

# Multi-Sectoral Partnerships Cross Sectional Evidence From Uganda Show Strong Readiness For Young Women's TVET Programs

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**Abstract:** Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programs addressing young women's employment require strong multi-sectoral partnerships. This cross-sectional study assessed stakeholder readiness for implementing the Sustainable Inclusive Youth Employment Pathways Project in Uganda. Thirty-one stakeholders from local government, private sector, and civil society organizations across seven regions completed structured surveys examining current youth engagement practices, TVET partnerships, and community attitudes towards TVET. Results revealed high partnership willingness (93.1%), substantial existing TVET collaborations (72.0%), and moderate community support ( $M = 1.89$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ). One-way ANOVA showed no significant differences in community attitudes by organization types ( $F = 2.153$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Financial constraints, cultural norms, and distance emerged as primary participation barriers. Findings indicate favorable conditions for program implementation while highlighting the need for comprehensive support addressing structural inequalities. The study demonstrates how baseline stakeholder assessments inform evidence-based TVET program design in contexts where young women face multiple barriers to skills acquisition.

**Keywords:** Vocational education, Stakeholder readiness, gender inclusion, Youth employment, partnership assessment, Uganda

## I. INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment remains a persistent challenge across Sub-Saharan Africa, with young women facing disproportionate exclusion from skills training and formal

employment opportunities (Boye et al. 2024). While Technical and Vocational Training (TVET) programs are recognized as strategic pathways for enhancing employability, their effectiveness depends not only training but also on stakeholder engagement, community participation, and coordinated cross-

sectoral partnerships (McGrath et al. 2020). Understanding the existing landscape of potential partners and prevailing community attitudes toward skills training is therefore essential for evidence-based program design.

It is within this context that the Sustainable Inclusive Youth Employment Pathways (SIYEP) Project was initiated to enhance young women's access to market-relevant skills in Uganda. SIYEP aims to strengthen the TVET ecosystem by building coordinated partnerships between local governments, private sector institutions, and community organizations. Given the project's multi-sectoral approach, its success relies heavily on the existing capacity, willingness, and alignment of these stakeholders. Conducting a baseline assessment of stakeholder readiness was thus a critical first step in ensuring that SIYEP's design and implementation strategies respond effectively to local realities rather than applying generic interventions.

Uganda's TVET sector continues to face structural challenges, including limited infrastructure, weak industry linkages, and persistent gender disparities in enrolment and completion (Okumu and Bbaale 2019). Moreover, young women's participation in TVET is constrained by cultural norms, household responsibilities, and limited access to information about training opportunities (ISER 2023). These factors underscore the importance of designing gender-responsive interventions built on strong institutional and community partnerships.

Emerging literature underscores that successful TVET programs must move beyond isolated training delivery to tackle systemic barriers and promote gender equity through collaborative governance (Bray-Collins, Andrade, and Wanjiru 2022). Yet, empirical insights into the readiness of local stakeholders to support such approaches remain limited in Uganda. This study therefore examines the organizational characteristics of potential SIYEP partners, their current engagement in TVET collaboration and youth-focused initiatives, stakeholder willingness and forms of support offered, community attitudes toward TVET across organizational contexts and perceived barriers to young women's participation.

Findings from this assessment provide a critical evidence base for refining SIYEP's partnership strategy, strengthening coordination mechanisms, and ensuring that program interventions are responsive to the structural and social realities affecting young women's participation in Uganda's TVET system.

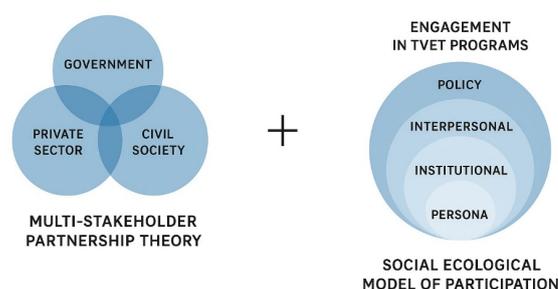
### A. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored in multi-stakeholder partnership theory and the social ecological model of participation, both of which provide a lens for understanding how collaborative and contextual factors shape young women's engagement in TVET programs. Multi-stakeholder partnership theory (Brinkerhoff 2002) posits that effective development interventions rely on coordinated action among diverse actors who contribute complementary resources, mandates, and expertise. Within TVET systems, such partnerships are critical for aligning training provision with labor market needs, ensuring institutional sustainability, and fostering community

ownership (Shi and Bangpan 2022). This framework guided the assessment of stakeholders' readiness and willingness to collaborate in the implementation of the SIYEP Project.

Complementing this, social ecological models (Bynner and Parsons 2002) recognize that individual participation in TVET is influenced by multiple, interacting layers ranging from personal and interpersonal factors to institutional practices and policy environments. For young women in particular, gender norms and cultural expectations operate across these ecological levels to shape access to training and occupational choices (Shi and Bangpan 2022). By integrating these perspectives, the study situates stakeholder engagement within a broader ecosystem of social and structural influences. This dual framework thus supports a holistic understanding of how multi-sectoral readiness and contextual barriers intersect to inform the design of inclusive and sustainable TVET interventions under SIYEP.

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



## II. METHODOLOGY

### A. RESEARCH STUDY DESIGN

A cross-sectional survey was conducted between 2024 and 2025 across seven regions in Uganda: West Nile, Karamoja, Lango, Acholi, Buganda, Bugisu, and Teso. This geographic diversity captures variation in socio-cultural contexts, economic conditions, and TVET infrastructure.

### B. PARTICIPANTS SELECTION AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The study targeted stakeholders engaged in youth development, skills training, and employment initiatives. Participants included representatives from local government agencies, private sector organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Purposive sampling was employed to identify key organizations in each region based on their involvement in youth programs. The final sample comprised 31 stakeholders (N = 31). While this represents a relatively small sample, it includes major stakeholders across diverse sectors and regions, providing valuable baseline data for program planning.

### C. DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire covering, demographic characteristics (gender, position), organizational profile (type, establishment year, focus areas), current engagement with young women (services provided, beneficiary numbers), TVET partnerships and collaboration mechanisms, community mobilization capacity, perceived barriers to participation, community attitudes toward skills training, and willingness to partner with SIYEP.

### D. MEASURES

Independent variables included gender (1 = Male, 2 = Female), organization type (1 = Private Sector, 2 = Local Government, 3 = NGO, 4 = CSO), and position within organization. Dependent variables included partnership willingness (1 = Yes, 2 = No), current TVET partnerships (1 = Yes, 2 = No), engagement with young women (1 = Yes, 2 = No), and community attitudes toward TVET measured on a four-point scale (1 = Very supportive, 2 = Moderately supportive, 3 = Less supportive, 4 = Not supportive).

### E. DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables, presenting categorical data as frequencies and percentages, and continuous variables as means with standard deviations. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) examined differences in community attitudes across organization types. The statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ . Analysis used standard statistical procedures with complete case analysis for variables with missing data. All the analysis was carried out in R statistical software version 4.2.1 (R Core Team, 2020).

### F. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All participants provided informed consent before participation. Data confidentiality was maintained throughout the study and any identifying information was removed before analysis.

## III. RESULTS

### A. STAKEHOLDER CHARACTERISTICS

Data on stakeholder characteristics was collected from 29 organizations, of which local government agencies constituted the largest proportion ( $n = 14, 48.3\%$ ), followed by private sector organizations ( $n = 9, 31.0\%$ ), NGOs ( $n = 4, 13.8\%$ ), and CSOs ( $n = 2, 6.9\%$ ). The above regions were distributed across Bugisu (38.7%), Acholi (32.3%), Teso (9.7%), and other regions (19.3%). The sample included 19 males and 12 females.

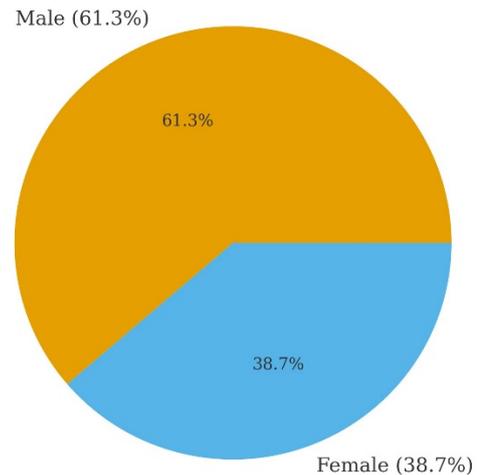


Figure 1: Gender distribution among stakeholder participants

### B. CURRENT YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Among 26 organizations reporting engagement status, 20 (76.9%) indicated current work with young women aged 15-35 years. Services provided included skills training, employment opportunities, internships, mentorship, financial support, business incubation, and community mobilization. Organizations served varying numbers of young women annually, reflecting differences in organizational capacity and geographic reach.

#### Not working with young women

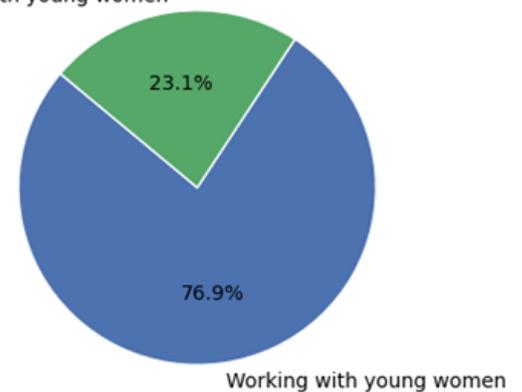


Figure 2: Young women engagement across different organizations

### C. TVET PARTNERSHIPS

Of 25 organizations responding about TVET partnerships, 18 (72.0%) reported existing collaborations with technical and vocational institutions. Partnership types included internship placements, curriculum feedback, equipment provision, guest lectures, and job recruitment support. These existing relationships provide infrastructure for SIYEP implementation.

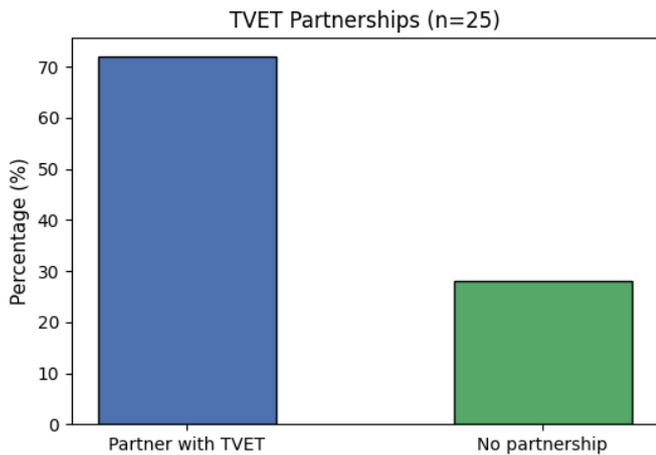


Figure 3: TVET Partnerships across different organizations

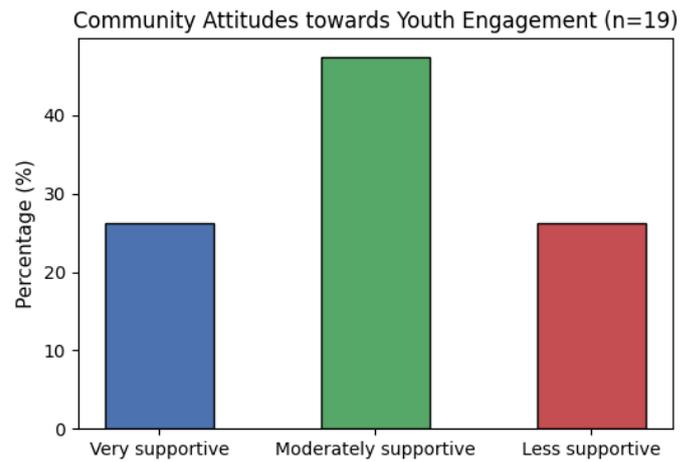


Figure 5: Community attitudes towards Youth engagement

#### D. PARTNERSHIP WILLINGNESS

Twenty-seven of 29 organizations (93.1%) expressed willingness to partner with SIYEP, while only two (6.9%) indicated unwillingness. Proposed support types included beneficiary identification, community mobilization, venue provision, technical expertise, mentorship, employment opportunities, equipment and materials, financial support, and monitoring and evaluation assistance.

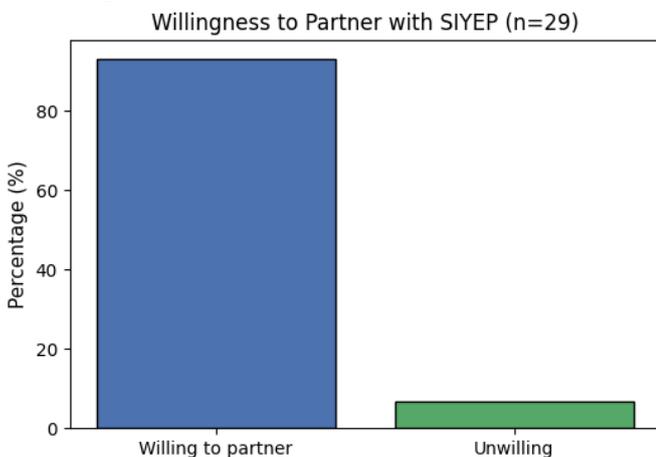


Figure 4: Organization's willingness to partner with SIYEP

#### E. COMMUNITY ATTITUDES

Community attitudes were assessed among 19 respondents. Distribution was: very supportive (n = 5, 26.3%), moderately supportive (n = 9, 47.4%), and less supportive (n = 5, 26.3%). No respondents reported communities as completely unresponsive. The mean attitude score was 1.89 (SD = 0.93, range: 1-3), indicating generally moderate to supportive perceptions.

One-way ANOVA revealed no statistically significant differences in community attitudes across organization types ( $F(3, 16) = 2.153, p > 0.05$ ). Between-groups sum of squares was 5.217 with 3 degrees of freedom ( $MS = 1.739$ ), and within-groups sum of squares was 12.933 with 16 degrees of freedom ( $MS = 0.808$ ). This suggests that perceptions of community support are relatively consistent regardless of organizational affiliation.

#### F. PARTICIPATION BARRIERS

Respondents identified multiple barriers including financial constraints, cultural and gender norms, distance to training centers, family responsibilities, and lack of information, limited transportation, and safety concerns. Proposed solutions included community sensitization, financial support mechanisms, flexible training schedules, and mobile training units, provision of sanitary materials, reproductive health programs, childcare support, and safe transportation arrangements.

Variable	n	%	M	SD
<b>Gender</b>			1.39	0.50
Male	19	61.3		
Female	12	38.7		
<b>Organization Type (n = 29)</b>			2.17	0.90
Private Sector	9	31.0		
Local Government	14	48.3		
NGO	4	13.8		
CSO	2	6.9		
<b>Current Engagement</b>				
Working with young women (n = 26)	20	76.9		
Partner with TVET (n = 25)	18	72.0		
Willing to partner with SIYEP (n = 29)	27	93.1		
<b>Community Attitudes (n = 19)</b>			1.89	0.93
Very supportive	5	26.3		
Moderately supportive	9	47.4		
Less supportive	5	26.3		

Table 1: Stakeholder Characteristics and Engagement Indicators (N = 31)

#### IV. DISCUSSION

This study examined stakeholder readiness and contextual factors influencing the implementation of the Sustainable Inclusive Youth Employment Pathways (SIYEP) Project in Uganda. Findings indicate a strong foundation for multi-sectoral collaboration, moderate community support, and several structural barriers that must be addressed to enhance young women's participation in TVET programs.

##### A. HIGH PARTNERSHIP READINESS AS FOUNDATION FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The finding that 93.1% of stakeholders expressed willingness to partner represents a significant opportunity for SIYEP implementation. This readiness aligns with growing recognition that youth unemployment requires collective action across sectors (Legg-Jack 2022). The diversity of support types offered from beneficiary identification to employment placement suggests stakeholders recognize the multi-dimensional nature of effective skills training. However, willingness must translate into sustained commitment with clear accountability mechanisms. Research on TVET partnerships documents challenges in moving from declarations to functional collaboration (UNESCO 2021).

##### B. LEVERAGING EXISTING TVET INFRASTRUCTURE

The substantial proportion (72.0%) of organizations maintaining TVET partnerships provides critical infrastructure for program implementation. These relationships can serve as entry points, reducing time and resources required for establishing new collaborations. The variety of partnership types such as internships, curriculum feedback, and equipment provision demonstrates sophisticated engagement between stakeholders and training institutions. This finding contrasts with literature documenting weak industry-training institution linkages in many African contexts (Muhwezi, Ferej, and Kiplagat 2025). The 28.0% without current partnerships represent untapped resources for expanding program reach.

##### C. GENDER AND POWER IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

While 76.9% of organizations work with young women, the quality and gender-transformative nature of this engagement requires scrutiny. The male-dominated stakeholder group (61.3%) raises questions about whether leadership adequately addresses gender-specific barriers. Identification of cultural and gender norms as significant barriers underscores the need for approaches that challenge restrictive expectations rather than merely accommodating them (Alla-Mensah and McGrath 2025). This finding aligns with feminist critiques of TVET programs that reinforce gender segregation by channeling women into traditionally female occupations (Górska, Ryś, and Korzyński 2024).

##### D. COMMUNITY ATTITUDES AS CONTEXTUAL FACTOR

The moderate community support ( $M = 1.89$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ) suggests room for improvement in community engagement. While no communities were completely unsupportive, the 26.3% classified as less supportive indicates potential resistance requiring targeted intervention. The lack of significant differences across organization types ( $p > 0.05$ ) suggests attitudes are shaped by broader socio-cultural factors rather than organizational context. This has important implications for program design, indicating sensitization strategies should be tailored to local contexts rather than organizational affiliations.

The moderate standard deviation indicates considerable variability in perceptions, highlighting the importance of context-specific approaches. This finding resonates with social ecological frameworks emphasizing how community norms shape individual participation in education and training (Pienkowski et al. 2024).

##### E. ADDRESSING MULTIPLE, INTERSECTING BARRIERS

The identification of financial constraints, distance, family responsibilities, and safety concerns confirms that effective programs must address structural inequalities beyond training delivery. This finding aligns with research documenting how multiple disadvantages accumulate for young women in Sub-Saharan Africa (O'Sullivan 2017). The proposed solutions community sensitization, flexible schedules, comprehensive support services reflect growing understanding of holistic support requirements. However, implementation feasibility and cost-effectiveness of these comprehensive approaches require careful consideration.

##### F. ORGANIZATIONAL DIVERSITY AS ASSET

The diversity of organization type's local government (48.3%), private sector (31.0%), and civil society (20.7%) suggests potential for leveraging complementary strengths. Local governments provide policy support and resource allocation, private sector organizations offer employment pathways and market linkages, while NGOs and CSOs bring community mobilization capacity and expertise with marginalized populations. This aligns with literature on multi-stakeholder partnerships in TVET emphasizing the importance of complementary capacities (Semali 2024).

#### V. CONCLUSIONS

This baseline assessment reveals favorable conditions for implementing youth skills development programming in Uganda, with high partnership willingness (93.1%), substantial TVET infrastructure (72.0%), and majority engagement with young women (76.9%). However, moderate variation in community attitudes and multiple intersecting barriers indicate success requires comprehensive, gender-transformative approaches addressing structural inequalities.

The lack of significant differences in attitudes across organization types highlights how socio-cultural context shapes TVET perceptions more than organizational affiliation. Moving forward, SIYEP should leverage multi-sectoral capacities while investing in sustained community engagement to strengthen support for women's participation.

Effective implementation requires moving beyond partnership declarations to functional collaboration with clear accountability. The identified barriers and proposed solutions provide a roadmap for comprehensive support enabling meaningful participation among young women historically excluded from skills development. This study demonstrates how systematic stakeholder assessments inform evidence-based TVET program design in contexts where gender inequality and multiple disadvantages intersect.

#### VI. LIMITATIONS

Several limitations warrant consideration. The relatively small sample (N = 31) and purposive sampling limit generalizability. Missing data for several variables reduced statistical power, particularly for ANOVA. Self-reported data may reflect social desirability bias, potentially inflating partnership willingness. The study excluded young women's perspectives, limiting understanding of beneficiary needs. The cross-sectional design precludes assessment of how attitudes and partnerships evolve over time. Future research should employ larger, randomly selected samples; longitudinal designs; and participatory methods including beneficiary voices.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

These findings have several practical implications. Programs should build upon existing TVET partnerships to accelerate implementation while engaging organizations without current partnerships. Comprehensive support packages must address multiple barriers simultaneously through integrated interventions. Community engagement strategies should invest in sensitization targeting less supportive communities while reinforcing existing support. Gender-transformative approaches should actively challenge restrictive norms rather than accommodating them. Multi-sectoral coordination requires formal mechanisms leveraging diverse stakeholder capacities. Robust monitoring systems should track partnership quality, beneficiary outcomes, and community attitude changes.

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