



# Evaluation Summary



International  
Labour  
Office

Evaluation Unit

## *Skills 21 – Empowering citizens for inclusive and sustainable growth – Independent midterm evaluation*

### Quick Facts

**Countries:** *Bangladesh*  
**Mid-Term Evaluation:** *11/2019*  
**Mode of Evaluation:** *Independent*  
**ILO Administrative responsibility:**  
*Regional Office for Asia & Pacific*  
**Technical Area:** *TVET/Skills*  
**Evaluation Management:** *Divya Verma*  
**Evaluation Team:** *Pierre Mahy/Reza Patwary*  
**Project End:** *December 2020*  
**Project Code:** *BGD/16/04/EUR*  
**Donor:** *European Union (22.5 Million EUR)*  
**Keywords:** *TVET/Skills*

### Background & Context

#### **Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure**

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

#### **Present Situation of the Project**

The project officially started in January 2017. The formal launch however only took place in May 2018 after approval of the Technical Assistance Project Proposal (TAPP) by the Government.

Less than 20% of the total budget has been disbursed at the time of the MTE.

#### **Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation**

The scope of the Independent Mid-Term Evaluation is from the project start (1 January 2017) until October 2019 and covers all

geographical areas where the project has been implemented.

The MTE examines whether the project is on track to deliver expected outcomes with respect to time and budget; it aims to assess the efficacy, sustainability, relevance, impact and effectiveness of the project, and to inform approaches or strategy shifts for the remaining time of implementation period, while also considering the opportunity to extend the project.

The clients and intended users of the evaluation are all country stakeholders, ILO Head Quarters, 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 and the EU as the donor agency.

### **Methodology of evaluation**

The evaluation has been conducted in November 2019 and comprised field visits to Dhaka, Gaibhanda and Bogura as well as inputs from the consultants' base to undertake desk research and prepare the Final report.

The work plan for the evaluation comprised:

- Review of relevant documentation
- Interviews with ILO programme management, coordinators and technical experts
- Interviews with the project partners, beneficiary organizations, final beneficiaries (trainees), relevant authorities and other key informants
- Preparation of the draft final report
- Preparation of the final report taking into consideration comments provided on the draft report.

The 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.

## **Main Findings & Conclusions**

Overall, progress has been made by the project despite the delayed start. Skills 21 builds on previous interventions, in particular the TVET-R programme (2007-2015) which provided a solid basis to define and implement the activities of the project.

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

Work is still in progress for all planned activities, some of which have not yet started at the time of the MTE. 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 will depend on the Government of Bangladesh's (GoB) responsiveness to the Skills 21 intervention, which is adequately implemented by the project team setting the foundations for both impact and sustainability.

The preparatory work to establish the BQF has been done (Outcome 1), the "model" approach for training centres developed by the project is innovative and likely to succeed (Outcome 2), the development of a possible SWAP is making progress (Outcome 3), but a more appropriate support and responsiveness of the GoB is needed to speed up the progression on all fronts.

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.

## Recommendations & Lessons Learned

### Main recommendations and follow-up

#### **1. Undertake a results analysis of each activity implemented.**

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 relates to “MoUs signed between TVET institutes and enterprises” – what has happened after the MoUs have been signed?

The project design lacks a potential results analysis of the project which needs to be prepared. Once the results analysis is made, it will be possible to define the potential impact of the project as a whole.

#### **2. Improve the Performance Measurement Framework.**

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.

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.

#### **3. Consider a project extension of 8-12 months and define clear priorities.**

Compensating 17 months delay on a 48 months project is not realistic. The project will not achieve its objectives in the current time frame.

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. A longer extension of up to 18 months, as requested by the project, will reduce the pressure on the GoB to provide the necessary attention and commitment to the project

Considering the current status of outputs and aiming at closing the project by December 2021 (i.e. with 12 months extension), the following priorities need to be considered:

Prepare overall exit strategy (ready by 12/2020 to ensure a one-year phasing out)

For Outcome 1 define 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

Similarly, for Outcome 2 define 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

For Outcome 3 the project team has already developed a roadmap to achieve a SWAP by 12/2021. The evaluator recommended that the Ministry appoints a SWAP coordinator to lead the development of SWAP.

#### **4. Improve Government commitment and engagement.**

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.

### ***5. Engage more intensively with the private sector.***

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 whenever possible, the concerned institutes can tap the need of the skilled workers in the area by training them appropriately in the TVET institutions

### ***6. Define a clear exit strategy for the project.***

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.

### ***7. Ensure higher gender and disability inclusion***

Gender inclusion in TVET is low in Bangladesh. Sewing is about the only trade in which women are enrolled.

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 participation of women which can start offering higher training allowances and wider coverage of tools for subsequent self-employment.

### **Important lessons learned**

The main global lessons learned from the project are the following:

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 Sector Wide Approach needs more time and a different method with a stronger commitment of the Government
4. TVET outreach and networking activities can work in the region

### **Good practices**

The M&E system and tools developed by the project