

► Policy Brief

August 2023

► Gender responsive TVET and Skills Development systems: Progress, challenges, and policy options for women's economic empowerment

Key points

- Building positive attitudes, mindsets and perceptions towards women and girls by society to better prepare them for economic empowerment.
- Reform of laws, policies and strategies are significant for making the system gender responsive.
- Ensure access of women and girls in the available TVET services and skills system with a special focus on engage in non-traditional sectors.
- Strengthen mechanism to create enabling environment by addressing gender based- violence particularly sexual harassment in educational institutes and workplaces.
- Ensure inclusion of marginalized group by addressing the specific needs of women with disabilities and ethnic minorities.
- Promote private sectors' engagement in bridging gender gaps in the areas of financial support, infrastructure development, and mentorship programmes.

Background

The Project **Promoting Gender Responsive Enterprise Development and TVET Systems** aims to advance women's economic empowerment in Bangladesh through policy reforms, gendering and greening entrepreneurship promotion, TVET services, and skills development. With the funding support of the Government of Canada, it intends to further strengthen the capabilities of the Government of Bangladesh accelerate economic growth by addressing gender gaps in the labour force. The Directorate of Technical Education (DTE) under the Technical and Madrasah Division (TMED) of Ministry of Education (MoE) is the Project's nodal counterpart while the National Skills Development Authority (NSDA) and The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWCA) are among the key strategic collaborators.

Policy dialogue on achieving inclusion and gender equality in TVET and skills system for women’s economic empowerment

The policy dialogue was the kick-off event of series of forecasted policy discussions to be undertaken under the ProGRESS project. The policy dialogue aspires to spotlight the existing gender policy gaps in skills and TVET sectors and moving forward by engaging relevant State and non-State actors. The key findings and insights of the recently concluded analysis on “Gender and Social Inclusion Gaps in the Skills and TVET System” played the driving role to initiate the conversation while sharing the global perspectives and good practices by of ILO’s International Specialist on Skills and Employability shaped-up the policy talk.

The discussion

The discussion brought up various issues for promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment in TVET and skills development in Bangladesh by addressing policy and practice gaps. The participants from diverse sectors (Government, employers’ representatives, workers, NGOs, CSOs, UN agencies) shared their valuable insights. The highlights of the discussions include-

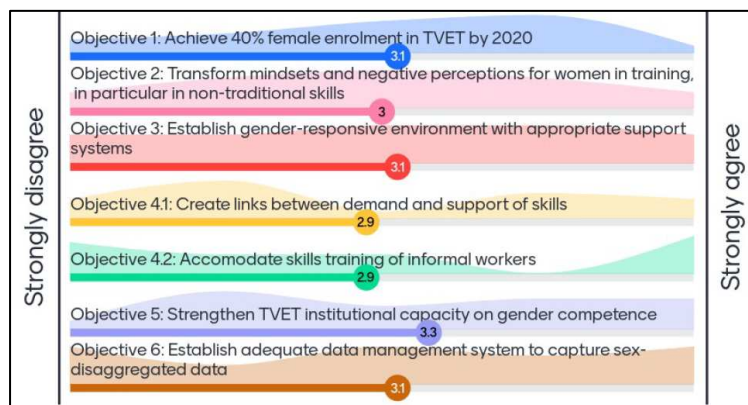
Key areas for policy focus

- Implementation challenges of attaining gender equality and social inclusion in TVET and the skills system

Despite gender-responsive policy frameworks and gender-based budgeting, gender disparities persist in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) enrolment. There is also low female representation in diploma programmes and a shortage of female instructors and principals in TVET institutions. Occupational segregation confines women to lower-paying and lower-status jobs.

- Effective measures to support women and girls in TVET and skills development

Participants emphasized the need for proactive measures to rectify gender imbalances in skills development and job opportunities. They suggested addressing these challenges through inclusive policy initiatives and strategic frameworks designed to promote gender equality in TVET and employment. Regarding the progress of existing gender strategy in TVET system, participants opinions are reflected in chart.



How satisfied are you with progress on Bangladesh’s strategy on gender in TVET/skills development?

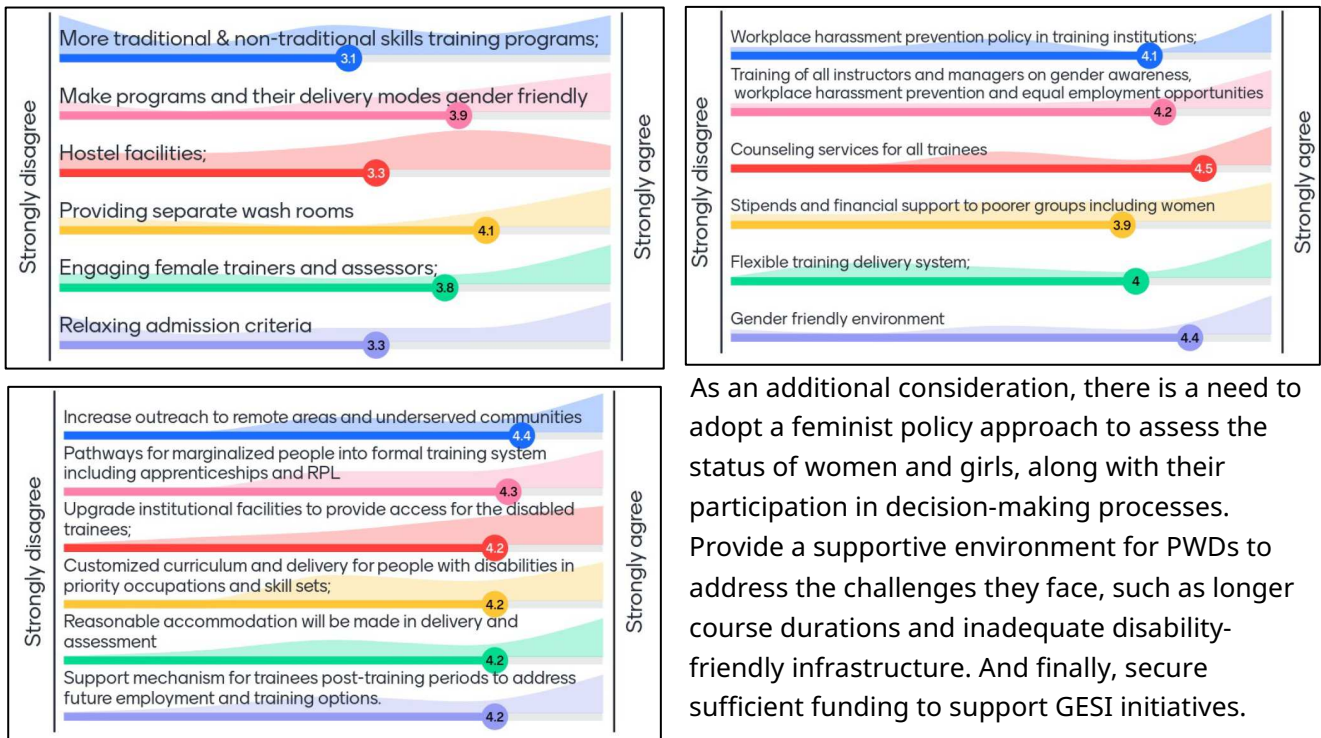
- Measures to be undertaken by employers’ and workers’ associations to address gender gaps in the workplace

Participants focused on the involvement of private sectors, i.e., employers and workers associations, to bridge gender gaps in industrial areas. They discussed providing competency-based training to meet market demands, particularly in fields like the care economy, IT-based training, automation, and life skills.

► Needs in existing structures, institutional capacity, systems, support mechanisms, and tools to promote and operationalize GESI in TVET and skills system

Participants pointed at the need to make the skills development ecosystem more inclusive, which requires revision of TVET and skills policies to make them relevant to the current reality, considering the digital age and evolving Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). Education of girls in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) need to be given attention. Incorporate inclusive classrooms within TVET institutes and integrate the issues of persons with disabilities (PWDs) into the TVET curriculum. Address the higher costs of girls' training compared to boys' training by conducting thorough gender assessments to select appropriate training locations and allocating more government funding to address specific gender needs. Additionally, there is a need to launch a nationwide campaign to promote gender equality and change mindsets and attitudes towards girls' and women's rights and economic potential. Deliberate and concerted effort must be undertaken to address sexual harassment at TVET institutes and employment sectors.

Which inclusion measure from the 2022 National Skills Development Policy should be prioritized in your view?



As an additional consideration, there is a need to adopt a feminist policy approach to assess the status of women and girls, along with their participation in decision-making processes. Provide a supportive environment for PWDs to address the challenges they face, such as longer course durations and inadequate disability-friendly infrastructure. And finally, secure sufficient funding to support GESI initiatives.

► Measures to support women and girls to be economically empowered and transition to formal, market-oriented, and higher-value jobs

Along with the policy reform, integration of gender and inclusion indicators into government monitoring tools was given high importance as having these indicators would facilitate the measurement of progress against them using various sources of information. To support the school to work transition, there is a need to develop a national employment portal for labor market information and establish effective connections with local employers.

The discussants also focused on the UN system opportunities to recruit UN Volunteers (UNVs), by offering a valuable chance to nurture and support them in developing skills within a professional ecosystem. In addition, adopting apprenticeship tools by government produced by the ILO to enhance skills development and gender equality in TVET was significantly highlighted.

Policy concerns and recommendations

Areas of Concerns	Recommendations
Finance and budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► increase budgetary allocation to support women's participation in TVET programmes. ► Enhance private sectors engagement in bridging gender gaps in the areas of financial support, infrastructure development, and mentorship programmes.
Lack of gender responsive policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Strengthen national labor and other relevant policies to bridge the gender gap and promote gender equality in the workplace ► Conduct regular policy reviews and revision to align with current realities and adapt to changing contexts and market demands.
Lack of inclusive approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Establish inclusive classrooms and infrastructure to ensure accessibility for the person with disabilities. ► Consider the needs of young people, particularly those in remote areas and ensuring that no one is left behind.
Poor awareness and sensitization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Conduct and maintain nationwide campaign on gender equality to increase awareness and changing perceptions and mindset shifting about girls' economic potential. ► More efforts to disseminate information about suitable training opportunities to women and girls. ► Encourage and engaging women in non-traditional roles. ► Enhance awareness on prevention of gender based violence particularly sexual harassment in the TVET institutes and employment sectors.
Lack of gender responsive TVET system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Integrate gender and inclusion indicators into government monitoring tools ► Adopt apprenticeship tools produced by the ILO to enhance skills development and gender equality in TVET. ► Establish of a national employment portal focused on labor market information. ► Form a functioning the sexual harassment prevention committee in TVET institutions and workplaces.
Limited consideration on current market demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Integrate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in TVET to make education relevant to the digital age and 4IR.

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