



Young ethnic minority women break job stereotypes

Tackling youth unemployment through TVET



Photo: Gretchen Robleto/TVET-SAY

Teen pregnancy limits the opportunities women have to develop or maintain literacy and job skills, restricting their options in life and compromising the their own and their children's futures.

"Now I have the chance to study and be able to provide a better future to my daughter"

Zoliang Pollack Cash, teen mom and TVET scholarship recipient

In a group of 20 students, 19-year-old Zoliang Pollack Cash does not go unnoticed. The Afro-Caribbean teen is one of just two female students in the Outboard Motor Repair Training Course.

Hailing from Bluefields, Zoliang is one of the first scholarship recipients from the Caribbean Coast through the Technical and Vocational Education and Training for At-risk Youth program.

When she received scholarship, the single mother of a 3-year-old girl was out-of-work and out-of-school. Her story was not unusual. Nicaragua has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in Latin America; 28 percent of women give birth before the age of 18, according to the United Nations Population Fund. The International Labour Organization finds that 250,000 Nicaraguan youth ages 15 to 24, about 19.5 percent, are neither studying nor working.

But with support from the project, Zoliang is charting a new path.

"Now I have the chance to study, get an education and be able to provide a better future to my daughter," says Zoliang,

She will complete an internship with a local marine transport company, *Transportes Wendelyn Vargas*, in Bluefields. The company is one of several private sector partners contributing to curriculum alignment of TVET institutions so they can better respond to private sector needs. Centro de Formacion y Desarrollo Integral is the TVET center leading the training, with support from the local marine transport enterprise.

Zoliang knows she is breaking ground for other women.

"I was motivated to enroll in the Outboard Motor Repair Training Course because men say that as a woman I cannot do this job. But as women, we must demonstrate that we have the capacity to do anything we aim to achieve," she says.

A TVET-SAY Gender Analysis found women an underrepresented in more than 50 percent of technical careers. Women report higher levels of education, but earn 55 percent compared to men in urban areas and 24 percent in rural areas. Women represent 70 percent of students in technical education for business sectors

and services; 25 percent for agriculture and forestry; and 10 percent for industry and construction.