United Nations Development Programme

Country/Region/Global: I.R. Iran
Initiation Plan

Project Title	: Strengthening TVTO capacities towards enhancement of its educational and operational effectiveness for the empowerment of crisis affected women through AI and digitalization
Expected UNSDCF/CPD Outcome(s)	**: Outcome 1**
Expected CPD Output(s)	**: Output 1.3**
Initiation Plan Start/End Dates	**: 1 June 2026 – 30 May 2027**

Brief Description

In a disaster-stricken setting, women are among the most vulnerable groups, requiring support and assistance to resume and recover their livelihoods. In line with the UNDP's Leave No One Behind (LNOB) agenda and in order to mitigate the impacts of crisis on women, it is essential to empower their capacities and enhance their resilience through different means including up-to-dated trainings (with a focus on digitalization and AI) and employment opportunities. To achieve this, it is required to strengthen the capacity of the Technical and Vocational Training Organization (TVTO), affiliated to the Ministry of Cooperative, Labour, and Social Welfare (MCLSW), as the custodian organization for vocational trainings nationwide. The cooperation between UNDP, MCLSW, and TVTO for women empowerment will consist of three main components including:

- Providing training for TVTO trainers as well as development of standard training content and material on AI and digitalization
- Improvement of women target group's capacity on AI/digitalization and provision of required facilitation for joining the marketplace
- Development of a roadmap on mainstreaming AI in TVTO's training

First and foremost, this initiative is expected to enhance the capacities of TVTO trainers on how to leverage AI and other digital tools for different professions and skills, which enables transfer of practical knowledge to the target groups.

Additionally, this initiative expects to provide the required training facilities for the beneficiaries, ensuring that the trainees benefit from the necessary setting for advancing their professional skills.

Ultimately, the above activities will lead to mentoring target groups on AI/digitalization and employment facilitation for joining digital marketplaces. A roadmap on mainstreaming AI in TVTO's training will be developed.

Programme period: 12 months Project number: GEN marker: GEN 3	Total resources required: **USD 91,481.6** Total allocated resources: Regular: Other: • Donor • Government: **USD 91,481.6** Unfunded budget: In-kind contributions / Parallel Funding: **USD 114,267**

Signed by:

UNDP RR a.i.

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I. PURPOSE AND EXPECTED OUTPUT

Iran is among the countries in which the rate of higher degree education for women is almost the same or in some cases even surpassed that of men. However, their employment as well as economic participation rates remain far below the global and regional averages. The latest Labour Force Survey (LFS) of the Statistical Centre of Iran (SCI) in Q1-2026, highlights a persistent and widening gap in Iran's workforce. While the male labor force participation rate reached 67.2%, the female participation rate remained as low as 12.2%. This means men are participating in the labor market at roughly five times the rate of women, underscoring the limited role of women in the economy.

Among men, the employment rate rose to 63%, a 0.1 percentage increase compared to the same period last year, while the unemployment rate declined slightly to 6.2%.
For women, however, the employment rate declined to 10.4%, a 0.9 percentage decrease compared to last year (11.3%). The unemployment rate for women increased from 14.2% in Q1/2025 to 15% Q1/2026.

This decline in women's economic participation rate, as well as the employment rate, indicates that fewer women are actively seeking Jobs. Instead, they have become discouraged and exited the labor market altogether.

The disparity is even more striking among university graduates. In Q1/2026, the unemployment rate for educated women (university degree holders) was more than twice that of their male counterparts. While female graduates saw a 0.2 percentage point decrease in unemployment compared to last year, bringing the rate down from 17.7% to 17.5%, the rate for men experienced a 0.7 percentage fall from7.6% to 6.9%.

Notably, around 61.8% of unemployed women hold higher-education degrees, compared with 25.5% of unemployed men. This imbalance points to a critical structural issue: a shortage of job opportunities that align with the skills and conditions of educated women, limiting their ability to convert education into employment.

On the other hand, within Iran's already disaster-stricken environment, women remain among the most vulnerable segments of society. They are often disproportionately affected by shocks and disruptions, facing multiple layers of discrimination (social, economic, and cultural) that limit their ability to cope and recover. In times of crisis, women frequently experience heightened insecurity and reduced access to resources, leaving them in greater need of targeted support and assistance to rebuild their livelihoods and restore economic independence.

In the post-crisis setting, this vulnerability is particularly evident in the labor market. Evidence shows that women in Iran have suffered higher rates of job loss than men, as they are typically the first to be laid off when businesses downsize or close. Their employment is often concentrated in informal, low-wage, or temporary sectors, which offer little or no social protection and are among the first to be cut during periods of economic stress. As a result, many women not only lose their source of income but also face significant barriers to re-entry into the workforce, including limited childcare options, cultural constraints, and a persistent gap in access to new job opportunities. Given the context, and in line with the UNDP's Leave No One Behind (LNOB) agenda, it is essential to empower women and enhance their capacities and resilience through different interventions.

In response to this situation—and with the objective of empowering and encouraging unemployed female university graduates to enter the labor market—the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare, as

the country's lead employment policymaker, plans to collaborate with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Through the Technical and Vocational Training Organization (TVTO), the Ministry will provide targeted skills training to help these women gain entry into the job market.

Aligned with the Future of Work agenda and considering the triple shifts shaping both domestic and international employment conditions, namely technological, demographic, and climate-related changes, the Ministry's empowerment strategy will focus on emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, blockchain, virtual reality, and cybersecurity. This focus reflects the profound transformation taking place in the global labor market, where required job skills are evolving rapidly, creating a significant skills gap between the supply of and demand for qualified workers.

TVTO, with its nationwide network of training centers, plays a key role in preparing a skilled workforce for the labor market. However, given the changing demands driven by technological advancements, there is an urgent need to upgrade and expand existing infrastructure, including training specialized instructors and acquiring the hardware necessary to teach skills relevant to the digital economy.

In response to the above challenge, UNDP and TVTO decided to initiate a cooperation, through which the educational and operational effectiveness of TVTO's training capacity is strengthened through embedding AI trainings into TVTO training courses. The objective is to train unemployed women beneficiaries with the required AI/ digitalization skills, enabling them to join labour market more smoothly.

This Initiation Plan is built on a former mutual agreement between UNDP and TVTO in 2025, through which UNDP enhanced the access of TVTO trainees to the required facilities. In this new phase, the below activities are envisioned for the project.

First and foremost, this initiative is expected to enhance the capacities of TVTO trainers on how to leverage AI and other digital tools for different professions and skills, which enables transfer of practical knowledge to the target groups (ToT).

Additionally, this initiative expects to provide the required training to the women beneficiaries (TVTO trainees), ensuring that the trainees benefit from the necessary learnings for advancing their professional skills.

Ultimately, while embedding AI in TVTO training, the above activities, including the ToT followed by the training for women beneficiaries will pave the way for the women beneficiaries to be equipped with the required up-to-dated knowledge for joining the labour market.

Learnings from these initiatives will set the stage for developing longer-term partnerships between MCLSW, TVTO and UNDP, and formulating integrated programmes for empowering people living in vulnerable situations. It will be manifested in a roadmap which will be developed at the end of the project outlining the future possible upscaling of project activities and expanding collaboration in this area of work.

MCLSW, TVTO and other partners will put efforts in sound implementation of this initiative towards achieving its goals and objectives in line with the fundamental principles of national ownership and leadership, ensuring full alignment of activities with the Government's development policies and priorities.

TVTO will fund project activities in-line with the Government guidelines on cost-sharing of international projects issued by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance. UNDP will need to provide final progress report (results & finance) on disbursement of government funds as required by TVTO.

The main output of this Project Initiation Plan is as follows:

- **Output1:** The institutional, educational and operational capacity of TVTO is enhanced to empower disaster-affected women through AI and digitalization
- **Output2**: Development of a Roadmap on mainstreaming AI in TVTO's training context

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II. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

This Initiation Plan will be implemented by UNDP and in close coordination and collaboration with TVTO under the unwavering principles of national ownership and leadership.

Oversight and quality assurance of the outputs will be the responsibility of UNDP led by the UNDP Resident Representative and his/her designated staff, with support from a designated Programme Analyst.

A coordination committee which comprises the TVTO, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), UNDP, and other relevant ministries and organizations where needed will be established to ensure smooth implementation of the activities mentioned in this document.

TVTO will nominate a National Project Director as the focal point and responsible Government person for the coordination of this initiative between the two parties.

III. MONITORING

In accordance with UNDP's programming policies and procedures and in line with national laws and regulations, the project will be monitored through the following monitoring plans:

Monitoring Activity	Purpose	Frequency	Expected Action	Partners (if joint)	Cost (if any)
Track results progress	Progress data against the results indicators in the work plan below will be collected and analyzed to assess the progress of the project in achieving the agreed outputs.	Quarterly	Slower-than-expected progress will be addressed by project manager.	TVTO, UNDP	200K
Monitor and Manage Risk	Identify specific risks that may threaten the achievement of intended results. Identify and monitor risk management actions using a risk log.	Quarterly	Risks are identified by project management and actions are taken to manage risk. The risk log is actively maintained to keep track of identified risks	TVTO, UNDP	200K
Learning	Knowledge, good practices and lessons	Once in the lifetime of	Relevant lessons are captured by	TVTO, UNDP	200K

	will be captured regularly, as well as actively sourced from other projects and partners and integrated.	the project	the project team and used to information management decisions.		
Coordination Committee Meetings	Review project's achievements and key milestones, as well as replan/revise the remaining tasks – if needed – based on the emerging priorities	Twice a year	The project's activities are revised, adjusted, and adapted based on the evolving context.	TVTO, UNDP	200K
Project Report	A progress report will be prepared by the national consultancy entity and presented to the Vice Presidency of Rural Development consisting of progress data showing the results achieved	At the end of the initiative	The final project report will be prepared and presented to stakeholders, including progress data and achieved results.	TVTO, UNDP	200K

IV. WORK PLAN

Period: 12 Months

EXPECTED OUTPUTS *And baseline, indicators including annual targets*	**PLANNED ACTIVITIES** *List activity results and associated actions*	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	**Funding Source**	**Budget Description**	**Amount (USD)**
Output 1 ***The institutional, educational and operational capacity of TVTO is enhanced to empower disaster-affected women through AI and digitalization*** *Indicators:* *1- Number of TVTO trainers who received AI & digitalization trainings, with the average passing score of 70/100* *Baseline: 0* *Target: 117* *2- Number of women beneficiaries who received mentoring on AI /digitalization (in phase I)* *Baseline:* 0 *Targets:* 240 *3- Number of women beneficiaries who received employment facilitation for joining marketplaces (in phase I)* *Baseline:* 0 *Targets: 50*	***1.1 Activity*** *Providing training for TVTO trainers as well as delivery of standard training content and material on AI and digitalization*	10,000	40,000	36,303.4	0	Government of Iran, Cost Sharing	International Consultant- 71200 (USD 32,000) National Consultant- 71300 (USD 50,993.40) Services to Projects - 74596 (USD 2,151.50) Direct Project Cost - Services provided by CO Staff-64397 (USD 1,158.50)	86,303.4
	1.2 Activity *Improvement of women target group's capacity on AI/digitalization and provision of required facilitation for joining the marketplace*	0	0	0	114,267	Government of Iran, Parallel Funding	N/A	114,267
Sub-Total of Government Cost Sharing								86,303.4
General Management Services (GMS)								5,178.20
Parallel Funding								114,267
Grand Total								**205,748.6**

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