

# Skills Training and Employment Promotion for Women Workers in Bangladesh (ADVANTAGE)

## Background

Bangladesh has registered positive economic growth for much of the past decade, yet poverty remains widespread as the country is confronted with major labour market challenges. There is a high prevalence of low-income and informal employment, while wage employment constitutes a small part of the labour market. Moreover, the labour market is characterised by a strong correlation between the lack of skills development opportunities, low skill status of workers, low productivity and low earnings of both formal and informal sector workers, and a high rate of gender inequality among the workforces. Increasing the skills of the workers and overcoming gender imbalances will play a vital role in the future development of the country. Bangladeshi women face significant structural barriers to participate in the income generation workforce. Compared to men, they are less likely to engage in skills development and more likely to be unemployed. These disparities are rooted in systemic challenges, including gender stereotypes, limited job opportunities, occupational inequality, and the heavy burden of domestic and caregiving responsibilities. Additionally, women often lack access to essential networks, face restrictive social norms, and operate within an environment devoid of supportive gender policies and infrastructure. However, the participation of women in skills development measures and in the labour market is considered as key to economic development. This can be achieved by enhancing women's employment opportunities, and their economic and social empowerment through skills programs and employment promotion.

## Objective

The project 'Skills Training and Employment Promotion for Women Workers in Bangladesh' (ADVANTAGE) works to gear selected elements of the skill development system in Bangladesh more towards the needs of young and disadvantaged women by improving access to short-term trainings to qualify them for employment. The target group of ADVANTAGE are women from age 14 to 35 with an education up to grade 10, as well as other vulnerable groups (e.g. Hijra and Persons with Disabilities) with the project implementing its measures in the Dhaka division.

Project name	Skills Training and Employment Promotion for Women Workers in Bangladesh (ADVANTAGE)
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Commissioned value	8 million Euro
Project region	Dhaka Division, Bangladesh
Partner ministry	Chief Advisor's Office (CAO)
Implementing agency	National Skills Development Authority (NSDA)
SDG contribution	No Poverty (SDG 1), Quality Education (SDG 4), Gender Equality (SDG 5), Decent Work and Economic growth (SDG 8), Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10)
Duration	April 2024 to March 2027





## Approach

ADVANTAGE builds capacities of skills training providers to implement gender responsive and labour market-oriented trainings. In addition, it focusses on women empowerment, promotes gender transformation and awareness on gender equality. The project partners with the National Skill Development Authority (NSDA) to design and develop inclusive gender responsive and transformative strategies, innovative approaches and guidelines. The project also works with local civil society to create awareness for gender equality and toward changing stereotypes regarding skills and labour market participation.

ADVANTAGE further cooperates with selected skills training providers Dhaka division area, specialist ministries with qualification offers as well as private sector, NGO's and international partners.

## Areas of intervention

### 1. Gender-responsive orientation of the National Skills Development Authority

The needs of young and disadvantaged women as well as other vulnerable groups (e.g. Hijra and Persons with Disabilities) are incorporated into the NSDA's management instruments and products for competency-based training, NSDA Action Plan and the CBTA-based standards, curricula, teaching and learning materials in conjunction with the development of a gender strategy.

### 2. Gender-transformative changes in training and employment

Gender-transformative changes are initiated to enhance female participation in training and employment. A change in the per-

spective of social actors such as employers and women themselves leads to young and disadvantaged women taking part in training courses more often and in developing skills that match labour market needs thus enhancing their employability.

### 3. Innovative approaches for gender-responsive trainings

Selected skill training providers are provided with an improved range of innovative approaches for gender-responsive, competency-based training measures, increasing the focus of training to the needs of young and disadvantaged women and other vulnerable groups and increasing the overall scope of gender-responsive training offers.

### 4. Creation of institutional conditions to implement innovative trainings

Selected skill training providers improve staff capacities and institutional conditions for the implementation of innovative competency-based training courses. Institutions that have an appropriate learning environment are better able to offer competency-based training courses for young, disadvantaged women.

## Expected results

Young and disadvantaged women and other vulnerable groups are empowered to pursue career opportunities through skill development and participate equally in the labour market. Their environment (family, employers, skills training providers) support women to pursue careers.

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