



# QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK, VOLUME 1

Overview

## NOTE ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document is part of a set of training resources for the Quality Assessment Framework, or QAF, designed by RTI International. The QAF forms, rubric, processes, and other tools are intended to help technical and vocational education and training centers worldwide to assess their own strengths and weaknesses, the demands of the workplace in their context, national or subnational education policies, and the corresponding services they should offer to students and prospective employers.

The framework's premise is that, in order to meet current and future workforce needs, promote sustainable program quality, and ensure longstanding impact for individual students and the larger economy,

- Training centers must provide a comprehensive set of services;
- Governments must adopt a comprehensive set of quality standards that apply universally to all programs;
- Industry partners must have confidence that training programs are aligned with labor market demands; and
- International aid organizations will benefit from working from a similar set of criteria.

The training resources in this set are:

1. **Overview** – Summarizes the critical need globally for better educational opportunities that lead directly to youth employment in particular, and sets the stage for the QAF
2. **Framework** – Elaborates upon the rationale for the QAF, and describes its components
3. **Trainer's manual** – Serves as a guide for master trainers and facilitators responsible for training others in how to roll out the use of the QAF across networks of technical training centers
4. **Appendices** – Consist of reproducible handouts, forms, and other resources to accompany the trainer's manual
5. **PowerPoint slide deck** – Contains slides to accompany the trainer's manual

This package of training materials is available for free download from RTI International's education resources website, <https://shared.rti.org>.

### About the Authors

*Roman Stearns was the primary author of the QAF approach, working collaboratively with coauthor and project director Dr. Peter Joyce. Dr. Joyce served as the Director of RTI's Global Center for Youth Employment, and is a recognized expert on the challenges associated with the evolving global labor market. Mr. Stearns, contracted by RTI as a consultant for this work, has extensive experience in transforming education to more holistically and equitably prepare youth for future success.*

**RTI point of contact:** Sarah Mattingly, [smattingly@rti.org](mailto:smattingly@rti.org)



© 2019 RTI International.

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/). Unless otherwise credited, photographs and icons used in the Quality Assurance Framework documents are licensed specifically to RTI through Getty Images and may not be copied or repurposed for other materials.

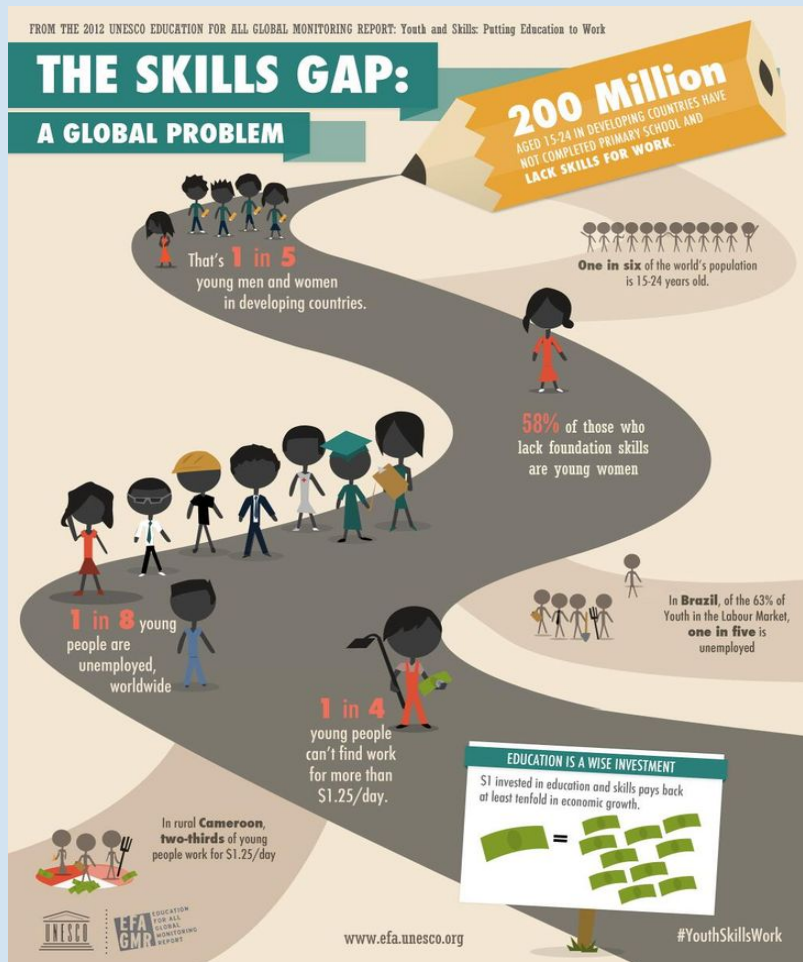
## OVERVIEW

This overview summarizes the critical need globally for better educational opportunities that lead directly to youth employment. It sets the stage for the sustainable Quality Assessment Framework, or QAF, that RTI has developed to help technical training centers improve their offerings and better serve both youth and industry.

*The RTI QAF system was designed to serve many different international contexts; as of early 2019, it had been piloted in Kenya and Indonesia.*

## Global Youth Employment – A Call for High-Quality Technical and Vocational Training

**Exhibit 1. UNESCO diagram of the “skills gap”**



Source: UNESCO, <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/skills-gap-global-problem>

To become or remain economically vibrant, countries must have a consistent influx of youth who possess the skills required to thrive in the labor market. Yet data from many developing countries are disturbingly clear: Far too many

youths do not have the foundational and occupational skills that local employers demand in a 21st-century workplace.

The existence of this so-called “skills gap” (see **Exhibit 1** on previous page) is challenging many long-held beliefs about what, how, and when skills should be taught. Education and training institutions that have been stalwarts for decades are being turned upside down and inside out in a search for their shortcomings or potential. One such institution is technical and vocational education and training centers.

### A Challenge for the Future: Why High-Quality Technical Training Is Essential to Meet Economic Goals



*Youth learning about vehicle repair in a class at the technical training center BLK Kabupaten Semarang (Semarang district), Indonesia. (Photo: USAID Ready-to-Work Accelerator Program)*

Technical and vocational training centers train youth in various skills, promising to lead to improved livelihoods and employment. Many countries, motivated first by the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals and then by the Sustainable Development Goals, have increased access to schooling through universal primary education and also have improved the quality of higher education systems. In the process, however, conversations about reforming technical, vocational, and occupationally directed education and training often have been crowded out—despite the growing prominence of “knowledge economies.”

The result is that the quality of too many training centers is unacceptable. Typical challenges include inadequate facilities, outdated equipment, ill-prepared instructors, curriculum not aligned with industry standards, and limited support from government or private sector partners.

In the end, even if poor and vulnerable youth are able to access training opportunities at these training centers, they may graduate with questionable

qualifications that still limit their employment options. In some cases, their learning deficits even before they enter training centers may be as fundamental as basic reading and mathematics:

### **UNESCO statement on the link between technical training and reading and math proficiencies**

New data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) show that 617 million children and adolescents worldwide are not achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics. This signals “a learning crisis” according to the UIS, which could threaten progress towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda.

The data breakdown shows more than 387 million children of primary school age (56%) and 230 million adolescents of lower secondary school age (61%), will not achieve minimum proficiency levels in reading and maths.

Sub-Saharan Africa has the single largest number: 202 million children and adolescents who are not learning these fundamental subjects. Across the region, nearly nine out of ten children between the ages of about 6 and 14 will not meet minimum proficiency levels in reading and math. Central and Southern Asia has the second highest rate, with 81%, or 241 million, not learning.

### **Most kids not learning are in school**

Most surprising – and alarming – is that two-thirds of the kids who are not learning are in school. Of the 387 million primary age children unable to read proficiently, 262 million are in a classroom. There are also about 137 million adolescents of lower secondary age who are in classrooms, but unable to meet minimum proficiency levels in reading.

The data suggests the new numbers are rooted in three common problems. First, lack of access, with children who are out of school having little or no chance to reach a minimum level of proficiency. Second, a failure to retain every child in school and keep them on track, and third, the issue of the quality of education being delivered in the classroom.

### **A wake-up call**

“The figures are staggering both in terms of the waste of human potential and for the prospects of achieving sustainable development,” says Silvia Montoya Director of UIS, “yet many of these children are not hidden or isolated from their governments and communities – they are sitting in classrooms with their own aspirations and potential. We can reach these kids, but not by simply hoping that they stay in school and grasp the basics. These new data are a wake-up call for far greater investment in the quality of education.”

The global goals for education are clear: Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) signals a commitment from governments to ensure an “inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all.” The new data are the very first to be gathered on progress towards SDG target 4.1, which requires primary and secondary education that lead to “relevant and effective learning outcomes.”

Source: UNESCO. (2017). *617 million children and adolescents not getting the minimum in reading and math*. Summary of UNESCO Institute for Statistics Fact Sheet No. 46, *More Than One-Half of Children and Adolescents Are Not Learning Worldwide*. Santiago, Chile: UNESCO. [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/617\\_million\\_children\\_and\\_adolescents\\_not\\_getting\\_the\\_minimum](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/617_million_children_and_adolescents_not_getting_the_minimum)

Most governments have established standards for accrediting training centers, but they typically focus on limited dimensions (e.g., technical curriculum and standards, or operations—finance, teacher certification, record-keeping). Few, if any, address a comprehensive set of quality criteria that have been validated by employers. Thus, increasingly, there is need for an international, universal standard to which training centers should aspire and to which governments should hold them accountable.

To have a significant impact on youth employment in an era of rapid technological change and globalization, training institutions must undergo a major transformation. They must be able to

- keep up to date with **labor market analyses and skills forecasts** to ensure that their services are forward-looking and pertinent;
- form **closer links with the private sector** and other key partners to access support for their programs and improve the relevance of their offerings;
- extend their coverage to a **wider pool of beneficiaries**, particularly rural youth and young women, who tend to be more affected by unemployment; and
- expand their programs to **incorporate elements known to increase the employability of youth**.

Technical and vocational education and training is not a panacea that can remedy a country's poor economic and human development performance, particularly in a context where countries already have the fiscal resources to respond to their many competing development needs. In fact, the opposite is true: Mainstreaming technical and vocational education and training requires not only extensive state resources to “rebrand” this type of training, but also appropriate education and training facilities that emphasize practical applications and extensive curriculum reforms. It also necessitates a different kind of state capacity: The ability to facilitate and foster new partnerships between industry and public training institutions—or at least, to create the policy incentives for such relationships to emerge.

Without state intervention, young people's transition into the formal world of work will remain a challenge whose resolution depends on chance rather than a concerted effort and design on the part of multiple social actors.

The post-2015 Education for All agenda is encouraging the expansion and diversification of education systems, with a sharper focus on post-basic and tertiary education positioning, lifelong learning, and—most importantly—skills for work and life.

See: UNESCO & UNICEF. (2013). Making education a priority in the post-2015 development agenda. Report of the Global Thematic Consultation on Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Paris and New York: UNESCO and UNICEF.  
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000223024>



*In many countries, the garment industry is an important source of employment for young people with up-to-date training and soft skills. (Photo: USAID Ready-to-Work Accelerator Program)*

Adopting this lens when we talk about technical and vocational education and training enables us to see the classroom and the workplace not as a single continuum, but as a cyclical approach to learning. Once we understand the cycle, it invariably beckons us to enter into a conversation about how the world of work can transform into a learning and training space.

Making a case for training is ultimately about setting a challenge not just for educational reform, but also for experimentation and innovation. It is also an invitation to enter into multi-actor alliances, spanning the public, private, and nongovernmental sectors, **with the intent to improve livelihoods and outcomes for citizens, especially youth.**

No other intervention would do more to alter the largely negative perceptions that youth and the public generally hold of technical and vocational education and training than more opportunities to secure employment or to pursue viable entrepreneurial activity.