



International Labour Organization

iTrack

Evaluation Unit (EVAL)

ILO - EVALUATION

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- **Technical Backstopping Office:** Sub-Regional Office for South Asia
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- **Donor: country and budget** European Union (EUR 22.5 million) ILO (0.5 million)
- **Evaluation Manager:** Divya Verma

*This evaluation has been conducted according to ILO’s evaluation policies and procedures.
It has been quality controlled by the ILO Evaluation Office.*

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

BEF	Bangladesh Employers Federation
BQF	Bangladesh Qualification Framework
BMET	Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training
BTEB	Bangladesh Technical Education Board
CBT&A	Competency Based Training & Assessment
CHT	Chittagong Hills Tracts
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSE	Centre for Skills Excellence
CTA	Chief Technical Adviser
DP	Development Partner
DTE	Directorate of Technical Education
DWCP	Decent Work Country Programme
EQF	European Qualification Framework
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
HQ	Headquarters
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMDC	Instructional Material Development Centre
LFM	Logical Framework Matrix
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEWOE	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoLE	Ministry of Labour and Employment
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRA	Mutual Recognition Agreement
NCCWE	National Coordination Committee for Workers Education
NPD	National Project Director
NQF	National Qualification Framework
NSDA	National Skills Development Authority
NSDC	National Skills Development Council
NSDS	National Skills Development System
NTVQF	National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework
PMCC	Project Monitoring and Coordination Committee
PMF	Project Monitoring Framework
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning

ROAP	(ILO) Regional Office for Asia and Pacific
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SWAP	Sector-Wide Approach
TA	Technical Assistance
TAPP	Technical Assistance Project Proposal
TC	Technical Committee
TIP	TVET Investment Plan
TMED	Technical and Madrasah Education Division
TTC	Technical Training Centre
TTTC	Technical Teachers Training College
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
VTTI	Vocational Teachers Training Institute

1 Executive Summary

The “Skills 21” project is a system strengthening initiative of the Government of Bangladesh funded by the European Union (EU), implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Directorate of Technical Education (DTE) under the Technical and Madrasah Education Division (TMED), Ministry of Education as lead government agency. It has a duration of 4 years (January 2017 – December 2020) and is funded by the European Union (EUR 19.5 million + EUR 3 million top-up granted in 2018) as well as a contribution of EUR 0.5 million from the ILO and EUR 1.0 million from the Government of Bangladesh (in kind).

The project has a focus on three specific outcomes:

- Improved Quality of the TVET / skills development system
- Improved Access to and Equity within the TVET / skills development system through TVET model institutions
- An enabled environment through improved Governance and Management of the TVET / skills development system

Independent Mid-Term Evaluation

The scope of the Independent Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) is from the project start until October 2019. It was carried out from November 10 to 21 by two external consultants in accordance with the ILO evaluation policy based on the United Nations Evaluation Norms and Standards, following ILO Evaluation Guidelines and Support Guidance Documentation.

The evaluation involved a desk study, field visits in Dhaka, Bogura and Gaibandha, and Skype/phone interviews with informants who could not be met during the field visit. A set of evaluation questions was proposed in the Terms of Reference, which the evaluators have slightly edited and completed during the Inception phase of the MTE.

Relevance, strategic fit and design

The justification and relevance of the project was and remains based on the needs and priorities of the country, which mainly relate to:

1. The need of target groups and beneficiaries to acquire better and recognized skills increasing opportunities for better jobs;
2. The priorities of the Government to advance the Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET), improve the governance of the sector and promote the development of skills in general;
3. The complexity of the environment surrounding the sector, characterized by a fragmented governmental involvement of 24 ministries and numerous agencies, multiple development partners supporting the sector with different agendas and priorities, and an overall lack of coordination among all parties.

Skills 21 builds on previous interventions, in particular the TVET-R programme (2007-2015), links with the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) Strategic Vision 2021, consecutive National Development Plans highlighting the importance of TVET/Skills development and GoB priorities to implement Sustainable Development Goals.

The project is anticipated to contribute to ILO P&B 2018-2019 Outcome 8 (Protecting workers for unacceptable forms of work) and Outcome 10 (Strong and representative employers’ and workers’ organizations), as well as to Outcome 1 (More and better jobs for inclusive growth and

improved youth employment prospects). The project is an integral part of the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) for Bangladesh 2017-2020.

The design of the project largely followed recommendations made by the final evaluation of TVET-R, but is often considered to be too “ambitious”. The main weaknesses of the project document are:

- The disconnect between objectives and allocated time frame, aggravated by the delays incurred so far;
- The activity-based nature of the design, which would benefit from a more results-based approach for each activity;
- The absence of a clear justification for a number of indicators;
- The absence of a sustainability strategy.

The strategic orientation of the project is adequate, but adjustments will need to be made to deal with the consequences of long delays incurred in implementation and address inadequacies of the design.

Effectiveness

The project faces significant delays, but outputs produced so far are rather remarkable considering the rather short “official” implementation time (May 2018-October 2019). The project team is implementing activities according to agreed work plans, which eventually will lead to the achievement of outcomes, however not within the current time frame of December 2020 for several reasons mainly linked to human resource shortages (regular staff of TVET institutes), slow responsiveness of the Government, procurement delays and sometimes missing strategic guidance.

Skills 21 has learned from previous interventions and builds on them to support the Government to improve the TVET/Skills sector by different means covering the development of the BQF, the creation of Model Institutes and Centres for Skills Excellence, promoting policy dialogues, paving the way towards a Sector Wide Approach and more. Capacity building is a key feature of all activities and is in general well perceived by all beneficiaries.

Stakeholders’ engagement with the project is dynamic, however more limited by the private sector and weak by the main GoB implementing partner.

Efficiency

Less than 20% of the total budget has been disbursed at the time of the MTE; the disbursements appear to be in line with activities implemented, but administration charges were high in 2017 and 2018 due to late official start of the project. The staffing of the project has so far been adequate.

The main 2 reasons for the delayed implementation are: i) the late approval of the TAPP which took 17 months, and ii) operational delays linked to the lack of responsiveness of the GoB, the length of certain processes and procurement delays. As a result of these delays, the “quantity” of outputs will not be delivered in December 2020.

The oversight and management mechanism of the project is adequate; monitoring has been given particular attention and the M&E system of Skills 21 could serve as best practice for other projects implemented by the ILO.

Communication and visibility of the project are well-managed; activities follow a communication action plan and visibility of the project is ensured.

Impact and Sustainability

Work is still in progress for all planned activities, some of which have not even started. Some objectives are likely to be achieved by 12/2020, but how the project will in the end strengthen TVET system, improve services by model institutions and improve management and governance of TVET institutes cannot be assessed at this stage.

The impact of the project entirely depends on GoB responsiveness to the Skills 21 intervention, which is adequately implemented by the ILO team setting the foundations for both impact and sustainability.

A sustainability strategy does not exist for now and has not been given any specific thoughts yet, neither by the project team, nor by the government.

The sustainability of the Skills 21 intervention requires:

- **Solid foundations:** the activities implemented by the project team are adequate to build the foundations but the current time frame is too short to allow a sufficient level of outputs to be finalized
- **Government ownership and commitment:** the responsiveness of the GoB officials is rather slow, often inadequate or insufficient. This deficit of GoB support and ownership is likely to affect the sustainability of Skills 21
- **Stronger involvement of private sector:** the involvement of the private sector is essential to ensure the appropriateness of TVET/Skills development with the needs of the industry. At this time the engagement of the private sector through the project remains too limited and needs to be reinforced
- **Coordination of all stakeholders involved in the TVET/Skills sector:** the lack of coordination between all GoB ministries and agencies involved, development partners, private sector and other stakeholders undermines the correct emergence of a National Skills Development System. The creation of the NSDA and the project's efforts to promote a SWAP are positive signs hinting towards better coordination in the future, but the challenges remain important and efficient coordination will take some time to be achieved.

Conclusions

Overall, the work is in progress. Activities are adequate and correctly implemented by a dedicated team. The current contractual end date of the project needs to be reviewed in order to allow objectives to be met or closely met; Government responsiveness needs to be enhanced.

Good practices

The M&E system and tools developed by the project.

Lessons learned

The lessons learned emerging from the project are:

1. There is a lack of awareness about programme modalities in the government sector
2. The need to have Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRA) is unrealistic and flawed
3. Preparing and achieving a SWAP needs more time and a different approach
4. TVET outreach and networking activities can work in the region

Recommendations

1. Undertake a results analysis of each activity implemented until now
2. Improve the Performance Measurement Framework in defining realistic impact indicators reflecting what has actually been achieved
3. Consider extending the project for 8-12 months and define clear priorities for the remaining time of implementation; this is shorter than the 18 months extension expected by the project team and requires the preparation of detailed roadmaps for all components aiming at maximizing outputs and results by December 2021 at the latest.
4. Increase Government commitment and engagement
5. Engage more intensively with the private sector
6. Consider June 2021 as the final date to achieve Outcome 1 in i) reviewing the sequence of activities regarding the development of the BQF for which indicators need to be adjusted; and ii) providing Human resources to VTTI and TTTC to allow them to achieve their objective to become CSE by June 2021 in line with a clear vision/strategy on how CSEs will contribute to improving TVET/Skills after closure of the project.
7. Specific recommendations for Outcome 2: Adjust achievement indicators for training to match values proposed for October 2021 and provide support to the GoB to define a vision/strategy for the 7 model institutes which will include own sustainability and further dissemination of their model status to other TCs (Sustainability plans should include plans to raise funding either from government and/or from self-revenue generating activities - further DP interventions should not be considered as suitable sustainability options). Sustainability strategies should also consider developing partnership models with both public and private institutes and developing synergies with other projects focusing more on the private sector, in particular the SUDOKKHO project.
8. Specific recommendations for Outcome 3: assign the leadership of establishing a SWAP to the GoB (and not to the project team) in requesting the GoB to designate a government official as SWAP mediator/coordinator (to be supported by the ILO team). The appointed coordinator should define what can be achieved within a time frame of 8-12 months beyond December 2020 and adjust the indicator of "SWAP in place" to "SWAP modalities defined and agreed by all parties, ready to be implemented by the GoB". For Output 3.2, review activities which need to be adjusted and/or deleted: Activity 3.2.1 (delete), Activity 3.2.10 (reformulate in replacing the objective of having MRAs in place by a more realistic objective hinting towards cooperation agreements on information exchange or similar). Indicators in general should be more qualitative and results-oriented (e.g. besides the number of policy dialogues completed, it would be of added value to have an indicator on what these dialogues have achieved).
9. Define a clear overall exit strategy for the project
10. Ensure higher gender and disability inclusion

2 Project Background

The following sections briefly describe the environment surrounding the project, its objectives and planned outputs as defined in the project design document and the Logical Framework Matrix (LFM), as well as an overview of the management and implementation arrangements.

Country context

In Bangladesh, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is mostly delivered by publicly funded institutions belonging to 23 Ministries. A large number of private institutions also deliver TVET commercially, occasionally through improved course-curriculum, better exposed trainers with new equipment, and practical support in national and international job placement in collaboration with the industry, and adequately funded by several development partners. However, access to quality training has been largely limited in Bangladesh and those few opportunities have not always been accessible to all. While several NGOs offer skills training irregularly through short courses, partnership between training service providers and the industry has never worked very well; the industry blames the poor quality of training for not choosing the graduates and instead prefers to ensure on the job training for the selected workers. In addition, large and small NGO service providers have also offered vocational training to women and young adults, often connected to dedicated funded programmes.

TVET in Bangladesh is delivered through different institutions under different Ministries and Departments. The Directorate of Technical Education (DTE) under the Ministry of Education, the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) under the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, the Department of Women Affairs under the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, and Department of Youth Development (DYD) under the Ministry of Youth and Sports deliver the major portion of skills training through their respective Training Centres all over the country. The Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) regulates admission, curricula and testing ensuring the quality assurance of the skill/TVET training system through accreditation of courses, TVET certification and registration of training providers. Most of these activities are to be coordinated in the future by the newly formed National Skills Development Authority (NSDA), though TMED and BTEB claim responsibility over TVET education.

Traditionally, inadequate budget provision has been one of the major constraints in TVET education in Bangladesh affecting procurement of modern equipment, regular upgrading of these equipment, employment of sufficiently proficient trainers and qualified assessors, support to continuous skill upgrading, and other issues affecting the quality of TVET.

While Bangladesh is expected to prepare to graduate to middle income country, the Government has already made the commitment in different strategy papers (e.g. in the National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction II) that TVET students will represent 20% of all secondary students by 2020.

Project description

The "Skills 21" project is a system strengthening initiative of the Government of Bangladesh funded by the European Union (EU), implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Directorate of Technical Education (DTE) under the Technical and Madrasah Education Division (TMED), Ministry of Education as lead government agency.

Skills 21 is a four-year project (2017-2020) with the development objective to “Increase productivity and better employment opportunities through an environmentally conscious, inclusive, demand-driven, and interlinked skills development system responding to the needs of the labour market”. The total budget of the project is EUR 21.00 million (EUR 19.5 from the EU, 1.00 from the Government (in kind) and 0.5 from the ILO).

The Skills 21 project has a focus on three specific outcomes:

- Improved Quality of the TVET / skills development system
- Improved Access to and Equity within the TVET / skills development system through TVET model institutions
- An enabled environment through improved Governance and Management of the TVET / skills development system

The project aims to strengthen the National Skills Development System of the country. For this, it was designed to develop a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) to create a single integrated national framework for learning development comprising a) general education and training; b) higher education; and c) TVET, and also to support national and international skills recognition. The Project is aimed to support the development of a new expert resource for all training providers, which will deliver trainer and assessor training, research and development of inclusive instructional materials, particularly interactive e-Learning tools, available to all training providers.

Moreover, the Skills 21 project aims to support alliances between industries and relevant public/private training providers to develop and implement demand-driven skills training programmes ensuring employment possibilities for the beneficiaries (Youths). In doing so, the project is due to place specific emphasis on paving the way for the transition to a greener, more sustainable economy (skills development for “green jobs”). This includes providing skills for emerging occupations in green industries, integrating issues related to resource efficiency into relevant curricula as well. The Project is intended to lead a process among stakeholders to improve the governance and management of the TVET/Skills Development system in the country, including the development of a Sector-Wide Approach (SWAP).

Given the importance of labour migration in the Bangladesh economy, the project also aims to provide inputs for the creation of adequate opportunities to integrate “migration” in the skills development system and assist in implementation of the policy for (a) skilling and reintegrating returning migrants and (b) those aspiring to migrate legally with skills needed in the destination countries. It also aims to address skills development related challenges faced by the ethnic minorities and other groups in the areas affected by climate change including the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

Objectives, scope and outputs of the project

As stated above the project was designed to “Increase productivity and better employment opportunities through an environmentally conscious, inclusive, demand-driven, and interlinked skills development system responding to the needs of the labour market”.

The outcomes and outputs of the project were defined as follows:

- **Outcome 1:** Improved Quality of the TVET / skills development system
 - Output 1.1 - A National Qualification Framework (NQF) ensuring harmonization of the qualification pathways across primary, secondary, technical and higher education is established.

- Output 1.2 - Expanded delivery of Competency-Based Training and Assessment (CBT&A) for trainers, assessors and managers in education and training institutions
- Output 1.3 – Better quality learning programmes and materials available
- **Outcome 2:** Improved Access to and Equity within the TVET / skills development system through TVET model institutions
 - Output 2.1 - Seven existing TVET institutions (including one in CHT) have become model institutions for inclusive, environmentally conscious, quality and labour market - responsive skills development, holding the RTO designation and performing as BTEB assessment centres
 - Output 2.2 - Seven inclusive Model TVET institutions serve as benchmark for industry driven, inclusive and environmentally conscious institution-level governance and management
- **Outcome 3:** An enabled environment through improved Governance and Management of the TVET / skills development system
 - Output 3.1 - The mechanisms and elements for a SWAP in the TVET / skills development sector are developed
 - Output 3.2 - Increased capacity within the key TVET / skills development institutions and bodies for the dialogue, implementation, monitoring and review of TVET / skills development policies

The project was anticipated to contribute to ILO P&B Outcome 8 (Protecting workers for unacceptable forms of work) and Outcome 10 (Strong and representative employers' and workers' organizations), as well as to Outcome 1 (More and better jobs for inclusive growth and improved youth employment prospects).

The project is an integral part of the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) for Bangladesh 2012-2015 for which it directly supports:

- Priority 1 (Generating productive employment with improved sustainable enterprises and skills development)
- Pillar 2: (Pro-poor economic growth with equity)
- CPO 101 (Skills development reforms for employability and livelihoods implemented)

The project furthermore contributes to Outcome 2.1 – Output 2.1.7 (Vulnerable groups benefit from area-based interventions that support local economic development and improve livelihoods) of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2012-2016 for Bangladesh.

The project links to the Government of Bangladesh Strategic Vision 2021 and to the 7th five-year plan (2016-2020), as well as with several other national, global and regional development frameworks.

A Logical Framework Matrix (LFM) specifying activities for each outcome with relevant targets, indicators, means of verification and assumptions is attached to the project document; a Project Monitoring Framework (PMF) based on the LFM has subsequently been developed by the project team.

Organisational arrangements for implementation

Management and Implementation Team

The overall management and implementation of the project is the responsibility of the Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) based in the ILO Country Office for Bangladesh. Overall guidance is provided by the Country Director.

The project document defined the staff to be assigned to the project as follows:

- A Chief Technical Advisor (CTA), at P5 level
- A TVET and Skills Development Specialist, at P4 level
- A Policy Development, Governance and SWAP specialist, at P4 level
- A National Programme Officer for Procurement
- A Communications and Advocacy specialist, at P4 level
- A National Programme Officer (Policy Development, Governance and SWAP)
- 3 National Programme Officers (covering respectively BQF and CSE, TVET and M&E)
- A Finance and Administration Officer
- A Communications Officer
- Administration staff (procurement, operations, secretariat and logistics)

Specific support is provided by ILO staff experts in the areas of Quality Assurance, Enterprise Development, Gender, disability inclusion, apprenticeship, OSH and Worker and Employer engagement, as well as by external consultants recruited on ad-hoc basis.

The project is overseen by a Project Steering Committee (PSC) chaired by the Secretary, Technical and Madrasah Education Division (TMED), Ministry of Education and co-chaired by the EU Delegation.

The project is furthermore guided by a Project Monitoring and Coordination Committee (PMCC) chaired by the Director General of the Directorate of Technical Education, who also acts as the National Project Director. The PMCC supervises the overall implementation of the project and the coordination with other government partners.

Project funding arrangements

The project budget is EUR 21.00 million provided by the European Union (EUR 19.5 million) as well as a contribution of EUR 0.5 million from the ILO and EUR 1.00 million from the Government of Bangladesh (in kind). A further EUR 3 million has been added to the budget by the EU for specifically targeting migration issues in the framework of the project.

Monitoring system

A Logical Framework Matrix (LFM) specifying activities for each outcome with relevant targets, indicators, means of verification and assumptions is attached to the project document. A Project Monitoring Framework (PMF) based on the LFM has subsequently been developed by the project team. The LFM has been revised in June 2018.

3 Evaluation Methodology and Evaluation Questions

3.1 Purpose, scope and beneficiaries of the evaluation

The **purpose** of the Mid-term Independent Evaluation is to assess the continued relevance of the project and the progress made towards achieving its planned objectives. This will give an opportunity to assess the progress of the project towards its long-term goal, determine if the project design addresses the needs that were identified and to assess how well the project is being implemented to meet these needs. The findings of the evaluation will provide all stakeholders with information to assess and revise or improve, as maybe required, work plans, strategies, objectives, partnership arrangements and resources, including recommendations for the remaining period of implementation.

The MTE will also ascertain if the project is still coherent with the ILO's strategic objectives; is relevant and useful to the key stakeholders and is being conducted in an efficient manner according to ILO standards and the agreed project document. The evaluation will focus on the standard OECD evaluation criteria of relevance, validity, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

The Terms of Reference define the specific objectives of the evaluation as follows:

- a. Assess the implementation of the project during the period January 2017-August 2019. Identify factors affecting project implementation, both positively and negatively. If necessary, propose revisions to the expected level of achievement of the objectives and project timelines;
- b. Analyse the implementation strategies of the project with regard to their potential effectiveness in achieving the project outcomes, including unexpected results;
- c. Review the institutional set-up, capacity for project implementation, coordination mechanisms and the use and usefulness of management tools, including the project monitoring tools and work plans;
- d. Identify the contributions of the project to the DWCP, SDGs, the ILO objectives and its synergy with other projects and programmes;
- e. Identify lessons and potential good practices for the key stakeholders;
- f. Provide strategic recommendations for the different key stakeholders to improve implementation of the project activities and attainment of project objectives;
- g. Assess the relevance of the sustainability strategy, its progress and its potential for achievement, identifying the processes that are to be continued by stakeholders.

The **scope** of the Independent Mid-Term Evaluation is from the project start (1 January 2017) until the time of this evaluation (October 2019) and covers all geographical areas where the project has been implemented.

The **Clients and intended users** of the evaluation are:

- Country stakeholders
- ILO HQ, DWT-New Delhi and CO Dhaka technical and programme backstopping officers
- ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific
- Representatives of governments
- Representatives of workers' organizations

- Representatives of employers' organization
- EU as the donor agency

The full Terms of Reference of the evaluation are set out in Appendix 1.

3.2 Evaluation Questions

The Evaluation questions suggested in the Terms of Reference have been edited in the Inception Report. Additional questions suggested by the evaluators have been approved by the Evaluation Manager.

Relevance and strategic fit

- Do problems and needs that gave rise to the project still exist or have they changed?
- Is the project coherent with the Government objectives, National Development Frameworks (National Skills Development Policy) and does it support the outcomes outlined in the UNDAF (UNSDCF) and DWCP as well as the SDGs?
- To what extent has the project integrated gender equality issues in the design, implementation, results and M&E framework?
- Are the outputs achievable or overly ambitious?
- Has the Project identified any other constraints or opportunities that need to be accommodated in the design in order to increase the impact and relevance of the Project? How does the project complement and fit with other on-going ILO programmes and projects in the country? How does the project fit with other non-ILO programmes and projects in the country?
- What links have been established so far with other activities of the UN or other cooperating partners operating in the Country in the areas of TVET and Migration?

Validity of design

- Does the project design (i.e. priorities, outcomes, outputs and activities) address the stakeholder needs that were identified?
- Does the design need to be modified in the second half of the project?
- How appropriate and useful are the indicators described in the project document in assessing the project's progress? Are the targeted indicator values realistic and can they be tracked? If necessary, how should they be modified to be more useful? Are indicators gender sensitive?
- Are the means of verification for the indicators appropriate?
- What, if any, alternative strategies would have been more effective in achieving its objectives?
- On the whole, are project assumptions realistic; did the project undergo a risk analysis and design readjustment when necessary?
- Was a strategy for sustainability clearly defined at the design stage of the project?

Effectiveness

- Has significant progress related to the Project's desired outcomes been made? What are the contributing and hindering factors for moving towards their achievement? Was/is the Project's response appropriate and sufficient?

- Have unintended results of the project been identified?
- How has the project contributed to coordination of government agencies and partner to enable them to work together effectively in TVET?
- How has the project learnt from initiatives previously implemented by ILO in the TVET sector of Bangladesh e.g. TVET reform project, BSEP project?
- How has the project contributed to consolidating ongoing policy initiatives specifically in the TVET sector of Bangladesh and in the education sector in Bangladesh in general
- Has the capacity building approach of the project been successful so far?
- How have stakeholders been involved in project implementation?
- How does the oversight mechanism operate and provide strategic guidance to the project?
- To what extent has the project promoted the relevant ILS or ratification and application of the ILS, social dialogue and tripartism?

Efficiency

- Have the available technical and financial resources been allocated and used strategically to provide the necessary support and to achieve the broader project objectives? (Value for money)
- Could the use of the resources be improved?
- Have projects outputs in terms of quality and quantity been delivered in a timely manner?
- Has the management and governance structure put in place worked strategically with all key stakeholders in Bangladesh, ILO and the donor to achieve project goals and objectives?
- How has the staff recruitment/hiring process facilitated or hindered the project implementation?
- Does the project management have an M&E plan in place on activities and results (i.e. output and outcome)?
- Is information being shared and readily available to national partners?

Impact orientation

- How is the project contributing to strengthening the TVET system?
- How is the project contributing towards improvement of services provided by the model institutes to the trainees?
- How is the project contributing towards improving the management and governance of the TVET institutes?
- To what extent are national partners able and willing to continue with the project? How can the project best build the foundation to ensure that the project is sustainable after its completion? Can further donor interest and support be leveraged to upscale the outcomes of the project?

Sustainability

- Is the project strategy and management steering towards sustainability?
- How can the project's key partnerships contribute to the sustainability of the initiatives under the project and to what extent? Are other partnerships worth considering and, if so, which one?

- To what extent has the project strengthened the capacities of government structures, social partners and Private sector to ensure improved TVET governance and management?

3.3 Methodology

The Independent Mid-Term Evaluation was carried out in accordance with the ILO evaluation policy based on the United Nations Evaluation Norms and Standards, following ILO Evaluation Guidelines and Support Guidance Documentation. It fully adheres to ILO evaluation norms, standards and ethical safeguards.

The Evaluation is managed by Ms. Divya Verma, National Programme Officer – based at ILO DWT for South Asia and Country Office for India.

The evaluation has been conducted by Mr. Pierre Mahy and Mr. Reza Patwary, External Evaluators, from 10-21 November 2019. The choice of Bogura and Gaibandha for the field visit (16-18 November) was linked to the location of both VTTI and one of the most advanced TTCs where the project provided support in relatively close proximity of each other. Other locations would have been difficult to reach considering the short time allocated for the evaluation.

The work of the Independent Mid-Term Evaluation took place over three phases:

Phase	Activities and outputs	Tentative schedule
Preparation/Desk Phase	Review of documents Submission Inception Report	10-11 November 12 November
Field Mission Phase	Visits, meetings and interviews (see Annex 2 for complete list of persons interviewed) Debrief GoB and EU/ILO	12-20 November 21 November
Synthesis and Reporting Phase	Synthesis and preparation draft evaluation report Submission draft report ILO comments to evaluator Preparation of Final Report Submission of Final report with Executive Summary and Annexes	28 November – 10 December 10 December 5 January 2020 22-25 January 2020 27 January 2020

The evaluation tools employed were documentary analysis, identification of relevant evaluation questions and sub-questions, semi-structured interviews to elicit the facts relevant to the evaluation questions and synthesis of findings, conclusions and recommendations. Findings were validated by means of various cross-checks with stakeholders during debriefing sessions at the end of the field visits.

The evaluation referred to the Logical Framework of the project as the main basis for the evaluation and used the Annual Progress Reports 2017 and 2018, and technical documents delivered by the project as the evidence of reported outputs. Interviews conducted mainly aimed to confirm statements made in the reports and assess whether or not developments are

pointing towards the achievement of tangible results, which allow “trends” to be identified in relation to the potential sustainability and the emerging impact of the activities and project outputs.

4 Answers to Evaluation Questions

The presentation of the following sections (4.1 – 4.6) is based on the evaluation questions provided in the Terms of Reference of the evaluation (edited in the Inception Report). Considering the limited time allocated for the field work (as well as for the desk phase), the findings are somewhat limited and reflect the views expressed by informants during the field visit as well as the MTE team's observations.

4.1 Relevance and strategic fit

Current relevance

The justification and relevance of the project was mainly based on the needs and priorities of the country, which mainly relate to three key realities:

1. The **need of target groups and beneficiaries** to acquire better and recognized skills increasing opportunities for better jobs;
2. The **priorities of the Government** to advance the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), improve the governance of the sector and promote the development of skills in general; and
3. The **complexity of the environment** surrounding the sector, characterized by a fragmented governmental involvement of 24 ministries and numerous agencies, multiple development partners supporting the sector with different agendas and priorities, and an overall lack of coordination among all parties.

Since the project was designed, not much has changed and the needs and priorities remain largely unchanged, despite several important developments among which the definition of various policies through the NSDP which include the introduction of the National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework (NTVQF).

The needs of the target groups did not disappear and the lack of coordination remains critical, though the creation of the National Skills Development Agency (NSDA) could be a positive step in the right direction.

The Government is now looking ahead at several important milestones including the achievement of its Vision 2021, of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the graduation to middle-income country status. While preparing the next Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) focusing on job creation and GDP growth, ensuring equal opportunities for all and tackling the effects of climate change, the Government aims at strengthening technical education and skills development.

The relevance of the project therefore remains unchanged.

Coherence

"Skills 21" builds on previous interventions, in particular the TVET-R programme (2007-2015) which was in line with the Sixth and Seventh Five-Year Plan of the Government which underlined the importance of skills development in achieving government policy objectives.

The objectives of the GoB have not changed with regard to TVET/Skills development, to the contrary. The project aims at strengthening the NSDS and is coherent with the forthcoming

objectives of the Government which will be outlined in the next Five-Year Plan. The project also links with the GoB Strategic Vision 2021, with its aim to achieve the implementation of SDGs, as well as with several other national, global and regional development frameworks.

It supports the further development and implementation of the National Skills Development Policy and the development of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) to create a single integrated national framework for learning development encompassing general education and training, higher education, and TVET, while also supporting national and international skills recognition.

Given the importance of labour migration in the Bangladesh economy, the project also aims to provide inputs for the creation of adequate opportunities to integrate “migration” in the skills development system and assist in implementation of the policy for (a) skilling and reintegrating returning migrants and (b) those aspiring to migrate legally with skills needed in the destination countries. The Project also aims to address skills development-related challenges faced by the ethnic minorities and other groups in the areas affected by climate change including the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

The Skills 21 project was designed to align closely with the Budget Support Programme HCDDP-21 (Human Capital Development Programme for Bangladesh 2021) by providing relevant Technical Assistance (TA) to the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders and by facilitating budget to support implementation.

The project is anticipated to contribute to ILO P&B Outcome 8 (Protecting workers for unacceptable forms of work) and Outcome 10 (Strong and representative employers’ and workers’ organizations), as well as to Outcome 1 (More and better jobs for inclusive growth and improved youth employment prospects).

The project is an integral part of the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) for Bangladesh 2017-2020 for which it directly supports:

- Outcome 1.2 Employment and Skills (Accessibility of TVET system enhanced in alignment with the National Skills Development Policy especially for women, disadvantaged groups, people with disabilities and ethnic groups and in view of introducing skills in emerging technologies)

The project furthermore contributes to Outcome 2.1 – Output 2.1.7 (Vulnerable groups benefit from area-based interventions that support local economic development and improve livelihoods) of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2012-2016 for Bangladesh.

Gender

The project design document does not specifically refer to a gender strategy, but mentions “especially women” as target groups for some activities. During the Inception period, the project referred to the National Strategy for Promotion of Gender Equality in TVET and to the National Women Development Policy 2011 as reference documents to mainstream gender equality in the project. There are a few specific measures regarding gender equality promotion for which indicators are now shown in the revised LFM (e.g. increase in percentage of women in training activities, gender segregated target data for trainers and assessors, etc.).

The project initiated the development of a gender mainstreaming strategy (combined to inclusion of persons with disability) and organized workshops on gender mainstreaming.

Realistic outlooks

The time frame allocated to the project (4 years) is rather short considering the rather large scope of the intervention and the usual delays to be expected, among which the compulsory approval process of the project by the GoB (Technical Assistance Project Proposal – TAPP) which in average takes six months, and the usual delay in recruiting the technical staff for implementation. Other important factors including the limited capacities of GoB partners, the number of stakeholders involved and the need for consensus on important decisions should also have been better taken into consideration when defining either the objectives or the time frame of the project. Considering the agreed time frame of four years, the outlook to achieve all outputs and outcomes was rather optimistic; target values of several outputs are unlikely to be achieved.

Constraints, opportunities and synergies

The relevance of the project does not need any further clarification; very little has changed since the project was designed which would justify a different degree of relevance. Constraints however, in particular those related to the lack of government responsiveness resulting in a slow decision-making process, need to be taken into consideration in order to achieve the objectives and make an impact.

Several other ILO projects are being implemented in parallel to Skills 21, in particular the “Application of Migration Policy for Decent Work for Migrant Workers (January 2016-December 2020)” project, with which the migration component of Skills 21 can develop synergies and exploit cooperation opportunities.

Other non-ILO projects related to Skills 21 are:

- the Urban Resiliency programme of UNOPS which, among other things, includes labour-based maintenance needs assessment and targeted skills training systems,
- the ADB/SDC project Skills for Employment Investment Programme (SEIP) which supports the government’s skills development initiatives,
- the DFID/SDC Skills and Employment Programme Bangladesh (SEP-B), known as SUDOKKHO, focusing on skills development in cooperation with the private sector,
- the World Bank’s Skills and Training Enhancement Project (STEP), which is helping improve the quality and relevance of technical and vocational education in Bangladesh with skills sought after by employers in Bangladesh and abroad, and
- the European Union’s Human Capital Development Programme 21 (HCDP-21) which supports the GoB in the implementation of its development policies aiming at a better educated, trained and qualified human capital and focusing on both Equity and Access, and Governance.

Although contacts between Skills 21 and other projects have been reported to the evaluators, very little cooperation has been identified, the main contacts with other development partners relating primarily to the development of the Sector Wide Approach (SWAP).

Other important projects are in the pipeline for the coming years providing further opportunities for synergies and cooperation, among which mainly large ADB and WB projects.

4.2 Validity of design

Needs analysis

The project document states that the project will address the needs and priorities of the country, as expressed by the National Skills Development Council (NSDC) and by the private sector to move towards a comprehensive, functional National Skills Development System (NSDS).

The need of target groups and beneficiaries to acquire better and recognized skills increasing opportunities for better jobs is one of the main justifications of the project. Older strategy papers of the government (e.g. the 2nd Bangladesh Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper “National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction II” in 2008) pointed out that the public TVET sector is disconnected from the job market, lacking flexibility and unresponsive to the needs of the labour market, both internally as internationally.

Needs and priorities have been clearly identified both from development partners interventions (of which the TVET-R programme) and reference documents, as well as in GoB strategy papers, hence not requiring any further needs analysis to be undertaken when designing the Skills 21 project.

Recommendations made by the final evaluation of the TVET-R programme furthermore pointed out remaining weaknesses of the system and suggested the Skills 21 project to focus on strengthening and consolidating the broader policy framework and complete the system- building project initiatives started during the TVET-Reform project. The recommendations which covered i) improved quality in the TVET and skills development system, ii) Access and Equity, and iii) Management and Governance, have largely been taken into consideration in the project document.

Design adjustment

During implementation, the project carried out specific need analyses (e.g. the occupational skills needs analysis to identify the occupations needed in the catchment areas of the seven model institutions, training needs assessments, etc.) to adapt the activities to specific needs of the beneficiaries. The LFM has been revised accordingly while at the same time clarifying indicators, baseline, target values and means of verification for the different outputs and outcomes.

The design of the project for the remaining time of implementation (with or without extension in time) will need to be adjusted to address the main shortcomings of the project document. This relates in particular to:

- The disconnect between objectives and allocated time frame, aggravated by the delays incurred so far;
- The activity-based nature of the design, which would benefit from a more results-based approach for each activity;
- The absence of a clear justification for a number of indicators;
- The absence of a sustainability strategy.

The additional tasks implied by the top-up rider targeting 3,000 migrants and their families will also have to be taken into consideration.

Indicators and means of verification

As stated above, the LFM has been revised during implementation; the most recent version dates back to June 2018. It provides a much clearer overview of the activities, outputs and outcomes with an explanation of the “rationale for revision”. The project has also developed a M&E Framework and an “Activity Tracker” table which shows what has been done and when it has been done. The means of verification are clear.

Because of the delays incurred, certain target values will need to be adjusted. Their values will depend on the decision (or not) to extend the project as well as on the duration of the extension (if approved).

A further revision of the LFM would also benefit from more results-based indicators, for which work is in progress at the time of the MTE (see section on M&E under Efficiency).

Strategic orientation

The strategic orientation of Skills 21, largely inspired from the TVET-R final evaluation’s recommendations is adequate; the difficulties in implementing it mainly arise from an optimistic assumption that the project would enjoy full ownership and responsiveness from the government partners, in line with the declared priorities by the GoB on TVET/Skills development. As will be clarified in the section covering Effectiveness, this is not a given fact and delays the achievement of several objectives.

Risks and assumptions

As already pointed out by the ROM review, “during the design phase of the action, no suitable risk analysis was carried out”. The project document has an “Assumptions and Risks” table attached to it, which is a rather meaningless generic table found in other project documents.

It would have been useful to have a detailed risk analysis, especially covering potential consequences of well-known conditions related e.g. to the capacities of the GoB, the large number of stakeholders involved in the sector, the different agendas of development partners, etc. Such a risk analysis would have avoided setting targets and expectations at a level which is now often considered by many stakeholders to be too ambitious.

The revised LFM of June 2018 mentions a few assumptions.

Sustainability strategy

The project document does not include any precise sustainability strategy.

4.3 Effectiveness

Output/Outcome/Results analysis

Before looking at outcomes, and because the project faces important delays, it is important to look at the outputs produced so far (clearly reported with more details in the Activity Tracker designed by the M&E officer):

For Outcome 1: Improved Quality of the TVET / skills development system

- Output 1.1 - A National Qualification Framework
 - BQF National Steering Committee constituted and Seven Technical Committees (TC) formed and operational: Primary and Mass Education, Secondary and Madrasah

- Education, TVET and Engineering (Diploma) Education, Higher Education (Diploma, BS, MS, PhD), Higher Education (Medical and Health Education), Higher Education (Agriculture, Fisheries, Livestock and Forestry) and Higher Education (Engineering)
- Qualification frameworks from other countries/regions (including the European Qualification Framework EQF) reviewed and discussed in the TCs
- Study on the Implementation of the NTVQF completed
- More than 10 BQF consultation workshops and meetings conducted
- Work plan and draft for the BQF prepared and submitted to DTE for consultation and feedback
- Output 1.2 - Competency-Based Training and Assessment (CBT&A) for trainers, assessors and managers
 - Agreements signed with VTTI and TTTC to initiate the process of becoming Centres for Skills Excellence
 - Gap analysis completed for selected occupations to support tools, equipment and furniture according to the institution to make them NTVQF Level 1 and 2 standards
 - Three occupations to support 2 laboratories per CSE (Electrical Installation and Maintenance (EIM) and Welding in VTTI and EIM and Refrigeration and Air Conditioning in TTTC) selected – procurement is in process
 - Gap analysis to upgrade physical accessibility in terms of renovation and upgrade electrical and safety facilities conducted and drawing, design and budget finalized
 - Level 4 CBT & A Training conducted for 30 assessors and 60 trainers in VTTI and 40 trainers in TTTC. Training conducted for 200 trainers and 500 assessors in other accredited institutions.
 - IMAB formed in VTTI followed by a 1st consultation workshop
 - Qualification Packages (Competency Standards, Course Accreditation Documents, Curriculum, Competency-Based Learning Materials, and Assessment Tools) for Assessors, Trainers, Master Trainers and Managers approved
 - Process of obtaining BTEB certification initiated for 3 institutes
- Output 1.3 - Better quality learning programmes and materials
 - Strategic plan to develop IMDC developed
 - Set-up for e-platform established in VTTI
 - Training provided to 63 teachers

Contribution of outputs to outcome 1:

Despite the delay incurred, the list of activities implemented is quite impressive; the project team is implementing activities according to an agreed work plan, which eventually will lead to the achievement of outcomes, however not within the current time frame of December 2020, for several reasons:

- The technical work undertaken by the 7 TCs now requires the BQF National Steering Committee to meet and decide on options and proposals prepared by the TCs – no meeting has taken place since December 2018, despite several requests made by the project team
- The training of trainers and assessors takes more time than anticipated, mainly due to a lack of human resources in VTTI and TTTC, which both do not anticipate the process of becoming Centres for Skills Excellence to be completed in less than 3 years from now; even more time will be needed to be able to seek some form of official certification; 2 more years are needed to complete the training and selection of IMDC teachers before learning materials can be developed

- The procurement of equipment for the laboratories has proven to be difficult as the identification of qualified suppliers took more time than anticipated

Overall, work is in progress and all activities being implemented are relevant to achieve the objectives; a more appropriate support and responsiveness of the GoB is needed to speed up the progression on all fronts.

For Outcome 2: Improved Access to and Equity within the TVET / skills development system through TVET model institutions

- Output 2.1 - Model institutions
 - 7 institutions selected and implementation agreements signed
 - Occupation needs analysis conducted in the 7 institutions: 9 skills/occupations identified to be offered - electrical Installation and maintenance work, IT related (computer application/graphic design), welding and fabrication, plumbing and pipe fitting, refrigeration and air conditioning, car driving cum auto mechanics, carpentry/wood working machine operator, sewing machine operator/tailoring & dress making, and caregiving
 - Gap analysis completed for physical upgrades and provision of tools – procurement in process
 - Training packages in entrepreneurship for green business developed; piloted to 13 candidate master trainers and 42 candidate trainers
 - Career guidance and job placement training to 14 trainers and institutes' staff
 - Skills training provided to 675 trainees by the 7 institutions
 - 128 industry workers assessed through RPL
 - 11 MoUs between TTCs and enterprises signed
- Output 2.2 - Model TVET institutions as benchmark for industry driven, inclusive and environmentally conscious institution-level governance and management
 - Guidelines for IMAB developed and 7 IMABs in place (Gaibandha Technical Training Centre, Sylhet Technical School and College, BS Kaptai Polytechnic Institute, Khulna Mohila Polytechnic Institute, Institute of Marine Technology Bagerhat, Feni Polytechnic Institute and Jamalpur Technical School and College)
 - First meetings of IMABs completed

Contribution of outputs to outcome 2:

The “model” approach for training centres is innovative and likely to succeed (for the designated institutions), although a number of weaknesses may undermine its potential impact:

- The selection of the 7 institutes to become models has not primarily taken the geographical location of industrial areas into consideration, but rather followed other criteria which indeed were also important (CHT, disadvantaged regions of the country, migration, etc.) – it is the evaluator’s understanding that the final selection was made by the Ministry, despite suggestions made by the project team to consider more economically appropriate locations. This being said, the selected institutions will need to reach out to geographical areas where skills can best be utilized (as done by Gaibhanda TTC)
- The ground work has been correctly done (needs analysis, identification of skills to be offered, training packages), is still being correctly done (training, career guidance, job placement, etc.) but the targets set for the number of trainees to benefit from the

intervention has been overstated due to incorrect assumptions (e.g. time needed to complete the process of achieving operation model status, availability of trainers, etc.)

- The “vision” and ultimate goal of a model institute has not been sufficiently anchored in the management of the institutes – strategic thinking is not sufficiently developed and needs to be reinforced
- The involvement of the private sector is, at this stage rather limited, though the IMABs put in place are now engaging with the private sector; their active contribution will facilitate a more beneficial participation of the private sector.

As for Outcome 2 work is in progress. The 7 model institutes are likely to be operational by the end of the project but the quantitative target values for trainees will have to be reviewed. The major concern however relates to impact and sustainability.

For Outcome 3: An enabled environment through improved Governance and Management of the TVET / skills development system

- Output 3.1 - SWAP in the TVET / skills development sector
 - A roundtable discussion held on TVET SWAP involving government, workers, employers and DPs on 22 May 2019; priorities discussed and documented which will lead to the SWAP design.
 - Situation analysis in TVET sector completed in August 2019. A consultation workshop on the current situation and development priorities held on 6 July 2019 with relevant stakeholders where the TVET situation was presented and priorities were discussed.
 - Priorities for consideration defined as per project team suggestions based on consultations with stakeholders and structure of SWAP leading to a possible TVET Investment Plan (TIP)
 - Skill Development Working Group (SDWG) meeting held on 15 April 2019 during which it was decided to review the TOR of SDWG. DP SDWG meeting held on 1 September 2019 with the presence of most of the DPs where DP priorities were discussed for future investment on TVET.
- Output 3.2 - Increased capacity within the key TVET / skills development institutions and bodies for the dialogue, implementation, monitoring and review of TVET / skills development policies
 - Baseline study for NSDP review completed and agreement signed with the NSDA for supporting stakeholders’ consultations on NSDP, assessment of TVET data system, and preparation of NSDA Action Plan.
 - MIS review according to HCDP 21 prepared and submitted to DTE
 - Training needs Assessment of TMED on sector financing completed
 - 8 policy dialogue workshops conducted in 8 TVET institutes (Sylhet, Gaibandha, Feni, Jamalpur, Kaptai, Khulna, Bagerhat and Bogura VTTI) with 30 participants in each during which participants were briefed about NSDP, organising policy dialogue and preparing policy brief. Participants also practiced conducting policy related discussion through group work.
 - 4 batches of 5 day-long Policy Dialogue training conducted for 100 managers of TVET institutes at TTTC where the NSDP 2011 was discussed in detail. Resource persons presented on different policy issues and participants had dialogue around those issues.

- Benchmarking study conducted with 3 EU countries on comparability of trainers' and assessors' competencies and qualifications. Mission and consultation workshop with stakeholders conducted to validate findings and recommendations.
- Policy dialogue conducted with the Planning Commission, NSDA and other relevant government agencies, private providers and development partners on skills investment in 8th Five Year Plan.

Contribution of outputs to outcome 3:

The idea of a SWAP is valid and progress has been made by the project in paving the way towards a "TVET Investment Plan (TIP)" SWAP model, which however faces multiple challenges:

- The definition of a SWAP remains unclear among the different parties involved; the project team may have a clear view of how a TIP could be developed (and has already undertaken preparatory activities in this direction), but many stakeholders seem to have a different view and enthusiasm about a sector wide approach
- The expected time line to have a SWAP in place by December 2021 is very optimistic and would require all parties involved to agree on still many unclear issues and most importantly the GoB to play a much stronger leading role in advancing the agenda on SWAP

With regard to output 3.2 in which several activities are dependent on progress for the SWAP, the activities related to policy dialogue at different levels are to be highlighted as they are likely to lead to interesting developments. The list of 12 activities under this output includes several unnecessary or wrongly defined activities which need to be revisited (e.g. activity 3.2.12 reads "Facilitate knowledge sharing and partnership with key international networks in TVET like BIBB (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung - Germany), other European TVET organizations such as ETF (European Training Foundation), CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training), EfVET (European Forum for TVET), and related networks in the region/other countries (like the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization - VOCTECH and UNESCO-UNEVOC)" – the corresponding indicator "network agreement signed" is unrealistic as such European institutions do not sign network agreements with non-European member countries. At the most they can share their knowledge products and can participate in seminars or workshops in Bangladesh and vice versa. Under the circumstances the existing log frame indicator needs to be changed).

Overall, progress in producing outputs is not "significant", but in line with the time of *real* implementation, which is less than 1.5 years after approval of TAPP.

Unintended results of the project have not been identified.

Contribution to coordination

As part of the activities, the project has signed an Implementation Agreement with the National Skills Development Authority (NSDA). The NSDA, directly attached to the Prime Minister's office, is mandated, among other things, to be the coordinating authority in the skills sector. The aim of the Implementation Agreement signed with NSDA is to support the authority in its mandate through various activities, including the revision of the National Skills Development Policy 2011, developing a National Action Plan for Skills Development, etc.

The support provided by the project to the NSDA will contribute to the objective for better coordination among the different ministries and agencies involved at GoB level, but also with other stakeholders in the sector, of which development partners and the private sector.

Better coordination is also promoted by the project in bringing together the different stakeholders at roundtable discussions and workshops aiming at making progress on the TVET SWAP.

Lessons learnt from previous interventions

As stated above, the project builds on previous interventions, in particular the TVET-R programme of which the final evaluation made specific recommendations for the design of Skills 21. These recommendations were largely taken up in the design of Skills 21.

The B-SEP project closed in June 2019 and one of the key achievements was the recognition of better trained, qualified and competent workers by the private sector, as identified by an internal project evaluation survey. Some of the skills developed under B-SEP were taken over in the Skills 21 project for the development of the model training centers.

B-SEP also tested Public-Private partnerships which may have inspired the concept of IMABs in the training institutes; the project also supported private TVET institutes which however has not been taken over by Skills 21.

Policy impact of the project

The main objective of the previous TVET-R project was to review and strengthen TVET policies, systems and legislation. It supported the GoB in defining a National Skills Development System (NSDS), including the National Skills Development Policy (NSDP) and the National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework (NTVQF). The NTVQF developed by the project was not adapted to the needs of Bangladeshi and/or overseas employers and not internationally recognized.

The final evaluation of TVET-R recommended that Skills 21 undertakes a revision of the NTVQF in integrating vocational and educational pathways to be agreed between government and industry, and making it internationally recognizable.

The project has been working on developing a National Qualification Framework (NQF) subsequently relabeled Bangladesh Qualification Framework (BQF); Qualification frameworks from other countries/regions (including the European Qualification Framework EQF) have been reviewed and are being discussed in the technical working groups.

Work is in progress and how further developments will materialize is entirely depending on the GoB's intentions and ownership of the process.

The project has furthermore organized several policy dialogue meetings with participation of government, employers' and workers' representatives, aiming at improving the implementation of the TVET policy by promoting a working relationship between the private sector and the labour market.

Capacity building

Capacity development has been (and still is) an important part of the project implementation; it is an integral part of all activities and is essential to ensure the benefits of the intervention in all areas covered by the project. The ILO-ITC provides capacity-building support services to the project in different specific tasks under five of the seven Outputs.

Skills 21 has a capacity improvement plan for the TMED, DTE, BTEB and other government agencies, provides capacity building to the 7 model institutes, to the CSEs, to the IMABs, and more.

Capacity development is in general well perceived by all beneficiaries, but at this early stage its practical benefits cannot be assessed.

Stakeholders' engagement

The MTE is not in a position to provide a comprehensive analysis of all stakeholders' engagement with or in the project, but overall most beneficiaries and other parties directly or indirectly involved with the project appear to be actively cooperating with the project team.

Two major stakeholders however could (and should) be much more involved, i.e.:

- The private sector, which for now plays a limited role as earlier described; in this regard it is worth noting the strong discontent expressed by the Bangladesh Employers Federation (BEF) with regard to the lack of consideration of the private sector in the project's strategic decisions and activities. The BEF participated in several meetings connected to the sector and in the Steering Committee, but felt that though they have addressed their concerns, they are not convinced that those comments are actually being considered or integrated in the TVET strategy.

- The Directorate of Technical Education, the GoB implementing department which assigns the National Project Director. Because of heavy workload and/or other priorities, very little time is dedicated to actually exercise the management duty as main partner of the project. One would expect a much stronger commitment to get things moving when they need to progress, for example in calling in a Steering Committee to advance the BQF.

Oversight mechanism

In accordance with the project document, the Project Steering Committee (PSC) is the oversight body for the project; it is co-chaired by the EUD and the MoE. The PSC should meet every six months. The first meeting took place on 28 October 2018; the second one on 8 May 2019.

The project furthermore has a Project Monitoring and Coordination Committee (PMCC) chaired by the National Project Director (NPD), the Director General of DTE; the PMCC oversees project implementation at operational level. Four PMCC meetings have been held so far (10 September 2018, 12 December 2018, 12 March 2019 and 23 July 2019), hence respecting the planned quarterly frequency of meetings.

Both PSC and PMCC were established after approval of the TAPP by the Government.

Minutes of the meetings of the committee's meetings reveal that the first PSC meeting endorsed the overall approach of the project, and agreed to the proposed implementation plans proposed for two quarters. The GoB confirmed that "the government would provide all sorts of cooperation to run the project to achieve the target stipulated in the project document".

PMCC meetings allowed sharing updates on project progress with all parties involved and making decisions on specific operational issues. It cannot be established from the minutes if concerns about implementation delays were raised and/or discussed.

The oversight mechanism is adequate, and will remain as such if the planned frequency of meetings is respected in the future.

International Labour Standards & Tripartism

The ILO's mandate is to advance social justice and promote decent work by setting international labour standards. The ILO promotes dialogue and cooperation between governments, employers, and workers and assists them to coordinate strategies for promoting decent employment and stands out as the lead UN agency for development cooperation in the field of skills and employment promotion, while also paying particular attention to value chain development, gender, disability and green jobs among other cross-cutting issues.

Much work has been done by social partners and stakeholders with the ILO without binding normative linkages, setting parts of the foundation for taking on sustaining international obligations (e.g. the Skills Development Policy was developed with the support of the ILO without binding normative linkages). The relation to the central obligation to "develop comprehensive and coordinated policies and programmes of vocational guidance and vocational training" key to C142 is clear. Elements of stakeholder efforts favouring disabled persons through training and education are consistent with C159, in the light of the new law in

Bangladesh and existing ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities)¹.

The backstopping support provided by ILO to the project ensures that ILO's values are taken into consideration at all times, though the involvement of employers' (BEF) and workers' (NCCWE) associations is limited to their participation in a few meetings. NCCWE leadership was found not well-versed about the project activities. Though they recalled their participation in some of the meetings, it was difficult for them to remember what was discussed and what were the issues raised in the meeting on behalf of NCCWE.

¹ David Tajgman (ILO)

4.4 Efficiency

Resource allocation/reallocation (Human – Financial)

Financial data provided by the project team shows that less than 20% of the total budget has been disbursed at the time of the MTE. For the period of 1 January 2017 to 31 October 2019, expenditures are as follows (in US\$)²:

Year	Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3	Administration	Total
2017	52,927	113,776	86,521	101,192	354,416
2018	681,974	316,421	246,930	401,636	1,646,961
2019 (10 months)	755,194	592,011	690,832	398,579	2,436,616
Total	1,490,095	1,022,208	1,024,283	901,407	4,437,993

The disbursements appear to be in line with activities implemented; administration charges including HR expenses are high in 2017 (28.5% of total expenditures) and 2018 (24.5%) due to late official kick-off of implementation resulting from delayed TAPP approval, but reduced to an acceptable level in 2019 (16.5%) also taking into consideration that approximately 2 million US\$ have already been committed (procurement and other engagements).

With just over one year to go until the end of the project (currently planned for December 2020), it will be practically impossible to engage and disburse the balance of funds, which amounts to approximately 16.5 million US\$.

Staffing of the project is in line with the staffing table provided in the project document, though the recent ROM review pointed out an organizational imbalance at the operational level (one Programme Officer covering Outcomes 1 and 2). This imbalance has been corrected by appointing Programme Officers separately for Outcome 1 and 2. The project team expects to be able to recruit one more Programme Officer to handle to migration portfolio covered by the rider to the contract.

At the time of the MTE, the CTA's position was filled by an acting CTA, pending finalization of contracting procedures for a new CTA due to take up his position on 1 December 2019. The "interim" period does not seem to have affected the project implementation.

More worrying is the limited involvement of GoB, which the ROM mission also highlighted in emphasizing the need to reinforce the active involvement of the GoB middle-management staff (the BTEB, DTE, VTTI, and management of the seven MTIs). This remains entirely valid; a stronger involvement and commitment of the GoB will be necessary to allow key decisions to be made to reach project objectives.

² The GoB contribution is not included in the table

Implementation delays

The implementation of the project is facing important delays for multiple reasons:

- The main initial delay of 17 months is due to the very late approval of the TAPP by the government; this delay was totally beyond control of the project and would normally have implied the project team to be idle during this period.
- Operation delays are due to several factors, in particular:
 - The lack of responsiveness of the government: government involvement is required to endorse decisions as is for example the case for the development of the NQF, which requires the related steering committee to meet in order to endorse proposals made by the technical committees working on the NQF – this has been pending for several months despite repeated requests of the project team to organize a new meeting (the last one dates back to 11 December 2018). Another example is the inadequate response of the government in assigning a sufficient number of trainers to the training centers, despite requests from the project to give priority to this issue.
 - The length of procedures required to reach an objective (e.g. achieving “model” status for the TVET institutions or “excellence” status for VTTI and TTTC requires multiple steps to be followed and training to be provided over longer periods of time than most likely anticipated when the project was designed)
 - Difficult procurement of equipment: certain equipment required to install the laboratories are not readily available off the shelf and require longer supplier identification. The project team however does its best to reduce procurement delays to the minimum.

As a result of these delays, the “quantity” of outputs will not be delivered in December 2020 which is the current closing date of the project, the more that the project team keeps a strong focus on delivering quality rather than taking short-cuts which would affect the quality of outputs.

Project governance

The oversight mechanism of the project already described under Effectiveness allows the different stakeholders, including the ILO and the donor to express their views and orient the activities of the project towards achievement of the objectives.

The evaluators did not have an opportunity to attend one of the PMCC (or PSC) meetings, hence cannot comment on the discussions which are taking place.

As stated above, the oversight and management mechanism is adequate, will remain as such if the planned frequency of meetings is respected in the future and likely to provide the platform for strategic discussions among stakeholders.

Monitoring & Evaluation

M&E has been given particular attention in the Skills 21 project. In accordance with the staffing table of the project document, a full-time M&E officer has been recruited to develop monitoring tools and ensure regular monitoring of project implementation.

A Project Monitoring Framework (PMF) has been developed, as well as specific monitoring tools tailored to the nature and needs of the different activities. The M&E officer has furthermore

developed an “Activity Tracker” table which allows to identify the status of implementation of each activity. He also initiated a needed results-based approach to the project and developed Results chains which are regularly updated. This is a rather new style for a project implemented by the ILO, often lacking adequate monitoring and results-based reporting.

On-site monitoring of activities is also performed by the M&E officer on a regular basis to provide the different components managers and officers with relevant feed-back on what is happening on the ground. The on-site “verifications” are meant to suggest corrective actions to be taken when necessary.

The M&E system of Skills 21 is outstanding and should serve as best practice for other projects implemented by the ILO.

Information sharing (communication & visibility)

Communication and visibility of the project are well-managed by a dedicated Communications Officer with the support of a Communication and Advocacy Specialist on part-time basis (cost-shared with another ILO project). A short Communications Strategy has been prepared in defining communication priorities and pointing out strengths and weaknesses in the environment, which need to be taken into consideration.

A Communications Action Plan has also been prepared describing key audiences, key messages and planned activities, as well as Communication and Visibility Templates for all publications and events.

The MTE team has been presented with a comprehensive set of communication and visibility materials which follow EU visibility guidelines.

Planned activities appear to be very relevant, in particular the planned “road show” across Bangladesh, aiming at raising awareness and interest in TVET and skills development.

4.5 Impact orientation

Considering the shortened implementation time, work is still in progress for all planned activities, some of which have not even started.

Some objectives likely to be achieved by 12/2020, but how the project will in the end strengthen TVET system, improve services by model institutions and improve management and governance of TVET institutes cannot be assessed at this stage.

The impact of the project entirely depends on GoB responsiveness to the Skills 21 intervention, which is adequately implemented by the ILO team setting the foundations for both impact and sustainability.

4.6 Sustainability

A sustainability strategy does not exist for now; the project document did not mention anything about the need to prepare one and the project team has not really thought about it (yet). Sustainability has also not been given any specific thoughts by the model institutes or the CSEs

which are more inclined to see the intervention of the Skills 21 project as “just another project” which comes after TVET-R, B-SEP and/or other projects funded by other development partners, and which will be followed by another project.

It can indeed be expected that more projects supporting TVET/Skills Development will appear in the near future, but sustainability cannot and should not be based on the expectation of another intervention.

Sustainability of the Skills 21 intervention requires:

- **Solid foundations:** the activities implemented by the project team are adequate to build the foundations for sustainability. The current time frame however is too short to allow a sufficient level of outputs to be finalized, hence the need for a no-cost project extension.
- **Government ownership and commitment:** the project provides all the necessary support to government structures in several different ways, but the responsiveness of the GoB officials is rather slow (e.g. BQF Steering Committee not meeting for one year), often inadequate (e.g. lack of human resources in training institutes) or insufficient (e.g. national project director too busy with other tasks). This deficit of GoB support and ownership is likely to affect the sustainability of Skills 21.
- **Stronger involvement of private sector:** the involvement of the private sector is essential to ensure the appropriateness of TVET/Skills development with the needs of the industry, hence ensure the responsiveness of the labour market to these developments. At this time, the engagement of the private sector through the project, besides its participation in policy discussions, is being triggered through involvement of enterprises and associations in the IMABs, but this is at early stages. In Gaibandha, for example, there is a small participation of private sector (one member in the Management Board). However, in general, participation of private sector would essentially require participation of skills employers which may include metal workshops, electrical workshops in a small city but also large-scale industrial set-up. This kind of vision of cooperation however was missing in the evaluators’ conversations with the GoB institutions. In those discussions, it was felt that private sector engagement was more like a compliance issue in this GoB institutions-supportive project which is Skills 21. The working relationship with the private sector still needs to be reinforced to achieve a real buy-in from the private sector and ensure greater sustainability.
- **Coordination of all stakeholders involved in the TVET/Skills sector:** the lack of coordination between all GoB ministries and agencies involved, development partners, private sector and other stakeholders, including workers’ and employer’s associations, and civil society in general, has undermined (and still does) the correct implementation of a National Skills Development System. The emergence of the NSDA and the project’s efforts to promote the creation of a SWAP are positive signs hinting towards better coordination in the future, but the challenges remain important and efficient coordination will take some time to be achieved.

5 Conclusions, Lessons learned and Recommendations

5.1 Overall assessment

Overall, as already mentioned, work is in progress. Activities are adequate and correctly implemented by a dedicated team. The current contractual end date of the project needs to be reviewed in order to allow objectives to be met or closely met. Government responsiveness needs to be enhanced.

5.2 Lessons learned

The way in which Skills 21 started and the relative short period of implementation since the TAPP was approved already allows to draw several lessons among which the following:

1. There is a lack of awareness about programme modalities in the government sector

The Skills 21 project is basically an EU grant to Bangladesh to which the GoB commits an in-kind contribution covering the rent for the use of government facilities and training venues, as well as high officials' overheads from the Ministries and Departments involved with the project. The grant-project modality of Skills 21 significantly differs from loan-project modalities usually associated with projects funded by multi-lateral development partners like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. The evaluators noted that a high number of Government officials interviewed complained about the lack of incentives they receive while working with Skills 21, whereas the other projects provide more benefits. The Skills 21 project provides a fair amount of financial allocations to relevant GoB officials for capacity development activities, as well as visits outside the country to learn about best practices in skills development and institutions in other countries. It is therefore unfortunate to learn about the GoB officials' focus on higher incentives which, according to several informants, dictates the priority (or not) given by some officials to the Skills 21 project.

2. The need to have Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRA) is unrealistic and flawed

Mutual Recognition can only emerge from mutual benefits. Analysing responses from several partner institutions and ILO officials, it is fair to say that seeking to obtain any MRA in its present form and understanding is unrealistic.

The GoB's view is that upgrading the skills comparable to those of western countries and obtaining mutual recognition will facilitate exporting skilled human resources to destination countries; the Government looks at TVET as a common solution to skilled migration, youth employment and foreign exchange earnings; destination countries however may not necessarily be on the lookout for skilled migrants from Bangladesh, especially not in Europe. Initial communication (with very limited response) with EU countries clearly demonstrates the challenge; European countries (and others) will not see the partnership as being responsive to their own priorities. A specific exchange programme with a particular country however could be considered to upgrade the framework of skills in Bangladesh and gain better understanding of European skills.

Some informants interviewed believe that an MRA would be more beneficial (and could possibly be achieved) between Bangladesh and Gulf countries and perhaps also between Bangladesh and Malaysia and Singapore where the majority of Bangladeshi unskilled and semi-skilled workers

are destined for. A dialogue about this sort of cooperation between high officials of Bangladesh and those countries however would need to be pursued and encouraged by GoB officials in a much more proactive way.

Considering these factors, seeking to obtain an MRA in its present form as an achievement of Skills 21 without stronger involvement of the GoB is unrealistic and unachievable.

3. Preparing and achieving a SWAP needs more time and a different approach

A SWAP is viewed as an effective solution to sort out the fragmented nature of the TVET administration and delivery in the public sector. Putting in place a SWAP is challenging mainly because of administrative power games and the desire of all parties involved to preserve the status quo among the different Ministries and Departments.

The same situation occurred previously when the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) was formed in 2017 and there was an unease observed about the coordination between BIDA and the powerful Departments and Ministries dealing with taxes and VAT, utilities and land registration to name a few.

The number of Departments and Ministries to be coordinated for the TVET/Skills sector is very high (23 Ministries and Departments at the moment and the number is growing). The growing fragmentation among the public institutions in the skills sector makes it challenging to coordinate. TVET has been emphasized by the top political leadership on many occasions, but it still misses the status of politically sensitive public service delivery, as is the case for health and primary education (this may have facilitated the establishment of a SWAP in primary education and health).

Because of this missing status of public service delivery, it will be difficult to achieve any visible progress on a TVET SWAP during the project lifetime. It is essential to carefully determine priorities and targets to be achieved, and to have a commitment of the GoB to advance the agenda on a possible SWAP.

4. TVET outreach and networking activities can work in the region

The newly established Technical Training Centre in Gaibandha made good progress in connecting local businesses to arrange placement, part-time jobs, and a cost sharing post-graduation platform to look for freelancing work / full time jobs by the TVET graduates. This is contrary to the popular belief that industries and small business are concentrated in large cities including Dhaka and establishing TVET institutions in the region may not be effective in finding jobs. But TTC Gaibandha (TTC-G) proved it wrong several ways, as demonstrated by the following examples:

- TTC-G connected with a female RMG-producer who receives orders from clients and sell garments through different fairs arranged for women entrepreneurs all over the country. She employs a number of TVET graduates from the institute who are either enrolled or completed their TVET course at TTC-G. While working there part-time they are either completing their undergraduate programme or managing their household work. Nevertheless, this is giving them a local stable livelihood option on completion of sewing training at TTC-G.
- Male graduates, particularly in the area of IT, receive the opportunity to open profiles and bid for work online using facility offered by a local IT service provider, in return for a monthly fee for using the facility and a small commission on the order they win. This gives the new graduates option to look for work while not being able to finance their own facility. These TVET graduates, however, have the option to operate independently when they secure enough of orders online. This is another industrial / business collaboration TTC-G forged for placement of the graduates.

- In addition to the Skills 21 supported course, TTC-G is also running a language programme in Japanese for the interested TVET-qualified students to seek employment in Japan under the categories of technical jobs in demand through a Government-to-Government cooperation. This also opens opportunities to the graduates of Skill 21 supported programme to plan further about their possibilities.
- TTC-G also connected with the local contractors who support construction projects across the country. Once such requirement of a local contractor in Gaibandha called for a number of electrical-skill graduates to be employed in construction project in Rohingya refugee camps in Cox Bazar where they were employed for 8-12 months with facilities of accommodation. This has certainly complemented their skills and certificates in a particular job category.
- TTC-G ran regular outreach activities with local leaders in Gaibandha which resulted in enrolment of participants living as far as 10 km or more who attend the course commuting with their bicycles every day.
- Finally, as it happens, the Skills 21 supported Placement Officer was also found visiting Dhaka to connect with some of the industry to employ graduates from TTC-G.

All of these examples demonstrate that networking and outreach activities can compensate for the absence of immediate industry proximity at TVET institution in remote areas.

5.3 Good practices

The evaluation team noticed a strong M&E capacity within the ILO programme team which effectively integrates three different and diverse components of the programme on a connected platform.

A results-based approach and result chains / impact logic of different outputs have been developed with rigorous exercise by the programme team during the first year of the programme implementation which served the project monitoring activities very well during the course of the project so far.

An “activity tracker” table was developed to identify the status of implementation of each activity. The tracker table was understood as an excellent tool to identify indicators that need to be monitored and measured, to determine the process of that monitoring and measurement exercise, and to identify the responsible person(s) for those tasks, among others. The tracking tool is capable of capturing and using all the qualitative and quantitative information gathered against specific indicators.

The Skills 21 project covers almost all regions in Bangladesh through the operation of model TVET institutions, in addition to Dhaka based coordination of the key Departments, Ministries and other key industry partners and associations/unions. As such, on-site “verifications” are actually needed given the fact that model TVET institutions are scattered all over the country with their local-level stakeholders and regional activities. The Skills 21 M&E system effectively integrates the field visits into the monitoring and results measurements mechanisms to suggest corrective actions to be taken when necessary.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the above analysis and conclusions, the evaluators would like to present the following recommendations:

	Recommendation	Justification
1	Undertake a results analysis of each activity implemented until now	<p>Activities implemented are relevant, but the question “what have they actually achieved?” cannot be answered without a sound analysis of their benefits and results. This is particularly the case for training activities (for which a methodology has to be defined on how to assess the benefit of a training in terms of outcome related for example to improved teaching methods). Another example would be about “MoUs signed between TTCs and enterprises” – what has happened after the MoUs have been signed?</p> <p>The analysis of the project design has identified a weakness in the absence of a potential results analysis of the project. Once the results analysis is made, it will be possible to define the potential impact of the project as a whole.</p> <p><i>Addressed to Project Management – High priority – No financial resources required</i></p>
2	Improve the Performance Measurement Framework	<p>In line with the first recommendation and to facilitate the results analysis, it is important to update in very precise terms the indicators of achievement which will be reached upon closure of the project (with or without extension). This goes beyond outputs and implies more than just showing numbers reached in order to prepare for a post-project impact evaluation.</p> <p>Activities already completed and further activities planned or initiated provide sufficient background information to clarify the indicators. Indicators should be realistic and directly relate to the activity and outcome they are defined for.</p> <p><i>Addressed to Project Management – Medium priority – No financial resources required</i></p>
3	Consider extending the project for 8-12 months and define clear priorities for the remaining time of implementation	<p>Compensating 17 months delay on a 48 months project is not realistic. The project will not achieve its objectives in the current time frame; without extension Skills 21 is likely to end as a failure.</p> <p>Some objectives can be achieved by 12/2020, others can be either achieved or closely achieved with an additional 8-12 months. This will however require the time lines proposed by the project team to be revised and adjusted, and also require a stronger commitment of the GoB. As the project team would prefer a longer extension (12-18 months), it will be the EU Delegation’s responsibility to make the decision. Such a longer extension will however</p>

		<p>reduce the pressure on the GoB to provide the necessary attention and commitment to the project</p> <p>Considering the current status of outputs and aiming at closing the project by December 2021 (i.e. with 12 months extension), the project team needs to prepare an overall exit strategy (ready by 12/2020 to ensure a one-year phasing out, including i) a clear roadmap for the development of the BQF (including fixed dates for Steering Committee meetings, staffing plan of training institutes, etc.) – ready by March 2020 and formalized in a signed agreement with the Ministry by May 2020; and ii) a strategic roadmap for the completion of the “model approach” by 12/2020 and for further dissemination to other institutes, defining objectives to be achieved by 12/2021 (the overall exit strategy needs to focus on financial sustainability of the model institutes).</p> <p>For Outcome 3 (SWAP), the evaluator recommends that the Ministry appoints a SWAP coordinator to lead the development of SWAP. After the evaluation, it appears that the project had circulated ToR to hire a SWAP coordinator as part of the Skills 21 team, hence paid by the project. This is a wrong approach – the responsibility to lead the SWAP lies with the government, not with the project.</p> <p><i>Addressed to the European Union/Project Team – High priority – No financial resources required (no-cost extension)</i></p>
4	Increase Government commitment and engagement	<p>The MTE has pointed out the lack of GoB responsiveness and the limited attention of the National Project Director in supporting the efforts developed by the ILO team. The team is there to support the NPD, not to make decisions on his behalf. GoB responsiveness needs to be given more attention to allow decisions to be taken and higher priority to be given to TVET/Skills</p> <p><i>Addressed to GoB/NPD – High priority – No financial resources required</i></p>
5	Engage more intensively with the private sector	<p>The private sector is the main recipient of skilled workers and needs to be given more attention both in policy orientations as in skills needs identification and skills development planning. Skills need to be market driven and a lack of engagement with the private sector could jeopardize the efforts of the project. Regional model institutes should have a platform with the local Chambers of Commerce or other dominant sector associations so that</p>

		<p>whenever possible, the concerned institutes can tap the need of the skilled workers in the area by training them appropriately in the TVET institutions.</p> <p><i>Addressed to Project Management – High priority – No financial resources required</i></p>
6	Specific recommendations for Outcome 1	<p>June 2021 should be considered as the final date to achieve Outcome 1. This implies i) reviewing the sequence of activities regarding the development of the BQF for which indicators need to be adjusted (“BQF in place” is not a valid target as this is not the project’s responsibility – likewise “MRAs to be signed” should be changed to e.g. “knowledge sharing agreements” – technically unfeasible activities like green jobs under NQF should be deleted); ii) providing Human resources to VTTI and TTTC to allow them to achieve their objective to become CSE by June 2021 and in line with a clear vision/strategy on how CSEs will contribute to improving TVET/Skills after closure of the project</p> <p><i>Addressed to GoB/NPD – High priority – Additional human resources required</i></p>
7	Specific recommendations for Outcome 2	<p>Adjust achievement indicators for training to match values proposed for October 2021 as a further delay would only provide a marginal increase of trained people and provide support to the GoB to define a vision/strategy for the 7 model institutes which will include own sustainability and further dissemination of their model status to other TCs (Sustainability plans should include plans to raise funding either from government and/or from self-revenue generating activities - further DP interventions should not be considered as suitable sustainability options). Sustainability strategies should also consider developing partnership models with both public and private institutes and developing synergies with other projects focusing more on the private sector, in particular the SUDOKKHO project.</p> <p><i>Addressed to Project Management – High priority – No financial resources required</i></p>
8	Specific recommendations for Outcome 3	<p>SWAP implemented by December 2021 as suggested by the project team is unrealistic. This target date is based on the assumption that the government (DTE) will endorse proposals at very short notice and that the Action Plan to be subsequently developed will be accepted by the government in August 2020.</p>

		<p>Fragmented discussions furthermore may not be the best practice to advance the agenda of a SWAP.</p> <p>It is therefore recommended:</p> <p>To clearly assign the leadership of establishing a SWAP to the GoB (and not to the project team) in requesting the GoB to designate a government official as SWAP mediator/coordinator (to be supported by the ILO team). The appointed coordinator should define what can be achieved within a time frame of 8-12 months beyond December 2020 and adjust the indicator of “SWAP in place” to “SWAP modalities defined and agreed by all parties, ready to be implemented by the GoB”.</p> <p>For Output 3.2, review activities which need to be adjusted and/or deleted: Activity 3.2.1 (delete), Activity 3.2.10 (reformulate in replacing the objective of having MRAs in place by a more realistic objective hinting towards cooperation agreements on information exchange or similar). Indicators in general should be more qualitative and results-oriented (e.g. besides the number of policy dialogues completed, it would be of added value to have an indicator on what these dialogues have achieved).</p> <p><i>Addressed to GoB & Project Management – High priority – No financial resources required</i></p>
9	Define a clear exit strategy for the project	<p>Besides exist strategies for the model institutes and for the Centres for Skills Excellence, an overall exist strategy for the project should be prepared, explaining how the GoB intends to sustain the benefits of the Skills 21 project. This strategy should include clear commitments from the GoB both on the provision of financial and of human resources, and suggest where further DP intervention would be necessary to compensate for what the GoB cannot provide.</p> <p><i>Addressed to GoB with support of Project Management – High priority – No financial resources required</i></p>
10	Ensure higher gender and disability inclusion	<p>Gender inclusion in TVET is low in Bangladesh. Sewing is about the only trade in which women are enrolled.</p> <p>It would be worth considering for example care-based services as new areas for TVET (female migrants to the Middle East are often working in this sector). Moreover, like in the primary and secondary education, an incentives mechanism can also be introduced in TVET sector to ensure higher</p>

		<p>participation of women which can start offering higher training allowances and wider coverage of tools for subsequent self-employment.</p> <p><i>Addressed to GoB – Medium priority – Limited financial resources required</i></p>
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference for the Evaluation

**Terms of Reference
for International and National Consultants for
Independent Mid-Term Project Evaluation
“Skills 21 – Empowering citizens for inclusive and sustainable growth”**

Project Code	BGD/16/04/EUR
Implementer	ILO Country Office for Bangladesh (CO-Dhaka)
Implementing Department (GOB)	Directorate of Technical Education, Technical and Madrasah Education Division, Ministry of Education (MoE),
Other Relevant GOB Ministries Partners	Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE), Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE), Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS), Ministry Of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (MoCHTA)
Constituents	Bangladesh Employers Federation (BEF) National Coordination Committee for Workers Education (NCCWE)
Collaborating ILO Units	SKILLS, GED, YEP, MIGRANT, GREEN, LABADMIN/OSH, ACTRAV, ACTEMP, ITC-ILO, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), Bangkok
Donor	European Union
Budget	Total EUR 21.00 million 19.50 million from EU 1.00 million from GoB (In kind) 0.50 million from ILO
Implementation Period	47 months, of which 6 months (January 2017 – June 2017) inception 36 months (July 2017-June 2020) operations 5 months (July 2020- December 2020) wind down
Type of Evaluation	Mid term
Timing	January 2017 – August 2019
Duration of the assignment	International Consultant: 27 working days over the period of three months (the assignment will be started from November 2019 but the date will be finalized after completion of recruitment process) National Consultant: 17 working days over the period of three months (the assignment will be started from November 2019 but the date will be finalized after completion of recruitment process)
Duty Station	International Consultant: Dhaka, Bangladesh and Home-Based. The assignment takes place for 11 days in Bangladesh with one visit outside Dhaka for three days and a total of 16 home-based days will also be incurred. National Consultant: Dhaka, Bangladesh with one visit outside Dhaka for three days

Deadline of submission application	to Ms. Divya Verma (divya@ilo.org) with a copy to Mr. Arif Tahmid (arift@ilo.org) within October 29, 2019 by 4.30pm (Bangladesh Standard Time)
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Background and Country Context

Bangladesh has experienced significant development over recent decades. Several social indicators have shown considerable improvements. Inclusive and sustainable growth is an important condition for Bangladesh to make further progress as a lower middle-income country. Bangladesh 7th Five Year Plan states that increased growth is dependent on more jobs in manufacturing, which requires that more jobs be created and that workers, especially women, become more employable by supporting vocational education and training. There is a need to train around 4 million people per year in Bangladesh to cover 2 million new labour market entrants each year and 2 million backlog training in the system per year. Lack of skills and education is recognized as a critical limiting factor (along with transportation and energy) in two key policy documents of the Government: Vision 2021 and the 7th Five Year Plan. The Government of Bangladesh, industries and development partners have invested significant resources to build and expand Bangladesh's skill development system. However, gaps still remain and, most importantly, the necessary elements for realizing an active, self-sustaining system that provides access for all to skills training that is relevant to employer and industry needs are not yet complete. Therefore, skilling and upskilling a large number of people is crucial to enhance labour productivity and facilitate industrialization, trade and economic growth.

The Technical and Vocational Education and Training Reform (TVET-R) Project of ILO, funded by the EU, established new systems for skills development in Bangladesh, including reforms in the formal TVET system. In contrast to more traditional skills development projects, which aim at skills training for specific groups, or at providing infrastructure for training institutions, the TVET-R Project focused on the national policy, legislative and institutional capacity to sustain a robust skills system for Bangladesh. A major achievement was the drafting and the adoption of the National Skills Development Policy (NSDP) and laying the foundations of the National Skills Development System in Bangladesh. As a result, the country has a nascent National Skills Development System (NSDS), however still needing strengthening, promotion, adoption/adaptation, and replication by stakeholders.

The independent final evaluation of the TVET-R Project commissioned by ILO in 2014 suggested that there was a need for further effort to ensure that Bangladesh has a firm foundation to enable it to realize the objectives of the National Skills Development Policy 2011 (NSDP) and through this, to meet the government's overall objectives for becoming a middle-income country.

The **"Skills 21 – Empowering citizens for inclusive and sustainable growth"** project, builds on the achievements and lessons learnt of the TVET-R project.

Project Background and current status:

"Skills 21" – Empowering citizens for inclusive and sustainable growth is a system strengthening initiative of the Government of Bangladesh funded by the European Union (EU), implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Directorate of Technical Education (DTE) under the Technical and Madrasah Education Division (TMED), Ministry of Education as lead government agency. Skills 21 is a four-year project (2017-2020). The development objective of the project is. "Increased productivity and better employment opportunities through an environmentally conscious, inclusive, demand-driven, and interlinked skills development system responding to the needs of the labour market". The Skills 21 project has a focus on three specific outcomes:

- Improved Quality of the TVET / skills development system
- Improved Access to and Equity within the TVET / skills development system through TVET model institutions
- An enabled environment through improved Governance and Management of the TVET / skills development system

The project aims to strengthen the National Skills Development System of the country. For this, it will develop a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) to create a single integrated national framework for learning development comprising a) general education and training; b) higher education; and c) TVET, and also to support national and international skills recognition. The Project is aimed to support the development of a new expert resource for all training providers, which will deliver trainer and assessor training, research and development of inclusive instructional materials, particularly interactive e-Learning tools, available to all training providers.

Moreover, the Skills 21 project aims to support alliances between industries and relevant public/private training providers to develop and implement demand-driven skills training programmes ensuring employment possibilities for the beneficiaries (Youths). In doing so, the project places specific emphasis on paving the way for the transition to a greener, more sustainable economy (skills development for "green jobs"). This includes providing skills for emerging occupations in green industries, integrating issues related to resource efficiency into relevant curricula as well. The Project will lead a process among stakeholders to improve the governance and management of the TVET/ Skills Development system in the country, including the development of a Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp).

Given the importance of labour migration in the Bangladesh economy, the Project also aims to provide inputs for creation of adequate opportunities to integrate “migration” in skills development system and assist in implementation of the policy for (a) skilling and reintegrating migrants returning from the destination countries and (b) those aspiring to migrate legally with skills needed in the destination countries.

The Project also aims to address skills development -related challenges faced by the ethnic minorities and other groups in the areas affected by climate change including the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

The Skills 21 project will align closely with the newly rolled-out Budget Support Programme HCDP-21 (Human Capital Development Programme for Bangladesh 2021) by providing relevant Technical Assistance (TA) to the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders and by facilitating budget to support implementation.

Project partners and beneficiaries:

The lead implementation partner in the Project is the Ministry of Education (MoE). The other key implementing partners are the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE), Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE), Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (MoCHTA) and the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS).

Directorate of Technical Education (DTE) under the Technical and Madrasah Education Division (TMED), Ministry of Education is the lead government agency. The National Skills Development Authority (NSDA), Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB), Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) under Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE) will be supported for developing and implementing a national framework, worked out in close consultation with employers’, workers’ and industry representatives.

Other direct beneficiaries are:

- Two public teacher training institutions involved in training TVET Trainers to be supported in becoming the Centre for Skills Excellence (CSE), which will act as a resource and driver for quality, market responsiveness and consistency across the system. Besides some private/ non-governmental organizations (NGO) will also be supported through implementation agreement with BTEB.
- Seven existing public TVET institutions to be supported for becoming model TVET institutes and in achieving Registered Training Organization (RTO) status.
- Partner organizations, particularly worker and employer organizations, will receive support in establishing a Swap Steering committee and capacity building for representatives of each organization.

Though the project period started from January 2017, the Technical Assistance Project Proposal (TAPP) was approved by the Government of Bangladesh only in May 2018. Therefore, the project could only start its implementation activities formally since May 2018.

In December 2018, the project received additional funding of 3 million Euro from EU. The approval of the revised project document for this additional amount is being processed by the government. This additional funding is proposed to be utilized for interventions with TVET institutions to develop, disseminate and test up skilling training for migrant returnees and their family members. Specific training will be offered in the model TVET institutions and will have, to the extent possible, a country-wide coverage. The TVET activities, tailored to migrant returnees, will take into account the main findings of the market needs analysis which will be previously undertaken at the local level, so as to better match the training to be provided with the labour market needs in order to ensure their potential employability. Specific services will be offered and tailored to migrant returnees such as recognition of prior learning and knowledge, acquired abroad.

Key results achieved during the period January 2017- August 2019 are as follows:

- Activation of 7 Technical Committees and conduction of Sector specific consultation workshop on Development of National Qualification Framework (NQF) and study tour of higher government officials for this in Malaysia and Philippines
- Occupational Needs Assessment and Selection of 9 Occupations for training of youths
- Implementation agreement signed with 7 TVET institutes for transformation into Model TVET institutes and 2 teachers’ training institute for establishing Centre for Skills Excellence (CSE)
- Finalized procurement of tools equipment and furniture based on competency standards for 7 occupations in 9 institutes
- Indicators and Guidelines for transformation of selected TVET institutions into Model TVET Institutions
- Finalised drawing, design to renovate 9 institutions for DAP (Differently Abled People) inclusion with bill of quantity

- Distribution of 120 desktops, 52 laptops computers to 7 TVET institutes and 2 CSEs
- Development of Guideline to form Institutional Management Advisory Board (IMAB) and establishment of 6 IMABs in TVET institutions and 1 in CSE
- Development of e-campus for Instructional Material Development Center (IMDC) with the technical assistance from ITCILO is going on
- Training of 359 TVET Trainers, Teachers, Managers in CBTA Level 4, Entrepreneurship, IMDC establishment and Policy Dialogue (both home and abroad) and Job and Career Guidance
- Training of 514 Youths (411 M, 103 F) following certificate courses (short course) in selected occupations in two institutes
- The Development Partners were supported to constitute Task Force on SWAp and three meetings of the Task Forces were held
- Road maps for SWAp, MRA and BQF were finalized in consultation with the stakeholders
- The Project supported the Government to constitute steering committees with relevant partners on BQF, SWAp and MRA. Meetings of the three committees were held to guide further actions
- Policy Dialogue for SWAp experience sharing (round table meeting with TMED/DTE, PEDP and Health SWAp experts, WB, and few other experts was organized.
- Capacity strengthening of TVET officials on TVET policy dialogue in three institutes.
- National consultation workshop held and report prepared on TVET situation analysis identifying development priorities
- Gap analysis in TVET MIS and organized a consultation workshop with stakeholders.
- The Project agreed to support National Skill Development Authority in the (a) review of National Skill Development Policy; (ii) preparation of NSDA Action Plan; and (iii) review of the TVET data system

Linkages with national development framework, DWCP, P&B, UNDAF &SDG

The Skills 21 project directly contributes to the ILO **Programme and Budget 2018-19, Outcome 1: More and better jobs for inclusive growth and improved youth employment prospects; Indicator 1.2: Member States that have taken targeted action on jobs and skills for young people through the development and implementation of multi-pronged policies and programmes; Outcome 8: Protecting workers from unacceptable forms of work** by integrating information on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work into skills curricula; and to **Outcome 10: Strong and representative employers' and workers' organizations** through its work to develop forums for worker and employer organization involvement in the Skills Development System. The capacity of the skills development system to support entrepreneurship and to secure and create employment in the Green Economy is part of the Project's goal.

Development of a National Skills Development System in Bangladesh is consistent with the Human Resources Development Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195) and the Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142), which has not yet been ratified by Bangladesh. Specially, matters such as vocational guidance, occupational safety and health, and needs responsive programmes are built in. Best practice in planning and delivery of TVET described in Recommendation No. 195 is reflected in Skills 21 Project.

Skills 21 project directly contributed to **Priority 1 – Generating productive employment with improved sustainable enterprises and skills development, of the Decent Work Country Programme (2012-2015), for Bangladesh and Pillar Two: Pro-Poor Economic Growth with Equity, and specifically, Outcome 2.1: Output 2.1.7: Vulnerable groups benefit from area based interventions that support local economic development & improve livelihoods of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2012-2016 for Bangladesh. The Project is relevant to Goals 4 and 8 of the Sustainable Development Goals.**³

Project Management Arrangement

The Project is based in ILO Dhaka Office. The project is being executed under the overall guidance of the Country Director for ILO Bangladesh. The project is led by the Chief Technical Advisor who is responsible for overall Project management, supervision, monitoring and liaison with other ILO Projects and other related Projects and activities. The

³**Goal 4: Provide quality education and life-long learning opportunities for all, and the following targets**³: **Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all**

CTA leads a team of International and National Staff. In addition to staff, the Project includes national and international expertise contracted on a short-term basis to address specific issues. The Project also has dedicated services of ILO staff experts in the areas of Quality Assurance, Enterprise development, Gender, disability inclusion, apprenticeship, OSH and Worker and Employer engagement. National program staff have significant substantive responsibilities, particularly in terms of liaising with and assisting the Government in drafting policy documents and implementing strategies for TVET, and in developing counterparts' expertise on monitoring and evaluation, gender and PWD inclusion and skills for the Green Economy.

The Project has engaged several implementing partners to carry out on-ground activities, as per the project workplan.

Evaluation Background

ILO considers evaluation as an integral part of the implementation of technical cooperation activities. Provisions are made in all Programmes in accordance with ILO evaluation policy and based on the nature of the Programme and the specific requirements agreed upon at the time of the Programme design and during the Programme as per established procedures.⁴

As agreed with the donor, this project will go through two independent evaluations: a mid-term independent evaluation; and a final evaluation. Both evaluations will be managed by an ILO appointed evaluation manager, and conducted by independent evaluators (one international and one national). In agreement with the donor the mid-term evaluation was scheduled at the end of 2019 to conform to ILO principles, methods and strategy of ILO's evaluation policy.

The ILO has submitted 02 Annual Reports for this programme. The EU Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) was conducted in March 2019 and the report was submitted. Also the follow-up action plan based on suggested recommendations of the ROM report was submitted to EU. Before this, in January 2018 an Evaluability Assessment of the project was conducted as a part of ILO Evaluation Policy for projects. Its purpose of the assessment was to enable stakeholders to understand the complexities, how these were addressed and what measures could be taken to strengthen the Programme's design, learning and eventual impact. The report is also available with the project.

This evaluation will follow the ILO policy guidelines for results-based evaluation⁵. For all practical purposes, this ToR and ILO Evaluation policies and guidelines, Checklist 3 "Preparing the inception report"; Checklist 4 "Validating methodologies"; and Checklist 5 "Preparing the evaluation report", define the overall scope of this evaluation (Annex 1). Recommendations, emerging from the evaluation, should be strongly linked to the findings of the evaluation and should provide clear guidance to stakeholders on how they can address them.

Purpose, scope, objectives and clients of evaluation

Purpose

The purpose of the Midterm Independent Evaluation is to assess the continued relevance of the project and the progress made towards achieving its planned objectives. This would give an opportunity to assess the progress of the project towards its long-term goal, determine if the project design addresses the needs that were identified and to assess how well the project is being implemented to meet these needs. The findings of the evaluation would provide all stakeholders with information to assess and revise or improve, as maybe required, work plans, strategies, objectives, partnership arrangements and resources, including recommendations for the remaining period of implementation.

The MTE would also ascertain if the project is still coherent with the ILO's strategic objectives; is relevant and useful to the key stakeholders and is being conducted in an efficient manner according to ILO standards and the agreed project document. The evaluation will focus on the criteria of relevance, validity, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability

Specific objective(s) of the evaluation:

⁴The evaluation in ILO is for the purpose of accountability, learning and planning and building knowledge. It should be conducted in the context of criteria and approaches for international development assistance as established by: the OECD/DAC Evaluation Quality Standard; and the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System.

⁵ http://www.ilo.ch/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_571339.pdf

- a) Assess the implementation of the project during the period January 2017-August 2019. Identify factors affecting project implementation, both positively and negatively. If necessary, propose revisions to the expected level of achievement of the objectives project design and project timelines based on lessons learnt;
- b) Analyse the implementation strategies of the project with regard to their potential effectiveness in achieving the project outcomes; including unexpected results.
- c) Review the institutional set-up, capacity for project implementation, coordination mechanisms and the use and usefulness of management tools including the project monitoring tools and work plans;
- d) Identify the contributions of the project to the DWCP, SDGs, the ILO objectives and its synergy with other projects and programs;
- e) Identify lessons and potential good practices for the key stakeholders. Good practices criteria to use are effectiveness/ impact, efficiency, replicability, relevance and sustainability;
- f) Provide strategic recommendations for the different key stakeholders to improve implementation of the project activities and attainment of project objectives;
- g) Assess the relevance of the sustainability strategy, its progress and its potential for achievement, identifying the processes that are to be continued by stakeholders;

Scope

The mid-term evaluation will include all the activities undertaken by the project during the period January 2017- August 2019 and will cover all geographical coverage of the project. The evaluation shall also include all stages of the project, including initial project design, work planning, and implementation monitoring and reporting. The evaluation shall also refer to the progress reports submitted to the donor, including the key achievements, lessons learned and recommendations of ROM. The evaluation shall also look at actual implementation mechanisms in line with initially planned implementation mechanisms, from the institutional set-up to the implementation plan. How the strategies and approaches have progressed, changed or evolved over the course of implementation.

Gender equality is an important cross cutting policy driver of the ILO. The evaluation will look particularly at how gender equality concerns were integrated throughout its methodology, strategies/approaches, data and all deliverables, including in the reports submitted to the donor.

Clients and users of the evaluation are:

- Country stakeholders
- ILO HQ, DWT-New Delhi and CO Dhaka technical and programme backstopping officers
- ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific
- Representatives of governments
- Representatives of workers' organizations
- Representatives of employers' organization
- EU as the donor agency

Evaluation criteria and questions:

The evaluator may adapt the evaluation criteria and questions, but any fundamental changes should be agreed between the evaluation manager and the evaluator, and reflected in the inception report

Strategic fit and relevance:

- Assess whether the problems and needs that gave rise to the project still exists or have changed.
- Is the project coherent with the Government objectives, National Development Frameworks (National Skills Development Policy) and does it support the outcomes outlined in the UNDAF (UNSDCF) and DWCP as well as the SDGs?
- To what extent has the project integrated gender equality issues in the design, implementation, results and M&E framework?
- Were the outputs achievable or overly ambitious?
- Has the Project identified any other constraints or opportunities that need to be accommodated in the design in order to increase the impact and relevance of the Project? How does the project complement and fit with other on-going ILO programmes and projects in the country?
- What links have been established so far with other activities of the UN or other cooperating partners operating in the Country in the areas of TVET and Migration

Validity of design:

- Does the project design (i.e. priorities, outcomes, outputs and activities) address the stakeholder needs that were identified?
- Does the design need to be modified in the second half of the project?
- How appropriate and useful are the indicators described in the project document in assessing the project's progress? Are the targeted indicator values realistic and can they be tracked? If necessary, how should they be modified to be more useful? Are indicators gender sensitive?
- Are the means of verification for the indicators appropriate?
- What, if any, alternative strategies would have been more effective in achieving its objectives?

Efficiency of implementation:

- Have the available technical and financial resources been allocated and used strategically to provide the necessary support and to achieve the broader project objectives? (Value for money)
- Could the use of the resources be improved?
- Examine delivery of Project outputs in terms of quality and quantity. Have they been delivered in a timely manner?
- Has the management and governance structure put in place worked strategically with all key stakeholders in Bangladesh, ILO and the donor to achieve project goals and objectives?
- How has the staff recruitment/hiring process facilitated or hindered the project implementation?
- Does the project management have an M&E plan in place on activities and results (i.e. output and outcome)?
- Is information being shared and readily available to national partners?

Effectiveness:

- Examine whether significant progress have been made related to the Project's desired outcomes and the contributing and hindering factors for moving towards their achievement and whether the Project's response were appropriate and sufficient.
- Have unintended results of the project been identified?
- How has the project contributed to coordination of government agencies and partner to enable them to work together effectively in TVET?
- How has the project learnt from initiatives previously implemented by ILO in the TVET sector of Bangladesh e.g. TVET reform project, BSEP project?
- How has the project contributed to consolidating ongoing policy initiatives specifically in the TVET sector of Bangladesh and in the education sector in Bangladesh in general

Orientation to impact:

How is the project contributing to strengthening the TVET system?

How is the project contributing towards improvement of services provided by the model institutes to the trainees?

How is the project contributing towards improving the management and governance of the TVET institutes?

Sustainability:

- Is the project strategy and management steering towards sustainability?
- Assess the project's key partnerships that can contribute to the sustainability of the initiatives under the project and to what extent. Identify if there would be other partnerships to consider.
- To what extent has the project strengthened the capacities of government structures, social partners and Private sector to ensure improved TVET governance and management?
- To what extent the project has promoted the relevant ILS or ratification and application of the ILS, social dialogue and tripartism?

Gender Mainstreaming: The gender dimension should be considered as a cross-cutting concern throughout the methodology, deliverables and the final report of the evaluation. In terms of this evaluation, this implies involving both

men and women in the consultation, evaluation analysis and evaluation team. Moreover the evaluator should review data and information that is disaggregated by sex and gender and assess the relevance and effectiveness of gender-related strategies and outcomes to improve lives of women and men. All this information should be accurately included in the inception report and final evaluation report.

Proposed Methodology

The evaluation will use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods and the final methodology will be determined by the evaluator, taking into account suggestions from the stakeholders, in consultation with the evaluation manager. The detailed methodology will be elaborated by the evaluation team on the basis of this TORs and documented in the Inception Report, which is subject to approval by the evaluation manager.

The Evaluation Consultants will carry out a desk review of all appropriate materials⁶ including Programme documents, progress reports, studies, copies of outputs of the Programmes, results of internal planning processes and other documents from secondary sources, whichever are available. At the end of the desk review, an inception report will be submitted to the Evaluation Manager defining the methodological approach and instruments that will be used throughout the evaluation. The Evaluation Manager will review and sign-off the inception report.

The evaluation is proposed to be carried out through a desk review and field visits to the project sites in Bangladesh and interviewing relevant GoB offices, implementing partners, ultimate beneficiaries (Teachers and youths), private sector, the donor, relevant ILO officers and other key stakeholders. The evaluation team may apply in-depth interview (IDI), focus group discussion (FGD), and small group discussion (SGD), or other methods or techniques as appropriate.

At the end of the field work a stakeholders' workshop will take place to present preliminary results. Then the draft evaluation report will be shared with all relevant stakeholders and a request for comments will be asked within a specified time by the evaluation manager. After receiving the consolidated comments from the evaluation manager the evaluation team will produce the final version of the report and indicate reason for not integrating comments if that would have been the case. Therefore, the evaluation methodology shall include but not be limited to the following:

Desk review: A desk review will be undertaken to analyze project and other relevant documentation including Revised Log frame and initial interviews with the CTA, Programme Officer (M&E) and the donor. The desk review will suggest a number of initial findings that in turn may point to additional or fine-tuned evaluation questions. This will guide the evaluation instrument which should be finalized under the Inception report that should be approved by the evaluation manager before starting the field phase.

Interviews with Key Stakeholders in Dhaka: A first meeting will be held with the ILO Country Director and with the Project Team. Thereafter, the evaluation team will meet the Key Implementing partners – Directorate of Technical Education (DTE)⁷ under the Technical and Madrasah Education Division (TMED), Ministry of Education; TMED Officials; Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET); Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB); National Skills Development Authority (NSDA); Bangladesh Employers Federation (BEF) and National Coordination Committee for Workers Education (NCCWE) to undertake more in-depth reviews on the respective national strategies and the delivery of outputs and outcomes. The team may investigate further on the operations and functioning of the Project, its implementation processes, interventions and achievements to date, M&E Tools. A detail itinerary will be prepared for these interviews in discussion with the Evaluation Manager according to the list provided by the project.

Field In-depth interviews in Bangladesh: The Evaluation team is expected to meet project beneficiaries' as well as TVET institutes⁸ and the ultimate beneficiaries Teachers, Youths (both male and female) to undertake more in depth reviews on the project work and results. The locations of the institutes are in and outside Dhaka.

Interviews with ILO Staff: The evaluation team will undertake group and/or individual interviews with the concerned staff in the ILO offices in the DWT New Delhi, Country offices in Bangladesh, management, programme and finance

⁶National Skills Development Policy 2011, Project Document, Budget, M&E Plan including Framework, Annual report (2018 and 2019), Inception report, Evaluability Report, EU Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) report 2019, minutes of meetings, workshop reports, work plans, technical progress reports and the approved log-frame, etc.

⁷Director General of DTE is also the National Project Director of Skills 21 Project from GOB side.

⁸There are total 9 institutes. 2 Teachers Training Institutes for Establishing Center for Skills Excellences and 7 TVET institutions for transformation into Model TVET institutes.

units, project team including key staff of other ILO projects that are linked to this project, and ILO staff responsible for technical backstopping of the project in the Country Office, HQ, ROAP or DWT New Delhi either through conference calls or face-to-face interviews early in the evaluation process. The project manager (CTA) or the Programme Officer (M&E) will share an indicative list of persons to be interviewed after further discussion with the Evaluation Manager.

It is expected that the evaluator will work to the highest evaluation standards and codes of conduct and follow the UN evaluation standards and norms. Transparency and objectivity will be observed at all times. ILO's policy guidelines for results-based evaluation (2nd edition) 2012 provides the basic framework; the evaluation will be carried out according to ILO standard policies and procedures. ILO adheres to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards on evaluation as well as to the OECD/DAC evaluation quality standards.

Main Deliverables: Inception report, draft and final evaluation report

1. The evaluation shall result in a concise evaluation report detailing:

2. The overall and specific performance of the project as assessed in terms of relevance and strategic fit of the intervention; validity of intervention design; intervention progress and effectiveness; efficiency of resource use; effectiveness of management arrangements; impact orientation and sustainability of the intervention; as defined in the ILO Guidelines for the Preparation of Independent Evaluations of ILO Programmes and Projects. The assessment shall provide information, such as below, but not limited to;

- progress made against indicators of achievement;
- contribution to the UNSDCF, SDGs, Donor strategy, ILO Decent Work Country Programmes in Bangladesh and any other broader national processes; validity of the design and quality of implementation;
- evaluation of the processes applied within the project particularly in terms of the timely delivery of project outcomes;
- Whether gender is properly mainstreamed in the project cycle, from planning to implementation, to monitoring and evaluation;

Key deliverables are as follows:

- 1. Draft Inception report:** upon the review of available documents and an initial discussion with the project. The inception report should set out any changes proposed to the methodology or any other issues of importance in the further conduct of the evaluation. The Inception report, alongwith detailed work plan and data collection instruments, following ILO EVAL Checklist 3, should include:

- Description of the evaluation methodology explaining the instruments to be used for data collection (qualitative and quantitative); analysis, triangulation including the data collection plan in line with the TOR
- Guiding questions for IDI, FGD, SGDs
- Evaluation Plan
- Detailed fieldwork plan (to be developed in consultation with the Evaluation Manager and project team)
- The evaluation report outline.
- Agenda for the stakeholders' workshop

- 2. Conduct interviews and consultations with the tripartite constituents and relevant stakeholders**

- 3. Stakeholder Workshop:** Facilitation during, and delivering a power point presentation at the Stakeholder workshop(s): upon completion of field trips, to present the preliminary findings at a stakeholders meeting to be organized by the project team. The workshop would have participation from key stakeholder representatives, project officials, ILO CO officials, and donor to be organized on the final date of the field mission. In the workshop the evaluation team will briefly describe:

- The methodology followed during the evaluation
- The brief findings in line with 5 OECD/DAC criteria.
- Initial tentative recommendations based on the findings

The evaluation team will share the agenda for the stakeholder workshop in advance with the evaluation manager.

4. Produce and submit a draft evaluation report, including an Executive Summary (following standard ILO format) of key findings, conclusions and recommendations (the report should be set-up in line with the ILO's 'Quality Checklists 4 and 5' for Evaluation Reports)
5. Final evaluation report incorporating feedback from ILO and implementing partners
6. Stand-alone evaluation summary (standard ILO format)
7. A power-point presentation of up to 15 slides summarizing the report
8. Notes with reflections on the process of the evaluation identifying lessons learnt and suggestions for future ILO evaluations

The total length of the report should be a maximum of 40 pages for the main report, excluding annexes. Annexes can provide background and further details on specific components of the project evaluated.

The evaluation report should include

- Title page (standard ILO template)
- Table of contents
- Executive summary (standard ILO template)
- Acronyms
- Background and project description
- Purpose of evaluation
- Evaluation methodology and evaluation questions
- Project status and findings by outcome and overall
- Conclusions and recommendations
- Lessons learnt and potential good practices (as per ILO guidelines on Evaluation lessons learnt and good practices) and models of intervention
- Annexes (list of interviews, overview of meetings, proceedings stakeholder meetings, other relevant information)

Management arrangements, work plan & time frame

Composition of evaluation team: The evaluation team will consist of one international consultant (evaluator/team leader) and one independent national consultant (team member). The international consultant will have responsibility for the evaluation report. He/she will be a highly qualified senior evaluation specialist with extensive experience on conducting independent evaluations and ideally well versed on the project thematic area (that is TVET/Skills Development). The national consultant will have particular experience in the project work area. The evaluation team will agree on the distribution of work and schedule for the evaluation and stakeholders to consult. The evaluation team leader will report to Ms. Divya Verma, Programme Officer, ILO DWT/CO New Delhi, (divya@ilo.org), assigned by ILO EVAL as the Evaluation Manager for the mid-term independent evaluation for the Skills 21 project.

Financing: This evaluation will be fully financed by the Skills 21 Project. The funds will cover the costs of the consultant(s), evaluation missions and conduct of the stakeholders' workshops.

Evaluator (International Consultant):

The mid-term independent evaluation will be led by an international evaluator who will be responsible to produce the above deliverables. He/she will be required to ensure the quality of data (validity, reliability, consistency, and accuracy) throughout the analytical and reporting phases. It is expected that the report will be written in an evidence-based manner.

Qualification of the evaluator (International):

- A minimum of 8 years experience in design, management and evaluation of development projects; experience in designing evaluation tools that fit the need of the exercise, conducting desk reviews and evaluation missions, drafting of evaluation reports;
- Experience in evaluations of ILO and UN programmes and projects;
- Relevant background in TVET, Skills Development CBT Training or social and/or economic development or other related field;

- Relevant experience in the region in TVET/Skills Development and sound understanding of gender equality, ethnic minority and disability issues will be an asset;
- Demonstrated ability to deliver quality results within strict deadlines;
- Fluency in English is essential;
- Experience in facilitating workshops for evaluation findings;
- Experience and knowledge of socio-economic development trends and strategy in South Asia, in particular in Bangladesh;
- Ability/ experience in facilitating an evaluation stakeholders' workshop;
- Ability to write concisely in English;
- Experience or knowledge in the region and ability to communicate in the local languages is an asset.

Evaluation team member/National consultant:

The team leader will be supported by a national consultant who will provide support during the whole process of the evaluation. Evaluation team member reports to the evaluation team leader. Specifically, the national consultant will be responsible for the following tasks:

- Conduct a desk review of relevant documents and translate documents to English, if required;
- Pro-actively provide relevant local knowledge and insights to the team leader;
- Be available and present during the evaluation mission;
- Take part in the interviews with ILO constituents and key stakeholders, assist the team leader including interpreting between the local language to English and vice versa, to make notes during interviews, and to write brief reports on main observations and conclusions;
- Contribute to the main report to be written by the team leader - the national consultant may be asked to contribute to certain sections in the draft and final report as requested by the Team Leader (International Consultant);
- Participate and jointly facilitate the stakeholders' workshop;
- Provide interpretation, where needed.

Qualification of the team member

Preferably a local consultant with expertise in evaluation following OECD/DAC criteria. Knowledge of TVET system of Bangladesh, local context, of other related local programmes/projects, and of associated local institutions and government structures will be a great asset.

Evaluation manager:

Divya Verma, Programme Officer of ILO DWT/CO Delhi (divya@ilo.org) appointed by ILO EVAL with whom the Evaluator should discuss any technical and methodological matters of the project as well as the evaluation. The evaluation manager will supervise and monitor activities of the evaluation team under oversight of the ROAP Regional evaluation officer. The final approval of the report will be by ILO Evaluation Office (EVAL). The evaluation will be carried out with full logistical and administrative support of the ILO Country Office in Dhaka.

All draft and final outputs, including supporting documents, analytical reports and raw data should be submitted to the evaluation manager in electronic version compatible with Word for Windows. The first draft of the report will be circulated to all partners for a two weeks review. Comments from stakeholders will be presented to the evaluator by the evaluation manager for its integration into the final reports as appropriate or to document why a comment has not been included.

Legal and Ethical Issues: The evaluation will comply with UN Norms and Standards. The evaluator will follow the UNEG ethical guidelines and abide by the EVAL's Code of Conduct for carrying out the evaluations. The consultant should not have any links to project management, or any other conflict of interest that would interfere with the independence of the evaluation

All reports, including drafts, will be written in English and following ILO templates for (each section). Ownership of data from the evaluation rests jointly with the ILO and the consultants. The copyright of the evaluation report will rest exclusively with the ILO. Use of the data for publication and other presentations can only be made with the written agreement of the ILO. Key stakeholders can make appropriate use of the evaluation report in line with the original purpose and with appropriate acknowledgement.

Quality assurance: Regional M&E officer ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok will provide quality control throughout the evaluation process. The final evaluation report will only be considered final when it gets approved by the ILO Evaluation Office.

Administrative and logistic support: The ILO Project team consisting of the Chief Technical Advisor and the National Project Coordinator will provide relevant documentations, administrative and logistic support to the evaluation team. The project team will also assist in organizing a detailed evaluation mission agenda, and to ensure that all relevant documentations are up to date and easily accessible by the evaluator.

Roles of other key stakeholders: All stakeholders particularly those relevant ILO staff, the donor, tripartite constituents, relevant government agencies, and key other project partners – will be consulted throughout the process and will be engaged at different stages during the process. They will have the opportunities to provide inputs to the TOR and to the draft final evaluation report.

Evaluation Timetable and Schedule

The MTE will be conducted during October 2019- January 2020:

Sl. No.	List of Tasks	Responsibility	Time line
	Selection of the consultant and contract signing	ILO	30 October 2019
	Discussion with the Consultants (Skype) on the Project and the TOR	ILO	1 November 2019
	Desk review of project background documents (PRODOC, Work plans and Progress Reports, etc.	Consultants	Early November
	Submission of draft Inception report including design of evaluation instrument	Consultants	3 November 2019
	Feedback on inception report	ILO	6 November 2019
	Finalization of the inception report (including work plan and field visit itinerary)	Consultants	8 November 2019
	Field mission including travel dates (data collection and debriefing and stakeholder workshop)	Consultants	11-22 November 2019 (Including Travel days)
	Submission of the Evaluation report (Draft)	Consultants	4 December 2019
	Review of the Draft evaluation report	ILO	19 December 2019
	Circulate draft report among key stakeholders including donor and receive feedback	ILO	19 December 2019-10 January 2020
	Consolidate feedback and share with the consultant.	ILO	First week of January 2020
	Submission of the final evaluation report	Consultants	Mid-January 2020

Appendix 2: List of persons and organisations interviewed

Name	Designation
ILO Country Office for Bangladesh	
Mr. Tuomo Poutianien	Country Director
Mr. Kishore Kumar Singh	Chief Technical Advisor, Skills 21 (as of December 1, 2019)
Mr. Manas Bhattacharyya	Policy Development, Governance and SWAp Specialist, Skills 21
Ms. Ligaya Dumaoang	TVET and Skills Development Specialist, Skills 21
Mr. Towhidur Rahmand	Programme Officer (National Qualification Framework), Skills 21
Mr. Anisuzzaman	Programme Officer (TVET and Centre of Skills Excellence), Skills 21
Ms. Tanjilut Tasnuva	Programme Officer (SWAp), Skills 21
Mr. Tahmid Arif	Programme Officer (Monitoring and Evaluation), Skills 21
Ms. Farhana Anam	Communication Officer, Skills 21
Mr. Mehbub ur Rahman Khan	Finance and Administration Officer, Skills 21
Ms. Laetitia Weibel Roberts	Chief Technical Advisor, ILO-CO Migration Programme
ILO Regional and International Offices	
Mr. Srinivas Reddy	Branch Chief, Skills, ILO-Geneva (ex-Country Director, ILO-Dhaka)
Mr. Snehal Soneji	Former CTA, Skills 21, ITC-ILO-Turin
Ms. Divya Verman	Skills 21 Mid-term Evaluation Manager, ILO-Delhi
Mr. Serajul Islam	Former PO and involved in Project Design for Skills 21, ILO-Beirut
Mr. Gabriel Borado	Skills 21 Backstopper, ILO Delhi
Government of Bangladesh (GoB) Institutions	
Mr. Ajit Kumar Ghosh	Additional Secretary, Technical and Madrasha Education Board (TMED), Ministry of Education
Mr. Mohammad Rezaul Karim	Joint Secretary, National Skills Development Authority (NSDA), Prime Minister's Office
Mr. Rawnak Mahmud	Additional Secretary and Director General (DTE)
Mr. Jahangir Alam	Director (Planning and Development) (DTE)
Mr. Quamruzzaman	Director (Skills Standard), NSDA
Mr. S M Shahjahan	Deputy Director (Course Accreditation) Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB)
Mr. Ramjan Ali	Principal, Technical Teachers Training College
Mr. Mostafizur Rahman Khan	Chief Instructor and IMDC Focal, (VTTI) in Bogra
Mr. M. Atiqur Rahman	Principal, Technical Training Centre (TTC)-Gaibandha
Development Partners	
Ms. Ameena Chowdhury	Programme Manager, Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh
Ms. Nazir Haider	Programme Manager, Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh
Mr. Hans Lambrecht	First Secretary and Team Leader of Education and Human Development – European Delegation
Ms. Funda Celikel Esser	Attache and Programme Manager – Education and Human Development, European Delegation
Skills 21 Programme Partners	
Mr. Farooq Ahmed	Secretary General, Bangladesh Employers Federation (BEF)
Mr. Santosh Dutta	Joint Secretary, Bangladesh Employers Federation
M. Zafrul Hasan	Executive Director, Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies
Mr. Shah Muhammad Abu Zafar	Chairman (National Coordination Committee for Workers Education) - President, Bangladesh Labour Federation; Bangladesh Textile and Garments Workers Federation; Bangladesh Transport Workers Federation
Others	
Mr. Shariful Islam	Manager / Proprietor – HTS Institute

Appendix 3: List of documents and publications consulted

- Terms of Reference for the Independent Mid-Term Evaluation

- Financing Agreement (GoB-EU)
- Project document (+ Annexes)

- Logical Framework (original and revised versions)

- Evaluability Assessment (February 2018)
- Skills 21 Inception Report
- Skills 21 Annual Reports (2017 & 2018)
- M&E documents (guidelines, Results Framework)
- ROM Report (March 2019)
- ROM Report Follow-up Action Plan
- Project Organogram
- Activity tracker
- Minutes of October 2018 and May 2019 Project Steering Committee meetings
- Minutes of Project Monitoring & Coordination Committee meetings

- Information available on ILO web site:
https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Projects/WCMS_543629/lang--en/index.htm

Other reference documents

- B-SEP achievements
- Breaking Gender barriers in the world of work
- Donor matrix (updated September 2019)
- Situation Analysis of Bangladesh TVET Sector: background work for TVET SWAp (August 2019)
- Bangladesh Technical Education Board Act (July 2019)

ILO Evaluation Guidelines and Support Guidance Documentation (EVAL Guidance Resources – June 2017)

EU Strategic documents

- Multiannual Indicative Programme for Bangladesh (2014-2020)
- EU-Bangladesh Cooperation Agreement