



## Gender, Vocational Training and Employment

### Report of a study



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## Background

In the recent past, efforts have been accelerated in the education sector in Bangladesh to promote equal opportunities for girls and boys. The country is on track to achieve Goal no.3 and has already achieved Goal no. 2 of the Millennium Development Goals before its deadline in 2015.<sup>1</sup> It has made remarkable progress in achieving gender parity, in primary and secondary level education.<sup>2</sup> But the imbalance between women and men in terms of participation in vocational training, employment in technical professions, and overall employment in the middle to higher level jobs in the workplace is still pervasive in Bangladesh.

In a meeting of GWAPB<sup>3</sup> with the team of the Urban Dredging Demonstration Project (UDDP), it was indicated that they did not find any women qualified to be trained as dredging machine operators in Dhaka Water and Sanitation Authority (DWASA) or in the UDDP. Against this backdrop, a decision was made by GWAPB and UDDP to conduct a short study on **Gender, Vocational Training and Employment** to find out more about why women’s participation in vocational trainings like dredging machine operation is so low, and how to overcome the situation.



This study will also focus on girls and women who dare to take a stand against gender stereotypes and related discourses about men and women’s work, to participate in “typical male” vocations and professions.

Not in all jobs and professions women and men have to be equally represented, but both have the right and need to be free to choose the education and the work they like. Furthermore, if relatively well-paid jobs are available, these should be open to all who are qualified, both women and men.

This study was undertaken between May and July 2014.

## Aim of this study

<sup>1</sup> The **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** are eight international development goals that were established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000, following the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. **Millennium Development Goal 2** refers to ‘Achieve Universal Primary Education’ by ensuring a complete and full course of primary schooling for boys and girls children alike while MDG Goal 3 suggests to ‘Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women’ through eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, and in all levels of education and other element of women’s social, economic and political participation. ‘Bangladesh continues to be a role model in MDG achievement’: *MDG Bangladesh Progress Report 2013*, <http://www.bd.undp.org/content/bangladesh/en/home/presscenter/articles/2014/09/07/>

<sup>2</sup> *Enrolment of girls in primary, secondary and tertiary level education is 93%, 51% and 11% while men’s enrolment is 90%, 44% and 16% in the respective level of education. The Global Gender Gap Report 2014: <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/economies/>*

<sup>3</sup> Gender and Water Programme Bangladesh (GWAPB) is to support EKN supported water programmes, civil society, water professionals and government organizations in Bangladesh to adopt and implement a gender mainstreaming strategy in water related policies and practices for bringing positive impacts on the lives of poor women and men. This programme does work in 5 areas of outputs/ components such as: collaboration, Capacity building, knowledge Development, Communication, Monitoring. The study contributes to component 3 of the programme.

The purpose of this study is, to assess the male and female students and their teachers’ knowledge, attitude, and perception of women’s participation in technical vocational training and in technical professions. It is intended to use the study findings to increase the awareness among vocational training centre faculties, students, their parents, and the water related organisations, of the relevance of integrating a gender-sensitive approach in the information dissemination by faculties, admission and selection procedures of students, teaching methods, placement facilities, and recruitment by organisations.

Freedom of choice in education is part of economic as well as of social empowerment.

**Discussion areas**

The main discussion areas of Key informant Interviews (KII)<sup>4</sup>, Focus Group Discussions (FGD)<sup>5</sup> and Semi Structured Interviews (SSI)<sup>6</sup> with the male and female students and the Training Centre’s staff were as follows:

- Why are female students reluctant or not interested in vocational training and in the professions related to machine-operated work?
- What are the job opportunities for women trainees? What are the obstacles they face in exploring technical jobs or machine-operated work?
- How do the male and female students perceive the potential of dredging machine operation training for female students of the centres?



Some questions for the Semi Structured Interview and Focus Group Discussion for the male and female students were formulated; most of them were open ended, to allow respondents to think and voice their opinions and ideas freely and independently. (See annex - 2)

**Study area and Samples**

We selected student respondents for this study from four technical training centres, all of whom had completed Grade 8-10 secondary education prior to being enrolled in different technical training courses of these Centres. Three government-run technical training centres and one privately owned centre within Dhaka City were chosen for this study being prior known to us and by building rapport afresh with them. The training centres were chosen within the city centre for frequent contact with them during

<sup>4</sup> Key informant interviews were face-to-face and resembled a conversation among colleagues of the Training Centres allowing for a free flow of ideas and information. Interviews were simple, quick and affordable, which makes their use inevitable in evaluations. Interviews were conducted with key individuals of the Technical Training Centres. It provided with detailed, qualitative information about impressions, experiences and opinions towards women engagement in Technical professions. We conducted the interviews in person or in groups either informal or more formally structured

<sup>5</sup> It provided an insight into how a group thinks about the issue, their opinions and ideas, the inconsistencies and variation that exists in terms of beliefs and their experiences and practices. The group of girls participants was guided by two moderators or facilitators who introduced topics for discussion and helped the groups to participate in a lively and natural discussion amongst them.

<sup>6</sup> A list of questions in a particular order was made to answer by the male and female students of the centres. Open ended questions of it helped the respondents to make true opinions, allowed informants the freedom to express their views in their own terms and often proceeded by observation, informal and unstructured interviewing them.

conduction of the study when needed. Also we selected a privately owned centre to understand if there were any differences in opinions between the students and teachers of government and privately owned centres about women in technical training and professions. Furthermore we try to gain understanding in the kind of links that are established between the students and the employers.

The names of the centres are as follows: Bangladesh-German Technical Training Centre (BGTTTC), Bangladesh- Korean Technical Training Centre (B-KTTC), Sheikh Fazilatunnessa Mujib Women Technical training Centre, and Shaymoli Technical Training School (privately owned).

These vocational Training Centres are mainly directed by the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET)<sup>7</sup>, and the courses and the certificates they provide are certified and awarded by the Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB)<sup>8</sup>. The privately owned institutions are in general approved by the government, and they offer and follow the same courses and curriculum as government run centres do. The administration and management of the privately owned centres are a little different from the government institutions. Some members of the committee of private institutes come from the staff of BTEB. The system of enrolment of the students and recruitment of the teachers and instructors are not very different from the government-run centres. However, while there are limited seats for the students in government institutes (maximum 1000 per year), the private institutes have more seats available for students. The Students of the private institutes also pay higher tuition fees than students of the Government institutes.

A total of 76 respondents were selected from the above technical training centres for interview and discussion. Out of 76 respondents, there were 62 students from different vocational courses of these centres (38 of them were female and 28 were male), and 14 principals, teachers and other instructors (5 of whom were female). The student respondents participated in the semi-structured interviews (SSI) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD), while the teachers and instructors participated in Key Informant Interviews (KII), and an open discussion.



### ***Methods Used***

Different methods were used for getting information about the female student's participation in Technical Training Centres and the barriers they usually face to grow as technical professionals after their training. These methods included both secondary and primary data collection, including:

- Undertaking a desk review of existing major documents and publications of the 4 technical training centres to get information about the Centres' objectives, details about the courses they offer to students, and about the enrolment of the students, their performance etc.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) of the Government is to facilitate the creation of a skilled labour force for both domestic and international market through training institutions and by working with foreign employers and Recruiting Agents. BMET processes the foreign demands for the recruitment of employees while simultaneously controlling and regulating emigration clearance for overseas employment.

<sup>8</sup> Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) is to organize, supervises, regulate, control and develop technical and vocational education courses and curriculum for different government and private owned training centres.

<sup>9</sup> Apart from brochures and publications of the Technical Centres, the following articles were used:

- Conducting semi structured interviews with the male and female students of the Centres, using a questionnaire, asking about their thoughts and opinions about the barriers they had to face to choose and follow vocational training as subject of study, what were their motivations, the job potentials of these professional training, and the opportunities and restrictions they faced when applying for jobs and being recruited. Also they were asked particular questions that if given training, would qualified women take Dredging Machine Operator as a profession?
  
- Conducting KII (questionnaire is attached in Annex 1) with the teaching faculty and management of the Training Centres (such as the Principal, vice principal, vocational training instructors, and other teachers of both government and privately owned. This mainly provided us with information about the centre's organizational structure, systems and procedures of student's enrolment, teacher's recruitment, students flow and the performance, also their opinions and ideas about women's lower participation in vocational training and thus in professions, whether they get involved in making liaisons and linking students with companies who offer potential job opportunities for them etc.
  
- Organizing FGD with some female students from BGTTTC and BKTTC to get more in-depth information about their lives, attitude to work, and opportunities and constraints they usually face in following a professional training and career, particularly what would and would not motivate them in taking dredging machine operation as a profession.

### ***Some information about the Technical Training Centres***

#### ***Bangladesh-German Technical Training Centre (BGTTTC)***

offers employment oriented vocational training to male and female students with and without secondary school certificates (SSC) from general education. It offers about thirty three modular courses which last for 2 to 6 months, especially designed for students who are planning to go abroad for employment. There are also fifteen other long vocational training courses available to SSC students, which last for two years. A moderate number of female instructors (20%) are working in this Centre, giving different vocational trainings. Although there is no restriction for male and female students to enrol in particular courses separately, except the House Keeping course (this is only open to females students), the girls mostly prefer trades like dress making, computer application and house-keeping. Very few girls are enrolled in heavy machine- oriented trades. Only 100 female students were enrolled in different S.S.C vocational



*Key Informant interview was conducted with the Principal and vice Principal of German Technical Training Centre*

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- Aesha Siddika,(2010). *Evaluation of Technical and Vocation Education and Training program for S.S.C vocational under the Circumstance of Food Processing and preservation*. Bangladesh Res. Pub. j 3(4): 1139-1151. Retrieve from <http://www.bdresearchpublications.com/admin/journal/upload/09119/09119.pdf>
  
  - Dr. Marianne Braig. (1997). *Gender Sensitive Vocational Education and training*. Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH.

training and modular (short) courses out of approximately 1000 students in the centre. In GTTC we conducted one SSI with 10 students (5 male students from electrical, refrigerator and automobile training courses, and 5 female students from garments and computer training courses), and one KII with 4 teachers and instructors of the centre (the principal, vice principal two other teachers from Electrical and Garments and Dressmaking trade).

**Bangladesh - Korea Technical Training Centre (B-KTTC)** offers one year skill certificate course in some



*Students from Bangladesh Korean Technical Training Center engage in a discussion on gender equality and women empowerment with the facilitator*

technical trades such as: Automobile, Electrical, Mechanical, and Civil Construction. The centre was established to enhance the vocational training capacity of young people of Bangladesh, to produce a highly skilled manpower and promote the export of a highly skilled workforce. The centre also offers about 25 modular courses (of 2 to 6 months duration) to address the domestic unemployment situation, and to meet the demands in present labour market at home and abroad. For some courses such as Electrical, Civil construction and AutoCAD, they must take SSC pass

students, while eighth grade pass is considered enough for enrolment to some trades like driving, welding etc. Like in BGTTTC, there are also very few female students in this centre - about 100 out of 1000 students. They are enrolled in different trades like Housekeeping, Garments and Tailoring, and Computer Application, in either day or evening shifts. Certain courses, like Electrical and Civil Construction are not popular among female students - We did SSI with 9 male students from Electrical department and got only one girl from the course on Auto mobile. We also conducted a FGD with 8 male and female students from different training courses run by this centre. Three chief instructors, two from Electrical and another from Automobile department were interviewed as key informants. They appeared to have a good understanding of gender concepts which was shown when the facilitator of GWAPB talked about gender and vocational training, they were clear, gave relevant additions and seemed eager to integrate gender in this centre as much as possible. They told about how the centres are not very gender sensitive in their work and behaviour and how they try to minimize this gender discrimination of the other instructors.

**The Teacher who is a Gender Champion in her life**



*Umme Habiba engages in hands on training for the students in a practical class*

*Umme Habiba, the Chief Instructor of Electrical trade, is a positive example for female students of the centre. She makes an effort to promote admission of female students in different technical trades, being a member of the selection and admission process of the centre. She encourages female students and their parents when they first come to the centre to collect admission forms and does her best to prevent female students from dropping out of different trades. She is now putting effort into promoting admission of more female students in her Electrical trade, which usually has very few female students. She also personally*

*maintains liaison with owners of some companies in order to send her students for jobs there. This year she was able to get 3 women students admitted in the Automobile Trade course.*

*Like in professional life, she steps ahead equally to improving lives of family members as well. She has two daughters who are brought up by their mother as self-reliant and self-respecting personalities. Moreover she also advised two of her house helps to enrol in some of the trades in this centre. In both public and private life she deals with her colleagues and family members equitably, without gender discrimination. She added that, she owes her success in the technical profession to the encouragement by her father as well as her husband (who is also the chief instructor of Automobile trade of this centre).*

**Fazilatunnessa Mujib Women Technical training Centre** is exclusively a centre for female students, established in 2001 in Mirpur, Dhaka to create more opportunities for female students to be trained and employed in technical professions. This Centre offers SSC vocational training courses of 2 years duration, and short trade courses which range from 21 days to 6 months. The enrolment capacity of the centre is approximately 10,000 trainees, which is much more than the two others centres mentioned in the previous section. Being a women’s-only training centre, they offer trade courses like Computer Operation, Garments manufacturing General Electronics Architectural Drafting with AutoCAD, Dying Printing & Block Batik, House Keeping, Driving etc. For the SSI, we got 10 female students, 5 from General



Electronics and 5 students from Architectural Drafting with AutoCAD. According to the statistics of the brochure of the Center, the employment rate in every year is about 75% - 90% from this centre.



**Shaymoli Technical Training School** is a privately owned technical centre with some branches in different districts all over the country. It was established in 1989 to fulfil the high demand for technical education among young students in the country. Getting admission and continuing studies in a private owned institute is quite expensive. The students of this institute usually come from wealthier families as they have to pay a handsome amount of money for admission and tuition fees. However, some poor but good students of this centre get government scholarship with the cooperation of World Bank, and they provide scholarship to 100% female students to encourage them for being attracted and retained in vocational training courses. Therefore, the female students of this school are provided with the opportunity to study without tuition fees. The centre presently has about 4000 students in different trades including only 100 female students altogether. Secure facilities and separate arrangements for male and female student’s accommodation in their own buildings is also available here. Along with building up a group of competent professionals, this centre also makes effort to place their students in good organisations and firms. As students of this centre have paid a lot for their education here, they could be more committed to do well in their study.

We conducted SSI and discussion with 12 students from two different trades (of which 5 were female students from Textile Engineering and Garments Design and Dress Making Technology). Also Key Informant Interviews (KII) and a discussion were held with 6 teachers/instructors from the Textile Technology and Marine Engineering departments, of which there was no female instructor who joined the interview and discussion. Like other government centres, Shaymoli technical school also has very few female instructors in different trades for example: there was no female teacher or instructor in the Textile Technology and Marine Engineering Departments of this centre.



*Instructors from different trades discuss about different aspects of low level of women involvement in technical education with the facilitator from GWAPB*

## Major Findings

When visiting the UDDP site where Sjoerd de Vries, the Dutch dredging teacher demonstrates how to work with the modern electric dredger, we asked him if he thought women could do this work. He said: *“Of course women can do this because the heavy work is done electrically and she only needs to push a button to operate it”*.



## Center Staff's influence on student enrolment and attendance of courses

Either during form collection or admission, the teachers and instructors who are involved in this process do not have any procedure for encouraging female students to be enrolled in certain technical<sup>10</sup> or heavy machine driven trades. This is left to the personal choices of the applicants. The vice principal of BGTTC informed us that he sometimes found some girls enrolled in General electronics, Air condition, and Refrigerator courses, but they dropped out of those trades as soon as they found it difficult for them to handle and manage. He tried to stop the drop out of some of the female students who were already in those training/ courses. *Some of the instructors in BKTTC informed us that there were some instructors and teachers who had a harsh attitude towards female students' enrolment in technical education and*

<sup>10</sup> Automobile, Electronics, Civil engineering, Refrigeration and Air-conditioning, Plumbing and Pipe fitting, Ship building and marine engineering – are considered heavy mechanical or machine driven trades among the students

training. Often these men were not friendly toward their female colleagues either. But some male staff are very friendly and believed in gender sensitive attitudes and behaviour in the centres- they added.

According to the instructors from the privately owned institute: *“in spite of ensuring highest safety and security and free education for female students, we do not get many female students in technical courses, except in Computer Technology and Architectural Technology which they think require less movement outside of workplace.* Women also have the ability to do any machine driven work like men, however negative perception of their family and society to women doing this work, limits their choice in taking up these vocations. Despite these constraints, the teachers and instructors of the privately-run centre found a more modern attitude of the students as compared to students in government-run centres, towards women in Technical profession. Replying to the question why there is a difference, the chief Instructor of Textile Engineering Technology said that, *“Students of this centre come from wealthier families who have more exposure to information technology and digital media such as internet, cable tv, computer, and mobile phone”.* He thought the knowledge the students gather from use of computer and internet can make them more liberal and give rise to more modern attitudes. He added that *“therefore, technology may shape students behaviour, ideas, attitude throughout their lives.”*

### **Career opportunities from the courses**

In all the vocational training centres, garments and dress making trades are mostly attended by female trainees (around 90%), while ‘Housekeeping trade is only for girls’ according to the Government instruction. Girls are already aware that in many garments factories, more than 80% of the workers are women, thus they feel guaranteed and ensured of jobs in garment factories, tailoring shops, or even working from home. *Some of the teachers said that female students in their centres were mostly sincere, modest, and enthusiastic but required some extra organizational support in areas like safety and security.* They added, *‘also male mentoring was considered important to make an enabling environment for female students’ career growth’.*



The chief instructor of Electrical trade in BKTTC said from her experiences that *‘even after completing the training in electrical trade, some female students don’t like to work in an electronics factory or workshop as they were afraid of work-related accidents with electrical machines.* Also, family resistance is a major reason why young women are not being enrolled in heavy machine driven trades, because *parents do not like to see their girl child as a technician or mechanic.* Although these trades do not always require heavy and hard labour, and some of them are fully automated now, there is still lack of interest of girls and their parents to enrol in technical trades.

Teachers from the private owned institute also expressed their feelings about the low number of female students in the technical training centres. Female students themselves think of their future work and earning too, thus want quick result of their learning and training and getting a job soon. They are very much conscious about what job and employment would give them a good salary, life security and comfort. Parents think their daughters are better off continuing their academic study rather than graduating from technical schools as the latter *will not be seen as an attractive quality by men, when they are trying to arrange their daughter’s marriage.* They also mentioned, for example: the female

students who did Textile engineering diploma and training, were reluctant to work in wet and dyeing sections of textile mills or factories, as they thought it to be an unhealthy environment<sup>11</sup>.

### Women-friendly facilities in the Centres

The Vocational Training Centre authorities were asked about what other facilities they had provided to attract more female students to these centres. The centres have separate hostel facilities for girls and boys, but the arrangements for female students are limited and smaller than those of boys in government run institutes, considering the small number of female students who enrol every year in these centres. But the privately owned institute was found always ready with safe and secure accommodation for female students in their own buildings, though they needed to pay for it. There is no provision of crèche facilities for babies and children, so that restricts enrolment of married girls in these centres. This means that a large number of young women cannot enrol in these centres, as more than 50% of girls are married before they are 18. The instructors of the centres argued that they did not support having crèche facilities, as centres do not want to encourage early marriage through creating such kind of facilities in the centres. One woman instructor from BKTTC also added that even the number and maintenance of washrooms for female students and staff in the centres were not satisfactory. The government run Technical centres did not have any system or procedures to take care of dealing with gender-based violence and sexual harassment and intimidation issues that occurred on campus. However, the arrangement and management of this in the privately owned institute was far better than government run institutes: The Shyamoli Technical Training Centre has a policy against sexual harassment, and a facility where students know where to go with their complaints.

The authorities of the centres were also asked if they offered physical education and sports as co-curricular activities in their centres. In all of the centres (both government and private), they have an irregular arrangement of sports and games (both indoor and outdoor) for the students, but not as co-curricular activities. Students sometime do it for refreshment. Female students' participation in sports and games is very low. The chief Instructor of textile technology from the privately owned Institute added that this is not unsurprising, as when there are very few female students in technical education, how could we expect their larger participation in sports and games?

### Poppy: A girl who steps ahead



Poppy posed for a photograph when she was working in the Automobile Workshop in Bangladesh Korean Technical Training Centre (BKTTC), Mirpur, Dhaka

Poppy, is the lone girl student in the Automobile trade of Bangladesh Korean Technical Training centre. Hardly any girl student is enrolled in this trade each year. Among 4 brothers and sisters, only she came to learn this machine driven trade with a determination that she would do a related job in a big automobile company, or would try by herself to start a car servicing workshop after her training. She faced constant discouragement from her family and neighbours to apply for admission in a Vocational training Centre. They used to say, "How could a girl possibly work in an automobile workshop?" Despite this, Poppy was determined and soon mastered the skill of repairing cars and other automobile vehicles

through her training in this centre. A diligent and hardworking student, Poppy did 8 weeks internship with Navana car servicing Centre and by this time graduated from the centre with good results with all other male

<sup>11</sup> This is an interesting finding in relation to GWAPB's other study in Gender in Wet Units in Textile Factories, in collaboration with the PaCT project.

classmates. According to Poppy “I was able to complete my training with the cooperation of my teachers, instructors and even my other male classmates, who never demoralized me. Rather, they encouraged me a lot. In fact they trained and helped me to think of myself as an independent and capable individual in the world of male dominated car servicing work” Poppy eventually proved that she is skilled, committed and dared to break down the socio-cultural barriers in traditional society, and empowered herself to lift herself out of poverty. The lesson is that women who use their opportunities and create space for themselves can come a long way.

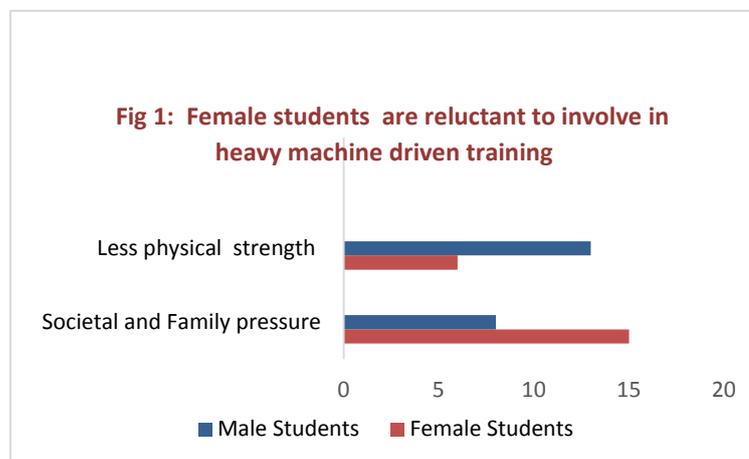
**Internship and Recruitment services liaison by the Centres**

Among the 4 Training Centres included in this study only Sheikh Fazilatunnessa Mujib Women Technical Training Centre and Shyamoli Technical School, have any tracking system through which they can get information on post-study career paths of their students (how many got a job and what other students were doing after finishing their courses here etc.). Most of the students in these centres come from poor and middle class families, and the centres found in them immense interest to be employed and support themselves and their family. However, in reality, the centres are not very active in making linkages and connecting the students with the job market and different companies. Sometimes they receive offers and opportunities from foreign companies and recruitment agencies (particularly from the Middle East) requesting trainees of some specific trades (e.g Housekeeping). In most of the cases the students enrol with a hope that the centre (institute) would arrange jobs for them or at least link them with the companies. The Vice Principal of GTTC said that, “last year, Navana (a big automobile company in Bangladesh) sent demand for Automobile trainees, and we could manage to send 4 of our students to them. On the other hand, for Garments and Fashion design trade, Bangladesh garments manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) several times made commitments to us but have not honoured their commitment yet.” The Principal of the centre added, ‘ however, after finishing their training here they get jobs in the Middle East such as Qatar, Kuwait etc. and in India, though we do not have a tracking system of how many of them got jobs and how many were unemployed’. Shyamoli Technical School has a ‘Placement Cell’ through which they create opportunities for students to visit different industries and provide industry based training before making linkages with them. Industry based training can help the students to gather knowledge about their work environment and gain capacity to work in an environment of industries and factories.



**Differences in opinions between male and female students, even between students of government and privately owned technical centres**

During Semi-structured interviews with the students of BGTTTC, male students interrupted one another or helped each other in answering the questions, resulting in some similarities in their answers. But there were little



differences in responses to some questions between male and female students of the Centres. Answering to the question of why girls are reluctant to enrol in machine driven work and do not like to do related jobs, male and female respondents reacted a little differently. Female student's answers were more revealing of family's unwillingness to encourage them to enrol in these courses, and work pressure on them at home. Their answers included: *lack of family support, post marriage demand on them to look after their children and the family, dislike for the environment of workplace, being busy in household chores, and lack of prior interest and skill in technical matters* etc. Some of them also added that 'these are very much 'men's Jobs. 9 female students (out of 21) mentioned physical strength as being an important requirement to do these jobs.' they also mentioned that some women think "vocational training centres are very good only for boys" and are reluctant to get admission in vocational Training Centres. In answering to the same question, most of the male students responded that girls are physically weak to work in such kind of trades, while boys have strong bodies with good muscles, and that is why this kind of work does not suit women's health and physical strength. For example: girls can make a slab sitting in one place but they cannot carry it" (see fig: 1). "Besides, in reality boys are more knowledgeable and skilled than girls in every issue."- opined most of the boys in the interviews. Male students from Shyamoli Technical School added that "female students themselves are mentally too weak to take decisions about technical education, and that their family put restrictions on their mobility from village to town mostly thinking about their safety, security of accommodation and staying alone etc. In addition, parents are reluctant to spend money on their daughter's education." They reported, one female student was admitted in Marine Engineering Technology last year, but she left this trade as soon as she got married.

Responding to the question of why women do not find a job after completing vocational training as easily as men do, most of the male and female students said that in general for women it is difficult to get or manage jobs in a male dominated labour market. They mentioned a number of socio-cultural barriers and some practical reasons too. The practical reasons they mentioned are as follows:

- Women do not know how to find or explore job opportunities,
- Women do not have as good access as men do, to relevant information on vocational courses and related job opportunities,
- Women get the job, but due to an unfriendly environment, they feel forced to leave again
- Sometimes women give up trying for a job when they think it may be heavy work etc.

The courses which the Vocational Training centres offer are considered men's jobs or work by most of the students of the BGTTC and BKTTC centres. The courses they mentioned as men's trades are as follows: Automotive, Civil Construction, Welding and fabrication, General mechanics, Plumbing and Pipe fitting, General Electrical, ship Building, Marine engineering etc. Only one out of 6 girl respondents from BGTTC and BKTTC, expressed her willingness to take such work or profession as she was already a student of Automobile trade in BKTTC. The other 5 respondents said 'it's not possible for the girls as they do not have related knowledge and skills' (see the table: 1). All the boy respondents from those two centres said that as they were men and also had these skills, they must be able to take up that profession.

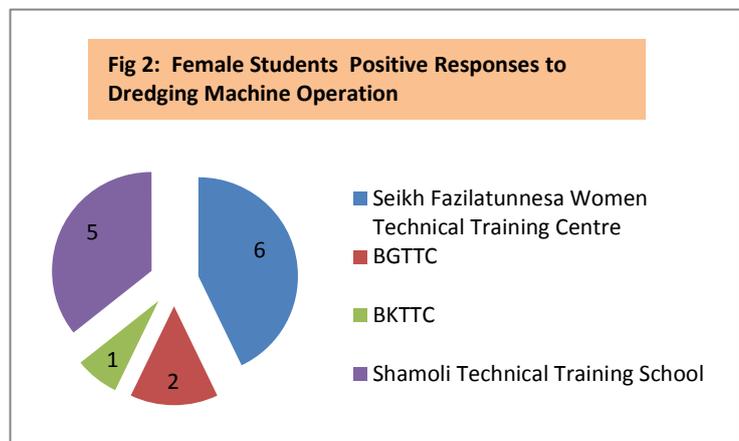
We got only one female respondent out of 10 from Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Women Technical Training Centre, who also considered these were men's job. Yet, a majority of the interviewed students of this centre thought differently from students of BKTTC and BGTTC, about women in technical training and profession. Some of them opined that "*except child bearing there are no other differences between men and women, we are convinced about it and have thus enrolled ourselves in these technical trainings*

to be able to do this professional job in future”. The students of the privately owned institute also shared this thinking, and were found to have a more liberal and modern attitude in this regard.

**Table 1: Responses on willingness to take jobs which are typically known as men’s jobs (14 male and 6 female students from BGTTTC and BKTTTC)**

Question	Respondents	yes	Statement(motivation)	No	Statement (reasons)
Are you willing to take a job which is typically known as a men’s job, if “yes” say the motivation and if “No” say the reasons	Female Students	*	“If I get the training, I will also be able to do such work”	*****	For women, this work is impossible as they do not have that many skills
	Male Students	*****	“I am a man, it’s possible for me and I have the needed skills too” “ the jobs related to Electrical, Mechanical, AutoCAD are available in country and abroad		

It seemed that Male students from BKTTTC and BGTTTC were very confident and specific in informing us about the list of places and companies where they would get suitable jobs related to their vocational training courses. The female students of those two centres were less sure about where they would be employed, and did not say anything about how they could even be self-employed. Male and female students both mentioned that boy’s mobility and their network outside home are wider; this is why they can manage to get a job faster. But there were different views from students in Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Women Vocational Training Centre, who had already been trainees of different technical or mechanical trades for two years (for example: General Electronics, Architectural drafting with AutoCAD, etc). It appeared that they were interested to work in jobs that they were learning about now in these centres, and determined to have a job in a private company, in Government office as a technician, or in an electronic company or radio station. They were also aware that the training centre would not be able to help them to find jobs or work after finishing their training here.



Most of the male and female respondents in BGTTTC and BKTTTC whom we interviewed were not positive that women can become a Dredging machine operator even if they get proper training on it. Therefore, answering to the question of dredging machine operation, only two out of 5 female students from BGTTTC said that ‘if girls get training, it would be possible for them to operate a dredging machine, but I don’t know how their family and surroundings will react to it’. The students from Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Women Vocational Training Centre were different from other female respondents in this regard as 60% of them had a positive attitude towards women’s involvement in this work and related jobs. The female students of Shyamoli Technical School said that “dredging machine operation is not a difficult work for women as there is no difference between men and women in doing technical tasks only safety security and health hazard are the biggest concerns because, no woman wants to get in peril doing work outside.

For example, women do not like to work in the wet and dyeing section of textile factory due to the uncomfortable and polluted environment. They also thought that female students can gain the same knowledge and skills that male students acquire, and said there was evidence to show that women are more diligent than men in their professions. In contrast, male students of BGTTTC and BKTTTC totally rejected the ability of female students to do this work, though they did not specify the reasons for thinking this. The male student respondents of Shyamoli Technical School were more liberal in their perception of women as dredging machine operators.

After the interviews, GWAPB facilitators also involved the students (9 male and one girl student) of Bangladesh Korea Technical Training Centre in an extended talk and discussion (FGD) on women working in heavy machine-operation. The discussion tried to observe their mind set, attitude, and perception towards women's ability to do vocational training and related jobs. *The male students' expressed their apprehension that their job opportunities might shrink if more women are interested to find work in this sector, after their training.* They shared the view that if women work outside, the work at home will be hampered. They think that it would be better if women enter general teaching profession rather than technical profession, as the former would not be as demanding, and they could give more time at home as well. They remarked that *"Women are basically lazy, so such kind of electrical and mechanical work they would not like, and most of the girls like to be economically dependent on their husband. There is lots of air pollution in the roads, workshops and factories that women cannot like at all."*

At the end of the discussion the facilitator and an instructor of Automobile department oriented the students about gender concepts; gender as relational and context-specific: men and women, boys and girls, and how it influences power relations in the household, and how they live and work. They explained that men can be partners in increasing women's ability to participate gainfully in the market economy, using some example from different countries they knew of.



### ***Women face resistance in public and private spheres***

FGDs with the female students in BGTTTC and BKTTC were conducted for gathering more in-depth information. For the FGDs, both centres gathered 12 and 8 female students respectively, mainly from Dress making and tailoring, and Computer Application trades. Two female instructors accompanied the

groups too. The FGD with the female students was conducted with some guiding questions related to the different aspect of their learning in the centre, satisfaction with their study in this centre such as, future prospect of male and female students in job market, the barriers the female students faced enrolling in these vocational training courses etc.



The groups looked confident and enthusiastic about what they had been learning and the future prospects for the jobs as well. Female students mentioned in the discussion about some of the barriers that many of them had to face to be enrolled in such kind of vocational training centres. Lack of awareness, lack of self-confidence, lack of family support, and uneasiness in co-education were the major reasons they mentioned for which girls felt constrained to get enrolled in technical courses. Sometimes female students simply do not like it considering it as just men's work. But they thought those who were already in the centre fought these barriers and were able to assert their personal interest to enrol and continue in this technical education. The girls added that "It is not widely practiced by the instructors to encourage female-applicants to take up vocational training". But they looked fully satisfied with the learning program and were happy with the teaching of the instructors in the centres. During talking about dredging machine operation, at first the students did not understand what the dredging machine is and what it means to work with it. After a little briefing on this they expressed their excitement that, *"women can do everything if they get training and skills. We understand that kind of profession could bring much more earning, especially for the family, as women mostly use their money for their families"*.

### ***Discussion***

Getting more young women to join engineering and vocational training was an important discussion topic in both the FGD and SSI with the students, and the KII with the management and teaching faculty of the Centres. Despite the efforts directed towards provision of vocational education, only a small group of female students pursue courses in technical and vocational education. Generally, vocational training is viewed by most of the responding students as an option for boys and not an option for girls. Socio-cultural norms as well as direct and indirect influence from parents, neighbours, and center's instructors often impede girls' access to vocational education. Both female and male students perceive physical strength and technical ability as the barriers that limit women's participation in technical training courses. However this perception was not common to the respondents across all the training centres, because some of the respondents from the Women Technical School and most of the respondents from the privately owned Technical School had a more liberal and modern view of men and women's work, and considered women to be able to participate well in technical studies and professions. According to them there are hardly any differences between men and women in technical work and professions, only the socio-cultural attitude towards women make them to feel they are unable to do so. For example: parents are reluctant to get admission for their daughters in technical schools.

Even if training of young women in so called male professions can improve their employment skills, without additional measures, the employment chances for female students still remain limited. There were some differences in attitude and perception towards women ability to do vocational training and work among the students, instructor’s teachers and the centre authorities. The Sheikh Fazilatunnessa Mujib women Vocational training centre was only for female students and their attitude and perception towards vocational training for female students was found more positive. According to their opinion, already being the students of some kind of technical and mechanical courses in the centre, their mind was ready to take the same profession after completing their courses. However, the government run centres did not provide many women-friendly facilities so that women would be attracted to enrol in these centres. For example: none of the centres provided crèche facilities, or good washroom facilities for women, and only some centres made linkages and liaisons (only for some courses) with government and private agencies for creating job opportunities for their students.

Very few female students among the group we interviewed wanted to start anything by themselves or look for work through their own initiatives, because of financial and social limitations. Besides, training courses and the subjects have an ‘image problem’ with teachers, and male and female students. From the discussions with them, we found that the centre management staff, and particularly many female students still perceive some vocational courses as ‘men’s work’. Some fields of vocational training were found easily accessible to women (garments and fashion design, housekeeping, computer, etc.). These courses are regarded as less expensive as these courses require less heavy machineries and technical equipment hence they do not need to pay more fees for practical classes as compare to other trades. Computer training courses are also preferred by female students as they think computer-related jobs require little physical strain, less travelling around, and can be done by just sitting in front of the computer. On the one hand, male students said they did have knowledge and exposure outside of home, and they felt more confident about finding employment for themselves outside and even can manage self-employment. On the other hand, few female students looked confident about managing self-employment after completing their training from these centres.

**Conclusion**

There are many government approved Vocational Training Centres now in Bangladesh for training youth in technical vocations, to thereby produce skilled manpower for the domestic and international sectors. However, the enrolment rate of female students in these centres is very low and remains limited despite measures to increase women’s enrolment. In the 4 centres we used in this research, we found



only 7 to 10 percent of the total students were young women, and most of these were enrolled in courses like Garments and Tailoring, Housekeeping, and Computer Application courses. This corresponds with the current work availability in the country and prevailing socio-cultural norms on suitability of this work for women. Age, family’s economic status, number of children, social class, and the social and cultural environment, are all factors determining students’ diverse family responsibilities and pressures,

which especially for girls, pose a major constraint to being enrolled in vocational training centres. Vocational training centres specialise in technical professions and hence mainly attract men under the prevailing gender discourse about men and women's work. However the study also revealed that the situation is changing, with government measures to aid women's enrolment in vocational courses, international funding for youth employment, and changing attitudes of teachers and students themselves. From the interviews and FGDs with respondents several suggestions were made on how to increase participation of women in technical vocational courses, thereby bridging the gender gap in this field and strengthening women's position in society, leading to economic and social empowerment.

### ***Suggestions***

- Training centres particularly government run centres maintain limited liaison with potential employers. They need to take initiatives for more collaboration and communication with Government and private vocational and technical companies to explore students' - particularly female students'- prospects for future jobs in public and private sector organizations and companies. This would attract more female students to be enrolled and complete their vocational training in the centres. Government run training centres could collaborate with privately owned institutes to enrich their curriculum as well as access more employer databases for providing placements to students on completion of their study. Students of government and privately owned technical centres can make exchange visits to each other so that students can gather knowledge about each centre's best practices and get ideas from each other to improve their employability.
- Some students from the government centres perceived that vocational training centres were not responding to the needs of the employers. Some teachers and instructors of the centres also expressed similar feelings. They need to identify and modify Programmes and curricula, of existing training courses for the Centre with Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB), if they fail to meet the demands of the labour market. Also, if employers were more involved in the design of training, the students would find it easier to find jobs.
- Create an enabling environment for female students such as increasing facilities of good lodging, transport, sanitary facilities, crèche facilities - which are usually needed if different groups of young women (married and unmarried) are to be encouraged to participate in vocational training. This environment could not only increase female student's enrolment in Vocational training in different trades, but also positively influence them in their motivation, engagement, and productivity in the courses. These measures not only require money, but also awareness and political decision of the centres and Government. The service sectors in which women usually predominate such as Teaching, and Nursing or Health care, could also be offered by the vocational training centres, along with mechanical trades.
- Further education of teachers, instructors and awareness building of information disseminators for a more current and gender-sensitive training curriculum, teaching methods, and institutional services and facilities are needed to close the gap between male and female students in their opportunities for learning and subsequent employment in the country and abroad.
- A key role BTEB needs to play is in providing information to general people including students and their families, on the nature and quality of trainings available, and facilitating regular and independent monitoring and evaluation of the quality and impact of training programmes on the development of the student's career path. It seems that students' families play a big role in encouraging or discouraging their daughters to take up technical trades. In presence of BTEB

members, training centres can arrange periodic meeting with the guardians or parents of the students to discuss about the encouragement for the girls to be enrolled in vocational training. Also BTEB can ask the centres for setting quota for enrolling female students in different courses to increase female students in their centres.



**GWAPB: RM, RK, AA, JM**

### **Photographs:**

Photographs are used with thanks to:

Page 3: Source: Charles Arthur: (2010). *Empowering Women through Renewable Energy Solution Bangladesh*. Business Fights Poverty – a web based magazine <http://community.businessfightspoverty.org/profiles/blogs/women-entrepreneurs>

Page 4: Source: [aprilvamasaki](http://www.emmanuelmennonite.com/2012/11/22/ten-thousand-villages-returns-to-abbotsford/) .(2012). *Ten Thousand Villages Returns to Abbotsford!* Emmanuel Mennonite Church- a web based Magazine.<http://www.emmanuelmennonite.com/2012/11/22/ten-thousand-villages-returns-to-abbotsford/>

Page 7: Source: the website of the Fazilatunnessa Mujib Women Technical training Centre

Page 9: Source: Annie Kelly (2014). *How women in Bangladesh are breaking a driving taboo*. *theguardian*, 14 November 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/gallery/2012/nov/14/women-bangladesh-driving-in-pictures>

Page 11: Source: Zahedul I Khan. 2010. *Breaking the Glass Ceiling*. Cover story of the Star Magazine of the Daily Star. <http://archive.thedailystar.net/magazine/2010/03/01/cover.htm>

Page 15: Source: Zahedul I Khan. 2010. *Breaking the Glass Ceiling*. Cover story of the Star Magazine of the Daily Star. <http://archive.thedailystar.net/magazine/2010/03/01/cover.htm>

Page 16: Source: Sahadat Hossain. *Women who dream to be train drivers*. the Daily Star, January 3 , 2015. <http://www.thedailystar.net/women-who-dream-to-be-train-drivers-58267>

All other photographs were made by GWAPB (Runia, Rokeya and Joke).

## Annex -1

### KII questions for the government and privately owned vocational training centres

#### Sample questions (for the Authority of School/ Training Center

Sl.	Questions	answer
1	How many trades you offer for the students every year?	
2	Please name of that trades you usually offer for the students or attach the list	
3	How many boys and girls enroll in the school/centre every year?	
3	How many girls are enrolled in different trades out of boys, please mention the number, how many female instructor do you have in this school?	
4.	What trade girls like to be enrolled most?	
5.	How you influence or support girls to take heavy machine or metallic trade?	
6.	Why or why not girls are interested in to be enrolled in vocational training?	
7.	What's the job opportunity for the girls after passing out from this school/ training center	
8.	How do you improve choice and negotiation skills of girls in the labor market and or how do you build a linkages between your students and the employer of the different organization for jobs	
9.	Do you have follow up practices to see what number of students including girls students are joining job or at least self-employed after finishing their training from this vocational training center?	
10.	Do you think it's difficult for girls to get job on technical trades? Or not? If yes, why?	
11	Do you have any anti sexual harassment Policy for the centre to ensure student safety, security and comfort?	

#### Sample question for the girl student of the school/ training centre

Sl.	questions	answer
1.	Why did you enroll in vocational training centre?	
2.	What do you like most in this school? Why?	
3.	Why do you not like much to be enrolled in mechanical and technical trades? Or why do you like the trades you already enrolled in	
4.	What's the job opportunity for you after passing out from this school/ training center, what do you think?	
5.	Why many numbers of girls are not interested to study in in vocational training particularly more technical and machine-driven trades?	
6.	How you get support from your teacher and parents to continue your training in this school?	

## **Annex 2**

### **Study on 'Gender, Vocational Training and Employment'**

The objective of the study is to assess the status of women who have been trained or are presently being trained by Vocational Training Centres and Technical Training Centres particularly, with respect to:

1. Employment opportunities and avenues for women technologists;
2. Motivation for taking a job consistent with the training knowledge;
3. Any perceived constraints that women students see for getting employment; and
4. Availability of qualified women for work as dredging machine operator.

#### **Questions to students of Technical Training Centres**

1. Name of the respondent:
2. Address:
3. E-mail:
4. Phone:
5. Name of Trade/Course presently studying:
6. Basic education required to study this Trade/Course:
7. Duration of this Trade/Course:
8. What do you think are the reasons that some girls are not interested to study too technical subjects like heavy machine-driven trades?
9. What are the specific skills you are acquiring through learning the trade that you are studying now?
10. Where the job opportunities are for you after completing this trade/graduating from this Centre?

11. Do women who completed their technical schooling find jobs just as their male counterparts?

Yes          No

If the answer is 'No', please tick reasons for this

- (a) Family/society does not like her to do technical work.
- (b) Need to look after children.
- (c) They don't know how to find a job.
- (d) Found job, but working environment is not good.
- (e) Not well informed about job opportunities like male counterparts.
- (f) ....
- (g) ....
- (h) .....

12. Will you receive support from your TTC to find suitable job?    Yes          No

13. If answer to question 12 is 'no', how will you find a suitable job for you?

14. Please mention names of some jobs which are typically known as man's job:

(i)

(ii)

(iii)

15. Are you willing to take any such job that you have mentioned at (14):    Yes          No

If yes, what is your motivation:

If not, what are the reasons:

16. Do you think, if given training, qualified women will take Dredging Machine Operator as a profession?

Yes                          No

If your answer is 'No', what are the reasons for that?

Thank you very much for your cooperation.