

Economic and labour market impacts of TVET for refugees in LMICs

Rigorous review commissioned by
Finn Church Aid, GIZ, ILO & UNHCR

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Contents

Executive Summary	4
Findings of the evidence review	4
Implications for policy and practice.....	5
Improving the evidence base on the impact of TVET for refugees in LMICs	6
Chapter 1: Introduction and Methodology	8
Methodology	8
Table 1: Inclusion criteria.....	9
Chapter 2: What economic and labour market impacts do TVET programmes for refugees have? .	10
Figure 1: Methodologies used in included studies (linked pie-chart).....	10
(1) Quasi-experimental studies.....	10
(2) Observational studies.....	11
(3) Descriptive studies	13
Chapter 3: What are the factors that enable or constrain impact?.....	15
Factors related to the labour market	15
Factors related to the design and implementation of TVET provision	16
Factors related to society	17
Factors related to individuals	17
Chapter 4: How should the evidence base on TVET for refugees be developed?	19
How reliable and valid is the existing evidence?	19
Where are the gaps in information?.....	21
What study methodologies could be replicated?.....	21
How do these findings compare to the existing argumentation and evidence on the economic impact of TVET for refugees?	22
What should be the priorities for developing the evidence base?.....	22
Chapter 5: What are the implications of this study for policy and practice?.....	24
List of References	27
Appendix 1: Further details of study methodology	29
Appendix 2: Classification of included studies	30
Appendix 3: Quality assessment of included studies	35

List of Abbreviations

DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
DST	Digital Skills Training
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (The German Agency for International Cooperation)
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LMIC	Low- or Middle-Income Country
RCT	Randomised Control Trial
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Social and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency

Executive Summary

To better understand the extent to which investment in Technical and Vocational Training (TVET) results in improved employment or livelihood outcomes for refugees, this study rigorously reviews the available evidence on the economic and labour market impacts of TVET for refugees in low-and-middle-income countries. Drawing on the principles of ‘systematic review’ methodology, the report critically appraises the reliability of the current evidence, highlights the key factors that enable and constrain the success of TVET programmes, and explores the implications of the findings for policy, practice and future research.

Findings of the evidence review

The labour market impact of programmes included in the evidence review is mixed.

Some refugees in LMICs who undertake TVET do progress into employment and improve their livelihood. Some TVET providers achieve impressive results in supporting refugee learners to progress into employment, self-employment or further learning. *However, in many of the studies considered, the intended employment impacts of TVET interventions are not achieved*, with refugees experiencing difficulties in navigating saturated labour markets, restrictive labour market policies and regulations, and other barriers.

A relatively consistent set of enabling and constraining factors are identified across the studies reviewed.

These include:

Factors related to the labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access to a functioning labour market is imperative to translating participation in TVET into positive employment and livelihood outcomes. ● Learners struggled to gain employment due to a lack of available jobs in the area they had trained, or labour market saturation (an oversupply of existing workers with the skills they had gained) ● In many countries, limitations on the right to work for refugees were a constraining factor. ● For refugees working in the informal economy or as small-scale entrepreneurs, the business environment can make it difficult to develop a sustainable livelihood – with constraints including lack of access to finance, difficulties in formally registering businesses, and limited access to markets.
Factors related to the design and implementation of TVET provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is a need to ensure that the training on offer is relevant to what is being demanded in the labour market. ● The provision of careers guidance and careers counselling is mentioned in several studies, anecdotally, as being useful in securing positive employment outcomes for learners. ● There is a need to focus on the quality of training
Factors related to society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Four studies report anecdotally that refugees face discrimination from the host community, which negatively impacts their labour market position, and employment and business opportunities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Restrictive gender norms also impact on the utilisation of skills acquired during vocational education and training, reducing the likelihood of women transitioning into work
Factors related to individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Several studies consider the perspectives and motivations of refugees. A lack of certainty about their own future, dissatisfaction with job quality, and lack of access to accurate information can all impact decisions taken about post-training employment. The quality of work available is a major concern – with research participants frequently highlighting insecure or short-term contracts, low wages, poor working conditions, excessive hours, and the lack of a written contract as issues. ● Two studies suggest highlighting language proficiency as an enabling factor for realising better economic outcomes.

Implications for policy and practice

Recommendations

Three pre-conditions need to be met for TVET to be successful in boosting the labour market outcomes of refugees

1. The legal and policy framework must permit refugees to work in the sector or occupation in which they are being trained.

- The design of TVET programmes should include undertaking a clear assessment of the legal and policy framework on right to work in the relevant sector to ensure that there is a clear transition-to-work pathway for learners.
- Where this is not present, TVET providers, implementing organisations, and other development actors should:
 - engage in advocacy with government and other decision-makers in support of the expansion of the *de jure* right to work
 - provide support to participants (before or during their training) to navigate work permit or equivalent processes in order to secure the *de facto* right to work
 - provide TVET in alternative sectors where refugees do have the right to work.
- Development partners and UN agencies should continue to work with host country governments to identify solutions to the policy and regulatory issues around the right to work that act as a barrier to the labour market participation of refugees.

2. TVET provision must have a clear connection to the skills being demanded and supplied in the labour markets that refugees will enter after training.

- Design of TVET programmes should include carrying out a clear labour market assessment to identify sectors that are likely to provide employment or livelihood opportunities and ensure that the programmes delivered are relevant and position learners well to progress to employment.
- Implementers should be judged on the extent to which intended learner outcomes are achieved rather than a sole focus on the number of learners enrolling on and completing the programme.
- Funders should consider incentivising implementers to focus more strongly on learner outcomes – for example, through growing the provision with the best outcomes.

3. Learners should be encouraged and supported to navigate employment opportunities and use the skills developed during training. TVET providers should focus more strongly on supporting learners to utilize the skills they have acquired during training. Depending on the specific identified within the context, this could include:

- bundling TVET with job search support, job matching and careers guidance and counselling (before, during, and after training) to support transitions from training to employment
- offering work-based learning, such as apprenticeships, internships or work placements, as part of their TVET offer
- providing complementary language training, functional numeracy and literacy, and intercultural skills
- providing learners with entrepreneurship skills and business start-up support, including for group enterprises and cooperatives, for people with viable business ideas in contexts where wage employment opportunities are scarce
- using participant selection processes that gauge the level of interest that prospective learners have in utilising their training and seeking employment
- ensuring that learners are given accurate information on how paid employment will impact their access to benefits and the likelihood of resettlement
- linking TVET provision to the skills being sought in labour mobility pathways (which allow refugees to move to another country to work and apply their skills)
- working to tackle social-cultural barriers to employment for female refugees. This could include changing the perceptions of employers and community members (through outreach, campaigns, community mobilisation, and sensitisation). It could also include the provision of additional targeted support, such as tailored career counselling, to help female trainees navigate the additional gendered barriers they face in participating in TVET and transitioning to the labour market.

There is a risk that focusing solely on economic returns leads to the overall impacts of TVET programmes being underestimated.

TVET interventions can have wider (non-economic) benefits for participants, including improved health and wellbeing, improved self-efficacy, improved self-confidence, improved social cohesion, enhanced social capital and an increased likelihood of continuing in education. TVET programme implementors should clearly identify the intended outcomes of their programmes at the outset, and integrate the measurement of these outcomes into their monitoring and evaluation activities.

[Improving the evidence base on the impact of TVET for refugees in LMICs](#)

There is a clear need to build the evidence base on the impact of TVET on refugees.

This review identified a small body of moderate-quality evidence. The evidence reviewed is diverse, covering a wide range of contexts (across Africa, the Middle East and South Asia), and a wide range of interventions. The relative sparsity of evidence limits our understanding of the efficacy of TVET as an intervention to improve livelihoods and limits the ability of programme implementors to make evidence-based improvements to the design and implementation of their programmes.

The included studies are of variable quality. Relatively few studies have a clear comparator group, which makes it difficult to robustly judge the success of interventions. Few programmes undertook

longitudinal tracking to determine whether outcomes had been achieved and sustained (reflecting the expense of tracing and contacting training participants). Only 3 of the included studies adopted a sampling approach that is representative of either training participants or the population.

Recommendations

To improve the evidence base on the impact of TVET for refugees:

- Funders and implementers of TVET programmes should invest in robust programme evaluations that longitudinally track TVET learners to determine whether the intended programme outcomes are achieved, and actively publish and disseminate evaluation results
- Researchers and evaluators should improve the quality of impact studies through:
 - Being clear and intentional about the sampling approach taken, including using representative sampling techniques wherever this is feasible
 - Ensuring that research includes a clear overview of the content of any data sources being used as a basis for evaluative judgements
 - Discussing the reliability of the evidence generated, and any limitations to their study
- Funders and implementers of TVET programmes for refugees should consider developing a standard approach to measuring and evaluating the impact of TVET programmes for refugee in a uniform way (for example through a shared set of indicators, definitions, and methodological approaches). This would support implementors and researchers to make more meaningful comparisons between different programmes.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Methodology

The Global Compact on Refugees specifies Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as a key factor for economic integration (United Nations, 2018). This includes recognizing and strengthening the existing skills, qualifications and expertise of the refugees, assessing the needs of the local labour market and developing skills profiles.

At the Global Refugee Forum in 2019, 26 pledges, including those from 10 States, focused on expanding and enhancing refugees' access to TVET. Interventions to improve skills and employability can facilitate transitions from education to decent work, allowing refugees to provide for their families' needs while making use of their skills and talents to contribute to their host communities.

Since 2019, Finn Church Aid, GIZ, ILO and UNHCR have been collaborating to develop the evidence base on TVET for refugees and support the uptake of evidence-based good practice. In 2022, they published a joint study, [“Skills and labour market transitions for refugees and host communities”](#), which identified field-tested models, from Ethiopia, Jordan, Kenya, Uganda and Sudan for the expansion of refugee inclusion in nationally accredited TVET programmes.

In the run-up to the Global Refugee Forum 2023 they have again collaborated to commission this report, which examines how financial and policy investments in TVET and skills development for refugees impacts on the economic status of individuals, families, and communities, and contributes to local and national economies in host countries. This study assesses the available evidence on the economic and labour market effects of TVET for refugees in low- and middle-income countries, evaluates the reliability of the evidence, identifies key factors influencing the success of TVET programs, and explores the implications for policy, practice, and future research.

Definitions

Technical and vocational education and training' (TVET) - Education, training and skills development relating to a wide range of occupational fields, production, services and livelihoods. As part of lifelong learning, TVET can take place at secondary, post-secondary and tertiary levels and includes work-based learning, continuing training, and professional development which may lead to qualifications (UNESCO, 2015).

Refugee – Someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion (United Nations, 1951).

Methodology

This study rigorously reviews the empirical literature on the economic and labour market impacts of TVET for refugees in low- and middle-income countries, drawing on the principles of 'systematic review' methodology. With relatively limited time and resources available for the review, the methodology adopted follows the approach and guidance recommended for rigorous evidence-focused literature reviews in international development produced by the Overseas Development Institute (Hagen-Zanker & Mallet, 2013).

An initial bibliography of relevant literature was assembled using a list of references provided by the project partners, forward and backward snowball searches of those references, and a search of the 30

academic databases, grey literature sources and library catalogues. Full details of the search strings used and the databases and other locations searched are detailed in Appendix A.

The identified studies underwent two rounds of screening based on the inclusion criteria listed in Table 1 below. The first round involved screening the titles and abstracts of studies to create a longlist of potentially relevant material for the review. Studies meeting the inclusion criteria or lacking sufficient information in the abstract were shortlisted for inclusion. This process yielded 51 longlisted studies.

Table 1: Inclusion criteria

Criterion	Requirement
Date	The study must be published after 2010
Language	The study must be published in English
Geography	The study must focus on low- and middle-income countries
Relevance	The study must be clearly relevant to the research questions – and address the impact of TVET for refugees on labour integration and economic impact
Study type	The study must be empirical. Theoretical or conceptual papers, policy papers etc will be excluded
Clearly explicated research design	The study must clearly identify the methods used

A second round of screening was then conducted using the full text of the longlisted studies. 17 studies were found to meet all of the inclusion criteria and were therefore selected to be included in the review. Forward and backward snowballing of selected studies was carried out, but no additional studies meeting all inclusion criteria were found. Data on study design, methodology, and findings were extracted from the selected studies. Screening of longlisted studies was repeated after data extraction to ensure consistent application of the inclusion criteria. The search, selection, synthesis, and reporting were completed between June and September 2023.

As anticipated at the outset of the study, the heterogeneous nature of the studies identified meant that quantitative reviewing approaches, involving, for example, meta-analysis of data from the included sources, would not be appropriate. Instead, this review takes the form of a configurative review, aiming to generate new insights by organizing and ‘configuring’ the available evidence (Gough et al., 2006).

To keep the scope of the study manageable the study focuses principally on the impact that TVET interventions have on the economic outcomes of refugees. We do not routinely examine the economic impact of interventions on host communities. Generally, TVET interventions should be targeted at both refugee and host community populations in tandem, in order to facilitate socio-economic inclusion and to avoid contributing to grievances by local populations.

There are a number of limitations to this study. Selection decisions were made by a single researcher (rather than through consensus decisions of multiple researchers). The decision to include only research published in English means that relevant research published in other languages (particularly Latin America) will not have been included in the synthesis. For time and resource reasons, only a light-touch assessment of study quality was made. Finally, whilst the study made substantial efforts to identify relevant grey literature through searches of the website of relevant organisations, the lack of comprehensive indexing of grey literature sources, means that there is likely other relevant study that have not been captured in the study.

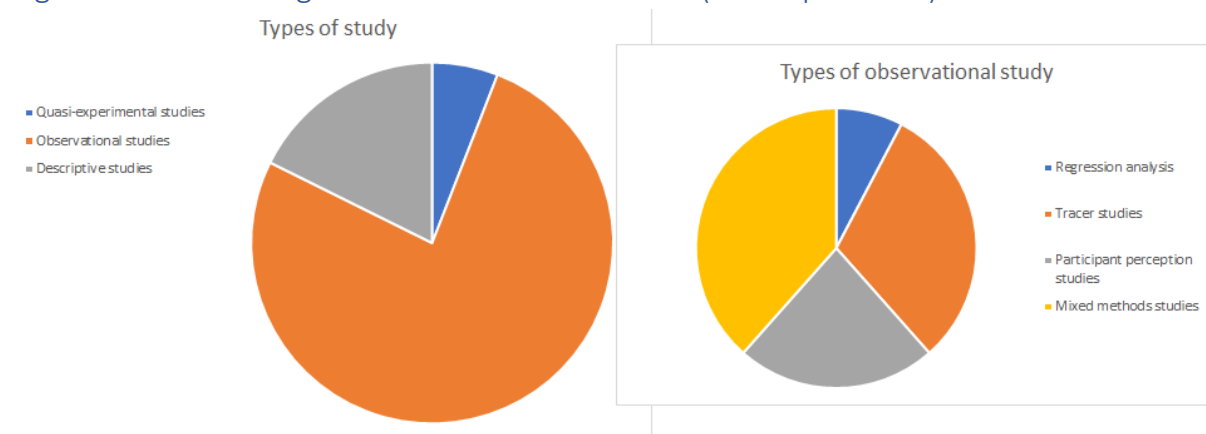
Chapter 2: What economic and labour market impacts do TVET programmes for refugees have?

Summary

- The TVET interventions considered within the studies reviewed are highly diverse, in duration, subject area, and modality. They range from short 4-day upskilling programmes in construction to 9-month training courses in dairy production, and from classroom-based vocational training programmes to informal apprenticeships.
- Overall, the economic and labour market impacts identified in the studies are mixed. Some refugees in LMICs who undertake TVET courses are able to progress into employment – however, in many studies considered in this review, the intended employment impacts are not achieved.
- The ability of refugees to move into employment (and generate a sustainable livelihood) is heavily constrained by poor labour market conditions, policy and regulatory constraints, and other factors. TVET interventions themselves are frequently unable to overcome these barriers.
- Relatively few studies have a clear comparator group, which makes it difficult to robustly judge the success of interventions by comparing the economic and labour market outcomes achieved against a counterfactual.

This chapter summarises the evidence extracted from each of the synthesised studies on the economic and labour market impacts associated with participation in TVET. The evidence reviewed is heterogeneous – and uses many different methodological approaches. To aid analysis, the studies have been grouped by the methodology used. The vast majority of studies (13/17) reviewed are observational studies.

Figure 1: Methodologies used in included studies (linked pie-chart)



(1) Quasi-experimental studies (1)

Only one relevant quasi-experimental study was identified, but the research design used limits the relevance of its insights. Ferguson et al (2022) find that a skills training programme in Jordan and Lebanon does not improve employment outcomes for participants *by the time that they complete the training*. This is anticipated by the authors, who are primarily researching the impact of the intervention on stability relations, as a product of the timing of the endline data collection, given the training reduces participants' availability to undertake job search and to undertake work. The authors suggest that the fact that refugees in the control group for the study, who were available for work and

job-search during the intervening time period, also do not see their employment outcomes improve between baseline and endline highlights the significant labour market challenges faced by refugees.

(2) Observational studies (13)

Regression analysis (1)

Regression analysis of data from a household survey in Kenya is positive, finding a statistically significant correlation between participation in training and the likelihood of being in employment. *Betts et al (2021)* conducted a multivariate regression analysis of household survey data collected in the Kalobeyi settlement in Kenya, testing the correlation between education, economic and consumption indicators among refugees in the Kalobeyi settlement in Kenya. They find that “skills are an important determinant of employment” and that “refugees are more likely to have an economic activity if they have done some vocational training in the past”. This finding is statistically significant but needs to be put in the context of low levels of market system development and economic development in the settlement overall. The authors conclude on the basis of this analysis that TVET, alongside language training and other forms of education are a promising intervention type for improving employment, though note that more thought also needs to be given to how employment opportunities can be built within the settlement.

Tracer studies (4)

Four tracer studies explore the impact of TVET interventions, with mixed results. Tracer studies are standardised surveys which take place after the end of the training to understand learner progression, transitions to work, and use of the skills and competencies learned (Schomberg 2016).

In Lebanon, an ILO (2022) evaluation of 1-year accelerated skills training programme finds that the programme had only a limited impact on employment (and also flagged challenges around skill utilisation and labour market activation). 73.4% of graduates had not worked in the week before the interview, with 54.9% of respondents reporting that they had not worked since undertaking the training (around 2 years previously). The research attributes this to a combination of labour market constraints and personal circumstances. Interestingly, similar employment outcomes are experienced by both Syrian (refugee) and Lebanese (host community) graduates of the programme – which indicates that both refugee and host community participants could benefit from action to improve the labour market benefits of participating in training. Those who were in work were likely to be in unstable work as short term, casual employees, earning below minimum wage and without a written contract. Syrian refugees were more likely to have short term contracts than Lebanese members of the host community. Skill utilisation was also highlighted as an area of concern. 41% of the graduates in work reported that they didn’t use the skills acquired during the training at all, with others reporting that they used them to a limited extent. Those who had trained in subjects related to food, agriculture and beauty were more likely to be working in a related job than those who had trained in other subjects. The study also highlights challenges around labour market activation of graduates – with around half of graduates (48.4%) reporting that they had not looked for work after graduation. This was a gendered trend, with women much less likely to have looked for work than men – and suggests that there is a need for labour market activation interventions, such as career guidance and counselling services to encourage and support participants to search for opportunities.

In Jordan, conversely, *Smith et al (2022)* report on relatively positive results of a tracer study carried out two years after a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) programme in the construction industry of Jordan. 23.3 per cent of respondents to the tracer study said they were in employment, with an additional 46.6 per cent stating they were in temporary employment, reflecting the seasonal and

project nature of the construction industry in Jordan. Almost a fifth of respondents (18.8%), meanwhile, reported that their salary had increased. However, the lack of comparator data, examining employment outcomes of others who did not participate in training, makes contextualising and assessing the significance of these findings more difficult

In Lebanon, Kherfi et al (2016) identify high participation in the labour market among graduates of the UNRWA Siblin Vocational Training School, despite low returns from participation. Graduates of the school make up the vast majority of the interview sample in a study assessing the impact of employment service centres for Palestinian refugees (carried out around two years after students registered). The study found that 59% of participants reported that they had worked in the previous week, but respondents expressed concern about labour market conditions, and the quality of work available. Excessive working hours, low pay and concerns about poor working conditions had seen a third of respondents report that they had either turned jobs down or resigned from them.

In Egypt, Feinstein International Center (2012) were only able to trace and interview 22 of the 150 refugees (14%) who had completed TVET courses run by Caritas International (with the remainder uncontactable or unwilling to participate). Of the 22 participants traced (a year on from undertaking training), just two reporting they were making use of the skills learned – with both running informal, home-based businesses.

Participant perception studies (3)

Three studies included in the review are qualitative explorations of the perspectives of either training participants on the impact of the training they received. These again, offer a mixed view, with participants across all studies reporting difficulty in forging a livelihood that provides a sufficient income. In Pakistan, Ahmed (2018) analyses the results of a survey of 157 vocationally trained Afghan refugees in six districts of Baluchistan. He found that three-quarters of respondents thought that the TVET they had undertaken was useful for their current career. Respondents had mixed views however on the extent to which it was easy to get a job, carry out business, or earn an adequate amount, on the basis of the vocational training they have undertaken. 70% of respondents reported that their income is insufficient to meet household expenditure. This was at least partly attributed to discrimination from the host community, with around half of respondents reporting that their ethnicity and identity as a refugee negatively impacted their employability and earnings. In Jordan, Thorne (2021) finds that a TVET programme was largely unable to overcome the many sociocultural and economic barriers to employment that were faced by both the refugee women and local women enrolled. She notes however that participants in skills development programmes are not always solely motivated by employment. In Malawi, Davis (2019) finds mixed economic impact among women who had undertaken TVET in refugee camps in Malawi. Some reported an increase in income, and having been able to make a profit from using their training to establish a small business. Others had not yet achieved this at the time the research was completed.

Mixed methods studies (5)

Five studies (mainly evaluations and assessments) included in the review used a mixed methods approach – combining and triangulating insights from multiple sources. These studies highlight the challenges TVET interventions face in realising a positive impact on the livelihoods of participating refugees. Two evaluation reports highlight that the intended impacts on income had not been achieved, one observes concerns about employment outcomes among participants, and one is

inconclusive due to data availability. The other study is more positive but uses a sampling approach that may limit the generalisability of its findings.

In India, *Ravesloot's (2018)* evaluation of UNHCR livelihood programming finds that interventions had not been effective in improving the income or employment of participants. The programming, which included skills training, job matching and support for self-employment had however helped participants to improve their resilience by increasing their level of savings or assets, their social capital, and their access to informal safety nets. The evaluation concludes that *“opportunities for income generation facilitated by the project are in general short term and reversible. Very few participants in the livelihood activities have made meaningful economic gains that can be attributed to program activities.”*

In Ethiopia, *Betts et al (2020)* conclude that whilst the ‘Youth Education Pack’ vocational training programme in the Dollo Ado settlement did not significantly increase participants’ incomes, it “played an important role in developing human resource and potentially improving participants’ self-esteem.” The programme suffered from limited relevance to the local labour market, supporting such a large number of trainees that the local labour market could not absorb them. It is reported that UNHCR administrative data suggest the employment rate of graduates is similar to that of the general population though the actual numbers are not presented in the study. For those who did obtain employment, this was often insecure or of limited duration (UNHCR reports that only 48% were employed for more than 6 months). Some skills trainings, linked to emerging demand in the local economy, were more likely to lead to paid work – with, for example, all of the construction graduates available subsequently being hired to support the construction of new shelters in the camp.

In Uganda, an assessment of livelihood training by *Easton-Calabria (2016)* reports that “lack of employment after training was cited by 78% of refugee informants, with a slightly more optimistic view presented by organisations.” Livelihood outcomes vary across sectors with hairdressing, tailoring, mushroom-growing identified as fields with greater levels of success.

In Ghana, *Frankenberger (2018)*'s evaluation of UNHCR livelihood programming reports on internal monitoring data showing that around 60% (300/495) of camp-based refugees who had participated in vocational training and business development interventions were subsequently engaged in agricultural activities as a way on developing a livelihood. He caveats his findings however, stating that it is not possible to draw firm conclusions about the impact (on income and employment, for example) due to the limited availability of data.

Conversely, in Jordan, *Jabbar and Zaza (2016)* find a high level of skill utilisation among women who had completed a vocational skills programme at the Zaatarī Syrian Refugee Camp in Jordan. 77% of the women (20 out of 26) reported that they were using the skills they had acquired through the TVET programme, whilst 96% (25 out of 26) report that the programme had helped them to generate an income. The study draws on only a small sample of respondents however, and the fact that the entire sample is drawn from women still working at the training institution raises questions about the generalisability of the findings to the full cohort of trainees and wider refugee population.

(3) Descriptive studies (3)

The final three studies included in the review are descriptive studies sharing insights from the experience of training providers in delivering TVET interventions to refugee and host communities. The studies provide examples of positive deviants (providers with results that set them apart from

which lessons could potentially be learned), and also provide insights from providers of constraining and enabling factors (the focus of the next chapter).

Basktaki & Charles (2022) examine the factors impacting on outcomes of TVET in Jordan through a series of interviews with providers and other stakeholders. The study includes employment outcome results reported by two providers (though it should be noted that these are not typical). Luminus report that 70 per cent of their graduates are able to attain jobs after graduation (though do not break this down between refugees and non-refugees), a success rate attributed to the provision of career counselling to support graduates to move into employment, partnerships established with prospective employers, the content of the education programmes, and an organisational culture that prioritises outcomes. Meanwhile, UNRWA reports employment rates of 85 to 90 per cent, with most students employed in sectors related to their training, though the authors note that there is no information on the sustainability of these jobs and that most of the UNRWA-registered refugees had Jordanian citizenship, with the right to work in all sectors

A case study in Hussein & Ferrero-Turrion (2017) profiles the success of UNRWA's Amman Naour and Wadi Sir community colleges in Jordan. The colleges report that 69.4% of TVET graduates are in employment a year after they graduate (with 67% of these in areas relevant to the field they are training in). When combined with those going on into further study instead, the overall success rate is 93.8%. Success factors contributing to high progression rates include programme quality, partnerships with employers (including some in other Arab states offering resettlement opportunities), provision of careers and job placement support, and, again, the absence of right to work issues given that most of the refugees have Jordanian citizenship.

Shibli and Kouzi (2022) report on the employment outcomes of participants in the Digital Skills Training (DST) they implemented in Lebanon. They reiterate the importance of the environment into which those completing TVET courses graduate, concluding that external factors prevented the DST programme from effectively supporting participants to obtain remote digital jobs. These external factors included IT constraints, with Lebanese IP addresses blocked; financial inclusion barriers, with refugees unable to open bank accounts and therefore get paid; and limits on the right to work for refugees. Participants had however been able to secure other work in the local informal labour market. 15% of refugees responding to a follow-up survey had reported finding new jobs within six months of graduation (a rate that the authors hypothesise may be an under-reporting of impact), as had 40 per cent of the respondents from the Lebanese host community. They also report on positive deviants from the programme, who had benefited from seed funding to develop start-ups from the World Food Programme, but express concern around whether these are scalable, given the requirement for seed funding and the risk of business failure associated with entrepreneurship.

Chapter 3: What are the factors that enable or constrain impact?

Summary

- Access to a functioning labour market is imperative to translating participation in TVET into positive employment and livelihood outcomes. Labour market factors impacting employment and livelihoods include a lack of available jobs in the area where participants had trained, labour market saturation, restrictions on the right to work, and challenging business environments for informal economy entrepreneurship.
- TVET provision must be relevant to what is being demanded in the labour market. Provision of labour market activation and post-training support such as careers guidance and careers counselling, is reported to be useful in securing positive employment outcomes for learners.
- Several studies identify discrimination from the host community, and restrictive gender norms, as being societal factors that negatively impact TVET participants' livelihood prospects.
- Refugee's own perspectives can affect their motivation to engage in both TVET and post-training employment. A lack of certainty about their own future, dissatisfaction with job quality, and lack of access to accurate information can all impact decisions taken by refugees about post-training employment. The quality of work available is a major concern – with research participants frequently highlighting insecure or short-term contracts, low wages, poor working conditions, excessive hours, and the lack of a written contract as issues.

From the studies reviewed it is possible to identify a common set of factors that influences whether a TVET intervention is successful or not in creating economic impacts for learners.

Factors related to the labour market

Learners struggled to gain employment due to a lack of available jobs in the area they had trained.

In some cases, the local labour market was saturated, with an oversupply of existing workers with the skills that the trainees had gained (Betts et al, 2019; Baskati & Charles, 2022; Easton-Calabria, 2016; Ravesloot, 2018). Avoiding labour market saturation is even more important in closed-loop settings such as refugee camps, where single TVET programmes can cause an over-supply of skills. Betts et al (2020) report that one TVET programme in Ethiopia supported such a large number of trainees (12.8% of refugees in the camps and 6.4% of the host community over a five-year period) that the local labour market could not absorb them, and few of the programme graduates were able to obtain employment.

In many countries, limitations on the right to work for refugees were a constraining factor. In many host countries, the ability of refugees to work is restricted by government policies and regulations. Refugees may only be permitted to work in a sub-set of sectors or occupations; may have to go through bureaucratic administrative processes in order to get work permits; or may not be permitted to work at all. Restrictions on the right to work lead to refugees entering into precarious employment in the informal sector (Ravesloot, 2018), or can lead to labour market saturation in the areas where they are allowed to work by channelling refugees into roles in a subset of often lower-paying, less attractive sectors (Betts et al, 2019). There is also a risk that the contours of the right to work for refugees could change. In Jordan, TVET providers highlighted that the employment laws and regulations “changed quickly and unexpectedly” adding to uncertainty about potential future changes (Bastaki and Charles, 2022). In Lebanon, the absence of a legal framework for digital work for refugees led the Ministry of Social Affairs to exclude refugees from a digital skills programme they had

previously been permitted to participate in (Shibli and Kouzi, 2022). In Jordan, Hussein & Ferrero-Turrion (2017) attribute some of the success of UNRWA-run community colleges to the fact that most of the Palestinian refugees the colleges serve have Jordanian citizenship and therefore have the right to work without restriction.

For refugees working in the informal economy or as small-scale entrepreneurs, the business environment can make it difficult to develop a sustainable livelihood. Many refugees will end up working in the informal economy, either due to restrictions on them obtaining employment in the formal economy or simply because of the size of the informal economy in the host country. In several studies, however, it was reported that refugees faced difficulty in setting up and running micro-businesses as a way to secure a sustainable livelihood. In Uganda, for example, Easton-Calabria (2016), reports that refugees struggle to obtain capital through micro-finance and bank loans, cannot afford to formally register their businesses, and have only limited access to markets, following the criminalisation of informal street vending. In Malawi, the refugees interviewed by Davis (2019) express frustration at being unable to access finance to build their businesses. In India, conversely, Ravesloot (2018) cites the “wide range of income generation options available within India’s extensive informal economy”. Financial exclusion is also cited as a challenge in several other studies. In India, Ravesloot (2018) reports that refugees do not have the documents required to open bank accounts, operate within a “system that does not allow them formal access to credit” and are facing new challenges as the government increasingly looks to limit cash transactions within the Indian economy. In Lebanon, Shibli and Kouzi (2022) report that Syrian refugees have struggled to open bank accounts (with financial institutions concerned that offering accounts may put them in breach of sanctions), meaning that online payments for work undertaken on online work platforms could not take place.

Factors related to the design and implementation of TVET provision

The training on offer must be relevant to what is being demanded in the labour market. In several studies, concern is expressed about the extent to which TVET programme content is aligned to the skills being demanded in local labour markets. In Egypt, Feinstein International Center (2012) reports that one respondent complained that the training programmes on offer were theoretical, and not of interest to prospective employers. In Lebanon, similar concerns were expressed about UNRWA’s Sibling Vocational Training School, with three research participants, expressing the view that “most of what they had learnt at Sibling was not practical and got not be directly utilized in the world of work” (Kherfi et al, 2016). In Uganda, Easton-Calabria (2016) finds that no labour market assessment had been undertaken, limiting the ability of TVET providers to ensure that the training provided was in line with labour market demand.

In Jordan, Baskati & Charles (2022) highlight that some of the more successful TVET programmes engage directly with employers to inform the design of training, whilst another collected and analysed job advertisements as a method of assessing demand. They also suggest that a lack of focus on employment outcomes is a challenge, and that one way of improving the relevance of training would be to review the incentives that drive TVET providers, so that the success of programme is judged by learners gaining employment rather than just completing a training course.

There is a need for a focus on the quality of training. Two studies make reference to the quality of training provided (Betts et al, 2020; Baskati & Charles, 2022). Betts et al (2020) finds differing views on the quality of training provided through the Youth Education Pack programme in Kenya, with some positive interviewees, but others reporting that YEP graduates hired to support the construction of shelters “lacked fundamental skills” and required additional training “beyond what they expected

would have been necessary”. As part of this quality focus, Betts et al also highlight the importance of ensuring that implementing partners have the necessary expertise and capabilities needed for delivery of programmes – finding that the use of “international humanitarian NGOs, with limited expertise in development-orientated programmes” had not been successful.

The provision of labour market activation and post-training support such as careers guidance and careers counselling, is mentioned in several studies, anecdotally, as being useful in securing positive employment outcomes for learners. In Jordan, for example, Bastaki and Charles (2022) highlight that careers counselling is one of the success factors identified by the high-performing TVET provider Luminus, whilst Hussein & Ferrero-Turrion note that UNRWA has been working to reinforce their job placement and career guidance services. The ILO’s (2022) evaluation of vocational training in Lebanon recommends that vocational training should “be accompanied by counselling services during the course and post-training support services to assist graduates in finding suitable jobs”. Pre-enrolment careers guidance also can help ensure that prospective students are well-matched to the course (tackling some of the information asymmetries identified elsewhere in this report), and support the design of training programmes. Post-programme support could improve graduate’s experience of navigating an often-difficult labour market, and increase the proportion of graduates using the skills acquired during their training.

Factors related to society

A number of studies report anecdotally that refugees face discrimination from the host community, which negatively impacts their livelihood prospects. In Lebanon, Kherfi et al (2016) report that research participants believe that employers prefer to hire Lebanese citizens, rather than Palestinians, and that Palestinians who are hired are treated poorly and paid lower wages. A similar perception of preference for local workers is reported by Feinstein International Center (2012) in Egypt. In Uganda, Easton-Calabria (2016) reports that refugees working in the informal economy perceived there to be discrimination by Ugandans, who “preferred to buy from fellow Ugandans or viewed refugees as competitors and sought to disrupt their business operations.” Similarly, in Pakistan, an opinion survey by Ahmed (2019) finds that almost half of respondents believe that being an Afghan refugee affects their position in the labour market, a perception he attributes to labour market discrimination and low levels of social cohesion, even for very established communities of refugees.

Restrictive gender norms also impact the utilisation of skills acquired during vocational education and training. In Jordan, Thorne (2021) highlights that in 2018, Syrian women made up just 4% of the work permits issued to refugees in Jordan, and concludes that “women are prevented from entering the formal labour market for sociocultural reasons” that the skills development programme was unable to overcome. In Lebanon, the ILO (2022) notes that women who had completed the programme did not seek work as actively as men, and were less likely to be in paid work, reflecting gendered expectations of female work outside of the home. The evaluators recommended that additional resources be directed to supporting the economic participation of women.

Factors related to individuals

Several studies consider the perspectives and motivations of refugees – and how these factors impact the likelihood of learners to make successful transitions from education into employment. Successfully transitioning from training to employment requires significant motivation from learners, and it is therefore important to understand how refugee learners perceive the learning they receive and the employment opportunities that are open to them. The ILO’s (2022) evaluation of a skills

training programme in Lebanon found that participant motivation significantly impacted the programme's results – with half of the surveyed participants reporting that they did not look for a job following graduation. The evaluation suggests that this can be addressed through pre-selection of participants, prioritising those with an interest in utilising training, and through identifying mechanisms for “incentivizing motivation and minimising discouragement” during the delivery of training. This could include career counselling and supporting learners through job search.

Perspectives captured in the synthesised studies include:

- **A lack of certainty about their own future.** Uncertainty is likely to reduce the inclination of refugees participating in TVET courses to make longer-term investments of time and effort in establishing businesses. In Ghana, Frankenberger (2018) notes that those who hope to be resettled in a different location may be disincentivised to invest time, money and effort in establishing a business in a refugee camp that could provide a source of livelihood if that business is unlikely to be transferable to a new geography. Where this is a factor, the success rate of livelihood programmes is likely to be reduced.
- **Concerns about the ongoing value of certifications.** Frankenberger (2018) and Kherfi et al (2016) both highlight concerns expressed by refugees living in refugee camps about the wider labour market value of the certifications on offer. If an individual believes that a course is unlikely to be recognised as having value in the labour market, he or she may, very rationally, be less inclined to participate in it.
- **Concerns about the quality of work.** In Lebanon, Kherfi et al (2016) highlight dissatisfaction with the quality of work available to refugees, with participants reporting that work involves “long working hours, low pay and poor working conditions”. Similarly, in India, Ravesloot (2018) reports that refugees were disappointed with the salaries available, which were lower than anticipated, and in some cases lower than those paid to Indian nationals doing the same work.
- **Wider motivations for participating in training programmes.** Thorne (2021) notes that people may participate in TVET programmes for a variety of reasons, not just to facilitate entry into employment. She notes that for the women participating in the training course she observed in Jordan, other imperatives for enrolling included wanting “to better settle into her new community” and “new people and forming friendships”. Employment was perceived by the women participating as being a possibility for the future rather than the driving force for their participation. This demonstrates the importance of identifying and capturing the wider social impacts of participating in training, in addition to the economic and labour market impacts.

Some refugees may make decisions about whether or not to move into employment based on imperfect or incorrect information. In Jordan, Basktiki & Charles (2022) report that some Syrian refugees are incorrectly concerned that securing formal sector employment in Jordan will either lead to the withdrawal of certain benefits or will make them less likely to be resettled in another country.

Finally, two studies highlight language proficiency as an enabling factor for realising better economic outcomes. The multivariate regression analysis undertaken by Betts et al (2021) in Kenya found a positive correlation between those who were able to speak Swahili well and the likelihood of having a job, leading the research team to suggest that “language training could potentially offer a means to increasing employment opportunities”. In India, meanwhile, Ravesloot (2018) identifies the inability of refugees to speak a local language as being among the factors posing a risk to the success of UNHCR's India livelihoods programme – he further notes that language proficiency was also perceived by refugees themselves as being essential to their economic prospects.

Chapter 4: How should the evidence base on TVET for refugees be developed?

Summary

- There is a need to improve the evidence base on the economic and labour market impacts of TVET for refugees in LMICs.
- This study identified a small body of moderate-quality evidence. The evidence is diverse, covering a wide range of contexts across Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, and a wide range of interventions. The substantive findings of the evidence reviewed are mixed, but generally consistent with the wider existing evidence on TVET in LMICs and TVET for refugees.
- To improve the quality of studies undertaken in this area researchers and evaluators should be clear and intentional about the sampling approach taken, including using representative sampling techniques wherever this is feasible; ensure that research includes a clear overview of the content of any data sources being used as a basis for evaluative judgements, and be more transparent about the reliability of the evidence generated, and any limitations to their studies
- Funders and implementers of TVET programmes should invest in robust programme evaluations that longitudinally track TVET learners to determine whether the intended programme outcomes are achieved, and actively publish and disseminate evaluation results.

How reliable and valid is the existing evidence?

To assess the strength of a body of evidence reviewed, consideration was given to the four dimensions of the body of evidence identified by DFID (2014): the size of the body of evidence, the quality of the studies included in the body of evidence, the consistency of the findings, and the context of the evidence.

Size of the body of evidence

The evidence base in this area is sparse, with relatively few studies meeting all of our inclusion criteria. Whilst 51 studies appeared to be relevant at the longlisting phase, the majority of them were screened out when the full text of the study was reviewed against the inclusion criteria. Common reasons for studies being screened out at the longlist stage included:

- Data in the study not being sufficiently disaggregated – for example, evidence on vocational skills training not being disaggregated from other interventions, or data on refugee outcomes not being sufficiently disaggregated from those achieved by the host community.
- A focus on refugees' perceptions of their experiences of TVET rather than on its impacts
- A focus on other non-economic measures of impact
- TVET only being considered tangentially as part of wider sets of interventions
- A focus on IDPs or returnees rather than refugees

It is considered likely that any relevant academic publications will have been identified during the search process given the exhaustive searches undertaken on relevant academic databases. It is not possible to have such confidence about the exhaustiveness of searches of the grey literature, given that these are not indexed in the same way, and in many cases are only published on the websites of the commissioning organisation. In particular, there are likely to be relevant evaluation reports that have not been identified during this review. Due to the small number of relevant studies identified as

being potentially relevant, the research has erred on the side of inclusion, where there were margin calls on whether the inclusion criteria were met or not.

Quality of the studies included in the body of evidence

Overall, looking at sampling, transparency and reliability, the body of evidence available can be assessed as being of moderate quality. The studies reviewed were of variable quality, with individual studies being judged to be of high, moderate and limited quality. Hagen-Zanker & Mallet (2013) note that it is very difficult to objectively assess the quality of individual research studies, and recommend that rigorous reviews instead prioritise the production of a comprehensive classification of the studies included in the review. Appendix 2, therefore presents a summary of the key characteristics of each study contained in this review, whilst Appendix 3 presents insights from a light touch quality assessment exercise. To improve the quality of the evidence in this area, future studies should (i) be clear about the approach to sampling taken, and (ii) be more intentional about the sampling approach taken, including using representative sampling techniques wherever this is feasible. Future studies should also provide a clear overview of the content of any data sources being used as a basis for evaluation judgements.

Consistency of the findings

As detailed in Chapter 2, the substantive findings of the evidence reviewed are mixed, with the economic outcomes of TVET varying across programmes. There is however more consistency in the findings around enabling and constraining factors explored in Chapter 3, with several factors being cited across multiple studies. The evidence is also generally consistent with the wider existing evidence on TVET in LMICs and TVET for refugees.

Context of the evidence

The studies included in the review cover a wide range of countries across the Middle East & North Africa (Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt), Sub-Saharan Africa (Malawi, Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, Ethiopia) and South Asia (Pakistan, India). Three countries are covered in multiple studies – Jordan (the focus of six studies), Lebanon (the focus of four studies) and Uganda (the focus of two studies). The absence of any studies from Latin America in the included studies may indicate that the requirement for studies to be published in English may have excluded relevant studies.

One challenge with a body of evidence covering such a wide range of contexts has been the lack of comparator information. Given the variation of local economic conditions and other variables across contexts, some discussion of how the labour market and economic outcomes achieved by participants in a particular intervention compared to the results achieved by a suitable non-intervention group (or segment of the population) would have allowed the results to be more easily assessed in context. This is not included in the majority of studies.

The interventions considered within the studies are also highly diverse, in duration, subject area, and modality. They range from short 4-day upskilling programmes in construction, to 9-month training courses in dairy production, and from classroom-based vocational training programmes to informal apprenticeships.

Where are the gaps in information?

A clear gap in the evidence base is systematic data on the employment and other labour market outcomes of participants in programmes providing TVET to refugees. This limits both our understanding of the relative efficacy of TVET as an intervention to improve livelihoods and limits the ability of programme implementers to make evidence-based improvements to the design and implementation of their programmes. In Jordan, Basktaki & Charles (2022): note that: *“None of the service providers we interviewed followed-up with the refugees on a long-term basis, such as a year after the end of the training, to assess long-term employment outcomes.”* In Uganda, Easton-Calabria (2016) observes that some organisations could only provide anecdotal evidence of success, and that the lack of outcome data constrained the ability of implementers to demonstrate their impact, noting that *“organisations were only able to offer general figures on participants’ ability to become employed or self-employed after training..”*

The timing of studies is also important, given that even where a TVET intervention is successful it will often take some time for the employment or labour market integration effect to be realised. If a study is undertaken too soon after the completion of an intervention, the full impact may not be captured (as discussed in Chapter 2 in the context of Ferguson et al (2022)). Betts (2020) similarly notes claims of impact on longer-term employability by implementers, that are not captured by that study – eventual employment “in situ, after repatriation, or after being resettled”.) Conversely, if the gap after the intervention is too long it is likely to increase the attrition rate of the study (i.e. it is less likely that participants will be able to be traced), and proving causality becomes more difficult.

What study methodologies could be replicated?

Experimental studies (such as Randomised Control Trials¹) provide rigorous evidence on the effect of interventions, but there are concerns about the ethics and expense of this type of research. The principal ethical concern is for the welfare of those assigned to the control group, which can be mitigated to some extent by admitting those assigned to the control group to a later cohort of the intervention, starting after the endline data collection is complete. RCTs also tend to be expensive and are not appropriate for the evaluation of early-stage or less-well-developed programmes.

For assessing the impact of individual programmes, tracer studies are likely to be a useful methodology, though difficulties are often encountered during implementation. For example, Feinstein International Centre (2012) experienced significant difficulties in tracing former participants in vocational training in Egypt – finding that most of the telephone numbers they had been provided by the implementer were out of service, or did not belong to the participant. Many of the participants they were able to contact were unwilling to participate in an interview due to political instability in the country. High attrition rates like this are a common challenge in tracer studies and can have a significant effect on the representativeness of the study sample. Other challenges include a risk that participants overstate the employment outcomes they have achieved as a way of showing appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the programme (McKenzie, 2021). Tracer studies can be carried out with a control group, but this is unusual (Simister & O’Flynn, 2017).

¹ A randomized controlled trial is “an experimental form of impact evaluation in which the population receiving the programme or policy intervention is chosen at random from the eligible population, and a control group is also chosen at random from the same eligible population” (White et al, 2014)

Research based on administrative data is unlikely to be helpful given the high likelihood that some refugees will be working in the informal economy (and therefore not reflected in official data sources). For assessing the impact of TVET generally (rather than individual programmes), multivariate regression analysis of household survey data, like that undertaken by Betts et al (2019) can provide a longer-term view of the impact of TVET intervention.

It may also be worthwhile to undertake further research into the practices of positive deviants (i.e. providers of TVET achieving better results) in order to identify how these results could be replicated by other providers.

How do these findings compare to the existing argumentation and evidence on the economic impact of TVET for refugees?

The findings of this study are generally in line with the wider secondary literature and argumentation on the impact of TVET for refugees. A review of jobs interventions for refugees and IDPs by Schuettler & Caron (2021) concludes that “the mostly descriptive and qualitative literature that exists for low- and middle-income countries shows that many training programs have not been successful”. They argue that implementers should focus on the legal framework refugees will be operating in; ensure join-up with the market demand for the skills training being delivered; and look at combining skills training with other interventions such as work experience, work permit support, or business start-up capital. In a report for the Migration Policy Institute, Jacobsen & Frantzke (2016) conclude that the “success of livelihood efforts is generally shaped by factors external to the programs themselves” – including the political and policy context in each country, the opportunities available in the economy, and the motivations and capabilities of refugees themselves. They also highlight lack of funding and capability gaps in implementing organisations as further challenges.

Looking outside of TVET interventions specifically for refugees, evidence on the impact of TVET on labour market outcomes of TVET is also mixed. A meta-analysis of nine vocational training interventions in developing countries by McKenzie (2017) finds that vocational programmes also do not always lead to the intended labour market effects. His review notes that a significant impact on employment is only observed in three of the nine studies, and a statistically significant impact on earnings is only observed in two studies. A systematic review of active labour market programmes for youth commissioned by the ILO meanwhile finds that skills training interventions have a positive impact on youth employment outcomes in low- and middle-income countries (with a medium effect size), though entrepreneurship promotion interventions were found to be more effective (Puerto et al, 2022). Finally, a recent global study of TVET in low-and-middle income countries by the World Bank, International Labour Organisation and UNESCO (2023) argues that there is often a ‘broken link’ between TVET systems and labour markets. The study concludes that the employment impact of secondary TVET specifically is “at best mixed”, with labour market outcomes observed in rigorous studies “often small and almost always highly heterogeneous”.

What should be the priorities for developing the evidence base?

There is a clear need to build the evidence base on the economic and labour market impact of TVET on refugees in LMICs. The current evidence base is relatively sparse. This limits our understanding of

the relative efficacy of TVET as an intervention to improve livelihoods and limits the ability of programme implementers to make evidence-based improvements to the design and implementation of their programmes.

To improve the evidence base on the impact of TVET for refugees:

- Funders should invest in robust programme evaluations that longitudinally track TVET learners to determine whether the intended programme outcomes are achieved, and actively publish and disseminate evaluation results
- Researchers and evaluators should improve the quality of impact studies through:
 - Being clear and intentional about the sampling approach taken, including using representative sampling techniques wherever this is feasible
 - Ensuring that research includes a clear overview of the content of any data sources being used as a basis for evaluative judgements
 - Discussing the reliability of the evidence generated and any limitations to their study
- Funders and implementors of TVET programmes for refugees should consider developing a standard approach to measuring and evaluating the impact of TVET programmes for refugees in a uniform way (for example through a shared set of indicators, definitions, and methodological approaches). This could usefully include, for example, agreeing on a common definition of how to measure employment outcomes. Currently, TVET providers use a range of measures for employment outcomes – ranging from job entry through to sustained employment over a period of months. It might also include shared measures of job quality (such as wage level, employment status, and compliance with decent work standards). Standardisation would support implementors and researchers to make more meaningful comparisons between different programmes.

Chapter 5: What are the implications of this study for policy and practice?

This research suggests that in order for TVET to be successful in boosting the labour market outcomes of refugees, **three pre-conditions need to be met**. If any of these pre-conditions are not met, the impact of TVET programmes is likely to be modest.

1. Legal and Policy Framework on Right to Work

The legal and policy framework must permit refugees to work in the sector or occupation in which they are being trained.

Design of TVET programmes should include undertaking a clear assessment of the legal and policy framework on right to work in the relevant sector to ensure that there is a clear transition-to-work pathway for learners.

Where this is not present, TVET providers, implementing organisations, and other development actors should:

- engage in advocacy with government and other decision makers in support of expansion of the *de jure* right to work
- provide support to participants (before or during their training) to navigate work permit or equivalent processes in order to secure the *de facto* right to work
- provide TVET in alternative sectors where refugees do have the right-to-work.

Development partners and UN agencies should continue to work with host country governments to identify solutions to the policy and regulatory issues around the right to work that act as a barrier to labour market participation on refugees.

2. Labour Market Relevance

TVET provision must have a clear connection to the skills being demanded and supplied in the labour markets that refugees will enter after training.

In practice this means:

- The design of TVET programmes should include carrying out a clear labour market assessment to identify sectors that are likely to provide employment or livelihood opportunities and ensure that the programmes delivered are relevant and position learners well to progress to employment.
- Implementers should be judged on the extent to which intended learner outcomes are achieved rather than a sole focus on the number of learners enrolling on and completing the programme.
- Funders should consider incentivising implementers to focus more strongly on learner outcomes – for example, through growing the provision with the best outcomes.

3. Participant Motivation, Self-Efficacy and Skills Utilisation

Learners should be encouraged and supported to navigate employment opportunities and use the skills developed during training.

TVET providers should focus more strongly on supporting learners to utilize the skills they have acquired during training. Depending on the specific identified within the context, this could include:

- bundling TVET with job search support, job matching and careers guidance and counselling (before, during, and after training) to support transitions from training to employment
- offering work-based learning, such as apprenticeships, internships or work placements, as part of their TVET offer
- providing complementary language training, functional numeracy and literacy, and intercultural skills
- providing learners with entrepreneurship skills and business start-up support, including for group enterprises and cooperatives, for people with viable business ideas in contexts where wage employment opportunities are scarce
- using participant selection processes that gauge the level of interest that prospective learners have in utilising their training and seeking employment
- ensuring that learners are given accurate information on how paid employment will impact their access to benefits and the likelihood of resettlement
- linking TVET provision to the skills being sought in labour mobility pathways (which allow refugees to move to another country to work and apply their skills)
- working to tackle social-cultural barriers to employment for female refugees. This could include changing the perceptions of employers and community members (through outreach, campaigns, community mobilisation, and sensitisation). It could also include the provision of additional targeted support, such as tailored career counselling, to help female trainees navigate the additional gendered barriers they face in participating in TVET and transitioning to the labour market.

Finally, there is a risk that focusing solely on economic returns leads to the overall impacts of TVET programmes being underestimated. TVET interventions often have wider benefits for participants beyond economic and labour market outcomes. Social impacts identified in the synthesised studies include:

- Improved health and wellbeing (Shibli and Kouzi, 2022; Easton-Calabria, 2016; Betts, 2020)
- Improved self-efficacy (Ferguson et al, 2022) and self-confidence (Smith et al, 2022; Davis, 2019)
- Enhanced social capital (Easton-Calabria, 2016)
- Improved social cohesion (Shibli and Kouzi, 2022)
- Increased likelihood of continuing in education (Shibli and Kouzi, 2022; Betts, 2020)

To support the generate of better evidence of these impacts, TVET programme implementors should clearly identify the intended outcomes of their programmes at the outset, and integrate the measurement of these outcomes into their monitoring and evaluation activities.

This study sets out clear learnings for all development actors on how the economic and labour market outcomes of TVET for refugees in LMICs can be enhanced. An evolution in practice is required. To improve the likelihood of economic outcomes being achieved, core TVET programming will need to be supplemented with rigorous labour market analysis, political advocacy for policy change, enhanced student support services, and more systematic engagement with employers.

Fundamentally, the design and implementation of TVET programmes must become more rooted in the labour market and regulatory conditions in which training participants will have to operate.

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Appendix 1: Further details of study methodology

Table 2: Databases and other sources searched

Academic Databases	IdeaREPEC ERIC VOCEDplus IZA 3ie Development Evidence Portal Campbell Collaboration SAGE ProQuest African Education Research Database JSTOR
Grey Literature Sources	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies ILO LabourDoc World Bank Open Knowledge Repository INCLUDE Platform Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement UNESCO Publications Library GIZ Publications Database ReliefWeb USAID Edu Links Danish Refugee Council Norwegian Refugee Council International Rescue Committee Overseas Development Institute Institute for Development Studies Center for Global Development Solutions4Youth Employment website Mastercard Foundation Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford
Library catalogues	British Library Newsom Library, UCL Institute of Education

Table 3: Search terms

The following search terms were used to identify relevant literature:

Concept 1 (Population)	Concept 2 (Intervention)	Concept 3 (Outcome) Used only where large number of hits were generated
Refugee	Vocational education and training Vocational training TVET Skills training Skills development	Labor market integration Economic impact Self-reliance Learning to earning

Appendix 2: Classification of included studies

Table 4: Key characteristics of included studies

Author (Year)	Type	Intervention	Country	Study design	Methodology	Sample size	Sampling approach
Ahmed (2019)	Academic (peer reviewed)	Various - including NGO provision and informal apprenticeship	Pakistan	Observational	Survey	157 refugees	Purposive sample controlling for location (rural / urban), and duration of training undertaken.
Bastaki & Charles (2022)	Academic (peer reviewed)	Various – including training in tailoring, welding, carpentry, hospitality, hair and beauty, maintenance, Agriculture, and digital skills	Jordan	Descriptive	Semi-structured interviews	12 stakeholders (including with private TVET providers, UN organisations, (I)NGOs	Selection from preliminary stakeholder mapping, supplemented by snowballing.
Betts et al (2019)	Evaluation	Any vocational education previously undertaken (and disclosed) by participants	Kenya	Observational	Multivariate regression analysis of household panel data	2,560 adults from 1,397 households	Households randomly selected using satellite image. Sample is representative of households whose members arrived after March 2015.
Betts et al (2020)	Evaluation / impact assessment	Vocational training on metal fabrication and assembly, construction, furniture making, tailoring, carpentry, electronics and electrical installations, hotel	Ethiopia	Observational	Mixed methods. Semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions	149 interviews, 46 focus group discussions (across much wider set of livelihoods interventions)	Purposive. Limited further information provided on sampling related to training intervention specifically.

		management, and food preparation (as well as literacy, numeracy, life skills)					
Davis (2019)	Academic (non peer reviewed)	6 month courses in bricklaying, carpentry, tailoring, plumbing, welding.	Malawi	Observational	Interviews.	9 refugees (representing 38% of the cohort), 2 staff)	Purposive sample.
Easton-Calabria (2016)	Commissioned study/report	Various NGO-run livelihoods trainings including Arts & Crafts, Baking, Business, Carpentry, Catering, Cobbling, Computer Skills, Hairdressing, Beauty, Fashion, Mushroom Growing	Uganda	Observational	Mixed methods. Semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation	119 refugees, 12 staff from 8 organisations	Snowball sampling
Feinstein International Center (2021)	Commissioned study/report	Hairdressing, electronics, welding, driving, appliance repair, tailoring and Arabic classes run by Caritas International	Egypt	Observational	Tracer study. Interviews with former programme participants.	22 refugees	Willingness to participate
Ferguson et al (2022)	Commissioned study/report	Full-time 2-8 week skills courses in sectors where there is market demand and refugees can legally work	Jordan, Lebanon	Quasi-experimental	Regression analysis on input and outcome variables.	472 participants from host community, 377 refugees (at endline)	Prospective learners on oversubscribed courses are assigned to treatment or control group. Probability weights are applied to control for non-random assignment.
Frankenberger (2018)	Evaluation	Small business skills, hairdressing, sewing,	Ghana	Observational	Mixed methods.	63 key informants,	Purposive. Limited further information provided. Not

		welding, construction, driving, languages			Focus group discussions, interviews with participants, staff and stakeholders, review of programme documents and data.	127 participants (across interviews and focus groups)	generalisable to refugee population.
Husseini & Ferrero-Turrion (2017)	Commissioned study/report	Vocational training and employment support provided by UNRWA's Amman Naour and Wadi Sir community colleges. Includes paramedical professions, business management, hair and beauty, building, mechanics and electrics	Jordan	Descriptive	Case study drawing on programme data and interviews with stakeholders.	Outcomes data covers 1294 participants. 12 trainees are interviewed.	Not specified. Selection of trainees for interviews is random.
ILO (2022)	Evaluation	1 year accelerated skills training programme (theoretical and practical courses plus paid internships) for refugee and Lebanese youth	Lebanon	Observational.	Tracer study (phone survey, supplemented with interviews)	500 participants	Representative of cohort (gender, nationality, and implementing partner)

Jabbar & Zaza (2016)	Academic (peer reviewed)	Tailoring, hairdressing, English, French, Drawing, Craft Making	Jordan	Observational	Mixed methods. Survey, interviews	26 participants	Purposive. The entire sample is drawn from women still working at the training institution, raising questions about the wider generalisability.
Kherfi et al (2018)	Evaluation	Courses taught at UNRWA Siblin Vocational Training School	Lebanon	Observational	Focus Group Discussions	87 participants	Stratified by gender and educational attainment. Randomised invitations sent until quota filled. Not representative of users.
Ravesloot (2018)	Evaluation	Skill and vocational training, job placement / matching, and support for self-employment. Skills training includes crafts, manufacturing, business training, mobile phone repair	India	Observational	Mixed methods. Focus group discussions, interviews with participants, staff and stakeholders, review of programme documents	28 key informants, 148 participants (across interviews and focus groups)	Purposive. Limited further information provided. Not generalisable to refugee population.

					ments and data.		
Shibli & Kouzi (2023)	Academic (peer reviewed)	Digital Skills Training programme	Lebanon	Descriptive	Survey	Unclear	Unclear
Smith et al (2022)	Evaluation	4-day construction course, designed to fill the main knowledge gaps identified in the cohort, supplemented by mentoring, workplace coaching visits, assessment, certification and work permit support	Jordan	Observational	Tracer study (interviews and survey)	352 participants	Random.
Thorne (2021)	Academic (peer reviewed)	9-month dairy production training course (plus money management, social media use, and self- care)	Jordan	Observational	Semi- structured interviews	11 participants (44% of cohort), of which 4 are refugees. 4 staff.	Willingness to participate

Appendix 3: Quality assessment of included studies

A light touch quality assessment of the studies included in the review was undertaken looking at the following process-oriented dimensions of quality.

1. Sampling: Was an appropriate approach taken to selecting the sample for the study? Is the sample representative?

Relatively few of the included studies (3/17) adopt a sampling approach that is representative of either training participants or the population. A wide range of sampling approaches were taken within the studies included in the review, including snowball, random, purposive, convenience, and representative sampling. Sample sizes for the study varied from 11 to 2560. This reflects the wide range of methodological approaches taken, with smaller numbers of participants required for in-depth qualitative studies of participant experiences, and larger samples required for studies undertaking quantitative analysis of outcomes). In Jabbar & Zaza (2016) the entire sample is drawn from women still working at the training institution, which raises questions about the wider generalisability of its findings, which are generally more positive than the other literature. Whilst drawing the sample from a more representative group would undoubtedly be more logistically difficult it would allow us to have more confidence in the studies' findings. In 4 of the studies, the information available on sampling is itself limited, which makes it more difficult to assess the reliability and representativeness of study results.

To improve the quality of the evidence in this area, future studies should (i) be clear about the approach to sampling taken, and (ii) be more intentional about the sampling approach taken, including using representative sampling techniques wherever this is feasible.

2. Transparency: Does the study provide clear information on how the study has been conducted?

11 out of 17 studies were found to have provided clear, transparent information on how the study was conducted. In the remaining 6 studies, there are limitations in the reporting of the analysis undertaken. Several evaluations included in this review (for example Frankenberger (2019) and Hussein & Ferrero-Turrión (2017)) cite internal monitoring data provided by implementers, but provide limited information on what the monitoring data actually shows. Without further detail on this data, it is difficult to assess its quality and judge what weight it is to be given.

To improve the quality of the evidence in this area, future studies should provide a clear overview of the content of any data sources being used as a basis for evaluation judgements.

3. Reliability: Does the study discuss the reliability of the evidence it has generated? Are the limitations of the work identified and discussed?

7 out of 17 studies discuss the reliability of the evidence they have generated, and the limitations the studies may have. The remaining 10 studies do not. A number of questions on the reliability of data are raised in the synthesised studies themselves. Baskati & Charles (2022) highlight definitional challenges on the measurement of employment outcomes, noting that the TVET providers interviewed during their study have different success measures for employment, with some counting

acquisition of a job as a successful measure of employment, and others using a more challenging sustained employment measure (staying in the job for a certain number of months). Two studies qualify their results by raising the possibility that positive results achieved by TVET interventions may be understated. Based on insights from Key Informant Interviews, Frankenberger (2018) notes that there may be incentives for refugees to “understate positive outcomes derived from current livelihood activities because they assume they need to appear vulnerable in order to resettle”. Shibli and Kouzi (2022) note that fear of enforcement action by labour inspectors may reduce the proportion of refugees reporting that they had found employment.