

Promoting women in a male dominated sector

Labour market challenges in Angola

Angola, with vast oil and mineral deposits, has one of the most vibrant economies in Africa. But it had also only just emerged, in 2002, from decades of shattering civil war. The need for educated professionals has burgeoned in engineering, finance, IT and management since then. Angola has experienced a period of impressive economic growth, developing rapidly into a middle-income country. Despite this, more than half of all Angolans still live below the poverty line, and the gap between rich and poor is widening. The Angolan Government attaches great importance to developing human resources. So, for example, in recent years an impressive amount has been invested in expanding vocational training opportunities - in particular in the physical infrastructure e.g. operating equipment, buildings etc. But there is a huge qualitative problem in education – including the vocational training system. Courses at this level are not closely linked to the needs of the economy and the civil war has compromised the quality of the training offered by today’s teachers and advisors.

Education is a major bottleneck to youth employment. While there are jobs, would-be employees often lack the requirements for the jobs. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) has the potential to provide young people with more applied skills and better chances in the labour market. Skills can be obtained either through structured and specialised institutions or through on-the-job practical experience, or both. Studies have also shown that returns to vocational training are highest in the informal sector, emphasising the importance of practical skills for this sector. To be successful TVET systems need a clear vision of the desired outcome and have to be focused on sectors with promising employment opportunities, and, in the case of Angola, one of these is construction. The National Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (INEFOP) is the institute that is in charge of initial and further vocational training and, hence, is the close cooperation partner on the Angolan side within FormPRO (Training for the labour market in Angola).

THE FORMPRO APPROACH

Coming into this economy, one would think that a programme such as FormPRO, working in the construction sector, a typically male domain, would have enough problems, without concerning itself with the ever present gender issue. The project, which was short-term - a bit more than two years of active implementation - had as its objective “The quality and relevance of training and advisory offerings in the construction industry have improved”. The programme was commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ) and the lead executing agency was the Ministry of Public Administration, Labour and Social Security (MAPESS – now MAPTSS). It is a bilateral Angolan-German project. It focuses on cooperation between players from the state and the private sector, such as the Ministry of Public Administration, Labour and Social Security with its National Institute for Employment and Vocational Training, and from chambers, associations and companies. The pathway is an integrated capacity development one which includes:

- Young people being trained and qualified for occupations that are in demand in the construction industry.
- Specialists and managers at selected vocational and occupational institutions receive advice on the management of technical and vocational education and training (TVET), in order to bring about continuous improvements in the quality of their services.
- Data on the labour market are collected and analysed jointly with relevant players. They examine definitions of occupational profiles and training programmes derived from them in detail. In addition, the data form a key prerequisite for continuous quality management of vocational training that is geared to employment.

Given the traditional constraints of the construction industry and that FormPRO did not include in its mandate any particular focus on women, gender outcomes would not seem to be a priority for this programme.

WHY WORRY ABOUT WOMEN?

Women suffered the direct effects of war in unique ways. A large number of women died as a result of combat operations, and many were raped by fighters on both sides. Men used their positions in the fighting forces to subjugate women, compromising any sense of trust. Women have also suffered the most from landmine accidents because it is they who gather food. Many lost sons and husbands during the war, increasing the number of female heads of households. Many had to migrate within Angola or to flee the country. Against this backdrop the war and its impact have increased women's workloads, as they have taken over responsibilities usually performed by men, including building and repairing houses. Although the HIV/AIDS rate is relatively low in Angola, its burden falls heavily on women - with women in the 15 to 24 age range about three times more likely to fall victim to the disease. There are many reasons for this, not least the limited use of condoms, the destroyed social networks and weak female autonomy.

In the early 2000s, average literacy rates among young women were 54-63% which was about 75% of the rates of men. Among the lowest socio-economic groups, only a minority of women is literate. It seems that only about half of all Angolan girls aged 6-11 go to primary school and the gap between boys and girls is even higher at secondary level. These figures are important for MDG3 "Promote gender equality and empower women." In the construction industry formal sector, 11% of the labour market share is female, one of the lowest participations rates.¹

A Family Code has been introduced and one of its provisions is the encouragement of a fair division of tasks and responsibilities within the family. But full gender equality or an understanding of how men and women can play a joint role in rebuilding the country remain a far way off. Women bear the brunt of rural work. At community level women's participation is minimal and culturally participation is in the home. About 29% of urban homes are headed by women and 33 % of rural homes, generally considered among the poorest in the country.

After the war, with the collapse of the formal economy, informal activities of women became a lifeline for many families leading to an upsurge in domestic violence as men saw their role as main breadwinner eroded. In households where men were absent, women took on new roles, developed new skills and assumed new status in the household. This had different long term consequences. While at the top levels women are beginning to make progress, particularly professional women, women at the lower ends of the economic scale struggle and programmes do not usually include them.

ENTER FORMPRO

FormPRO is a bilateral programme implemented on the German side by GIZ on behalf of the BMZ. The concern for gender issues is inherent to this type of programmes and underpins the implementation of programmes. Although FormPRO did not have a specific mandate to focus on women and gender issues, it would, however, have been almost impossible for the programme to ignore the pressing gender issues that presented themselves and which it was possible to integrate into the work it was doing already. This was particularly so because those involved already had experience elsewhere in introducing women to occupations previously regarded as being in the male sphere only. In addition to including articles on women and their contribution in its regular publication "Vamos Trabalhar!", FormPRO also produced additional publications and film clips that focused on the importance of women's contribution, potential and actual, to the recovering economy in the construction field.

There are considerable differences in women's and men's access to the opportunities to exert power over economic structures in their societies. In most parts of the world women are virtually absent from, or are poorly represented in, economic decision-making, including the formulation of financial, monetary, commercial and other economic policies as well as tax systems and rules governing pay. Closing the gender gaps here is seen by many as a core development objective in its own right. In addition it is good economics. Greater gender equality can enhance productivity, improve development outcomes for the next generation, and make institutions more representative. GIZ has never been afraid to start with the most basic unit of production, the household, to show how this can be achieved. In An-

gola, increasing women's voice and agency in the household and in society and limiting the reproduction of gender inequality across generations became a sub-goal of GIZ-FormPRO.

As the work of Paulo Freire fits well with the GIZ-FormPRO approach: it paid attention to Freire's dictum that "before learning anything, a person must first read his/her world" - by which he meant to evaluate the limits and the potentialities, the political and historical forces of our world, in order to take the necessary and possible next step. Start from where you are. Informal education is conversational rather than a curriculum. He insisted on situating educational activity in the lived experience of participants.

With these markers to guide them, at the most basic level, GIZ-FormPRO looked at the lived reality of the impoverished women they saw around them and began a series of activities that increased women's voice and agency in the household. Reduced to the simplest format, FormPRO goes for capacity development starting with TVET design and provision, including identifying demand, improving the relevance of TVET offers (in this case in the construction industry), and readiness for employment, formal and informal. Given the gender challenges in Angola, FormPRO, wisely stuck to a more rigorous and formalised approach for men in the lower levels of the construction industry while using more informal and target appropriate approaches to women. Using DACUM as a rough guide, FormPRO developed a programme that fitted well with informal training, too. In a number of cases a competency-based vocational programme was used. This meant competency-based, performance-based, individually paced to meet individual needs, immediate feedback was given, learning took place in the field (often, in this case, the household), there was assistance from a resource person or persons, specific objectives were set, the criteria for success were objective, and the ultimate goal was learner competence.

There were also elements of Paulo Freire's such as offering courses, consulting with groups, producing, editing and publishing works that refer to Freirian thought and promoting events.

FormPRO, while focusing on its main objective, and occupational profiles meant mainly for men, such as bricklayer and electrician, brought these strands of thinking together to produce a meaningful programme for women.

WOMEN IN THE FORMPRO PROGRAMME

The first main figure in FormPRO's female cast of models was Idalina, "a versatile woman". There is a collection of colourful animated comics, telling the story of a woman, named Idalina, who, together with her husband, learns to plaster a wall. This format of coloured pictures had also been used to train men but now Idalina's friendly face and her practical approach are there with her husband and children as they set about improving the home they live in. And, importantly, the comic pamphlets show them doing it together. Together, Idalina and her husband, Lino, measure out distances, do costing and buy what they need to plaster their house and together they do it. The messages here are self-confidence in one's own abilities, self-directed planning, the role of women and men in a family, the concrete results achieved. A church organisation volunteer also took up the story of Idalina and some women started to upgrade their housing situation. The volunteer now has the ground to set up a training centre for women. The women are involved in doing the physical planning which is done overall by a professional construction company. The women will contribute their labour and will work beside the professional construction workers so that they are learning by doing.

Idalina's story was incorporated in other teaching materials and the idea of this kind of teaching was taken up by companies and their in-company training provision: A very positive example is the story of Salome - a photo-story - that introduces a woman called Salome who starts participating, together with her colleagues in a literacy programme offered by her employer which now promotes the engagement of companies in the provision of literacy training of their personnel. FormPRO regards collaboration with the business community as a key success factor in its work with base level vocational training and is keen to co-operate. The input from the labour/company side is essential but requires support from those who understand innovative pedagogic skills.

The notion of photo-stories was already used by GIZ in Egypt and proved very effective with participants involved in taking pictures themselves. In Angola, the plan was to install the photographs in open spaces such as the courtyards of training centres and on slum squares. There people could easily see the work and start a discussion on the subjects addressed, and open up the discussion to new issues. For the future this could help to change stereo-

typical images of what men and women can do. This exhibition: “Constructors for the Future”, introduced people like Angelina, Sumal, Judit and Lesley to setting up their own self-made clothing shop after attending a course in cutting and sewing. Another young woman saw possibilities in the field of electricity etc.

During the implementation process it became clear: visual instruments are important to start discussions and reflections on perceptions. Therefore, FormPRO proceeded to experiment with different formats – e.g.:

- In a short video, a young woman, Celma, an electrician, shows a group of women of all ages how they can connect a light bulb – the magic of the moment is illustrated when they all cry out “Wow” together but the real magic is that they all realise that being an electrician is not something that only men can do.
- FormPRO has used the musical form Kuduro, producing a Kuduro song and video clip about bricklayers. Although only men were involved in the making, the impact of the clips was evaluated in a secondary school in Luanda with positive responses from both girls and boys. The message FormPRO seeks to send is that every human being, whether woman or man, has the same rights and opportunities in the economy and labour and underlines this by showing how men and women enjoy, together, exposure to these opportunities.

FormPRO understands that facilitation means ensuring that a group learning process involves everyone in participating and learning together. Therefore, FormPRO additionally has produced special facilitation handbooks to support the reflection of all visual tools.. It also understands that facilitation for a group of women may be different from that of a group of men and women. But the messages may be the same. So, for example, in the Idalina story, the emphasis is on both the man and the woman having equal rights in the family based on different industrial and economic and social roles. There is also a photo-story and a booklet on collaboration for men and the juxtaposition of the message helps to cross the gender barrier.

In general: the involvement of women and giving them credibility in a variety of fields from which they were previously excluded is done in a subtle but effective way. They are visible through photographs, the booklets and the articles in the newsletters. They articulate their dreams, their capacity and their opinions. The message is clear: a woman can be trained in any profession, even construction. It takes self-confidence and self-esteem and encouragement for a woman to think about training in a skill and/or profession. Even when the FormPRO programme is not focused on expanding gender possibilities in work, the underlying message is that, for a nation to prosper, the women of the nation must be incorporated into the labour economy and it takes very little to make them enthusiastic and competent participants.

1 An overview of Women's Work and Employment in Angola, July 2009, Netherlands