SCE FACILITATORS' GUIDE

UN WOMEN

© 2023. UN Women. All rights reserved.

Produced by the Humanitarian Action Section of UN Women.

Cover photo credit: UN Women

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations or any of its affiliated organizations.

SCE FACILITATORS' GUIDE

Second Chance

UN WOMEN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 6

ACRONYMS 7

GLOSSARY 8

1. INTRODUCTION 9

- Overview of SCE 9
- SCE's signature features 9

2. SETUP AND REGISTRATION 9

- Hub location and setup 9
- Staff and volunteers 10
- A safe space 10
- Building relationships and trust 10
- Marketing and outreach 11
- Registration 11
- Being agile: Recognizing and responding to changing needs 12
- The start of a participant's journey 13
- Certificates 14

3. SUPPORT TO ADDRESS GENDER-BASED BARRIERS 15

- Referrals 15
- Building support and countering social norms 16
- ID documents 18
- Language 18
- Essentials 18

4. GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE LIFE SKILLS 19

- Gender 20
- Socio-emotional skills and self-confidence 21
- Digital skills 22
- Life planning 22
- Wellbeing 23
- Leadership 24

5. ENTREPRENEURSHIP PATHWAY 25

6. EMPLOYMENT PATHWAY 28

- Training 28
- Partnerships 29
- Challenges 29

7. RETURN TO FORMAL EDUCATION PATHWAY 31

8. PERSONALIZED SUPPORT 33

- Mentoring 33
- Who are mentors? 33
- What do mentors do? 34
- Types of mentors 34
- Incentives 35
- The role of facilitators in mentoring 35
- Training and support of mentors 36
- Peer support 36
- Communication tools 37

9. E-LEARNING 38

Benefits 38

Challenges 38

Blended learning 40

Interactions and support 41

Learning platforms 42

Roles and responsibilities 43

E-learning tools in SCE 43

Content development 44

10. SHARING AND LEARNING 46

SOURCES 47

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This guide was produced thanks to the generous inputs of individuals who shared their experiences of implementing the Second Chance Education programme on the ground. Their time and thoughtful insights, through online discussions and interviews, written contributions, and production of the virtual hub tours were instrumental in the development of this guide.

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.

1. INTRODUCTION

"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 … I think women can flourish provided that there are spaces like this that help them achieve it."

Jessica Cárdenas, Center Leader Crea Hub, Mexico[1]

UN Women's Second Chance Education and Vocational Learning programme (SCE) provides women who have missed out on education with a second chance to access learning and training opportunities and find pathways to personal and economic empowerment. The SCE pilot programme (2018–2022) was implemented in six countries in three different contexts: humanitarian crisis (Cameroon and Jordan), middle income (Chile, India and Mexico) and high income (Australia).

Photo: UN Women

This document draws on the experiences of the six pilot countries to offer practical guidance on implementing a gender-transformative second chance education programme.

For further examples and more in-depth descriptions of the programme, see "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". For guidance on setting up an SCE learning hub, see "A Safe Space to Learn, Connect and Thrive: The SCE Hub Handbook".

Overview of SCE

SCE is designed around four outcome areas:

- **Outcome 1:** More marginalized women access and benefit from high-quality educational content and learning pathways.
- **Outcome 2:** More marginalized women benefit from increased employment, livelihood and entrepreneurial opportunities.
- **Outcome 3:** Fewer marginalized women are disadvantaged and denied education opportunities due to harmful and discriminatory social norms.
- **Outcome 4:** More marginalized women have improved access to education and employment pathways through enhanced multi-sectoral policy and financing frameworks that enable scaling of successful SCE solutions.

Implementation is built around these outcomes and localized according to context: it is a global model with local solutions. The freedom to adapt within a global framework has been a significant factor in SCE's effectiveness.

The SCE framework is defined by signature features identified across the programme as essential to achieving successful outcomes for marginalized women.

SCE's signature features

These components, shown in Figure 1, give SCE its added value as a unique, innovative and holistic gender-transformative intervention. They create an environment that enables participants to not simply enroll in training but develop a sense of agency and tackle the practical, social and psychological constraints to participation and economic activity. This holistic approach means that women are more likely to complete the programme and sustain the benefits of SCE after graduation.

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

Figure 1: SCE's signature features

Support to address gender-based barriers. In addition to establishing the SCE Hub as a safe space for women, additional support is provided to remove the constraints to women's participation in SCE. Such support can include access to care services to alleviate the care burden placed on women for children, older people and people with disabilities, safe and affordable transport to the hubs, and engaging with men in families and communities to build their support. It can also include referrals to complementary social services to access professional support for gender-based violence, housing, personal finances, health or other issues.

Gender-transformative life skills. Training and support in this area enable women to develop self-confidence, a sense of agency, and aspirations aligned with their interests, skills and circumstances. It is centred on an awareness of participants' strengths and the potential of all individuals, and the part that gendered roles, stereotypes and discriminatory norms plays in everyone's lives. Gender-transformative life skills are context-specific and attempt to address intersecting inequalities. This training may provide the opportunity for participants to revisit, adapt or change established attitudes, behaviours and practices at individual, household and community level, often resulting in participants assuming new roles and responsibilities that may differ from socially expected gender roles.[2] It is an essential foundation for subsequent training and ensuring sustainable change to women's lives and community resilience.

One SCE learning pathway. Women participate in one of three pathways: **entrepreneurship/self-employment, employment/vocational training** or **return to formal education.** Each pathway is a progression of courses based on a globally standardized curriculum with locally relevant content tailored to participants in language, imagery and type of media. Industry and government connections are provided to link participants to jobs or business development opportunities during and after training.

2 Dietrich Ortega, L.M., Skakun, Z., Cabezas Pino, A., and Novelo Duarte, M.F., 2020. *'Who holds the microphone?' Crisis-affected women's voices on gender-transformative changes in humanitarian settings: Experiences from Bangladesh, Colombia, Jordan and Uganda*, New York: UN Women.

Personalized support underpins women's participation throughout their SCE journey. It includes social and instructional support and can be provided through a range of approaches including mentoring, tutoring, peer networks and advisors.

E-learning is offered in some form to all participants, whether SCE is delivered through physical hubs or entirely online. E-learning allows flexibility in the delivery of learning with in-person, online, and hybrid approaches used according to circumstances, making it easier for women to participate. It also builds digital skills for an increasingly digitalized world.

Advocacy and policy work draws on SCE's experience on the ground to advocate for removal of the structural constraints to women's participation in education, training and the workforce. It also advocates for reforms of laws, policies and financial frameworks and the introduction of government programming to enhance women's economic participation.

Photo: Real Futures

2. SETUP AND REGISTRATION

"[T]he 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."

Michelle Franco, Centre Leader, CEMEX Hub, Mexico[3]

Hub location and setup

Hubs or women's centres are the **physical spaces** where SCE is implemented. See "A Safe Space to Learn, Connect and Thrive: The SCE Hub Handbook" and SCE virtual hub tours[4] for more details on setting up and running one of these physical spaces.

- Locate the hub where it is **easy to reach and accessible** by public transport or on foot. It should be in a well-lit, safe area that poses no risk to women. A location close to other services can be an advantage, especially childcare facilities. For women who have difficulties with transportation, consider **arranging group transport** to and from the hub (e.g., by minibus) or fundraising for **subsidization** of transport costs.
- Consider delivery through **mobile outreach** or through an **online component** to serve those living in isolated areas.
- Make sure the hub is **accessible to women living with disabilities**.
- Organize the layout to make it **easy for women to socialize**, with social spaces as well as rooms for training and meetings. A garden or green area outside can work well as a social space.
- Ensure the hub is a place of **safety and trust**, particularly for women who have suffered abuse or violence. Consider a 'by invitation only' policy for men.
- Provide a **safe, private space** where women who have suffered **abuse or violence** can talk to trusted staff and where staff can arrange confidential referrals. Provide beds for overnight stays.
- Provide a **space with toys, books and games for children** and organize a supervision rota involving staff and/or participants, to allow women with small children to attend.
- Schedule activities **within school hours** as far as possible.
- The layout and atmosphere should promote a sense of **ownership and belonging** through furniture, artwork, posters, and signage.
- Ensure hubs are **'culturally safe'** so women feel comfortable expressing their cultural values, beliefs and identities. Employ women from the same culture; display (and commission) culturally resonant art and handicrafts; and work with culturally appropriate providers.
- **Partnerships** with organizations that provide **public spaces nationwide** offer great potential for scaling, such as public libraries. Partnerships with local or federal government who can provide facilities and even staff also have huge benefits for sustainability.

Staff and volunteers

Most SCE hubs have a coordinator or manager in charge of the space to monitor activities and supervise and support staff and participants. Implementing staff, such as facilitators, work directly with participants.

The duties of **implementing staff** include welcoming and registering women; helping them resolve issues related to transport, housing, childcare, health, or violence in the home; helping them adjust to the demands of the programme and build their confidence; giving individual support through WhatsApp, SMS or email; speaking with male members of a family or community; organizing and conducting courses and activities, and commissioning or creating learning materials; supporting women in the three pathways;

3 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Jalisco, https://youtu.be/nzv_oUPhkoM, 6:24–6:50.
4 SCE Virtual Hub Tour playlist: https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJ5VcsUWWhLsMNALE5QC9hdvjbZ98Alqf.

identifying potential mentors, and promoting the programme.

Volunteers can make an important contribution to an SCE programme, particularly as mentors and advisors but also, in countries with a strong volunteering tradition, in other roles. Volunteers may be interns and students at local institutions, women from the local community, SCE graduates who stay on to mentor new participants, professional women with a particular area of expertise, or volunteers from the private sector.

A safe space

Creating and maintaining a safe space, whether in physical hubs or online, is a priority for implementing staff as it is central to a woman'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 and know that any confidential information they share is secure. It is where they can openly share aspirations and ideas in a positive and supportive atmosphere; feel physically and emotionally secure; open up about deeply troubling experiences or problems in the knowledge that support is at hand; be comfortable in simply being themselves, outside of their roles of wife, mother, daughter or caregiver, and learn new skills or try new things without feeling constrained by social and cultural norms, or expectations about fulfilling a 'woman's role'.

Developing a non-hierarchical atmosphere in the hubs, where participants and facilitators are considered to be on the same level and there to help and support each other, can help participants to feel genuine ownership of the programme and have a positive impact on their wellbeing. Participants feel they are among friends and view the hub as a place where they feel happy and comfortable. They may spend time in the hubs simply to be with other participants and SCE staff, in a space not available to them anywhere else.

Building relationships and trust

SCE participants must feel comfortable talking to implementing staff so they can seek support when necessary and gain the confidence to move forward in their SCE journey. Building relationships and trust between facilitators and participants is therefore key and needs to start at the first encounter.

Participants often need time to open up about personal, social or financial problems, and require a safe space to do so. Group activities such as craft production can provide a supportive environment without pressure where relationships and trust can be built, and new participants gradually gain the confidence to speak about personal issues. Social activities such as wellbeing workshops can offer similar opportunities.

Photo: UN Women/Priya Naresh and Aniket Kolarkar

Once relationships and trust have been built and a safe environment is secured, sessions can involve introspection where women can share more personal perspectives on their abilities, strengths, concerns and 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. Contacting new participants every week or fortnight in the first month or so for a chat can keep them engaged and up-to-date on what is happening at the hub.

> Welcoming participants, assessing their needs and interests, and building relationships is equally important in an online environment. The online SCE Chile programme has been successful in connecting women with each other and their own personal tutor in the critical initial stages of the programme and throughout.

Photo: AWO/Suhaib/Khamaiseh

Marketing and outreach

Word of mouth is often the most effective method of outreach, but a range of physical and digital channels can be used to publicize the programme:

- **Social media** networks, including those of local partner organizations, NGOs, CSOs, and the UN; using **success stories and testimonials, infographics,** links to e-portals or **national SCE websites**, advocacy by **influencers** and **public figures** close to target audiences, and leverage **special days** (e.g., International Women's Day) to publicize SCE and share broader messages on the benefits of educating women and girls.
- **Community radio, TV** and **podcasting**.
- **Working with local partners, service providers** and **community organizations** is essential when trying to reach and meet women in **new locations**. Use their platforms to make **announcements** and disseminate **branded posters and leaflets**.

Registration

Registration is the first step in **identifying the needs and aspirations** of each participant so that she can be offered appropriate and bespoke support and services. It is a **structured way of getting to know** her and of starting to build a relationship. Do not view it as an exercise in information extraction!

Information collected at registration is also essential for **monitoring and evaluation** purposes. Without it, we do not know who the programme is reaching or what difference it makes to participants' lives.

- As a minimum, the registration process should collect 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.[5]
- The registration process works well when it takes place as a discussion: a one-to-one **interview** in which the **registration form** is completed. It is as an opportunity for **dialogue and relationship building** and the interview should be informal and friendly.
- The initial registration can be kept **short and simple** by asking for their name, contact details and what they would like to do in general terms. More detailed information gathering and needs assessment can be left to a later stage when relationships and trust are more firmly established.
- Registration is a significant, **tangible achievement** for women who may have never imagined themselves doing anything outside their home.

5 Participants are asked about their use of social media, confidence with other applications (WhatsApp, email, SMS, video calling, Word, search engines, online banking, Google maps, digital camera, etc.), ownership of digital devices and internet connection at home. Facilitators can then determine the kind of support they need.

- Data collection and storage must abide by the UN Women **Personal Data Protection Policy**.

SCE programmes with different target groups may have different information requirements. A programme for migrant and refugee women might ask women to score their levels of confidence about living in a new country, their connections and relationships, and sense of self and identity. Another programme might focus on digital skills, socioeconomic level, financial skills, and empowerment.

Being agile: Recognizing and responding to changing needs

Facilitators and other implementing staff play an important role in recognizing changes in the profiles of women who register, barriers to participation, and the demand for different pathways and courses. This helps SCE stakeholders to adapt to changes in the wider social and economic environment so that it continues to be relevant and effective.

For example, COVID-19 lockdowns reduced the demand for many products produced by SCE entrepreneurs and altered the price of agricultural products produced by SCE farmers. But implementing partners (IPs) and responsible parties (RPs) were quick to identify and grasp new opportunities, such as producing face masks.

SCE's localized approach within a global framework allows for a programme to be responsive to changes in demand and wider socioeconomic changes. Existing services may be expanded and new services added while investments in others are reduced.

Implementing staff can play a primary role in monitoring the need for adjustments, new offerings or new partnerships due to changes in the wider economic, social or health environment. Some of the things that can be monitored include:

- The **profile** of women who respond to marketing outreach: their age, educational attainment, and pathway of interest.
- **Attendance and feedback** from participants to monitor lowering of appetite for some training and an increase for others.
- Women's **availability** for in-person/live sessions (where possible, adaptations to content and/or delivery can accommodate changing needs).
- The success of **SCE graduate businesses** and demand for their specific goods and services.
- **National or regional data** on employment rates among women and the growth of particular sectors.

Initial **labour market assessments** to identify the most promising sectors for SCE investment 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 and crises such as the pandemic can affect the viability of whole sectors. What may have emerged as a great area for investment in the initial assessment may no longer be so a few years later.

As people living within the community, facilitators are well placed to act as key informants on the local economy and labour market, and identify both declining and emerging opportunities for income generation by SCE women.

The start of a participant's journey

Most SCE programmes involve the following elements in some form:

1. **Invitation**: Participant is invited to the hub.
2. **Explanation**: Facilitator gives an overview of the programme and the services and support on offer.
3. **Decision to join**: Participant decides whether she is interested.
4. **Registration**: Facilitator goes through the registration form and the participant 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. Online, participants join one or more welcome sessions to get to know their tutor and other participants.
6. **Overview of services and pathways**: This is done during the hub tour and through subsequent meetings and discussions.

7. **Practical support**: Offered for issues such as gender-based violence, money, housing or health problems, childcare, etc. The participant is referred to professional services as required.
8. **Gender-transformative life skills**: These courses and activities enable participants to think through their interests, goals and aspirations, gain digital and personal skills and develop awareness of gender.
9. **Learning pathway**s: Participants embark on one of three SCE pathways: entrepreneurship/self-employment, employment/vocational training, or return to formal education.

The goal of initial activities should be to introduce the programme, awaken participants' curiosity and enable them to start connecting with each other. They should help women realize and embrace a **sense of agency** in their lives and confidence to bring about change. Social interaction is key at this stage. These initial activities and courses focus on **personal skills, digital skills, a gender perspective, life planning and goal setting**, and are covered in the next section as they constitute gender-transformative life skills.

In-person group activities include fun ice-breakers, painting and drawing with a gender theme such as 'what it means to be a woman in my community,' storytelling, games that encourage openness about emotions and values, discussions on thought-provoking questions such as generational changes among women, animated songs, and inspiring videos of success stories of local women.

VeOmás, an IP in Chile, summarized the aims of SCE's initial stages as follows:

- **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.

Literacy and numeracy are considered to be prerequisites for further learning and living in ways that are not dependent on others. But SCE resources can be designed for participants who are not literate or literate in the primary language of the locale, through the use of images and videos. Examples of such materials can be found in Cameroon where resources for refugee women have been modified, or in Australia, where (often highly educated) new arrivals to the country may not be literate in English.

Certificates

Certificates and graduation or completion ceremonies are excellent ways of recognizing participants' achievements in finishing a course or when they graduate from SCE.

The certificate can be accompanied by small photos and screenshots from their tutor or mentor, showing their contributions to the sessions and the course overall.

Where the same group of women have spent several weeks together, this final activity can be emotional as it recognizes the bonds that have developed among them as well as their effort, will and commitment in completing the programme.

A template recommended for use in all SCE programmes is available from the SCE global team.

Photo: UN Women/Sonali Hedditch

3. SUPPORT TO ADDRESS GENDER-BASED BARRIERS

"[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

Many women wishing to re-start their education are prevented from doing so not just by the lack of learning opportunities but by gender-based constraints. A lack of childcare, lack of housing, isolation, gender-based violence, domestic abuse or lack of safe transport can all work against successful participation in SCE. An important role for implementing staff is to help women to access the support they need to resolve these difficulties, so that they have the time and mental space to focus on their aspirations and maintain participation.

Constraints may be:

- **Financial/physical** (lack of transport, money for transport, devices for digital learning, access to internet, ID documentation).
- **Social** (lack of childcare or care for elderly parents, need for flexible hours, discriminatory gender norms, resistance from family or community members, past or ongoing abuse or violence, isolation).
- **Personal** (lack of confidence, mental or physical ill-health, anxiety).

Some of these can be at least partly addressed through hub location, facilities and course scheduling (see, for example, section 9 on E-learning).

Others can be addressed through SCE's gender-transformative life skills component, which includes a focus on self-confidence and socio-emotional resilience.

Mentoring and peer support are pivotal in helping participants overcome difficulties. It can take time for a participant to disclose that she needs help, but once she has done so, SCE staff can discuss with her options for support, including referrals.

Photo: UN Women

Referrals

To access effective support, facilitators may need to refer participants to professional services outside SCE, which may be provided by government or non-government agencies in relation to gender-based violence, housing, personal finance or debt, legal aid, and health. For a facilitator, this may involve not just arranging an appointment but helping participants fill in the relevant forms and applications, and encouraging them to apply in the first place. Previous experience may have led participants to distrust government or other organizational support, and their relationships with SCE staff, built on trust, can be important for ensuring they can access the services they need.

Implementing staff can also help participants **connect with social services online** using hub computers and internet.

Partnerships with local and state governments can make it easier for SCE women to access government social and health services, as well as career counselling and employment service programmes.

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 or mentor 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 and mentors may literally have a hand-holding role when referring women to housing, health or financing support services. In some cases, their presence will make the difference between whether she goes or not.

Warm referrals and physical accompaniment ensure that women who have little confidence and trust in other agencies are able to access the support they need.

Hub staff should be particularly aware of referral services for **gender-based violence or domestic abuse** and feel confident that these services are trustworthy and offer good care. If not, and apart from the implications for the women themselves, the SCE programme risks its reputation as a trusted source of high-quality support.

Training in GBV prevention and response should also be integrated within employability and entrepreneurship pathways to avoid backlash or pushback from family or community members.

Building support and countering social norms

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

This can be countered by **inviting parents and partners to the hubs** and giving them a tour so they can see for themselves the programme ethos, environment and activities. **Meetings and discussion sessions** (often best led by a man) can be arranged where staff can offer reassurance on SCE's aims and objectives and share participant success stories. Resistance tends to soften when family members meet programme staff, hear about wider benefits, and see there is no intention to 'pit women against men'. Engaging with parents has been found to be critical for securing the participation of younger women in countries such as Cameroon and India.

It is helpful to create **WhatsApp groups** for family members where motivational videos and other information can be shared and contact maintained.

In highly patriarchal contexts, engaging male members of the community and families of participants is essential for SCE to operate effectively. Explaining how families and communities, not just participants, benefit helps to dissipate feelings of distrust and enable participants to benefit from their families' support.

Awareness-raising workshops around the broader theme of **social norms**, such as masculinity from a gender perspective, also give men an opportunity to both voice their opinions and find out how they can best support the women. These sessions have proved popular among male relatives of participants in Mexico. Such sessions can be used to highlight the benefits to the whole family of a fairer distribution of childcare and domestic work.

At the community level, **sensitization campaigns** (including through broadcast media) can promote the benefits of SCE and women and girls' education generally. In a country like Cameroon, the **involvement of community leaders** is essential before and during programme implementation since they are the custodians of tradition. Without their engagement, it is difficult to make headway in changing attitudes about women.

Where literacy rates are low, sensitization campaigns can use visual resources (called 'image boxes' in Cameroon) to raise awareness of GBV and social norms harmful to women.

> In rural India, patriarchal norms pose severe constraints to the participation of women. As well as engaging directly with male family members, SCE tackles this through activities at various levels that challenge gender stereotypes and prejudices: village-level mobilization meetings, street plays, mass campaigns, gender workshops, camps, and offline and online gender trainings.

Even in a highly patriarchal society, the development of a strong **relationship between SCE and the community** may allow for the organization of open discussion among traditional and religious community leaders, parents of SCE participants, and SCE staff on harmful social norms and how to combat them.

It may also be possible to build support for SCE by offering elements of it to the whole community, such as the return to education pathway whereby men can also benefit from SCE discounts for sitting exams and certification.

> In Cameroon, community discussions have included the following topics: 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; and social discrimination against refugees and internally displaced persons.

ID documents

Displaced and refugee women who have fled violence are often constrained by a lack of identification like birth certificates and national ID cards. Without these, they are prevented from accessing official education, training, and other services. Inadequate documentation should not prevent participation in SCE.

SCE stakeholders can advocate for women who do not have documentation as a result of fleeing conflict. In Cameroon SCE has successfully lobbied government to allow birth certificates to be issued to displaced women and girls.

Language

SCE has supported participants who do not speak the primary language (usually displaced or refugee women) in several ways.

For women to get immediate benefit from practical training and start generating income relatively quickly, it may be preferable to conduct training in women's native languages, as in some refugee camps in Cameroon, where they also receive language training through specially designed learning resources.

In other contexts, participants can be entirely immersed in the new language at the hub and encouraged to 'have a go' within a friendly and supportive atmosphere. E-learning resources can be tailored for women with low or no proficiency in the language, with video tutorials featuring slow voiceovers and clear, built-in subtitles, and other resources published in simple, clear language with photos and imagery alongside the text (see the SisterWorks educational videos for examples of resources created for refugee and migrant women in Australia).

Partnerships with institutions offering language training can help participants to benefit from professionally developed language courses, whether online or in-person. For example, Afghan refugees in Chile learn Spanish through courses offered by ECLAC (United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean).

Essentials

Where SCE participants lack essential household and sanitary items that prevent them from interacting with others and participating in SCE activities, consider distributing kits or making them available in the hubs. This can give women the self-confidence to interact with others and engage in SCE activities.

Photo: UN Women/Priya Naresh and Aniket Kolarkar

4. GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE LIFE SKILLS

"They are going to grow as women, they are going to open their minds to other things, they are going to see that our world is not square, and it is not only the shape of a house."

Cherie Díaz, Mentor, SCE Chile[6]

Gender-transformative life skills are the psycho-emotional, social and intellectual skills needed to deal with the demands of everyday life and help an SCE participant aspire and plan for the future. They are a core component of all SCE programmes and essential in setting the foundations for learning because they help participants to realize their agency and feel a sense of control over their lives. This can make all the difference not just for completing the SCE programme but in the long-term impact it may have on an individual's life.

Gender-transformative life skills training is usually the first thing women embark on when they join and usually continues throughout their SCE journey, interwoven in their chosen pathway. All participants should be required to undergo gender-transformative training as resulting outcomes are fundamental to retention in the programme and longer-term success.

The core SCE life skills and activities are:

- An understanding of **gender** and gender inequality so that SCE participants recognize the part that gendered roles, stereotypes and discriminatory norms play in their lives, and to consider their dreams and constraints in the wider context of gender inequality.
- **Socio-emotiona**l skills and attributes, including self-confidence, assertiveness, communication, negotiation, self-knowledge, and resilience.
- **Digital** skills to access e-learning and enjoy the benefits of the digital world generally.
- **Life planning** to help participants identify their interests and strengths and set medium- to long-term goals that match them. In many cases, this will be the first time that they have thought seriously about their own talents and aspirations.
- **Financial** skills that enable participants to handle their personal finances independently.

SCE's life skills component can also include:

- **Support for wellbeing** provided through mentoring, peer networks and, in cases of trauma, abuse or violence, referral to psychosocial services.
- **Leadership skills** developed through mentoring systems and participation in internal and external events.
- **Language skills** for refugee and migrant women.
- **Literacy and numeracy** support for illiterate women through referral to external literacy and numeracy programmes.
- **Health** especially reproductive health, family planning, and menstrual health and hygiene.
- **Practical** skills training such as plumbing.

Gender

Developing SCE participants' awareness of gendered social norms and gender inequality is an important aspect of SCE training and activities. 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 roles and actions are not set in stone. Sharing experiences through a gendered lens

6 Second Chance program mentors, Chile, https://youtu.be/94-M2GKCEJY.

can help women uncover possible ways of challenging gendered roles and behaviours in her household, community, or workplace.

A gender perspective enables each woman to see herself in her own right rather than as a mother, a wife, a sister, caregiver for elderly parents, or an individual with limited opportunities. It supports the process by which she recognizes herself as an independent woman with agency who can imagine a different future and commit to her SCE journey.

Photo: UN Women/Priya Naresh and Aniket Kolarkar

Gender training also addresses intimate partner and gender-based violence and offers links to practical support and referrals to specialist services. Participants are often made aware of their rights, legal entitlements and government services. Men and boys may also be involved in learning about gender-based violence prevention, sexual and reproductive health, and family planning. In India, the gender perspective is conveyed in a fun and accessible way through exercises like 'kiska palra bhari' ('Who has the upper hand') and 'Kamla Kamli' ('masculine/feminine').

Topics include basic concepts on gender; the importance of a gender perspective in everyday life; norms and roles; household decision-making and control of household finances; the difference between sex and gender; historical inequality and changes over time; women's employment, entrepreneurship and educational status and reasons for dropping out of education; types of violence and strategies to prevent it; understanding the structure of violence; and how to take care of oneself.

A gender perspective should be treated as a topic in its own right under life skills but should also be integrated in all other life skills training and the entrepreneurship and employment pathways. SCE activities and support should all be shaped through a gender lens, that is, tailored to women and reflecting and responding to the everyday reality of women.

- 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 that 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.

Gender-transformative life skills and the entrepreneurship and employment pathways should include training in how to deal with potential backlash from immediate friends, family and the community when women run a business or work in a job outside of traditional gender norms. They may be seen as transgressing, which can generate difficult and even dangerous tensions. They will need support in dealing with this. Engaging with men in their families and communities, from the start, to explain the benefits for family and community and dissipate any sense of threat can help to prevent such a backlash.

Socio-emotional skills and self-confidence

Training in this area is designed to help women acquire greater confidence, be persistent, and develop expectations and assertiveness. It builds participants' capacity to engage and collaborate with others and develop resilience. This enables them to maintain participation in SCE despite the difficulties they may face.

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, which reduces their ability to act on everything on offer in SCE. 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 like facilitators, mentors, tutors.
- Social interactions with other participants, through informal socializing in the hubs (especially in spaces designed 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 tangible products and pride.
- Giving women time to develop trusting relationships with key SCE contacts.
- Shared craft activities – developing a creative skill in a group with other women, where social connections can be built naturally and informally alongside a tangible product.
- Encouraging women to speak and share experiences in a safe and trusted group, such as in 'yarning circles' among indigenous women in Australia.

Photo: UN Women

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 SCE opportunity as a personal project.
- Knows the road she wants to take based on her needs, current reality and expectations.

Digital skills

Digital skills are a core component of gender-transformative life skills as they enable women to (i) **participate in online learning** and (ii) **benefit from the digital world** more broadly (to access government support, search the Internet, look for jobs, write emails, create a CV, support their children, participate safely on social media, and keep in touch with family and friends).

For women to participate in online learning they must first understand how to use the tools. This is especially important for programmes that are completely online. Considerable time may be needed to teach women how to use the learning platform and video-conferencing tools like Zoom, using step-by-step video tutorials and instructions.

For hubs with blended learning programmes, basic digital skills training in the hub early on allows women to interact, work out problems, and receive instant help from instructors or peers. The employment, entrepreneurship and formal education pathways then offer further digital training courses such as 'Office for Employment Productivity' for the employment pathway. These can be delivered through an external training provider or the implementing organization.

It may well be possible, and more efficient, to provide digital skills training through an external provider with already established courses. For example, a partnership with telecoms company Claro in Chile resulted in training in basic and advanced digital skills for hundreds of SCE participants.

Life planning

When they first join, SCE participants often have difficulty articulating their strengths and weaknesses or professional and personal aspirations. Women who left school early, have 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 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 define their aspirations.

The 'life planning' courses offered by SCE to support this process tend to be popular among participants and rarely offered by established training institutions. They ensure that participants are guided towards activities aligned with their long-term goals. Different methods are used but they all involve interactive exercises often in a group environment, along with visual exercises to identify interests, talents, skills, weaknesses and dreams.

To support the process, implementing staff can:

- Hold **Life and Career Planning** courses and engage in **reflections on personal talents and interests**. This can be incorporated in human development courses at the start of the SCE journey. **Vision boarding**, pioneered by Real Futures in Australia, involves creating a collage of images and words reflecting values, goals and dreams.
- Provide an **overview of different pathways** and careers to see what aligns with a woman's aspirations.
- Offer **short 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 their thinking on what they aspire to achieve.
- 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.

Once participants identify the direction in which they want to travel, they need support to turn their aspirations into a series of **achievable**, **measurable goals**, with small achievements leading to the bigger result. SMART goals can be used to ensure they are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

> Most SCE pilot countries have a video-based 'life and career planning' course that was developed in 2021 in partnership with the Open University (OU) and Cobra Collective. The videos feature women from local communities and the course enables participants to think through work and career plans, especially when delivered through a blended learning approach. In group sessions, videos can stimulate discussion and help participants identify career and personal goals.
>
> See the Second Chance collection on the free OU platform OpenLearn Create.

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 and poor mental health can be significant barriers to women's successful participation. SCE activities aimed at improving wellbeing, personalized support and connections to professional services encourage women to stay in the programme and develop the confidence and resilience to take advantage of opportunities after they graduate.

In all SCE programmes, building relationships between participants and staff and among participants, is recognized as a central factor in nurturing wellbeing.

Wellbeing is supported through mentoring, peer support including through online connections, the development of personal skills and attributes through life skills training, setting and achieving goals, and access to specialist psychological support. Professional psycho-emotional support may be offered to participants in addition to routine support given by mentors and/or tutors, for example through the regular attendance of a psychologist at the hub.

This 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.

Live online sessions on Zoom or Google Meet are important for connecting with women who cannot access the hubs because of transportation, mobility, childcare tissues or daytime responsibilities. Live sessions go some way to provide them with opportunities 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.

Leadership

Mentoring training offered to SCE participants helps them develop the foundational leadership skills of listening, supporting and guiding. Creating public speaking opportunities for participants in the community and at high-level events, such as on International Women's Day, enables participants to develop those skills further, giving them an opportunity to speak about their own experiences and be powerful advocates for other women.

Leadership can be recognized and encouraged through the issuing of awards and an Awards Night, as done by Real Futures in Australia.

Photo: UN Women

5. ENTREPRENEURSHIP PATHWAY

"I am a beneficiary of the Second Chance 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, Cameroon[7]

"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, Mexico[8]

The SCE entrepreneurship pathway offers contextualized training in core business skills and practical, hands-on training in the production of goods or skills for self-employment. Personalized support, up-to-date advice from local experts, and opportunities to market and sell produce in a supportive environment combine to enable women to start or build a business that matches their interests and circumstances.

The entrepreneurship pathway in SCE enables women to start earning income from the production and sale of goods and services. During the pilot programme, this was the most popular pathway among SCE participants overall, due in part to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions, but also because running a small business from home can offer greater flexibility for fitting in unpaid domestic or caregiving work than full-time employment.

Women often produce the goods they sell, initially on a small scale in their homes or at the hubs. This enables them to generate income immediately while gradually building up confidence and entrepreneurial capacity. The goods sold commonly include hand-crafted household items, decorative artefacts for the house, hand-tailored clothes, baked or cooked products, and home-produced fruit, vegetables, mushrooms, herbs or chickens. Services have included a food delivery service and breakfasts for birthday parties and anniversaries. Women can also become small-scale traders, as in Cameroon, trading in household items such as soap, salt and oil.

Entrepreneurship training encompasses basic business skills such as price-setting, marketing and selling, and the actual production of goods – all the skills that participants need when starting a business for the first time. The objective is for participants to leave the programme equipped with the tools and skills they need to commercialize their activities and with their products available for sale.

As with the employment pathway, SCE participants continue to be supported after graduating or starting their own business.

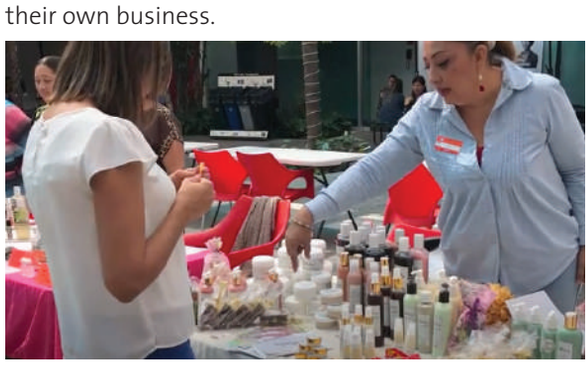

Photo: UN Women

7 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Cameroon, https://youtu.be/mxG7H3hM3II, 18:43–19:19.
8 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Jalisco, https://youtu.be/nzv_oUPhkoM, 11:40–11:53.

Examples of training approaches in the SCE entrepreneurship pathway include:

- Practical workshops with online video tutorials for reference and consolidation (Australia, Jordan).
- Active learning delivered on demonstration sites or work locations, such as 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).

Tips for forging an SCE entrepreneurship pathway

- **Offer a range of products and self-employment options** for women to choose from, and where facilitators help guide the choice of business and product design. Facilitators should encourage participants to consider options aside from those traditionally considered 'women's businesses' such as baking or floristry. They should guide participants towards selecting an enterprise that not only suits their interests and skill set but is likely to be commercially successful.
- **Use a blended learning approach** that combines practical hands-on skills training with online courses. Hubs need to cater for **hands-on production classes** (for example with sewing machines, kitchens, 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). It is possible to implement the entrepreneurship pathway entirely online, as done in Chile during the pilot phase.
- Consider **what training should be offered and by whom**. Direct training in the hub has advantages – women can develop tangible skills in a group of like-minded women, simultaneously building self-confidence and a support network – but training provided by an external training or specialist organization may be more effective in providing women with the skills and certification they need, and also be more scaleable.
- **Partnerships** with training and development organizations during SCE's pilot phase has provided access to effective entrepreneurship training and support throughout the programme. A pathway may end up being a mix of IP/RP-delivered courses (hub-based or online) and courses provided by an external training provider.
- Be mindful of the risk of training too many businesswomen to **specialize in the same product or service**, leading to market saturation and reduced prices.
- Through connections with business associations and chambers of commerce, **invite local business experts** to advise on price setting, marketing and other business activities.
- Organize temporary or permanent **spaces at the hub** for women to **display and sell their products**, or organize an SCE fair. Organizing collective spaces helps women to embark on commercialized sales activities in a safe and supportive environment.
- Invite an expert such as a public broker to give a session on **registering a business** and the associated tax implications. But leave the decision on whether to register a business with each woman as many may be concerned about taxation.
- Offering a **startup kit or seed funding** on completion of training can be a big incentive for participants to keep going. In Cameroon, SCE graduates are given startup kits such as sewing machines, agricultural tools or items for petty trade so they can start their business immediately. SCE women may be able to arrange capital from local community groups, self-help groups (as in India), or their families. There may be government schemes offering startup credit or grants for entrepreneurs; SCE staff can help participants to apply. Corporate partnerships can improve SCE participants' access to credit, as in India where a loan scheme was set up for women through a partnership between UN Women, the World Bank and the State Bank of India.

Cooperatives where women work together to generate products or services for sale can work well in SCE since joint enterprises promote confidence, solidarity, cooperation, and a common purpose, as well as

spreading the benefits from a shared workload. Examples include goat rearing in Cameroon and hydroponic lettuce and mushroom nurseries in Mexico. Cooperatives can also open routes for sustainability and recycling investments.

In Cameroon, proceeds from cooperatives are divided between family expenditure, savings, and supporting a new cohort of beneficiaries through a village savings association account. This re-investment of profits requires supervision but has the potential to create a multiplier effect and be self-sustaining.

Photo: UN Women

6. EMPLOYMENT PATHWAY

"[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, Chile[9]

The SCE employment pathway offers bespoke, relatable training and personalized support that build confidence, interest and understanding. This is combined with industry connections that offer up-to-date information to guide women's choices, sector-specific training and employment opportunities.

The added value of this pathway relative to government or corporate work schemes lies in:

- **In-house training and resources tailored** to the target audience and developed with a gender lens.
- **Supporting women to select a sector and job type** that aligns with their aspirations and career goals, drawing on accurate and up-to-date information provided by sector experts.
- **Personalized mentoring support** in writing a CV, applying for a job and preparing for an interview, and peer support through which women can share experiences, challenges and solutions.
- **Partnerships with training institutions** can offer high-quality, sector-specific learning opportunities. SCE participants may be given preferential access to scheduled trainings or receive bespoke training specifically designed for SCE women.
- **Partnerships with industry** that provide SCE participants with up-to-date information on different sectors and careers, and direct links to job openings. IPs/RPs that are accredited organizations for government work schemes are particularly well placed to connect SCE participants to jobs.
- Regular **follow-ups** with SCE graduates after they have started a job, for up to six months, to provide support during that transitional stage, which helps to prevent dropout.

Training

Typically, training for the employment pathway has these components:

- Skills needed to **find a job**, often delivered through a mix of group sessions and 1:1 support where information is shared on job searching, creating a CV, writing a cover letter, preparing for an interview (what to wear, when to arrive, how to carry yourself, what to say, etc.), and reviewing a contract.
- Generic **transferable skills** sought after by companies, such as in communication, conflict management, time management, good work habits, and digital skills. These skills are useful in all sectors and offer some mitigation against job losses in a particular sector in the future.
- **Employment rights** through a gender lens, covering topics such as part-time contracts, maternity and sick leave, sexual harassment, etc.
- **Sector- or job-specific training**, usually provided through partner organizations and industries.

Different levels of digital literacy require different stages of **digital skills** training in the employment pathway, ranging from short courses that cover the basics to comprehensive training in Microsoft Office, particularly in Word, Excel and PowerPoint. The latter is often efficiently provided through partnership with an organization or company with established digital skills training.

Partnerships

Partnerships are critical to the employment pathway. An IP/RP with expertise in training and/or employment can be a huge asset, whether it already operates

9 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Acción Emprendedora, https://youtu.be/ZjmYc9CCJeg, 7:04–7:19.

as part of government employment schemes (such as Real Futures in Australia), provides vocational or technical training and education (such as AIEP in Chile), or supports people excluded from the labour market (such as Fundación Emplea in Chile).

Other examples of partnerships that have the potential to generate good outcomes in the employment pathway include:

- **Providers of vocational, technical and further education**, such as skills training institutes in India.
- **Business or community organizations** that provide training and links to employment opportunities for marginalized groups or in sectors where women are under-represented, such as in tech and coding in Cameroon.
- **Private companies, government agencies and intergovernmental organizations** that offer training and employment sessions, such as the European Southern Observatory in Chile that led to training and employment for selected SCE participants.
- **Local chambers of commerce** that alert IPs/RPs to new vacancies and support women in their applications, such as in Puebla State, Mexico.

Partners can also use their networks to build SCE visibility and connections with other employers. For example, the Chilean partner AIEP organized a four-day online employment fair for SCE in July 2021. Over 80 companies presented more than 3,000 employment opportunities and over 1,500 women participated.

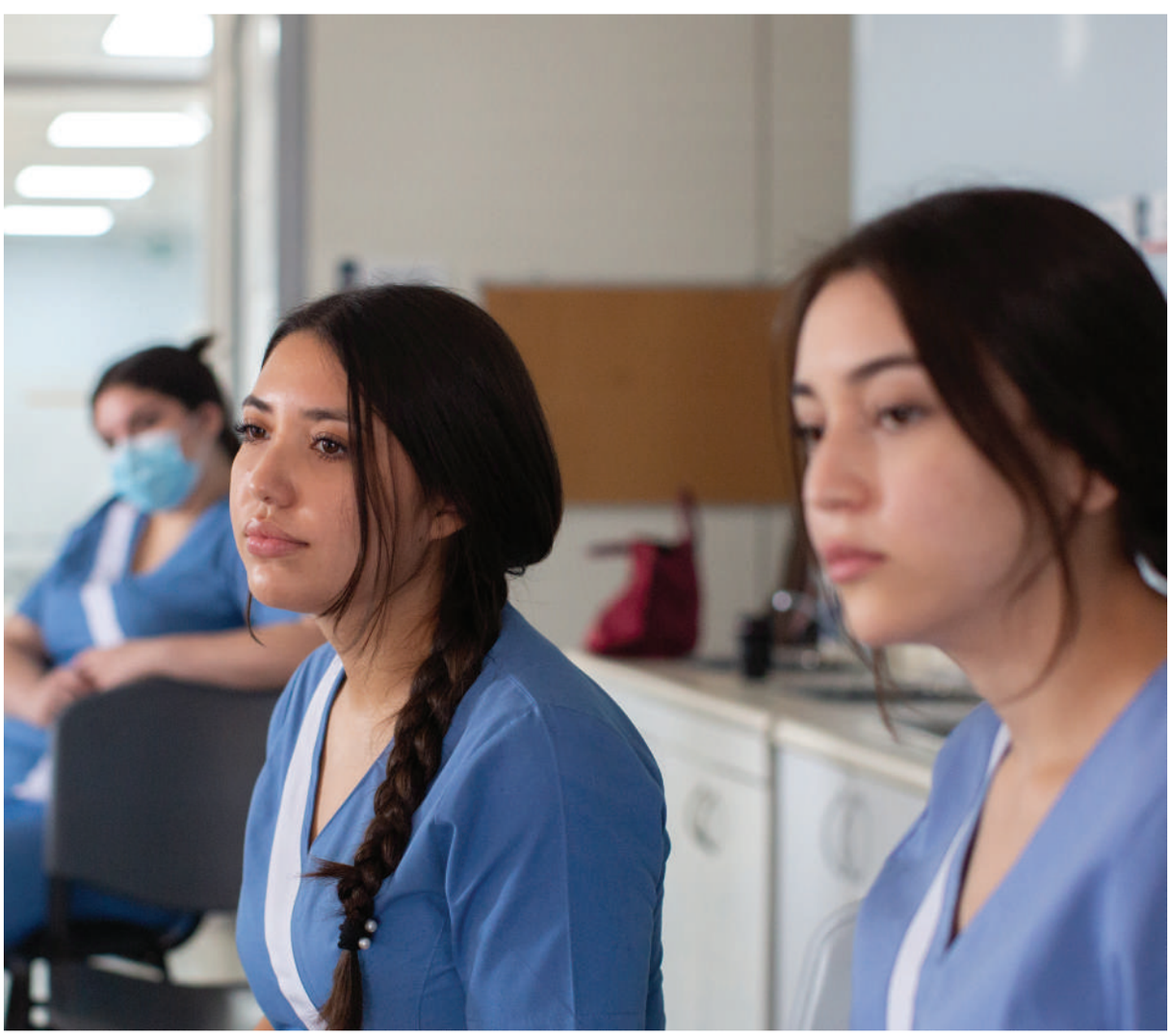

Photo: UN Women/CVA

Challenges

Below are solutions drawn from SCE's pilot phase for addressing common challenges on this pathway.

Challenges	Solutions
Participants may have never created a CV or written a cover letter and feel they have no qualifications or experience to include.	Training on writing a CV and cover letter, with 1:1 mentoring support. Work with partners offering job opportunities to build commitment to, and support for, employees lacking experience.
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. Build partnerships with training organizations and provide practical inputs in the design of training and learning materials so that SCE's target women are reflected in images, examples and language.
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 is on offer in different sectors.	Weekly job information or industry taster sessions with guests from different sectors. Monthly newsletters featuring trainings, webinars and job openings.
Women may face resistance from their families or communities, especially if their choice of job or career goes against social and cultural norms.	Establish links with a participant's family when they first join the programme, and include them in information sessions.
A lack of basic digital literacy skills.	Build partnerships with providers of digital skills training, including in Microsoft Office. If basic digital training is not available, offer bespoke sessions and video tutorials that address the fundamentals.
A lack of confidence about entering the workforce.	Establish a forum where women can openly speak about barriers to employment and build self-confidence and motivation. Women who have started employment can also share their experiences. The SCE programme should also have a confidence-building ethos throughout.

SisterWorks in Australia 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 among employers themselves. They offer training to companies to boost their cultural capabilities and understanding of diversity around clothing, holidays, language and food.

7. RETURN TO FORMAL EDUCATION PATHWAY

"[I]f 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, Chile[10]

The SCE return to formal education pathway is implemented in partnership with government or education institutions that already have systems in place for schooling, school examinations and certification.[11] Through such partnerships, SCE can establish reduced fees for enrolment, sitting exams and obtaining the certificate.

SCE facilitators can directly support women on this pathway by:

- Building their **self-belief and confidence** that they can return to studying and exams as adults.
- Providing help with **registration** and **payment of fees**, applying any SCE discounts.
- Providing access to **computers, books and study space** in the hubs.
- Organizing **tutorials, Q&As and advice sessions** with external instructors and tutors on particular subjects.
- Offering **training in digital skills** and digital advice sessions, so that women can use the relevant learning platforms, study online and take computer-based exams.
- Providing **support on studying** since participants will not have studied for some time and may never have picked up effective study skills.

Girls drop out of school for varied reasons: displacement or migration due to crisis, poverty, early marriage, early pregnancy, and cultural norms that prioritize boys' education. New barriers to catching up on their education are added as they become women and take on domestic, caregiving and income-earning responsibilities.

SCE support for women returning to formal education should take account of these new barriers with **flexible learning times**, **at-home support**, and **subsidization** of costs. Support from within the family can also be a big motivating factor and this can be encouraged by advocacy for the benefits of women's education and even opening up the pathway to men.

Photo: UN Women/Priya Naresh and Aniket Kolarkar

10 SCE Virtual Hub Tour, Acción Emprendedora, https://youtu.be/ZjmYc9CCJeg, 6:05–6:51.

11 As with the Instituto Nacional para la Educación de los Adultos (National Institute for Adult Education) in Mexico and the National Institute for Open Schooling in India.

Some SCE participants join the return to education pathway after or while completing the employment pathway. They realize how important it is to get their school certification in order to enter the workforce or advance in their career.

The National Institute for Open Schooling (NIOS) in India is an autonomous government agency and the largest open schooling network in the world. SCE educators conduct regular classes in the villages where SCE operates. SCE makes examination and certification processes much easier for SCE participants.

In Mexico, SCE has arranged discounted prices for enrolling, taking the exams and obtaining the certificate, through partnership agreements with national and local education institutions.

Photo: UN Women/Priya Naresh and Aniket Kolarkar

8. PERSONALIZED SUPPORT

"What gives me the most satisfaction is to see that the other person understands, and I can see myself reflected in that person when I started. Why not share what I once didn't have and now have?"

Cherie Díaz, Mentor, SCE Chile

Support from mentors, tutors and peers is central to SCE participant success. Mentors and tutors provide personalized, regular, easily accessible support while connections and friendships among participants provide opportunities for sharing experiences, mutual encouragement and social learning.

Mentoring

Mentoring is an essential component of all SCE programmes. Mentors accompany women through their SCE journey and provide personalized, regular and easily accessible support and encouragement. They also facilitate connections among the women themselves. Feedback from participants and staff along with retention data suggests that women who have a mentor or tutor are more likely to complete the programme, as their mentor motivates them to continue in the face of challenges that might otherwise cause them to drop out.

Mentors usually meet their mentees weekly or fortnightly to talk about the topics they have been learning about or personal issues. They help participants to find employment or set up and run a business. They can help them to build networks that support them in their job or help their business grow. They may continue to support their mentees after they have left the programme.

The mentoring relationship is built on trust, such that women are more inclined to be open with their mentor about the constraints they face and seek support. Mentors are therefore well placed to identify the need for targeted support in relation to issues such as housing, finance and gender-based violence, and they help their mentees to access social services as needed.

Who are mentors?

A mentor has personal or professional experience that may come from completing SCE training herself or tackling the kinds of constraints faced by women in the programme. She may have expertise in running a small business, working in a particular sector, employment rights, returning to education as an adult, or other areas relevant to SCE participants.

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. They tend to be unpaid volunteers who receive non-monetary incentives. They may continue mentoring after their mentee graduates.

- **SCE graduates** tend to make good mentors because they understand the barriers that participants face and the potential pain points on the SCE journey. But personal and professional responsibilities can make it difficult to take on this role, particularly if it is unpaid.
- **University students** in degree subjects such as psychology, sociology, or social work may do their placement (often a certain number of community hours) as an SCE mentor.
- **Women from the host community** may volunteer a certain amount of time regularly to mentor refugee, migrant and displaced women.
- **SCE participants** may be identified as potential mentors and coached into the role. Prospective mentors stand out within their cohort as naturally supporting and encouraging their peers, who see them as role models and women to admire and emulate. Using SCE participants as mentors may not work in a small community where it can lead to interpersonal tension.

- **Professional women** with experience in a relevant area such as law or accounting can be effective mentors, sharing their technical knowledge either 1:1 or in workshops, and offering support as a woman.

Women can also receive support from **advisors** once they are on the entrepreneurship or employment pathway. For the entrepreneurship pathway these might include a final-year business management student or business professional. On the employment pathway it might be women working in relevant areas who help with CV writing and preparing for job interviews.

What do mentors do?

A mentor will usually meet with her group of mentees every two weeks or so to motivate, encourage, guide and support. She may set up a group chat in WhatsApp for participants to keep in touch with her and each other. She supports them with their learning and entrepreneurial activities and shares her expertise. She offers 1:1 moral and practical support as needed. She will refer a mentee to internal or external services as necessary and immediately raise urgent or high-risk concerns with SCE staff.

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

All mentors should receive an induction and training before starting as an SCE mentor.

Photo: UN Women/CVA

What is the difference between tutors and mentors?

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.

In the pilot phase of the SCE programme (2018–2022), Chile is the only programme to use a tutoring system, with mentoring offered to participants in addition. A tutor is assigned to each participant from the start and is responsible for 20–25 women, who they support 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.

Types of mentors

Mentors may be:

- **Social mentors** or **buddies** who accompany a woman on her SCE journey, helping her deal with everyday problems and issues such as GBV, isolation, and low confidence.
- Mentors with a **particular skill or knowledge** that women can tap into on their employment/entrepreneurship pathways. For example, in India, mentors specialize in one of the three pathways.

Participants should have access to both **reactive** and **proactive mentoring**. **Reactive** is when a mentor responds to a specific question or problem, and **proactive** is when a mentor contacts a participant to find out how they are doing.

Incentives

In most countries, mentors are not paid, but other incentives can be offered and include:

- **Training and a certificate of completion**, since mentoring requires transferable skills that add value to CVs and job applications.

- A **defined role** with responsibilities and minimum requirements (such as 12 hours of mentoring over six months) set out in a term of reference document so that the position can be included on a CV.
- Use of a **smartphone or tablet** while acting as a mentor, with phone credit if necessary.
- A **target** of a certain number of mentees or amount of time, and a certificate once the target has been achieved. This helps prevent volunteer fatigue and ensure that new mentors are recruited regularly.
- Offering a **reference** upon completion for potential employers.

The role of facilitators in mentoring

Mentoring is usually part of the role of facilitators and other implementing staff, since they are the first people participants are in contact with. But they also have an important role in managing mentors.

- **Detecting**: Facilitators must detect those participants with the character, attitude and potential to become a mentor.
- **Recruiting**: They encourage potential mentors to take on the role. 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 likely unpaid.
- **Training/coaching**: Except where a particular partner has the responsibility for training mentors (as in Chile), facilitators usually must coach or train new mentors for the role.
- **Fostering a spirit of networking and collaboration**: An environment grounded in collaboration and mutual support will make it easier to recruit mentors. Facilitators can have a big impact in encouraging this kind of friendly, helpful spirit in the programme.
- **Mentoring**: Is often carried out by implementing staff, as well as volunteer mentors. They may telephone participants fortnightly for a wellbeing check and provide updates on hub activities.
- **Matching mentors to mentees**: The facilitator has to ensure that the mentor has experience in her mentee's chosen activity (tailoring, poultry, agriculture, etc.); lives near to her home or work; can meet her specific support requirements as identified in the wellbeing support plan; is available at times that suit her; and has a compatible personality.

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 primary goal of the SCE programme.

Training and support of mentors

Whether they come from within the programme or the local community, and no matter their innate skills and inclination to support others, mentors need comprehensive induction and training, and this is usually provided by SCE implementing staff. Facilitators can coach SCE participants to become mentors while still in the programme, building on their innate empathy and supportive behaviours and teaching them how to run their own sessions.

Training should cover what the role does and does not entail, how to communicate and maintain contact, how to mentor with a gender perspective, the importance of confidentiality, how to monitor and report interactions and progress, how to act on concerns or make a referral, and how to access support for themselves. All programmes should have a mentor handbook and examples of these are available on request.[12] A knowledge network among mentors can also help to share good practices.

Mentors should have regular check-ins with SCE staff, such as the mentor coordinator, to discuss progress and issues arising. They need to show that contact is being maintained and support provided, and access support for themselves.

Peer support

Like mentoring and tutoring, peer support motivates and encourages women to stay in the SCE programme. Friendships and connections develop organically and informally and with little intervention from implementing staff as participants move through a course or pathway together. Peer support groups can also be created more formally, as happens at SisterWorks in Australia, where women who share similar experiences and concerns are brought together in a small group of three to six women. The aim of these groups is to provide mutual emotional help, advice and encouragement.

In hub-based programmes, participants depend heavily on the hub as a safe space where they can socialize

12 For example, see SisterWorks Social Mentors and Peer Support Groups Program Manual, May 2021 by SisterWorks (Australia) and Tu Oportunidad Program Mentoring, October 2022 by AIEP (Chile).

as well as receive training. They often see the hub as a place where they can be themselves without criticism or judgement. Many have never had access to such an environment before. In some of the hubs in Mexico, for example, the women love spending time in the hub even when there are no activities. The empathy and trust that grows among them means that when they participate in SCE activities, they do so in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration, not competition. Creating opportunities and spaces for bonds to develop is especially important for participants from minority ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Strong peer-to-peer connections can lead women to feel 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. In this way, programmes are genuinely co-designed and more likely to engage and retain women as a result.

Most peer groups use WhatsApp to keep in contact and share information on education, employment and entrepreneurship. Private Facebook groups, messenger chat groups and videoconferencing calls also allow for virtual group interaction. The latter can be particularly important in enabling women in remote locations and taking part in fully online programmes to socialize.

Women can also support each other via online pathway- or topic-specific forums, which are set up so they can openly share experiences, barriers and solutions. Such forums can build women's self-confidence and motivation.

Peer support groups often continue after women have left the programme.

Communication tools

Tutors and mentors can communicate with participants remotely through telephone calls, emails, SMS, videoconferencing calls and WhatsApp. For example:

- **Telephone** is commonly used to confirm participation and welcome participants.
- **Group chats** such as on WhatsApp enable tutors to respond quickly, keep participants motivated, and have members interact with each other directly on a platform they are already familiar with, creating an easily accessible peer network.
- **Videoconferencing calls** on Zoom (or similar) enable face-to-face group interaction for participants who cannot get to the hub or are enrolled in an online-only programme. Women who cannot attend can watch a recording. It is important to monitor attendance and participation in live sessions to follow up with women who do not attend or attend but do not participate.
- **Email** is used to share information about programme activities.

It is important to set expectations regarding response times and periods of downtime. Mentors and tutors should be clear **when** they are available, **how** they can be contacted, and **how quickly** they will respond. However, to prevent dropout, it helps to be relatively flexible at the start when women often have low confidence levels and before bonds have been established with other participants.

When using group chats, establish ground rules from the start to avoid unwanted or irrelevant messages, as per the wishes of members. 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.

> The SCE programme in Chile developed a web app that enables women to connect with each other in a safe space and facilitates the creation of networks among SCE participants past and present. It launched in December 2022.

Photo: UN Women/Dzilam Méndez

9. E-LEARNING

"It has been very important … that [the women] themselves recognize how online learning processes have also been a path towards autonomy … 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, Mexico[13]

For both hub-based and fully online SCE programmes, e-learning offers flexibility and the potential to extend reach. While significant challenges have to be addressed for successful implementation, the experience of SCE Chile has shown that SCE can be delivered fully online with high retention and satisfaction rates when personalized support and opportunities for interaction and relationship building are built in.

Benefits

Experiences during SCE's pilot phase showed that e-learning can:

- **Reach women who live far from a hub or have difficulty getting to one.** In Chile, implementing the programme entirely online meant that it could reach rural women in isolated communities.
- **Give women flexibility in when and where they learn.** The demands of unpaid care and domestic work and lack of childcare mean that many women have difficulty attending in-person courses. Online learning makes it possible for them to study at a time and location convenient to them. Blended approaches mean that women get the best of both worlds, with in-person workshops complemented by live sessions on Zoom and digital 'anytime, anywhere' learning materials.
- **Reach greater numbers of women.** If women have access to a mobile phone and a partial internet connection, participant numbers need not be limited by the hub's space and facilities.
- **Accelerate development of digital skills and confidence.** Learning how to use digital tools and platforms and being online in a safe place and among a trusted group increases confidence in navigating the digital world.
- **Have broader family benefits.** It can be inspirational for children to see their mothers studying at home, learning on a laptop or phone. In return, women can use the digital skills that they acquire through e-learning to support their children with schoolwork.

The Chile SCE programme was originally designed to be delivered through training centres and public libraries, but the onset of the pandemic led to its re-design as a fully online programme. By designing in personalized support, opportunities for interaction and the building of relationships, and through the development of relatable, relevant resources, the programme had a high retention rate and strong satisfaction ratings, despite participants never meeting their tutor or peers in person.

Challenges

Constraints to digital learning among the SCE target group lie in three main areas: lack of devices, lack of connectivity and lack of digital skills. During 2020 and 2021 lockdowns linked to COVID-19, when some programmes were wholly dependent on online delivery and IPs/RPs had to rapidly expand their online components, a number of solutions and workarounds were put in place, and these are listed below.

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

Access to devices and internet

Challenge: Women do not have access to a computer or tablet at home.

Partner with tech companies for device donation and internet installation in the hubs, and with government to join forces in distribution of tablets or computers.

Give access to computers in the hub. Setting up a scheme where devices can be lent out can also be helpful, but it requires careful administration and tracking. Be wary of asking for donations of old devices with a view to refurbishing since they often need major repairs.

Use a platform that works well on mobile. Although some skills, such as in Word or Excel, need to be learned on a computer, most SCE subjects and live videoconferencing sessions can be designed for mobile learning.

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

Partner with tech companies to install internet in the hubs.

Give participants a data allowance to kickstart participation.

For a sustainable solution, advocate with government for country-wide connectivity and join forces with other organizations to do so.

Use a learning platform that allows users to download lessons for use offline so that women can download lessons to their phone using the hub's internet, complete them at home, and sync their progress to their account once they are back online.

Include how to use free public WiFi safely in digital skills training.

Challenge: Women cannot attend live sessions due to domestic and professional commitments.

Be as flexible as possible in finding solutions to help women participate. Record sessions and put them on YouTube so they are easy to access. For each cycle of participants, be open to requests for modifications in the schedule and adapt as far as possible to each group's needs: sessions may be longer, shorter, more frequent or less frequent than the default timetable.

Respect the time that participants give to attend live sessions. Be friendly but efficient!

Digital skills

Challenge: Lack of digital skills and confidence. 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.

Start building **relationships and trust** with women who believe the digital world is 'not for them' or who lack skills and confidence so you can gently steer them towards digital use.

Train women in basic digital skills so that as a minimum they know **how to use the learning platform** and connect with each other online. This is usually easier to do in person if women can get to a hub. Reinforce digital literacy throughout, repeating tasks and introducing new skills, to gradually increase confidence.

Provide a **clear overview** of course objectives, calendar, timings of activities, how and when to get support, and criteria for success. Highlight dates and times of live sessions in advance.

Alongside a new platform, set up communication channels with tools that **women are already familiar with** (often WhatsApp), so they can connect with each other immediately.

Conduct **1:1 follow-up** to ensure each woman is engaged and to adjust as needed so she does not drop out. Use different means of communication simultaneously (email, WhatsApp, phone calls, video calls) to offer support and build self-confidence.

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.

Raise awareness of the value of mobile phones and digital skills with the parents and husbands of young women and through community meetings. Mentors should share success stories about other women who have successfully and safely used a mobile for educational purposes.

Content

Challenge: Lack of relevant and engaging courses.

Solutions in the short term might involve 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 adapting existing training materials (or commissioning a developer to do so), curating materials from another provider (which may need negotiation if they not openly licensed), or developing content from scratch, drawing on expert knowledge.

Make the content you create in-house personal, friendly and encouraging, and include short, welcoming homemade videos. And if participants have low literacy levels, or have been out of education for a while, use videos rather than text. Make content bite-sized, so it is easy to access and digest. If participants are refugee, migrant or displaced women who do not understand the language, create videos with slow voiceovers, simple language and subtitles (see SisterWorks' videos for examples).

Challenge: Learning materials are tiring to read on screens.

Solutions include designing e-learning materials for online use and including a printer in the hub so text-heavy materials can be printed out.

Blended learning

A blended approach combines in-person and online, group and individual, and live and asynchronous methods. The precise combination of these different methods in an SCE programme will depend on participants' access to devices and internet at home, their ability to access training in the hubs, and the availability of tutors or mentors (whether volunteers or staff) to facilitate live online group sessions.

In an SCE context, in-person courses **in the hubs** allow women to meet others in person, benefit from group discussions and collaborative learning, take practical, hands-on courses, and focus on themselves outside of the home environment. They can also use the hub's computers/Internet for online learning. The **online learning** element enables women to participate at home without travelling to the hub. It can be **synchronous** (meeting online at the same time in live tutorials, webinars, discussions and chats) or **asynchronous** (studying materials online or offline at a time and location of their choosing).

For example, hands-on practical workshops on product creation (pot production, floristry, baking and cooking) may be combined with online courses on human development and business skills. Videos from online courses can be presented in group sessions to stimulate discussion and sharing experiences with follow-up study and interactions occurring online.

Online courses and quizzes can be used to consolidate or refresh knowledge after an in-person session.

Photo: UN Women/CVA

Interactions and support

One of the biggest challenges with online learning in SCE is to **create opportunities for interaction and relationship-building** that replicate 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. Support and opportunities for interaction must be built in.

To be effective, a fully online SCE programme requires a **mix of asynchronous and synchronous** learning, whereby participants can access the learning platform at any time but also meet with others in their group through regular online videoconferencing sessions. Providing **personalized support** through a mentor or tutor and giving women **opportunities to interact with each other** is essential in creating bonds and supportive networks and adds value to asynchronous learning.

As with hub-based SCE programmes, the key structural components of an online programme can be summarized as personalized support through tutoring, mentoring and peer networks, regular opportunities to interact, and contextualized learning materials.

Dividing large cohorts into **smaller groups** (20–25 women per group in Chile, for example) is necessary for relationships to develop and for the facilitator, tutor or mentor to offer personalized support. The relationships that build over time in smaller groups enable women to maintain motivation, feel connected, and gain and give support.

Regular live sessions are essential for a fully online SCE programme. They present opportunities to discuss the week's topic and develop bonds. To enhance the online experience:

- Give participants clear instructions in a tutorial video on how to connect, turn the camera and mute button on and off, etc.
- Have a technical support person present in the sessions so the tutor can concentrate on facilitating.
- Use music to create a relaxing environment.
- Use images and stories relevant to the women and simple, conversational language.
- Use the chat function to get women to share their thoughts and ideas.
- Use breakout rooms for conversations in smaller groups so that participants can get to know each other.
- Interaction can occur outside synchronous sessions through a WhatsApp group or a discussion forum. The advantage of these tools is that participants do not have to be online at a certain time to be able to contribute to the discussion. They enable contact to be maintained outside regular live sessions.

Photo: UN Women/Dzilam Méndez

Spaces that allow for interaction – be they videoconferencing sessions or WhatsApp chats – are also useful for monitoring programme effectiveness. A chat space with a direct line to participants provides an easy channel for gauging how a course is unfolding and its impact.

Refugee and migrant women are constrained by language, low digital literacy, a lack of family or community networks, and marginalization from mainstream society. They may be unable to attend in-person training because of caring responsibilities or lack of money for transport. They may have a mobile phone but no computer. As such, they need tools that:

- Are simple, easy to use, and intuitive.
- Work on smartphones.
- Navigate through images rather than text.
- Offer resources tailored to participant needs and language skills.
- Enable them to connect with other women.

SisterWorks in Australia could not find a tool that fit these requirements, so they developed an app. The app offers easy access to a library of high-quality, internally produced videos and live classes that are designed to create the same sense of community as in the physical hub. During the COVID-19 lockdowns, it was a lifeline for many women.

While developing a bespoke app is not always be an option, it is important to find a tool and blended learning formulation that meets as many of the above requirements as possible.

Learning platforms

The key requirements of a learning platform for SCE participants are that:

- It is designed for smartphones and can be accessed offline.
- It allows for the use of courses developed or commissioned by IPs/RPs, since this is the

contextualized, gender-responsive content that is most relevant and relatable for SCE women.
- It is easy to navigate for users with low digital literacy, with a simple, intuitive interface.
- Content is easy to access and digest through bite-sized learning.
- It allows for users to interact with each other.

At the time of writing (December 2022), SCE is building capacity in the use of the mobile-first microlearning app EdApp. Through an initiative called Educate All, established through a partnership between EdApp and UNITAR, access to the app, its library of courses, and authoring and management tools is offered free of charge to organizations in exchange for sharing of content through the EdApp public library.

EdApp courses can be accessed through the mobile app and through a browser on PCs. Lessons can be downloaded for offline use on the app. The authoring tools and templates enable the creation of bite-sized, interactive lessons by people who are not professional instructional designers.

EdApp features and functionality seem to be a good fit for the SCE programme. The Educate All initiative offers a sustainable way for IPs/RPs to reach more women with contextualized content they have developed or commissioned themselves.

> When designing a programme with an online component put the women you want to reach at the centre. This applies to the choice of learning platform and communication tools, and design of content and support systems. Start small with a pilot to show what works and what does not, and to allow for adjustments.

Roles and responsibilities

- **Implementing organizations (IPs/RPs)** are responsible for sourcing or developing content for beneficiaries. They are best placed to identify content gaps and the most effective ways 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 the country level** provides support and funding where necessary. It may have a coordination function to ensure optimal use of resources and avoid duplication. It may draw on the UN Women brand to open dialogue, establish partnerships with content providers, and facilitate partnerships between IPs/RPs and providers.
- **UN Women at the global level** provides technical support and advice in creating learning materials and using the platform, advising on quality assurance processes, helping resolve bugs and technical issues, and facilitating the drafting of agreements with content providers on the use of their content.

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

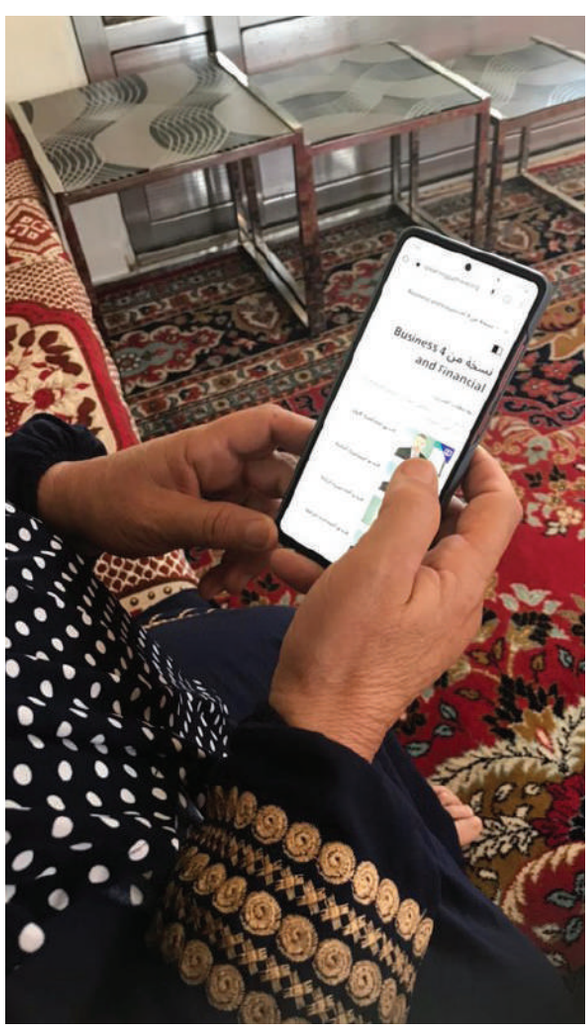

Photo: AWO/Suhaib Khamaiseh

E-learning tools in SCE

Below is a summary of the main tools and platforms used across the SCE programme.

Technology/tool	Examples of use
Zoom, Google Meet, Teams	• Live skills training, regular tutorials, social and wellbeing sessions. • Led by a facilitator or tutor but with interaction among participants.
WhatsApp	• Group chats in parallel with live sessions and asynchronous courses. • Enables women to interact, motivate and support each other; provides a space for strengthening peer relationships. • A familiar tool for women who own a phone. Groups can continue beyond the end of the programme. • Allows tutors/facilitators to contact women regularly but informally, to remind them of their activities and maintain their sense of belonging and motivation.
Private Facebook group	• For promoting learning events and building an online community of SCE participants and SCE support staff. A private, protected, safe space which only registered participants can join.
Kolibri	• Study of (mostly IP-created) learning material at any time, either in the hubs (Mexico, Jordan, Cameroon) or at home (Chile).
YouTube	• To host videos of SCE success stories that inspire and motivate. • To host recordings of live sessions for women to catch up/view again.
Phone	• To confirm participation in the programme and welcome participants. • To check in on a participant's wellbeing, issues they face and how to help, and motivate them to attend upcoming hub events or live sessions.
Email	• For sharing introductory information on the programme and activities.
SCE portal, mylearningpathway.org	• The main online source of information on SCE and SCE resources and gateway to a selection of SCE courses. • Offers users in each country a sample of course offerings, information on the national programme, and contact details of local partners.
Chile networking app	• Enables SCE participants, mentors and tutors to communicate with each other in multiple languages and to build networks. Launched in December 2022.
e-hub app (SisterWorks)	• Gives participants at SisterWorks easy access on their phones to very tailored resources and live classes. Resources also support learning of English.
Kolibri	• SCE's learning platform from 2019–2022.

Content development

Relevant online courses from **external providers and open educational resources** should be used where possible, but their suitability for SCE women and alignment with gender-transformative outcomes should be carefully assessed. Courses need to reflect the cultural, social and economic background of SCE participants, with imagery and examples they can relate to. Course content should also include a gender lens and be tailored for adult women who may not have completed their school education.

During SCE's pilot phase, the most successful resources have been those that IPs/RPs have **commissioned or created** themselves since they best understand the needs and priorities of the target audience. But developing content in-house requires staff time and capacity, so where resources allow, it is often best to engage local experts or organizations with learning design expertise to **adapt existing training materials for online delivery** or to work with subject matter experts to develop a course on a new topic.

The advantages of **in-house content development** are:

- The IP can **shape the product** according to their knowledge of participating women and maintain control of the process. This can lead to accessible, contextualized, friendly and engaging content.
- It can make **gathering feedback and making later adjustments** easier. Facilitators may be able to adapt learning materials for new cohorts or geographical areas, ensuring that materials reflect the reality of life for participants while avoiding the expense of developing new ones.
- 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 the skills of the IP/RP team.
- Learning materials that are of **imperfect quality** but feel more intimate and personal can be used as long as they are good enough to be accessible.

Wherever possible, consider **adapting existing open educational resources**, for example by integrating a gender perspective or simplifying, reducing, adding or contextualizing the content.

Personal development courses such as confidence building or gender and life planning may be where implementing staff add most value in content creation since they understand where the women are coming from in their thinking. Staff also know what they need in terms of confidence boosting and developing aspirations.

In Mexico, each course has a set of *cartas descriptivas*, concise notes showing the course topics, key ideas, and sources. For live sessions, they also give detailed timings, the resources and materials needed, and activities. They are essential not only for instructors but for online learners as they guide the latter towards the most appropriate courses for their needs.

It is important that SCE content should be **accessible** to everyone, including women with physical or learning disabilities. Tips on how to make documents, links, images and videos accessible are available in "Our Space is Your Space", but in almost all cases, the adjustments and workarounds that **people living with disabilities have to make mean they require more time to complete an online course**.

Resources such as checklists and more detailed guidance are available from the SCE global team that support content creation and ensure a minimum quality standard.

Photo: UN Women

10. SHARING AND LEARNING

Documentation of experiences and a robust evidence base are critical for demonstrating impact and for the continued funding and sustainability of SCE.

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. The cross-fertilization of ideas and sharing of results and stories is a key strength of the SCE programme.

Many of SCE's knowledge products can be found on the SCE YouTube channel:

- **Short testimonial videos** where SCE participants from across the six pilot countries describe what the programme has meant to them.
- **Virtual hub tours** that provide highly engaging insight into the different programmes and how they are organized.
- Recordings of **online conferences** among IPs/RPs that showcase their work.
- Recordings of **webinars** in which external experts talk about SCE-relevant issues.

The SCE e-portal at www.mylearningpathway.org will be re-launching in mid-2022 with access to these and a range of other global and country-specific knowledge products.

Photo: UN Women/Dzilam Méndez

SOURCES

Internal SCE documents

SCE Annual Report 2020

Narrative inputs from IPs/RPs into SCE quarterly reports

SCE Mid-term review 2020

Life planning survey among IPs/RPs, February 2021, part of the Open University participatory video project

Interviews with IPs/RPs including focus group discussions in October 2021

SCE IP conferences

IP roundtable on COVID-19 (Spanish interpretation), June 2021, https://youtu.be/I3C67LT747g

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/UflmTfM9ifU

SCE 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/mxG7H3hM3II, 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/CQkV6KnnzzI, 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/m1xWB7I-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

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.

A Safe Space to Learn, Connect and Thrive – the SCE Hub Handbook.

UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.

220 East 42nd Street
New York, New York 10017, USA

www.unwomen.org
www.facebook.com/unwomen
www.twitter.com/un_women
www.youtube.com/unwomen
www.flickr.com/unwomen