

# Skills and Vocational Training Centres in Bungoma East District

## Summary findings and advice on the way forward

### 1. Introduction.

Harambee Foundation Holland (HFH) is a small scale Dutch NGO. It aims at improving the level of education in the Kimilili area. After 8 years of supporting primary and secondary schools it was discovered that skills and vocational training centres are also in a very poor state. HFH and her partner IcfEM Mission have had several discussions about this type of education and how to improve.

For their orientation IcfEM Mission and HFH have visited most of the skills and vocational training centres (polytechnics) in the district. The aim of the visits was to get a good impression of every polytechnic on various topics. The following polytechnics were visited:

In 2008:	Chebukwabi	in 2009:	Sosio
	Kamasielo		Naitiri
	Matili		Sinoko

These findings give a general, overall image of the situation in the polytechnics we visited. If in any polytechnic the situation is very different from the others it is mentioned.

### 2. Summary findings

During the visits all kinds of aspects of the polytechnics were looked upon.

- **Instruction rooms**  
In general the number of instruction rooms is insufficient. They are in a bad condition, sometimes made of mud, sometimes made of brick. They are usually small, dark and with bad floors. There are no ceilings. There is neither electricity nor running water. The new CDF- rooms at Sinoko are a positive exception.
- **Tools, equipment and working materials**  
The availability is very low: usually only a few tools are present. They are very insufficient for teaching. There is lack of almost everything regarding equipment. Also working materials are hardly available. There are no cupboards or storage facilities. Teaching facilities are few; there are hardly any books. There is a timetable but the curriculum is not clear. Equipment and working materials are badly organised; they usually are a big mess.
- **Boarding facilities**  
There are very few boarding facilities and the quality is very poor. Electricity and running water are absent. The environment is depressive for the trainees to stay.
- **Expression of the infrastructure as a whole**  
The institutions express a very low level, they are not inviting, they are not well kept and looked after. There are hardly any flowers, plants or trees. On the whole they are very depressing.
- **Management**  
The managers seem weak and have hardly any idea of how to run the institution. There is no initiative, no energy, unclear motivation and a low self-esteem. Usually they wait for others to bring a positive change. Sosio seems to be an exception. Also Kamasielo is trying.
- **Organisation**  
The ability to organise the institution well seems low. There are no vision, mission and strategy and a development plan is absent. The payment of the instructors by the

government (a grant, but no salary) is often overdue and the amount is very insufficient to motivate the staff at all. The polytechnics do not co-operate. Their administration is very poor.

- **Trainers**  
There are not enough trainers and the quality is poor. They might be well skilled, but they have not learned to educate trainees; some of them are volunteers. Motivation is low; we often did not find them in class. Self-esteem is low. Only a few trainers at some polytechnics are better trained; they are an exception and very important for the institution.
- **Trainees/students**  
Trainees are sometimes form 4 leavers, sometimes standard 8 leavers, sometimes drop-outs.  
Sadly trainees have a very low self-esteem; they are shy and sometimes afraid of their trainer. They feel to be looked upon as “fools and failures” by everybody. This gives them no motivation at all, even though they try well despite the challenges they face; most of them want to learn. However they often stop their education at the polytechnic before the end because they think to know everything. The diploma is not valued and hence often not collected. In Sosio the students had formulated their vision for good education which was a positive exception.
- **BOG**  
A BOG is present but the quality of its members is questionable. Its role for the institution is not clear.
- **Parents**  
Unfortunately parents hardly see the importance of vocational training. They are often poor and unable to pay school fees. Also the discipline to pay fees is poor. They seem to have no interest in the polytechnic; they don't see the importance of exam and diploma. Parents hardly communicate with trainers and managers at school.
- **Community**  
The community has a low attitude towards the polytechnic; they have no idea of its importance. Initiative and help is not offered. Exceptions are Sosio and Kamasielo where the community has a much more positive attitude.

### **3. General impression**

In general vocational training is very much undervalued and neglected. Until now the authorities have not treated it well, although they started to value this type of education more. The communities have no idea how positive a polytechnic can be for their children: children need further education and for many of them skill and vocational training is much more appropriate than the academic secondary school. Without further education children stay idle; they don't know what to do and they may develop bad behaviour.

The infrastructure, tools and facilities are very insufficient. Management and administration are poor. Managers, trainers and trainees feel neglected. Vocational training seems to be for “fools and failures”.

However there are some positive exceptions.

Because all aspects of the vocational training institutions have to be improved, it is senseless to start a HFH-project to improve facilities, infrastructure or tools and expect that everything will change. Before anything new can be done basic conditions like good management and community input must be available. It is obvious and necessary that government input on this is urgently needed.

### **4. Advice on the way forward**

This important type of education needs everybody's concern and support in order to put it on track to develop. Because the needs are huge and the necessary changes are enormous

it is needed to combine all available “forces” together. It is strongly advised to form a task-force to lead the changes in the institutions consistently.

Ownership by the community is a must and a condition for any change to start. Both government and IcFEM Mission need to co-operate to make this turn around happen. Good management and BOG are needed before any improvement can be made. This is the next step the government has to look at. Also IcFEM Mission with the community transformation approach may have a very positive influence.

Together with the community (they need to fill in the needs) the new management and BOG have to make a development plan which will be the base for further improvement. Good planning is essential in order to move forward step by step. Not all necessary changes can be made at the same time, but every change should add into the right direction. By working so the institutions can be improved step by step.

It is possible to start at Sosio and Kamasielo since they seem to have sufficient conditions fulfilled. Well written project proposals and estimates are needed to move forward. These polytechnics may also act as role model training centre for the others in the way forward.

## 5. Programme and action plan

An important condition for the way forward of this type of education is the formation of a task-force. Members of the task-force are from the communities, IcFEM, DEO’s office, District Youth Officer, (HFH - if present in the area), etc. The task-force meets regularly. The task-force is responsible for the draft of the programme of improvement and its implementation. It has to make an action plan in order to manage the programme and its implementation well.

The aim of the programme is to promote vocational training as an important form of education beside primary and secondary education and to improve the quality of the vocational training centres so that they will be respected and well valued.

The action plan will imply the following:

- Discussions with each community about the importance of vocational training and the actions to be taken to improve this type of education;
- Appointment of a good manager at each school;
- Appointment of a good BOG at each school;
- Investigation of the needs in the communities;
- A development plan **per school**, approved by the community, manager, BOG, trainers, IcFEM, DEO’s office, consisting of:
  - i. A prioritized plan for the infrastructure, electricity and water;
  - ii. An education plan with curriculum and targets per subject, as well as necessary books, wall charts, tools, equipment and working materials; the curriculum will include both practical and some theoretical subjects;
  - iii. A training plan for manager, BOG and trainers;
  - iv. A financial plan about running the institution including maintenance;
  - v. A financial plan about investments.
- Proper payment of managers and trainers;
- Training and guidance of managers and BOG about how to run the institution;
- Training and guidance of trainers on teaching skills;
- Guiding and counselling of trainees on the importance of vocational training;
- Investigation of knowledge and assistance needed after the diploma in order to help the trainees to start their own business, including the organization of specific courses and assistance;
- Etc.