

Necessity of Youth Empowerment for Today's Competitive Job Market: Skill is Strength

With more than **two million new jobseekers entering the labor market of Bangladesh every year**, it has become crucial to pay attention to the skills required to survive in it.

While in one end youths need a range of skills to survive and thrive in the market, on the other end government and employers also need to ensure efficient utilization of this massive volume of human resource by providing them with adequate skills training and guidance. As a result, several large-scale skill development projects have been initiated, to provide the youths with the necessary technical/soft skills they need to become independent by securing/initiating income-generating activities.

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of those skill development trainings in the life of marginalized youths.

The study was designed to take a closer look at the changes experienced by youths in their everyday life along with their employment status and income, because of the skill development trainings that they have received. The study included both **qualitative and quantitative components** to ensure adequate understanding of the **skill demands, difference in the socio-economic context and change in perspective** before and after the skill development trainings were given to the targeted youths.

Source: 'Situation Analysis of Bangladesh TVET Sector: A background work for a TVET SWAP', ILO, August 2019

"I could not care less about the taunts I receive for not getting married and continuing with my study and skill trainings. It is me who is mainly responsible for my livelihood and wellbeing, and I want to be prepared to take care of myself irrespective of receiving any support from my future spouse"

- **Khuku Moni, a 22-year-old female undergraduate student** from a remote village of Satkhira, Khulna.

There are thousands of youths like Khuku Moni across Bangladesh, who has shared similar viewpoint regarding youth empowerment in a recent national-level impact study facilitated by Innovision.



Thousands of youths from three different divisions of Bangladesh have been interviewed regarding the soft and technical skill development trainings that they have received, which brought out some very interesting and meaningful insights about the context.

The skill development interventions have turned out as very useful in addressing market demand for skills. The trainings have helped the marginalized youths to gain hands-on experience of skills that they could leverage further in gaining employment. The interventions have covered a range of industry-wise skillset training that can enable a youth to earn his/her livelihood. Majority of the participants said that **they have managed to find employment within months and become financially independent.**

The skill development trainings have also been proven as tremendously **successful in boosting organizing, knowledge sharing and collective voice raising by the youths.** Youths even have even participated in **creating a national-level civil society platform** to promote policy frameworks and social norms.

However, there are still areas of improvement for future TVET programs that has come to the surface during this study. **Lack of appropriate and market-required skills** has been observed as a key reason for many youths to lose employment as well, where many participants have mentioned **lack of physical establishments** (e.g., a training center with proper equipment) as a reason could gain the skills hands-on or practice them for improvement.

Unemployment rate is still higher among female youths comparing to male youths, in a lot of cases it has been influenced by **gender-related social norms and family expectations.** There has also been **gender-based disparity in average monthly income**, where male participants have reported earning **nearly twice** as much as the female participants.

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Noshin T Othoi
Associate – Monitoring & Evaluation
Innovision Consulting

For more insights about this study, please reach out to –

Innovision Consulting Private Limited

✉ info@innovision-bd.com

🌐 www.innovision-bd.com