



Skills on the Move: Linking Labor Mobility and Vocational Training

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Our Argument



- TVET often touted as important for economic growth in LMICs, but largely fails to deliver positive, significant, impacts.
- It can help address *supply-side issues* (such as skill shortages and skill mismatches) but can't address *demand-side issues* (such as a lack of jobs).
- The Global South will see nearly 800 million young people without adequate jobs, while the Global North has persistent skill shortages.
- Donors have recently cut their aid budgets and refocused attention on how development spending benefits their own populations and economies.



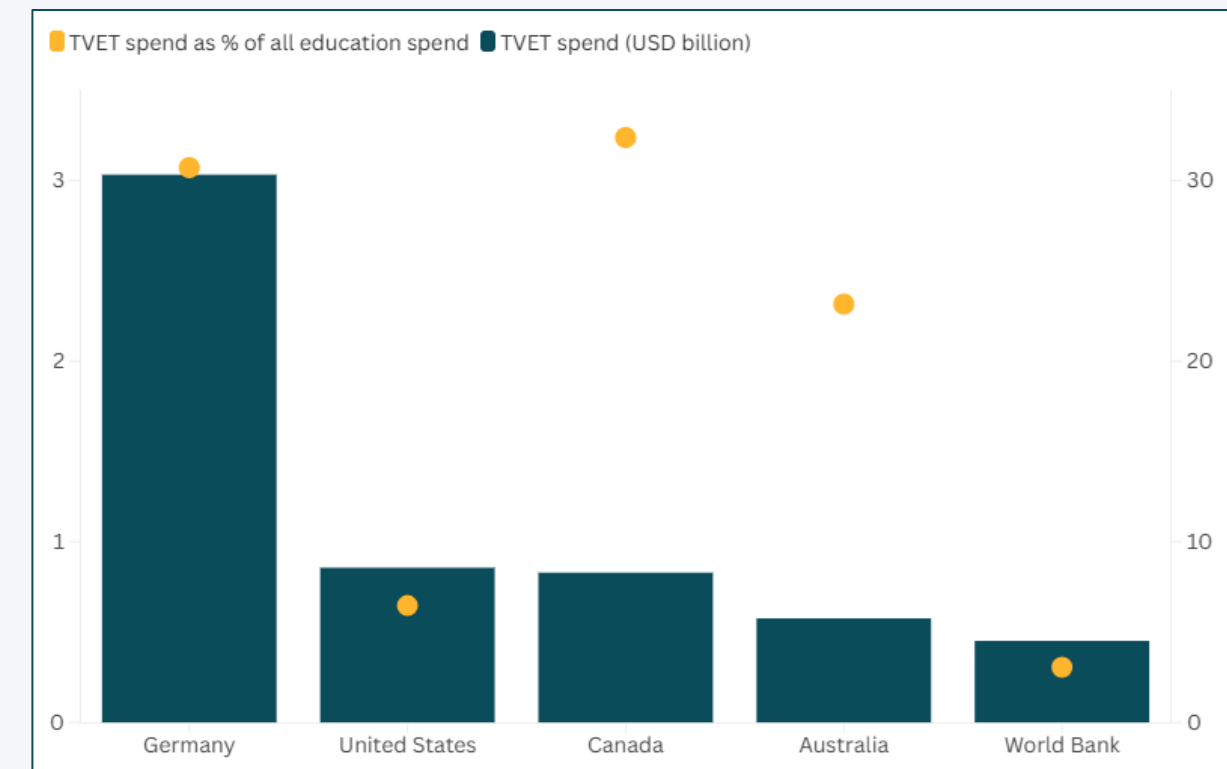


If donors supported some trainees to move to higher-income countries, it would improve TVET outcomes and quality; support employers at home and abroad; and reduce poverty by allowing trainees to access higher incomes and more opportunities.

Exploring Donor Investments in Green TVET

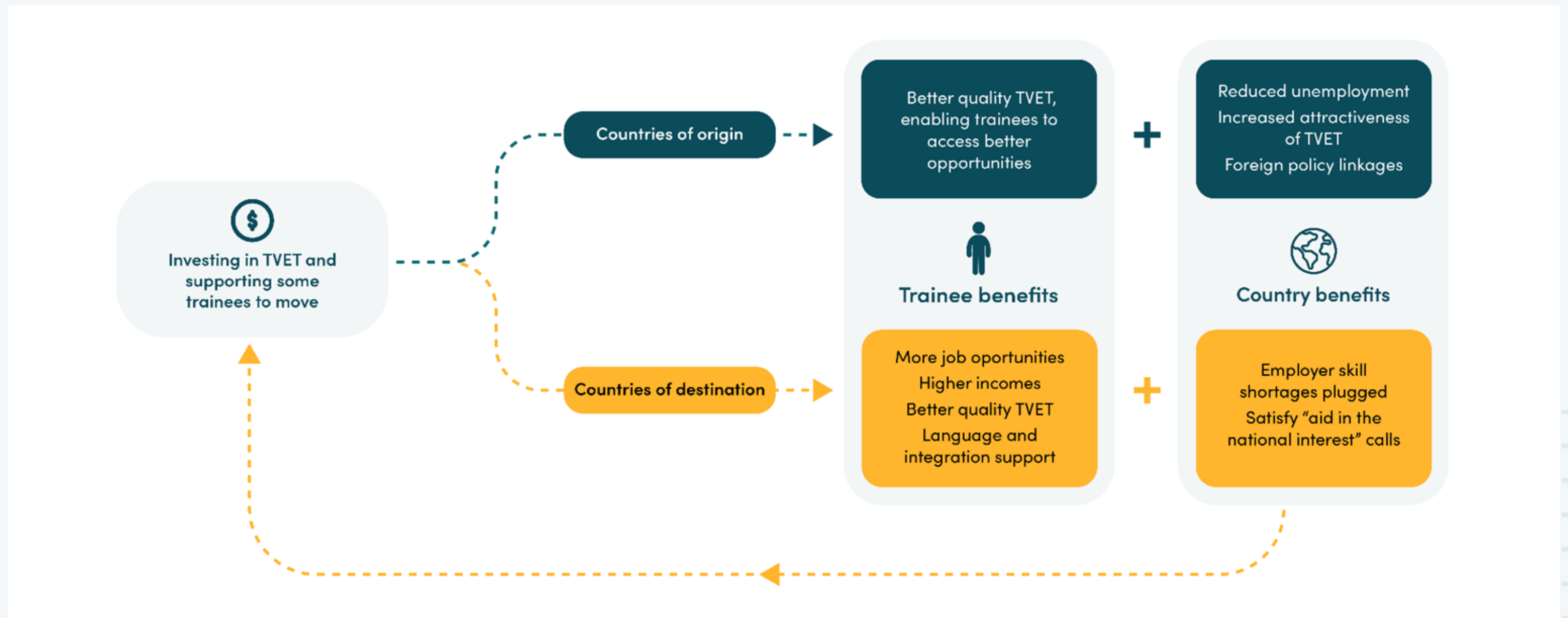


- Looked at donor investment in TVET, with a focus on green skills, using OECD CRS data.
- Between 2013–2022, the top five donors (Germany, the US, Canada, Australia, and the World Bank) spent US\$7.5 billion on TVET.
- Relative importance of TVET within education spend differs—e.g., 32% (Canada), 31% (Germany)—but under 2 percent of all aid goes on TVET.
- In line with low- and middle-income countries, which spend 0.2 percent of GDP in TVET.



Source: Iqbal and Dempster (2026)
<https://www.cgdev.org/tags/skills-on-the-move>

Linking Labor Mobility and TVET: The Why



Linking Labor Mobility and TVET: The How



1. Align training content and quality with employer needs

- Improve overall quality.
- Provide “top-up” training.
- Develop a full “away track”.

2. Recognize certifications or qualifications

- Implement Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs).
- Support individual certification.
- Pursue accreditation.
- Form partnerships with country of destination employers.
- Deliver industry-issued certifications.

Abstract

This paper explores how linking international labor mobility and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) can enhance the effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, and developmental impact of donor and government investments in skills development. In the context of shrinking global aid budgets and persistent skills shortages in low-, middle-, and high-income countries, we argue that linking labor mobility and TVET (particularly in skills relevant to the green transition) can deliver a “triple win”: improving employment outcomes for trainees; filling critical labor gaps in countries of destination; and strengthening TVET institutions in countries of origin. Drawing on evidence from existing initiatives, this paper identifies two broad, non-mutually exclusive, approaches for linking labor mobility and TVET: (1) aligning training content and quality with employer needs; and (2) recognizing qualifications or certifications, through mechanisms such as mutual recognition processes and international accreditation. Complementary measures—including language training, cultural orientation, and sustainable financing models—are also examined. This paper discusses how this linkage can increase TVET placement rates and opportunities for disadvantaged groups, and how to leverage these impacts successfully, sustainably.

e.g., Germany's PAM program

Phase 1
Practical & theoretical metal cutting training + German language course
VIETNAM
50 students

Phase 2
Extension of dual training or entry into profession
25 students
Recognition process + Intensive German language course + Transcultural preparation
25 students

Phase 3
25 qualified metal cutting technicians join companies in VIETNAM
25 qualified metal cutting technicians join companies in GERMANY

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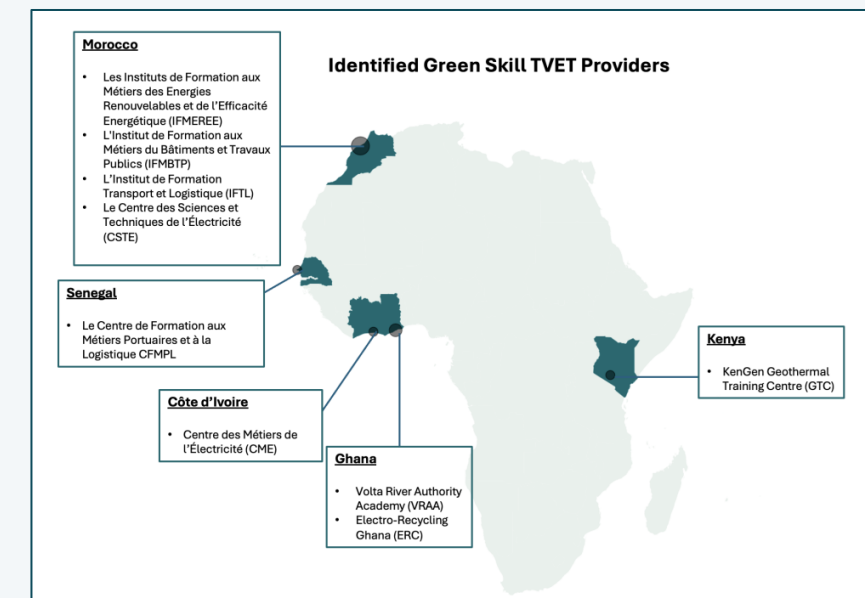
Source: Dempster and Ricou (2026)

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Finding “Investment-Ready” TVET Providers



- Set out to find high-performing, “investment-ready”, TVET providers in Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, and Senegal.
- Focused on those delivering green skills.
- Found nine providers with active, viable plans for how they could expand their work and / or represent models which can be readily replicated.
- Would need support with language training, pre-departure orientation, and integration programs.
- All PPPs or Centers of Excellence—need to provide demonstration effect, improving public TVET provision.



Source: Ricou et al. (2026)

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Thank you!

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