

OUR SPACE IS YOUR SPACE

EXPERIENCES FROM THE PILOT PHASE OF THE SECOND CHANCE EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMME (SCE) IN AUSTRALIA, CAMEROON, CHILE, INDIA, JORDAN AND MEXICO



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Second
Chance

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENTS	5	Setting goals	26
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7	Initial activities	28
ACRONYMS	8	Recording participation	29
GLOSSARY	9	Being agile: Recognizing and responding to changing needs	29
IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS	10		
PREFACE	11		
1. INTRODUCTION	13	4. LIFE SKILLS	32
Purpose	13	Key points	32
Audience	13	What are life skills?	32
SCE offerings and outcomes	13	Building confidence	34
What makes SCE programmes effective?	14	Digital skills	36
		Gender	38
2. HUBS AND STAFF	16	Life planning	39
Key points	16	Wellbeing	40
SCE staff	17	Leadership	41
Supporting staff roles	18		
SCE volunteers	18	5. OVERCOMING CONSTRAINTS	43
		Key points	43
3. WELCOMING PARTICIPANTS	20	Constraints	43
Key points	20	Referrals	44
Marketing and outreach	20	Transport	45
Typical elements of a participant's journey	21	Childcare	46
Building relationships and trust	23	Gender-based violence (GBV)	46
Providing a safe space	23	Community, family and men	47
Registration	24	ID documents	48
Building aspirations	25	Language	49
		Essentials	49

Wellbeing	49	Resources for startups and access to credit	91
6. DIGITAL AND ONLINE LEARNING	50	Case study: Entrepreneurship in Mexico	92
Key points	50	Case study: Online training in Chile	93
Digital, online, and blended learning	51	Incorporation of values and personal skills	94
Benefits of online learning	52	Cooperatives and group enterprises	94
Assessing needs/planning	54	Need to be agile	95
Approaches	54	Language	96
Challenges and solutions in online learning	59	9. EMPLOYMENT	97
Learning platforms	62	Key points	97
The e-portal	64	Challenges	97
A summary of e-learning tools used in SCE	65	Approaches	98
Interaction	65	Partnerships	98
Certificates	68	Digital skills	99
Assessment	69	Supporting decisions	99
Monitoring engagement	70	Case study: SisterWorks, Australia	100
Content development	70	Support in work	101
7. MENTORING, TUTORING AND PEER SUPPORT	76	10. RETURN TO FORMAL EDUCATION	102
Key points	76	Key points	102
What do mentors and tutors do?	76	SCE support	102
Tutors	76	Partnerships	102
Mentors	78	High school	103
Peer support	86	University	104
Communication tools for tutors and mentors	87	11. SHARING AND LEARNING	105
8. ENTREPRENEURSHIP	88	Videos	105
Key points	88	SCE conferences and webinars	105
Entrepreneurship in SCE	88	Knowledge products	106
Examples of SCE businesses	90	SOURCES	107
Partnerships	91		

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ACRONYMS

AIEP	Academia de Idiomas y Estudios Profesionales (technical–professional higher education institution in Chile and SCE implementing partner)
DIF	Sistema nacional para el desarrollo integral de la familia (government agency that provides social assistance for families in Mexico)
GBV	gender-based violence
IP	implementing partner
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MINPROFF	Ministère de la Promotion de la Femme et de la Famille (Ministry for the Empowerment of Women and the Family, Cameroon)
NGO	non-governmental organization
NIOS	National Institute for Open Schooling (India)
OU	The Open University (UK)
OSDA	Odisha Skills Development Authority (India)
SCE	Second Chance Education
SEPICJ	Servicio de Promoción Integral Comunitario Juvenil – SCE implementing partner (Mexico)
SMART	Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound (for goal setting)
VTECs	Vocational Training and Employment Centres (Australia)

GLOSSARY

Asynchronous	Not occurring at the same time. Asynchronous learning means learners can study whenever they want and not according to a similar schedule as their peers.
Blended learning	Learning occurs through a mix of approaches involving use of digital resources. It is usually a blend of two or more of in-person training sessions, online self-guided learning, offline self-guided learning, live online sessions, and the use of individual digital resources during in-person sessions.
Digital learning	Learning grounded in digital resources or courses that may be online or offline. Digital learning can occur through the use of computers, phones and tablets.
Face-to-face	Sessions where participants and teachers/trainers meet in 'real time'. Often used to mean when people meet in person but can also refer to live online sessions where people meet in digital 'face to face' format.
Facilitator	Someone who acts in ways to make an activity easier. For the purpose of this guide it refers to anyone who supports SCE participants in achieving their goals.
Hub	The physical building or part of a building where SCE activities take place. Hubs may be referred to as SCE centres, women's centres, women empowerment hubs, learning centres, or other localized terms.
In-person	Training/learning where the participants and facilitator are in a particular location at the same time. It often includes a digital element like the viewing of a video.
Kolibri	An offline-first learning management system, managed by not-for-profit Learning Equality, used by SCE in Phase 1 of the programme (2018–2022).
Mentor	Someone who offers individualized, tailored support to an SCE participant. Support may be personal, technical and/or professional. In SCE, mentors are usually volunteers.
Self-guided learning	An approach where the learner chooses what to study and engages with the learning materials at their own pace and at times that suit them. They are not dependent on a trainer or facilitator for learning, although the latter may provide support. The learner sets learning goals and manages learning. Also known as 'self-directed learning'.
Supported learning	An approach that provides dedicated human support to learners, usually as they work through online learning resources. An example is a system where learners study online with online learning materials but are allocated a tutor who provides scheduled, regular, personalized support.
Synchronous	Study or learning that occurs at the same time. It usually refers to live sessions with a teacher, trainer or facilitator, which may be online or in-person.
Tutor	Someone who provides support focused mainly on students' learning, rather than (or sometimes as well as) on social or personal issues.

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

Below are implementing partners (IPs) from Phase 1 of the SCE programme (2018–2022). The list includes IPs mentioned in this guide who are no longer SCE partners at the time of writing (May 2022).

AUSTRALIA

- Real Futures (Greater Western Sydney)
- SisterWorks (Victoria)

CAMEROON

- Le Ministère de la Promotion de la Femme et de la Famille (MINPROFF)

CHILE

- Acción Emprendedora (Región de Antofagasta)
- AIEP
- Infocap (Región Metropolitana)
- VeOmás (Región de la Araucanía)

INDIA

- Pradan (lead partner)
- Aaina
- Chaitanya
- Aga Khan Rural Support Programme
- Manjari Foundation
- PRAN (Preservation and Proliferation of Rural Resources and Nature)
- Shristi

JORDAN

- Arab Women's Organization of Jordan

MEXICO

- ProMéxico (State of Jalisco)
- ProSociedad (State of Jalisco)
- SEPICJ (Servicio de Promoción Integral Comunitario Juvenil) (State of Puebla and State of Mexico)
- ConVivencia Joven (SCE IP 2018–2021)

PREFACE

Opening reflections from implementing staff on the SCE experience.

“I think of all the experiences I’ve had in the education centres, the most fulfilling has been discovering the fortitude that women have, how they use it to tackle difficult situations and how they need opportunities to take advantage of it ... and to excel in any sector. I think women can flourish provided that there are spaces like this that help them achieve it.”

Jessica Cárdenas, Center Leader Crea Hub, Mexico¹

“The most rewarding part is seeing the women, being in contact with them, seeing them grow and want to continue to grow and learn, seeing all these happy women planning their future and projects.”

María Blanco, Community Development Coordinator, San Juan Cosalá Hub, Mexico²

“It has been incredible seeing these women take advantage of this opportunity by returning to education and realizing how they can improve their ventures while creating community and helping each other continuously improve.”

Alejandra Lahr, Mentor, Chile³

“The thing that distinguished this project is the availability of a number of local female facilitators from selected areas, and through whom community needs were attained and interventions were successfully made. Our advice for anyone who wants to make a similar intervention is to closely work with local communities in a participatory manner to create sustainable opportunities.”

Suhaib Khamaiseh, Programme Coordinator AWO, Jordan⁴

“I love sharing things with them that they already know or things they think they can’t do but then realize they can. They bring lots of taboos and barriers from home, but here they often say, ‘Wow, I can do this’, ‘I never thought that I could make a cake, I always used to buy them’, or ‘I was afraid of this kind of thing’. It’s a satisfying and priceless experience. This is what I’m passionate about and I love seeing the results and what they can achieve.”

Irma Casillas, Facilitator, Central Zapopan Hub, Mexico⁵

1 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Jalisco, https://youtu.be/nzv_oUPhkoM, 10:09–10:44.

2 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Jalisco, https://youtu.be/nzv_oUPhkoM, 4:05–4:25.

3 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, VeOmás, <https://youtu.be/CQkV6Knnzsl>, 2:43–3:01.

4 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Jordan, <https://youtu.be/TUgSZOasca8>, 2:22–2:45.

5 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Jalisco, https://youtu.be/nzv_oUPhkoM, 11:55–12:31.

‘We’re really flexible with support and try to have an approach to everything where we’ll talk to each individual aspirant to work out how we can help them, and then we’ll put a programme and workshops and even social days or courses that they specifically want ... It’s really important to have that aspect there so they feel that all their needs are being catered to ... it’s a really good support system to have.’

Mackenzie Stone, Real Futures, Australia⁶

‘In the beginning, there were several challenges. Women were not willing to participate. On occasions, I spoke to them at length about the importance of getting an education and motivated them to study. On the personal front, the training that I underwent gave me a sense of self-confidence and self-reliance, and I reached a stage where I was confident enough to take classes for adult learners. The women who before hesitated to step out of their homes now attend classes regularly at the hub centre without any self-doubt.’

Jyothi Panwar, Educator, India⁷

‘The most rewarding part has been seeing these ladies start out as entrepreneurs. At first, they were a little scared and would say they didn’t know if they had what it took to achieve it, or that they didn’t know what would happen if their plan didn’t work. Despite their doubts, they felt very well supported and they took on board all of the tools to make lots of progress. Seeing them reach a place that they never thought they would get to, that’s what has been most satisfying.’

Michelle Franco, Center Leader, CEMEX hub, Mexico⁸

‘It has been incredible seeing these women take advantage of this opportunity by returning to education and realizing how they can improve their ventures while creating a community and helping each other continuously improve.’

Alejandra Lahr, Mentor, Chile⁹

‘They have helped us a lot and, personally, have answered all doubts and questions that I’ve had. We go to them with any problem and they are always happy to assist.’

María Goretty Maldonado Gómez, participant, Zinacatepec Hub, Mexico¹⁰

‘[The educators] taught us very well and helped us immensely. They also came all the way to our villages to teach us. They have a very good way of explaining concepts and ideas and I have had a good experience.’

Narayan Kanwar, participant, India¹¹

6 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Real Futures, <https://youtu.be/fNHpAAf9kJo>, 11:19–11:47.

7 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, India, <https://youtu.be/1YSaUcxfdQo>, 5:58–6:29.

8 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Jalisco, https://youtu.be/nzv_oUPhkoM, 7:49–8:20.

9 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, VeOmás, <https://youtu.be/CQkV6KnnzZl>, 2:44–2:59.

10 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Puebla, <https://youtu.be/KJxXVCzXYHQ>, 7:53–8:04.

11 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, India, <https://youtu.be/1YSaUcxfdQo>, 4:23–4:34.

1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This guide provides information on how to design and facilitate the learning experiences of Second Chance Education (SCE) participants, based on experience gained in the six countries involved in the pilot phase of the programme between 2018 and 2022. It addresses how to:

- Reach and recruit women, build trust and confidence, and help them define their goals and aspirations so they embark on the most appropriate pathway ([section 3, Welcoming participants](#)).
- Support the development of life skills (literacy, numeracy, financial and digital literacy, etc.) ([section 4, Life skills](#)).
- Help women overcome constraints, including connecting them with external services ([section 5, Overcoming constraints](#)).
- Use educational technology to give SCE participants access to digital learning opportunities ([section 6, Digital and online learning](#)).



Photo: UN Women/Priya Naresh and Aniket Kolarkar

- Provide tutoring and mentoring support to participants and encourage peer support ([section 7, Mentoring, tutoring and peer support](#)).
- Offer an effective entrepreneurship pathway ([section 8, Entrepreneurship](#)).
- Offer an effective employment pathway ([section 9, Employment](#)).
- Support women who wish to return to formal education ([section 10, Return to formal education](#)).
- Contribute to, and benefit from, the sharing of knowledge and good practices across the SCE programme ([section 11, Sharing and learning](#)).

It is grounded in the experience and evidence of the pilot phase in the three contexts of the pilot programme (humanitarian crisis, middle income and developed countries) and includes examples from implementing partners (IPs), showcasing their work and illustrating the breadth and depth of their collective experience.

Audience

The guide is aimed at anyone who designs or implements SCE learning programmes, works directly with participants in training or support roles, designs or creates learning materials, or works with the families of participants or the wider community to facilitate the programme.

It may also be of interest to facilitators, hub coordinators, programme leaders, content developers, trainers, tutors and mentors.

SCE offerings and outcomes

SCE offers training and support along four pathways: life skills, employment, entrepreneurship and re-entry into formal education.

Life skills is a foundational element that underpins the other three but is also important on its own. Some SCE participants opt only for the life skills pathway because their circumstances or skills level are such that it is the only tenable path for them. Poverty, patriarchal norms, isolation due to language, social exclusion or having young children may mean other pathways are not yet realistic options for them. For women with young children, SCE enables them to maintain their

skills, even if they do not have the time or resources to enter the workforce or begin a business at this point in their lives.

SCE has four outcome areas:

Outcome 1: More marginalized women and young women access and benefit from high quality educational content, material and learning pathways.

Outcome 2: More marginalized women and young women benefit from increased employment, livelihood and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Outcome 3: Fewer marginalized women and young women are disadvantaged and denied education opportunities due to harmful and discriminatory social norms.

Outcome 4: More marginalized women and young women have improved access to education and employment pathways through enhanced multi-sectoral policy and financing frameworks that enabling scaling of successful SCE solutions.

The SCE design is based on a theory of change where it is anticipated that:

If increased access to high quality content is provided with an emphasis on learning outcome and retention; and,

If links to the labour market are established to increase the value of education and learning for women; and,

If positive social norms support second chance education and vocational learning for women; and,

If supportive multi-sectoral policy and financing frameworks for second chance education and vocational learning for marginalised women are promoted,

THEN women will be empowered to determine their future because structural barriers that women face in equally accessing quality education, learning and decent work opportunities will be addressed through long-term systematic change.

The education and training element of SCE is delivered in two ways:

- In-person training in women empowerment hubs (also called women's centres or learning centres) and other physical spaces.

- Digital and online learning through blended and self-study approaches, in the hubs and elsewhere.

What makes SCE programmes effective?

The experience of pilot countries from 2018 to 2022 suggests the following characteristics are noteworthy in the design of an effective SCE programme:

- A **holistic** approach that aims to develop not just business/employment skills but socio-emotional skills, a gender perspective, and sense of agency which is foundational to sustainable personal growth. ([section 4, Life skills.](#))
- The **focus in early stages** on confidence building, life skills and goal setting, which provides a robust foundation for subsequent training and for women to develop aspirations that align with her interests, skills and circumstances. ([section 3, Welcoming participants.](#))
- **Stepwise progression** such that women progress through a series of small, feasible but challenging steps to achieve their goals, gradually strengthening their ability to make decisions for themselves in all aspects of their lives. ([section 3, Welcoming participants > Building aspirations and Setting goals.](#))
- The use of **industry and government connections** to link training and women directly to jobs. ([section 9, Employment.](#))
- Linking of **entrepreneurship training to startup kits** or small grants that enable women to start small businesses, incentivizing women to complete training despite the barriers they face. ([section 8, Entrepreneurship.](#))
- The **bespoke, relatable nature of the training** and learning materials, which are tailored to SCE women in their subject, language, imagery and media. ([section 6, Digital and online learning.](#))
- **Flexibility in pathways**, such that if a woman decides a training or path is not a good fit she has alternative options. Each participant is supported as long as is needed as her aspirations evolve and she builds confidence and a sense of direction during the programme. ([section 3, Welcoming participants > Setting goals.](#))
- **Flexible delivery of learning** with in-person, online, and hybrid approaches used according to circumstances. In-person and online training schedules are adapted to dodge constraints that participants

face such as domestic and care work or difficulties with public transport. Digital technologies are employed in ways that make it easier for women to participate. ([section 6, Digital and online learning](#).)

- **Support networks** since personalized and empathetic support are crucial to participants' success. This includes peer support, personal and professional mentoring, and tutoring. ([section 7, Mentoring, tutoring and peer support](#).)
- **Referral to complementary professional services** such as GBV support, legal aid, housing, food programmes, and health services. ([section 5, Overcoming constraints](#).)
- **Financial support** for educational fees, especially return to secondary education and completion of school certificates. ([section 10, Return to formal education](#).)
- **Engagement of men** in families and communities, to encourage support for participants. ([section 5, Overcoming constraints > Community, family and men](#).)
- From this, we can draw down some of the central principles that underlie the design and implementation of SCE programmes.
- It is based on a **theory of change** with outcomes in four areas that serve to break down barriers at four different levels.
- It is **rights-based**; all women have a *right* to a second chance and do not need to *deserve* one.

- It is **evidence-led** through initial labour market assessments and regular monitoring to detect changes in beneficiary profiles and economies.
- Each programme is **tailored** to participants through contextualized design, training, learning materials and activities.
- It works through **partnerships**, meaning better outcomes, increased efficiencies, and greater potential for scaling.
- **Building women's agency** underpins all other outcomes and involves investments in the life skills pathway, as well as mentoring, and peer support.
- A **holistic** approach is employed at the **individual level** to remove practical, psychological and social constraints to participation.
- **Personalization** is key, with a focus on identifying and developing each woman's aspirations.



Photo: UN Women/Pablo Sanhueza

2. HUBS AND STAFF

“We let the women know that this space, as much as it’s our hub, is your hub too. The kitchen is your kitchen, you can go and help yourself to a cup of tea, make a coffee, go in the fridge; you don’t need to ask. Or the bathroom facilities. Our space is your space. We really want to make them feel like, as much as this is where we are located, this is your second home too.”

*Oneeva Tuuhetoka, Site Coordinator,
Real Futures, Australia¹*

The **SCE Hub Handbook** is the primary source of information for setting up and running the physical spaces where SCE is implemented. The Hub Handbook walks readers through the most important areas of work that are required to run a hub and highlights the approaches followed by diverse IPs that make their learning hubs unique.

In addition, **the SCE virtual hub tours²** are an immersive way of viewing how hubs are set up in different contexts and hearing firsthand from individuals and the teams running them.

Only the primary points related to hub location and organization of the physical space are included here, along with an outline of key implementing staff, which is described in depth in the Hub Handbook.

Key points

- Hubs are the **physical spaces** where **women participate in in-person activities**. Depending on locale, they may be called Women’s Centres, Women’s Empowerment Centres, Learning Centres, Oasis Centres, or other context-specific terms.
- Hubs should be **easy to reach and accessible** by public transport or on foot. They should be in well-lit, safe areas that pose no risk to women. If they are close to other services it will be easier for women to attend. Sometimes an IP can arrange transport

to and from the hub (e.g., minibus) to help women who have difficulties with transportation.

- Hubs should be **accessible to women living with disabilities**.
- Providing a **space and activities for children** allows women with babies or small children to attend. Locating the hub near to childcare facilities is another solution.
- Hubs should be places of **safety and trust**, particularly for women who have suffered abuse or violence. Some hubs allow men by invitation only.
- Providing a **safe, private space** for women who have suffered **abuse or violence** can help them feel safe, talk to trusted staff, allow staff to arrange confidential referrals, and outfit rooms with beds to provide survivors of gender-based violence with a safe space to stay overnight.
- Hubs should be **‘culturally safe’** so women feel comfortable expressing their cultural values, beliefs and identities. This can be encouraged by staffing hubs with women from the same culture, displaying (and commissioning) culturally resonant art and handicrafts, and working with culturally appropriate providers.
- Hub layout should make it **easy for women to socialize**, containing social spaces and **rooms for training and meetings**. Where possible, a garden or green area outside can work well as a social space.
- The layout and atmosphere should promote a sense of **ownership and belonging**: “This space is your space.”
- **Partnerships** with organizations that provide **public spaces nationwide** offer great potential to be scaled-up, like public libraries in Chile where women can access computers and the Chilean online programme for free.
- Delivering the SCE programme in particular hubs along with **mobile outreach** for those living in isolated areas, or through an **online component**, makes it possible for more women to benefit from SCE opportunities.

¹ SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Real Futures, <https://youtu.be/fNHpAAf9kJo>, 9:20–9:42.

² SCE Virtual Hub Tour playlist: <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJ5VcsUWWWhLsMNALE5QCghdvjbZ98Alqf>.

SCE staff

Most SCE hubs have a coordinator or manager in charge of the space, who monitors activities, and supervises and supports staff and participants. This person supervises a team of implementing staff and individuals acting as a ‘facilitator’.

What is a facilitator?

A ‘facilitator’ is anyone involved in SCE implementation in the hubs or online components and has direct contact with women in the programme. As such, ‘facilitator’ roles may include:

- Welcoming and registering women.
- Providing culturally safe spaces where participants can express their cultural values, beliefs and identities.
- Supporting participants in solving practical issues related to transport, housing, childcare, violence in the home, and more.
- Supporting participants to select the most appropriate pathway based on their interests, background and circumstances.
- Signing up participants for relevant training, workshops or online courses.
- Helping women build confidence and adjust to the demands of the programme, particularly in terms of possibly being a ‘learner’ for the first time in years.
- Speaking with male members of a family or community about the programme and encouraging them to see the benefits of women’s participation.
- Planning and organizing courses and activities.
- Conducting in-person training or facilitating online training and support sessions, assisting participants through phone, WhatsApp, SMS, email, etc.
- Tutoring, mentoring, or organizing and supporting the tutoring/mentoring system.
- Identifying potential mentors across a cohort of participants.
- Commissioning or creating learning materials used in the programme.
- Supporting women on the entrepreneurship pathway in creating and growing their business through material support, guidance, and networks or communities for peer-to-peer support.
- Supporting women on the employment pathway to search and apply for jobs, attend and perform well in interviews, and transition smoothly into a new job.



Photo: UN Women/Sonali Hedditch

- Supporting women in returning to education by applying to relevant institutions, handling financial and administrative matters, and returning to classes.
- Promoting the initiative and disseminating programme-specific information.

In Chile, facilitators are all women who have the necessary competencies to lead participant learning processes, provide clear and accurate plans with corresponding objectives together with the tools needed to mobilize the capital of each programme participant based on goals set.³

In some settings, facilitators are assigned to a particular theme. In India, this includes education, livelihoods (including agriculture), gender, and skills growth.

Typical of SCE programmes elsewhere, SEPICJ facilitators in the State of Mexico focus on human development, digital skills, employment and entrepreneurship—in online and in-person format.

Facilitator responsibilities can be extensive. In Puebla, Mexico, SEPICJ facilitators organize courses, plan and implement activities, promote and disseminate information related to the programme, and enroll women.

3 TEDUCA User Manual for Tu Oportunidad/SCE Program, May 2021, p. 5.

They expend a lot of effort ensuring their hub is a safe and emotionally comfortable place for participants, which sometimes leaves little time for supporting each woman individually.

It's all in the name

A job title can be a powerful way of indicating the facilitator's role and inspiring both sides of the facilitator/participant relationship. The way 'participant' is defined can be a powerful way of conveying what participation means, such as 'aspirant' (Real Futures, Australia) and 'sister' (SisterWorks, Australia).

'Facilitator', meanwhile, simply means someone who makes things easier.

Facilitators in India are known as 'sarathis', a local word meaning a charioteer, driver, guide, and someone who intends to motivate, guide, manage and support.

At Real Futures in Australia, the essence of the facilitator role is encapsulated in the job title 'Reach Out Officer'.



Photo: UN Women

Supporting staff roles

Women commonly receive support from people in three roles: hub leaders or coordinators, facilitators, and mentors. In Chile, where the SCE programme is 100% online, tutors have an essential fourth role.

For Pro-Mexico and ProSociedad in Jalisco, Mexico:

- **Hub leaders/coordinators** identify the barriers women face and challenges they must overcome, using M&E tools and research tools like socio-economic and barrier detection studies. They also provide friendly and personalized follow-up through WhatsApp groups and calls.

"This way, they are able to incentivize and motivate the women, creating close ties with them which helps identify their needs and interests."

ProSociedad, Mexico, Life Planning survey, Feb 2021

- **Facilitators** accompany women through their time in the SCE programme and offer help and advice with financing, entrepreneurship, and trade techniques.
- **Mentors** offer close and personalized assistance to women who request the service. Mentors check-in regularly to see how things are going, detect concerns or problems, and offer support and advice.

"We have observed that the personalized and continued support provided through the mentorship service has been instrumental in keeping the women in the program and creating support networks."

ProSociedad, Mexico, Life Planning survey, Feb 2021

SCE volunteers

In countries with long traditions of volunteering, parts of the facilitator role may be carried out by volunteers. SisterWorks draws on a strong volunteering culture in Australia by staffing many of their programmes in this way, engaging two types of volunteers:

- **Interns and students at local institutions** that have partnerships with SisterWorks, particularly students in courses that require community service. A 200-hour requirement of community service means they work for three to four months while 400 hours equals six months of service.

- **Women from the local community** who have a job but can commit time regularly (say, one day per week) sometimes stay with SisterWorks for years.

Other volunteer roles at SisterWorks include:

- an **intake coordinator**, who conducts interviews with new participants and keeps database records
- an **engagement coordinator**, who works with participants enrolling in classes and supporting class operation
- **teaching volunteers**, who impart life skills and implement basic skills development programmes for participants.

In other countries, volunteer roles include:

- **SCE graduates** who continue involvement in the programme after completion and stay on to mentor new participants.
- In Jalisco, Mexico, **volunteers from the private sector** act as advisors or mentors to SCE participants wishing to set up a small business.
- In Australia, **corporate volunteers** work for SisterWorks and Real Futures in hosting product market sales, delivering training and doing technical work.
- In Chile, AIEP offer training of **community volunteers and mentors** who go on to support and guide women and serve as role models.



Photo: UN Women

3. WELCOMING PARTICIPANTS

Key points

Marketing and outreach

- Outreach on **social media**, through IP accounts and associate organizations, is an effective channel for reaching new participants.
- Many women hear about the programme through **word of mouth**, including on WhatsApp groups and other messaging platforms.
- **TV, radio, and in-person activities of IPs** can be effective for outreach.
- **Working with partners and like-minded organizations** on the ground are essential when trying to meet and register women in **new locations**.

Building trust

- Building **relationships and trust** with new participants from the start makes it easier for them to seek support for particular difficulties and gives them the confidence to move forward in their SCE journey.
- In patriarchal societies, talking to **male members of a woman's family and community**, to explain programme objectives and share feelings of distrust, is essential for a woman's successful participation.

Registration

- The registration process—often a 1:1 interview involving registration—is one way of **getting to know** a participant and **identify her needs**, but also an opportunity for **relationship building**. It should not be seen as an exercise in information extraction.

Initial programme focus

- Initial training tends to focus on **personal skills, digital skills, a gender perspective, life planning and goal setting**.

- A key goal in initial stages is helping women realize and embrace a **sense of agency in their lives** and **confidence** to bring about change.
- **Life planning** includes aspiration building, which can be encouraged through reflection and visualization of participant life stories, talents and interests, through drawing, painting and collage-making.
- Training according to **gender perspective** helps participants recognize the extent to which gendered roles and stereotypes is present in their lives. As such they may see themselves as **women in their own right** and not as a wife, mother, daughter, sister or caregiver.

Responding to changing needs

- Facilitators and other implementing staff play an important role in **recognizing changes** in the profile of women registering, barriers to participation, and demand for different pathways and courses. This helps SCE programmes **adapt to changes** in the wider social and economic environment so it continues to be relevant and effective.

Marketing and outreach

“We launched a massive social media campaign aimed at a very specific target audience, particularly women between 18 and 29 years of age, although we slightly widened the search parameters.”

Natalie Traverso, Programme Coordinator, Acción Emprendedora, Chile⁴

“Every now and again we publish a call across physical and digital media. A coordinator guides those interested, provides them with information, and answers any questions.”

ConVivencia Joven, State of Mexico, Mexico⁵

4 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Acción Emprendedora, <https://youtu.be/ZjmYcgCCJeg>, 1:24–1:34.

5 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, State of Mexico, https://youtu.be/Vgoz_mY_JeQ, 1:26–1:37.

IPs achieve outreach through a range of physical and digital channels.

- **Social media** networks, including those of local partner organizations, NGOs and CSOs, and UN Women to share **success stories and testimonials** (short videos and quotes), attractively designed **infographics**, links to e-portals or national **SCE websites** (such as in Chile on www.tuoportunidad.org and Mexico on www.segunda-oportunidad.mx), and advocacy of **influencers** and **public figures** close to target audiences.
- **Word of mouth**, including through WhatsApp groups to **share the enjoyment** of SCE women. SEPICJ in Puebla, Mexico, described how participant happiness and camaraderie when they attend centres draws the attention of other women who want to know what is happening and wind up enrolling.
- Using **special days** (e.g., International Women’s Day) to share SCE messages. In Cameroon, on International Women’s Day 2021, five national awareness and advocacy campaigns were launched at five SCE project sites focusing on the broader benefits of educating women and girls through the SCE programme.
- **Community radio and TV**. Real Futures in Australia promote the programme through an Indigenous community radio station (Koori Radio) once a month and give an update of what’s happening at the Hub.
- **Branded posters, brochures and leaflets**.
- **Community announcements**, as in Mexico where SCE information is delivered in **churches** with the support of priests or on the street through a car with a **loudspeaker** in Jocotepec.
- **Partnerships** with community organizations and service providers. At SisterWorks in Australia, partnerships are key to reaching beneficiaries in new locations. Marketing efforts involving mobile hubs in new venues tend not to be successful without the backing of organizations already there. Real Futures’ partnerships with Aboriginal community organizations and service providers in Western Sydney have been instrumental in increasing such reach.
- **Tapping into existing networks**, like in Jordan, makes it possible to reach prospective participants. Local community-based associations raise awareness of the SCE programme and encourage women

to participate. SCE facilitators recruited from within communities can also active in recruitment.

- **Podcasting** is all the rage and in India in 2021 the SCE supported the country’s first interactive pop culture podcast (‘Popkast with Garima’) featuring celebrity influencers and aiming to break stereotypes and taboos. An SCE participant spoke about her experience on the podcast focusing on open schooling.
- **Telephone** follow up calls to field expressions of interest and confirm participation.

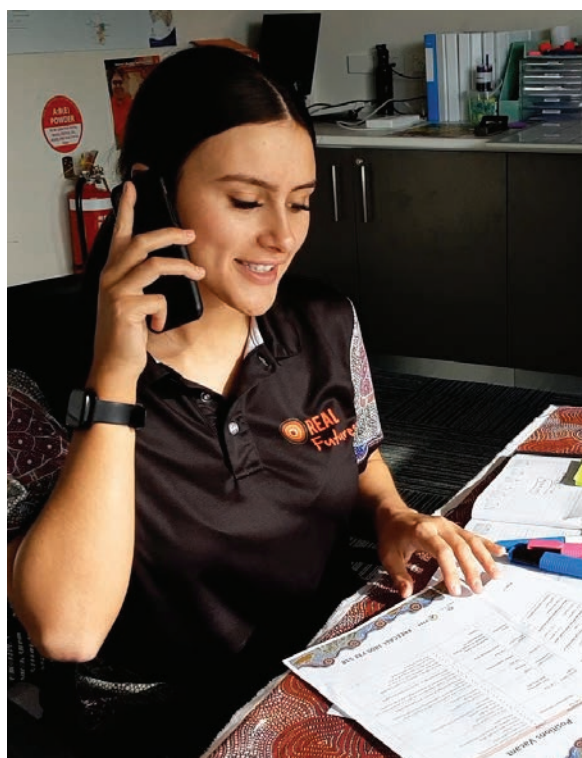


Photo: UN Women

Typical elements of a participant’s journey

Most SCE programmes contain several elements, which vary according to context.

1. **Invitation:** Invited to the hub.
2. **Explanation:** Facilitator gives overview of the programme, goals and services, and support on offer.
3. **Decision to join:** Participant decides whether she is interested.
4. **Registration:** Facilitator goes through registration form and either the participant fills it out or facilitator fills it out while in discussion with the participant.

5. **Hub tour/online welcome session:** Facilitator gives the participant a tour of the hub, plus the services and pathways on offer.

“We get them to come into the hub in person so they can have a tour, meet our staff and understand our overall program. This breaks down any misconceptions they might have about the services and reiterates our focus on support and helps to build the positive relationship.”

Real Futures, Life Planning survey, Feb 2021

Online, participants join one or more welcome sessions to get to know their tutor, other participants and the pathways.

6. **Overview of services and pathways:** This is done partly during the hub tour and through meetings and discussions.
7. **Practical support/referral** for gender-based violence, money, housing or health problems, childcare, etc.
8. **Aspiration building and goal setting** activities to enable participants to think through what they want to do.
9. **Begin digital and personal skills training.**
10. **Begin entrepreneurship, employment or return to education pathway.**

Thoughts on how new participants are welcomed to the Real Futures hub in Australia.

“A woman’s journey would start by them being invited into the hub. We would sit down, I would initially sit down with her and have a discussion with her and pretty much provide her with an overview of the many different services we offer out of the hub.

A lot of our women are quite amazed and really happy because they’re like, you can do all of this? ... from employment to training and the emotional, social and wellbeing support. We really want to not be just a band-aid-approach service, but we want to get down and if it’s social support that’s needed prior to you getting into a role or prior to you starting an education or workshop, then let’s get that out of the way.

So we go through the membership form with them, whether they want to fill it out or they speak to us and we fill it out as they go, it works either way. Once that has been completed, we would take the woman through the whole hub, give her a hub tour ...

Once we’ve got the overview and hub tour out of the way, and they know what our services provide and have had time to go away and have a think on: what can I really gain from your service? What assistance do I really need help with?”

Oneeva Tuuhetoka, Site Coordinator, Real Futures, Australia⁶

For the online programme in Chile, signing up is through an online form:

“Women can sign up to the programme either by completing a form that we send them via social media or through an alliance that we have with important players in their region, town, university or technical training centre, for example. All women who join the programme must complete this application form. If they are selected for the SCE programme, we contact them by email and assign them a tutor based on their interests.

We recommend a workplan for them based on their interests, centered around one of our three pathways: employment, entrepreneurship and return to formal education.”

Acción Emprendedora, Chile⁷

After registering, women in the Chile programme take part in a welcome discussion with their tutor group.

“The first thing they do is give the women a welcome talk. This talk is given to all women who have signed up to the programme and it explains to them the outline of the course and introduces them to the Kolibri platform.”

Acción Emprendedora, Chile⁸

In Cameroon, an important activity for facilitators in the first weeks is to talk not just to participants but their husbands, fathers, uncles and brothers. Addressing any feelings of threat or disrespect amongst male family members can be essential for

6 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Real Futures, <https://youtu.be/fNHpAAf9kJo>, 08:08–9:58.

7 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Acción Emprendedora, <https://youtu.be/ZjmYc9CCJeg>, 2:43–4:04.

8 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Acción Emprendedora, <https://youtu.be/ZjmYc9CCJeg>, 3:35–3:46.

women's participation. Facilitators describe aims and benefits of the programme, noting in particular how it benefits not just women but their families (see [section 5, Overcoming constraints](#)).

Building relationships and trust

"In this community center, the key is to create a space where people work in cooperation, a spirit of sisterhood and with a focus on gender. It's not just about education but also about trying to make these women trust in us so that they can ask us for help whenever something is happening in their lives. We have a psychology service and we also offer legal advice with a gender perspective but none of this matters if they don't feel comfortable talking to us."

*Michelle Franco, Center Leader, CEMEX Hub, Mexico*⁹

In initial visits to the hubs and first encounters with staff, SCE participants must be given clear information about how the programme works and the services and trainings on offer. The building of relationships and trust is as important as providing information and starts from first contact.

"The relationship I think is really important from the initial setup. I think if we can really build that relationship with the aspirant on the first meeting, I've found in my experience just by being here that you're really able to sustain that aspirant in wanting to realise the services from the hub."

*Oneeva Tuuhetoka, Site Coordinator, Real Futures, Australia*¹⁰

"It was a challenge of how not only to reach them with information, but how to generate closeness and build trust."

*Michelle Franco, Center Leader, CEMEX Hub, Mexico*¹¹

"When a person can see that you are genuine about the service you provide, they will want to be a part of it."

Oneeva Tuuhetoka, Site Coordinator, Real Futures, Australia

In Cameroon, facilitators share small presents amongst participants and their children in the

awareness raising and introductory sessions, with responses sometimes expressed in the form of traditional dance.

In the SEPICJ and San Pedro centres in Puebla, Mexico, when new women join the programme, the facilitator organizes a series of activities to welcome and integrate them into the group. What happened spontaneously is that current participants become the spokespeople for the programme (portavoces) and warmly welcome new women.

This exemplifies the non-hierarchical approach followed at these centres. Participants are considered to be on the same level as facilitators; everyone is equal and there to help and support each other. Participants feel genuine ownership of the programme and one that imparts a positive impact on the wellbeing of facilitators and participants alike. They feel they are among friends and view the hub as a place where they feel happy and comfortable. Many spend time in the hubs simply to be with the facilitators and other participants, in the kind of space not available to them anywhere else. They may come for a class in the morning but then want to come back in the afternoon too.

"No me voy hasta que me corran": "I'm not going until they throw me out."

Providing a safe space

Linked to the building of trust is the need to create and maintain a safe space, in physical hubs and online. This is an ongoing priority for facilitators and other staff as it is central to women's ability to connect, collaborate, and grow.

A safe space in the SCE context means an environment where women

- Can talk about their experiences and problems without being judged.
- Know that any confidential information they share is secure.
- Can openly share aspirations and ideas in a positive and supportive atmosphere.
- Feel physically and emotionally secure, which, in most contexts, means excluding men.
- Can open up about sometimes deeply troubling experiences or problems in the knowledge that

⁹ SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Jalisco, https://youtu.be/nzv_oUPhkoM, 6:24–6:50.

¹⁰ SCE IP roundtable on building confidence, 7 June 2021

¹¹ SCE COVID-19 Adaptation, <https://youtu.be/m1xWB7leqbc>, 11:38–11:42.

support, including links to professional support, are at hand.

- Are comfortable in simply being themselves, outside of their roles of wife, mother, daughter or caregiver.
- Are able to learn new skills and try new things without feeling constrained by social and cultural norms or any expectations from the community or oneself about fulfilling a ‘woman’s role’.

If the participant is a survivor of gender-based violence (GBV) she may need an immediate referral to medical, social and/or legal services. Counselling sessions may be offered on site where the prevalence of abuse is high, as in Minawao Refugee Camp, Cameroon. ([section 5, Overcoming constraints > Gender-based violence.](#))



Photo: UN Women/Dzilam Méndez

Registration

IPs employ a variety of approaches when registering new participants.

- Registration is the first step in **identifying the needs and aspirations** of each participant and **barriers** which, if not addressed, will prevent one from succeeding in the programme.
- It represents a **structured way of getting to know** a new participant. Typically, a form is used to record information on a participant's:
 - **Background**, interests and expectations (aspirations tend to be developed later).
 - **Practical needs** in terms of housing, health issues, financial problems, caring responsibilities, etc.
 - **Access to digital devices** and confidence navigating the digital world.
- Typically the registration process consists of a one-to-one **interview** and filling in a **registration form**. It often works well when the two are combined.
- **Dialogue and relationship building**, not information extraction, is how participants start building trust in people and the programme.
- The initial registration can be kept **short and simple** with more detailed information gathering left to a later stage. Some opt for **longer, more involved exercises** centred around a 1:1 interview.
- A **tangible first step**, registration in itself is a huge achievement for women who may have never imagined themselves doing anything outside their own home.
- Recording information on a participant's background is essential for **monitoring and evaluation** purposes. Without this information, we do not know who the programme is reaching or what difference the programme makes to participants' lives.

Registration interviews are informal and friendly and intended to start the process of getting to know a participant and identifying her needs and interests so that she can be offered the most appropriate services.

Below is a summary of the registration processes of three IPs.

- **SisterWorks'** registration process collects minimal information to avoid putting off new participants: they are simply asked for their name, contact details, and what they would like to do in general terms.

“At the time of initial engagement, we find that many do not feel comfortable talking about their personal details. This is why we take [just] a couple of steps.”

A more detailed assessment is carried once the participants have started engaging in activities and relationships and trust are more firmly established. Participants do not have to fill in forms themselves. The Sister Scale Assessment devised by SisterWorks was later incorporated into intake and goal planning as a strengths-based assessment tool. It involves scoring six areas of life:

Physical and mental wellbeing
Confidence in living in Australia
Having connections
Self-organization and time management
Having strong relationships and culture
Sense of self and identity ('I know and am proud, I like and believe in who I am and what I want to achieve in the future')

This helps the intake team to identify, for each participant, the programmes and services that would give the best support and those who might benefit from being assigned a social mentor.

- **Real Futures** tries to address significant barriers the women may face before they move into the training and development stages. A Real Futures staff member works through the six-page membership form together with the participant.

“Our first activity is to sit with them and go through our membership form. This enables us to start conversations and understand their background and personal stories. It identifies any barriers they may face and gives us an understanding into literacy levels as well.”

Real Futures, Life Planning survey, Feb 2021

The form asks for information on documentation and background checks (working with children, drug and alcohol testing, criminal history, student ID), experience with community activities, strengths, weaknesses, children and adults they are responsible for, digital devices and internet

access at home, digital literacy, social media use, qualifications they'd like to have, how long since school, education level, training received, do you want to start your own business, do you want to study, what's your dream job, type of work you're interested in, availability for training, financial goals, personal goals, professional goals, issues with health, housing and finances, parenting and caring, transportation, safety, law and justice, literacy and numeracy.

It also asks for Covid-19 vaccination status. It is not compulsory to give this information but it enables Real Futures to direct women who are not vaccinated to community organizations and employers that do not require vaccination.

- In Jalisco, **ProMexico** and **ProSociedad** carry out a quadruple diagnosis for each woman when she joins, on socio-economic level, digital inclusion, financial practice and empowerment. The hub staff adapt their services accordingly. Then, through shared experiences in the training sessions and in-person or virtual exchanges, facilitators, mentors and hub leaders identify any other needs. They later connect women to organizations that offer support in the relevant areas, such as psychological assistance, legal advice and nutritional advice.

All personal data must be stored in a secure database or content management system. At SisterWorks, all information on individual women is managed in the CRM system *Infoodle*.

Building aspirations

“We know that a lot of our beneficiaries, when they first register with our hub, have difficulty in articulating their strengths and weaknesses or their professional and personal goals.”

Renee Hawkins, Data and Resource Manager, Real Futures, Australia¹²

A lack of self-awareness and confidence are challenges common to participants across the SCE programme. Women who have not completed school, fled conflict, spend their days caring for others, struggle to make ends meet, or are in a minority group and lack access to mainstream opportunities, will not be in a position

¹² Participatory Video in the Second Chance programme, <https://youtu.be/J7Cx3Ok6Ao>, 1:55–2:10.

to take an informed view on what they want to do with their lives at registration.

They need time and support to start looking to the future, identify interests and talents, reflect on information about different sectors, jobs and careers, and build their aspirations from there.

To support the process, SCE facilitators:

- **Build relationships and trust** (see section on Confidence building).
- Hold **Life and Career Planning** courses and **vision board** sessions (Real Futures, Australia) and engage in **reflections on personal talents and interests**. This can be incorporated in human development courses at the start of the SCE journey.
- Provide an **overview of different pathways** on offer that align with a woman's aspirations and examples of where pathways can lead.
- Offer **taster sessions on different industries** where experts from different sectors are invited to provide accurate, up-to-date information.
- Provide participants with a **mentor** to support thinking around what they aspire to.
- Provide **self-reflective questionnaires** for participants to work through, which enables them to attain personal life goals consistent with central aspects of self-knowledge, targets achievement, relevant actions, barriers and opportunities.

Setting goals

"Setting goals helps trigger new behaviours, helps guide your focus and helps you sustain your momentum in life. Goals also help you to focus and promote a sense of self-discipline. Setting goals not only motivates us, but can also improve our mental health and our level of personal and professional success."

From Vision Boarding by Nakoa Pitt, Reach Out Officer, Real Futures

Once participants identify the direction in which they want to travel, they need support to turn their aspirations into achievable goals. At this time, it can be useful for them to define a series of **manageable goals or milestones**.

In Jalisco, Mexico, women identify an ambitious but feasible life project of their own, with the support of facilitators, who also help them break down their

chosen project into a progression of steps and goals. When the women achieve a milestone in their life

Vision boarding

A vision board is a collage of images and words used to spark motivation and remind you of your values, goals and dreams.

You can create one with a sheet of A3 cardboard, magazines (to cut out pictures and words), images printed off the internet, scissors and glue.

Words can include affirmations, true statements about oneself like 'beautiful', 'creative', 'confident', 'grateful', 'loved', 'resilient'.

A vision board should be displayed in a prominent place to remind you why you do what you do every day. It can also be filled with things that inspire you or make you feel happy.

Vision boards don't have to contain pictures. Whether it is words or images they should inspire you to have a positive mindset.

Your vision board is about your journey, whatever that may look like. Take your time, plan, and have fun. You may even want to invite your friends or family to create one with you.

Source: Vision Boarding, course created by Nakoa Pitt, Real Futures on EdApp

project, a sense of satisfaction motivates them to continue to the next stage.

This is echoed by other IPs:

"We want to ensure they are measurable goals with small rewards leading to the bigger result at the end. We find our women are more receptive with breaking down the goals into maintainable and reachable outcomes."

Real Futures, Life Planning survey, Feb 2021

SMART Goals

Source: SMART Goals, <https://youtu.be/daB8qzd2unw>, SisterWorks

Specific means your goal should be clear. The more specific your goal is, the easier it is for you to see what you're trying to achieve. It should answer the question: **What do you want to achieve?**

For example, instead of setting a goal of 'I want to increase my sales', you can be more specific and set a goal of 'I want to double the number of sales with the help of Instagram in the next three months.'

Measurable means once you have set the goal, you need to be able to measure your success in achieving this goal and also keep track of your achievements.

For example, to be able to achieve 'double the number of sales with the help of Instagram in the next three months', you need to define smaller steps to reach the goals such as 'gaining 30 new followers on Instagram every week' and 'receiving 10 sales enquiries from Instagram every month'.

Achievable means your goal should be something which you can make happen and not impossible. It should answer the question: **How can you achieve your goal?**

For example, it is not realistic to double your sales in three weeks if you're not trying anything new. But you can do it in three months and with the help of a new platform such as Instagram. You can then set smaller goals in order to help you reach this goal, such as take two different photos of your products every day. Post FOUR photos of your products on Instagram every week.

Relevant means that your goal matters to you and will help you grow. **How will this goal change my life?**

For example, in order for you to reach the goal mentioned earlier, you need to be realistic and think if your goal is what you really want to achieve in your life now and you are happy with it.

Time-bound means every goal needs a target date, so that you have a deadline to focus on. It should answer the question: **By when should I achieve this goal?**

For example, you have set a time limit of three months to achieve the goal mentioned earlier. So you have three months or 12 weeks until your goal is completed.

"Everyone wants to achieve something in life. Achieving becomes easier when you have goals. Goals can be set daily, weekly, monthly or yearly. And this will help you create a structure to work on and succeed. Setting SMART goals will help you to create clear and easy goals and know how to achieve them."

SMART Goals, SisterWorks,
<https://youtu.be/daB8qzd2unw>

For many programmes, the time scale for immediate and medium-term goals depends on the length of training.

- In Cameroon, the petty trade training is relatively short but participants receive follow-up. The trainings in farming and tailoring have a longer time scale of 8–12 months.

- At SisterWorks, initial assessments are designed to identify medium to long-term goals, but individual training programmes take up to three months to complete, after which the next goal is identified.
- At Real Futures, each participant attends a session with their Reach Out Officer and completes a training and support plan. This gives a basis for planning and is a working document that is continuously reviewed and adapted according to the participant's needs. She will also be booked into the Life and Career Planning course. The Reach Out Officer provides information on all upcoming courses and workshops, and adds any the participant wishes to attend to the original plan. Goals cover one year but are broken into one, three, and six-month goals, with tangible outcomes at each stage.

An important feature of many SCE programmes is the flexibility in the participants' choice of pathway. Many women end up on more than one; for example, someone on the employment pathway may subsequently join the return to formal education pathway in order to be better qualified in the job market. Or if she decides a training or pathway is not a good fit, she is offered alternative options.

Each participant is supported as long as is needed to evolve her aspirations and build confidence and a sense of direction during the programme.

Initial activities

SEPICJ in Mexico calls the initial activities and training *el tronco común*, the common 'trunk' that all participants take after which they branch out on one of the three pathways (entrepreneurship, employment or return to formal education). Activities in the *tronco común* are designed to help women acquire greater confidence, establish clear objectives, be persistent, and develop expectations and assertiveness.

For SEPICJ, the goal of the induction stage is to awaken participants' curiosity and encourage their interest in the programme. For example, if a woman comes to a centre and asks about computer classes, she will be given information but also invited to a two-hour introductory workshop where staff encourage women to enroll.

Most programmes start by introducing the programme and people. In India, this means:

- Describing the three pillars of the programme: Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship (farm and off-farm).
- Promoting a gender perspective through discussion of norms and roles, household decision-making and control of household finances.
- Discussing women's employment, entrepreneurship and educational status and reasons for dropping out of education.

In-person group activities might include:

- Ice-breakers such as matching pairs (India).
- Creative activities such as plasticine modeling and painting to create representations of ideas such as 'what it means to be a woman in my community' (Mexico).
- Painting and drawing, especially during gender sensitization workshops (India).

- Storytelling (India).
- Games that encourage openness about emotions and values, such as emotion and gesture dice, puppets, values dominoes, emotion cushions, faces and gestures cards and mandalas (SEPICJ).
- 'Micro Lab': Thought-provoking questions help participants immerse themselves in the discussion topics (India).
- Comparison tables (generational changes in women's living conditions).
- Animated songs (Minawao, Cameroon).
- Talks and meetings.
- Exercises to explain and develop gender perspective.
- Showing motivational videos and success stories of local women (Cameroon, India).

Social interaction is very important when women first join. For *Convivencia Joven*, an IP in Mexico until 2021, the aim of initial activities was to encourage participants to get to know the coordinator and facilitators, integrate with the group, and understand the programme structure. Social interaction was key.

"The group integration dynamics were essential for developing a sense of belonging to and participation in the programme."

Convivencia Joven, Mexico, Life Planning survey, Feb 2021



Photo: UN Women

Welcoming participants, assessing their needs and interests, and building relationships tends to be more difficult in an online environment:

“The introduction videos and online education in general are weak at integrating the participants into the programme and their group work, although they do partially make up for the enormous possibilities lost that are offered by in-person and group work.”

Convivencia Joven, Mexico, Life Planning survey, Feb 2021

But the online Chile programme has been successful in connecting women with each other and their own personal tutor online, both in the critical initial stages and throughout the programme.

Participants in the second phase of the online programme in Chile run by AIEP follow this schedule of activities in the first week, which seems to work well:

- Monday 5pm: *Welcome meeting*
- Tuesday 5pm: *Activation workshop*: gender and empowerment. Participants get to know each other and chat with workshop facilitator
- Wednesday 5pm: *Challenge workshop*: a discussion on the two pathways open to participants, entrepreneurship and employment. The workshop facilitator answers questions and supports participants in thinking through which option is best for them and what their challenge or project is going to be about at the end of the programme.

Once relationships and trust have been built and a safe environment is assured, sessions can involve introspection and the sharing of more personal perspectives. Women can share their abilities, strengths and concerns, their personal interests and the gender challenges they face.

Regular follow-up of newly registered participants is important to avoid them dropping out before they have a chance to experience SCE benefits. Reach Out Officers at Real Futures contact all aspirants twice a month to keep them in the loop on what’s happening at the Hub, booking them into workshops, sending confirmation texts, and calling the day before the workshop.

Throughout the SCE programme, initial training focuses on life skills, particularly:

- **Digital skills**
- **Building confidence**
- **Gender**
- **Life planning.**

See [section 4, Life skills](#) for details.

Recording participation

In Cameroon, field trips by implementing staff are important for encouraging participants, verifying whether lessons have been assimilated, and correcting errors in implementation.

In Jalisco, Mexico, ProMexico and ProSociedad facilitators take attendance registers for all activities and during workshops they monitor the women’s progress. On completing a workshop or training, participants usually present a final product or piece of work based on key learning points.

In India, evidence that women are completing activities is collected through feedback during and after workshops, one-to-one discussions, completion of feedback forms with district units, and periodic field visits.

At SisterWorks, participation is recorded through programme participation records, volunteer teachers’ feedback, production roster, and individual discussions after they a training programme has been completed.

At Real Futures, participants give verbal and/or written feedback after every workshop or training.

Some monitoring tools used in trainings include:

Activity reports, which include attendance registers and photos of activities
Weekly logs, which are summaries of the group’s activities, completed by each learning centre
Reports on the outcomes of specific courses and workshops
One-to-one and group interviews with an external investigator who gathers user experiences and compiles a written report.

Being agile: Recognizing and responding to changing needs

“The hub is ever evolving because we are organic and we pride ourselves in being organic, meaning that we react to what it is that our women want. We react to what we know, in our industry, what

our indicators are showing us, what is needed to progress each individual either socially or toward a training or toward an economic outcome in a job, or in the creation of a small business.”

*Wendy Yarnold, Founder and Chair,
Real Futures, Australia¹³*

Responding to economic and social shifts – and crises

Needs assessments

Initial needs assessments should not be seen as static, one-off reports but the start of a process of regular reflection. The demand for particular goods and services changes over time due to demographic shifts, state of the economy, and crowded markets where businesses do the same thing. Crises, like COVID-19, can drastically affect the viability of whole sectors. What may have emerged as a great area for investment in the needs assessment may no longer be so a few years later.

As people living within the community, who are in direct contact with SCE graduates trying to run their businesses in the local economy, facilitators are well placed to feed into ongoing assessment of how demand is changing and identify emerging opportunities for income generation by SCE women.

Facilitators and SCE teams play a primary role in monitoring the need for adjustments or new partnerships due to changes in the wider economic, social or health environment.

- Falling attendance and feedback from participants can suggest the need for changes in what a programme training offers. During the 2021 lockdown in Melbourne, Australia, when delivery had to be entirely online, SisterWorks picked up on the reduced appetite for employment and entrepreneurship training. Instead, they shifted the focus to wellbeing, life skills and maintaining a virtual

community that could counter the isolation and mental challenges the women were experiencing.

- In Chile, reduced employment rates amongst women due to COVID-19 led the programme to give more focus to employment by providing more incentives to women to join that pathway, through a partnership with an organization specializing in that area, Fundación Emplea.
- In Mexico, implementing staff adapted the initial training offered to participants when COVID-19 restrictions limited access to the hub. Convivencia Joven (IP 2018–2021) used to focus in the first five weeks almost entirely on life planning with a gender perspective but shifted their focus to strengthening digital skills when learning moved online. Training in digital skills and virtual learning is now a core component of most SCE programs.
- In response to the health crisis of 2021, the India SCE programme partnered with Learnet to upskill 10,000 nurses and nurse assistants on COVID-19 response and management.
- When a program has established its own internal momentum, facilitators and beneficiaries can adapt to very difficult circumstances, such as during Covid-19 lockdowns in Mexico:

“The women looked for alternative places, they looked for venues, they looked for some backyards, some houses, so that in small groups they could continue with the workshops. Despite the pandemic, despite not having devices and sometimes even the digital skills, they have looked for ways in which the dynamics of the centre keep going, they have spread the word, they have looked for these key actors, they have looked for families, they have looked for people who can open small spaces where they can continue to meet and train in small groups. Why? Because they think that the learning can no longer be stopped.”

Mexico IP, Covid-19 Adaptation¹⁴

Adapting to changes in demand

The SCE ‘global model with local solutions’ approach allows for a programme to be responsive to changes in demand that arise from those taking place in society. Existing services may be expanded and new services added while investments in others are reduced.

¹³ SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Real Futures, <https://youtu.be/fNHpAAf9kJo>, 5:52–6:24.

¹⁴ SCE COVID-19 Adaptation, <https://youtu.be/m1xWB7leqbc>, 17:20–18:05

How can an SCE programme identify when and how to pivot to a different mode of operation or set of services?

- Monitoring the profile of women who respond to marketing outreach: age, educational attainment, pathway of interest.
- Monitoring attendance of in-person training and accessing of online courses: Does falling attendance suggest women have less time to spare?
- Follow-up of SCE graduate businesses and detecting changing demands.
- Noting increased interest and involvement of women with higher levels of education.
 - Chile adapted by creating two profiles for training: Beginner and advanced.
 - SisterWorks looks not just at how women with qualifications from a different country can be supported to get a job, but at the opportunities for effecting change at the level of employers, offering training to companies to boost their cultural capabilities and understanding of diversity around clothing, holidays, language and food.
- Expanding services for marginalized and hard-to-reach groups like refugee and migrant women, and survivors of gender-based and domestic violence (especially given the rise in domestic violence during lockdowns).
- Adapting services for women who struggle with access, as in Toluca in the State of Mexico where SEPICJ found that women were travelling long distances in order to register and attend SCE centres. Courses and related activities were therefore moved online so that women attended in-person workshops only once a week.
- Similar adjustments may need to be made with shifts in lifestyle and women's workloads. In Chile in 2021, the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions led to fewer women enrolling and graduating, as 'normal life' returned. To adapt, IPs made continuous adjustments to schedules to give women more flexibility so that their learning could fit in with their other responsibilities.

Qualitative and quantitative assessments can provide evidence to indicate needed adjustments to make the programme more effective and efficient, such as commissioned in Chile nine months into the programme.

The qualitative report considered the state of implementation, the design, methodology, expected outcomes, perceptions of IPs and participants. The

field work included interviews with stakeholders, focus groups with participant women and participation as an observer in all phases of the programme with all IPs.

The quantitative report focused on four main areas: instruments for characterization, follow-up and the data obtained by them; definition of women's profiles, desertion rate and causes; status of implementation by partners and indicators; and cost-effectiveness.



Photo: UN Women/CVA

4. LIFE SKILLS

"[In the first part of the programme] we prioritized fostering and boosting their personal empowerment, teaching them that self-confidence, self-esteem, self-belief and cross-cutting skills are without a doubt the most important aspects for achieving anything they set their minds to."

Valentina Orrego, Director, VeOmás, Chile¹⁵

Key points

- Life skills training is a **core component** of all SCE programs. Life skills equip SCE participants with the confidence and resilience, digital literacy, personal skills, understanding of gender, and ability to set goals and plan for the future that are foundational to their success.
 - Building participants' **self-confidence and sense of agency** is one of the most important things that SCE does because it builds a foundation and motivation for subsequent learning and economic activity.
 - SCE participants need to learn **digital skills** both to access SCE's online component and to enjoy the benefits of the digital world generally.
 - Learning about **gender** enables SCE participants to recognize the part that gendered roles and stereotypes play in their own lives, and to consider their dreams and constraints in the wider context of gender inequality.
 - **Life and career planning** courses and exercises can be very effective in helping participants identify medium- to long-term goals that match their interests, skills and circumstances. In many cases, this will be the first time that they have thought seriously about their own dreams and aspirations.
 - **Support for wellbeing** is important both in its own right and for women to achieve their SCE goals, and is provided through mentoring, peer networks, online sessions, and where necessary, referral to mental health services.
- **Leadership skills** are developed through mentoring systems and participation in internal and external events.

What are life skills?

Life skills are the emotional, social and intellectual skills needed to deal with the demands of everyday life and help one aspire and plan for the future.

In the SCE context, life skills are an essential foundational block for successful engagement in the SCE programme and completion of their chosen pathway. This is why life skills training is usually the first thing SCE participants do when they join, and usually continues throughout their SCE journey, interwoven in the entrepreneurship and employment pathways.

Moreover, these skills are essential for giving women agency over their lives and the psychosocial skills necessary to live a rewarding life in personal and professional terms. Life skills help them navigate life as a citizen and access social support for housing, health and education.

In SCE, life skills training involves developing the following, depending on context:

- literacy and numeracy
- financial literacy
- digital skills
- self-confidence
- relationship building
- communication
- self-discipline, punctuality and teamwork
- resilience
- self-knowledge and agency
- a gender perspective
- language skills (for refugee and migrant women)
- psychosocial support for dealing with trauma, abuse and violence
- life planning
- leadership skills
- health (especially reproductive health and family planning)

Foundational skills generally refer to basic literacy and numeracy, which are considered to be prerequisites for

¹⁵ SCE Virtual Hub Tour, VeOmás, <https://youtu.be/CQkV6Knnzzl>, 3:15–3:40.

further learning and living a life that is not dependent on others. In SCE, however, participants do not have to be literate to participate in the programme. Where necessary, training sessions and bespoke e-learning resources are tailored to illiterate or semi-literate learners. Examples can be found in Cameroon in the resources for refugee women, or in Australia, where new arrivals to the country, who are often highly educated, may not be literate in English.

In SCE e-learning programmes, digital skills are also considered foundational since they are a prerequisite for online learning. This was especially the case during the pandemic, when hubs closed and learning moved online. Women with access to a device and internet at home had to first understand how to set up and use a variety of new apps and websites to enable online communication, such as for messaging and video-conferencing, before any online training could occur. For example, platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook were used to set up private groups and share information on classes, and Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams were often used to host the classes. For many women, digital literacy and skills needed to be built to set up email accounts, download apps, and set usernames and passwords for the apps and accounts. These processes often required intensive support. Where possible, participants also learned how to access learning resources on the Kolibri platform at home.

Learning to use a digital learning platform does not necessarily require users to be literate. The SisterWorks e-hub app is designed for women with no English. Users navigate through pictures and text is minimal. Content is video-based with a slow, simple voiceover and clear subtitles.

In SCE, training in life skills tends to be offered when women first join the programme as it is so fundamental to their retention and success. This is combined with building relationships and trust with facilitators and staff, as illustrated in these testimonies from tutors in Chile:

“I can see the progress the women make from one workshop to the next, such as how they start speaking louder, opening their minds and participating more and more. At the beginning, some of

them had trouble joining in with groups of people and they were shy, but they began to loosen up.”

Carolina Lukaschewsky, Classroom host, VeOmás, Chile¹⁶

“The workshops deal with cross-cutting subjects which help create a trusting relationship between us and the women, as well as among the women themselves, allowing them to branch out and network.”

Alejandra Lahr, Mentor, Chile¹⁷



Photo: UN Women/CVA

In Chile, life skills are the first thing women learn – the foundation on which other learning occurs – and the development of confidence and agency is interwoven through the whole programme.

“Women will be better prepared and boast improved personal tools and soft skills which will help them in the workplace, increase their entrepreneurship and even learn about techniques and

16 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, VeOmás, <https://youtu.be/CQkV6Knnzsl>, 4:32–4:51.

17 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, VeOmás, <https://youtu.be/CQkV6Knnzsl>, 2:30–2:37.

tools that will give them a head start as entrepreneurs. Above all, however, they will take on board personal skills which enable them to set up their own companies and pass their exams so that they can complete their education.”

Valentina Orrego, Director, VeOmás, Chile¹⁸

“The ‘shared plan’ contains various different subjects to help them in this regard. One of them is socio-emotional education, where they learn to believe in themselves and to deal with and overcome emotions such as anger, rage and frustration. Another of the subjects talks about gender equality and equity. After this, each pathway contains more specific content.”

Tutor, Chile¹⁹

Themes in the initial course, called the shared plan, are socio-emotional intelligence, ‘we are all intelligent!’, gender equality and equity, women and human rights, and female inequality.

Life skills workshops can also include practical skills training as in Mexico:

“I’m also taking the plumbing workshop because it’s something that everyone should know ... I needed to fix some problems in my house and now I don’t have to pay or have people come into my home. They have also shown me my self-worth through self-esteem courses and above all they have taught me that if I set my mind to something and dedicate time to it, I can achieve lots of things, like I already have. I’m extremely pleased with myself because I’ve awoken a potential and a passion that I didn’t have before.”

Olga Gómez, participant, Central Zapopan Hub, Jalisco, Mexico²⁰

In Guadalajara, the initial life skills training by ProMexico and ProSociedad concentrates on human development, productive development, digital inclusion and financial inclusion while, in Zinacatepec, Puebla, SEPICJ’s life skills programme promotes self-knowledge, self-esteem and resilience, and teaches basic digital skills, Excel, Word and other common applications.

Building confidence

“The women themselves have told us how the course has been helpful for them, how they feel more confident in themselves and more capable as the course went on, and how they feel less lonely and well supported.”

Karina Stormezan, Project Advisor, Infocap, Chile²¹

Yarning circles at Real Futures, Australia

We conduct yarning circle sessions at the hub. I set the tone prior to starting this session by letting our women know this is a safe space and what is said in this circle remains here. This allows the women to be vulnerable and open up about their deepest problems should they wish.

In the second part of the yarn, we take the time to speak life and words of affirmation to encourage and uplift one another and remind each of the aspirants that they are strong, worthy, and great leaders within their space, family and community.

Oneeva Tuuhetoka, Acting Site Coordinator, Real Futures, May 2022

Particularly important for SCE participants are the attributes of self-confidence and self-belief. Many women enter the programme never having had much control over their lives. A sense of being unable to influence the direction of their own life reduces their ability to act on everything on offer through the SCE programme. Encouraging women to believe that their lives can change and helping them gain a sense of agency is essential to the effectiveness of whatever they subsequently do.

Building confidence can be facilitated through:

- Social interactions with support figures: facilitators, mentors, tutors.

¹⁸ SCE Virtual Hub Tour, VeOmás, <https://youtu.be/CQkV6Knnzsl>, 0:59–1:23.

¹⁹ SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Acción Emprendedora, <https://youtu.be/ZjmYc9CCJeg>, 4:50–5:36.

²⁰ SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Jalisco, https://youtu.be/nzv_oUPhkoM, 11:01–11:46.

²¹ SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Infocap, <https://youtu.be/oZjGkCv2fas>, 7:14–7:26.

- Social interactions with other participants, through informal socializing in the hubs (especially in spaces designed specifically for that purpose), online messaging groups and live sessions.
- Activities that encourage participants to reflect on their talents, achievements and interests.
- Motivational e-learning resources, especially when followed up with peer exchanges.
- Developing creative skills that result in a tangible product and pride.
- Giving women time to develop trusting relationships with her key SCE contacts.
- Encouraging women to speak and share experiences in a safe and trusted group.

At SisterWorks, women's confidence is built through social interaction, shared activities that produce something tangible, a sense of safety, and informality:

"All SisterWorks programmes have a confidence building factor. Throughout the training programmes, the women are encouraged to speak in English, they develop skills to make something tangible, build social connections and interact with other Sisters and volunteers through craft and other activities to develop a sense of belonging. Production activities and earning a stipend also boosts confidence in many women. The pathways programme and social mentoring also provides a sense of safety as well as independence, and warm referral to other organizations, which contributes to their confidence building."

The Sister Levels scheme, labelling, post training exams, surveys, generally do not work for the women at SisterWorks. Informality has proven to be a big need of the women that SisterWorks is supporting."

SisterWorks, Australia, Life Planning survey, Feb 2021

For SEPICJ in Mexico, the milestones for each participant after the initial phase are that she:

- Accepts that she deserves this opportunity
- Has all the elements in place to take the first step
- Is not scared of failure or other people's opinions
- Has identified the resources and support needed to commit to her project
- Perceives the opportunity as a personal project
- Knows the road she wants to take based on her needs, current reality and expectations.

Human development themes run through all SEPICJ's SCE training courses, helping women reflect on their skills, interests and values, as well as develop a sense of agency in the first few weeks of the programme—all of which is critical for women to bring about change in their lives.

"Personal development, which focuses on the women's psycho-social aspects and their deepest aspirations, is the internal flame which furthers their ability to configure their own lives, surroundings and finances. Continuing education, culture, gastronomy, relaxation and quietness techniques and renouncing inequality are intertwined with courses on entrepreneurship and employment as a focal point of the comprehensive development of the women and young people."

Convivencia Joven, Mexico, Life Planning survey, Feb 2021

Beginnings of the SCE programme implemented by VeOmás, Chile

- **Visibility:** help make women visible, seen and recognized for who they are
- **Connection:** enable women to connect with each other and create support networks.
- **Empowerment:** help women strengthen their personal skills as a foundation for the rest of the SCE process and to give them a sense of agency in their lives.

Hub layout can also promote confidence and a sense of looking forward:

"We always encourage our women to come into the hub and offer a workshop or course, if not just a chat to see where they are at. This builds confidence in the workers supporting them and also brings them into the space to think about what they might want to do moving forward. Our space is set up to be inviting but also to initiate discussion around the future, their aspirations etc. With the training rooms, equipment and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artefacts being the first thing they see, it creates the atmosphere of learning, participation and a culturally safe space."

Real Futures, Australia, Life Planning survey, Feb 2021

In Moro, Cameroon, women's confidence is built through meetings to explain the programme; individual, confidential interviews; presentation of individual success stories, and frequent follow-ups in village and/or local settings.

In tandem, facilitators often need to have their confidence built too!

"In the beginning, there were several challenges. Women were not willing to participate. On occasions, I spoke to them at length about the importance of getting an education and motivated them to study. On the personal front, the trainings that I underwent gave me a sense of self-confidence and self-reliance and I reached a stage where I was confident enough to take classes for adult learners. The women who were earlier hesitating to step out of their homes now attend classes regularly at the hub centre without any self-doubt."

Jyothi Panwar, Educator, Manjari Foundation, Rajasthan, India²²



Photo: UN Women

Digital skills

Most SCE programmes include an assessment of digital skills in the initial registration of participants. This typically covers use of social media, confidence in digital literacy, applications (social media, WhatsApp, email, SMS, video calling, Word, search engines, online banking, Google maps, digital camera, etc.), as well as measures of digital access, such as ownership of digital devices and availability of the internet at home. This enables facilitators to determine the kind of support they need.

The two objectives of SCE digital skills training are:

- **Digital skills for online learning:** To enable women to participate in online learning through live sessions and digital learning materials.
- **Digital skills as life skills:** To bring women online so they can benefit from available services and goods.

Digital skills for online learning

Certain digital skills are a prerequisite for participants to join live learning classes and access materials on the SCE learning platform. This is especially important in the online SCE programme in Chile.

"We dedicate a considerable amount of time to teaching the women how to use the Kolibri platform. This has been our greatest challenge, because although we also train them to use Zoom and Meet, the greatest difficulty has been making them proficient in the use of Kolibri.

We repeatedly talk about the platform with the women during the six tutorials and introduction talk where they experiment with it and start completing work using it. The tutors are at their full disposition and the women can call them whenever they have a problem or question."

Acción Emprendedora, Chile, Acción Emprendedora Virtual Hub Tour, 1:41–2:11

For VeOmás in the south of Chile, training in digital skills is considered particularly important in rural areas given the lack of on-site education programmes through which women can return to education and prepare for exams. The demand for such programmes is greater than in cities as the proportion of women not completing their studies in rural areas is higher.

22 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, India, <https://youtu.be/1YSaUcxfdQo>, 6:00–6:28.

The SCE online programme offers an opportunity to fill that gap.

“From the beginning we develop step-by-step tutorials for digital tools – how to log into Zoom, how to change your name on Zoom, how to create Zoom meetings so they can do it with their own families. We teach them how to store a contact from a WhatsApp group – step by step, we provide pictures, text, we give a very simple explanation. We also teach them to test the Zoom functionality before the meeting starts, a connectivity test to make sure that everybody can hear appropriately, before the actual meeting. The digital skills lesson on Kolibri is mandatory for all participants. Even if they have different knowledge and different levels of skills in this area, we want to bring them to the same level of digital knowledge.”

Valentina Orrego, Director, VeOmás, Chile²³

Digital skills as life skills

Digital skills training gives SCE participants the skills and confidence to benefit from the digital world more broadly. It may enable them to access government support, search the Internet, look for jobs, create job applications, support their children, participate safely on social media, and keep in touch with family and friends.

“At IMJUVE we offer a range of courses, one of which is called Digital Mother. Digital Mother gives women knowledge of different tools and applications like Zoom and Meet, so that they can make video calls, among other things. At the end, they gain a qualification and become happy and excited because they’ve completed a learning process which, in some cases, leads to them finding work straight away.”

Eleazar Rojas Martínez, Director, IMJUVE hub, Puebla, Mexico²⁴

“We are a group of girls and women who did the IT training at the Ngam empowerment space. I had heard of IT at school but I had never actually used it. But thanks to this training, I can now use

IT tools. I knew about layout and formatting, but I am now able to connect to the internet and do an online course.”

SCE participant, Ngam, Cameroon²⁵

“My job is to train the learners in IT tools. In other words, I teach them basic skills such as creating tables and cover pages and to channel their knowledge in vernacular art. The course is taught in small groups. It depends on the number of machines, here we have five machines. Each learner has their own machine to work on, so it’s in groups of six.”

Benjamin, ICT trainer, Mokolo, Cameroon²⁶

“We needed to provide a digital experience for our women or an opportunity for them to trial, or to sample, because quite often our women were getting left behind in that digital world. So, we had laptops available, we have access to mobile phones, access to different apps, and people who are quite proficient in using those.

We also have some great partnerships with registered training organizations and other training groups, so we could have training on offer all of the time, but also be very conscious and understanding of what our women’s needs are as far as childcare needs, and needing to be home before school and after school, and be able to pick up their children or have their children come.”

Wendy Yarnold, Founder and Chair, Real Futures, Australia²⁷

For hub-based programmes, such as in Mexico and Jordan, training in digital skills is offered at the outset and usually through in-person training in the computer room(s) in the hub. It is easier to teach digital skills to novices in an in-person setting because of opportunities to interact, work out problems, and receive instant help from instructors or peers.

In the State of Mexico, SEPICJ has workshops on digital skills and human development that cover the three pathways of employment, entrepreneurship and return to formal education. Integration is seamless, with

23 Spotlight on Chile’s COVID-19 response, <https://youtu.be/UflmTfMgIfU>, 44:32–45:36.

24 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Puebla, <https://youtu.be/KJxXVCzXYHQ>, 3:43–4:16.

25 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Cameroon, <https://youtu.be/mxG7H3hM3ll>, 23:13–24:01.

26 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Cameroon, <https://youtu.be/mxG7H3hM3ll>, 11:18–11:52.

27 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Real Futures, <https://youtu.be/fNHPAAf9kJo>, 3:07–3:58.

no sharp delineation within the course or sessions between the employment/ entrepreneurship content and life skills/digital skills. Participants do not know what they will focus on a certain day and facilitators plan sessions carefully so participants receive a good balance of topics.

Digital skills courses offered by SEPICJ range from 12 hours to three months. The longest course, 'Office for Employment Productivity', trains participants in Microsoft Office and is divided into three modules on Word, Excel and PowerPoint, each lasting one month. Participants can take them individually and receive a graduation certificate for each module. This division makes the content more digestible and they are all offered as part of the employment pathway.

Online learning resources are used for in-person digital skills training too. Videos demonstrating how to use WhatsApp, set up an email account, or open a Word document can be projected during a group session and also accessed afterwards by women at home. Televisions or big screens are very important in this respect. In the Manjari hub in India, class participants access online visual material through the use of a projector.

Gender

See also: [section 5, Overcoming constraints > Community, family and men](#)

Developing SCE participants' awareness of gendered social norms and gender inequality is an important aspect of SCE training and activities.

A strong gender perspective helps women to recognize the extent to which gendered roles and stereotypes play in their own lives, and to consider their hopes, dreams, and constraints in the wider context of gender inequality. Doing so helps a mother at home alone with young children, a wife carrying the entire burden of domestic work, or a woman with limited training and career opportunities to see how such behaviours and roles have come about. And they can realize these are not set in stone. Sharing experiences through a gendered lens can help women uncover possible ways of challenging gendered roles and behaviours in her own household, community, or workplace.

A gender perspective enables women to see themselves in their own right rather than as a mother, a wife, a sister, caregiver for elderly parents, or an individual with limited opportunities. It allows for expansion of the process of recognizing themselves as independent women with agency who can imagine a different future and make commitments to their SCE journey.

Gender training also addresses intimate partner and gender-based violence for which the SCE approach offers practical support and specialist services referrals. In Cameroon, where rates of intimate partner violence are high, participants along with men and boys learn about gender-based violence prevention, sexual and reproductive health, and family planning.

Likewise, in India, an empowerment approach to livelihoods couples 'learning and earning' pathways (employment, entrepreneurship and education) with capacity building initiatives like gender training. These focus on building the voices, choices, and agencies of women and make participants aware of their rights and entitlements against violations and demand accountability.

Gender training in the India SCE programme focuses on basic concepts of gender in education, employment and entrepreneurship, and building women's self-esteem. IP personnel attend gender training prior to conducting training and awareness raising courses for women in the villages. Exercises like '*kiska palra bhari*' ('Who has the upper hand') and '*Kamla Kamli*' ('masculine/feminine') strengthen the gender perspective in a fun and accessible way. Gender equality is promoted by:

- Addressing social barriers
- Building awareness of legal provisions and government schemes.
- Helping women formulate their aspirations.

Various topics are covered in an online gender course offered by ProMexico and ProSociedad in Jalisco, Mexico. Although a gender perspective is commonly treated as a topic in its own right under life skills, it is also integrated in all other life skills training and the entrepreneurship and employment pathways.

Example of gender perspective online course

ProMexico and ProSociedad, Mexico

Sex, gender and historical inequality

1. Gender perspective
 - 1.1 What do I expect from the course and why am I here?
2. Basic concepts on the gender perspective
3. The importance of the gender perspective in everyday life
4. What is the difference between sex and gender?
5. How does the gender perspective affect my personal, professional and social life?
6. Historical inequality and gender perspective
7. Timeline of sexism, androcentrism and machismo

Types of violence and strategies to prevent it

1. Let's act in the face of violence
2. Basic concepts on the gender perspective
 - 2.1 Types of violence
3. How can we stop the violence?
4. How do we deal with violence?
5. Culture of violence prevention
 - 5.1 Can we prevent violence?
6. Gender-based violence in my work
7. Strategies to prevent gender-based violence
 - 7.1 Action protocols to prevent violence
8. How do I take care of myself and others?
9. How can I understand the structure of violence?

SCE activities and support are implicitly gendered as they are tailored to women and reflect and respond to their everyday reality in each context.

- Digital skills may include learning about online abuse and harassment of women on social media and how to stay safe online.
- Communication skills could include assertiveness training and raising awareness of personal and professional communications are shaped by gendered conventions.
- Psycho-emotional training reflects that women are disproportionately burdened with care and

domestic responsibilities and can include a focus on resilience and perseverance, as well as support for negotiating a better balance of parenting and domestic responsibilities in the home.

- The employment pathway may include learning about employment in industries traditionally dominated by men, as well as anti-discrimination or other laws relevant to women, maternity rights, and sexual harassment in the workplace, as in Chile.
- The entrepreneurship pathway may include how to deal with tensions or obstacles arising from running a business outside of traditional gender norms.

Life planning

See also: [Section 3 Welcoming participants > Building aspirations and Setting goals.](#)

When they first register, new participants are invited to specify their interests and personal goals. However, many are not able to properly define their personal or career aspirations at that stage since they need time to reflect and discuss, and digest accurate information on different career options. The 'life planning' training offered by IPs to support this process tends to be popular amongst participants and a necessary element of SCE programmes, so that participants are guided towards activities aligned with their long-term goals.

In all six SCE pilot countries, a 'life and career planning' course was developed in a project with the Open University (OU) and Cobra Collective in 2021. It involved a small number of staff in each country adapting a generic script and filming each other, and SCE participants, to create videos that reflect the communities and women involved and who are the audience. Courses are available on the free OU platform OpenLearn Create in the [Second Chance collection](#) and also on SCE's primary learning platforms, Kolibri and EdApp.

Participants are encouraged to take this course to help them think through work and career plans. Videos are also used in in-person group sessions, like at Real Futures in Australia, where they stimulate discussion and help participants identify career and personal goals that feed into their support plans.

Life projects, Jalisco

In Jalisco, Mexico, ProMexico and ProSociedad's 'life project' training involves practical exercises on visualizing and planning the future, and personal SWOT analyses. The outcome is a long-term life plan. The training was originally delivered in person in the hubs, and then through Zoom during COVID-19 restrictions. In 2021, it was digitized and converted to an asynchronous e-learning course. A summary of the whole course is available on request. It can still be taken through any of these three modalities: in-person, on Zoom or asynchronous.

Wellbeing

Positive wellbeing is a valid objective in its own right but also makes it more likely that a participant will have a successful outcome in the SCE programme. Anxiety causes challenges for SCE participants to achieve the goals they set and develop the mindset and confidence needed to take advantage of income-earning opportunities. In Mexico, as in other SCE programmes the focus on wellbeing has made participants more confident and resilient when embarking on new paths to improve their livelihoods.

In Mexico and Chile, elements of wellbeing are addressed in initial life skills training, but also continue through the programme.

The development of self-knowledge, personal skills and resilience is integrated within training courses on employability and entrepreneurship.

Personalized support, and the programme-wide emphasis on wellbeing and relationship building has made SCE stand out from other livelihood programmes in that it upholds the role of emotional resources and resilience in enabling participants to achieve the goals they set themselves.

Personalized support can impact participants' wellbeing and may be provided through IP staff, mentors, tutors, and peer networks. Support networks offer practical advice on specific projects, someone to turn to for emotional support, and information on services outside of the SCE programme, such as for domestic abuse.

In all SCE programmes, **the building of relationships**, both between participants and staff and among participants, is recognized as a central factor in nurturing wellbeing. To support wellbeing, IPs use the following strategies:

- **1:1 support from facilitators and mentors**

All SCE programmes have a mentoring component that enables mentors or other implementing staff to support participant wellbeing. Personalized support of tutors and mentors is key in helping participants deal with personal issues, anxiety and stress, and to enable them to stay in the programme.

See [section 7, Mentoring, tutoring and peer support](#) for more details.

- **Peer support**

"Ever since the beginning, our idea was for the hub to be a meeting place, mainly for women where they could share their life experiences, connect with each other and create support networks. It's essentially a space for both formal and informal educational processes where the participants are responsible for their own learning processes."

*Luis Álvarez, Project Coordinator, Convivencia Hub, State of Mexico*²⁸

SCE women benefit from informal networks that often develop with little intervention from implementing staff. Women connect with each other in person and online through WhatsApp groups. These spontaneous networks are supported by social activities organized at the hub. For example, the 'our hub is your hub' ethos pervades Real Futures' social activities, such as 'mums n bubs' groups and gatherings to celebrate when a cohort finishes training. SCE participants are always welcome to drop in for coffee and an informal chat with whoever is around.

See [section 7, Mentoring, tutoring and peer support > Peer support](#).

²⁸ SCE Virtual Hub Tour, State of Mexico, https://youtu.be/Vgoz_mY_JeQ, 3:21–3:48.

- **Life skills training**

The life skills training of most SCE programmes contains a wellbeing element.

In Chile, online learning content has a strong focus on the development of personal skills that receive attention at the start and are interwoven through the entrepreneurship and employment pathways. Participants scored the programme highly on the development of personal skills and the support networks offered to them.

The SisterWorks' app offers a wealth of resources in the module 'My Wellbeing', including videos such as *What does wellbeing mean?*²⁹ and *What can I do if I feel anxious? Where to ask for help?*³⁰.

In Mexico, all courses include the development of socio-emotional skills. These build participants' capacity to engage and collaborate with other women and regulate their emotions, which in turn enables them to maintain participation in SCE despite the difficulties they may face.

Other components of the life skills development programme support positive wellbeing, particularly confidence building, personal skills (such as relationship building, communicating, and resilience), and gender.

- **Goal setting**

Setting and achieving small goals can give SCE participants a positive boost as can learning to create something new or receiving a certificate for completion of a course. In Mexico, setting and achieving incremental goals in the life project boosts participants' confidence and gives them the satisfaction, confidence and motivation to continue.

- **Online connections**

Sessions on Zoom or Google Meet are important for connecting with women who cannot access the hubs because of transportation, mobility, or childcare issues, or daytime responsibilities. Live sessions go some way to provide them with an opportunity to socialize and learn with others. Even if the programme operates mainly through in-person interactions, it is useful to have the knowledge and systems in place to pivot in the face of civil unrest, disruptive weather, or a public health emergency.

- **Access to psychologists and specialist support**

Psycho-emotional support may be offered to participants and their families through SCE, in addition to routine support given by mentors and/or tutors. In some programmes, women have access to a psychologist, like in Jocotepec in Mexico where a psychologist attends sessions once a week to offer support to participants and graduates. Psycho-emotional support was offered by the Mexico program during the COVID-19 crisis when participants and their families experienced high levels of stress due to fear of contagion, sickness, death, and financial problems.



Photo: UN Women/Dzilam Méndez

Leadership

Mentoring training offered to SCE participants helps them develop foundational leadership skills of listening, support and guiding. When identifying potential mentors, facilitators are also identifying potential leaders.

29 https://youtu.be/i_L8vtqhUSs

30 <https://youtu.be/SJ79pY61CjA>

Celebrating achievements

Real Futures, Australia: Women's Business Awards Night, 2022

Purpose: to celebrate the Women's Business Hub's second year and the great achievements and leadership of aspirants.

Award categories: Education, Employment, Community Service, Entrepreneurship, Funniest Aspirant, Elders, Rising Star, Quiet Achiever, Best Hub Attendance, Deadliest Aspirant.

Nominations: Aspirants and staff can nominate candidates for each award through a selection survey.

Dress: To help cater to women who may not have anything to wear, a "Deadly Dress Donation Closet" is set up at the hub for anyone who wishes to donate a dress to an aspirant. There is also a Make Me Look Deadly prize whereby 10 aspirants can get their hair and makeup done at the hub before the event.

Finale: To wrap up, staff and aspirants battle it out in a 'Koorioke' competition. Guests decide the best singer of the night!

Public speaking

SisterWorks creates public speaking opportunities for participants in the community and at high-level events such as on International Women's Day, where they can speak about their own experiences and be a powerful advocate for other women on the basis of their life stories.

Leading up to the event, participants are given mentoring and training in public speaking and storytelling based on a template developed by the SisterWorks Ambassador who, in 2021, provided mentoring in public speaking and storytelling to five participants with leadership potential.



Photo: UN Women/Sonali Hedditch

5. OVERCOMING CONSTRAINTS

“Women have difficulty in considering the long-term picture while focusing on immediate practical issues.”

SisterWorks, Australia, Life Planning survey, Feb 2021

“[T]heir practical problems need to be met or addressed immediately as this hinders their overall outlook on aspirations or success. If these needs aren’t addressed or acknowledged, then our women would most likely not continue in the programme. A huge focus for us is to ensure we are actively working on their social and emotional needs whilst encouraging them to look to the future.”

Real Futures, Australia, Life Planning survey, Feb 2021

“When my father visited the hub, he was convinced by Sir [an educator] and finally agreed that his daughter should continue her studies.”

Sonia Gadri, SCE participant, India³¹

Key points

- Many women join the SCE programme while **managing chronic and acute problems** in their lives. These may be related to housing, money, debt, relationships, GBV, and mental and physical health. An important role for facilitators is to help women access the support they need to resolve difficulties, which leads to better retention and outcomes.
- To provide effective support, facilitators may need to **refer participants to professional services** outside the SCE. Previous experience may have led many women to distrust government or other organizational support. Trust between facilitators and participants can be important in ensuring women can access SCE services.
- **Partnerships with local and state governments** can make it easier for SCE women to access

government services in social and food security, gender-based violence, health and legal services, housing and employment service programmes.

- Helping participants **connect with services online**, using hub computers and Internet, is another important facilitator role.
- **Relationship building, personalized support** and **connections** with other women are key to helping participants overcome difficulties and empower them to make concrete changes in their lives.

Constraints

Many women who join the Second Chance programme face practical and personal problems that may involve money, housing, abuse and violence in the home, lack of family support, isolation, and loneliness. Any and all can work against successful participation in SCE. They may be the same barriers that led them to leave school early or with no qualification, or new barriers that they face as a refugee or displaced person, or as an under-educated woman trying to acquire skills and earn an income while caring for dependents and managing a home.

- Constraints may be: **financial/physical**: lack of transport to get to the hub, lack of money for transport, lack of devices for digital learning, lack of internet, lack of ID documentation (especially for refugee and migrant women)
 - **social**: lack of childcare, lack of care for elderly parents, need for flexible hours, discriminatory gender norms, resistance from family or community, past or ongoing abuse or violence, isolation
 - **personal**: lack of confidence, mental or physical ill-health, anxiety.

It is difficult for anyone to think about the future when juggling immediate practical problems. A major role for facilitators and SCE teams, therefore, is to support women in addressing constraints so they have the time and mental space to focus on their aspirations and maintain participation throughout the SCE programme.

³¹ SCE Virtual Hub Tour, India, <https://youtu.be/1YSaUcxfdQo>, 5:09–5:20.

The Australian experience

At SisterWorks, migrant and refugee women often need time to open up about personal, social or financial problems. As new participants join craft production and social activities, relationships and trust start to build and they gradually speak about personal issues. When this happens SisterWorks may conduct an assessment and offer social mentoring support and an external referral where appropriate.

Likewise, at Real Futures women are encouraged to discuss their problems at wellbeing workshops that involve yarning circles. These are safe spaces for them to open up, share their experiences, and comment on how they overcame difficulties.

The India programme estimates that about 30% of their focus in the initial weeks is on finding solutions before encouraging them to think about their aspirations for the future.

While the registration process ([section 3, Welcoming participants > Registration](#)) is designed, in part, to identify these needs it often takes time and the building of trust for participants to discuss and seek support for certain issues. It is also important to remember that the pressures Second Chance women face at home are not static. They change over time according to context and the socioeconomic environment.

“Before the pandemic, this was a small aspect of the work carried out by the hubs, mainly to do with issues with their partner, explicit violence and anxiety caused by personal problems. Now, however, cases of financial problems, domestic abuse, anxiety due to an overload of work in the home, fear and sadness resulting from illnesses, and mourning have multiplied as a result of the pandemic and the ensuing lockdowns, all of which has obviously shifted the participants’ focus away from their process of autonomy.”

*Convivencia Joven, Mexico, Life Planning survey,
Feb 2021*



Photo: UN Women

Referrals

In SCE, a referral helps to connect an SCE participant to external support or services not provided by SCE (housing, personal finance or debt, health issues, domestic abuse) but usually by government or non-government agencies. For example, at Real Futures, referrals are often for public housing or in support of applications for private rental accommodation, such as to Sydney Region Aboriginal Corporation, a not-for-profit charitable organization that provides support services to Aboriginal people. Real Futures works with other organizations to help participants get support with childcare, identification documents, financial hardship, and mental and physical health.

In some SCE programmes, specialist services are located nearby and even in the same building as the SCE centre, as in the Toluca Bombonera in the State of Mexico, which is located in a centre for GBV where a psychologist, lawyer, and social workers work on site.

Warm referrals can be effective in helping SCE participants connect to external services, particularly when they have little confidence or trust in the agencies or organizations running them.

While a ‘cold’ referral provides information about another service to an SCE participant so that she can contact them, a ‘warm’ referral involves a facilitator contacting the service on her behalf. It may also involve filling in a referral form or providing written information to the service in some other format (with the participant’s consent), and by accompanying her to initial appointments.

Facilitators may literally have a hand-holding role when referring women to housing, health or financing support services; in some cases, the presence of a trusted facilitator will make the difference between whether she goes or not.

SisterWorks routinely uses warm referrals to ensure that women who have little confidence and trust in other agencies are nevertheless able to access the support they need.

Partnerships with local and state governments can make it easier for SCE women to access government services related to social and food security, GBV, health and legal services, career counselling services, housing, and employment service programmes. In Mexico, SCE has alliances with:

- three municipal governments in the State of Mexico to help to channel food support services to SCE women
- the State Council for Women, to facilitate care for victims of violence
- the Huixquilucan Office of Economic and Business Development to disseminate weekly the job bank among SCE participants and follow up applications
- the Secretariat for Substantive Equality in Jalisco to facilitate access to health services, legal advice, and job opportunities.

Transport

“We’re on a main street, we’re not far from public transport, but we are understanding that a lot of our women are fearful of coming out and particularly fearful given the Covid environment, but we have a minibus available to pick up our women and to transport them to the hub.”

Wendy Yarnold, Founder and Chair, Real Futures, Australia³²

Ensuring women can get to the hubs safely and cheaply for in-person support and activities is an important facilitator task. If the hub is not on a direct and cheap public transport route, or where some do not have access to public transport, solutions include:

- Fundraising to **subsidize women’s transportation costs** (ProMexico/ProSociedad, Mexico).
- **Organizing transport** or using their own minibus (Real Futures, Australia).
- **Organizing mobile hubs**, whereby the activities and training are brought to the women in their communities (Australia (SisterWorks), Cameroon, Mexico, India).
- A **blended learning** approach that involves fewer visits to the hub and online learning at home if devices and Internet are available to women (Mexico).



Photo: UN Women/Prashanth Vishwanathan

32 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Real Futures, <https://youtu.be/fNHpAAf9kJ0>, 0:16–0:33.

Providing clear, accessible **information on how to get to the hub** is essential. A strong example is SisterWorks' short (less than two minutes) step-by-step video on [how to get to their centre in Melbourne by tram](#).

Case study: Reaching a remote community

The Jocotepec municipality in Jalisco, Mexico is surrounded by small mountain communities. Transportation to Jocotepec is limited and can take over two hours. Internet connectivity is poor.

Many women in the most remote communities were interested in joining the SCE programme but lacked transportation and time. ProMéxico decided to fundraise to pay for the transportation of farmers and craftswomen to the trades workshops. For women in communities where costs are higher, the hub organized group transport and extra collective activities such as mentorship.

ProMéxico and ProSociedad also organized a mobile programme in 2022, in which trainers travelled to the women. Trainers from SCE and DIF, the government institution for the welfare of children, delivered training to women entrepreneurs on cheese, bread and baked good production and brought some of tools they required.

Childcare

"We have a room ... which is close to the children's playground and they can keep an eye on them. Our staff will also support the children when they're in the play area ..."

This is our playground area. This is where we host our Mum and Bubs programme, which is on a Thursday. Little kids love to come and play."

*Debra Toseni and Oneeva Tuuhetoka, Real Futures, Australia*³³

Some hubs are located near or even in the same building as childcare services, which means participants

can drop their children off before continuing on to SCE activities. The centre in Jocopetec, Mexico, for example, is located in front of the government's institution for children's welfare and mothers can make use of the childcare services there.

Scheduling activities within school hours can increase attendance, as in the Jordanian example. However, the issue of childcare persists after women graduate from the programme. Engaging with male family members can help, highlighting the benefits to the whole family of instituting fairer distribution of unpaid caregiving and household tasks in the home, as in the Mexico SCE programme. Many IPs also maintain up-to-date details of local childcare services to share with participants.

To facilitate the participation of women with young families, many hubs have spaces with toys, books and games for children, such as in Real Futures, Cameroon and Mexico. Some of these spaces are supervised by facilitators or other staff while others, for older children, are not. At the SEPICJ hub in Puebla, participants take turns watching over the children.

Gender-based violence (GBV)

"We have something like a safe space here. It used to be called the call centre. Now it has become a safe space where we handle gender-based violence cases. We take care of the psychological aspects. We refer the cases to the quarters that be, the gendarmerie, the police or any area that may be of importance to make sure her rights are respected."

*Josephine Awounfac, Bertoua, Cameroon*³⁴

Facilitators need to be aware of available referral services and case management systems, and feel confident that the services to which they are referring women are trustworthy and offer good care. If not, the SCE programme risks its reputation as a trusted source of high-quality support. Regarding GBV, training in prevention and response should be integrated within employability or entrepreneurship instruction to avoid backlash or pushback from other household or community members.

³³ SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Real Futures, <https://youtu.be/fNHpAAf9kJo>, 2:47–2:54 and 4:20–4:29.

³⁴ SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Cameroon, <https://youtu.be/mxG7H3hM3jI>, 1:48–2:17.

Having female facilitators or other staff on the ground tends to make it easier for women to disclose abuse and seek help. In Cameroon, where many women who are part of the programme have suffered rape or other GBV, this is identified as soon as possible, and psychosocial support provided.

In the State of Mexico, the Toluca Bombonera hub, operated by state-level Secretaria de la Mujer ('Women's Secretary'), is located in a centre for survivors of GBV. This facilitates access for SCE participants and support workers that include a psychologist, lawyer and social work staff. Though external to SCE they work in the same building.

Community, family and men

For many women, their participation in SCE is a first step outside of their domestic and childcare work, and they can face resistance, violence, and even death threats from within their families with partners, fathers, brothers, and uncles feeling threatened by the idea of an empowered and educated woman.

SCE programmes work most effectively if men and the wider community are actively engaged in the programme. In highly patriarchal societies, it can be impossible to implement a Second Chance programme without involving men.

This can be countered through various methods, but particularly by creating opportunities for men to meet with implementing staff who can provide information about the programme, offer reassurance on aims and objectives, and build trust. Resistance tends to soften when family members hear about wider benefits and when they meet programme staff and see there is no intention to "pit women against men."

Community building can be informal (talking to individual men and perhaps allowing them to participate) or formal. The latter might include meetings and discussion sessions for partners and fathers, often led by a man, as well as broadcasted awareness-raising events, like in Cameroon in early 2021, that featured women's rights to education and benefits to families and society.

Sensitization campaigns can influence attitudes about women generally and outline benefits of the

SCE programme so male family members and community leaders enable, or even encourage, women to attend. In Cameroon, where SCE operates in communities with low literacy levels, illustrated documents called 'image boxes' are used to raise awareness of social norms harmful to women like GBV.

Other lessons from the Cameroon experience demonstrate that **engaging and sensitizing parents** is critical for securing participation of younger women. Furthermore, **close and ongoing involvement of community leaders** is essential, before and during the programme since they are custodians of tradition. Without their engagement, it is difficult to make headway in changing attitudes about women. What is more, **sharing beneficiary success stories** is an effective way of building support.

In 2021, a meeting was held for 120 Cameroonian traditional and religious community leaders and parents of SCE participants. The aim was to openly discuss harmful social norms and how to combat them, which raised awareness of:

- GBV in all its forms
- Violation of women's rights such as the right to education
- Forced and early marriages
- Commercial exploitation of young girls
- Economic marginalization of women
- Stigma from GBV
- Social discrimination against refugees and internally displaced persons

In Puebla, Mexico, SEPICJ offer a workshop on masculinity from a gender perspective that consists of three sessions and male relatives of participants are encouraged to attend. SEPICJ staff have found workshops get advertised by word of mouth with news of them spreading easily. A private company run by one of the men who promoted the workshop is interested in offering similar ones to its staff.

A facilitator in the State of Mexico highlights below some of the issues involving men in the SCE programme.

SCE Mexico is also working with a government-financed programme to introduce a similar approach in areas where SCE is not implemented.

Engaging with men in the State of Mexico

“We engage with men and boys in different ways. The participants’ male relatives bring them and pick them up, waiting outside for them until they finish their courses. There was one husband of a participant who asked if he could participate in the upcoming workshop but said he didn’t want to make the women uncomfortable.

The facilitator told him that she needed to check with the other participants to see if they would be ok with him joining from next week. She asked the women and all of them were happy to have him join. The facilitator was surprised with how welcoming they were. They also congratulated the woman whose husband he was. They started asking how exactly she had convinced her husband to get involved and want to join.

Then they started saying they wanted to invite their sons, husbands, fathers, but the men responded with ‘isn’t that for women? How can I (a man) be there?’

It was clear a space needed to be created for men who want to get training and for sensitization activities, to get the men’s points of view so they can support. Awareness-raising workshops for men, especially the male relatives of participants or prospective participants, were organized. The facilitator in charge is using the knowledge network (red de conocimiento) to find the best person among SCE’s allies to facilitate these workshops.”

*Yareny Sanchez, Learning Center Coordinator,
SEPICJ, State of Mexico, March 2022*

In rural India, patriarchal norms pose severe constraints to women’s participation. SCE tackles this through village-level mobilization meetings, street plays, mass campaigns, gender workshops, camps, and offline and online gender trainings. All activities challenge gender stereotypes and prejudices, and promote gender sensitization. Gender awareness building initiatives have been given special names like ‘Uthori’ (‘Wake up, oh woman’) in Rajasthan to encourage women.

Similarly, in Cameroon, getting parents of SCE participants on board with the programme is crucial to their

success. Parents are invited to the centres and given a tour so they can see for themselves the programme ethos, environment, and activities. They are encouraged to watch motivational videos and join WhatsApp groups where information on the programme is shared.

Facilitators and staff who come from and work in the communities, such as *Sarathis* and Community Resource Persons, have proven to be particularly effective in winning the trust and support of families and communities for women’s participation in SCE.



Photo: UN Women

ID documents

A major problem faced by displaced and refugee women who have fled violence is the loss of identification like birth certificates and national ID cards. Without these, displaced and refugee women are prevented from accessing education, training, and other services. As such, SCE stakeholders can advocate for women who do not have documentation as a result of fleeing conflict. For example, in Cameroon in 2021, SCE changemakers brought together government, policy creators, and concerned organizations and lobbied

government to allow birth certificates to be issued to displaced women and girls.

ID documentation and visa status may also be an issue for refugee women who sought asylum in another country. However, incorrect or inadequate documentation should not prevent women from participating in the SCE programme since all women are welcome no matter civil status. The problem is that a lack of ID limits the services to which women can be referred. Many women come to SisterWorks in Australia having already struggled to go through government processes, and SisterWorks staff deliberately do not ask about documentation. They do not want to deter anyone and want every woman to feel welcome, safe and respected.

Some refugee SCE participants in Cameroon, Chile and Mexico are channelled to SCE through UNHCR, where they may have received assistance acquiring ID documentation.

Language

What approach should SCE programmes take when refugee or displaced participants do not speak the primary language? The answer varies according to context.

SisterWorks in Australia have a strong ethos of building participants' English language skills and doing so by speaking only English to all who come to the hub, regardless of their proficiency level. Interpreters are generally not used and women are encouraged to attend without English-speaking friends or family members. The friendly and supportive atmosphere fostered at the hubs increases participant willingness to 'have a go' and e-learning resources are tailored for women with low or no English proficiency. The approach is different from that of government English language programmes that tend not to be effective with this group of women.

But this is not the case in other countries. In Cameroon, face-to-face training at some refugee sites is conducted in women's native languages, so they can embark on practical training immediately and potentially generate income relatively quickly. At the same time, they receive language training through specially designed learning resources like image boxes.

Essentials

Many refugee and displaced women in camps in Cameroon lack basic household and sanitary items, which can reduce their self-confidence, activity levels, and desire to interact with others. To counter this, dignity kits are distributed to pregnant women and nursing mothers that contain reusable pads, towels, bed sheets, soap, Vaseline, and buckets.

Wellbeing

Anxiety and poor mental health can be a significant barrier to women's successful participation in the SCE programme. Helping them deal with difficult circumstances and making connections to professional services can reduce anxiety. Most SCE programmes also implement a range of activities specifically to improve wellbeing. These are described in [section 4, Life skills > Wellbeing](#).



Photo: UN Women

6. DIGITAL AND ONLINE LEARNING

“One of the good things that the pandemic brought is virtuality; it is the online world that allowed us this program, that was going to be done only in one city, to be extended and that allowed women from many other parts of Chile to be able to benefit and that makes us very happy.”

Valentina Orrego, Director, VeOmás, Chile³⁵

This section focuses on the key principles and practices in an effective digital or online learning programme in SCE. Examples of digital skills training and online learning in general can be found in [section 4, Life skills > Digital skills](#).

Key points

Designing online learning for SCE women

- SCE online learning has to take account of **low digital literacy**, greater phone access than computers, poor connectivity, and the demands of domestic and caregiving work (running the risk of increased likelihood of not making live sessions or dropping out).
- **Putting women** at the centre when designing a programme with an online component increases the chance of impact. This applies to the choice of learning platform and communication tools, and design of content and support systems.
- **Starting small with a pilot** helps show what works and what doesn't, and ways of adjusting.

Online content

- Learning materials need to be **relevant and relatable**, contain imagery that reflect participant experiences, and be presented in bite-sized portions. Text should be concise, but friendly and conversational.
- The most engaging courses are those that **IPs create or commission** because they understand target

audience needs and priorities, plus the language they respond to best.

- **In-house creation** of e-learning materials requires planning and time. Resources are available within the SCE programme that support this and ensure a minimum quality standard.
- It is possible to design courses for **women who cannot read** using audio, video and pictures.

Support

- Ensuring **personalized support** for each participant makes a huge difference to the quality of the learning programme and women's retention. A **mentoring** and/or **tutoring** system is a good way of doing this when facilitators and other hub staff do not have the time to give regular support and encouragement.
- Participants benefit from more than one-to-one support from SCE staff. **Connections with peers** make it easier to maintain motivation, feel connected to others, and embark on significant learning after hearing about other women's experiences. As such, consider live sessions and WhatsApp groups involving the same group of people so relationships can build over time.
- Set up communication channels with **tools that women are already familiar with** so they can connect with each other immediately. This is often through WhatsApp groups but can also be through SMS, phone calls, or emails.
- For women who believe the digital world is “not for them” or who lack skills and confidence, the **relationship and trust** they have with a facilitator can be central to moving them towards digital learning. Start building both with each participant from the first moments in the SCE hub.

Incorporating personal goals

- A learning programme which helps women to **identify and pursue personal goals** and provides

35 SCE COVID-19 Adaptation, <https://youtu.be/m1xWB7leqbc>. 16:52–17:06.

tangible support in linking 'learning' to 'earning' maintains engagement more than a generic professional skills programme. Embedding a personal life project within the programme, as in Mexico and Chile, and offering a blended approach to life and career planning helps women to think through options with the support of their facilitator, tutor, or e-learning resources.

Preparing participants

- The first thing participants need to know is **how to use the learning platform**. This is sometimes more easy to do in person if women can get to a hub. Otherwise, facilitators can provide support over the phone and/or through video tutorials or written instructions.
- Provide a **clear overview** of course objectives, calendar, timings of activities, how and when to get support, and criteria for success. Dates and times of live sessions should be highlighted in advance.

Closing

- **Certificates** and **closing ceremonies** are excellent ways of closing an online course or in-person training. They give participants the chance to recognize progress made (including digital skills) and for their achievements to be acknowledged by others.

Digital, online, and blended learning

Digital learning (or e-learning) occurs on a digital device (phone, tablet, or computer) and covers activities and resources that can be accessed offline, without an internet connection. By contrast, **online learning** always requires an Internet connection.

Blended learning refers to an approach that includes in-person and digital learning. Except in the case of Chile, which is 100% online, most SCE programmes follow a blended model to reap the benefits of both approaches.

- **In the hubs**, women can meet others in person, benefit from group discussions and collaborative learning, take courses difficult to deliver online, and focus on themselves outside of the home environment. They can also use the hub's computers/Internet for online learning.
With online learning, women participate from anywhere, access resources on different topics when

they choose, strengthen their digital skills, and meet other participants from elsewhere. Online learning can be **synchronous** (joining live tutorials, webinars, discussions or chats at the same time) or **asynchronous** (learners study at whatever time suits them).

Examples of SCE **blended learning**.

- **Entrepreneurship training** in Mexico comprises hands-on practical workshops on product creation (pot production, floristry, baking and cooking) and online courses on human development and business skills.

The SCE e-learning programme occurs through different arrangements and platforms. For 2018–2022, the primary learning management system was the **offline-first platform Kolibri**, used in the following ways:

- online in hubs (Cameroon, Jordan, Mexico)
 - online at home on women's own devices (Chile, Mexico)
 - offline in hubs (only in one or two hubs in Mexico)
 - offline on tablets loaded with the Kolibri app and SCE content (Mexico)
 - to host content through a bespoke mobile app designed for migrant and refugee women (SisterWorks, Australia).
- Participants use **online resources to consolidate** or refresh knowledge retention after an in-person workshop. Women at SisterWorks might attend an in-person craft workshop and later watch the step-by-step craft video tutorial on the e-hub app at home.
 - Participants receive in-person **digital skills training** in hubs so they can study online independently on computers in the hub or at home (Mexico, Jordan, Cameroon).
 - Videos from an online course are shown during in-person workshops to **facilitate discussion and personal reflection**. Testimonies from local women in the Life and Career Planning courses may prompt recognition and sharing of personal experiences in group settings.

Benefits of online learning

“It [going online] is a very good change. I see this Corona as a blessing only because of these online classes. It changed my life so much during this time. If the classes were in the hubs, I couldn’t have gone, because I would have to take my daughter with me. I am not sending her to childcare and my husband cannot stay every day at home.”

SCE participant at SisterWorks, Australia³⁶

Despite the challenges of implementing SCE learning programmes virtually, many IPs testified to the benefits of offering an online or blended learning programme because they

- Reach women who live far from a hub
- Give women flexibility in when and where they learn
- Reach greater numbers of women
- Accelerate development of digital skills and confidence
- Have broader family benefits.

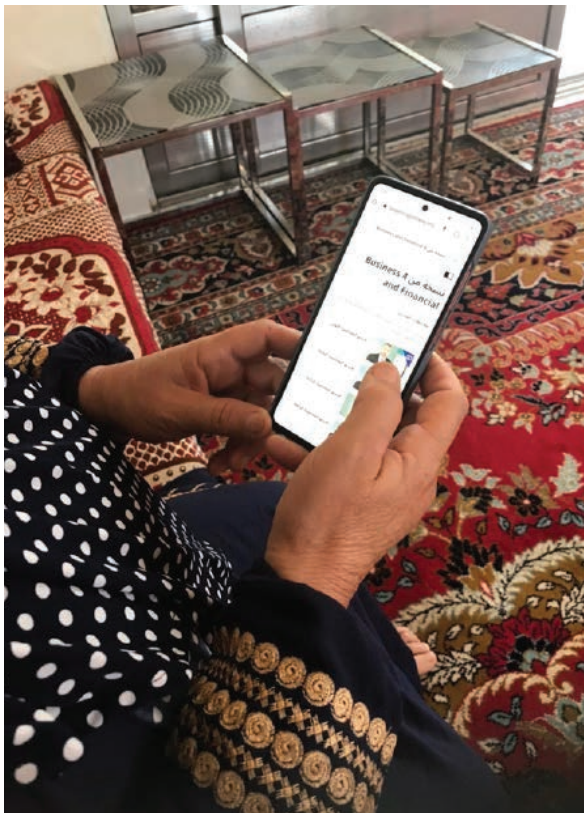


Photo: AWO/Suhaib Khamaiseh

³⁶ SCE COVID-19 Adaptation, <https://youtu.be/m1xWB7leqbc>, 15:23–15:47.

³⁷ SCE COVID-19 adaptation, <https://youtu.be/m1xWB7leqbc>, 17:09–17:16.

³⁸ SCE Virtual Hub Tour, VeOmás, <https://youtu.be/CQkV6Knnzsl>, 1:37–2:11.

Reaching women who live far from a hub or have difficulty getting to it

“We have been able to reach very isolated communities, specifically rural communities where we know that women lack networks and opportunities.”

Alejandra Lukaschewsky, General Coordinator, VeOmás, Chile³⁷

In Chile, the programme was initially designed for women in urban areas. Moving the programme online meant that it could reach rural women as well.

“At the beginning the programme was designed just for the city of Temuco in the Araucania Region of southern Chile. However, with the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, we have been able to roll out this programme 100% online, which has allowed us to implement the programme in more regions, from Biobio to Magallanes, covering a distance of almost 1,660 km and reaching very isolated communities, in particular the more rural communities where we know that women lack support networks and opportunities.”

Alejandra Lukaschewsky, General Coordinator, VeOmás³⁸

For women with physical disabilities, for whom travelling to and from the hub can be extremely challenging, an online learning programme can enable them to participate in a course that would otherwise not be accessible to them.

Similarly, the blended learning approach used by training provider TAFE in New South Wales enabled Real Futures to reach women who live anywhere in the state, not just those in the region of Western Sydney.

Flexibility in blended learning

Online learning offers flexibility to SCE programmes that are primarily hub-based. Centres in Toluca in the State of Mexico run by SEPICJ attract participants from across the state and even from Mexico City. To assist women who have to travel such long distances, the programme was adapted so that in-person workshops only occur once a week.

Flexibility in when and where participants learn

“I feel really comfortable taking classes online because I can manage my time better and I never stop learning, even though I’m at home.”

Cinthya Ayala, SCE participant, Cemex Hub, Jalisco, Mexico³⁹

“I’m a student on the UN Women SCE programme run by Infocap and I love the course because I can do it from home.”

Florence Alssaint, SCE participant, Chile⁴⁰

Women can **study at times convenient to them**. The demands of unpaid care and domestic work mean many only have pockets of time available for SCE activities, sometimes only in the evening. Lack of childcare can be a big barrier to attending in-person training and online learning offers greater flexibility.

Increased numbers and increased diversity

Regardless of how many participants can reach the centres, the number of computers or other devices, and the space available **limit the number of women** who can access learning materials there.

But when women have access to a mobile phone and a partial Internet connection, online learning can reach women in their homes. In Chile, this resulted in higher-than-expected participation amongst indigenous women.

Development of digital skills and confidence

“It has been very important ... that [the women] themselves recognize how online learning processes have also been a path towards autonomy, for example ... some have said that before, they were afraid to go to a bank because how were they going to use the ATM?”

And having done the training, and being able to use certain devices, they are also beginning to be interested in other, more complex digital tools ... that contribute to their development of themselves.”

Elsa Dominguez, ProSociedad, Mexico⁴¹

Many online SCE participants have to **learn how to use digital tools and platforms**. Digital activity **in a safe place and among a trusted group** consolidates what they learn and increases their confidence in navigating the digital world, which they can apply to other areas of life.

Wider family benefits

“The centre has helped me a lot and as a result of the pandemic the classes changed to online. So, whenever my eldest son, who is 15, does his homework, which includes Excel, he does it with me so we learn together. When I received this invitation, I didn’t think twice.”

Miriam Magali Vargas Mora, SCE participant, San Pedro Hub, Puebla, Mexico⁴²

It can be inspirational for **children to see their mothers** studying at home, learning on a laptop or phone. In return, women can support their children with schoolwork using the digital skills that they acquire through e-learning.



Photo: UN Women/Priya Naresh and Aniket Kolarkar

39 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Jalisco, https://youtu.be/nzv_oUPhkoM, 07:14–7:24.

40 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Infocap, <https://youtu.be/oZjGKCv2fas>, 7:27–7:39.

41 IP roundtable on COVID-19, <https://youtu.be/Y8GAR98VpZU>, 1:12:20–1:13:05.

42 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Puebla, <https://youtu.be/KJxXVCzXYHQ>, 2:56–3:22.

Assessing needs/planning

“One of the main things that must be done to be able to migrate to online platforms or online modalities is to always ... put women at the centre. It is of no use that we as a programme generate strategies if we do not consult and do not identify what the needs of women are. If we do not adapt to their needs, the strategies we generate will not work. We cannot generate strategies and have the women adapt to them.”

Mexico IP staff member⁴³

“It is not only about transferring content to a platform as we have done with the Kolibri platform... but it also means that we have to find new working methodologies that allow us to come together and get to know each other.”

María Belén Aguilera, Virtual Campus Sub-Director, Infocap, Chile⁴⁴

Facilitators have an important role identifying the most suitable learning platform, monitoring effectiveness, and developing courses and learning materials to offer. The SisterWorks’ approach provides a good example of how to centre women when designing digital learning.

- Building **personalized support** through a mentor or tutor as important as providing engaging, well-designed content.
- Giving women **opportunities to interact with each other**, whether on WhatsApp or Zoom, helps create bonds and supportive networks that increase the value of the asynchronous learning.
- **Starting small**, with a pilot programme, means lessons can be turned into incremental improvements.
- No one wants to re-invent the wheel, but **existing content**, whether open source or requiring payment, does not always meet the needs of SCE participants. The most popular content in SCE is created or commissioned by IPs and tailored to the women in the programme.
- Providing **similar training through different approaches** (online, offline, in-person and blended) offers great flexibility to participants though designing training modalities is time consuming.

Approaches

Online learning can be incorporated into SCE programmes in various contexts:

- 100% online supported learning in Chile
- Mobile learning on a bespoke app in Australia
- Hub-based blended learning in Mexico
- Supported self-guided learning in Jordan

100% online supported learning: Chile

“It is an asynchronous course, meaning that there’s no teacher and instead the women complete their work online on a digital platform which can be accessed 24/7. As it is a self-taught method of learning, the women need assistance and here at Infocap we offer them a personalized support service.

Because it is all online it has been a challenge to make up for the lack of in-person interaction, so we have set up tutorial groups of a maximum of 25 people which they stay in for the whole process, from the moment they are accepted until they pass into the next phase.”

Sofía Guzmán, Virtual Campus Coordinator, Infocap⁴⁵



Photo: UN Women/CVA

43 SCE COVID-19 Adaptation, <https://youtu.be/m1xWB7leqbc>, 4:47-5:20.

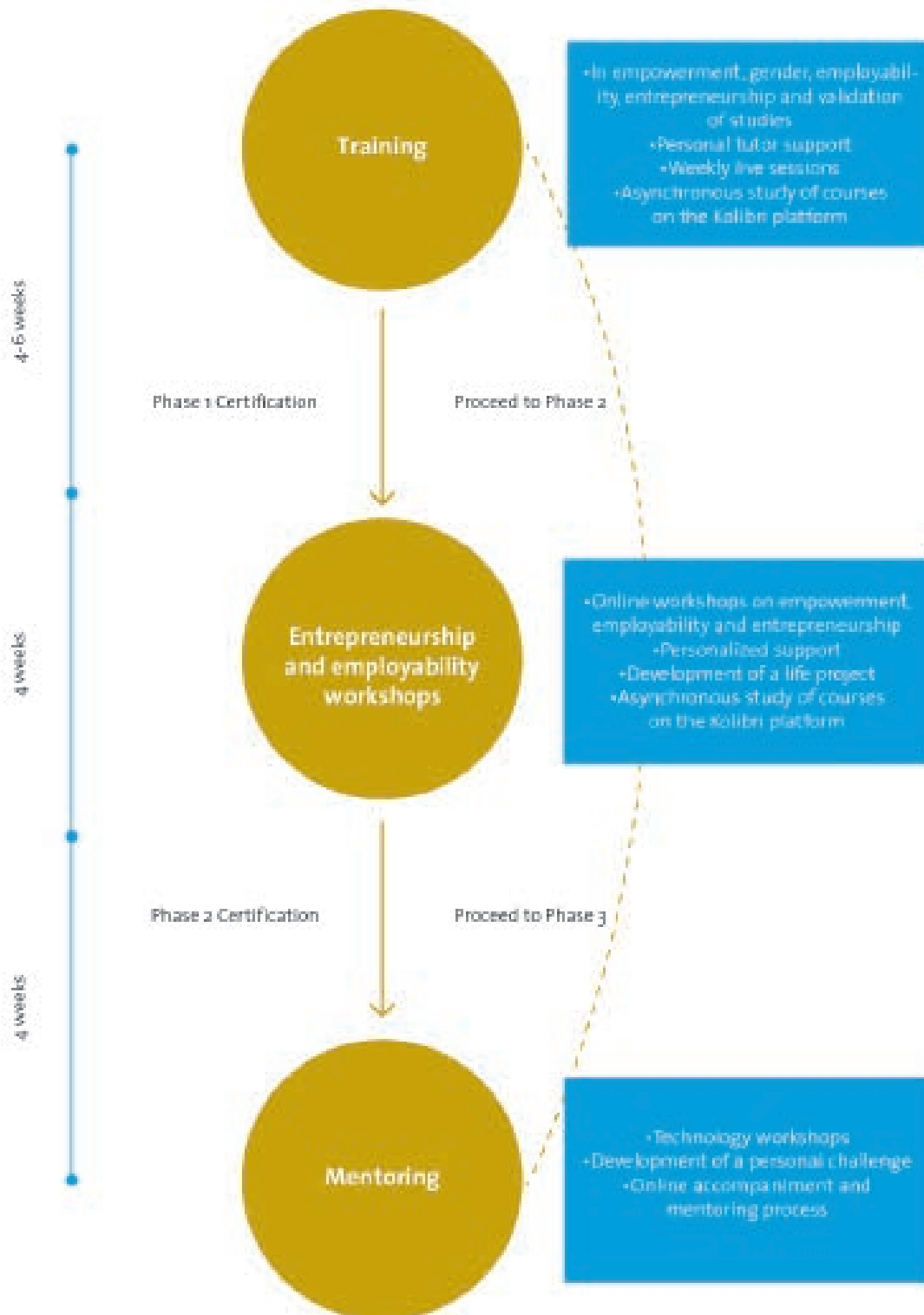
44 SCE COVID-19 Adaptation, <https://youtu.be/m1xWB7leqbc>, 11:55-12:13.

45 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Infocap, <https://youtu.be/oZjGKcv2fas>, 2:00-2:47.

The Chile SCE programme uses a 100% online supported learning model. Originally, the programme was supposed to be delivered through training centres and public libraries, but the onset of the pandemic meant it was re-designed as an online programme where women could participate from home.

The programme is divided into three phases and combines synchronous group activities (live sessions on Zoom) with asynchronous individual activities (learning on Kolibri).

Figure 1: The Chile model (to June 2022)



Phase 1: Personal skills development (4-6 weeks)

- Implemented by three IPs according to region.
- Participants study in tutor groups of up to 25 women on the learning platform Kolibri or on their own and attend a live session once a week with their tutor and the rest of their group.
- All women learn about digital tools, gender, empowerment, personal and emotional development, and communication. They can choose to focus on entrepreneurship, employment or a return to formal education.
- The same tutor supports them throughout and helps them overcome any barriers to participation. Interaction is through live sessions, WhatsApp, phone calls and email.

Phase 2: Entrepreneurship and employability workshops (4 weeks)

- Participants can choose between employment and entrepreneurship pathways. They attend virtual workshops and access job fairs and employment and business networks to identify a personal challenge to pursue.

Phase 3: Mentoring (4 weeks)

- Women work on their personal project. They are assigned a professional mentor who provides personalized support, advice and access to their networks. Women develop connections with other organizations or companies to ensure continued development after graduating from the programme.
- Women can also receive training to become mentors in their own communities.

For a tour of Kolibri as used in Chile, see Infocap's virtual hub tour at <https://youtu.be/oZjGKCv2fas> (2:01–2:47; 4:36–6:02; and 7:47–8:27).

See [section 7, Mentoring, tutoring and peer support > Tutors](#) for more information on Chile's tutoring system.

Mobile learning on a bespoke app: Australia

“For us, it's about providing different options for women to participate in our programmes. And online is a big new option.”

Mamiko Nakada, SisterWorks, Australia⁴⁶

SisterWorks supports migrant and refugee women who often arrive in Australia with little English and low digital literacy. Many have no community or family networks, are marginalized from mainstream society, and feel isolated. Most have a mobile phone but no computer. In 2020, SisterWorks addressed the issue by opening up the benefits of being modifying online for women with this profile and developed an app with the following features.

- Simple, easy to use, and intuitive.
- Designed for smartphones, not computers.
- Visual interface, relying on pictures with minimal text.
- All app resources—short videos and step-by-step guides—are created by SisterWorks and relevant and tailored to the needs of participants.
- Resources help women learn English and learn new skills.
- Women can attend live classes or access resources on over 80 topics.



Photo: SisterWorks

⁴⁶ IP roundtable on COVID-19, <https://youtu.be/Y8GARg8VpZU>, 1:03:20–1:03:32.

Supporting migrant women in Australia through the development of an app

Edited transcript of Ina Vergara from SisterWorks, Jan 2021 <https://youtu.be/TjRz5l>

Background

Many women could not come to our physical hubs – because of commuting or they didn't have enough money to pay for public transport, or they had family at home and could not leave their children – and they could not attend the face-to-face training.

The women we support speak little English and are not digitally literate. It was a difficult situation: How were we going to support them? And then we noticed that they all have phones or tablets, and they were happy to start exploring different tools. So this was a great opportunity to teach them some digital skills and give them tools so they could explore and upskill.

Challenges

We looked into other platforms that could fit the English skills that our sisters had and that could help them access different learning opportunities in a simple, simple, simple way. We couldn't find a tool that would fit. So we were thinking, OK, we should make something specifically for them, where they can open their phone, easily navigate, watch videos and attend classes, and have all of this on one platform.

Probably the most challenging part of the whole process was: how are we going to make this tool as simple as possible, so the sisters can understand it, want to engage with it, go easily into the different tabs that we wanted to create, and learn?

The process

We had a workshop where we decided on the different pages that we needed for the app, the illustrations, the icons, and how we were going to [organize the content].

We started mocking up and doing lots of focus groups with the sisters, face to face. When the lockdown started, we started going to the sisters' houses, outside – “OK, we're outside!” – and they came out, and with the social distancing we showed them the mockup and got feedback from them: Do you understand how to navigate, the illustrations? What would you like to see in this app, what would you like to learn?

And probably that was the key part of all our app development process. And having always in mind that our target women need to have it very, very simple.

When we started testing the app, we discovered that the women were really wanting to learn new skills. And also, with lockdown, we needed urgently to have a tool for the sisters to access our training, so we created another part that wasn't considered at the beginning: a live courses/live class section where we deliver daily online courses and classes, where the sisters can easily click into it and you're into the class, and we used Zoom for that.

The result

Now we have had lots of interviews with them and it's impressive the feedback we get. They are grateful, in some way, for Covid, only because SisterWorks shifted to this blended education, of having this online platform where they can jump in and attend the class while they're taking care of their kids at home.

Thus, a key aspect of the app is not only the extensive library of high quality resources, but the community that is built up through the live classes, which aims to replicate the sense of community in the physical hub. During the pandemic, when restrictions led to greater loneliness and isolation, this was a lifeline for many women.

Hub-based blended learning: Mexico

“It was important that we put women at the centre in the design of any solution. We did a pilot with selected content that was already in Kolibri and did a feedback exercise with the women to define what was needed for them in their lives ... so that we could adapt the learning.

... A very important learning is that for the participants, learning has to be planned differently when it is through an asynchronous digital platform, and different when the platform is used in a physical space, where there is interaction.”

Elsa Dominguez, ProSociedad, Jalisco, Mexico⁴⁷



Photo: UN Women/Dzilam Méndez

“One of the ways we adapted ... was to invite women here to the digital centre to take their on-line trainings or use the Zoom platform because many do not have internet in their homes that supports the Kolibri or HP platforms to access workshops and courses.”

ProMexico staff member, Mexico⁴⁸

A range of learning and teaching approaches are used in Mexico with combinations of in-person and online, group and individual, and live and asynchronous. Participants usually have digital skills training in the hubs, focusing on basic computer skills and learning about the platform, after which they can:

- Take courses entirely online or a combination of live and asynchronous sessions.
- Attend in-person training and use Kolibri or other online resources as complementary materials.
- Attend 100% in-person training with no online component.

After the initial digital skills training, participants who do not live close to their centre or have access to a mobile/computer or Internet connectivity, can follow a self-directed learning programme and receive support from facilitators and mentors at home. Alongside the learning platform, women use tools they are already familiar with, namely WhatsApp, to interact and support each other while learning to use Kolibri and working through the resources provided.

In many hubs in Mexico, facilitators have created notes on each course (*cartas descriptivas*) that help guide women towards the most appropriate courses. At CREA centre in Guadalajara, and elsewhere, facilitators also offer a Kolibri manual and accompanying infographics that summarize introductory information in a visual, accessible way. Furthermore, at CREA centre participants are offered two pathways:

- One is the ‘traced’ or marked pathway (*camino trazado*) where they follow all courses in a defined sequence. The pathway covers all the capacity building needed for empowerment. It takes at least six months but usually up to nine months of about four hours per week.
- The other is ‘my own pathway’ (*mi propio camino*) where participants select a number of individual, standalone courses in any order. This is more suited

47 IP roundtable on COVID-19, <https://youtu.be/Y8GARg8VpZU>.

48 SCE COVID-19 Adaptation, <https://youtu.be/m1xWB7leqbc>, 5:19–5:51.

to participants who face barriers to attendance as it only requires they commit for the duration of the course(s) they select. It is open to the public and some participants return after completion for support updating their CVs.

In San Juan Cosalá centre in Jocotepec, Jalisco, workshops are offered under a number of themes:

- Digital skills (6 sessions)
- Life Project (6 sessions with 2 mentors, who are psychologists)
- Personal finance (3 sessions)
- Trades (oficios) in artisanal sewing, dehydrated food, natural cosmetics, care for the elderly, and event organizing.
- Business finance
- Entrepreneurship

Participants can take these workshops in an established sequence – the ‘traced’ or marked pathway (*camino trazado*) – or select the ones they want through ‘my own pathway’ (*mi propio camino*), which is less successful.

Participants usually come to the centre once a week for two or three hours. They usually receive their mentorship sessions (one every 15 days) on the same day, especially for those for whom it is difficult to come to the center. For example, they might meet their mentor at 9am and then take part in a workshop at 11am, meaning they stay at the hub for around 4-5 hours.

In the State of Mexico, participants at SEPICJ-run centres may choose a short course of at least 12 hours for which they would come to the centre once a week. Longer courses will be between 18 and 24 hours and women would attend the centre twice a week. The organization of courses is flexible and participants are free to request modifications. Schedules are adapted to each group’s needs and sessions may be longer, shorter, more frequent or less frequent than the default timetable.

Most women come once or twice a week for two hours. They can stay longer if they wish and the facilitators encourage them to view the hub as their own space. They only insist on participants leaving before it gets dark, for their own safety.

In Puebla, the centers have two schedules for the activities offered: One in the morning and the other in the afternoons. Each session lasts a minimum of two hours up to six and it takes two to three months for the women to complete their courses.

Supported self-guided learning: Jordan

At the beginning of a cycle, a participant joins a group of about ten women to discuss their training needs with a facilitator who curates relevant resources on the Kolibri platform to meet the group’s needs. A course of about 12–16 hours results and the average participant completes the initial course over four days. The facilitator creates an account for her, so she can access the course whenever possible.

In host community hubs, training is conducted in-person. In refugee camps, training is online.

Following the initial course, participants can browse other learning resources on the platform and continue learning on any topic of their choosing. Facilitators can monitor participant activity on the platform.

Challenges and solutions in online learning

“... Internet connections have been a challenge since most of them do not have this facility and have to make use of their data and then do not have the money to be able to do these recharges either.”

IP staff member, Mexico⁴⁹

“Although within the city we have greater access to the use of the Internet, many women did not know how to use a device as simple as their cell phone.”

IP staff member, Mexico⁵⁰

“To actually get online, do you have the infrastructure to get online? Do you have WiFi at home? Are you working off a smartphone? Do you have enough data? Do you have the digital technology and digital knowledge to know how to do this? So that has been a huge learning, a challenge, but it’s also been a great educational opportunity.”

SisterWorks team member, Australia⁵¹

49 SCE COVID-19 Adaptation, <https://youtu.be/m1xWB7leqbc>, 12:54–13:08.

50 SCE COVID-19 Adaptation, <https://youtu.be/m1xWB7leqbc>, 13:10–13:21.

51 SCE COVID-19 Adaptation, <https://youtu.be/m1xWB7leqbc>, 10:13–10:35.

SCE programme stakeholders have had to think of innovative ways around the three main constraints to digital learning: 1) most SCE participants do not have a computer, 2) many are not able to access the Internet, and 3) they have limited digital skills and confidence.

Access to devices and internet

Challenge: Women have no device at home, or there is a device at home but it is used by the rest of family, or there is a device at home but it is old and outdated.

Solutions:

Increase numbers of devices and access by:

- Building partnerships where equipment is donated to hubs (e.g., HP in Mexico).
- Leveraging government partnerships to piggyback on tablet/computer distribution programmes (e.g., in Jalisco, Mexico, SCE content created by IPs was uploaded to thousands of tablets that were distributed to women via state government scheme in 2021).
- Setting up a scheme where devices can be lent out, as well as a digital or computer room in the hub that is accessible at any time.
- Being wary of asking for donations of old devices with a view to refurbishing since they often tend to need major repairs.

Design courses fit for mobile:

- Design for the most widely available device: smartphones. Although some skills in Word or Excel need to be learned on a computer most SCE subject areas can be designed for mobile learning.
- Develop an app with bite-sized learning and access to classes, services and support (SisterWorks, Australia).

Challenge: Lack of connectivity, especially in rural and semi-rural areas, and cost of data for phones

Solutions:

- Provide access to computers in the hubs.
- Kickstart learning by providing data card allowance.
- Subsidize data for women who are unable to afford it.
- If using Kolibri, set up a local network in the hub to allow offline access to the learning platform or download/install core materials so they can be accessed offline.
- If using EdApp, build lessons that can be downloaded and completed offline.

- Make materials easy to download by compressing videos before publishing using a programme like Handbrake and reducing the size of images.
- Teach women about how to find and use free public WiFi.

Challenge: Women cannot get to learning centres to use computers or for digital skills training

Solutions:

- Establish an online learning programme with carefully designed online support systems from the start.
- Mobile training with laptops and tablets (e.g., in the State of Mexico), so learning takes place in a secure a location that participants ask the facilitators to travel to. The centre has 30 tablets that can be used in this way. The main problem is Internet connectivity, which is often accessed through private WiFi networks.
- Bring training to women's spaces in community/ neighbourhoods and train groups of 20-25 women.
- Be flexible with scheduling for people who attend centres and open to adjusting times.

Challenge: Women cannot attend live sessions due to domestic and professional commitments, or poor connectivity

Solutions:

- As a facilitator, try to be as flexible as possible in finding solutions to help women participate. VeOmás in Chile created a category called 'women in green' for participants who found work but did not want to end their involvement with SCE. They were given permission to be absent from the workshops but watched recordings afterwards.
- Record sessions and put them on YouTube so they are easy to access.
- Make the most of participant time in a live class: Be friendly but efficient and concise in any written materials.

Digital skills, confidence and social norms

Challenge: Lack of digital skills. Even when women have a mobile phone they may only use it for calling and messaging. Digital skills tend to be lower in rural areas compared to urban.

Solutions:

- Include digital skills training early in the SCE learning programme so that women know how to use the learning platform and connect with each other online.
- Start with digital basics like how to turn on a computer, set up email, passwords, security, and change phone settings.
- Use tools that the women already know, like WhatsApp, alongside new platforms.
- Teach digital basics in an in-person environment if possible, so women can solve problems in the moment.
- Reinforce digital literacy throughout, repeating tasks and introducing new skills, so that working online becomes a habit.

Challenge: Lack of confidence: Participants think being online is too difficult or it is 'not for them'. Lack of motivation: Participants do not like being online and/or recognize the benefits of digital training.

Solutions:

- Provide human, personalized support to each participant throughout the online learning programme.
- Use WhatsApp groups to support women in use of Kolibri.
- Conduct 1:1 follow-up by phone, messaging or email to ensure each woman is engaged and to make adjustments as needed so she does not drop out.
- Use different means of communication simultaneously (email, WhatsApp, phone calls, video calls) to support women, build self-confidence, and solve barriers.
- Showcase specific ways in which digital skills can improve their lives (e.g. through online banking) and help them support their children at school.
- Encourage enthusiastic peers to share their experiences and promote the wider benefits of being online.

Challenge: Even when women own or have access to a phone, use may be limited by patriarchal norms as in India.

Social norms and mobile phones in India

In rural India, women may not need men's permission to use a mobile phone but this 'freedom' is limited by social norms that define when, how often, and for what purpose women use their phones. Only certain use is socially acceptable (speaking or texting to family) whereas men use them for work, entertainment and socializing. Patriarchal norms support a collective attitude that mobile phones are a potential distraction from care-giving and a risk to a woman's reputation.



Photo: UN Women

Solutions:

- Engage with parents of young women to sensitize them to the value of mobile phones.
- Ensure regular, sustained contact between field workers and women through visits and phone calls to be aware of issues and find solutions.
- Mentors can share success stories about other women who have overcome difficulties.

- Mobilization meetings and gender training. See [section 5, Overcoming constraints > Community, family and men.](#)

Content

Challenge: Lack of relevant and engaging courses

Solutions:

- In the short term, consider live sessions as an immediate way of engaging women and facilitating shared experiences.
- In the medium term, plan development of contextualized, relevant, high-quality digital content by curating materials from another provider (may need negotiation if they not openly licensed), adapting existing materials/drawing on expert knowledge, commissioning/adaptation existing materials.
- Make the content you create personal and include short, welcoming homemade videos or audio of yourself accompanied by a photo. Write in a personal way.
- Entice new learners onto platforms using engaging content as the 'hook'. In Jocotepec in Mexico, digital skills and personal finance courses are the ones participants are first invited to use, after which they explore further content.

Challenge: Participants have low literacy levels or been out of education for a while

Solutions

- Use videos or images rather than text. Make content bite-sized.
- Follow the tips for making online content easy to digest.

Challenge: Learning materials are tiring to read on screens

Solutions:

- Include a printer in the hub so that materials can be printed out.
- Design e-learning material for online use, that:
 - Is well-edited so text is minimal
 - Is divided into short sections with lots of headings
 - Imparts good use of white space
 - Has lots of (contextual) photos and images
 - Features different media especially videos
 - Offers opportunities for interaction with the material, other participants and the tutor/facilitator.
 - Allows for slower reading speed than in printed material.

Challenge: Refugee/migrant women may not understand the language

Solutions

- Create videos with slow voiceovers, simple language and subtitles (see SisterWorks videos for examples).

Learning platforms

Kolibri

During the SCE pilot phase in 2018–2022, the programme used Kolibri, an offline-first teaching and learning platform used around the world where connectivity is poor or non-existent, such as rural schools, refugee camps, orphanages and training centres without WiFi. It has been used by over six million learners in more than 200 countries.

Kolibri is used by all SCE countries online, including in humanitarian contexts (Cameroon and Jordan) where the SCE stakeholders have established connectivity in the hubs and women's centres. Kolibri is used mainly on PCs and tablets rather than phones, although an Android Kolibri app has been developed.

To see Kolibri in action in Chile, see the Infocap hub tour (<https://youtu.be/oZjGKCv2fas>) from minutes 2:01–2:47; 4:36–6:02; and 7:47–8:27.

For more information on Kolibri and its supporting tools, visit <https://learningequality.org/kolibri/>.

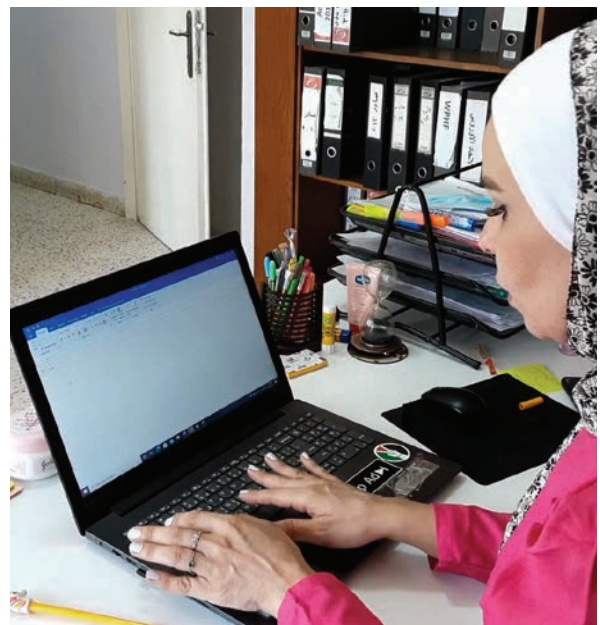


Photo: UN Women

Kolibri and SCE

Kolibri is developed and managed by Learning Equality, a non-profit organization based in California, with whom SCE established a global partnership. From September 2019, each SCE country had its own Kolibri site with a library of selected materials from the public Kolibri library. IPs added to this during the pilot phase with content that they sourced, created, or commissioned themselves.

Under the agreement with SCE, Learning Equality provided support and maintenance of six country servers; training and technical support to the country teams; a dedicated analytics dashboard, and additional software developments to the Kolibri ecosystem.



Photo: UN Women/Dzilam Méndez

EdApp

At the time of writing, the use of the mobile-first microlearning app EdApp is being explored. Under an initiative called Educate All, established through a partnership between EdApp and UNITAR, EdApp can be used free of charge for a range of topics including entrepreneurship, employability, personal skills and leadership. EdApp is mobile-first by design but also works on PCs and tablets.

SCE participants are much more likely to own a smartphone than a computer and would benefit in many countries from having access to a platform that is easy to use on a phone. Mobile-first e-learning has the potential to substantially increase the reach of SCE e-learning and the programme as a whole.

EdApp enables the creation of bite-sized, interactive lessons that can be accessed on mobiles, tablets and PCs. Authoring tools use a templated approach that facilitates the creation of content by users who are not professional instructional designers. Courses can be downloaded and accessed offline, with progress automatically synced when back online.

EdApp features and functionality seem to be a good fit for the SCE programme and Educate All offers a sustainable way for IPs to reach more women with contextualized content they have developed or commissioned. Migrating the SCE e-learning programme to EdApp opens up the potential to scale SCE learning to a larger audience and offers long-term sustainability of programme delivery for IPs as use of the platform is free of charge under the Educate All initiative.

For more information on EdApp, its authoring tools and the Educate All initiative, go to <https://www.edapp.com/>

Roles and responsibilities

- **IPs** are responsible for sourcing/creating and uploading content for beneficiaries. They are best placed to identify content gaps and the most effective way of filling them. This may be through sourcing content via local or national providers, commissioning content based on their own training and learning materials, or creating content in-house.
- **UN Women at country level** provides support and funding where necessary. The organization may have a coordination function to avoid duplication

among IPs and ensure optimal use of resources. UN Women may draw on its brand to open dialogue, establish partnerships with content providers, and facilitate the creation of partnerships between IPs and providers.

- **UN Women at global level** provides technical support and advice in creating and uploading content to the platform, feeds into quality assurance processes, liaises with LMS managers to resolve bugs and technical issues, and facilitates drafting of agreements with content providers on the use of their content.

The e-portal

The e-portal or aggregator (www.mylearningpathway.org) is the shop front for SCE courses and resources. Each country has its own landing page where participants and visitors can browse course offerings and learn more about the programme.



Photo: UN Women/Ruhani Kaur

A summary of e-learning tools used in SCE

Technology/tool	Examples of use
Zoom Google Meet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live skills training (SisterWorks, Australia). • Live wellbeing sessions (SisterWorks, Australia). • Live tutorial sessions (Chile, India, Mexico).
WhatsApp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group chats, to enable communication alongside live sessions and asynchronous courses. • Enables facilitators/tutors to motivate, facilitate interaction and respond to questions. • 1:1 dialogue between participant and mentor/tutor/facilitator.
Private Facebook group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For promoting learning events and building an online community of SCE participants and SCE support staff. It is a private, protected, safe space which only registered participants can join (e.g. Real Futures, Australia).
Kolibri	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study of (mostly IP-created) learning material at any time, either in the hubs (Mexico, Jordan, Cameroon) or at home (Chile).
YouTube	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosts recordings of live sessions for women to catch up/view again (Chile). • Hosts inspirational videos of SCE success stories in each country to stimulate and motivate.
Phone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To confirm participation in the programme and welcome participants (Chile, Real Futures-Australia). • 1:1 calls between participant and mentor/tutor/facilitator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables facilitator/tutor/mentor to check up on participant's wellbeing, any issues and how to help, through an actual conversation. • Enables participant to receive regular updates on activities in the hub (Real Futures).
Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used to share information about the programme activities and for participants to ask questions about the platform (Chile).
e-hub app	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives participants at SisterWorks easy access on their phones to very tailored resources and live classes. Resources also support learning of English.
SCE portal, mylearningpathway.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCE users and external visitors can find out about the SCE programme in all six countries and how to contact IPs, and can get a taste of the online courses available.
Chile networking app	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New as of March 2022! • Enables SCE participants, mentors and tutors to communicate with each other in multiple languages and to build networks.

Interaction

One of the biggest challenges with online learning in SCE is to **create opportunities for interaction and relationship-building** that go some way to replicating the sense of community found in the hubs. Self-guided learning by an individual may work in some cases but for most SCE participants, interaction with others is an essential component of the digital journey, especially in the early stages.

Spaces that allow for interaction are useful for monitoring programme effectiveness and making adjustments. A chat space with a direct line to participants provides an easy channel for gauging how a course is unfolding and its impact. The two common forms of online group interaction in SCE learning programmes are live sessions and WhatsApp groups.

Live sessions

“It was a process of creativity, to see how we could do one hour and a half workshops where we could really get women to stay focused, get them excited, and involved.”

IP staff member, Chile⁵²

“I think Zoom works great for synchronous activities as nowadays everyone knows how to use it and it is excellent for keeping everyone motivated during the activities. In addition, it helps integrate new and innovative methods into the teaching, such as new channels of communication which complement the online activities, which also motivate them and encourage them to create support networks among themselves.”

Patricia Torruella Alegria, Tutor, AIEP, Chile⁵³

Live sessions through Zoom, Google Meet or social media livestreams enable face-to-face interaction and collaborative learning when participants cannot meet in-person.

- In **Chile**, tutors facilitate a weekly session with their group of up to 25 women to discuss the week’s topic and share experiences. The same group meets over the next four to six weeks, so participants can build relationships with the tutor and with other participants. This is encouraged through the use of breakout rooms where women can talk in small groups of three to five and get to know each other better. Video conferences in SCE Chile were found to be “essential to programme implementation ... They help create an environment of trust among participants in which they share their experiences, and participants rate them highly” (Chile Lessons Learned, p.10).
- At **SisterWorks in Australia**, live sessions held through the e-hub app on Zoom were essential for maintaining engagement during the 2021 lockdown.

“We made it really easy for the women. We took the platform that works for [them],

and we have control, so the women don’t have to do anything when the class starts. We had lots of live online classes with the teachers ... it was creating that community, replicating that community online which SisterWorks is normally providing in the physical hub.

And rather than self-guided learning, we created a community environment to learn skills together during the pandemic ... A lot of women were looking for this sense of community and belonging, and they wanted to meet their friends again online, so they were eager to learn about this new platform and learning method.”

Mamiko Nakada, SisterWorks, Australia⁵⁴

These sessions replaced in-person workshops usually held in the hub. The initial focus was on skills such as how to make face masks and other products that are sold in the SisterWorks store. They were complemented by tutorial videos in the e-hub app that women could watch whenever they wanted after the live sessions.

As lockdown progressed, however, the focus moved towards wellbeing, mental health and sustaining a sense of community to counter feelings of isolation. The wellbeing classes featured yoga, some group counselling and psychology classes. They were very popular and SisterWorks responded to the demand by offering 60-70 classes per month at its peak.

- The Manjari Foundation in **India** organizes online sessions for **one-off mentoring events** where specialists share knowledge and practical experience, and participants can ask questions.
- In **Mexico**, SCE participants sometimes voluntarily organize live sessions when they have particular skills or knowledge to share. In December 2021, in the State of Mexico, a participant who makes figurines for sale livestreamed a demonstration of the process on social media so that other women could benefit from her skills.

52 SCE COVID-19 Adaptation, <https://youtu.be/m1xWB7leqbc>, 13:22–13:41.

53 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, AIEP, <https://youtu.be/8HHHfh-Q31Y>, 3:49–4:27.

54 IP roundtable on COVID-19, <https://youtu.be/Y8GAR98VpZU>, 00:59:15–1:00:30.

Tips for running live sessions: lessons from Chile

- We try to create an **emotional context** to facilitate learning.
- We use **music** as a motivator: “Music, according to our experience, and if you ask any of the women who have participated in our workshops, music has been key.”
- We use **visual presentations with little text** and pictures relevant to them, of rural women with black or grey hair, who are short. Pictures of rural life. We do not show pictures of CEOs.
- **Simple and conversational language**, not academic or formal.
- We use **examples and stories** relevant to them, about the orchard, walking three km to get the bus, or the realities they live.
- We **use the chat to get their opinions** because it can be hard to get them to talk on microphone. So we post a reflection question in the chat and they reply there. There is a facilitator who reads the full chat and all their opinions. This gives them visibility. In the beginning they are reluctant to share but as workshops go by they become more active, they feel free to share their experiences and share them on the chat.
- We have a **technical support person** behind the scenes in every session who helps solve any problems. She is not visible in the overall experience but is there to help when needed, so the tutor can concentrate on facilitating the session. Usually this is a volunteer student.
- **Familiarize participants with the technology** and **check connectivity** before the first live session, e.g. through a tutorial video or written instructions. Understanding how to connect, turn the camera and mute button on/off, use a mic, use the chat, etc. beforehand saves time in the session.

Source: Spotlight on Chile’s Covid-19 response, June 2021, VeOmás and AIEP, <https://youtu.be/UflmTfMgjfU>



Photo: UN Women

WhatsApp groups and other messaging tools

“We used what the women were already familiar with, like WhatsApp groups, so groups that take the training [on Kolibri] at the same time are part of a social network familiar to them.

They [participants] also give feedback afterwards to share how they applied learning at home or in some other place and it becomes a learning process that exceeds the space.”

*IP staff member, Mexico*⁵⁵

Many SCE learning programs use WhatsApp groups or other instant messaging service for participants to interact with each other and with tutors, mentors and facilitators. It provides a space to strengthen those relationships. These messaging platforms are already familiar to women who own a phone and groups can continue beyond the end of the program.

It allows facilitators or tutors to contact women regularly but informally, to remind them of their activities and to maintain their sense of belonging and motivation. It allows participants to interact among themselves, to ask for help and support each other.

“The instant-messaging application group made it possible to respond quickly to participants’ needs, to enable tutors to constantly motivate them to participate and facilitate interaction, giving them an opportunity to form direct networks between themselves, thus strengthening group empowerment. This communication channel was viewed positively by participants.”

UN Women, 2021, Tu Oportunidad: Lessons Learned, p.10

A WhatsApp chat group is a useful complement to both live sessions and self-guided learning. A learning platform that has such a space built into it or allows such spaces to be built into courses as EdApp does, could be advantageous.

“One of the main recommendations for the platform is to open a space in which users can interact with each other and ask tutors any questions that arise from the learning process through some means built into the platform, such as a forum or chat space.”

UN Women, 2021, Tu Oportunidad: Lessons Learned, p.10

The Chile SCE programme acted on this recommendation and developed a webapp specifically for SCE participants to interact and network. The app is being piloted at the time of writing and will be accessible on the Tu Oportunidad website.

Certificates

Issuing certificates in a closing ceremony is an effective way of recognizing participant achievements and that they are ready to move on to the next stage. In Cameroon, ‘moving on’ is marked by issuing start-up kits in graduation ceremonies. In other programmes, participants may pass into the next phase with a different IP or simply another course in the programme.

In Chile, the certificate is accompanied by small photos and screenshots showing their contributions to the sessions and the course overall.

“The small gestures and the gifts we present to them during the virtual closing ceremony, such as an exclusive certificate with their name, photo and where they live, and a picture slide show, are all tiny details which add up to help the women feel recognized and seen. This is all part of the strategy to make them feel empowered and trust in themselves.”

*Valentina Orrego, Director, VeOmás, Chile*⁵⁶

Where the same group of women have spent several weeks together, this final activity can be quite emotional.

“The process finishes with a closing ceremony on Zoom. It is very emotional. ... It helps make them aware of the meaning of the experience that they have undergone and their learnings. We acknowledge them for completing the process.”

*Valentina Orrego, Director, VeOmás, Chile*⁵⁷

As well as inclusive.

“We are working with women who have the option to drop out and they take the chance as soon as they have a personal issue. So we commend those who have completed the process, who didn’t drop out. Maybe they were absent or unable to finish the Kolibri program, but we honour them equally, with a certificate of participation.

⁵⁵ IP roundtable on COVID-19, <https://youtu.be/Y8GAR98VpZU>

⁵⁶ SCE Virtual Hub Tour, VeOmás, <https://youtu.be/CQkV6Knnzsl>, 4:04–4:29.

⁵⁷ Spotlight on Chile’s COVID-19 response, <https://youtu.be/UflmTfM9ifU>, 41:32–41:53.

For those who attended the 5 workshops and did the 3 self-learning courses, and who have actively participated in mentoring, we acknowledge their will, their effort and their commitment.

This is not like a graduation certificate. Women don't need this certificate to move to the next phase. It's mainly an acknowledgement, a source of pride."

Valentina Orrego, Director, VeOmás, Chile⁵⁸

SEPICJ in Puebla, Mexico, issue certificates to women on completion. They are not certified or accredited to an institution so are *reconocimientos* rather than *certificados*.

Assessment

Most SCE programmes have no formal final assessment that participants have to pass to earn their certificate. For most women, the achievement lies in registering in the first place and still being there at the end. It is this that is recognized in closing ceremonies in the Chile programme.

Nevertheless, assessment is helpful:

- During the programme, to ensure progress towards goals is made and to identify any additional support the participant may need.
- At the end of the programme, to show progress that was made for the purposes of both the participant and the programme.

Evidence of attendance, activities, and an understanding of what's been taught all contribute to the assessment.

"I'd like to show you how I complete the weekly review using the platform and the different tools that I have. ... Here at Infocap we have a spreadsheet which we fill in each week to see how the students are progressing. The best way is to take an in-depth look at each student's progress one by one, especially if they haven't successfully completed one of their classes."

Catalina Brevis, Tutor, Infocap, Chile⁵⁹

The learning platform allows tutors to track the progress of individual participants.

"The Kolibri platform ... has a space where each person can see their progress. The tutors review this and then talk to the students to ask them about what's going well, what's going badly and how they can improve."

Sofía Guzmán, Virtual Campus Coordinator, Infocap, Chile⁶⁰

In a manual created for the Chile programme, recommendations, tutor and self-assessment methods are described.

- **Observation and feedback from their tutor** or other support person. The three key questions for delivering feedback (oral or written) are:
 - Where am I going? What are my goals?
 - How am I doing? What progress am I making towards my goals?
 - How do I proceed? What activities do I need to do to make better progress?

This feedback should be a dialogue, with the participant made aware right at the start how this assessment is going to be done and what the goal is.

- A **self-assessment** in which participants 'describe moments of self-observation, which will reveal their position at the beginning and end of the stage developed, the discoveries made and the future challenges that they have to continue working on.

TEDUCA User Manual for Tu Oportunidad/SCE Program, May 2021, p. 71

58 Spotlight on Chile's COVID-19 response, <https://youtu.be/UflmTfMgIfU>, 41:54–43:12.

59 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Infocap, <https://youtu.be/oZjGKCv2fas>, 4:06–4:33.

60 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Infocap, <https://youtu.be/oZjGKCv2fas>, 4:39–4:53.

Monitoring engagement

"[in establishing the online programme] we also strengthened the processes of mentoring, accompanying and calls to carry on the monitoring aspect that occurred in the centres, monitoring the needs to see if the learning was significant and if it needed to be adjusted."

Elsa Dominguez, ProSociedad, Mexico⁶¹

Without the immediate feedback that in-person interaction provides, it can be harder to assess women's engagement or the quality of their online learning. But as seen in the ProSociedad case, IPs have done this by:

- Including feedback activities within the mentor or tutor role.
- Eliciting feedback in live sessions.
- Eliciting feedback through WhatsApp groups and phone calls.
- Analytics to track individuals' activity and completion of tasks.

Example of an M&E exercise in Chile

In one M&E exercise, carried out for the pilot SCE programme in Chile, evidence was gathered through two processes:

Surveys of participants

Four questionnaires were issued:

- At the start, on participant characteristics.
- At the end of Week 1 on their experiences when joining the platform.
- During Week 3 on their learning experiences and use of the platform.
- After the programme had ended, about use of the platform and the support given.

Logbooks completed by tutors: Five were completed, one per week. Tutors recorded difficulties and unforeseen issues that arose during the programme.

Various indicators are available for evaluating the quality of an online course. A typical one is presented in the Chile Lessons Learned document (p.5) and groups indicators into five categories.

- Course operation, planning and programming.
- Content.
- Methodology and teaching.
- Communication and interaction.
- Use of platforms and media.



Photo: UN Women/Dzilam Méndez

Content development

Another challenge for SCE programmes in most countries is the lack of relevant, contextualized content that SCE participants can relate to. Open educational content from global sources is often ineffective for SCE beneficiaries as it does not relate to their cultural, social or economic contexts and tends to target people with higher educational attainment.

Many IPs have therefore created or commissioned their own learning resources. Often these involve converting their own training materials to online learning formats. Sometimes they are developed from scratch. They include courses on personal development and confidence building, life planning, the skills and knowledge needed to set up and run a business, improving employability, and job preparation skills.

The personal development and psycho-emotional courses, integrated with a gender perspective, are essential in setting the foundations for learning because they help participants to realize their agency and harness a sense of control over their lives. This can make

61 IP roundtable on COVID-19, <https://youtu.be/Y8GARg8VpZU>.

all the difference to the long-term impact of the SCE programme on an individual's life.

These personal development courses may be the ones where facilitators and other staff working closely with women can add most value in content creation, since they understand where the women are coming from in their thinking, what they need in terms of confidence boosting and developing aspirations, and the best ways of achieving that.

SisterWorks, Australia: In-house, bespoke video production

A system of volunteers and scripted templates are used to create over 80 short videos designed to help women develop skills and learn English at the same time.

Approach: In 2020–2021, the e-hub manager led a team of volunteer script writers and video makers to produce more than 80 short videos on topics around living in Australia, wellbeing, personal finance, digital literacy, employment, and craft production.

The process for producing each video involved:

- Project is assigned to a team member, matching a volunteer to the topic where possible (the 'My Rights' video was scripted by a volunteer lawyer).
- Team member drafts a script, using a template designed for each video category (e.g., for a craft video, the structure is: Introduction | Materials | Steps | Typical errors | Cleaning up | Final product).
- Draft script is reviewed by another team member and amended/approved.
- Volunteer filmmaker captures footage using the approved script.
- Lead/volunteer film maker creates a storyboard and edits and produces the video (with Adobe Premier Pro), and includes front and end boards with SisterWorks branding.
- Lead team, including English as a Second Language teacher, reviews video.
- Final video is uploaded to YouTube.
- A PDF of key points with screenshots is created for each video.

Key working principles:

- Clear process and roles.
- Well organized project folders on Google Drive.

- Videos have slow-paced voiceovers and large subtitles to aid English literacy.
- Use of templates for consistency (in structure and also for volume, subtitle fonts, etc.).

Output: A syllabus of over 80 videos and PDFs which can be accessed through the e-hub app and on the SisterWorks' YouTube channel.

ProSociedad, ProMexico, Mexico: Working with local companies or organizations with relevant expertise

Approach: Identify local companies or organizations with e-learning expertise and work with them to adapt training materials for asynchronous learning on the Kolibri platform.

Process: Digital skills training may be particularly suitable for this approach as there is more likely to be pre-existing generic material available. ProMexico worked with a private digital skills training company, EdNovae, to produce a basic digital skills course. While new resources on Kolibri had to be created, the course included some EdNovae generic material. ProMexico in Jalisco also hired a company that focuses on digital skills. They offered capacity building and created the manual that is used in the digital center.

"We found that... there are already local actors implementing the type of content that interested us, but certain things had to be adapted and reinforced [such as a gender perspective]. ..."

It is important to take advantage of local resources and strengthen those local resources. So rather than developing from scratch, what we did was find experts who already had certain trainings and work with them in this adaptation process that would allow us to digitize, so that we can have some adaptations on Kolibri that have already proven to be effective."

Elsa Dominguez, ProSociedad, Mexico⁶²

In the State of Mexico, SEPICJ facilitators are in charge of content development and do everything from design, development, editing and uploading. They produce hard-copy materials as well as digital content, such as brochures, leaflets and infographics for SCE participants. Printed copies of digital material can be

62 IP roundtable on COVID-19 (with Spanish interpretation), <https://youtu.be/l3C67LT747g>, 1:09:29–1:11:45.

more accessible and easier to read for many women. They have also produced a manual for facilitators.

The content was originally developed in Puebla State, where SEPICJ worked initially, and facilitators realized that it needed to be adapted to serve a new audience in the State of Mexico, who usually had completed their secondary education. The facilitators created descriptive notes on the content which they can review and update as needed.

Even in Puebla, facilitators continually adapt learning materials for current participants and to meet the needs of women in different locations. They see these adjustments as being important in ensuring that their materials reflect the reality of life for participants, which varies from centre to centre. This capacity to adapt source materials has meant that they have been able to continue using the original learning content without the expense of developing new materials.

In CREA centre, Guadalajara, participants use content created by the Ministry of Equality (Secretaría de Igualdad Sustantiva) for the Fuerza Mujer and Mujer Empresaria programmes. This material has been uploaded to Kolibri.

Output: Resources, internally or externally developed, are uploaded to the learning platform, which can be adapted to the needs of different cohorts and different locations.

Chile: curation, creation and sharing

“It took us several months of blood, sweat and tears to create this series of personal development workshops made up of content that would be of interest to all women, regardless of their economic or social situation and their education.”

Alejandra Lahr, mentor, VeOmás, Chile⁶³

Approach: Review of content from external providers in the public channels on Kolibri and the curation of relevant resources into courses, alongside the development of e-learning resources based on IPs’ existing training and learning materials that are shared amongst each other.

In creating online courses on Kolibri, IPs in Chile (Acción Emprendedora, Infocap and VeOmás) assessed the suitability of open resources available elsewhere on Kolibri and curated those that were appropriate

and relevant into some of their courses, alongside new materials that they created themselves.

The result was a collection of carefully curated courses that comprised a mix of existing and new materials. For example, VeOmás courses consisted of:

- Pre-existing videos and HTML5 resources from other Kolibri channels, for example on how to use Kolibri (Learning Equality), entrepreneurship (HP LIFE) and psycho-emotional themes (Ceibal).
- Videos and PDFs created by VeOmás.
- Videos and PDFs created by the two other IPs in Chile engaged in that phase of the programme.

Creating content internally

Internally created content is a good option when there is no budget for outsourcing but there is enough staff capacity. Advantages of this are:

- The IP can maintain control of the process and end product. When combined with their understanding of the target audience, this can lead to accessible, friendly and engaging content.
- It can make gathering feedback and later adjustments easier.
- It can lead to a greater sense of ownership and stronger commitment to promoting and using material. It is also an opportunity to introduce or strengthen skills within the team.
- It usually does not matter that the learning materials are not of perfect quality. In fact, it can make a video of a facilitator talking to camera feel more intimate and personal.



Photo: UN Women/CVA

63 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, VeOmás, <https://youtu.be/CQkv6Knnzsl>, 2:13–2:30.

Creating videos

Some examples of how educational videos can be made are shown below.

Technology/ equipment	Examples of topics	Min. no. of people
A selfie video made using a smartphone, tablet or camera	<p><i>Any topic that needs a personal connection and can be covered in a few minutes:</i></p> <p>Welcome to the programme!</p> <p>What to do if you need help</p> <p>What is a mentor and how you can get one</p>	1 person
A narrated presentation recorded in PowerPoint or Zoom	<p><i>Any topic where headings, pictures or diagrams can aid engagement and understanding:</i></p> <p>How to prepare for a job interview</p> <p>How to open a bank account</p> <p>Stories of great women in this country</p> <p>Why employment law is important for women</p> <p>Any topic of history, art, social science, science, etc.</p>	1 person
Screencast recorded on screencast software or Zoom	<p><i>Tasks that are done on a computer or phone:</i></p> <p>How to use the internet</p> <p>How to use YouTube/Google Search/Google Translate etc.</p> <p>How to write an email</p>	1 person
'How to' demonstrations filmed on a smartphone or camera	<p><i>Tasks that involve making or doing:</i></p> <p>How to make a face mask</p> <p>How to grow herbs</p> <p>How to check the oil in a car</p>	1 person but easier with 2 people
Scripted dialogue with a slide show, recorded in PowerPoint or Zoom	<p><i>Anything that can be explained through a fictional, scripted dialogue:</i></p> <p>A man and woman discuss gender equality, with the man putting forward arguments against equality and the woman explaining why equality is good for all.</p> <p>Mentoring dialogue: A woman describes her lack of motivation and a mentor shares ways of dealing with it.</p>	2 people

Guidance on creating educational videos and adapting text-based content according to staff capacity is available from the SCE Global team.

Quality assurance

A quality assurance checklist is available from the SCE Global team to use in the **design and development of learning materials**.

It is also important to undertake **due diligence checks on potential content providers**. A checklist for verification of a provider is also available from the SCE Global team.

Making content accessible

'Accessibility' means different things according to context. In its broadest sense, accessible content should be clearly presented, easy to understand, and engaging. More technically, accessible content means that it is in a format that people living with disabilities can access. It is this meaning that this section refers to.

SCE content should be accessible and usable by everyone, including women with physical or learning disabilities since:

- Nearly all of us will cope with a physical disability at some time in our lives: Broken wrist, reduced hearing, declining eyesight, carrying a baby, arthritic fingers. We all benefit from accessible content.
- It provides legal protection against allegations of discrimination where accessibility standards have to be met.
- It almost always leads to improvements for people without disabilities too including marginalized groups and people who face intersectional disadvantages.

Content should be accessible to women who have sight or hearing impairments, physical disabilities that might make using a mouse difficult, dyslexia, and various learning disabilities. It should be accessible to people who are neurodiverse, including those who are autistic or have ADHD and who find it difficult to follow synchronous live training sessions online.

In almost all cases, the adjustments and workarounds that people living with disabilities have to make mean they **require more time** to complete any particular online course.

Documents and text

Making content accessible for women living with disabilities such as impaired sight (that requires use

of a screen reader) or dyslexia should involve several considerations.

- **Structure** your content in a logical, clear, consistent way.
- **Edit** so that text is clear, concise and easy to understand. Avoid long, complex sentences. Use short paragraphs. Remember we read more slowly online than in print.
- Ensure content is **easy to navigate** with lots of **headings**.
- Use **heading styles**—don't just make normal text bigger or bolder. Heading styles clarify the structure and make it consistent for everyone, especially those who use screen-readers.
- **Avoid using all capitals**. Capitalized words are harder to read for people with impairments and screen-readers spell out the word, rather than read it.
- Use **meaningful text on a link** so that, if a link stands alone, its purpose is clear. See good and bad examples below. Avoid using a full URL as the link text since a screen reader will read it out.

Do	Don't
Find out more about the Second Chance programme	To find out more, click here .
Go to the BiblioRedes site for more information.	For more information, click here .
Read more about UN Women results in Mexico .	Read more about UN Women results in Mexico.
Go to Employers on the Second Chance Mexico site to find out more.	Go to https://mexico.mylearningpathway.org/es/employers to find out more.

Images

Curating images is especially important for women with impaired sight or colour blindness.

Make sure users who cannot see can access the information provided in an image with **alternative text** (or

an 'alt tag') for images that are not decorative. A user with no vision will depend on a screen reader. And to add alt text to an image in Word or PowerPoint, right-click on the image and select 'Edit Alt text'.

When writing alt text:

- Keep it short and succinct– the most popular screen readers cut off alt text at 125 characters, so keep it within this count.
- Do not include information that is in the text next to it.
- Do not include 'image of' in the text as that is obvious.

If an image is purely decorative or stylistic, and adds nothing to a non-sighted user's understanding of the content, add " " to the alt text box so the screen reader will skip this content. Furthermore, do not communicate information using colour alone as this is not accessible for colour-blind users. Include information as text or use different shapes.

Videos

- Include **subtitles** for users with hearing impairments and, if possible, a screen-readable transcript.
- Include controls that allow people to **adjust the volume, pause and play**.
- **Do not set videos to 'autoplay'** as this can be confusing for screen-reader users. Being in control of when you play videos is helpful for mobile users who are using data to connect.

The platform

- Ensure the **user can modify** how they see content by zooming in, adjusting colour contrast, etc.
- Make sure **interactive tools like drag and drop, buttons, and other controls** can be operated without a mouse and by keyboard alone.
- When writing activities, make sure they can be performed without a fast-typing speed, manual dexterity, or good eyesight.

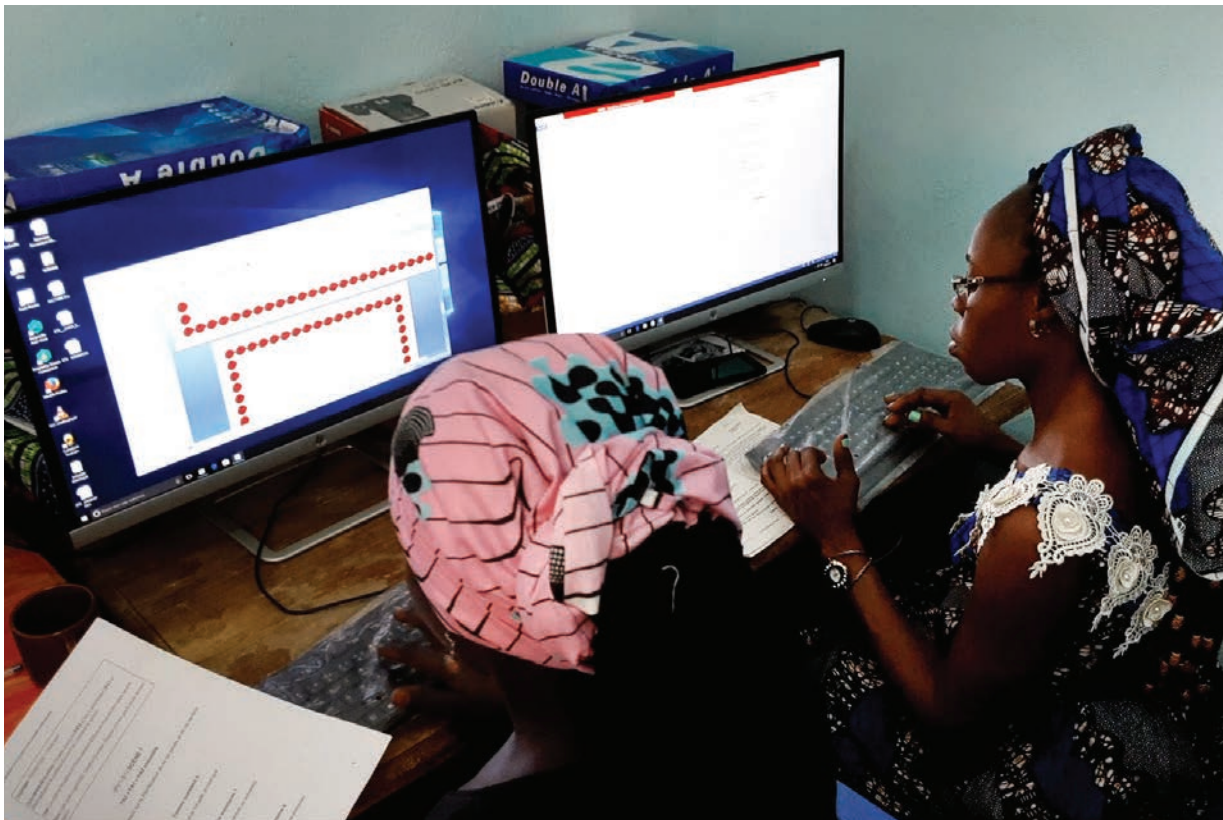


Photo: UN Women

7. MENTORING, TUTORING AND PEER SUPPORT

Key points

- Mentors and tutors are **central to SCE participant success**. For many women, they are the face of the SCE programme. They provide personalized, regular, easily accessible support and advice.
- SCE mentors and tutors are nearly always **volunteers** and can be SCE graduates, students, professional women with an established career, or local businesswomen.
- **SCE graduates** tend to make good mentors and often feel motivated to volunteer. But because they are busy with their own personal and professional lives, mentoring needs to fit into their schedules and aspirations.
- Offering **training** can be a good incentive for SCE graduates to mentor as it is a transferable skill that they can add to their CVs and carry forward.
- Mentoring is also **part of the facilitator role**, since facilitators are often the people women are in contact with first and most often.
- **Peer support** plays a key role: Connections and friendships amongst the women are integral programme engagement and retention.

What do mentors and tutors do?

Mentors and tutors provide SCE participants with personalized, regular and easily accessible support during and after their involvement in the programme. While mentoring and tutoring can be part of a facilitator's role, mentors and tutors focus exclusively on supporting SCE participants they have been assigned. Evidence suggests that women who have a mentor or tutor are more likely to stick with the programme and achieve their goals (as per Chile and Mexico Colegio de México [COLMEX] evaluations).

While both tutors and mentors offer personalized support, the two roles focus on different things. Tutors support women primarily with their learning while mentors act as a 'buddy', someone to walk with the

women on their SCE journey or offer support in their area of expertise.

Tutors

In the pilot phase of the SCE programme (2018–2022) the only one to use a tutoring system was Chile. Mentoring is offered in addition to a tutor, as is mentoring training for participants themselves.

The main purpose of tutors is to accompany women through their learning process and provide support, encouragement and connections with other women so that they complete the first phase of the programme.

“You can really see how the women benefit from the tutorials. They make full use of the opportunity to learn and they also create support networks among themselves. The ability to train these women and help them progress and flourish is very satisfying and it makes you feel so happy when they get to the end of the process, receive their certificate and take on board these tools and knowledge to take advantage of this second chance.”

Ignacia Manríquez, Employment and Entrepreneurship Tutor, Acción Emprendedora, Chile⁶⁴

A tutor is assigned to each participant from the start. Each tutor is responsible for 20–25 women and they support them during the entire process over six to seven weeks. This leads to a sense of belonging, trust, and continuity. For women in Chile, their tutor is the face of the SCE programme.

“The tutor is in constant contact with the women, sending them a welcome email, informing them of the first session, and creating a WhatsApp group, which is vital for keeping in close contact with the women for the duration of the programme ...

64 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Acción Emprendedora, <https://youtu.be/ZjmYc9CCJeg>, 7:27–8:05.

“The work they [the women] do with their tutor is very important because they offer them constant support during the entire process.”

Acción Emprendedora, Chile⁶⁵

Tutors are mostly women volunteer students on placements who are working towards a degree in psychology, sociology, or social work at a local institution. They can also be women with experience in a relevant area, such as entrepreneurship.

“Here [on the entrepreneurship pathway] they gain knowledge which they can use to create or improve their own business. I’ve been following this route for around 15, 16 years and I advise entrepreneurs, offering them help and support in creating a business plan, understanding how a business works and putting their business ideas into practice.”

Tutor, Acción Emprendedora, Chile⁶⁶

Later in the programme, when women are in their chosen pathway of either entrepreneurship or employment, they are supported by **advisors**.

- In the **entrepreneurship** pathway, this is an expert, professional, or a business management student in their final year who supports participants along the initial entrepreneurship pathway.
- In the **employment** pathway, advisors may be psychology or social work professionals who help participants apply for and secure employment. They may support them in creating a CV, preparing for a job interview, or producing a high-impact introduction video.

The evaluation of an early SCE trial in Chile concluded that:

“Online support is a key facet of the programme. It is important that participants feel supported and guided during their self-learning process on the platform and that it is possible to answer their questions in a timely manner. ... Tutor support is vital to the success of the programme and to prevent participant drop-out.”

Chile, Lessons Learned and Recommendations in Online Learning, p.10



Photos: SisterWorks/Sonali Hedditch

65 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Acción Emprendedora, <https://youtu.be/ZjmYc9CCJeg>, 3:21–4:21.

66 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Acción Emprendedora, <https://youtu.be/ZjmYc9CCJeg>, 4:32–4:59.

Tips for tutors – the Chilean experience

(Adapted from Chile Lessons Learned, p. 11)

- Be clear **when** you are available, **how** you can be contacted, and **how quickly** you will respond.
- When facilitating everyday communication, use a platform like **WhatsApp** that women are familiar with and where you can give an immediate response, if necessary.
- Regular **videoconferences** enable vital face-to-face interaction. Resolve connectivity and technical issues before meeting to make best use of the time.
- **Monitor** attendance and participation in live sessions and activity on the learning platform so that you can follow up with women who show signs of falling engagement.
- The women in your group will approach tasks in different ways.

“It is important to remember that, even though these are all groups of women, the groups are very diverse and each woman in the group is different with her own rhythm, schedule, life story and personality. We have to support them while respecting their uniqueness. Each one has a different way of tackling the task.”

María Elena Garrido, Tutor, Infocap

- Women often have low confidence levels when they start which makes them more likely to drop out when facing personal challenges. Be as **flexible** and creative as you can with live session timings, attendance, and helping women catch up through session recordings.
- Remember that you are **transforming** lives! *“It’s very rewarding to see them take control of the situation, take on this new information that they have learned and become motivated to go out and work. The process allows them to reflect and question certain structures, which is a good thing as it helps them transform.”*

María Elena Garrido, Tutor, Infocap

Mentors

“We aim for women to receive comprehensive, personalized training and for them to build strong relationships with each other. For this reason, we also have mentorship and mentorship groups.”

San Pedro centre, Puebla, Mexico⁶⁷

“The mentorship process is our conduit for putting the SCE program into practice by accompanying the women, creating a bond with them and gaining their trust.”

Rosario Pavez, Mentorship Coordinator, VeOmás, Chile⁶⁸

“What is a mentorship? It is a space for trust and reward, for mutual learning and collaboration between a group of participants and a woman who has lots of experience in a specific area, who will help them with their challenge or project.”

Camila Cornejo, AIEP, Chile⁶⁹

Mentoring is an essential component of all SCE programmes. It is almost always part of the facilitator’s role, although it is rarely possible for a facilitator to get to know every participant in depth and give her the personalized support she needs. This is why mentoring is often undertaken by women who are assigned a dedicated mentor post. Most are unpaid volunteers.

A mentor in SCE is a woman with personal or professional experience who provides 1:1 support, advice and encouragement to a participant. Her experience may come from having completed SCE training herself or tackled the kinds of constraints faced by women in the programme. Or she may have particular expertise or knowledge in running a small business, working in a particular sector, employment rights, know what it is like to return to education as an adult, or other areas relevant to SCE participants.

Mentors can support women with personal or social problems, in accessing social services, learning, finding employment, and setting up and running a business. They may continue to support their mentees after they have left the programme.

67 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Puebla, <https://youtu.be/2Oq15A5nL1U>, 5:35–5:47.

68 SCE Virtual Hub Tour – VeOmás, <https://youtu.be/CQkV6Knnz1>, 6:01–6:13

69 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, AIEP, <https://youtu.be/8HHHfh-Q31Y>, 3:02–3:23.

“All the women have a mentor who they meet with once a fortnight to talk about some of the topics that they learn about in the capacity building sessions, in addition to more personal topics. This mentorship has proved to be one of the most effective aspects. This is shown not just by documentary evidence but also by empirical evidence from the work carried out.”

Sarahí Romo, Coordinator of SCE operations in Jalisco, ProSociedad, Mexico⁷⁰

Mentors can also support SCE participants outside of their mentoring group, for example to answer technical or professional questions.

“I’m a mentor and I provide support to a group of women during the entire process. I also take part in question time, which is when they come to us for more specific advice.”

Karin La Fuente, mentor, VeOmás, Chile⁷¹

Mentees can turn to their mentor whenever they need support. It is a relationship built on trust, so women are more inclined to talk about constraints and seek support. This renders mentors as critical for identifying women who need targeted support for issues related to housing, finance, and gender-based violence.

In their manual on the Social Mentors and Peer Support Groups Program, SisterWorks provides a useful summary of the characteristics required of a mentor and what is expected.

SisterWorks’ introductory video on mentors conveys the essence of mentoring to participants.

Mentors at SisterWorks

Extract from SisterWorks ‘Introduction to SW and Social Mentors’ video <https://youtu.be/cZ1yppWH6tA>

SisterWorks Social Mentors are lovely volunteers that will help you settle into life in Australia. Think of them like a buddy or a friend. They are there to be a listening ear and to help you with problems or challenges you may encounter in your day-to-day life.

Some common questions Sisters ask Social Mentors to help with include health and well-being, visa questions, how to get a driver’s license, learning English and learning new skills.

It is important to know that your social mentor may not be a trained counsellor or social worker. They may not have all the answers, but they will help direct you to more information.

We also have other mentor programs at SisterWorks, e.g. work and business mentors, so if you need more specific help you can also ask about those.

The best way to think about your social mentor is as a buddy and friend, who can walk with you during your journey of settling into life in Australia.

A mentor is:

- Able to relate to the sister and demonstrate empathy
- Willing and able to support and motivate the sister
- Patient, respectable, and caring
- Able to maintain appropriate boundaries
- Reliable, trustworthy and a good communicator
- Willing to share knowledge and keep learning
- Able to build a rapport and guide the sister to services and resources
- Interested in helping others help themselves

⁷⁰ SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Jalisco, https://youtu.be/nzv_oUPhkoM, 1:26–1:46.

⁷¹ SCE Virtual Hub Tour, VeOmás, <https://youtu.be/CQkV6Knnzsl>, 6:56–7:07.

A mentor is not:

- A personal or career counsellor
- Negative or judgmental
- Expected to carry burdens that impact on their own contributions and successes
- Expected to do something they are not comfortable doing
- A specialist that is expected to provide expert or professional advice
- Responsible for making career choices or a sister's personal wellbeing

Source: *SisterWorks Social Mentors and Peer Support Groups Program Manual*, 2021, p. 19

Mentors may also generate awareness of the programme in their communities and mobilize women to join, as some mentors do in India.

Mentors have to communicate closely with facilitators or other IP staff to show that contact is being maintained and support provided as necessary. For example, among the duties of social mentors at SisterWorks are that they send a contact update after every contact with the mentee; refer her to internal or external services as necessary; raise urgent/high risk concerns immediately; attend relevant training provided by SW; and meet with mentor coordinator for monthly review.

Types of mentors

Broadly, mentors fall into two categories:

- Those who **act as a buddy** and accompany a woman on her SCE journey; these are known as 'social mentors' in Australia.
- Those who have a **particular skill or knowledge** that women can tap on their employment/entrepreneurship pathways.

At SisterWorks, social mentors have also addressed gender-based violence, social isolation during COVID-19, homelessness, familial resistance to involvement in the programme, and low confidence in pursuing aspirations.

An important aspect of mentorship for indigenous, migrant and refugee women in Australia is that it acts as a psychological safety net for women who have felt unsupported by other service providers. Mentors at SisterWorks provide 'warm' referrals to social service providers, sometimes physically accompanying women to meetings and helping them access education, training and employment opportunities offered by external providers online and offline.



Photo: UN Women/Ruhani Kaur

In India, mentors specialize in one of the three pathways where **education mentors** give scholastic support to women who are completing their school education, while **skills and entrepreneurship mentors** help participants to identify the right skill or business for them.

SCE programmes commonly offer both **reactive** and **proactive** mentorship, as in Chile:

- **Reactive mentorship** is when a participant contacts a mentor with a question or problem that might be technological, related to business or employment, or personal.
- **Proactive mentorship** is when a mentor contacts a participant to find out how they are doing: whether they are attending the classes, how they are finding them, and how they are emotionally.

Mentors can be **SCE graduates, students on placement** from local universities, **volunteers from the host community, SCE participants, professionals** with specialized knowledge such as businesswomen, lawyers and accountants, **or SCE staff** where mentoring is part of the facilitator role.

SCE graduates

Women who have passed through the SCE programme tend to be effective mentors because they understand the barriers participants face and know first-hand the difference that encouragement and 1:1 advice can make. But SCE graduates often have personal and professional responsibilities that make it difficult to take on this role. Because mentoring is usually unpaid it offers no economic incentive.

It can be especially difficult for migrant and refugee women with young families to find time for mentoring. They are focused on getting established in the country and moving onto the next stage of work or education to generate income for their family.

One incentive for becoming a mentor is acquiring training and developing a transferable skill that can be useful in acquiring paid work in the future. Graduates may be incentivized by the addition of this role to their CV so this could be offered as a motivating factor by a hub. The hub could consider creating a terms of reference for the mentor role with minimum requirements (such as 12 hours of mentoring over six months) so that the position can be included on each

mentor's CV. Reference letters can also be provided upon completion of the role.

In India, mentors are SCE graduates who want to remain involved with the programme; some have a job or run their own business, others do not. They provide support to participants during their training or education and, for those who obtain a job away from home, help them to prepare for life in a new city. They also generate awareness of the programme and mobilize women to join. Mentors are seen as one of the most successful means of encouraging women to take up SCE activities.

In Cameroon, SCE graduates who are successful in their enterprises become mentors for new beneficiaries who follow the same path (tailoring, poultry, agriculture, petty trade, ICT). Because the mentors are women who have gone through a similar experience, participants learn from their mistakes and positive experiences and can better track their goals and maintain their commitment. The encouragement of mentors also motivates mentees to continue in the face of challenges that might otherwise have led to them to drop out. And mentors help participants build networks that can grow her business, for example assisting a poultry farmer to join a hotel supply chain.

As in India, mentors also carry out sensitization campaigns in the community to encourage women to join the program.

Every two months, the mentoring networks in Cameroon hold meetings and activities to build skills in leadership, teamwork, women's empowerment, sexual reproductive health and rights, and GBV. Members of networks are expected to have a small financial saving scheme (*Njangi*) to keep themselves together and ensure indirect impact of SCE to other vulnerable women and girls in their respective communities.

The overall aim is to build a sustainable system of social capital and support.

In Puebla, Mexico, the SEPICJ facilitators encourage participants to become mentors by explaining that they are already mentors in the way they support other women. They coach mentors in running their own sessions. For example, they support mentors in developing their notes (*cartas descriptivas*) for the content they would like to share with other participants and give them advice on creating and delivering presentations and facilitating sessions. This has led

to the development of a knowledge network (*red de conocimiento*).

These mentors help to prevent women dropping out. They even offer to pick up participants who are unable to get to the hub.

In Puebla, mentors engage in various activities, motivating, encouraging, guiding and congratulating participants:

- They share knowledge and support women with their learning in the hubs, in courses and workshops. They act as spokeswomen for the program.
- They support the teams of women who produce vegetables, fruit and chickens, for sale and their own consumption (*módulos integrales*)
- They support women in the ‘green markets’ (*mercaditos verdes*) where women come together to showcase and sell their products.

Students on placement

Mentors may be university students, as in Chile or Mexico:

“We also have women here who help others in their learning process. These are women who

finished their secondary education and are now in university, and they want to help other women do the same. How do they do it? Well, by giving advice to those who want to sign up, helping them with their needs and providing other women with guidance and mentorship.”

Josefina Montalvo Muñoz, Project Coordinator, SCE Puebla, Mexico⁷²

Volunteers from the host community

SisterWorks in Australia engage volunteers from the local community as mentors. Typically they have their own work commitments but give a certain amount of time regularly.

SCE participants

In the State of Mexico, SEPICJ mentors can be SCE participants or professionals from outside the programme. Identifying potential mentors from within the programme starts when, without prompting, participants support their fellow women while still in the SCE programme by sharing their experiences and offering support. Sometimes they organize workshops spontaneously and accept training offers that build on their innate skills and inclination to support others.

Figure 2: Real Futures’ mentoring cycle, Australia



72 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Puebla, <https://youtu.be/KJxXVCzXYHQ>, 9:08–9:37.

A facilitator walks her through the role and coaches her after which she takes on the title of ‘mentor’ (*soy una mentora*). The SCE participants who take on the role of mentors receive a special certificate when they graduate along with any others.

Participants see SCE mentors as role models, women who they relate to, admire and want to emulate.

Using SCE participants as mentors may not work everywhere. In a small community it can lead to interpersonal issues amongst women. For this reason, the approach is avoided in the San Cosalá centre in Jocotepec in Mexico.

Professionals

In the small community of Jocotepec in Mexico, ProMexico mentors tend to be professional women from outside the programme. Some come from Guadalajara, which is a 90-minute car ride away. They mentor participants for the three months they are in the programme and another three months after participants graduate. They share technical knowledge and are compensated for their time.

Each mentor is assigned a group of women and holds a mentoring session in the centre every 15 days.

The mentor keeps in touch with mentees through a group chat and she also attends some workshops and may become involved as a workshop teacher.

Similarly in the State of Mexico, mentors are often professional women such as lawyers and accountants who share specialized knowledge and form a knowledge network (*La Red del Conocimiento*). They give workshops on specialist topics in their own area of expertise.

SCE facilitators and other staff

IP staff members who, by virtue of their role (such as the Reach Out Officers in Real Futures), can also serve as mentors, build relationships with women involved in the programme.

At Real Futures, their preferred model of support focuses on staff, particularly Reach Out Officers, rather than volunteers. Mentoring is a key part of the Reach Out Officer role.

The mentoring cycle captures the nature of the support needed at each stage of an aspirant’s journey in indigenous language.

Individual IP staff also perform a mentoring function by sharing specific knowledge or skills, such as on handicraft production or social media marketing.



Photo: UN Women

Figure 3: Outline of mentor training, Chile



Incentives

In most countries, mentors are not paid. However, other incentives can be offered to generate buy-in, especially amongst SCE graduates who are well suited to the role but busy. These include:

- Training on mentoring and/or adult learning – transferable skills that add value to CVs and job applications.
- A certificate of training as evidence for potential employers.
- Use of a smartphone or tablet while acting as a mentor, with phone credit if necessary.
- A certificate of completion once a mentoring target has been reached for a certain number of mentees or amount of time. Such targets help reduce volunteer fatigue and ensure that new mentors are regularly added to the programme.

The role of facilitators in mentoring

- **Detecting:** Facilitators must detect those participants with the character, attitude and potential to become a mentor.
- **Recruiting:** They explain the role to potential mentors so they agree to take it on. They need to describe the benefits of being a mentor while being realistic and open about the time and commitment required; and the fact it is unpaid.
- **Training/coaching:** Except where an IP has the responsibility for training mentors (as in Chile),

facilitators usually have to coach or train new mentors for the role.

- **Fostering a spirit of networking and collaboration:** An environment grounded in collaboration and mutual support is one in which it will be easier to recruit mentors. Facilitators can have a big impact in encouraging this kind of friendly, helpful spirit in the programme.
- **Mentoring:** Carried out by IP staff and women in a dedicated mentor role. Facilitators/Reach Out Officers at Real Futures in Australia contact SCE participants by phone twice a month for a wellbeing check and provide updates on what is happening at the Hub.

Supporting and coaching women to become mentors is also important because mentoring is a form of leadership. Supporting women to lead, as well as to learn and earn, is a key goal of the SCE programme.

Matching mentors to mentees

Facilitators work to ensure the needs of mentees are matched with the experience of the mentor. In Cameroon, this requires ensuring the mentor has skills and experience in the mentee’s chosen activity (tailoring, poultry, agriculture, etc.). At SisterWorks, social mentor guidance shapes the criteria for a social mentor in matching with a mentee (Social Mentor guidance, p.14).

- Near to participant’s work or residence
- Able to meet specific support requirements as identified in the wellbeing support plan

- Available at times suitable for participant
- Compatible personalities

Training and supporting mentors

“Ongoing support, training and workshops are instrumental to the development and motivation of our (social mentor) volunteers.”

*SisterWorks Social Mentors and Peer Support Groups
Program Manual, 2021, p.17*

Whether they come from within the programme or local community, mentors need comprehensive induction and training so they understand what the role entails, how to monitor and report interactions and progress, and ways of accessing support for mentees and themselves.

All mentors receive an induction from SCE facilitators or other IP staff and some have a dedicated mentoring coordinator. Many programmes produced a mentor handbook or manual that offers gives information on responsibilities, need for confidentiality, how to act on concerns or make a referral, and communicating, facilitating, and maintaining contact. At SisterWorks, mentors attend regular workshops on topics like being culturally competent and gender-based violence.

In Chile, mentoring training for participants is provided in four areas:

- Tools for communicating and mentoring
 - Gender
 - Citizen participation
 - Skills and knowledge for social leaders
- Mentors are usually directly and regularly in touch with staff to confirm that contact is being maintained and so that they in turn can access support. In Jocotepec in Mexico, the staff have monthly meetings with their mentors where they discuss progress, issues and cases that may require referral. Each mentor has an outline of what they will cover with their women and the topics within their area of expertise that they need to focus on.

And, as outlined earlier, mentors receive recognition when they complete their period of work. In Puebla, Mexico, SEPICJ mentors are given an honorable mention at the end of the programme, rather than certification since the SCE mentoring programme is not officially accredited by an institution.



Photo: UN Women/Priya Naresh and Aniket Kolarkar

Peer support

“For me it’s been a wonderful experience getting to know such a beautiful and varied group of women. They have courage, strength, empowerment, confidence and energy, all of which they have also given to me.”

Sonia Morales, SCE participant, Chile⁷³

“I’ve gotten to know many amazing and strong women who have had to overcome lots of obstacles. I’ve taken from the programme the fact that with effort and dedication I can forge my own future and that there are support networks that you sometimes can’t see and we feel alone, but when we dare to make changes, everything clears up and we can see these support networks more easily.”

Leyla Tovar, participant, Chile⁷⁴

“I’ve met persistent women, warriors who have a desire to keep fighting despite all the obstacles they face.”

Kathy Mendoza, participant, Chile⁷⁵

Like mentoring and tutoring, peer support motivates and encourages women to stay in the SCE programme. Mentorship provides an entry route into peer support groups where support and solidarity is available even after women have left the programme.

Peer support also develops organically and informally as participants move through a course or pathway together and develop friendships. Peer support groups can be self-organized, as long as participants are given the opportunity to connect with each other.

In India, informal peer groups are established as a result of mentors raising awareness of the program and encouraging women to join. They are used to share information on education, employment and entrepreneurship, including through WhatsApp groups.

In many centres in Mexico, in Puebla and the State of Mexico, the connections and friendships among the women themselves are integral to their retention in the program. In some of the SEPICJ hubs in the State of Mexico, participants meet together socially, outside of any training activities, just to spend time together.

They see the hub as a safe space where they can be themselves and where there is no criticism or judgement. Similarly in Puebla, the bonds between the women mean that they love spending time in the hub, even when there are no activities, including at weekends when they come together and organize celebrations, parties and other events. The empathy and trust that grows among them means that when they participate in the SCE activities, they do so in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration, not competition.

An SEPICJ facilitator in Puebla has extended this interaction by bringing together the participants from two hubs. For example, on International Women’s Day on 8 March 2022, she brought together the women from the two hubs so that they could meet and participate in events together. She also organizes fun activities virtually so they can connect and socialize online.

Creating spaces for networks to develop is especially important for participants from a minority ethnic, cultural and linguistic background.

“People speak Nahuatl here, so the centre is a point of reference for people to meet and ensure that they don’t lose this culture.”

Sandra García Cera, Director, Zinacatepec Hub, Puebla, Mexico

Strong peer-to-peer connections can lead to women not just staying in the programme but feeling a sense of ownership of the hub space and the programme itself. They feel empowered to express their needs and ideas on how the programme could be adapted to meet those needs, as well as put those ideas into practice. In this way, programmes are genuinely co-designed and more likely to engage and retain women as a result.

Women also support each other via pathway- or topic-specific forums, which are set up so women can openly share experiences, barriers, and solutions. Like mentoring, such forums can build women’s self-confidence and motivation.

73 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, VeOmás, <https://youtu.be/CQkV6Knnzsl>, 8:13–8:24.

74 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, VeOmás, <https://youtu.be/CQkV6Knnzsl>, 7:36–8:01.

75 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, VeOmás, <https://youtu.be/CQkV6Knnzsl>, 8:05–8:11.

Facilitators and peer support groups at SisterWorks

SisterWorks has a system of organized peer support groups called Sister Strong. Each group consists of between three to six women who share similar experiences and concerns. The aim of the group is to provide mutual emotional help, advice and encouragement. The women decide how the group is run.

A facilitator is assigned to the group and facilitates the first session, encouraging the women to share a bit about themselves and help them get to know each other.

The facilitator has to be sensitive to the mood of the group and keep it informal while achieving the goals of the session. One of these it to agree how frequently to meet, where, and for how long, and agree discussion topics and rules of engagement.

The facilitator summarizes the key decisions in writing.

To keep in contact online, most informal groups use WhatsApp, the tool that most women are familiar with. Real Futures uses a private Facebook group to maintain an online community, along with messenger chat groups and phone calls.

Scheduled video-conferencing sessions also provide an opportunity for women to socialize. In Australia, the Google Meet and Zoom sessions on the SisterWorks app allows women to connect and chat in real time. The app was a lifeline during the long lockdowns of 2021, during which many women felt isolated and experienced a deterioration in mental health.

Despite the value of online networking during the pandemic and the benefits of WhatsApp groups for keeping in touch, in-person socializing resumed with enthusiasm once Covid-19 restrictions eased. Nevertheless, online interaction remains important in Chile's wholly online programme and in locations where it is hard to get to the nearest hub.

Communication tools for tutors and mentors

Tutors and mentors can communicate with participants remotely through telephone calls, emails, SMS, videoconferencing calls and WhatsApp. It can be helpful to set expectations regarding response times (e.g., 'no longer than four hours') and periods of downtime or little contact.

In Chile, each media form plays a different role for tutors communicating with participants:

- **Telephone** is used to confirm participation and welcome participants. This 'was found to be a key action for the commencement of the programme' (Chile Lessons Learned, p.10).
- **Group chats** such as on WhatsApp can enable tutors to respond quickly, keep participants motivated, and enable women to interact with each other directly, creating a helpful peer network. This kind of communication channel 'was viewed positively by participants' (p.10).
- **Email** is used to share information about programme activities. Participants asked questions about the platform which had to be answered within four hours.

When using group chats, it can be helpful to establish ground rules from the start to avoid unwanted or irrelevant messages, as per members' wishes. It may be that the chat should be used to share information related to the course only. It is always worth outlining the basic "netiquette" principles of courtesy, politeness and respect.

In Chile, the need for a user-friendly app that enables women to connect with each other in a safe space led to the development of a mobile web app in partnership with the coding training organization Laboratoria. The app was designed collaboratively by women students to be intuitive, easy to use, lightweight and multilingual. Its aim is to facilitate the creation of networks amongst SCE women so they can keep in touch, strengthen their contact networks and have direct communication with each other. At the time of writing, the app is being piloted. It will be accessible from the [Tu Oportunidad](#) website.

8. ENTREPRENEURSHIP

“We offer training in entrepreneurship, an area which is very important because it combines all the work, initiatives and ideas that the women have and want to develop and we embark on a journey together where we strengthen one another...we offer courses and workshops, we provide guidance and we help them along the path of being an entrepreneur, from coming up with an idea to creating a star product.”

*Mario G. Flores Pastelin, Facilitator,
Zinacatepec, Mexico⁷⁶*

Key points

- **Entrepreneurship tends to be the most popular pathway** in the SCE programme (though this could have been partially due to pandemic restrictions when job opportunities became more limited due to lockdowns). Practical, relatively short training enables women to develop a skill that can generate income immediately. They can run a small business from their own homes and fit it around any unpaid domestic or caregiving.
- **Training is particularly successful when combined with resources for business startup**, e.g., start-up kits in Cameroon or product creation workshops in Australia (SisterWorks), Mexico, and India.
- **Cooperatives** where women work together to generate products or services for sale can work well in SCE, as these promote confidence, solidarity, cooperation, and a common purpose, as well as benefits from a shared workload.
- Facilitators can support SCE participants in **selecting businesses** that not only suit their interests and skill sets but are likely to be **commercially successful**. They can also encourage participants to consider options aside from those traditionally considered “women’s’ businesses.”
- SCE entrepreneurship training commonly consists of two parts: **Hands-on practical training** in creating a marketable product and training in basic business skills.

- **Connections with business associations** and local business experts help women market and sell their products as they can offer advice on price setting and marketing.
- **Hubs** can be organized to provide temporary or permanent spaces for displaying/selling products.
- Providing advice on how to **register a business** and investigating why women choose not to help more women enjoy the benefits of formal registration where it suits them.
- Options, training, learning materials and support in the entrepreneurship pathway need to be **responsive to changes** in the local economy and in demand for goods and services.

Entrepreneurship in SCE

“A small business doesn’t have to be something that’s going to look like a multi-million-dollar business in a few years. A small business is enough to make some extra money to buy some extra bread for the freezer or bread and milk for the table. For a small business, success is when someone buys your product for the first time! That’s your first success. And that success breeds success.”

*Wendy Yarnold, Founder and Chair, Real Futures,
Australia⁷⁷*

The entrepreneurship pathway in SCE aims to enable women to start earning income from the production and sale of goods and services. More often than not, women produce the goods they sell. Aiming to immediately generate income and gradually build up confidence and entrepreneurial capacity, goods are produced on a small scale either in women’s homes or at the hubs. They commonly include baked or cooked products, hand-crafted household items, decorative arts for the house, hand-tailored clothes, and home-produced fruit, vegetables, mushrooms, herbs or chickens.

Entrepreneurship training encompasses basic business skills such as price-setting, marketing and selling, and actual production of goods. It tends not to cover many other skills required for business development such as customer relationship management, hiring staff, maximizing capacity, and more.

⁷⁶ SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Puebla, <https://youtu.be/KJxXVCzXYHQ>, 12:19–13:07.

⁷⁷ SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Real Futures, <https://youtu.be/fNHpAAf9kJo>, 6:26–6:48.

However, it is not always the case that SCE participants create the products they sell. They can also become small-scale traders, as in Cameroon, where they buy household items such as soap, salt and oil and sell them on for a small profit.

The entrepreneurship pathway is the one chosen by the majority of SCE participants. Testimonials from participants reflect the popularity of entrepreneurship training.

“Because of SisterWorks, now I am calling myself an entrepreneur which my parents are very happy to hear!”

SCE participant, SisterWorks, Australia⁷⁸

“They supported me in terms of moving forward, like how to market your products in Instagram, or how to talk with the customers, because you know that I have been coming to SisterWorks and being at the shop, it gave me a good opportunity to adapt myself to the culture.”

SCE participant, SisterWorks, Australia⁷⁹

“There was no shop in my village, so they gave me a little shop. ... Since it worked well, I added other items. I added biscuits, soap, sweets, pills, and it’s going well.”

SCE participant, Cameroon hub tour 22:09

“I’m extremely pleased with myself because I’ve awoken a potential and a passion that I didn’t have before. I don’t have many clients, but the ones I do have are secure and thanks to them I can earn a decent wage each month.”

Olga Gómez, SCE participant, Jalisco, Mexico⁸⁰

“I did some sewing training so I now know how to sew. I have now opened my own sewing workshop. This allows me to earn money as well as cooking supplies such as salt. I no longer need to ask my husband for anything. Sometimes I even buy the children’s shoes”

Mairamou Hamadou, SCE participant and refugee from CAR, now in Ngam, Cameroon⁸¹

“I am a beneficiary of the Second Chance sewing project. I took some training at the UN Women training centre. I now have my own workshop at home, where I work. I sew clothes for my customers, which allows me to earn a living for my family and me. I can now say that I’m independent.”

Aumainatou, SCE participant and refugee from CAR, now in Ngam, Cameroon⁸²

SCE entrepreneurship covers both individual and group enterprises.

- Small businesses (Jordan).
- Small businesses with collective spaces for marketing and selling (Mexico).
- Production and sale through social enterprise where women make craft products which are marketed through SisterWorks (Australia).
- Cooperatives (Cameroon) that purchase and use shared assets suitable for refugee contexts because of the transient nature of the target group.

SCE employs a range of training approaches.

- Practical workshops with online video tutorials online for reference and consolidation (SisterWorks, Jordan).
- Active learning delivered on demonstration sites or work locations, especially with producing and selling agricultural products (Cameroon, India).
- E-learning programme delivered 100% online with personal skill development interwoven with learning on basic business skills (Chile).
- Blended learning of in-person training and practical hands-on workshops delivered in hubs by trainers and complemented by online courses that can be taken in the hubs or at home (Mexico).
- Through partners (India).

At SisterWorks in Australia, women on the entrepreneurship pathway choose from two tracks.

- Joining craft-making workshops with a view to making products to sell in the SisterWorks store (where the women invoice SisterWorks per item) or wholesale.
- Taking part in business training and pitching their own product to a SisterWorks panel that

78 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, SisterWorks, <https://youtu.be/-yTaSmOTQsM>, 09:47–9:54.

79 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, SisterWorks, <https://youtu.be/-yTaSmOTQsM>, 9:57–10:18.

80 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Jalisco, https://youtu.be/nzv_oUPhkoM, 11:40–11:53.

81 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Cameroon, <https://youtu.be/mxG7H3hM3lI>, 18:10–18:32.

82 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Cameroon, <https://youtu.be/mxG7H3hM3lI>, 18:43–19:19.

decides whether it can be sold in the SisterWorks store. On this track, women can also sell products independently via markets and online sales. Some sisters are referred externally to governmental or community organizations' small business programmes.

As with the employment pathway, SCE participants are supported after graduating and starting their own business, as in Cameroon.

"To ensure that everything is going well, we regularly conduct home visits. Here we are in Bawa, at the home of a beneficiary who chose to make and sell wheat-flour donuts. After talking to her, we identified the difficulties she faces each day in order to suggest some solutions."

SCE facilitator, Cameroon⁸³

Examples of SCE businesses

"I already know exactly what my venture is going to be. I want to get a food truck so that I can give my clients a good impression. I know that at the beginning they are going to have to get to know me little by little, but then they are going to come looking for me and I'll help them out, or something like that."

SCE participant from Peru, Chile, AIEP hub tour, 5:02

"Well, I already have my own business. I sell breakfasts for birthday parties and anniversaries. All of a sudden, because of the pandemic, it's difficult to think about going out to buy a present for somebody's birthday. I manage it all for them, I offer them the full service. I upload it to Instagram or Facebook, but I don't deliver it to them. In other words, I hire the service and get it delivered to me."

How can I improve this? For example, I'd also like to offer gifts for when people don't just want breakfast. At some point, I want to learn how to do it all myself. I'd like to learn more about this and grow on social media so that more people can find out about what I do and what I offer. That's what I want."

Maria, SCE participant, AIEP hub tour, Chile after 5:02

In Cameroon, SCE participants are offered training that is carried out in two phases: theoretical, followed

by practical, which employs a 'learning by doing' approach.

"This is the second year that I am teaching tailoring to these girls. Last year I trained 50 girls and this year I am training 25. When the girls arrive here, first I teach them how to assemble parts of the sewing machine. I continue by teaching them how to cut and sew various types of dresses such as skirts, blouses, shirts, etc."

Samuel Albert, SCE trainer, Minawao hub, Cameroon⁸⁴



Photo: UN Women

In India, SCE participants have set up businesses in tailoring, beauty, jewelry making, paper plate and paper bag making, agri-service, a tiffin shop, mushroom cultivation, natural pest management, grocery stores, spice processing, livestock, and candle making. This programme also includes women farmers whose agricultural practices benefit from SCE advice and training in new practices such as intercropping, quality seeds, better field preparation, pest management, and organic farming. It further introduces the farmers to off-farm interventions that can earn them additional money, such as goat rearing, poultry, mushroom cultivation, bee keeping, and vermicompost or agri-entrepreneurial enterprises like clean solar dehydration technology that enables them to dry and sell agricultural and fish products.

83 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Cameroon, <https://youtu.be/mxG7H3hM3lI>, 22:33–23:02.

84 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Cameroon, <https://youtu.be/mxG7H3hM3lI>, 14:32–15:13.

Facilitators have an important role to play in **supporting women in their choice of enterprise**. This needs to be based on women's ideas, interests and skills, while also considering the need for a business to succeed commercially.

In Jalisco, Mexico, women are introduced to a wide range of products and services from which they can choose their small business. They are offered courses in regional cuisine, dehydrated foods and preserves, baking, making tea and natural cosmetics from herbs, macrame, floristry, make-up, manicures, pedicures, and other beauty treatments. The same applies in Puebla where training focuses on producing products, business finance, and maximizing income.

"We have a range of products that we can familiarize them with, such as making marmalades, pickled chilies, chipotle chilies, traditional sweets, and a part which focuses on bread-making and bakery."

Sandra García Cera, Director, Zinacatepec hub⁸⁵

The facilitators encourage women to think about their existing skills and interests, while also steering them towards the ideas that can be monetized. In doing so, they negotiate the balance between more traditional female enterprises such as baking or floristry and those that make good business sense due to limited supply: such as in CREA centre in Guadalajara:

"There is a high demand for more traditional courses such as on floristry, baking, etc., but we tell them how important it is to monetize the business idea."

Claudia, coordinator of CREA centre

Partnerships

Partnerships with experienced training and development organizations can help to give women access to effective entrepreneurship training and support, as in other pathways.

- In India, a partnership with the non-profit Head Held High Foundation, which has expertise in youth transformation, women's empowerment and livelihood development, led to the establishment of a training and production centre for handicrafts in Odisha with market links identified to facilitate sales.

- In Chile, SCE partnered with the state institution PRODEMU that carries out women's development initiatives throughout Chile to reach more women across the country.

Connections with local business associations and chambers of commerce in Mexico enable external experts to be invited in to advise on particular areas such as price setting or marketing.

Resources for startups and access to credit

SCE participants do not generally have access to the capital, materials, and technology they need for their businesses, beyond those provided by SCE. In Mexico, not being landowners limits SCE participants' access to government programmes, loans, and other opportunities. As such, sometimes materials and resources can be purchased for women undergoing vocational training.

In Jordan, cash grants of 500 and 1000 Jordanian Dinar (\$700 and \$1400 US dollars) were given to some SCE participants to establish their own business in the informal sector.

In Cameroon, women who completed training are given startup kits so they can start their business immediately after graduation. New group enterprises may also be given a portion of the profits from a group from a previous cohort, who have started earning. This re-investment of profits requires supervision but has the potential to create a multiplier effect and be self-sustaining.

In India, most women arrange capital from their self-help groups or their own families. In a few cases, such as natural pest management shops, they receive support from government schemes.

SCE facilitators can sometimes help women entrepreneurs to access funds for their businesses, especially when the distributing agency is an SCE partner. In India, SCE offers technical support to Odisha Skills Development Authority (OSDA), which has a programme that provides finances to microentrepreneurs. SCE facilitators help beneficiaries in Odisha to apply for this funding.

Partnerships can also improve **SCE participant access to credit**, as in India.

85 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Puebla, <https://youtu.be/KJxXVCzXYHQ>, 13:10–13:26.

- The Women Livelihood Entrepreneur Loan Scheme was set up through a partnership between UN Women, the World Bank, and the country's largest public sector bank, the State Bank of India. The scheme raises low-cost funds through a market-based mechanism so women entrepreneurs who are not able to secure bank loans can access low-cost credit and technical support. This enables them to graduate from self-help groups when they want to expand their small businesses. The SCE role is to provide advisory and implementation support in two states.
- A programme in Maharashtra called REVIVE piloted returnable grants among small self-employed people and micro-entrepreneurs. The grant can be used as working capital and for reskilling, capacity building, and digitization. When repaid, the funds are disbursed as returnable grants to another set of beneficiaries and so on, which generates a multiplier effect. The returnable grant is customized to the needs of each cohort, provides flexible repayment terms, and comes with a moral (but not legal) obligation to repay.



Photo: UN Women/María Fernanda Novelo Duarte

Case study: Entrepreneurship in Mexico

The entrepreneurship pathway in Mexico is comprised of a number of components where implementing staff are involved.

Components of the entrepreneurship pathway in Mexico

Range of practical trades (*oficios*) to choose from

Facilitators help guide choice of business and product design

Blended learning approach of online courses plus practical hands-on workshops

Online courses cover human development and business skills

Hands-on workshops cover how to create products

Training also offered on delivering services such as care of elderly, beauty treatments

Involvement of local business experts on e.g. price setting

Connections with business associations and chambers of commerce help women market and sell their products

Space organized at hubs for displaying and selling products

Advice given on registering business and tax implications, where women make the decision to register.

Practical hands-on workshops plus business classes online

Centres in Mexico are designed to cater for **hands-on production classes** (e.g., some have large kitchens with multiple ovens to allow for up to 25 women at a time, facilities for creating cement products, and internal space for floristry sessions) and **business classes** (e.g. through online, asynchronous courses that the women can take in the computer rooms). The Cemex

centre in Guadalajara also has a garden where herbs are grown for some of the products.

“I’m taking a course on dehydrated foods and as a result I’ve created my own product, a vegetable seasoner. ... They are training me in a profession and helping me sell my products and take more money home.”

*María Elena Rameño, SCE participant,
San Juan Cosalá hub, Mexico⁸⁶*

“I love macrame. This is a product that I made myself. It’s the first time that I’ve done it and I’m really happy with the result.”

Cinthya Ayala, SCE participant, Cemex hub, Mexico⁸⁷

Alternative to the sale of products, women can also choose training in a skill that would lead to **self-employment**, such as in caring for the elderly where the woman works as a service contractor.

Support for sales

To commercialize a business idea, such as pot making, facilitators in Mexico **connect participants with local business experts**. For women engaged in making cement pots, a member of the local chamber of commerce for construction (*Cámara de Comercio Construcción*) is invited to the hub to advise them on how to set a good price.

SCE staff also provide practical startup support by providing a **space at the hubs** where women can sell their products.

“The SCE programme considers all aspects, like creating a space for selling your products, setting up markets and exhibiting your products.”

Mario G. Flores Pastelin, Facilitator, Zinacatepec, Mexico⁸⁸

“We decided to set up this space where we all bring our different products and sell them. This is where we advertise them and it’s a great opportunity to sell them too.”

*Minerva González Sánchez, SCE participant and mentor,
SEPICJ hub⁸⁹*

In Lerma, some funding was allocated to organize a fair for SCE women to sell their products, as their first experience in commercialization. The objective of the pathway is participants leave the programme equipped with the tools and skills they need to commercialize their activities and with their products available for sale.

Facilitators also offer sessions on how to formally **register a business** with the government, run by a public broker. A lot of women are concerned about taxation and fear registering their business, so the broker gives general information and then, after a while, if women want to register, they walk them through the process.



Photo: Real Futures

Case study: Online training in Chile

In Chile, entrepreneurship training occurs entirely online.

86 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Jalisco, https://youtu.be/nzv_oUPhkoM, 4:27–5:09.

87 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Jalisco, https://youtu.be/nzv_oUPhkoM, 6:56–7:04.

88 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Puebla, <https://youtu.be/KJxXVCzXYHQ>, 13:27–13:38.

89 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Puebla, <https://youtu.be/KJxXVCzXYHQ>, 13:40–13:52.

“If they are interested in setting up their own business ... they can opt for the entrepreneurship pathway [‘Linea Independente’ on Kolibri]. Here they will find classes on what it means to be an entrepreneur, business ideas, clients and value proposition, there’s a class on business finance, which also teach them how to use Excel, and classes on profitability and setting prices, sources of financing and social media and advertising.”

Tutor, Infocap, Chile⁹⁰

The Infocap syllabus, part of the Entrepreneurship pathway, is below.

Classes offered by Infocap in the entrepreneurship pathway, Chile

Each class consists of a slideshow of 10–15 pages, complementary materials such as an activity sheet, video tutorial on using Excel, tips or other additional reading, and a quiz.

- Class 1: What is entrepreneurship?
- Class 2: Business Idea
- Class 3: Customers and Value Proposition
- Class 4: Business Finance
- Class 5: Profitability and Pricing
- Class 6: Sources of funding
- Class 7: Social Media and Advertising

Incorporation of values and personal skills

In Moro, Cameroon, several themes are integrated into practical trainings.

In tailoring:

- Encouraging beneficiaries to work in teams and with team spirit.
- A sense of the common good, that is, the proper maintenance of the material.
- Attention to detail and respect for discipline.

In agriculture:

- Love for teamwork because a field and produce belong to the whole group.
- Respecting the instructions of the agricultural trainer.
- Attendance at work.

In poultry rearing:

- Proper maintenance of the pens because the animals must live in a clean environment for a good yield.
- The love of teamwork.
- Respecting a vet’s instructions.

In small business:

- Good security for the kits.
- Good maintenance of accounting documents.
- The development of an attitude of saving.

Cooperatives and group enterprises

Examples of SCE cooperatives

- Goat rearing in Ngam, Cameroon
- A coop that distributes and sells coffee and derivatives in Lerma, Mexico
- Hydroponic lettuce nursery and mushroom nursery in Huixquilucan, Mexico.
- Farming in Rajasthan, India
- Clothing, jewelry, handicrafts cooperative: they design, measure and make dresses with jewelry and arts and craft. (State of Mexico hub tour, 06:54)

Enterprises where women work together to generate products or services for sale work well in SCE, as joint collaboration promotes confidence, solidarity, cooperation, a shared purpose, as well as benefits from a shared workload.

“You realize that you’re not the only woman who has gone through difficult situations: in fact, there are lots of us, and lots who want to stand out. We are all in agreement about what we want for our lives and what we want to achieve in the future ...

[of the mushroom nursery in Huixquilucan] The idea is that anyone who wants to can use this space to grow their own crops and be self-sufficient. ...

⁹⁰ SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Infocap, <https://youtu.be/oZjGKCv2fas>, 6:42–6:50.

We really have the chance to grow as people and as women, and this is the opportunity it gives us.”

*Members of mushroom coop,
Huixquilucan, Mexico⁹¹*

In the goat cooperatives in Ngam, Cameroon women share the workload.

“Our group is made up of ten women from Cameroon and from the Central African Republic. Every day, five women take care of the goats and everything is moving well. We know that from these goats, we can have money to take care of our families.”

Diza Jacqueline, SCE Participant, Cameroon⁹²

In India, 700 farmers each from three districts in Rajasthan work on various farming models and prototypes such as multilayer, monocropping, intercropping, etc. Through this, women are able to grow different crops on a small tract of land and earn a good income for the produce.

“I am working as an agricultural worker as well as in the animal husbandry sector, with 70 women. At the hub, we are taught how to make miller mix, vermicompost and animal food. We pass on the practical skills and knowledge that we learn here to the farmers in the village.”

Sangeeta Meghwal, Participant, India⁹³

In India, group enterprises have been established in the areas of cleaning agents, agarbati, spice processing, solar hatchery, stitching unit, tamarin deseeding, handicraft production and catering.

The SCE programme can also establish enterprises that offer women employment. In Chittorgarh, India, SCE established a woman-led and woman-operated spice processing unit, which processes, brands, packages and markets chilli, coriander, turmeric and other spices.

The IP Manjari Foundation are establishing two more units in Rajasthan with SCE support.

In Cameroon, proceeds from women’s businesses are partly spent on family, partly reinvested, partly saved,

and partly used to support new beneficiaries through a village savings association account. This creates a multiplier effect but requires supervision.

Need to be agile

Options, training, learning materials and support on the entrepreneurship pathway need to be responsive to changes in local economies and demand for goods and services. For example, COVID-19 lockdowns reduced the demand for many products produced by SCE entrepreneurs and also reduced the price of agricultural products for sale in Cameroon. But IPs were quick to identify and grasp new opportunities, such as in the production of face masks and online sales.

“Many women saw an opportunity [in the pandemic] in online sales. Many women saw an opportunity there, if they did not know or did not want to sell, they know how to make products and they saw the need to go out and offer their products online.”

*Sandra Garcia Cera, Director, Zinacatepec hub,
Mexico⁹⁴*

Naturally, COVID-19 had a major negative impact on the kind of small businesses run by SCE graduates that operate on tight margins and are thus vulnerable to changes in market prices and access.

“The outbreak of COVID-19 in Cameroon in March 2020 destabilized almost everything in Cameroon and also affected the beneficiaries of SCE, especially those that are doing agricultural activities. This is because the prices of their products harvested were sold at very low prices because the borders were blocked.”

*Estella Kinga, SCE Programme Manager,
Cameroon⁹⁵*

IPs need to be mindful of the risk of training too many businesswomen who specialize in the same kind of product, leading to market saturation and reduced prices.

91 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, State of Mexico, https://youtu.be/V9oz_mY_JeQ, 5:37–6:30.

92 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Cameroon, <https://youtu.be/mxG7H3hM3ll>, 20:52–21:20.

93 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, India, <https://youtu.be/1YSaUcxfdQo>, 5:24–5:43.

94 COVID-19 Adaptation, <https://youtu.be/m1xWB7leqbc>, 14:42–14:57.

95 COVID-19 Adaptation, <https://youtu.be/m1xWB7leqbc>, 11:14–11:36.

Language

Amongst refugee women, IPs take different approaches to the language in which entrepreneurship training is conducted. In Cameroon, to train refugee women quickly and efficiently so that they can rapidly start earning money, trainers are employed who speak their language.

“The reason for choosing him [the trainer] is because he speaks the language that most of the trainees can understand. You know, while you are in the process of teaching someone, the language is very important.”

*Soulaimanou Moussa, Education expert,
Minawao hub, Cameroon⁹⁶*

Taking a different approach, SisterWorks in Australia deliberately communicates with participants in English. Their trainings have a dual purpose: to teach craft production/business skills and language and cultural skills. Like all their e-learning content, video tutorials on craft production and business skills are published with slow voiceovers and prominent, built-in subtitles. Other e-learning materials – step-by-step guides in PDF or e-book format – are published in simple, clear English with photos and imagery alongside the text.



Photo: UN Women

⁹⁶ SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Cameroon, <https://youtu.be/mxG7H3hM3ll>, 14:17–14:27.

9. EMPLOYMENT

“Today has been really exciting, it’s the end of our pre-employment, work-ready, age care workshops. We’ve held workshops with 13 women over eight weeks to prepare them for working in age care in Australia.”

*Karen Williams, Head of Partnerships,
SisterWorks, Australia⁹⁷*

“[The employment pathway] is for people who are interested in or are already in the process of looking for a job. We give them training in subjects which will help them with the job search process and in their work performance.”

Acción Emprendedora, Chile⁹⁸

Key points

- SCE participants need accurate, up-to-date **information** on different sectors and jobs so each individual can make informed decisions about which sector or type of job is right for her.
- Most women need a combination of **generic training**, usually provided in-house, and **sector-specific training**, which is usually provided through partner organizations and industries.
- **Generic training** includes skills in creating CVs, job searches, interviews, preparing for work, and employee rights (childfree or as a parent). All should have a gender perspective and cover issues relevant to women.
- **Partnerships and industry connections** are central to getting women jobs, and this is accomplished through training, provision of information on different sectors and careers, and direct links to job openings. Partners that are accredited organizations for **government work schemes**, such as Real Futures in Australia, are well placed to connect SCE participants directly to jobs, particularly government work schemes.
- **Training designed for marginalized** and under-represented women is often missing in government

systems or other training programmes. It is a gap that SCE programmes can address.

- One-to-one **mentoring support** with CVs, applications, cover letters and interviews is an important feature of SCE employment pathways.
- **Peer support** can be critical, especially through forums where women can share experiences, challenges faced, and solutions.
- Regular **follow-ups** with SCE graduates after they have started a job, for up to six months or as long as needed, can help prevent dropout rates in that critical early period.
- Training is particularly successful when **linked to government work schemes** as in Real Futures in Australia.
- In sum, the SCE employment pathway offers **bespoke, relatable training** and **personalized support** that build confidence, interest and understanding, combined with **connections with industry** that offer sector-specific training and get women into the job market.

Challenges

SCE support for getting women into employment needs to address the following barriers, here shown with some of the solutions drawn on by IPs.

- **Participants may have never created a CV or written a cover letter and feel they have no qualifications or experience to include.**
 - **Training in writing a CV and cover letter, with 1:1 support and feedback from a mentor or facilitator.**
- **Training offered by government or other organizations often does not meet the needs of SCE women as language, examples and imagery are not targeted to women with their profile. Trainers may also, consciously or not, discriminate against women or particular groups of women in their language and examples.**
 - **Design and create bespoke training targeted at SCE women.**

97 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, SisterWorks, <https://youtu.be/-yTaSmOTQsM>, 10:19–10:38.

98 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Acción Emprendedora, <https://youtu.be/ZjmYcgCCJeg>, 7:04–7:19.

- Build partnerships with training organizations and provide inputs into training design and learning materials or training for trainers.
- Employers may, consciously or not, discriminate against women (especially marginalized women such as refugees or migrants) when selecting candidates. They may also lack family-friendly policies for employees.
 - Establish partnerships with organizations open to SCE values of diversity, inclusion and fairness, including those who signed up to the Women’s Empowerment Principles, so SCE participants are encouraged to apply to training and job openings.
- Women’s views on what jobs in different sectors entail may not be accurate or up to date. They may not be aware of what’s on offer in different sectors.
 - Weekly job information sessions featuring guests from different sectors, such as conducted at SisterWorks.
 - In Chile, monthly newsletters feature trainings, webinars and job openings, such as in Chile. These are posted on the Chile Tu Oportunidad website.
 - They may face resistance from their families or communities, especially if their choices go against social and cultural norms (e.g., if a job is seen as one ‘for men’).
 - If possible, establish links with a participant’s family and community members when they first join the programme and include them in information sessions.
- They commonly have low digital literacy skills.
 - Enroll them in digital skills training, including in Microsoft Office.

Solutions for all the above: Establish a forum where women can openly speak about barriers to employment. This can build women’s self-confidence and motivation through peer support and mentoring. Women who have started employment can also provide perspectives and share experiences that can be followed up on regularly.

Approaches

“If they choose the employment pathway, they will complete seven classes which include classes on work in the 21st century, the global job market, employment legislation in Chile, and employment competencies and interests, where women

identify their employment interests, the job search process, job interviews, work habits and conflict management.”

Infocap, Chile⁹⁹

Typically, training for the employment pathway has three components.

- Skills needed to **find a job**: Job search, creating a CV, writing a cover letter, preparing for an interview, reviewing a contract
- The generic **transferable skills** sought after by companies, such as in communication, conflict management, time management, good work habits, etc. Such skills are useful in all sectors and offer some mitigation against job losses in a particular sector in the future.
- **Employment rights**, especially through a gender lens, covering topics such as part-time contracts, maternity and sick leave, sexual harassment, etc.

In Puebla, Mexico, SEPICJ offers six courses. The first three encompass human development to identify and develop the skills sought after by companies, job search, CVs, cover letters and interviews, and understanding female workers’ rights and obligations. The next three courses are more specialized, such as setting up online contact networks by taking advantage of online platforms.

Elsewhere, IPs that operate as part of government employment schemes are well placed to link women to government services. Real Futures in Australia operate Vocational Training and Employment Centres (VTECs) as ‘places where people who want to work meet employers who want to hire them’ ([Real Futures website](#)). SCE participants in the employment pathway benefit from Real Futures’ own pre-employment training, VTEC training, the VTEC guarantee of a job, and continued mentoring once they have started a job, provided for six months under the VTEC scheme.

Partnerships

Partnerships with training institutions may open up high quality, tailored learning opportunities. SCE participants can be given preferential access to scheduled training programmes or receive bespoke training specifically designed for SCE women.

Real Futures has a partnership with Australia’s leading provider of vocational and further education, TAFE (Technical and Further Education), who deliver training in ways particularly accessible to women with children. Real Futures also has partnerships with other business and community organizations which provide training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. In India, SCE has partnerships with 16 training institutions, such as the Skills and Entrepreneurship Department of Maharashtra and Odisha Skill Development Authority. IPs work closely with training partners to mobilize and enroll women in sessions on home nursing, hospitality, retail, sewing, sanitary napkin production, packaging of food items and candle making.

Connections with private companies and government agencies are also very important in linking SCE participants to training and job opportunities.

- SEPICJ in Puebla State, Mexico has connections with chambers of commerce so when new vacancies appear, IPs are alerted and can support women in their applications.
- A partnership between SCE Chile and the European Southern Observatory led to a 14-week technical training in 2021 on optical coating of telescopes for selected SCE participants.
- A partnership with the telecoms company CLARO in Chile resulted in training in basic and advanced digital skills for hundreds of mostly vulnerable women.
- Real Futures’ partnership with a company focused on health insurance and care for older people saw SCE participants secure work in the sector, as well as with government and in the logistics, retail, health and hospitality industries.

Employment fairs can be a good way of bringing companies and SCE participants together. SCE Chile, through its IP AIEP, conducted a four-day online employment fair for SCE women in July 2021. Over 80 companies presented more than 3,000 employment opportunities and over 1,500 women participated.

In most SCE programmes, work readiness training, and support in finding and getting a job, is usually carried out through a combination of group sessions and 1:1 support, in which facilitators or mentors give feedback on CVs and applications, assist with job searches, and

advise on interviews (what to wear, when to arrive, how to carry yourself, what to say, etc.).

Digital skills

Since being digitally capable is a pre-requisite for most jobs, SCE employment pathways usually include a strong focus on digital skills training, including in Microsoft Office.

In the State of Mexico, a number of digital courses are offered within the employment pathway, ranging from 12 hours to 3 months. The one that is 3 months is Office for Employment Productivity (*Office para la productividad en el empleo*) and is divided into three separate, month-long modules on Word, Excel and Powerpoint. Participants can take them individually and receive a graduation certificate for each one. This division makes the courses more appealing and gives women the flexibility to manage their course schedules.



Photo: AWO/Suhaib Khamaiseh

Supporting decisions

“We’re really flexible with the support and try to have an approach to everything where we’ll talk to each individual aspirant to work out how we can help them, and then we’ll put a programme and workshops and even social days or courses that they specifically want ... It’s really important to have that aspect there so they feel that all their needs are being catered to before they get thrown back into work and feel like we aren’t supporting them, so it’s a really good support system to have.”

Mackenzie Stone, Real Futures, Australia¹⁰⁰

100 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Real Futures, <https://youtu.be/fNHpAAf9kJo> 11:19–11:47.

Providing information on different jobs and industries and supporting participants to develop aspirations and career goals aligned with their interests, skills and circumstances ([section 4, Life skills > Life planning](#)) can help women make informed decisions on their future employment paths.

In Mexico, SCE graduates are supported to employment through specialized advice on job searches, access to vocational training and channeling to employment opportunities.

At Real Futures, Reach Out Officers find as many potential job openings as possible for SCE participants by teaching out to employers themselves.

The SisterWorks case study below shows how accurate and up-to-date information on different industries can be provided to SCE participants to help them make informed decisions about their careers.

Case study: SisterWorks, Australia

A pivot to employment outcomes

Up until 2021, SisterWorks' training focused on entrepreneurship, hand-in-hand with English and digital literacy. In 2021, SisterWorks developed a three-year strategy for a new employment pathway. The training programme was redesigned to incorporate skills development, a job readiness programme, and English and digital literacy.

For example, the previously entrepreneurship-oriented sewing programme became part of a machinist development programme, while the food handling course became part of a general hospitality training programme that would lead to employment.

Several industry partnerships were developed, which offer training and job openings. These partnerships are built upon the values of diversity and inclusion to ensure that the organizations are invested in sustainable outcomes for women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Women have found work in roles such as conveyancing, customer service, personal care, warehouse supervision, and aged care, and has rendered the employment pathway the most popular at SisterWorks.

In early 2021, SisterWorks commissioned research into which growth sectors offer appropriate employment opportunities for SCE participants and developed a 'systems map' for migrant and refugee women after they enter Australia and look for employment.

At the time of writing, SisterWorks have three staff dedicated to the employment pathway: Employment Pathways Manager, Head of Employment Support and Jobs Advocate. SisterWorks offer a four-week pre-employment programme, industry taster workshops, and a hospitality programme.

In weekly 'job information sessions', the employment staff introduce their services and provide mentoring on the spot. Women are offered different services: job counselling, networking opportunities, skills development in cv writing, interview skills.

SisterWorks also offers pre-employment Industry Taster workshops in which SCE women are introduced to different industries and jobs and requirements since it was found that women often embark on programmes without clarity on their life goals and with little knowledge on work in different sectors. They often rely on their own information channels for employment prospects and have not had the opportunity to explore their options in various sectors and learn directly from industry experts.

The Industry Taster workshops are facilitated through an interactive forum, which allows women to pose practical questions and have discussions with industry experts, hopefully resulting in more informed choices and better retention in training and employment programmes.

In addition, in their social enterprise work, SisterWorks introduced casual employment contracts to replace the pay-per-piece remuneration method. Casual employment helps sisters to understand and experience recruitment and contract processes, and introduces them to their duties and rights as workers, superannuation, the need for a tax file number and to do tax returns, and the protection offered by workers' compensation insurance.

Support in work

“We [at VTEC] support the women to get into employment. I’m a mentor for the women once they start employment, so basically I support them while they’re in their journey through work.”

*Teliah Edwards and Mackenzie Stone, Reach Out Officers,
Real Futures, Australia¹⁰¹*

SCE support does not end with the start of a new job. Like Real Futures, most IPs continue to follow up with participants after they have started employment to provide support where needed.



Photo: UN Women/CVA

¹⁰¹ SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Real Futures, <https://youtu.be/fNHpAAf9kJo>, 10:55–11:06.

10. RETURN TO FORMAL EDUCATION

“This pathway is a mechanism that allows the women to receive a basic or secondary education, for example, if they never completed their basic or secondary education, this pathway is a great option, as we provide the women, who must be at least 18 years old, with advice and practice for all of the exams and processes that they need to complete with the Ministry of Education and the designated exam bodies so that they can finally receive their education and understand the importance of having one.”

Acción Emprendedora hub tour¹⁰², 6:05–6:51

Key points

SCE facilitators support women who wish to return to formal education in the following ways:

- Through **partnerships** with education institutes who provide schooling and exam arrangements.
- By building women’s **self-belief** and confidence to return to studying and exams, and encouraging them to take this pathway.
- Providing help with **registration**.
- Providing **access to computers, books and study space** in the hubs: e.g. Manjari Foundation in India provides a ‘reading corner’ in the hub, where learners prepare for their exams and have access to other books, and an NIOS room where learners are registered and their training activities logged
- Organizing **advice sessions** with external specialists, on particular subjects and digital skills.
- Offering **training in digital skills** so women can study online.
- Providing **advice and support on studying** since participants will not have studied for some time and may never have picked up effective study skills.

SCE support

The reasons why SCE women drop out of school are varied – in India, they are early marriage and affordability; in Mexico, the need to earn an income and early pregnancy (Mid-Term Review, 2020). Cultural and social norms may mean that education for boys is given priority when family resources are limited. For women who spent their childhood in a refugee camp, schooling may have not been an option or been limited. In addition to these initial factors, new barriers are added as girls become women and take on domestic, caregiving and income-earning responsibilities.

SCE responses are listed in earlier sections but flexible learning times, at home support, and support to reduce costs are all at the heart of programming. In India and Mexico, the top three reasons for women being able to return to education were found to be flexible study time, the ability to learn at home, and more family support – which highlights the importance of male family members and the community valuing the education of women and girls (Mid-Term Review, 2020). In the State of Mexico, the return to formal education pathway is offered to the general public, including men, who also benefit from the discounts for exams and certification. This helps to build support for a woman’s participation in SCE among her family and community.

Digital literacy is also key as many programmes are online, especially those offered by the government. Women need digital skills to be able to access them.

Partnerships

Partnerships with national organizations in charge of high school examinations and certifications play a key role in this pathway, such as the National Institute for Adult Education in Mexico.

“For this programme, we have collaborated with the State Institute for Adult Education so that women who haven’t finished their primary or secondary education, or those who are just missing

¹⁰²See <https://youtu.be/ZjmYcgCCJeg>.

one exam, can obtain their certificates and keep growing as people, keep growing academically and open doors for themselves to better opportunities. When they finish their courses and finally obtain their secondary education certificate – sometimes they stopped studying 10, 12 or even 20 years ago – thanks to this second opportunity they are able to take the initiative and transform their lives.”

*Valentín Alejandro Torres López, Director, SEPICJ Hub, Puebla, Mexico*¹⁰³

Such partnerships benefit SCE participants by establishing reduced fees for sitting for exams and obtaining the certificate.

In India, the National Institute for Open Schooling (NIOS) is an autonomous government agency and the largest open schooling network in the world. NIOS has its own study centers where they conduct classes, but these are often at district headquarters, making travel for many women difficult. SCE conduct regular classes (at least two every week) in villages and hubs using 54 education facilitators across the 12 districts where SCE operates. By linking up with NIOS, SCE makes examination and certification processes much easier for SCE participants.

At the end of 2021, SCE Chile worked with partner BiblioRedes to support women who want to finish high school. The aim was to develop a joint strategy to include tutorship, gender-oriented content and digital skills training to women who have dropped out of school, to prepare them for examinations for high school validation. The strategy focuses particularly on younger women who left school early during the pandemic and whose personal situation does not allow them to return in the traditional way. The scheme has the potential to reach over 40,000 young women.

High school

In the State of Mexico, there are two main routes for women to get their high school certificate, plus a third local route.

- A free, online government programme (*prepa en línea*) that takes two years and four months.
- A shorter programme for a cost, managed through alliances and partnerships with other academic institutions. Participants take a computer-based exam.

- In addition, Lerma center offers a route provided by the city council (*Ayuntamiento*), which is cheaper (90/120 MXN or \$4/\$6 per exam) and takes 1.5 years.

Given the duration of the government programme, SCE tries to reduce the costs for women wishing to take the non-governmental route. There is a cost to sitting the exam and obtaining the certificate after passing. Participants who do not pass will often try again, as they gain confidence in understanding how the online platform works. SCE tries to reduce the costs through:

- a scholarship fund, which helps women who pass the exam to pay for the certificate
- arranging discounted prices for SCE participants through partnership agreements with the learning institutions, so that they pay (for example) around 30% of the usual certification fees.

Facilitators try to ensure that the highest number of participants pass their exams by doing the following:

- Organize tutoring sessions (*asesorías*) for the most challenging courses such as mathematics, chemistry and physics. A series of such sessions is offered under the council scheme in Lerma.
- Arrange for external teachers and tutors who are not SCE staff members to come to the centres and provide additional support.
- Women attend a series of tutoring sessions (*asesorías*) where they can ask questions.

In Puebla, SEPICJ works through two partnerships to return women to formal education:

- With Instituto Nacional para la Educación de los Adultos (National Institute for Adult Education, INEA) which offers an open education programme for primary and secondary schooling.
- With a government-led high school programme, Prepa MX that offers high school certificates through one exam and is the first step for going on to university.

Under both agreements, scholarships were established so that the costs for women were reduced. With Prepa MX, enrollment for the exam costs 599 MXN (approx. \$30 US dollars) and includes capacity building, tutorship, and a study guide. If they pass the exam and satisfy certain socio-economic criteria they

¹⁰³SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Puebla, <https://youtu.be/KJxXVCzXYHQ>, 8:16–9:07.

are offered the certificate at a reduced cost of 3599 MXN (approx. \$180 US dollars).

SEPICJ offers digital advice sessions (*asesorías*), led by external specialists, to help them prepare for the exams.

Apart from helping them to register, the facilitators' role is to motivate the women to take this pathway, strengthen their self-esteem and self-confidence, and support the development of their digital skills.

In CREA centre in Guadalajara, Mexico, participants are connected to the partner institutions offering this, especially the Ministry of Education (Secretaría de Educación). They use the equipment in the centre and get support from the facilitators.

In Jocopetec, SCE works through INEA and women are supported in groups of about ten.

In the State of Mexico, participants often join this pathway after doing employment courses:

“They realize just how important it is to get their secondary school or high school certificates in order to be able to apply for better positions and/or to ask for higher salaries around the different industries based in the state.”

Yareny Sanchez, Learning Center Coordinator, SEPICJ, State of Mexico

Some women follow both employment and return to formal education pathways at the same time.

University

In the State of Mexico, most participants have at least a secondary level of education. Many, who experienced an interrupted life plan, find they want to go back to university around 55 years of age. Some SCE participants studied law or other subjects and went on to find internships or traineeships.



Photo: UN Women/Dzilam Méndez

11. SHARING AND LEARNING

Documentation of experiences and evidence across the programme is critical for its continued funding and sustainability. Donors are more likely to respond to funding proposals with a robust evidence base that shows impact and potential for scaling up.

As a decentralized programme, where design and implementation are driven locally and vary across different contexts, documenting the local experience and what is effective is even more important. Evidence that something ‘works’ in Australia does not necessarily mean the same for Cameroon; yet, the cross-fertilization of ideas and sharing of results and stories is a key strength of the SCE programme. Strategies that have been effective in Mexico can be, and have been, shared with Australia and tweaked to work in the Australian context.

Documenting and sharing experiences about SCE programmes or hubs is invaluable for:

- Reflecting on your own role to identify the strategies that are most effective in achieving results.
- Feeding into wider documentation and sharing of good practices in the country programme.
- Making the programme as effective as possible locally and as it expands to other locations.
- Encouraging innovative and effective implementation in other SCE programmes.

Videos

One of the most powerful outputs for communicating the impact of the programme are **short testimonial videos** where SCE participants describe what the programme has meant to them. There are many examples from all six pilot countries on the [SCE YouTube channel](#).

The **virtual hub tours** provide a highly engaging insight into the different programmes and how they are organized. The tours have mostly been filmed by SCE facilitators, coordinators and other staff, and are accessible and compelling introductions to SCE programmes in the six pilot countries.

SCE conferences and webinars

SCE’s online conferences give IPs from across the programme an opportunity to come together, learn about the experiences of others, and showcase their work. You can watch recordings on the SCE YouTube channel.

In June 2021, an **online conference** was held on the following topics:

- Building beneficiaries’ confidence
- Women’s Empowerment Principles
- COVID-19 adaptations and responses

Interpretation services were funded by SCE-Geneva.

The SCE programme in **Mexico** held a **conference** in May-June 2022, bringing together IPs to share experiences and collectively strengthen the programme. It consisted of two virtual sessions and two in-person sessions over a period of two weeks. In **Australia**, information exchanges were regularly held on shared themes between Australian IPs on topics such as reporting and CRM software, social-entrepreneurship, and employment pathways.

In 2020/2021, a series of **webinars** were held in which external experts were invited to talk about SCE-relevant issues. All recordings, including individual clips, are on the SCE YouTube channel, in English except for the first listed below. Topics were:

- Programme-wide beneficiary surveys and country-specific M&E approaches: Building a global evidence base for programme success (Nov 2021).
- Innovating for scale: An evidence-based framework for innovation and scaling (Feb 2021).
- Ceasefire at home: Findings from a study on harmful social norms in Cameroon during the pandemic (Feb 2021).
- Online learning for all: Can digital literacy be used to leapfrog illiteracy? (Dec 2020).
- Crowdwork: A future-facing, flexible income pathway or a road to continued inequity? (Nov 2020).

External experts can also deliver sessions locally/ domestically. For example, in **Australia**, a social media

expert conducted sessions on how to engage in social media marketing with Real Futures.

Knowledge products

The development of knowledge products that encapsulate the lessons of country programmes are important for the continuation and sustainability of the programme. In Chile, the development of knowledge products for policy recommendation enabled SCE participation at high levels events nationally, bridging discussions with the private sector, government and civil society. Outcomes are reflected in documentation like the [brief on good practices in online learning](#) published in 2021, based on the Chile experience.



Photo: UN Women/Pablo Sanhueza

SOURCES

Internal SCE documents

- SCE Annual Report 2020
- Narrative inputs from IPs into SCE quarterly reports
- SCE Mid-term review 2020
- Life planning survey among IPs, February 2021, part of the Open University participatory video project
- Interviews with IPs including focus group discussions in October 2021

SCE IP conferences

- IP roundtable on COVID-19 (Spanish interpretation), June 2021, <https://youtu.be/l3C67LT747g>
- IP roundtable on COVID-19 (English interpretation), June 2021, <https://youtu.be/Y8GAR98VpZU>
- Spotlight on Chile's COVID-19 response (English interpretation), June 2021, <https://youtu.be/UflmTfMgjfU>
- Digital Divide conference, SCE Mexico, 28 October 2021

Virtual hub tours

- SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Real Futures, Australia, <https://youtu.be/fNHpAAf9kJo>, 8 November 2021
- SCE Virtual Hub Tour, SisterWorks, Australia, <https://youtu.be/-yTaSmOTQsM>, 25 October 2021
- SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Cameroon, <https://youtu.be/mxG7H3hM3lI>, 25 October 2021
- SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Acción Emprendedora, Chile, <https://youtu.be/ZjmYc9CCJeg>, 8 November 2021
- SCE Virtual Hub Tour, AIEP, Chile, <https://youtu.be/8HHHfh-Q31Y>, 8 November 2021
- SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Infocap, Chile, <https://youtu.be/oZjGKCv2fas>, 8 November 2021
- SCE Virtual Hub Tour, VeOmás, Chile, <https://youtu.be/CQkV6KnnzZl>, 8 November 2021
- SCE Virtual Hub Tour, India, <https://youtu.be/1YSaUcxfdQo>, 4 October 2021
- SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Jordan, <https://youtu.be/TUgSZOasca8>, 8 November 2021

SCE Virtual Hub Tour, State of Mexico, Mexico, https://youtu.be/V9oz_mY_JeQ, 8 November 2021

SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Jalisco, Mexico, https://youtu.be/nzv_oUPhkoM, 8 November 2021

SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Puebla, Mexico, <https://youtu.be/KJxXVCzXYHQ>, 8 November 2021

COVID-19 Adaptation, <https://youtu.be/m1xWB7l-eqbc>, 8 November 2021

SCE and IP knowledge products

UN Women, 2021 Tu Oportunidad – Second Chance Education Programme: Lessons Learned and Recommendations in Online Learning for Women (Spanish and English) <https://lac.unwomen.org/es/digiteca/publicaciones/2021/09/programa-tu-oportunidad>

Teduca Report No. 3 Methodology Design and Implementation User Manual for the Tu Oportunidad/SCE Program, UN Women Chile, May 2021

SisterWorks Social Mentors and Peer Support Groups Program Manual, 21 May 2021

Participatory video in the Second Chance programme, <https://youtu.be/J7CxF3Ok6Ao>, 21 January 2022

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