



Challenges and Lessons from Technical and Vocational Training in the Horn of Africa

Digital Development Dialogue
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Although the lack of local economic opportunities can be one of the main motives behind irregular migration, it is not clear whether investment in active labor market programs can deter migration. In this dialogue, **Nathalie Vernhes**, the Trust Fund manager at the Emergency Trust Fund (EUTF) for Africa, **Markus Frölich**, professor at the University of Mannheim and director as well as founder of the Center for Evaluation and Development (C4ED), and **Thomas Eekhout**, Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist at C4ED, discuss the results of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs implemented by the EUTF in Africa. The dialogue was moderated by **Viviana Urueña**, Team Lead and Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist at C4ED.

In the first presentation, **Nathalie Vernhes explained the work of the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa** by focusing on its strategic objective which aims to address the root causes of irregular migration and displacement in the continent. Implemented in twenty-six countries, the fund focuses on generating economic and employment opportunities, strengthening community resilience, improving migration management, preventing conflict, and reducing forced displacement. To achieve the first, they fund TVET in the region, with programs adapted to each market and population's profile.

In partnership with the EUTF, the C4ED conducted an impact evaluation of these TVET programs, analyzing their effects on employment and income generation, as well as on irregular migration and displacement. **Thomas Eekhout presented the process and the results found by the evaluations conducted so far.** The evaluation shows positive overall effects on employment, with the generation of decent employment opportunities coming mainly from the development of income-generating activities. Therefore, especially when considering the most vulnerable populations, Eekhout highlights the importance that they receive additional support to overcome financial and social barriers to reach decent working conditions. When considering migration, Eekhout reported that no direct causal effects from the implementation of TVET programs were found, showing that the promotion of decent employment is probably not the most cost-effective approach.

In the third presentation, **Markus Frölich provided a summary of the recent literature on active labor market programs**, showing how this literature dialogues with the EUTF experience and what are the potential avenues for future development interventions and research. Focusing on TVET programs, he pointed out that the similarity, synchronized timing, and hidden costs of participation, are seen as challenges for successfully addressing their potential. Frölich highlighted that despite the modest positive results found, TVET programs cannot be taken as a panacea for unemployment. As long as these programs do not change the general economic conditions of a region, they cannot be taken as a solution for increasing employment. Rather, as a way of promoting the inclusion of marginalized individuals into the labor force.

During the Q&A, one of the participants asked the speakers about the functionality of the educational programs for different contexts. The speakers agreed that, in many occasions, there is a mismatch between what people expect to be trained and what they are actually trained. This poses a challenge on the attendance of the programs and also indicates that there is potential room for improvement in their content and design. When questioned if programs mixing training in life and technical skills have better results than solely technical ones, the speakers said that it is very hard to disentangle where the effects come from. At last, considering the effectiveness of other programs, such as wage subsidies, the speakers agreed that a combination of labor programs might be beneficial for improving their intended results.

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