



Bangladesh

ITC SHETRADES OUTLOOK | 2023



International
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Centre

SheTrades





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ABOUT THE SHETRADES COMMONWEALTH PROJECT

TIMEFRAME

March
2018

March
2025

OBJECTIVE

To increase economic growth and job creation in Commonwealth countries by enabling the increased participation of women-owned businesses in international trade. The project is funded by the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and implemented by ITC under the framework of the SheTrades Initiative.

ACTIVITIES

- Provide governments with the tools, information and capacity to implement gender-responsive policies. Also offer a platform for governments to work collectively and share best practices, including through SheTrades Outlook and in-country technical assistance on policy reform.
- Provide direct support to women-owned businesses. Build their competitiveness and their capacity to participate in trade through intensive training, mentoring and coaching.
- Work with business support organizations to improve the service offering for women entrepreneurs.
- Engage private sector partners to adopt business practices that create economic opportunities for women-owned businesses.

SHETRADES OUTLOOK

Creating trade opportunities for women in Bangladesh

This policy brief presents analysis and recommendations for Bangladesh to unlock women's participation in trade by improving its policy ecosystem. It is based on the results of the SheTrades Outlook tool in Bangladesh, which collected and analysed data from 13 national institutions and six private sector organizations.

WHY DOES **WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT** MATTER?

Bangladesh was adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2019 economic growth rate of 7.9% slowed to 3.4% in 2020 as the government imposed restrictions related to COVID-19. Within the manufacturing sector, the textile, leather, and apparel sectors were hit the hardest – sectors where women workers are primarily concentrated in Bangladesh. In 2021, Bangladesh's economic growth rate rebounded to 6.9%. Industry and service sector activities were the major contributors to Bangladesh's economic recovery. In 2022, it was estimated that gross domestic product grew by 7.2%.

Bangladesh will graduate from its least developed country status by 2026. In the long term, it seeks to transform into an industrialized and export-driven economy. Women have the potential to drive economic growth and structural transformation. In 2019, women made up half of the population and 36% of the labour force in Bangladesh.

[Bangladesh's Eighth Five Year Plan \(8FYP\) 2020–2025](#) sets out a strategy to accelerate economic transformation, promote exports and boost job creation. Specifically, it aims to strengthen the manufacturing and agricultural sectors, support small businesses and promote technology-based entrepreneurship. It also provides a framework for women's economic empowerment and gender equality. The framework tackles women's access to skills, finance, information and the labour market. It also seeks to include women in policymaking and promote women's leadership and underlines the importance of collecting gender-disaggregated data and enforcing laws on gender equality.

SheTrades Outlook provides critical data to help policymakers prioritize areas for improvement to better promote women's economic empowerment and implement the 8FYP. It offers practical insights to ensure that policies affecting business and trade are gender responsive.

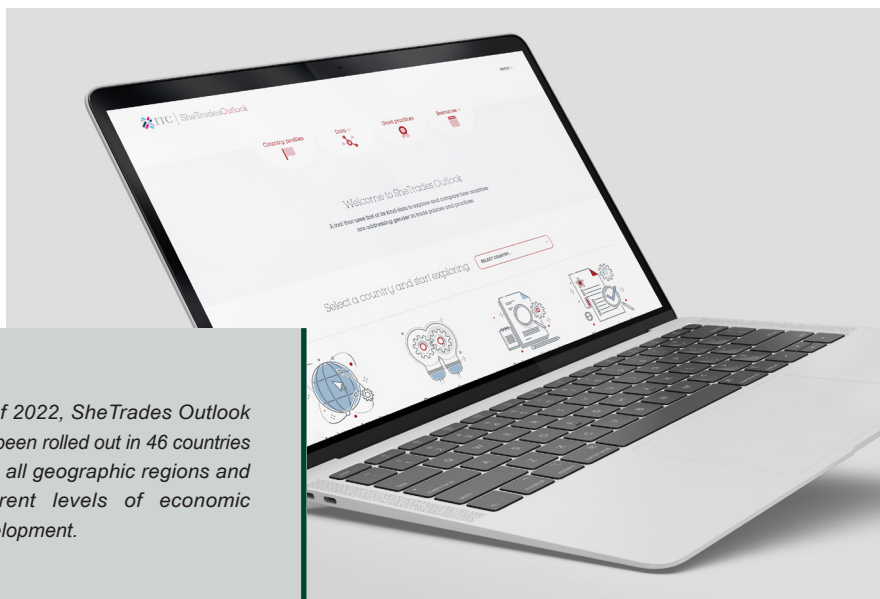


WHAT IS SHETRADES OUTLOOK?

SheTrades Outlook is an innovative, evidence-based policy tool designed by the International Trade Centre (ITC). It identifies policies, laws or programmes that contribute to or prevent women's participation in the economy and trade. This first-of-its-kind tool is based on 82 indicators. These are grouped under six interlinked pillars – Trade Policy, Business Environment, Legal and Regulatory Framework, Access to Skills, Access to Finance and Work and Society.

SheTrades Outlook is based on data collected by national consultants from an average of 20 national institutions and organizations per country. Data is collected through interviews based on semi-structured questionnaires. Examples of institutions surveyed include ministries of trade, education, finance, technology and women's affairs; public procurement authorities; Customs authorities; central banks; national statistics offices; business associations; chambers of commerce; and other trade support institutions.

SheTrades Outlook also makes use of reliable, publicly available and recently updated databases from the Inter-Parliamentary Union; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; the United Nations Statistics Division; the World Bank and the World Economic Forum. Additionally, an average of three good practices are identified per country by national experts.



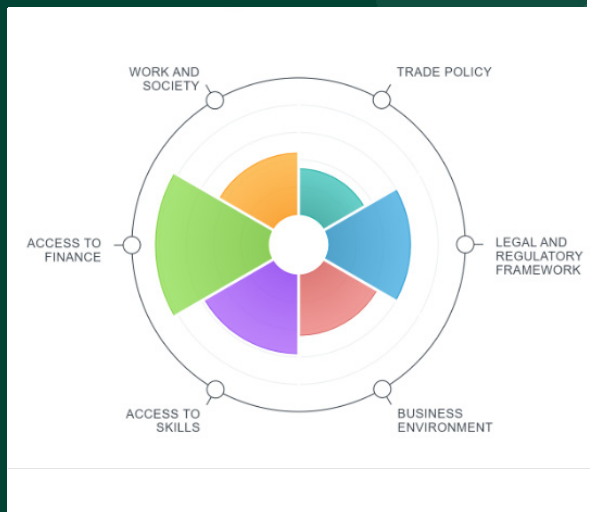
As of 2022, SheTrades Outlook has been rolled out in 46 countries from all geographic regions and different levels of economic development.

SheTrades Outlook - Results

Nineteen organizations – 13 national institutions and six private sector organizations – were interviewed to collect data. Institutions were chosen based on their strategic objectives and relevance in relation to the six pillars of the initiative. The institutional survey was conducted in 2019. This policy brief presents the latest available data from existing data sources.

The SheTrades Outlook indicator scores range from zero to one. On average, Bangladesh has made medium progress in the six policy dimensions. It performed the highest in Access to Finance. It has medium scores on Legal and Regulatory Framework, Access to Skills, Work and Society and Business Environment. It performed the lowest in Trade Policy.

Detailed information on the scores under each pillar is presented below. This includes strengths and bottlenecks, as well as gaps identified in the data.



TRADE POLICY



Consultation process



Initiatives or mechanisms are in place to include women's associations/organizations in consultation processes



Women's associations/organizations participate in consultation processes



Trade and gender-related concerns are included in policies and agreements



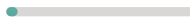
Policy or action plan on gender equality and women's empowerment includes trade-related concerns



Trade agreements or regional economic integration agreements include gender provisions



Assessment, monitoring and evaluation



Ex-ante and ex-post gender impact assessments of trade agreements are carried out



Policies, programmes or projects use gender indicators



Gender-disaggregated data



Law or regulation mandates the collection of gender-disaggregated data



Gender-disaggregated data is collected on companies



Women's participation in strategic roles



Women are represented in ministerial positions



Women are represented in national parliaments



Gender quota or targets are used to promote women's political participation



Capacity building on gender issues



Trade Ministry staff receive training on gender issues



A gender focal point focusing on trade and gender issues has been established





The Trade Policy pillar focuses on the inclusiveness of trade policies, agreements and practices. It also includes the adoption of gender-sensitive practices in trade and trade-related institutions.

Bangladesh scored the lowest in this pillar. This is mainly attributed to the lack of a mechanism to include women's business associations in policy consultation processes, gender provisions in trade agreements, and gender indicators in projects and programmes. There is also an opportunity to leverage the policies on women's economic empowerment and e-commerce to promote women's participation in trade.

WHAT WORKS?

In Bangladesh, the Statistics Act 2013 mandates the collection of gender-disaggregated data. Data on company ownership is also collected. The latest data collected through the Economic Census 2013 shows that women-led businesses account for 11.7% of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The Constitution reserves 50 out of 350 seats in the parliament for women. As of 2021, women occupy 73 seats in the parliament. However, only two out of 26 ministers are women.

WHERE IS MORE PROGRESS NEEDED?

Bangladesh has an opportunity to improve gender mainstreaming in trade policy. For instance, national institutions could ensure that women are included in trade policymaking. This can help understand women's challenges and priorities and develop the right solutions to address their concerns.

Bangladesh can also adopt the internationally recognized definition of a woman-owned business prescribed by the [International Organization for Standardization International Workshop Agreement \(IWA\) 34: Women's entrepreneurship – Key definitions and general criteria](#).

The national industrial policy provides an official definition for a woman-owned business. It is defined as a business wherein one or more women owns at least 51% of the shares. However, national institutions can consider aligning the national definition with the IWA 34 definition. IWA 34 defines a woman-owned business as “a business that is more than 50% owned by one or more women, whose management and control lie with one or more women, where a woman is a signatory of the business’ legal documents and financial accounts, and which is operated independently from businesses that are not owned by women”.

Adopting the IWA 34 definition can help improve targeting of beneficiaries of women’s economic empowerment programmes and the collection of internationally comparable data on women’s entrepreneurship.

There is also scope to include gender in trade agreements. In SheTrades Outlook, trade agreements can receive three ratings: ‘limited’, ‘evolving’ or ‘advanced’ levels of gender responsiveness. Bangladesh is a member of the Asia Pacific Trade Agreement, the South Asian Free Trade Agreement and the South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement. None of them have an evolving or advanced level of gender responsiveness.

Additionally, Bangladesh can strengthen monitoring of trade agreements and policies. Specifically, the government can consider conducting gender impact assessments before and after signing trade agreements, National institutions can also use gender indicators in projects and programmes related to business development and trade. This can help ensure that women can take advantage of the trade and business opportunities stemming from these policies, programmes and agreements.

To build institutional capacity, it is important to provide training on trade and gender issues to the staff of the Ministry of Commerce. Further, appointing a trade and gender focal point can ensure that the work on gender mainstreaming in trade policy is institutionalized.

The National Women Development Policy 2011 aims to promote women’s entrepreneurship through training and credit facilities for women entrepreneurs. There is an opportunity to revise the policy to tackle women’s trade concerns.

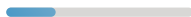
Lastly, the government adopted the National Digital Commerce Policy 2018 to create a conducive environment for businesses to participate in e-commerce. While the policy is not gender-discriminatory, it is important to address gender-specific challenges when participating in e-commerce. In this regard, the government may consider revising the policy and developing gender-responsive approaches to make e-commerce work for both women and men.



LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK



Signing, ratification and enforcement of key international conventions



Country has ratified the CEDAW and CEDAW optional protocol



Laws, policies and procedures are reviewed to ensure compliance with CEDAW articles and the Committee concluding remarks



Country has ratified and enforced ILO Conventions 100, 111, and 183



Gender-responsive budgeting approach



Government uses gender-responsive budgeting approach



Access to productive resources



Women and men have equal inheritance rights



Women and men have equal ownership rights to immovable property



Women and men have equal access to financial services



Access to the labour market



Law mandates non-discrimination in employment based on gender



Law provides legal protection from sexual harassment in the workplace



Law mandates equal remuneration for females and males for work of equal value



Paid parental leave policies



Maternity leave benefit is mandated



Parental leave is available for both parents



Childcare support and facilities



Families with children under school age receive support for early childhood education and care



Parents receive childcare support



Initiatives are in place to encourage investment in childcare facilities





This pillar assesses a country's adoption of laws and regulations that protect and promote women's rights. It also covers laws and policies that encourage women's entry into, and continuity and advancement in, labour markets. An example would be laws that support women to combine work with childcare responsibilities.

More than 50% of the data for this pillar was sourced from World Bank Women, Business and the Law; the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Information System on International Labour Standards.

Bangladesh has medium performance in this pillar. This is linked to the ratification of international conventions and the establishment of national laws to tackle equal ownership rights between men and women, and provide protection against sexual harassment in the workplace. The government also uses a gender-responsive budgeting approach.

WHAT WORKS?

At the international level, Bangladesh has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and ILO Conventions 100 (equal remuneration) and 111 (non-discrimination in employment and occupation). At the national level, the government has established laws to provide equal ownership rights between women and men, and protection against sexual harassment in the workplace.

The government has also applied a gender-responsive approach to planning and budgeting. Since 2009, all government ministries are accountable for allocating and spending budgets on women's economic and social empowerment.

Lastly, the government provides 16 weeks of fully paid maternity leave for private sector workers. Mothers employed in the public sector are entitled to 20 weeks of maternity leave. Maternal health benefits and allowances are provided to women through the Maternal Health Voucher Scheme. Throughout the country, the government has established childcare centres for children of low-income working women.

WHERE IS MORE PROGRESS NEEDED?

Bangladesh can consider ratifying ILO Convention 183 (maternity protection) and providing paternity leave benefits. This can help distribute childcare responsibilities between women and men.

In addition, the government can establish laws to guarantee equal rights to inheritance between women and men, and prohibit gender-based discrimination in employment and access to credit. This can help ensure that women can participate in the economy through labour and entrepreneurship in the same way as men.



BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT



Representation of women business associations



Women's business associations are represented at the national level



Women's business associations are represented in all key sectors and subsectors



Women-owned businesses participate in activities conducted by chambers of commerce



Business start-ups



Support services are available when establishing a company



An incubator or accelerator programme is available



Access to trade and customs information



Help and information desks are available at government offices to assist companies in complying with national regulations and export/import requirements



Information on changes in customs procedures and trade regulations are announced in a timely manner



Public procurement



Information on public procurement application and selection process is available



Information on vendors and transactions on public procurement is available



Preferential scheme on public procurement for women-owned businesses is implemented



Reporting and monitoring unfair practices in trade



Means exist for women and men to report complaints on wrongdoing on trade regulations or procedures



Working conditions in export-processing zones are monitored



Trade facilitation and gender-sensitive framework



Single-window electronic interface is available



Gender-sensitive guidelines by the World Customs Organization or other national monitoring framework is implemented



Border-level customs agents and officials receive training on gender-sensitive practices



Public-private dialogue and frameworks



Regulatory framework for public-private partnerships includes gender concerns



Structured dialogues are conducted with the private sector regarding gender equity policies, programmes, and activities





A conducive business ecosystem is essential to achieve resilient growth through the business cycle. This pillar focuses on the inclusiveness of the business ecosystem and covers industry bodies that support women's entrepreneurship. It also includes the ease and costs of establishing and running a business, trading across borders, and accessing information and public procurement markets.

Bangladesh has a low–medium score in this pillar. This is related to the existence of women's business associations, availability of business support services and incubator programmes, dissemination of information on trade regulations and procedures, establishment of grievance mechanisms to report trade malpractices and adoption of gender-sensitive guidelines in Customs.

WHAT WORKS?

Under the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries, there are 14 women's chambers and four women's business associations. The Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry has members across the country engaged in the agriculture, services and manufacturing sectors.

The Small and Medium Enterprise Foundation (SMEF) provides support services to individuals who want to start a company. SMEF has also established an SME Incubation Centre, which provides working space, networking opportunities, training, market access and business advisory services to small businesses.

The Ministry of Planning has an [e-procurement system](#) that contains a database of public procurement tenders. The [National Trade Portal](#) provides information to help exporters and importers comply with relevant requirements and procedures. Updated information on Customs procedures and trade regulations is also published at the borders. The Bangladesh Investment Development Authority has a [single window electronic interface](#) that allows investors and businesses to process transactions online.

Bangladesh adopted a National Integrity Strategy to implement the World Customs Organization Customs Integrity Action Plan. Lastly, businesses can report complaints on wrongdoing on trade regulations and procedures to the Ministry of Commerce.

WHERE IS MORE PROGRESS NEEDED?

The government may consider collecting gender-disaggregated data on clients of its business support services and incubator programme. This can help track how these government initiatives benefit women entrepreneurs.

Bangladesh could also collect gender-disaggregated data on public procurement vendors. This can help map women's participation in government procurement. Further, there is an opportunity to adopt a preferential public procurement scheme for women. This can ensure that women-led businesses take advantage of business opportunities in the public procurement market.

Finally, it is important to provide training on trade and gender issues to border-level Customs officials. This can help eliminate gender-based discrimination and harassment typically faced by women in trade.



ACCESS TO SKILLS



Universal access to education



Law mandates compulsory education



Adult literacy rate, ages 15 and above (female-male ratio)



Monitoring frameworks on education



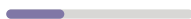
National numeracy tests are gender-disaggregated



Drop-out ratios, by gender



Access to tertiary education



Scholarships are available to continue tertiary education



Enrolment rate in technical and vocational programmes (female/male ratio)



Skills programmes for workers



National industry placement programmes are available for undergraduates



Skills-upgrading programmes for workers are implemented



Programmes to enhance technical capacity of companies



Skills and knowledge trainings for MSME owners are conducted



Training to facilitate access to markets are conducted



Targeted support and capacity building programmes for women



Women's business associations receive support to increase their technical capacity



Targeted programmes and incentives are provided for women to increase their technical capacity



Access to information and communication technologies



Policies and programmes are in place to support women's business innovation



National statistics on access to information and communication technologies are available



Access to internet (female-male ratio)





Improved access to education is essential to build necessary skills and reduce inequality of opportunities between men and women. It is also vital to break the vicious cycle of poverty. This pillar focuses on measures designed to enhance women's abilities and business-related skills. One objective is to close the education gap. Another is to equip women with the capacity to compete and succeed in international markets and occupations traditionally dominated by men.

Bangladesh's performance in this pillar is medium. This is related to the availability of skills-upgrading programmes for workers and entrepreneurs, and training on public procurement and trade topics.

WHAT WORKS?

In Bangladesh, education is compulsory up to 13 years of age. The government provides scholarships to help students attend secondary and higher secondary education. In 2020, adult literacy rates were 72% for women and 78% for men.

The Ministry for Women and Children Affairs provides skill-upgrading programmes for women with low levels of education. Topics include health, nutrition and information and communications technology (ICT). There is also training for entrepreneurs in the country. For instance, the Ministry of Finance implements the Skills for Employment Investment Programme. SMEF also provides training to entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs from priority sectors, as identified in the industrial policy. The Joyeeta Foundation hosts business-related training for women across the country.

SMEF provides training on how to export. The Central Procurement Technical Unit under the Ministry of Planning hosts regular workshops for public sector officials and public sector bidders on public procurement processes. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of ICT provide training on digital trade for women entrepreneurs.

WHERE IS MORE PROGRESS NEEDED?

Available gender-disaggregated data shows that in 2018, women accounted for only 28% of students in technical and vocational education and training (TVET). This highlights the need to encourage women's participation in TVET – for instance, via scholarships.

National institutions can consider collecting gender-disaggregated data on participants in skills-upgrading programmes. This can help understand women's participation in available training and assist in developing solutions and incentives to ensure they can access such training.

Editing
tion

Editing

1. Spot tool
2. Healing
Patch
Clone
5. Pattern
tool



ACCESS TO FINANCE



Access to financial services



Coverage of financial service providers



Digital financial services are available



There is access to formal financial resources (female/male ratio)



Financial inclusion strategies and programmes



Financial inclusion strategy or programme is implemented



Training on finance are conducted



Financial support for women-owned businesses and women's business associations



Women-owned businesses receive financial support to participate in trade fairs



Women's associations and organizations receive financial support from institutions



Fiscal and targeted trade finance schemes



Financial institutions are mandated to report gender-disaggregated data



Fiscal schemes are available to facilitate entrepreneurial opportunities



Trade finance schemes are available in the country to facilitate trade



Financial instruments and other financing opportunities



Financial instruments are available to support entrepreneurial opportunities



Venture capital financing opportunities are available to support women entrepreneurs





This pillar focuses on women’s access to formal financial services. It also covers whether governments – alone or in partnership with the private sector – have developed innovative solutions to promote financial inclusion for women. Examples include removing or modifying bank requirements for physical collateral or verifiable cash flow so that women can access finance more easily.

Bangladesh’s medium–high performance in this pillar is related to several factors. These include the adoption of a financial inclusion strategy, availability of trade finance schemes and financial instruments to facilitate entrepreneurship and trade, and provision of financial support to women-led businesses to participate in trade fairs.

WHAT WORKS?

The Government of Bangladesh has adopted the [National Financial Inclusion Strategy \(NFIS\) 2020–2024](#). This plan seeks to improve access to financial services, broaden financial literacy and build digital financial infrastructure. The NFIS also aims to improve the collection of gender-disaggregated data to monitor financial inclusion targets.

Exim Bank provides finance schemes to facilitate trade. These include letters of credit, advances against export bills surrendered for collection, export cash credit and packing credit.

Several financial instruments to support entrepreneurship are available, including some targeted at women. For instance, SMEF provides special interest rates to women entrepreneurs. The Bank of Bangladesh provides collateral-free loans to women and refinancing schemes for small businesses.

National institutions provide financial and in-kind support to businesses to participate in business-generating activities. For example, the Export Promotion Bureau provides subsidies to entrepreneurs to participate in trade fairs. SMEF provides booths for women to exhibit their products in national trade fairs.

WHERE IS MORE PROGRESS NEEDED?

In 2021, 63% of men and 43% of women in Bangladesh owned a bank account. Digital financial services can offer alternative ways for women to own a financial account other than through traditional banks. Examples include mobile wallets and branchless banking. However, there remains an opportunity to develop digital financial services in the country.

In line with the NFIS, it is recommended to strengthen the capacity of financial institutions to collect gender-disaggregated data on financial products usage. This can help understand and address the financial needs of women entrepreneurs and traders.

Lastly, the government can consider providing venture capital financing opportunities to start-ups, including those that are women-led.



WORK AND SOCIETY



Woman's opportunities in the labour market



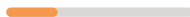
Women are allowed to work in the same industries and perform the same tasks as men



Estimated annual earned income, US\$ PPP (female-male ratio)



Division of labour



Labour force participation rate (female-male ratio)



Female share of employment in managerial positions (%)



Gender occupational biases



Unemployment rate with advanced education ratio (male-female ratio)



Time-use on unpaid domestic chores and care work (male-female ratio)



National and regional awareness initiatives on gender equality and women's economic empowerment



National public campaign has been launched to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment



National institutions participate in regional or international initiatives promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment



National institutions support private and non-profit initiatives



Awards and recognition programmes exist to highlight companies' best practices or initiatives promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment



National institutions support awareness initiatives launched by the private sector, non-governmental organizations, or international organizations to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.





This pillar addresses the unconscious or conscious gender biases that prevent women from participating equally in the economy. This includes existing patterns of job segregation and the interventions set up by governments to address these biases.

Bangladesh scored low–medium in this pillar. This is due to existing gender biases, observed through the annual earned income, time spent on unpaid work and labour-force participation rates among women and men. There is also a lack of updated data on unemployment rates among highly educated women, and on men's and women's share of employment in managerial positions.

WHERE IS MORE PROGRESS NEEDED?

In Bangladesh, women have a lower tendency to work than men. In 2022, labour participation rates were 91% among men and 42% among women. A gender income gap also remains. The female-to-male ratio of annual earned incomes is 0.410.

Gender-disaggregated data on the unemployment rate among the highly educated and women's employment in managerial positions is not regularly collected. The latest available data shows that in 2017, the unemployment rate was 21% among highly educated women and 8% among their male counterparts. In the same year, 10.7% of managerial positions were occupied by women.

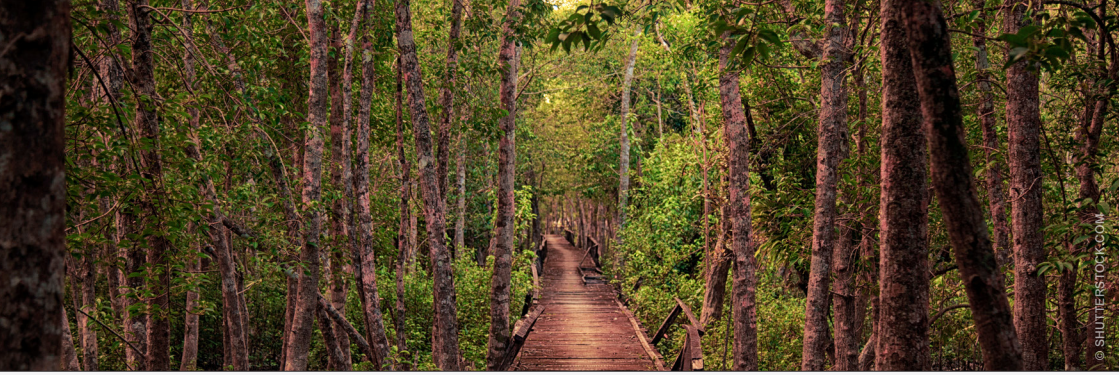
In 2012, a time-use survey was piloted in Bangladesh. In 2021, the results of this survey showed that women spend 5.9 hours per day on unpaid domestic and care work while men spend 0.8 hours only. This shows that there remains an imbalance in the distribution of household responsibilities between women and men.

The way forward

Gender-responsive policies, programmes and practices are crucial to achieve Bangladesh's vision of an industrialized and export-driven economy. Bangladesh's 8FYP identifies gender equality and women's economic empowerment as key to economic growth.

Bangladesh has made progress in promoting gender equality; for example, in the areas of school enrolment and participation in political roles. National laws have also been established to protect women's rights. However, SheTrades Outlook results show that more can be done to advance gender equality through business and trade. In this regard, policymakers can adopt specific actions to mainstream gender into trade policy. This includes involving women in consultation processes, incorporating gender issues in trade agreements, improving monitoring of policies and programmes through gender-disaggregated data, and building the capacity of trade-related public entities on trade and gender issues. Further details on the steps and actions to make trade policy work for women are available in the ITC policy guide: *From Design to Evaluation: Making Trade Policy Work for Women*.

There is also an opportunity to ensure that public procurement and e-commerce work for both women and men. Implementing targeted initiatives can help address women's challenges in accessing skills and finance. National institutions can work together and ensure that gender-mainstreaming efforts are coherent. Finally, policymakers can share good practices on promoting women's economic empowerment with the world and learn through examples from other countries.



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01

MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN TRADE POLICY

Bangladesh can further mainstream gender into trade policy. Specifically, the government can:

- Include women's business associations in consultation processes
- Incorporate gender issues in trade agreements and conduct gender impact assessments before and after signing a trade agreement
- Use gender indicators to track outcomes of trade policies and programmes
- Adopt the internationally recognized definition of a woman-led business specified in ISO IWA 34: Women's entrepreneurship – Key definitions and general criteria
- Appoint a trade and gender focal point in the government
- Provide training on gender issues to the staff of the ministries responsible for trade and industry, and Customs officials.

02

INCLUSIVE FRAMEWORKS

It is important to ensure that policies, schemes and practices related to business and trade benefit both women and men. To do this, the government can:

- Adopt a preferential public procurement scheme for women
- Mainstream gender in the national digital trade policy
- Include trade concerns in the national gender policy.



03

MONITORING MECHANISMS

To support the monitoring and evaluation of existing gender-responsive initiatives, the government can:

- Encourage financial institutions to collect gender-disaggregated data on financial product usage
- Collect gender-disaggregated data on:
 - exporting firms
 - suppliers in the public procurement database
 - participants in skills training programmes
 - clients of business and trade support services
 - unemployment rates among the highly educated
 - employment in managerial positions.

04

TARGETED INITIATIVES

Initiatives targeted to women are crucial to ensure that they benefit from access to skills and finance initiatives. Specifically, national institutions can:

- Provide incentives and targeted information to women through women's business associations to ensure women's participation in skills-upgrading programmes and access to available financial instruments
- Provide venture capital financing opportunities, specifically to women-led start-ups.

GOOD PRACTICE:

IMPROVING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO CREDIT IN BANGLADESH

Women entrepreneurs often face difficulties raising capital for their businesses. Typically, women struggle with documentation and other requirements to apply for loans. Women also lack information on how to access and manage finance.

In this context, the Bangladesh Bank formulated a policy that allocates 15% of credit funds, offered at a reduced interest rate, to women-led businesses. Banks and other financial institutions across the country implement the policy. These institutions publish information via printed materials and online. They also prioritize the processing of loan applications from women-led businesses. Further, banks and other financial institutions provide financial literacy training for women entrepreneurs.

In 2018, almost 13,000 women entrepreneurs accessed approximately \$106 million in capital. In 2019, around 23,000 women entrepreneurs received a total of \$3 billion of refinancing through various banks and financial institutions.

Source: [Bangladesh Bank](#)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

More information about the SheTrades Outlook project can be found at:
www.shetrades.com/outlook

This policy brief was prepared by Ma. Diyina Gem Arbo (Associate Economic Affairs Officer, SheTrades Initiative, ITC) and Vanika Sharma (International Consultant, SheTrades Initiative, ITC) under the guidance of Anahita Vasudevan (Associate Economic Affairs Officer, SheTrades Initiative, ITC). Selim Raihan administered the data collection.

Contribution to UN Sustainable Development Goals:



#SheTrades

FOR EVERY WOMAN, EVERYWHERE

The International Trade Centre's (ITC) SheTrades Initiative is a global platform that empowers women to engage in business, creating value for both them and their communities. The Initiative ensures that the right capacities and conditions are present to foster inclusive and sustainable trade.

SheTrades delivers activities and training that improve women traders' ability to do business successfully. At the same time, the Initiative works to remove inequalities that hinder women's participation in trade and foster a better trade environment for all.



International
Trade
Centre

SheTrades

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