

Enhancing Skills Training for Access to Decent Work

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The issue

- Limited access to decent work - a major impediment for the advancement of women and a serious issue world over, especially in the developing world
- Hinders the possibility for women to live as dignified human beings, enjoying equal rights with men, despite the growth of labour force participation of women and the intensifying opportunities for women to enter into remunerated work and to become economically independent
- This presentation focuses on four factors:
 - deficiencies in skills training for women
 - developing skills training via formal and non-formal training
 - The barriers for achieving this objective
 - The strategies that could be adopted in promoting the process of skills training and young women's employability

Defining Decent work

- Covers 4 main objectives
 - creating employment
 - guaranteeing workers' rights
 - extending social protection
 - promoting social dialogue
- Primary goal is to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, within conditions that provides them freedom, equality, security and human dignity
(Report of the Director-General to the International Labour Conference meeting, 87th Session, 1999, p. 3)



Defining skills

- In general skill could be the ability, coming from one's knowledge, practice, aptitude, etc., to do something well.
- Skills, with or without training contribute to develop competency, excellence in performance; expertness and dexterity
- World Development Report of the World Bank (2007) identifies skills as follows;
 - thinking skills (critical and creative thinking)
 - behavioral skills (perseverance, self- discipline, teamwork, the ability to negotiate conflict and manage risk, specific knowledge (including numeracy and literacy)

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- vocational skills (a mix of specific knowledge and skills to perform jobs that rely on clearly defined tasks).
- “Basic skills denote the set of minimal abilities needed for further learning, work and life, including numeracy and literacy and basic levels of behavioral skills (decision – making skills, teamwork , the ability to negotiate conflicts and managing risks), specific knowledge applied to real-life situations and vocational skills (World Bank, 2007:71).



Formal and Non-formal training as a Tool for Employment

- Lower participation of women in the labor force and/or concentration of women labor in unskilled or low skilled, low income generating economic activities including part time and casual work
- This creates a significant gap between the quality of employment between men and women
- The proportion of young females who are neither in school nor in labor force is considerably higher than the proportion of that for males (World Bank, 2006)



Formal Training

- Generally incorporated within primary, secondary and tertiary education (both in classical education and vocational training)
- Formal training provided at the schools during childhood, adolescence and early youth and the informal training in the family and community during these years are essential in skills development (Knudsen, 2004)
- Recent evidence shows that the education which lacks skills training is one of the biggest challenges for full employment



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- A large number of firms in developing countries have identified inadequate skills of the employees as a major impediment for their regular functioning (World Bank: 2006)
- Current employment market requires
 - Thinking and behavioral skills (private sector, banking and industrial sector)
 - Advanced skills such as the problem solving ability or vocational skills (industrial sector)
 - Computer Literacy has become a basic requirement for many jobs and an association of higher wage premiums has been identified with it (Autor, Katz, and Krueger, 1998)



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- Development of as many skills as possible including soft skills seem to make an individual more advantageous over the others in order to have access to decent employment
- Continuous involvement in skilled jobs has been identified as a contributing factor for development of human capital. A relationship has been established between experiences gained in skilled jobs and increase in adult reading comprehension and nonverbal cognitive abilities (World Bank, 2006)



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- In Sri Lanka, high incidence of female unemployment (double those of men) despite the high enrolment of women in senior secondary education (56%) and university education (53%) during the last four decades
- Enrolment of women in engineering courses in universities and vocational education institutions has been respectively 25 percent and less than 20 percent (Jayaweera, 2010)
- World wide statistics and data confirm that those who have developed skills through education and training are less vulnerable for exploitation in the labor market. During the decade of 1997-2007, 72 percent of those Sri Lankans migrated for work has been female domestic workers (Foreign Employment Bureau, 2007)



Non- Formal Training

- Non-formal training could either be incorporated within the field of formal education (skills other than technical), vocational training or informal family and community based training (technical and other)
- Community and family based non- formal training provide numerous opportunities for young people who become left out from the formal sector of education and training, especially the rural and urban poor in the developing world



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However, general lack of

- Social acceptance
- Encouragement
- Opportunities
- New and modern technologies and equipments
- Quality and standards
- Market opportunities

Hinder women's entry and performance



Barriers to skill training among women

Barriers to skills training could be identified within five major areas of training of women

- Deficiencies in incorporating skills into formal education
- Hindered entry into science and technology based education
- Problems in access to formal education or early dropout rates
- Lack of access to skills based non-formal training
- Social and cultural impediments hindering skills training and development



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- Sri Lanka, is a country which achieved gender parity in education at the primary and secondary levels
- In arts and management streams of study, over 70% are women (despite high rates of enrolment (57%))
- Have failed to enter into jobs in the growing private sector or gain employment at all
- 63% of the unemployed graduates were arts graduates (2005)
- Only 12% of the graduates in the Arts streams found employment within 3 months after graduation (55 % in the science and management streams)
- The major obstacles have been the inadequate IT and communicative (English) skills, and poor adaptability to the working environment which delineates the dearth of behavioral and vocational skills (World Bank, 2005b)

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- Absence of schools or opportunities after primary education due to less affordability, distance to school, lack of encouragement or less motivation for learning, poor teaching, poor school environments early employment, health reasons (HIV/AIDS and other health issues), early marriage and pregnancy and displacements influence the early dropout rates
- Girls are particularly left behind as they would be most vulnerable in this scenario (World Bank, 2006)
- In many of the low income countries, access to education is low in remote, disaster and conflict affected, poor and backward areas, particularly affecting women's education



Barriers Contd.

- Low social acceptance for vocational training
- Tradition preventing the inclusion of women in family vocations of technical nature due to gender attitudes
- Social attitudes towards women's training outside classical education
- Family responsibilities, pregnancy, less opportunities and hindrances for further training
- Lack of self confidence due to gendered upbringing and gender socialization processes
- Difficulties in moving up the skill ladder by changing jobs for higher wages and developing skills in the process
- Lack of a safe learning environment (sexual harassment in or outside the learning environments)
- Derogatory attitudes towards women and labeling of women achieving outside the accepted women's roles and responsibilities

Strategies to Increase Young Women's Employability

- Improve women's entry and continuity in formal education
- Giving priority for skills development aspect of education and incorporation of skills into existing curricula
- Taking steps to increase family and peer support for women's education
- Making more information available through raising awareness among women helping them to make better choices
- Taking steps to encourage women's entry into vocational training through more publicity, increased recognition and facilities including scholarships etc.
- Women's interest in skill development and training needs to begin in an early age to empower women and become good decision makers in making choices



Strategies Contd.

- Increasing women entrepreneurship training and improving facilities including bank loan systems and market opportunities
- Skills training need to be improved at the secondary and tertiary levels of education, including soft skills catering to increased competency
- Gender specific measures in improving education and training, Eg. distance to educational institutions, specific arrangement for transport, counseling, addressing health issues
- Efficient mainstreaming of gender priorities within the policy planning
- Steps to bridge the gap between school and work with a gender focus through apprenticeship, work placements etc.



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- Addressing the labor market biases affecting women through proper state level mediation
- Strengthening monitoring and evaluation specially with regard to female education and training
- Maternity and child care support is essential for education, training and continuing employment of women
- More acute steps to address gender issues affecting education, training and work of women, including violence, gendered education, gender discrimination and harassment at work places



Thank You

