Tracer Study Handbook

A methodology for determining employment and income results stemming from Vocational Training courses

May 2012
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Appendix 1 Questionnaire

Appendix 2 February 2012 workshop handout distributed to VT partners for their future follow up
**Background**

In Sri Lanka, World University Service of Canada (WUSC) has been conducting Tracer Studies (TS) since the early phases of our vocational training project (the Project for Rehabilitation through Education and Training (PRET)). Now in its fifth phase of delivery, the TS have proved to be an effective tool for project management, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. This method provided the organization with the necessary information to determine employment and income of trainees as a result of vocational training courses supported by the PRET project. All information was disaggregated by gender. However, as trainees ventured into self-employment more and more, the project included this segment in 2003. (See example table below. No average wages have been included here.)

The sample size of the TS was usually 50%-60% of the entire number completing the full training cycle. This was mainly due to the difficulty in locating trainees more than six months after their training. The ongoing conflict and subsequent tsunami compounded the challenges in tracking trainees. However, towards the end of 2008 -2009, the project was reaching 80% of the participants completing the full training cycle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Trained</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Employment in trained trade</th>
<th>Self employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III (97-03)</td>
<td>4199</td>
<td>2840</td>
<td>1359</td>
<td>4229</td>
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<td>IV (04-09)</td>
<td>5912</td>
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<td>3539</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

WUSC-Sri Lanka has summaries of its Tracer Studies over the past 15 years. This handbook documents the process undertaken during that period and how it changed in 2012 with the end of PRET Options, the fifth phase.¹

**Purpose of tracer study and vocational training**

Investing in youth education and training is a priority in Sri Lanka. However, technical training alone is not enough. Youth need to learn employment and life skills that meet the needs and standards of the labour market. In Sri Lanka, the labour market goes beyond the boundaries of the nation.

Anyone investing in the education of youth needs to focus not only on the quality of the training but also follow up to see whether the training received was useful and graduates were able to find employment. WUSC-Sri Lanka has been working in Sri Lanka and investing in vocational training for over two decades. Our detailed databases for documenting progress of training during the course duration and after completion of training have enabled the project to quantify

¹ This handbook was compiled by K.S. Atulugama in consultation with the PRET Program team, including the regional Deputy Field Directors.
results in terms of employment and income earned. Monitoring the progress of a trainee during the course period is not as difficult as trying to trace their progress once they leave the training centre premises.

At the end of 2011 WUSC began to transfer the TS methodology to its partners, both government and civil society. Workshops were held in February 2012 in both Tamil and Sinhala to explore group follow up which allowed for a more sustainable means to collect data.

**Why Tracer Studies**
WUSC has used this as a tool to measure the relevance of vocational training courses and document the number of trainees finding employment in their trained occupations. Gathering and documenting feedback from trainee graduates can help improve project planning, revise or reinforce interventions, demonstrate results and contribute towards improving public confidence in vocational training. Depending on the information sought, a tracer study can be used as a tool for management, or marketing, or monitoring.

**Process**

**Key steps to the process**

**Step 1:** Design a questionnaire to gather relevant and necessary information. (See questions to be answered below). Criteria for designing an effective questionnaire:

1. Keep it simple and short
2. Ask questions which are of immediate use or relevant to the organization
3. Avoid suggestive/leading questions
4. Use clear language
5. Ask for recommendations
6. Include quantitative and qualitative (or open ended) questions
7. Test the questionnaire – use the questionnaire to talk to a small sample of trainees and make necessary alterations/corrections

**Step 2:** Develop a data base in which relevant information can be recorded. If the requirement of the organization/program is elaborate a data base accommodating and storing data spanning several years should be designed by a software developer. However a simple excel format can be done annually. Information such as

1. Personal information – name, address, contact details, and related background information including whether they are male/female
2. Name of course and period of training
3. Pre-training and present personal/household income
4. Employment history (male/female employer, private or public sector, causal or wage or self employed)
5. Access to credit or additional training received
6. Reasons for unemployment

The above list is not exhaustive and the data base can include more information for both qualitative and quantitative analysis but it is important to gather data not for the sake of
gathering data but for the purpose of making decisions. Avoid gathering too much and keep in mind the aim of the organization/program.

**Step 3:** Select the sample size. In disaster prone or conflict prone areas, trainees may be subject to relocation and tracing could be difficult. Conducting tracer studies for all trainees enrolled would be an ideal situation, however, depending on a country or local context, select a reasonable sample size if this is not possible. Ensure:

1. A minimum of 60-70% of the total number trained (both male and female) per year of graduation.
2. Use random samples (avoid hand picking respondents) for example,
   a. Employed and unemployed
   b. Wage and self employed
   c. Male and female
   d. Representatives of all trade courses offered at your VT Centre
3. Avoid a sample size below 10 per class, your results are not of a representative nature
4. If your organization has never carried out a tracer study before, it is advisable to trace graduates reaching back at least the last 2-3 years. This will enable you to form a baseline/benchmark your results achieved in subsequent years.
5. A tracer study should be conducted annually - i.e. 9 to 12 months after graduation or 6 months after completing OJT placements.
   - Send post cards in advance, to inform trainees that a study will be conducted and information will be used for future training delivery purposes only and if there are any changes to name, address or contact number kindly inform the centre via post card every 6 months.
   - Telephone call/SMS to check in case the postcard did not reach the individual or in the absence of a postal address.
   - Where trainees have found employment abroad, follow up to ensure if the employment was due to their training, and conduct the interview with family members.

**Step 4:** Collection of data can be done on a one-on-one basis as WUSC did for more than a decade but there are other possibilities now being adopted by WUSC. Suggestions for data collection:

1. If possible link the data collection with an event (e.g. class reunion; Ex-trainees meeting etc.) This will maximize participation while reducing cost and effort.
2. Allocate 45-60 mins per questionnaire.
3. Methods for data collection –
   - Provide a self-addressed envelope and mail the questionnaire to the respondents. For the time being, email questionnaires are not a recommended method due to limitations – e.g. low return rate; not effective when collecting quantitative data; questions can be misunderstood. This method may require ‘in-depth’ interviews to verify the information gathered.
   - Group discussions – may have similar results to the previous method and may require in-depth interviews to verify information.
• Interviews – face to face. This method can have good results as it provides an opportunity for the interviewer to gather personal data/qualitative data through a personal discussion with the respondent.
  i. The questionnaire can be facilitated by an internal Program Officers (PO) or instructor. Randomly the PO will check 3-6 of the questionnaires per course, to verify accuracy, OR
  ii. The organization can identify an external person to conduct the Tracer Study. The external individual/s should be qualified and from the region, (i.e. able to speak the local languages). The individual/s collecting the data should be qualified and familiar with vocational training. If not he/she/they should be trained on data collection of the purpose of your tracer study. Randomly 20% of the questionnaires will be verified/cross checked by the organization for accuracy.
    ▪ Hiring or contracting a university lecturer or a VT instructor from a different district
    ▪ A nominal rate per questionnaire could be agreed upon e.g. LKR 300/= per questionnaire
    ▪ Provide the updated student contact list to the consultant/person collecting data, and an introductory letter for ID purposes
    ▪ Collaborate closely when designing the questionnaire to minimize problems with data collection or entry
    ▪ Ensure a means of verification – 10% -30% cross checking for accuracy

Step 5: Data entry and analysis. Once all data are verified, data should be entered into the database system. Develop charts that could be used for reporting purposes, sharing results or monitoring progress. If you have not done a tracer study before, contract an external resource person for technical support and data analysis. You could group/cluster the questionnaire based on gender; trade; geographical area (district/region) etc.

Step 6: Share the information with relevant groups. For example,
  1. Share and discuss findings at the partner forum, at staff meetings, board meetings, at tools of the trade distributions
  2. Use the findings to improve VT delivery –
    a. Think about new courses with employment potential; link with employers to increase employment and placement opportunities etc.
    b. Think about training needs based on labour market surveys
    c. Use findings to revise or adjust the training process, concepts, methodology or curricular and follow up
  3. Develop a plan of action for the coming year
  4. Ensure that findings are in your annual report to donors and government officials
  5. Use information in your promotional material, including brochures to encourage new trainees
Step 7: Next steps – the Tracer Study should become a management tool for your VT Centre or skill training program. A regularly conducted Tracer Study is an effective monitoring system that highlights performance (outputs). Your TS can be refined to enhance results. You can do more with the findings of the TS. For example,
1. Invite former trainees successfully graduated to become instructors or demonstrators
2. Provide Entrepreneur Development Training for those interested in self employment
3. Sensitize new trainees on the need and value of participating in the next TS and encourage them to update change of address/name etc.

Key questions to be answered
✓ Have trainees found employment after completing the training? Do they earn an adequate income, and is it the same for men and women with the same skill?
✓ Why are trainees unable to find employment in the market? How effective is the training process?
✓ Are they applying the skills and knowledge? Is the course selection based on labour market surveys? Has the Centre provided the relevant skills and competencies required by the job market?
✓ Is further training necessary and if so in what areas? Do trainees need additional skills or upgraded skills to improve employability?
✓ Do we need to review our curricula or improve our training delivery? Does the curricula need to be revised?
✓ Is the existing information sufficient to select new courses or do we need labour market surveys to understand the changing trends of the job market? How often should this be done? Are there entry points for women entering into male dominated trades?
✓ Is the training demand driven or supply driven? Are the courses relevant to the needs of the market? Does it meet the expectations of employers?
✓ Is there measurable social and economic impact as a result of the training provided? Has the household income increased and living standards improved for the individual as well as for the family? Has the trainee invested in household assets?

Practical tips
✓ Engaging past trainees: It is a good practice to keep in touch with past trainees – i.e. both drop outs and graduates.
  o Organize a past trainees meeting for all students. Gather changes of addresses/contact numbers during such meetings.
• Organize a female trainees meeting post OJT (On the Job Training) to discuss issues or find solutions to overcome challenges

Documents should be easy to access. Data entry should be inputted by a few key staff while access to the information should be for all.

Analysis of qualitative data should be done manually if the system is not able to generate a chart. A narrative analysis will be helpful to the reader.

Knowledge should be transferable to new employees. Information should not be dependent on one individual. A substitute/counterpart should always be familiar with the system.

If the organization/program requiring the tracer study covers a wider programming area than a district, then a common methodology should be used by all to ensure uniformity and continuity.

Keeping partners involved throughout the process is critical to ensure continuity beyond the project cycle. An organization conducting a Tracer Study should:

• Keep the process and software simple (Excel/data base).
• Collect information individually face to face or collectively depending on their resources.
• Maintain soft and hard copies. Both should be located or stored until the end of the programming period or project life span.
• Identify potential successful case studies to share with others as concrete examples. In such instances it is advisable to obtain permission from the respective trainee.
• Decide who to share the information with and how the information will be used – e.g. either in reports to donors or share the information with relevant authorities i.e. Government Agents (GA)/relevant line ministry
Appendix 1

Tracer Study Questionnaire
For PRET-Options Assisted Trainees
WUSC-SL

1. Course Details / සොයාව දෙදේ ප්‍රශ්න / අවශ්‍ෂීංග වේෂයේ සිදුකරණ.
   1.1. Project District/ අයිගෝග ආරක්ෂාව කණා / මුරුණිය කණා කරණය:

   1.2. Partner Organization Name / ආරක්ෂාව කණා ප්‍රශ්න / මුරුණිය කණා කරණය:

   1.3. Project LOA Number / අයිගෝග LOA කණා / මුරුණිය (LOA) කණා:

   1.4. Name of the Trade / විද්‍යා ප්‍රශ්න / මුරුණිය කණා කරණය:

   1.5. Name of the Sub Trade / විද්‍යා ප්‍රශ්න / කුංකාගත කණා කරණය:

   1.6. Batch Number / අයිගෝග කණා / මුරුණිය කණා:

   1.7. Donor / යම්මා / මුරුණිය කණා:

   1.8. Project Code / කුංකා කණා / මුරුණිය කණා:

   1.9. Medium / මුරුණිය / මුරුණිය කණා:

   English [ ] අංක කණා [ ] අගල කණා [ ] අංක කණා [ ] අංක කණා

2. Personal Details / විද්‍යා ප්‍රශ්න / මුරුණිය කණා:

   2.1. Full name of the Trainee / විද්‍යා ප්‍රශ්න / මුරුණිය කණා:

   2.2. Gender / විශේෂය කණා / මුරුණිය:

   Female/ මුරුණිය/ කණා [ ] Male/ මුරුණිය/ කණා [ ]

   2.3. Address / කණා කරණය:

   2.4. District/ මුරුණිය කණා කරණය:

   2.5. NIC Number / මුරුණිය කණා කරණය:

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2.6. Date of Birth / ආයශ කලා / ස්මාද්‍ය කොටපු:

.......................................................... (dd, මාසය, අධාරී / mm, අධාරී, අධාරී / yyyy, කොටපු කොටපු)

2.7. Contact number/ සම්බන්ධ කණ්ඩ / සම්බන්ධ කණ්ඩ:

Home/ ඇසුරු සම්බන්ධ: .................................................................

Mobile/ මෝබැйල් සම්බන්ධු: .................................................................

3. What is your family’s average monthly income / සමාජයේදී යොදාගන්න සාමාන්‍ය ප්‍රමාණය අමැතක්? / කොහේවාදී පිළිතුරුවේ ආශ්‍රය අතුරු නිශ්චීය කියි?

3.1. Before the Training Programme/ ග්‍රාමික ගොවිතාකරණ කුරු / පැරිසිදුරු කාර්යාලයේ සාමාන්‍ය ප්‍රමාණය:-

Rs: මුළු කොටපු: .................................................................

3.2. Present (without trainee)/ සාමාජිකයන් පැවතියේ අඩු ප්‍රමාණය / සිතුකාම් කුරු / පැරිසිදුරු: පැවතියේ ප්‍රමාණය:- Rs: මුළු කොටපු: .................................................................

4. How many members in your family (living with you presently)/ සමාජයේදී පිළිතුරු අපේ යොදාගන්න ප්‍රමාණය / පිළිතුරුවේ ගොවිතාකරණ අඩු ප්‍රමාණය?

Employment/ ගොවිතාකරණ / පිළිතුරු

5. Are you employed now? / පිළිතුරු සාමාජිකයේදී ප්‍රමාණය / සාමාජිකයන් පැවතියේ ප්‍රමාණය සේවාදායකයි?

Yes/ දෙක් / දෙක් / No/ දෙක් / දෙක්

6. If yes, which trade/ පිළිතුරු සාමාජිකයන් පැවතියේ ප්‍රමාණය / නැම්පල් කෙනේ?

6.1. Trained Trade/ නැම්පල් කෙනේ / නැම්පල් (පොළණ) කෙනේ

6.2. Other Trade/ නැම්පල් කෙනේ / අවස්තන කෙනේ

7. If employed in the trained trade, what category of employment/ නැම්පල් කෙනේ නැම්පල් නැම්පල් කෙනේ/ නැම්පල් කෙනේ නැම්පල් කෙනේ/ නැම්පල් කෙනේ නැම්පල් කෙනේ/ නැම්පල් කෙනේ නැම්පල් කෙනේ?

7.1. Self employed/ සාමාජිකයන් සාමාජිකයන් සාමාජිකයන් සාමාජිකයන් සාමාජිකයන් සාමාජිකයන් සාමාජිකයන්

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<th>Category</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Private</th>
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<tr>
<td>7.2 Permanent/ ජාතිකඟහනයෙන්</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3 Contract/ නැම්පල් කෙනේ/ නැම්පල් කෙනේ/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3 Casual/ නැම්පල් කෙනේ/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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8. What is your average monthly income now? (in dollars)

9. How is your monthly income contributing to the family? (check all that apply)

9.1. For day to day primary needs (food, clothes & utilities)

9.2. To assist brothers/sisters’ education

9.3. Improve your business

9.4. To repair or build the house

9.5. Saving

9.6. Other – please specify:

10. What percentage of your salary do you give to your family?

11. For Female trainees only (do you face any obstacle during employment or from your family, neighbors or society (if yes what are they))?

11.1. Unequal pay for equal skill and workload

11.2. Gender biased division of labor in workplace (e.g., ordering to prepare tea)

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12.8. Lack of experience/ 缺乏经验/ 经验不足

12.9. Employer not accepted/ 未被雇主接受/ 雇主未同意

12.10. Transportation difficult/ 交通困难/ 运输不便

12.11. Child care/home responsibilities/ 子女照护/ 家庭责任

12.12. Other (please explain)/ 其他（请解释）

13. What is your future plan regarding employment (check all that apply)/ 就业计划（请勾选所有适用）

13.1. No idea/ 无想法/ 无计划

13.2. Looking for a job in any trade/ 任何行业求职

13.3. Looking for a job in trained trade/ 训练有素的行业求职

13.4. Need additional training in the trade/ 需要行业额外培训

13.5. Need financial assistance for self employment/ 需要财政援助自谋职业

13.6. Any other (please specify)/ 其他（请具体说明）

Comments by the Trainee/ 培训生的评论/ 评论

World University Service of Canada – PRET OPTIONS
Comments by the Interviewer/

Potential Case Study/ 

Interviewer's Name/

Interviewer's signature

Cross checked by/ 

Checked by/ 

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Appendix 2

Workshop on Tracer Study Methodology
A methodology for determining employment and income results stemming from Vocational Training courses - February 2012 (simplified version handout)

Objective of the workshop

A day Tracer studies training (theory and practice) will be provided to selected partners from the East, North and South on Feb 16th and 22nd, 2012, in order to continue the tracer study by partner organizations from March 2012 till after the completion of PRET-OPTIONS, for sustainable project management results.

Purpose

- The Tracer Study should become a management and result based tool of partner VT Centres or skills training programs.
- Think about new courses with employment potential; link with employers to increase employment and placement opportunities, etc.
- Think about assessment training needs in the labour market
- The tracer study result should become a marketing tool for acceptance and further financial sustainability.
- Share and discuss findings at the partner forum, with government, other VT providers, VT donors, at staff meetings, board meetings, at tools of the trade distributions or any other appropriate places.
- Use findings to re-plan or adjust the training process, concepts, methodology or curricular and follow up.
- Invite former trainees that have successfully graduated to become instructors or demonstrators with VT providers.
- Provide/support Entrepreneur Development Training for those interested in self-employment with other VT providers or for itself.
- Use information (results) in your promotional material, including brochures to encourage new trainees.

Methodology (How to use the questionnaire - Process)

Step 1: Design a questionnaire to gather relevant and necessary information.
  8. Keep it simple and short
  9. Ask questions which are of immediate use or relevant to the organisation
  10. Avoid suggestive questions
  11. Use clear language
  12. Answer all questions
  13. Ask for recommendations
  14. Include quantitative and qualitative (or open ended) questions

Methodology (Implementation)

Step 2: Field Implementation
1. Invite the ex-trainees to the partner location to work with them in order to get the accurate information to meet the needs by the partner organization. This will be done with the involvement of WUSC staff, partners and instructors.

2. Ongoing practical training will be provided to partners by regional offices.

3. All VT completed trainees MUST be surveyed.

4. A Tracer study should be conducted 6-9 months from the VT completion date.

5. How to communicate with ex-trainees and parents.
   a. Send postcards/SMS in advance, to inform trainees that a study will be conducted and information will be used for future training delivery purposes only. If there are any changes to name, address or contact number kindly inform the centre via post card every 6 months.
   b. Telephone call to check in case the postcard did not reach the individual or in the absence of a postal address.
   c. Where trainees have found employment abroad, follow up to ensure whether the employment was due to their training, and conduct an interview with the parents.

6. What will be the benefit to hold at partner location
   a. Open a room for ex-trainees to meet the VT providers and share their experiences on which skills they learned and how they are using these skills, as well as how ex-trainees see their development etc.
   b. Information will be accurate and learning opportunity is high.
   c. This approach will be cost-effective and save time.
   d. Ex-trainees are able to meet the VT trainees at the training centre in order to share success stories for motivation.

7. Use the agreed questionnaire to talk to ex-trainees and apply necessary mechanism to gather accurate information.

8. Analyse the information by a panel.

9. Cross check the information (if necessary)

**Methodology (How to manage the information)**

**Step 3:** Data entry and analysis. Once all data is verified, data should be entered into a Database System.

**Step 4:** What is meant by Database System and which relevant information can be recorded.

1. Personal information – name, address, contact details, and related background information including whether they are male/female
2. Name of course and period of training
3. Pre-training and present household income
4. Employment history (male/female employer, private or public sector, causal, wage or self-employed)
5. Access to credit or additional training received
6. Reasons for unemployment

Updated by VJ on Feb 8th 2012.