A. Sector Road Map

1. Sector Performance, Problems, and Opportunities

1. **Demographic trends.** The average age of Tajikistan’s population is under 25 years, with 33% of the population younger than 14. Youth aged 15–29 years constitutes 35% of the total population. Many young workers continue to enter the labor market every year. This “youth bulge” will require targeted policies and actions to ensure that educational and employment opportunities exist and will expand the demand for public services and the need for investment in human capital.

2. **Youth and female employment.** In 2017, Tajikistan’s working age population (15 to 75 years) totaled about 5.3 million, but only 2.4 million were economically active. Strong economic growth in the last decade has not translated into sufficient job creation to meet demand. Youth aged 15–24 have a lower labor force participation rate than adults aged 25–64 (footnote 3). Thirty percent of youth are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Almost one third of employed youth are in unpaid jobs, compared to 15% of adults. Women are particularly disadvantaged in the labor market. The labor participation rate of women was 32.6% in 2016, which is low compared with other countries in the region—66.0% in Kazakhstan, 55.0% in Kyrgyzstan, and 53.0% in Mongolia. The dominant female occupation is unskilled worker, mostly in agriculture. The proportion of female NEET is considerably higher than that of male youth.

3. **Labor migration.** The lack of job opportunities in Tajikistan causes many job seekers to migrate to other countries. At the peak in 2013, more than 1 million people of working age (about 30% of the labor force) had left Tajikistan for jobs and/or better pay. About 90% of migrants work in the Russian Federation, primarily as unskilled workers in construction, trade, housing and cleaning services, agriculture, and maintenance. In 2018, almost 500,000 people of working age (about 10% of the labor force) left Tajikistan as labor migrants. According to the Labor Force Survey 2016, the typical labor migrant is male, aged 15–29, from a rural area, unemployed prior to migration, not receiving any technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and migrating to work in a seasonal low-paying job. A migrant and household survey has shown that the majority of migrants leave without vocational and soft skills, information and communications technology (ICT) knowledge and financial literacy, as well as information on the working condition of destination. Many returning migrants face difficulty reintegrating with their families and communities while the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment (MOLME) can only provide limited support to migrants due to a lack of financial and technical resources.

4. **Education and training sector profile.** Basic education starts at age 7 and lasts 9 years: 4 years of primary and 5 years of lower secondary education. After graduating from basic education...
education (Grade 9), students may enroll in either general senior secondary education; secondary technical education provided by technical colleges; or Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET). While general secondary education and IVET lead to a Grade 11 diploma, the secondary technical education diploma is equivalent to Grade 12. In 2016, about 10% of those completing Grade 9 enrolled in an IVET institution, while 15% enrolled in a secondary technical and vocational education and training (SVET) college. The rest, which represent the majority, either continued their education in a general secondary school or left the education system.

5. The Ministry of Education and Science (MOES) is the principal ministry responsible for all levels of education in Tajikistan – from early childhood to higher education. In 2013, responsibility for the IVET system was returned to MOLME, with MOES retaining responsibility for the secondary TVET system. In addition to IVET institutions, MOLME operates more than 30 adult learning centers (ALCs), which offer short courses for basic skills training and skills upgrading. The 49 SVET institutions (technical colleges) are managed by different ministries and state-owned enterprises. SVET colleges tend to be significantly better equipped than IVET lyceums. SVET enrolments are growing rapidly, although this growth is mostly due to the development of private colleges in medical professions, which are popular with women (60% of students being trained in medical professions are women) despite the limited labor market demand for these specialists, and the low wages.

6. Limited support for labor migrants. Four Migration Service Centers operate in Tajikistan. The centers have limited knowledge about demand for labor market skills in destination countries and are therefore unable to guide prospective migrants. The current centers are not equipped or staffed to provide pre-employment short-term skills training that could enhance the ability of migrants to find employment in a host country. An estimated 50% of current staff are young with no training in providing migrant services. The centers do not offer training in financial literacy and ICT skills although these are important for safer remittance and access to information on social welfare services. Support for returning migrants is limited to providing information as to whether the migrant is on the list of those banned from returning to work in the Russian Federation. The social and psychological problems faced by many banned migrants have been widely ignored, as the current public migration service has very limited expertise in this field. Moreover, there is limited support for reintegration and finding work because of a lack of awareness among family members and lack of job counsellors in the centers.

7. Limited access to and relevance of public employment services. A training needs assessment of disadvantaged groups in Tajikistan conducted under the ongoing ADB TVET project revealed that available training programs are often poorly matched to the needs of local labor markets because of the lack of an effective system for providing labor market information and job counseling. In addition, training equipment and teaching methods are outdated due to limited budgets. Vocational instructors often cannot provide market-responsive short-term training courses, and TVET programs do not teach enough employer-required soft skills.

8. In 2017, the Public Employment Services registered 60,500 people, 86% of whom were unemployed, but this accounted for only 20% of all unemployed persons. The majority of unemployed persons do not register with the service. There is limited job counselling and job matching support. The Public Employment Services do not provide training, but job seekers may

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8 ADB. STVET Project Report. 2018. *Baseline socio-economic study on key indicators in the design and control scheme of the project on the situation of current students, lyceum and Adult Learning Centre graduates, as well as their employers. Final Report.* Dushanbe.

9 Employment Agency of Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment.
receive vouchers for training at ALCs. A few soft skills training programs are currently provided. However, short-term training does not focus on the competencies required for those occupations that are in high demand or those sectors with high potential for growth. Training to improve productivity using ICT is also lacking. Women with children are particularly disadvantaged as a result of cultural and economic barriers. Those from remote rural areas find it difficult to access services and training because of limited accommodation and transportation.

9. **Limited planning and management capacity for migration and employment services.** Tajikistan lacks the quality reliable data required to successfully monitor the labor market and has no system with standard classifications and methods in which labor market data are collected and published at regular intervals. MOLME’s labor market portal provides some information but the coverage and accuracy of skills and employment data for key sectors is limited. Only a small number of those seeking jobs domestically and overseas access currently available services. Job seekers appear to lack knowledge regarding the services they can access while TVET schools lack the resources to perform tracking surveys of their graduates, which limits job guidance and actions to improve the quality and relevance of skills training programs.

10. Tajikistan developed the Republican Classification of Occupations (RCO) in 2003 based on the 1988 Internal Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-88) of the International Labour Organization (ILO). Although Tajikistan has experienced a rapid expansion in international labor migration, the RCO has not been updated based on the 2008 ISCO (ISCO-08). Lack of ISCO-08-based occupation classification system is one of the reasons why the qualifications of Tajik workers are not fully recognized in external labor markets. In addition, lack of the internationally comparable labor market statistics and information has resulted in weak planning and management capacity and delivery of services for public migration and employment in Tajikistan. There is an urgent need to introduce ISCO-08.

11. Capacity development opportunities available for planners and administrators of the migration and employment service departments and agencies of MOLME are limited. Job creation and improvement of labor competitiveness are key challenges to realizing inclusive growth in Tajikistan, and exposure to best practice in the provision of migration and employment services, and in the conduct of skills and employment surveys do not exist. A lack of public awareness regarding migration and employment services results in limited use of migration and employment centers. About 60% of job seekers in Tajikistan found employment through friends and relatives, while only 5.8% found jobs through the assistance of the labor offices.

2. **Government’s Sector Strategy**

12. **National Development Strategy.** The National Development Strategy (NDS) 2030 serves as the overarching development strategy for Tajikistan. The NDS is based on three principles: (i) prevent or reduce vulnerability in future development, (ii) industrialize or more efficiently use natural resources; and (iii) innovate or develop by integrating new developments into the country’s social and economic mainstreams.

13. In Line with these principles, the NDS acknowledges the importance of expansion of productive employment in the country. The NDS proposes the following actions for better employment outcomes: (i) develop the educational network for professional skills development considering the needs of women, youth and vulnerable segments of the population; (ii) diversify

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foreign labor migration and strengthen state regulation of the migrants’ return process; (iii) develop labor-intensive sectors of economy; (iv) implement state employment policies; (v) make extensive use of telecommunication services in the process of exchanging data on creating jobs for young people and promoting entrepreneurship; and (vi) encourage farmers to start small businesses in agriculture, especially for youth.

14. The NDS emphasizes that the main factor in generating Tajikistan’s economic growth is human capital, and that the main contributors to human capital development, including education and science, are key to encouraging national economic competitiveness. Based on the implementation of the NDS, the government has set the following education and TVET targets to be achieved by 2030: (i) increase the proportion of the total employed population with vocational education from 26.0% to 60.0% and from 20.0% to 50.0% for employed women; (ii) increase the number of children with access to pre-school education from 12.0% to 50.0%; (iii) increase school enrolment from 86.4% to 98.0%; (iv) ensure 80% of children with disabilities receive education; (v) increase the percentage of grade 9 graduates entering the system of primary and secondary vocational education from 12.0% to 30.0%; and (vi) increase the percentage of graduates from secondary schools, IVET and SVET schools and colleagues, and universities from 26.0% to 50.0%.

15. **Laws and strategies on migration.** Labor migration is a focus area of the government. It is commonly accepted that migration will remain a vital source of employment. Labor migration is regulated by three documents: (i) the Law on Migration; (ii) the Law on licensing of certain activities related to job placement of citizens of the Republic of Tajikistan outside their motherland and activities pertaining to employment of foreign citizens within the territory of the Republic of Tajikistan; and (iii) the National Strategy on Labor Migration of Nationals of the Republic of Tajikistan Abroad. The National Strategy showed that labor migration has reduced stress on the Tajikistan labor market and contributed to active development of the banking sector and trade, and improvement of culture of travel and the professional qualifications of migrant workers.

**B. Major Development Partners: Strategic Foci and Key Activities**

16. Human resource development is a key development strategy in Tajikistan, and many development partners, non-government organizations (NGOs), and civil society organizations have been supporting general education and TVET. The major ongoing projects and programs supported by development partners are summarized below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development Partner</th>
<th>Project Name</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Amount (million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education – TVET</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training Project</td>
<td>2016–2021</td>
<td>$34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>Quality Education Support Program</td>
<td>2017–2020</td>
<td>$16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education – Higher Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Bank</td>
<td>Higher Education Project</td>
<td>2015–2021</td>
<td>$15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education – Others</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IsDB and GPE</td>
<td>Support to Implementation of the National Education Development Strategy</td>
<td>Ongoing from 2020</td>
<td>$30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JICA</td>
<td>Project for Livelihood Improvement in Tajik-Afghan Cross Border Areas (Phase 2)</td>
<td>2018–2020</td>
<td>$3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Partner</td>
<td>Project Name</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Amount (million)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
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<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AKES (funded by EU and other DPs)</td>
<td>Outreach Programs</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>Various initiatives focusing on access and inclusion</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Industry and Trade (including education and TVET components)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development Partner</th>
<th>Project Name</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Amount (million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World Bank</td>
<td>Tajikistan Socio-Economic Resilience Strengthening Project</td>
<td>2019–2024</td>
<td>$37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Bank</td>
<td>Rural Economic Development Project</td>
<td>2019–2024</td>
<td>$30.0</td>
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</table>

### Migration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development Partner</th>
<th>Project Name</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Amount (million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IOM (funded by DFID)</td>
<td>Reintegration of returning migrant workers in GBAO and Khatlon regions (part of a Central Asia regional program)</td>
<td>Ongoing from 2015</td>
<td>Euro 3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


17. The European Union (EU), Islamic Development Bank, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the World Bank are the major partners in education. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and UNICEF focus on basic education, and the World Bank on higher education. The EU has provided a budget support program that finances both education and TVET.

18. ADB, the Aga Khan Education Services, EU, ILO, International Organization for Migration, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations have supported skills training, entrepreneurship, and continuing education. The Aga Khan Education Services is financing several TVET institutions in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast Region. JICA has supported youth employment through its Livelihood Improvement in Tajik–Afghan Cross Border Areas Project (Phase 2). This $3.8 million grant aid project has been implemented through the United Nations Development Programme. One of the key components of this grant project is the promotion of youth employment in rural Tajikistan.

### C. Institutional Arrangements and Processes for Development Coordination

19. MOES has long-standing institutional arrangements to coordinate with development partners in the education sector. The World Bank, UNICEF, EU, selected bilateral donors, and some large NGOs have regularly met to discuss issues relating to general education, including implementation of the National Strategy for Education Development up to 2020, and revision of the Vocational Training Law. MOLME is also a member of this education sector group.

20. There are no formal institutional arrangements for development coordination regarding TVET because of the relatively small number of development partners that provide nationwide support. Many development partners active in TVET help with vocational training as part of their rural development and livelihood improvement projects that target particular regions or groups in

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Tajikistan. To ensure complementarity and synergy, ADB has regular meetings with the EU, which is a large development partner active in TVET. The EU has provided support to MOLME for in-service teacher training for IVET and development of the national qualifications framework, which complements the ongoing ADB-supported Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training Project (footnote 8). The EU is also designing the next phase of its support to TVET and has been coordinating with ADB in terms of areas and approaches. The EU’s first program involves budget support, while its planned project will comprise technical assistance. ADB provides investment projects.

21. A working group to collaborate on support to labor migrants and migrant families includes ADB, the EU, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Organization for Migration and JICA as active members. The working group facilitates capacity development of MOLME’s migration service planning and delivery. Development partners meet regularly to share outputs of their support, including knowledge products and information on future assistance.

D. ADB Experience and Assistance Program

22. ADB approved Tajikistan’s first TVET project in 2015 (footnote 8), which is a $32-million investment project co-financed by an Asian Development Fund (ADF) loan, an ADF grant, and the Clean Energy Fund (CEF). It is one of the most comprehensive initiatives supporting the TVET sector in Tajikistan. The project supports the: (i) introduction of competency-based training for 17 occupations, (ii) upgrading of facilities and equipment in 29 TVET schools, (iii) development and implementation of a market-responsive and inclusive training program and gender equality model program for vulnerable groups, and (iv) strengthening industrial partnerships for TVET delivery.

23. **ADB’s strategic focus.** ADB’s country partnership strategy for Tajikistan, 2016–2020 includes continued support for education.\(^\text{13}\) Future support will be provided to align with the education sector policy in ADB’s Strategy 2030: to improve education and training by improving learning outcomes for all, enhance the employability and job readiness of graduates, and support lifelong learning and training opportunities. The strategy also supports strengthening students’ foundational skills, including digital literacy and soft skills.\(^\text{14}\)


Problem Tree for Education (TVET)

**Productive domestic and foreign employment is limited**

- **Limited industrial transformation**
- **Major job mismatching**
- **Remittance-dependent economy**

**Youth and women do not have appropriate skills and employability to match domestic and overseas labor market needs**

**Access to and relevance of public employment services is limited**

- **Support to labor migrants is limited**
  - Number of Pre-departure centers is low
  - Lack of short-term pre-employment services
  - Pre-departure orientation program is weak

**Planning and management of migration and employment services are weak**

- **Planning and management of migration and employment services are weak**
  - Standard job classification system is not updated
  - Employment survey capacity of MOLME is weak

**EFFECTS**

**CORE PROBLEM**

- **Support to labor migrants is limited**

**CAUSES**

- **Number of Pre-departure centers is low**
- **Lack of short-term pre-employment services**
- **Pre-departure orientation program is weak**
- **Limited skills training in poor rural areas**
- **Short-term training provided by TVET institutions are not relevant**
- **Transportation and accommodation are expensive**
- **Limited job opportunities in rural areas**
- **Soft skills and ICT training are limited**
- **Training methods and facilities of ALCs are outdated**
- **Culture and norms prevent female from attending training**
- **Job counselling is weak**
- **Job opportunities are limited in rural areas**

**Abbreviations:**
ALC = Adult Learning Centers, ICT = information and communication technology, MOLME = Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment, TVET = technical and vocational education and training