



# The Invisible Contribution of TVET to SDGs - Palestine Case

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**Abstract:** The contribution of Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to development has been widely referenced in the research literature. Various studies have indicated its contribution to human development, others have indicated its contribution to economic and social development, social justice, poverty reduction, to equality and reducing marginalisation. Hence, its link to poverty reduction, inclusive education, gender, employment and reducing inequality sets VET within Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 1, 4, 5, 8 and 10, although SDG targets and indicators related to TVET are only limited to SDG 4. The invisible impact and effects of TVET and its invisible link to the other SDGs are linked to definitions and reflected in data collection. The author's research has pointed out the limitation of data collection for TVET indicators to the vocational schools only, which presents only a small part of the TVET provision in Palestine and other countries. Although, the Global TVET Strategy for 2016-2021 has specified the link to employment, decent work, green skills and gender equality, and called for TVET that would support the realization of the SDGs. The paper will investigate the monitoring tools and collected data that limit the exhibition of TVET to SDGs. It will argue against limiting TVET to SDG 4, based on an evident case study of Palestine (with data from the author's doctoral research project and other national reports), and presents tools and indicators that can be used in monitoring TVET globally, hence will present alternatives for current limitations.

**Keywords:** TVET, Marginalisation, SDG, Equality, Human Development, Rights-Based-Approach

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## 1. Introduction

Following the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) [38] recommendations, and in line with the SDGs and global trends, the UNESCO TVET Strategy (2016-2021) [39] has clearly linked TVET to development. This was illustrated through the UNESCO three pillars' strategy, concerning youth employment and entrepreneurship, equity and gender equality, and the transition to green economies and sustainable societies. Most importantly, it has set policy measures and approaches towards achieving the Strategy objectives, including enhancing governance, TVET technical related schemes, as well as enhancing policies and measures for reaching the marginalized with the inclusion of sustainable development. The Strategy also advocates enhancing the monitoring and evaluation system for youth employment, as well as spreading informal and rural training to integrate women and other marginalised groups, greening skills, cooperation and

cross-sectoral approaches. The Strategy has noted that UNESCO will apply a results-based programming, management and monitoring approach.

The evaluation of the Strategy [45] noted various studies and approaches to knowledge sharing, initiatives for policy reform, a mid-term consultation, and a final evaluation. The report noted few monitoring indicators regarding the number of countries adopting policies, but could not measure the change made on the higher level of outcomes and impact to illustrate progress towards the anticipated change.

The following paper will present background information about the international debate and the relevant link to SDGs. It will present the case of Palestine in TVET that illustrates the contribution to different SDGs and a failure to integrate such impact in national and global figures. The paper will end with conclusions and recommendations to address the gap and move forward. The methodology is based on an in-depth literature review of published global TVET strategies, reports and data, as well as SDG and Global Education

Monitoring Report (GEMR) reports, as well as the case of Palestine documented in the author's PhD research [8], which consulted with over 1000 people from different TVET systems in different regions in Palestine. Findings were published in Springer book [11]. The paper also makes use of many studies, research and conference papers that followed the PhD work.

## 2. International Debate Indicted the TVET Link to SDGs

The work of King [15], King and Palmer [16, 27, 28] on VET and poverty has been central to illustrating the contribution of VET to poverty reduction. Other important contributions from different international contexts include the work of Cheng [3] in Cambodia and Wallenborn [49] in Tajikistan. The author's work on VET's role in poverty reduction for women and youth in Palestine [5] contributed to the analysis, as well as Powell's findings [30] that VET has been successful in attracting the poor in South Africa.

Other works have further investigated the contribution of TVET to gender equality, including the author's PhD work [8], which focused on empowerment within Gender and Development theory for women VET learners and for the marginalised, through the link to Kabeer's [14] work on empowerment. Stuart's [35] work on TVET for abused women in England has also added to this dimension within a human development approach.

McGrath [19] has identified the gap between the rise in policy and programmatic interest in VET's role in development, and the academic debate, especially in the South, and called for a new theory and the building of a "human-centered development account of VET". The contribution of VET to human development was researched by various scholars, VET's contribution to Human Development (HD) called for by McGrath [19], and developed in the work of McGrath [19], Powell [29, 30], Powell and McGrath [31, 32], McGrath and Powell [20-22], López-Fogués [17, 18], and DeJaeghere [4], Hilal and McGrath [6], Hilal [7-10], Stuart [36], and Alla-Mensah [1]. The contribution of VET to human development was investigating the agency of VET learners, by setting the VET learner at the centre of TVET with clear aspirations. The work of the different scholars is based on Sen's [35] work on human development and well-being and other social justice research.

The McGrath et al. [23] paper has set the Critical Capabilities Approach to VET (CCA-VET), as a potential for theorising a transformed and transformational VET, called for by UNESCO in its global strategy. The McGrath paper has presented the value of VET and its contribution to poverty reduction, to gender equality and reducing marginalisation, through the different CCA-VET research conducted in the North and South countries.

As such, TVET, through the different research work, provides evidence from the North and the South indicating the contribution of VET to the different SDGs 1, 4, 5, 8 and

10, concerning poverty reduction, education, gender equality, decent work and inequality.

The UNESCO-Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR), through the years 2017-2021, [40-44, 46] has highlighted the link of education as a whole, including VET, to marginalisation (reports on Gender, Refugees, Youth, Inclusion and Non-state actors). Linkages with accountability and inclusion of different actors, as well as the link to SDGs through education as a whole within each theme was also presented.

Hence, international debate and research indicated the TVET link to SDGs. The GEMR linked TVET to the SDGs through different reports, but indicators of achievement through monitoring and evaluation (M&E) reports do not reflect the VET transformational vision, i.e. the achievements on the results levels, and not linked to other SDGs, neither within the TVET strategy M&E Reports nor for the M&E reporting on SDGs.

## 3. SDG Limited Reflection of UNESCO Global TVET Strategy and International Debate

TVET targets and indicators are only limited to 3 targets and 2 indicators within SDG 4. TVET related targets are limited to 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, calling for access and reducing disparity, and for increasing youth with skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. While there are only 2 indicators out of 7 indicators for TVET within SDG 4, being 4.3.1 and 4.5.1. 4.3.1 measures TVET as part of *Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months*. Hence, TVET would be only measured as disaggregation of indicator 4.3.1, which some countries can choose to neglect as did the State of Palestine report. 4.5.1 measures Parity indices for inclusion for all education levels disaggregated by different education levels including TVET, which also can be neglected by some. Although 4.4 target notes ICT and TVET, yet the indicator 4.4.1 is limited to gained ICT skills.

These two indicators don't show the change in TVET and are included with other levels of education, hence providing partial monitoring of TVET, and weak presentation of its value and the change anticipated through the adopted reform in the strategy. Therefore, the transformation done through the TVET strategy 2016-2021 following the international debate, was not reflected in the collected data globally.

The GEMR data is the SDG collected data, although the narrative part of the report presents qualitative analysis that clearly includes TVET. The quantitative data is limited and can exhibit real progress, or reflect that of the narrative. Nor to reflect the progress towards achievement of the planned change and transformation.

Therefore, the need for a monitoring system for the UNESCO Global strategy that shows the transformation is high and should be based on Theory of Change (TOC). The qualitative and quantitative monitoring data for the strategy

can feed into GEMR, and could strengthen SDG data for TVET.

The SDG targets and indicators limited reflection of the TVET international debate for the role and value of TVET presents a threat to the global planned transformation, and can easily be neglected by countries, as unavailable disaggregated data. This was done by the State of Palestine, although, TVET in Palestine presented a rich example of addressing the different groups including the most marginalised, as the author's various studies indicated (Hilal 2022, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016) and the following section will present.

Moreover, the UNESCO Global TVET strategy is an important document for TVET policy making across the globe, and the policy element was highlighted in the strategy and measured as output indicators in the evaluation (UNESCO, 2021a). Nevertheless, monitoring did not link with accountability and learning on the results level, leading to further marginalisation in the global data as it is marginalised in many national contexts. The author's PhD and further research work has presented tools that could be utilised in global TVET monitoring systems.

## 4. Palestine and TVET Context

### 4.1. Palestine Context Increasing Inequality and Marginalisation

The Palestinian context of being under occupation for decades, has been described by the UNOCHA [47] in its Humanitarian Needs Overview in the occupied Palestinian Territories (oPt) 2021 document, as protracted protection crises, characterised by the following:

The crisis is characterized by more than 53 years of Israeli military occupation, lack of respect for international humanitarian and human rights law, internal Palestinian political divisions, and recurrent escalations of hostilities. ([47], p. 6).

Understanding the Palestinian context further, it is worth noting that the Occupied Palestinian Territories is divided into three zoned areas with policies that restrict mobility of people and goods: the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. The West Bank is further sub-divided into three zones of A, B and C. Area C constitutes 60% of the land, with all its resources under the control of the Israeli Occupation, as the World Bank report noted [24]. The UN OCHA map in Figure 1 illustrates the zoning policies.

UN-OCHA has further noted the increased impact of the military occupation policies on various groups and areas within the oPt,

Palestinians in the oPt face a range of threats, including to life, liberty and security, destruction or damage to homes and other property, forced displacement, restrictions on freedom of movement and on access to natural resources and livelihoods, and lack of accountability and effective remedy. [47], P. 6.

The impact of the military occupation on the population

was further exacerbated by the effects of Covid-19, where UN-OCHA noted the marginalisation of over 2.45 million people, amounting to around 50% of the population, For further details of the context and its effects, see the UNOCHA website: <https://www.ochaopt.org/>.

Two important international reports have shed light on the human rights violation the Palestinians are facing, including the report by B'Tselem [2], an Israeli Human Rights Organisation, and the report by Human Rights Watch [13]. Both reports have clearly highlighted violations and the illegality of the military occupation by the international laws and conventions, and offer a new discourse to the international community; both reports are backed-up by extensive research and documentation. As such, this highlights the importance of TVET's role and contribution towards SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

### 4.2. TVET Context Addressing Marginalisation Through Different Systems

TVET has been delivered in Palestine since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century by Non-Governmental Organisations and Church-related organisations, as a method of helping the marginalised for their own source of income. Many started providing TVET after the plight of the Palestinian people in 1948 and the forced expulsion of their land, as hundreds of thousands became refugees, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) that was set by the UN to provide service for the Palestinian refugees. TVET presented a source of survival for the Palestinian refugees at that time.

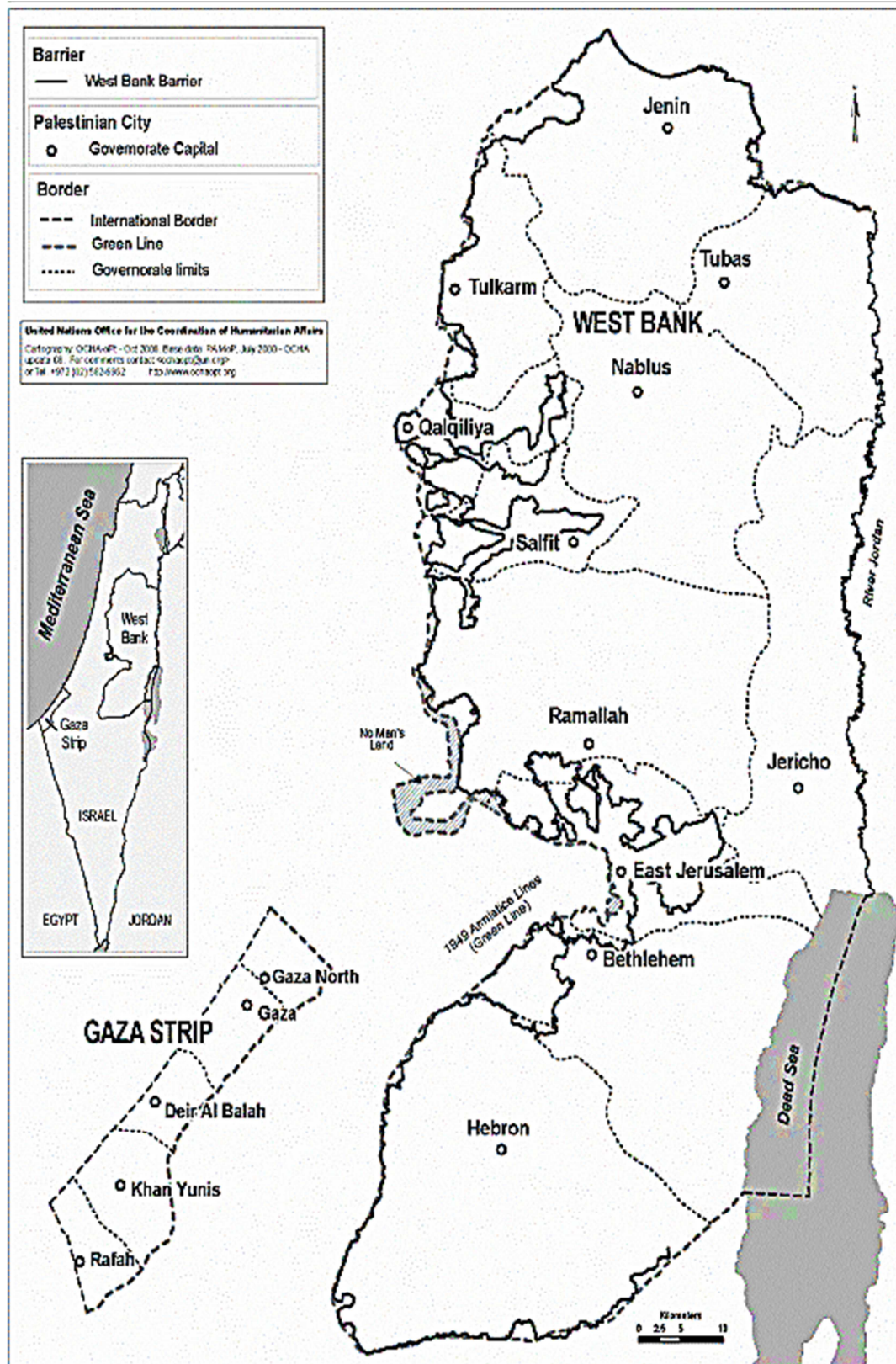
Other organisations are providing services for marginalised women, or youth with disabilities or in poverty. Most of the noted TVET provision is done through Vocational Training and is considered informal, although training is provided through structured Vocational Training Centers and outreach programmes.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) resumed responsibility for the TVET sector in 1994, following the international Oslo agreements. As, the international community committed to the peace talks that should end in 5 years-time, the talks never ended and the PA is responsible for services till today without control of land, resources, border or currency, although was provided with the status of The State of Palestine by the UN in 2015. The PA, through the Ministry of Education, is currently running formal vocational education and accrediting other vocational education systems. The PA, through the Ministry of Labour, is responsible for vocational training, and through the Ministry of Higher Education is responsible for technical education. The PA became responsible for the accreditation and the governance of TVET as a whole. Other vocational training was provided by other Ministries, such as the Ministry for Social Development.

The historical background illustrates the variety of TVET providers in oPt addressing different target groups. Vocational

education (the formal secondary education), as well as vocational training (informal VET) and technical education (the formal higher education at college level) are being provided.

This paper refers to the first two types within VET. The governance system for TVET in Palestine has been reviewed recently, and a unified TVET Commission established.



Source: UN-OCHA, [www.ochaapt.org](http://www.ochaapt.org)

**Figure 1.** The oPt Map, according to UN OCHA.



## 5. The TVET Value and Link to SDG: The Palestine Case

### 5.1. The VET Value and Tools of Measurement

Hilal's PhD research [8], published as a book by Springer [11] has defined the marginalised in the case of Palestine as being two categories. The first is shared globally and includes the socially-marginalised (women, youth and people with disabilities), and the economically-marginalised (the poor, the unemployed and precariat workers and drop-outs or potential drop-outs of the education system. The second category relates directly to the Palestinian context under military occupation, which is young men and women directly affected or coming from families affected by military occupation practices, such as home demolition, house arrests, and internal displacement, resulting in refugees, previously detained, a lost source of income or properties, or even lives. The study found that most women and youth attracted to VET were from different marginalised categories, living in a vulnerable status or being pushed to the periphery due to their context.

The research measured the impact of VET through different set indicators, based on the Human Development Capability List, which measures achievements according to set indicators for achieving agency linked to their aspiration, and addresses policy makers' indicators to measure the achievement due to policy reform. The framework is based on the HD-CA. The author's work is based on other capability lists developed by researchers. Development of the Capability list has utilised the work of other capability lists, including the work of Nussbaum [25, 26], Robeyns [33, 34], Walker, [48], Powell, [30]. The capability list is built on Powell's list for VET, with additions of gender and marginalisation dimensions, as well as links to accountability. The list was published in Springer chapter [10] and in the Springer book [11].

In addition, through the author's PhD, another set of indicators were presented, being the VET empowerment indicators for women and the marginalised based on empowerment connotation within GAD theory. The list was published in the Hilal [7] published paper, and is published in the author's Springer book [11]. The empowerment indicators are based on Kabeer's [14] work on empowerment as enabling choice and as a process that facilitates change to the disempowered, or those who have been denied the power to choose. Empowerment of VET learners is measured, along with enhancing their self-confidence, their ability to contribute to their surroundings and challenge gender-norms, their active participation in public life, and their achievement of freedom of decision-making over life choices.

The two tools presented in the above noted author's work presents sets of indicators that could be utilised for future TVET global monitoring system.

These tools were used for impact assessment of VTC support programme in 2021 [12]. The PhD results and the

impact assessment have indicated the high achievement of the graduates compared to national figures.

Hence, the research and study have indicated the high achievements of women and youth compared to national figures, which led to reducing inequality and marginalisation of women and youth and contributing to the impact level of human development.

### 5.2. Contribution of VET to SDG-Palestine Case

The findings of the author's PhD research [8] and following studies have also indicated the clear link to the SDGs 1, 4, 5, 8 and 10 as follows:

- 1) SDG1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere: The impact of VET on poverty reduction of the original family when enrolled after VET Learners graduation and work was apparent, through their contribution to the family income, furthermore it enabled male and female graduates to start their own families and providing for them, not to mention that skills gained supported the graduates in reusing their resources and cutting costs was apparent from the study.
- 2) SDG4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all: through 4.3 and 4.4. VET has increased participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal vocational education and training, and has increased the number of youths with relevant TVET skills for employment and entrepreneurship, as the research clearly indicated.
- 3) SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls: the empowerment impact has clearly indicated the empowerment of women graduates following gaining skills and work, it has also indicated empowerment effect for those practicing non-market work, through gained skills. The findings indicated empowerment achievement, yet still challenged. Results indicated higher achievement in self-confidence for all graduates and higher achievement for women reached (78% for all and 82% for women), compared to others between 53% to 63% for both with lower achievement of women graduates when addressing gender norms and roles, as they requested overcoming structural challenges, including patriarchy within a context of military occupation, which limited choices for women.
- 4) SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all: the research has noted the contribution of 8.5 and 8.6, where, male and female youth employment was higher than their peers within same age on the national level, which has also contributed to reducing the number of youths not in employment, education, or training. Yet graduates are still affected by minimal implementation of the decent work agenda, due to the fragile private sector in Palestine, mostly small businesses, 89% employs less than 5. Although salaries gained after 3-4 years of

graduation are higher than national ones and higher than minimum wage.

- 5) SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries: as the research had indicated the policies and measures taken by TVET institutes to increase access to TVET and work, which impacted the access to both amidst contextual challenges.

The high achievements of indicators, indicate clearly the contribution to change through a clear Theory of change (TOC) that links to the different SDGs, where VET enabled men and women, as well as male and female youth to access education and training and gain market and non-market skills, as such gaining skills as well as other policies and measures enabled them and achieve their capabilities, in economic opportunities, empowerment and LLL, through the 10 capabilities noted in Box 1. This in turn has contributed to increased agency and reducing inequality for the graduates and their families, and hence would contribute to the higher impact of the SDGs on the national and global level and would lead to local development and resilience for the fragile countries. The constructed tools in Box 1 and 2 can measure the impact of reducing inequality and contribution to human development.

## 6. The Invisible Vocational Training Within TVET in the Global Data - Palestine Case

The high impact of VET is achieved by the mosaic system in the oPt, with 266 VET institutes (governmental, non-governmental, UNRWA and private sector institutes). 39 of which are providing vocational education (the formal secondary education), and 243 providing vocational training (informal VET), with some institutes providing both. The numbers were collected from all entities through developing the Torino Process Report, by the National Team in 2020. [37].

The ETF Torino Process Report by the national team [37] has also illustrated that the long-noted percentage that measures the limited number of students in VET compared to those in academic education, was only measuring the number of students in formal vocational education only, with the announced percentage of 3%. While all those that attend the vocational training are not reflected within the national figures. This was the case due to the lack of a unified data as well as the lack of a unified monitoring and evaluation systems, and the previously spread governance and information between the Ministries. Currently a unified TVET system is newly established.

The national TVET report [37] has identified that the percentage of those enrolled in TVET could rise to 15% of new enrolments (11th grade following ending the basic schooling at 10<sup>th</sup> grade) from those in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, and to 7% of those in secondary education (11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade), versus what was reported of less than 3% for the years 2017/2018, while percentage of age population could rise to 4.5% if all

vocational training as part of TVET is added, it's worth noting that 5% is the global rate.

Hence the reported percentage nationally and to GEMR of the following, is only catering for the formal education, as the reported indicator: 4.3.3 for Palestine was:

- 1) 3% of youth enrolled in TVET in 2021 GEMR [46] report showed statistics of 2019 (p308)- only Vocational education and 1% percentage of TVET share of secondary enrolment.
- 2) 3% of youth enrolled in TVET in 2020 GEMR [44] report showed statistics of 2018 (p374)- only Vocational education and 1% percentage of TVET share of secondary enrolment.

Such reporting ignores the vocational training and underestimates its value. Although number of students have indicated higher percentages of women, people with disability and other marginalised groups are enrolled in vocational training, and for many that moves from basic education, they found vocational training as an option to achieve their aspiration for economic gains and for achieving agency and empowerment, towards reducing their marginalisation.

The state of Palestine is reporting nationally on the two TVET related indicators of 4.3.1 and 4.5.1., where in 4.3.1, it presents the participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months without disaggregation of TVET. While 4.5.1 measures the disparities along sex, locality type and wealth index for basic and secondary education, without desegregation along TVET, as noted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the national body responsible for measuring the SDGs. PCBS webpage for the nationally collected data is <https://sdg-pcbs.opendata.arcgis.com/> and the page for publishing the measured SDGs, <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/main/sdgs.aspx>. The data is collected in-line with the UNESCO IUS definition and requirement. It's expected with the newly unified TVET body that the data will be available for measuring unified TVET data nationally.

Yet their removal from the national and global data is a reflection of overseeing the marginalised sector, prioritised by the marginalised groups. An issue that stems from the unclear definition of TVET globally, which allows countries to detect the easiest formal data. The definition according to UNESCO data, the share of technical and vocational education in total enrolment by level: is the total number of students enrolled in vocational programmes at a given level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total number of students enrolled in all programmes (vocational and general) at that level. While other indicators in SDG 8 does not reflect enrolment in VET or VET impact.

This is contradicting to GEMRs that in some parts have illustrated the importance of TVET for marginalised groups, as the GEMR 2020 noted, *Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is often considered inclusive by definition because, at least in some countries, it tends to serve populations commonly excluded from mainstream*

education. [44].

The confining of VET to SDG 4, limits its value to being an alternative for access to education, and does not reflect its other benefits on the personal, community and state levels. As noted above, even enrolment in TVET is not really reflected in the data. Again, indicating invisible data for invisible marginalised groups.

Hence, concluding from the above, the VET transformative effects for the marginalised, and its contribution to human development has been hidden from the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, with its numbers invisible as its target groups in many countries, including countries of the South and the fragile countries.

## 7. Conclusions

In conclusion, the paper has identified two main gaps in the global monitoring system regarding TVET. One is the weak monitoring system that reports on TVET links to SDGs. The second concerns the invisible initial vocational education and training (IVET) figures within the reporting framework. The paper pointed out to tools (the capability list and the Empowerment indicators). The VET Capability list published in the author's Springer chapter [10] and in the author's Springer book [11] The Empowerment Indicators' list was published in the author's [7] published paper, and is published in the author's Springer book [11]. The lists and indicators measure achievements and impact that are linked to SDGs and new VET theories of human development and social justice, which fit well within the UNESCO TVET strategy and SDGs overall goals.

The need for contextualisation and conceptualisation of global trends that became apparent through the Case of Palestine were different categories of marginalisation to be considered within different contexts, especially those in fragile countries and countries of the South.

As such, unless direct action is carried to show the value of VET, it will continue to be invisible and hidden. Therefore, the following could be done among other actions:

Develop SDG4 indicators: VT to be part of the collected data beyond secondary and post-secondary TVET education, disaggregated clearly by level/type of TVET.

Link to other SDGs: contribution of TVET to SDGs to appear in all the SDG indicators,

- 1) Develop monitoring and evaluation system for the UNESCO strategy based on the theory of change to present outcomes and impact beyond the output level, utilising presented tools that measures agency, policy and empowerment, in line with the UNESCO strategy pillars.
- 2) Activate context related mechanisms: Developing MEAL systems within the countries, that is contextual relevant. The system to measure indicators for TVET within the different SDGs and disaggregated by level, gender and marginalisation. Marginalisation is context related but link to the global marginalisation index.
- 3) Conceptualization of the global strategies and

mechanisms and link it with available funding.

- 4) Global strategies and monitoring systems to reflect learning from the South, through referring to the rich research from different countries and the open channels and networks for consultations.

Further research is needed to:

- 1) Identify ways and methods that could integrate the neglected TVET numbers and measure the change within the overall figures.
- 2) Have a holistic TVET definitions beyond formal education and includes informal VET, through clear definitions, and distinctions from other LLL schemes.
- 3) Show evidence and analyse contexts and marginalisation in different countries, regions and countries with special conditions as the fragile countries.

Lastly, global consultation should include participants from the South including those from fragile countries, an issue started prior to SDG and can continue using different online means.

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