

A few words to our readers

Dear Readers,

I am very pleased that you are interested in this report on the crosscutting evaluation of vocational training projects in West Africa. Perhaps you yourself work in the area of vocational training or support partner organisations that are active in this field? We would like the findings of this study to be of practical value to as many people as possible.

In addition to 60 to 70 evaluations every year, which are carried out within the framework and within the responsibility of the supported projects, our organisation regularly commissions crosscutting evaluations that provide information on the effects of our funding activities in a special field. The aim of these studies is also to gain information about one support area that can be applied to other regional and social contexts. Where this is not possible, the kind of questions and the approaches taken to answer them can have the effect of inspiring change or action elsewhere.

Allow me to illustrate this with two examples. The study indicated that counselling was a very important instrument for the success of vocational training projects. As much as good training, young people require counselling in choosing their profession, training in applying for jobs and assistance in looking for work placements. Of equal importance on a social level are the life skills that have to be trained before and after beginning professional life. Here, particular attention must be given to the specific situation experienced by young women, who have more difficulty gaining a foothold in professional life than their male counterparts.

Furthermore, the study indicates that, when all advantages and disadvantages of the various approaches to vocational training are weighed up, a combination of “hands-on” lessons at a vocational training centre and an on-the-job apprenticeship in the real world appears to be a very promising model, although its ultimate success does depend on many contextual factors.

By publishing this report in English, our organisation would like to instigate a discussion among partners and players who consider vocational training for young people their mission. In particular, I would like to thank the partner organisations in West Africa who were involved in the study. Their cooperation and will to full transparency made this publication possible.