- **Focus Group Discussion** is a form of qualitative research that helps gain knowledge about a particular topic or issue by interviewing a group of people directly concerned by the issue. It is an interactive group interview intended to stimulate constructive exchange of experiences, opinions and perceptions between people knowledgeable and interested in the subject in question. An assigned facilitator guides the discussion by asking semi-structured questions in order to elicit useful qualitative information on a certain subject for consequent analysis, and further explore ideas and thoughts on a given issue. The Handbook includes guidelines to organizing an FGD that covers all steps – from logistics to the actual content, as well as some facilitation tips.

- **Direct Observation** is another important method of data collection that involves observations of processes, relationships or people, of which record is taken for further evaluation. Direct observations help evaluate the consistency between the described environment, processes or behavior in the workplace and the actual situation.

While analyzing the data, triangulation of each of the data sources is undertaken and a conclusion is reached.

The Handbook offers detailed guidance on how to carry out all above-mentioned methods of data collection, including recommendations on how to build a rapport with the interviewees and participants of focus group discussions.

Virtues of taking the time and care to follow through the suggested steps before designing a vocational training course are hard to over estimate. Knowing the demand in the labor market will help TVT providers adjust the number of trainees to the number of vacancies available and avoid over saturation of trained labor with the same skill set in a given area.

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What is RMA

Rapid Market Appraisal (RMA) is a quick, innovative and effective method of labor market needs assessment. It helps Skills Training Providers to identify the needs and opportunities in the labor market. Training courses that are based on RMA results have proven to be effective.

The step-by-step approach involves collecting, processing, analyzing and presenting information on labor market needs. With that information Technical and Vocational Training (TVT) providers will be able to design technical training courses tailored to concrete vacancies, as opposed to training masses in skills for jobs that are not available. The strength of this approach is that information is gathered from a specific, predetermined area of the labor market. RMA focuses on selected industries and occupations within a geographic area, where it helps identify

unfilled vacancies. Such tailored approach yields more concrete results. A well-targeted training aligned with specific market needs maximizes trainees' chances of gainful employment as a result of the training received.

RMA will generate the following information for TVT providers:

- Current workforce in a given occupation in a given area;
- Current and future demand for workforce in a given area;
- Skills sought by employers in a given occupation/area;
- Professional interests of local youths;
- Technical training providers operating in a given area.

Why RMA

A trained worker does not necessarily mean an employed worker. It is often the case that job seekers receive training in a profession where there are no jobs to be found or little market demand for those particular skills. As a result of this discrepancy between the labor market demand and the training on offer, the problem of unemployment persists and people's time, effort and money is wasted. However, a training course designed based on an assessment of present and future needs for specific skills in a specific market can fill the skills gap and has a high potential to reduce unemployment.

Background

With this in mind, Employment Fund Secretariat (EFS) / Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation have used a Rapid Market Appraisal (RMA) methodology to help Technical and Vocational Training providers (TVTs) to gauge the skills gap on the market. Having initially been developed as a micro- and small enterprise development effort in 1980s and tested across Africa, a modified version of the original RMA to assess a demand for technical training of human resources was introduced in Nepal by Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation Nepal through F Skills project in 2005, and then through Employment Fund Project from 2008. While at the beginning RMA focused primarily on agricultural products and services, it eventually expanded beyond the agricultural sector into manufacturing and services to foster enterprise and human resources development.

How we do it

EFS has developed a **Rapid Market Appraisal Handbook for Practitioners** – practitioners in this case are market assessors from Technical and Vocational Training providers. The Handbook is structured in an easy and accessible manner conducive to independent application or work in a team. It is divided into five modules – each of them with its own set of lessons and practice activities to improve learning experience and assist practitioners in their work.

The Handbook follows a sequential order and guides practitioners through the process of designing an RMA survey (including identification of key informants and market location, formulation of an RMA statement, etc), collecting data, processing and analyzing it, and presenting the results in a form of a written report for optimal usability. During the survey and direct observations stage RMA practitioners engage with employers and entrepreneurs and local young job seekers. As a result, apart from identifying current skills gap, RMA helps to map new areas and occupations, in which training might be needed in the future, or inform trainers and curriculum developers about the technological challenges in certain areas that might require tweaking of the training curricula

Methods and tools of data collection:

- **Semi-structured Interviews** are built around a set of guiding 'wh'-questions to elicit useful information and collect qualitative and quantitative data that will help identify skills gap in a given occupation. The semi-structured modality allows for some degree of flexibility when it comes to the probing questions asked during the interview in order to acquire more relevant information.