



A Market-led, Client centred, economic strengthening as structural HIV approach

Results from Namibia prevention:

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Background

In Namibia, adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) aged 15-24 years are disproportionately affected by HIV, with a 1.06% incidence compared to 0.03% incidence among young men. Economic disparity related to gender inequality is an ongoing and complex driver of the HIV epidemic, especially for vulnerable AGYW. Among young people aged 15-34 years, unemployment is at 46.1%, with females experiencing higher unemployment (48.5%) than males (43.7%). A skills discrepancy between the labour market demand and supply is a major factor for the high youth unemployment. The PEPFAR/USAID - funded DREAMS project, in collaboration with the Ministry of Sport Youth and National Services, Bantwana Zimbabwe, and FR Research Services, conducted a labour market assessment to explore this gap.

Materials

The labour market assessment was conducted between September - December 2021 in five health districts of Namibia where the DREAMS project was implemented. Data was collected through a desk review, focus group discussions, surveys, and key informant interviews. Interviews were held with representatives from 90 stakeholders, 276 AGYW aged 15-25+ participated in focus group discussions, and 274 of the focus group participants completed the survey. The AGYW were active DREAMS participants. Grounded theory was employed to analyze the qualitative data and the assessment was validated and endorsed by key stakeholders in June 2022.

Results

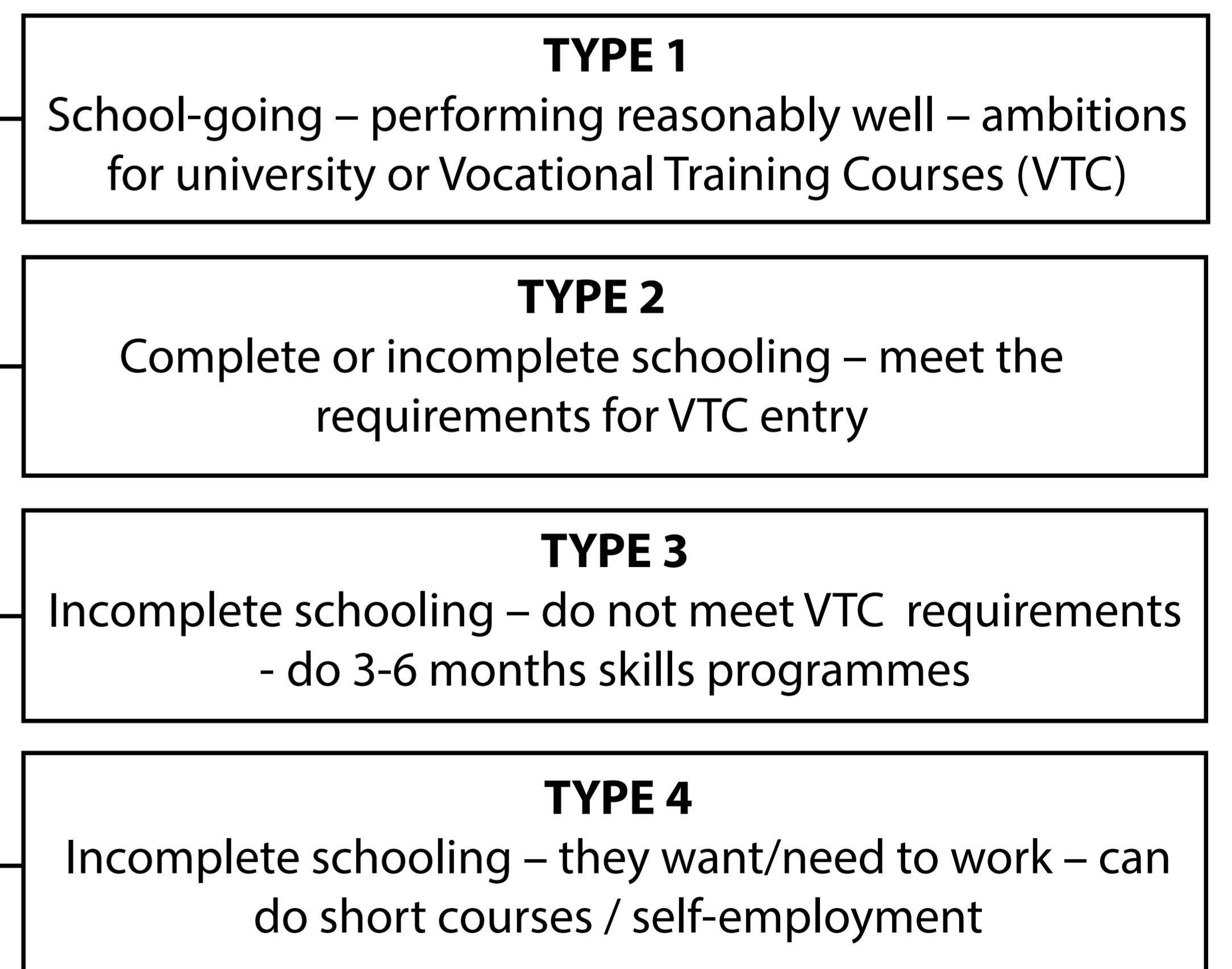
The assessment identified job rich value chains for training AGYW. Among the survey participants, 49% did not complete high school, 66% had no employment/training, <50% had good numeracy skills, and 55% needed assistance to find self- / wage employment. This heterogeneous nature of AGYW led to the development of a typology of AGYW (as seen in figure below) and customized training pathways juxtaposed with the DREAMS economic strengthening pathway to assist programme staff in linking AGYW to economic services based on their individual needs .

Conclusions and Recommendations

Although HIV rates have been on the decline globally, certain sub populations have seen their incidence rates increase. AGYW in Namibia bear a disproportionate risk to HIV infections and are a key demographic for action to realize an AIDS free generation. Studies have shown a positive correlation between economic strengthening initiatives and reduced HIV risk among AGYW by decreasing AGYW's reliance on transactional sex, reducing dependence on male sexual partners, ending relationships with abusive partners and strengthening AGYW's self-efficacy and decision-making power in relationships. Overall, we concluded that skills development and training programs as structural HIV prevention intervention should align AGYW interest and skills with available occupations in job rich value chains.

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Key words

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