



# 2

## Work-based learning

2.1	Description of key approaches	28
2.2	Narrative and lessons learned	32
2.3	Sustainability	34
2.4	Integration with other areas of work	35
2.5	Challenges	36
	Key takeaways	37

Work-based learning (WBL) can act as a bridge between education and work by providing job-seekers with practical experience and guidance to enable them to obtain and keep jobs. Based on dynamic and changing labour-market needs, it is also a time- and resource-efficient means to provide workers with the skills and competencies they will need on the job. These include technical skills but also “soft” skills, such as teamwork, communication and time management. In contexts of forced displacement, WBL can help refugees and displaced people gain a foothold in the local labour market, by building their competencies as well as professional networks, which expand in line with work placements.

Work-based learning refers to all forms of learning that take place in a real work environment. It can combine theoretical, classroom-based training with a period of practical application on the job. There are different types of WBL, ranging from informal or non-formal on-the-job learning to those operating as a part of technical vocational education and training (TVET) qualifications. Apprenticeships are one type of WBL, where the learner (the apprentice) acquires the skills for a trade or craft, working side by side with and learning from an experienced craftsperson. The ILO Quality Apprenticeship Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208) defines an apprenticeship as “a form of education and training that is governed by an apprenticeship agreement to acquire competencies to work in an occupation”.<sup>19</sup> It includes clearly defined learning outcomes that lead to a recognized qualification. Informal apprenticeships are also important training systems in informal economies.<sup>20</sup> In such schemes, the apprentice and a master craftsperson enter into a training agreement but do not follow a curriculum, nor does the apprenticeship result in a formal qualification. Other types of work-based learning include internships,<sup>21</sup> traineeships and structured on-the-job training.

In PROSPECTS countries, different forms of work-based learning were introduced in the industries in which forcibly displaced people and members of the host community were working. For example, in Uganda, craftspeople had taken on apprentices informally to introduce them to their chosen trade and refine techniques. PROSPECTS teams supported work to formalize such WBL and align opportunities with industry needs – and, in some cases, resulting in national certification. Work took place to modernize more demand-driven WBL policies and processes, alongside capacity-building for government counterparts, training providers, private sector employers and curriculum developers. Downstream, programme teams piloted WBL as a mechanism to enhance the employability of forcibly displaced people and members of the host community.

## ► 2.1 Description of key approaches

Based on analysis of WBL interventions in PROSPECTS countries, programmes supported wider strengthening of TVET systems that were linked to the development and delivery of WBL. This systems-strengthening included providing technical guidance and support for national qualification frameworks and standards, which enabled the development and delivery of WBL programmes. This was seen in Iraq and Uganda, as described in further detail in this chapter. Where national frameworks did not exist, pilot WBL programmes were introduced with the engagement of relevant line ministries, employer representatives and training institutions, as seen in Kenya, Iraq and Lebanon. In these cases, innovative approaches were taken to incorporate on-the-job training and work placements, alongside theoretical classroom training. In Uganda, the National Apprenticeship Framework was piloted in the hospitality sector, as outlined in the case study on page 31.

19 ILO, Recommendation concerning quality apprenticeships, International Labour Conference, 111th Session, 2023.

20 ILO, *Skills for Employment Policy Brief. Upgrading Informal Apprenticeship Systems*, 2011.

21 Internships involve temporary work placements for young people to apply learning and skills obtained as a result of formal institutional training in the workplace. Internships last up to one year, and the intern is assigned a specific job in the company to apply their skills and learn new ones. Like informal apprenticeships, internships do not follow any curriculum or result in any qualifications but are assumed to make interns more employable, since they can cite their internship experience in future job applications.

## 1. Strengthening and operationalizing national work-based learning

At the national level, PROSPECTS teams supported system-strengthening and capacity-building to operationalize WBL frameworks and programmes. WBL pilots were launched in sectors and geographical areas where there were displaced populations, where they addressed and were adapted to the practical barriers that impede the full participation of these populations.<sup>22</sup> Communication and outreach efforts engaged refugee youth-led organizations (RYLOs), local chapters of INGOs and UNHCR to ensure refugees had access to information about WBL opportunities and understood its objectives. These efforts supported the development of inclusive and accessible WBL programmes.

In Uganda, apprenticeships had long served as a practical way to introduce young people to trades. PROSPECTS partnered with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) to help develop and implement a National Apprenticeship Framework, which was piloted in the hospitality sector. A National Apprenticeship Steering Committee and a Sectoral Apprenticeship Committee were set up to form a governance structure. The Committees provided oversight and guidance in the pilot processes, with a view to learning from practical experience in implementing an apprenticeship programme at scale and refining the national model.

The hotel sector was identified jointly by the ILO and the MGLSD as a pilot sector, as it aligned with Uganda's growing tourism industry, was a main employer of young people, including refugees, and was an active sector in the refugee-hosting areas in which PROSPECTS worked. The programme partnered with the Uganda Hotel Owners' Association (UHOA) and the Ugandan Hotel and Tourism Training Institute (UHTTI)<sup>23</sup> to develop a curriculum, identify hotels where apprentices could be placed and monitor their progress. Forty workplace supervisors were identified with UHOA and UHTTI and trained by the ILO. Each was assigned to a participating hotel. Collaboration with the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT) helped align the processes with the government-administered trade tests and certificates, which, in turn, helped streamline the pilot within national processes. (For more details, see the case study on page 31.)

In Iraq, the programme worked with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) and the Nineveh Chamber of Industry to introduce a competency-based<sup>24</sup> model in MOLSA TVET centres. Training with MOSLA instructors from TVET centres in Federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq helped build capacities to design and deliver training that addressed the competencies demanded in the local labour markets. This training focused on occupational analysis and the development of training programme profiles, learning guides and assessments. Building on this, PROSPECTS introduced a practical component to training delivered via MOLSA TVET centres. WBL technical working groups were formed to support each WBL pilot programme that was introduced into the MOLSA TVET centres and comprised a vocational instructor, mentors from the Ministry of Youth and Sport and in-company trainers. This enabled a participatory approach to the design of the training programmes, work plans and evaluation tools. Pilot programmes allowed the working group and trained instructors to apply WBL on a small scale and learn by doing, before streamlining it across MOLSA TVET centres.

In Kenya, based on an existing partnership between PROSPECTS and the National Industrial Training Authority (NITA), which focused on implementing the National Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Framework, the programme reviewed and updated an in-company and master craftsperson trainers' guide that standardized the WBL approach. The guide was to train in-company mentors, trainers and supervisors nationwide, which enabled them to use WBL as a training approach. In Garissa and Turkana counties, the programme piloted a dual-learning apprenticeship approach with the NITA, employer associations/SMEs and the county governments. This focused on industrial welding for refugees and host community members. Alignment with the NITA meant the training resulted in a nationally certified qualification.

22 Barriers included geographical distance from training sites and legal restrictions on the sectors and occupations in which refugees and displaced people can be formally employed.

23 The UHTTI trains hotel workers and led on the curriculum development process, assessment and certification.

24 Competency-based training fosters the continuous involvement of employers and trades unions in the implementation of a training programme, including the testing and certification stages.

## 2. Introducing and piloting WBL approaches

In other contexts, the PROSPECTS teams used different mechanisms to introduce practical elements to more traditional classroom-based training. Pilots were conducted in sectors and for occupations in which refugees were employed. These included agriculture, construction, industrial sectors and crafts. The choice of partners also extended beyond national TVET providers and responsible line ministries to include local partners that could help develop and apply models that were fit for purpose and market-driven at the local level.

In Lebanon, the programme had already invested in building the capacities of Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) trainers using a competency-based training approach. The programme encouraged farmers and agricultural employers in refugee-hosting areas to support an additional seven-week, work-based learning component of a classroom training course delivered at an MOA technical school. The University of Balamand Veterinary Department took on a small cohort of the refugee and host community trainees to roll out mobile veterinary services for local farmers. A professor from the University supervised the trainees and provided guidance as they visited farms to administer vaccines and conduct artificial insemination for cattle. The University was accustomed to teaching and guiding students, and oversight from the professor helped ensure that the service delivery was still efficient, responsive to farmers' needs and safe for livestock.

In Egypt, the programme built on a partnership with a local business association, the Alexander Business Association (ABA), to pilot quality apprenticeships with Association members. This was done within ABA's own vocational training and employment centre, where capacities were developed to train, place and monitor apprentices. The apprenticeship programme responded to industry demand for standardized and market-driven apprenticeships and involved three months of on-the-job training in the operations of ABA members. The selection of occupations and design of the curriculum against required competencies were also stipulated by ABA members, enabling a more responsive model to the market in Alexandria. Professions included air-conditioning maintenance, carpentry, auto mechanics, plumbing, electrical installation and tailoring, all of which were accessible for refugees. The existing structure and staff of the ABA's vocational training and employment centre allowed the programme team to institutionalize WBL locally.

In Kenya, PROSPECTS piloted a WBL programme to respond to skills gaps identified in local vegetable and livestock value chains in Garissa County. This was embedded in a wider programme to enhance the production and efficiency of the two value chains. For the WBL component, consultative meetings were held with Farm Field Schools and local TVET institutions to develop a work-integrated learning approach that could be scaled up from county level to national level. To help roll out the approach, a guide for in-company trainers was reviewed and updated by PROSPECTS. This was ultimately used to build the capacities of 25 industrial training officers and further used by the NITA to train 400 additional in-company trainers and master crafts persons nationwide. The entire value-chain development programme was implemented under the Garissa County government, thus ensuring the pilot approach was modelled in a manner that could be adapted at the county level but learned from and replicated elsewhere in the country.

In Ethiopia, the Jigjiga Polytechnic College (JPTC) partnered with PROSPECTS to deliver classroom-based, technical training to refugees and host communities in Kebribeyah. Having identified capacity constraints of TVET instructors in the refugee-hosting area the partners developed and implemented work-based learning for them to help the instructors maintain up-to-date and relevant skills for the occupations they taught. The WBL included a practical work placement for TVET instructors. The ILO joined forces with the Confederation of the Ethiopian Employers' Association (CEEAA) and two of its members in the construction and aluminium manufacturing industries to host JPTC trainers. Under this programme, eight JPTC trainers had the opportunity to participate in work placements to gain relevant work experience, upgrade their practical skills and familiarize themselves with the latest industry technology and practices. This demonstrated the utility of having trainers regularly engage in their sector of expertise, so that they can respond to changes brought on by automation and technology, among other variables.

After helping the trainers update their skills through work placements, the programme introduced a practical skills training component for TVET students. This was delivered by the JPTC trainers who had participated in the work placements. The practical and theoretical training lasted for three months, followed by 45 days of work placements at enterprises in Jigjiga. The CEEAA facilitated the work-based learning by mobilizing its member enterprises in Jigjiga.



## ► Uganda case study

In Uganda, apprenticeships had been identified as a national tool to address skills deficiencies in the labour market. Consequently, in 2018, the Cabinet approved the Uganda National Apprenticeship Framework (UNAF) and directed the MGLSD to design and implement a National Apprenticeship Scheme. In doing so, national counterparts adopted a vision of WBL that offered hands-on skills development, engaged employers and tailored learning so that it aligned to industry needs. PROSPECTS partnered with the MGLSD to design and pilot apprenticeship schemes with the intention of modelling and replicating pilots on a national level under the UNAF. The MGLSD identified the hospitality sector for the pilot, based on Uganda's growing hospitality and tourism industry and the sector's status as one of the largest employers of young people. Hotels and the service sector were also inclusive of refugees, with several three- and four-star hotels located close to the main refugee-hosting areas.

The MGLSD helped convene key players in the hospitality sector, and coordinate and monitor compliance with UNAF guidelines, the labour law and related employment policies. Hotel owners were represented by the UHOA, whose role was to mobilize employers, recruit apprentices and coordinate workplace training. An important measure was to ensure that the UHTTI and hotels could offer accommodation to apprentices during their training and work placements, particularly refugees coming from the settlements. The UHTTI led on the development and delivery of the training curriculum, and on the assessment and certification of apprentices, in coordination with the Directorate of Industrial Training. DIT administered the government trade tests and issued trade certification. Workplace supervisors in each of the selected hotels were responsible for the apprentices and their learning outcomes. PROSPECTS developed a supervisors' manual and training to help supervisors take up the role.

For the curriculum, four trades were identified in the hotel sector: food production, food and beverages, housekeeping and front-office management. The overall curriculum development process was led by the UHTTI, but all other partners (UHOA, DIT, MGLSD) were involved in the design and approval processes. Key to the curriculum development process was input from the hotel owners, who provided practical insight based on their day-to-day operations and business needs.

Apprentices spent 25 per cent of their time on theoretical training and 75 per cent on on-the-job training. PROSPECTS guided the UHTTI on specific outreach and training approaches that were accessible to refugees, with an emphasis on promoting social cohesion and assessing learning outcomes. PROSPECTS also supported the development and production of teaching materials and aids for TVET instructors and facilitators. These included training for facilitators in the use of the ILO handbook, *Promoting Social Cohesion and Peaceful Coexistence in Fragile Contexts Through TVET*. Trained facilitators included refugees from RYLOs who were supporting the rollout of TVET in the Nakivale settlement.

The process of selecting apprentices was rigorous and time-consuming, but this was necessary to ensure employers and apprentices both experienced positive outcomes. Apprentices had to have a foundational skill set and motivation to pursue a career in the chosen profession. The application process involved several rounds of interviews, conducted by the UHTTI and UHOA, to assess foundational skills and work readiness. Although the young people targeted did not have to have previous work experience in hospitality, they did have to show enthusiasm for pursuing a career in the sector and the capacity to work independently. They were recruited from the Isingiro, Madi-Okolla and Terego districts, including from the two refugee settlements within them (Nakivale and Rhino). During the on-the-job training, apprentices first rotated among four trades to get a holistic appreciation of trades within the hotel industry, before choosing one of them to focus on for the remainder of their work placement. Throughout the course of the apprenticeship, apprentices maintained a logbook of learning, which was checked on a weekly basis by a workplace supervisor. These checks were used to monitor learning and ensure that the hotel was providing sufficient opportunity for the apprentices to work towards their predetermined learning outcomes. At the conclusion of the 12-month programme, the apprentices underwent theoretical and practical examinations administered by the UHTTI and hotel staff.

Of the first cohort of 100 refugee and host community trainees, 94 completed the training and graduated. The pilot helped raise the awareness of employers in the hotel sector of the availability of committed and skilled refugee workers at district level. Previously, many hesitated to employ refugees, believing that their temporary status and the fact that they lived in remote areas made them less reliable as employees. Having onsite housing for participants helped by giving young refugees the opportunity to

prove themselves as committed and reliable trainees. One hotel reported that a refugee apprentice from a Francophone country had helped forge business with French clients and improve customer relations and ratings. This was only one anecdote but it does illustrate the value of having a diverse workforce and the skill sets refugees can bring to local businesses.

For the apprentices themselves, the programme opened doors to those who faced barriers in translating classroom-based training into a workplace environment. The training administered by the UHTTI had cost and other logistical barriers which otherwise put the training beyond the means of the target group (refugee and host community young people not in employment, education or training). The programme covered enrolment fees at the UHTTI and provided living stipends for the duration of the pilot. These costs could be shared or covered by government bodies and employers in the longer term. The training was found to be highly practical and the nationally certified programme helped apprentices build experience and transferable credentials. The UHTTI found the training model practical and subsequently designed similar courses for the industry. In addition, it initiated work independently to collaborate with more industries on WBL, marking a notable shift away from the more general courses it had provided in the past.

The pilot also attracted attention from other donors, including the World Bank and the European Union, which supported two additional apprenticeship programmes designed by the MGLSD. The UHTTI, through the Ministry of Tourism, also attracted funding from the Ugandan government to run apprenticeship courses based on the PROSPECTS model. The government confirmed a funding line in the national budget to cover the costs of apprenticeships in the hospitality sector in subsequent years. ■

## ► 2.2 Narrative and lessons learned

### Operational lessons learned

The lessons learned with regard to WBL related to different aspects and stemmed from either the support provided to national processes and frameworks, or the pilot programmes.

### Establishing links to national policies, priorities and development plans

The ILO's history of providing technical support and guidance to government counterparts and national institutions positioned PROSPECTS to be able to contribute to the advancement of WBL policies and frameworks that were inclusive of forcibly displaced people. This was backed by the ILO Quality Apprenticeship Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208), putting the organization in a strong position from both a technical and normative perspective. In Uganda, with the adoption of the National Apprenticeship Framework in 2018 and the subsequent government decision to make the MGLSD responsible for piloting a National Apprenticeship Scheme, the ILO was the first port of call. PROSPECTS had the resources to be able to respond to the request and do so in a manner that made apprenticeships accessible to refugees. This was because the programme was already operating in the main refugee-hosting areas and specifically focused on the inclusion of both host communities and refugees. In Kenya, the ILO had been active in providing support under a national RPL framework, driven by national ambitions to upskill the workforce to one that was competent and productive. The programme made the most of existing partnerships with the NITA, the Kenya National Qualifications Authority and the Technical Vocational Education and Training Authority to strengthen the application of work-based learning in the industrial sector. In Iraq, WBL was introduced in the context of a national effort to draft and implement a National Qualifications Framework. National actors, including the MOLSA, were already primed to modernize the TVET sector, and PROSPECTS helped introduce a WBL approach that would deliver market-relevant training in refugee- and IDP-hosting areas, with the participation of local employers.

Having PROSPECTS' work tied to national-level policies and processes helped governments translate ambitions set out in national plans and frameworks into practice. In Uganda, the National Apprenticeship Framework was implemented in practice in the hotel sector through pilots conducted under PROSPECTS. These served as a model for the country as a whole and their positive profile encouraged the mobilization of further resources (see case study on page 31). National stakeholders, such as MGLSD in Uganda and MOLSA in Iraq, were the ones driving requests for technical assistance and guidance, as they recognized the benefit of WBL to national development. On a smaller scale, the MOA in Lebanon saw a clear need for technical support and investment in its technical schools and saw competency-based training and WBL as mechanisms to achieve this. All pilots that were conducted under national frameworks and processes, and in partnership with national institutions, took place in main refugee-hosting areas, to the benefit of both communities. This is in line with PROSPECTS' approach to strengthen national systems as a whole and make them inclusive.

## Identifying demand-driven sectors and occupations for WBL

For WBL to support employment outcomes, the sectors and occupations selected must reflect local labour-market demand and opportunities that are accessible to forcibly displaced people, as well as members of the host community. At country level, consultations took place to identify in-demand occupations and the outcomes of these were triangulated with skills maps that helped identify occupations where WBL would be most relevant. Importantly, these processes drew on the insight and experience of employers and industry representatives. In Uganda, the hospitality sector was chosen with the MGLSD in light of the country's growing tourism industry and high level of youth employment. The UHOA and its members helped identify relevant professions and hotels where apprentices could be placed. In Iraq, PROSPECTS supported a needs analysis that identified 18 occupations; these were subsequently narrowed down in consultation with the MOLSA, Chamber of Industry and TVET providers. In Egypt, the programme focused on a geographical area, Alexandria, and worked through the ABA's 350 members to identify trades where apprentices were needed and businesses that could host apprentices.

## Communicating the objectives of and managing expectations around WBL

WBL in PROSPECTS largely targeted young people to develop their workplace skills. At the same time, it relied on networks of employers who invested their own time and resources in hosting trainees. Outreach and communication on both sides needed to highlight employment and productivity gains, while also addressing common misconceptions about the work readiness of refugees and the availability of employment opportunities for both communities.

In the geographical areas where piloting took place across PROSPECTS countries, the concept of WBL was, for the most part, new. Apprentice-like arrangements had been deployed on an ad hoc basis to introduce young people to trades, but they weren't standardized or based on learning outcomes. Introducing the idea of WBL and distinguishing it from a job, or more traditional forms of skills training, were important. For employers, communication had to highlight the learning component of work placements, setting these apart from employment.

Programme teams had to address common misperceptions through outreach efforts. For instance, a pilot in Egypt found that young people perceived apprenticeships as a failure to find employment. Sharing experiences and examples from other countries and regions helped legitimize the concept as a practical means to transition into employment. In Iraq, young people were not clear whether the programme was a job or training. Explaining the dual nature of the training, with both theoretical and practical applications, was important, as was explaining that there was no job guarantee at the end of the training. This also had to be explained to partners who supported outreach to young people, including UNHCR and UNICEF.

On the employer side, programme teams had to manage expectations and build capacities to oversee WBL. Programme teams had to present the concept of WBL in a structured manner, so that employers could see a benefit from hosting WBL trainees, understand how WBL differed from regular employment and appreciate the need to establish learning objectives for apprentices. In Iraq, informal apprenticeships

and internships had tended to use apprentices as additional, unpaid staff, without providing clear learning outcomes. The programme team invested in building the capacities of company supervisors to be able to accompany trainees during their work placements. In Uganda, company supervisors underwent training, whereas in Egypt, the programme used staff from the implementing INGO to serve as enterprise supervisors. In both cases, the supervisor role helped ensure apprentices gained practical skills and could engage in a learning process. In Iraq, a life coach was also introduced to help apprentices gain soft skills during work placements. For apprentices coming from other regions and countries, a life skills coach also helped explain workplace customs that might differ, such as working hours, socialization between colleagues and work attire.

## Establishing and strengthening a governance structure

To link the upstream (policy-level) and downstream work, programme teams used existing governance structures, or created new ones, to capture the feedback and guidance of industry experts, local employers and workers' representatives. At the national level in Uganda, PROSPECTS established a National Apprenticeship Steering Committee and Sector Steering Committee to oversee progress under the National Apprenticeship Framework and related pilot in the hotel sector. In Iraq, working groups were set up per occupation to oversee the implementation of competency-based training and work-based learning. In both instances, the structures helped the pilots align to broader national and sectoral objectives, while also featuring a feedback loop, so that training could be adjusted in response to subtle changes in the development and application of skills at sectoral level. Such changes included technological developments and shifts in production, among others factors that shape how skills are effectively taught and deployed.

While there is merit in having pilots serve as proof of concept, these need to be introduced and reviewed through a committee, or similar structures that involve government participation. There are risks in having pilots operate outside of such structures. Without a link to national stakeholders, frameworks and standards, lessons learned from the pilot can fail to inform system-strengthening.

## ► 2.3 Sustainability

---

Having WBL integrated in national-level processes is one measure of sustainability after PROSPECTS concludes. Government involvement and ownership was crucial to ensure that WBL is seen as a mechanism to address skills mismatches, productivity and the incorporation of young people, including refugees, into the labour market. It also helped ensure programmes were compliant with regulations and policies, such as those governing refugees' access to vocational training and employment. Where there were national qualifications standards in place for the chosen occupation(s), having representatives from certifying bodies in WBL programmes helped ensure the pilots were fully aligned with these. This ultimately facilitated national recognition and/or certification of the WBL opportunity, as seen in the work with the DIT in Kenya and the UHOA in Uganda. WBL should be designed in a manner that allows graduates to obtain some form of formal recognition upon its conclusion.

Capacity within TVET institutions and certifying bodies is also needed to support the long-term use of WBL as a skills development tool. The efforts programme teams invested in building the capacities of institutions paid off in instances where national counterparts were the ones driving requests for technical assistance and saw WBL as a means to achieve national priorities on upskilling. This was evident in Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Iraq.

As already mentioned, to convince job-seekers to participate in WBL, it was necessary to change their mindset towards embracing it as a mechanism to transition into employment. Pilots started to demonstrate the value of WBL and highlighted employment figures that indicated successful transitions into employment after WBL. For instance, among the first cohort of graduates from the pilot in Uganda's hotel sector, 70 per cent secured employment or went on to pursue entrepreneurship in the sector. Additional communication and outreach efforts were made, making the most of partnerships with trusted organizations and community leaders, including RYLOs, UNHCR and employer organizations.



Financing and the use of government resources are further components in sustaining WBL. In the pilots supported under PROSPECTS, the project funded subsidies and stipends for trainees and, in some instances, incentives for participating enterprises. Because forcibly displaced people seeking employment are unlikely to be able to cover the cost of training and will most likely require support to cover related costs, such as transport and equipment, the cost per trainee is high. While in Uganda, a budget line was reserved for future apprenticeship programmes under the Ministry of Tourism, such programmes are unlikely to be fully covered by government resources and would require a cost-sharing arrangement with private sector employers, particularly to cover items like daily stipends and living allowances. This is critical if opportunities are to be provided to financially disadvantaged groups. Embedding training in larger training institutions can also help provide scholarships and redistribute costs between other courses where students are able to pay their own way.

## ► 2.4 Integration with other areas of work

---

WBL naturally links to social dialogue processes. In developing a WBL programme, the selection of occupations, development of the curriculum and identification of workplaces to host trainees require insight and input from both employers and workers. In developing and applying a national framework and scheme, ILO Recommendation No. 208 provides an opportunity to bring tripartite constituents around the same table to discuss quality standards, rights of and protections for apprentices. In the case of PROSPECTS, one shortfall is the lack of refugee representatives in workers' and employers' organizations. In some instances, such as Uganda, RYLOs were included in piloting as training facilitators, providing a measure of representation.

The supply of WBL opportunities also depended on the health of local enterprises near refugee-hosting areas. The majority of businesses in these areas were micro and small, with many operating informally. By supporting productivity gains at the enterprise level, local businesses are better placed to offer WBL opportunities. Different enterprises may have specific business development needs to which PROSPECTS can respond. For instance, among the hotels that participated in the apprenticeship programme in Uganda, several needed equipment to support production processes that would host apprentices. Providing this was a small incentive that added value for both the hotel and the apprentices.

WBL is part of TVET, so its operations should align to national recognition and certification systems. WBL may be followed by RPL or skills recognition, as this makes job-seekers' existing knowledge and skills more visible to employers.<sup>25</sup> If people have skills profiles or certifications, it will also be easier to refer them into WBL and to screen candidates. In Uganda, a lack of candidates with nationally recognized certification and skills profiles necessitated several rounds of interviews in the apprentice selection process.

Since WBL, and in particular apprenticeships, attract young people who lack experience in work environments, country programmes found it useful to incorporate soft-skills training. Soft skills include communication, teamwork and time management, among others. For trainees from different regions and countries, there may also need to be awareness-raising on work customs. As mentioned, the WBL pilot in Iraq featured a dedicated life-skills coach. Soft-skills training is also a natural link to UNICEF programming, as seen in both Uganda and Iraq.

As noted in Chapter 1 on skills profiling, qualifications recognition and recognition of prior learning, there are also natural links between skills training and employment services. ILO Recommendation No. 208 stipulates that Members should provide "access to vocational guidance and career counselling, and other support services ... before, during and after the apprenticeship". Employment service providers can be an important contact point for WBL candidates. Not only can they help advertise and make referrals into WBL programmes, they can also conduct skills profiling that helps screen candidates. This includes public

---

<sup>25</sup> ILO, "Strengthening Apprenticeships for Transitions to Formality", ILO Policy Brief, February 2024.

employment services, as well as career guidance offices in schools, universities and vocational training centres. In Uganda, mobile employment services helped map and profile the skills of refugees and host community members living in rural areas, which facilitated their application for apprenticeships.

The practical application of skills can also be linked to employment-intensive investment programmes (EIIP). In Iraq, an EIIP that rehabilitated TVET and youth centres provided an opportunity for practical application of skills in solar-panel and air-conditioning installation and maintenance, painting and gardening. Even though using WBL trainees meant it took more time and cost more to complete the work than using EIIP workers from the general population, this approach provided the trainees with practical opportunities and work experience. Similarly, in Ethiopia, a two-month theoretical training course on cobblestone installation concluded with the students helping to install cobblestones in the pathways leading to a TVET satellite centre that the programme had installed with the JPTC.

The experience in Kenya also demonstrated how WBL served as a component in value-chain development. By enhancing the productivity of workers and promoting the uptake of technology and new production practices, WBL served as an efficient tool to help trainees transition to the opportunities that value-chain development would create, such as cobblestone production and maintenance.

Having different pathways for trainees to apply their skills can also be useful. For instance, in Uganda, a small number of apprentices chose to pursue their own businesses after completing their work placements. This was also true of a subset of apprentices in Egypt. The apprenticeship allowed them to gain sector-specific skills and exposure to the industry, but after the apprenticeship period, they felt that entrepreneurship better suited their interests and talents. Having links to business development services – whether through referral to the ILO's own programming or to that of PROSPECTS partners, INGOs or national institutions – can help individuals progress along career paths that align with their interests.

## ► 2.5 Challenges

---

A key challenge of WBL is its cost. Employers are typically expected to compensate the apprentices or provide stipends to interns and trainees, in accordance with ILO Recommendation No. 208. Formal apprenticeships remunerate or financially compensate apprentices, reflecting the skills acquired and the value added to the hosting business. Registration and related fees at training institutions where there is a practical component to the training also need to be covered. In Uganda, PROSPECTS paid the fees to the UHTTI, arranged transport for the trainees and provided them with stipends. The UHTTI, as a training institution, relies on the fees paid by students and while it is possible to take on some apprentices at a reduced fee, it is not possible to do so for all students. The budget line reserved under the Ministry of Tourism will partly help respond to these costs once PROSPECTS ends. The programme in Egypt and Iraq also covered training costs, where trainees did not pay a registration or course fee to the MOLSA or the ABA, respectively. The programme also supported costs related to transport and daily stipends. Supplementing these project funds with national resources is critical for long-term sustainability.

As already noted, the majority of businesses in PROSPECTS' target locations are micro, small and informal. While these businesses might not be able to host a formal apprenticeship programme, they can offer opportunities for work-based learning that align with quality apprenticeships.

An additional challenge linked to remuneration is avoiding the use of trainees to replace workers on less or no pay. Because trainees will generally be remunerated or receive a stipend at a rate that is less than the wage of a full-time worker, and because these costs are covered by PROSPECTS, there is a risk of firms using trainees as free labour. Identifying and screening enterprises is therefore a critical step, which can be facilitated through employer organizations. The practical component of WBL should have specific learning outcomes that align to the theoretical training received. These learning outcomes can be monitored carefully by such measures as having trainees maintain daily training logs, as was the practice in Uganda, or having routine company visits or in-company trainers.

- ▶ Tying PROSPECTS work on WBL to government policies and processes helped translate ambitions set out in national plans and frameworks into practice.
- ▶ WBL pilots took different forms, such as informal and formal apprenticeships and internships, and ranged in duration from ten weeks to one year, thus offering a flexible format for bridging education and employment.
- ▶ For WBL to support employment outcomes, the selection of sectors and occupations has to reflect local labour-market demand and opportunities that are accessible to forcibly displaced people, as well as members of the host community.
- ▶ Communication and outreach efforts need to engage refugee youth-led organizations, local chapters of INGOs, employer organizations and UNHCR, as a means to ensure refugees have access to information about WBL opportunities and understand their objectives.
- ▶ Sharing experiences and examples from other countries and regions can help legitimize the concept of WBL as a practical means to transition into employment. This is particularly relevant in contexts where WBL is new.
- ▶ The supply of WBL opportunities reflects the health of local enterprises. More productive enterprises operating at scale introduce greater opportunities.
- ▶ There is a risk that informal apprenticeships and internships may be used by firms to get additional, unpaid staff, without offering clear learning outcomes. At the same time, informality is a reality in PROSPECTS' target areas, with informal apprenticeships providing a learning opportunity that the programme can work with and thus align to ILO Recommendation No. 208.
- ▶ In outreach, explaining what constitutes a quality apprenticeship and clearly distinguishing it from a job, or more traditional forms of skills training, is key. Employers proved to be an ally in advocacy for quality apprenticeships.
- ▶ The rollout of WBL necessitates training of workplace supervisors and in-company trainers who can oversee day-to-day work, and ensure both refugee and host community trainees progress towards achieving learning objectives.
- ▶ The choice of partners to carry out WBL can extend beyond national TVET providers and responsible line ministries to include local partners that help develop and apply models in a manner that is fit for purpose at the local level.
- ▶ The costs of WBL may hinder the sustainable uptake of models by national providers. These include costs that projects absorb, like stipends and travel expenses, which might not be feasible for national providers to cover independently.
- ▶ Measuring and documenting the impacts of WBL on businesses, in terms of sales, hiring, or other efficiencies, can help develop a case for businesses to host trainees and apprentices.



