



शिक्षण
क्षेत्र

NATIONAL TVET GENDER STRATEGY

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN TVET

2024 - 2028



DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE PLANNING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

National TVET Gender Strategy: Promoting Gender Equality in TVET

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Chapter 1

Overview

Bhutan is actively striving for gender equality across all sectors and at all levels, aligning its efforts with the principles of five-year plans, Sustainable Development Goals, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). While Bhutan does not openly practice gender discrimination, there are evident gender gaps in various areas. The participation of women in the labor force has historically been lower compared to men. Although there was a steady increase in women's labor force participation rate from 59.9 percent in 2017 to 65.3 percent in 2021, it experienced a decline in 2022. The unemployment rate among women is higher, with 5.9 percent in 2022 compared to 4.4 percent for men. Moreover, in urban areas, the unemployment rate for women is significantly higher at 15.3 percent compared to 7.1 percent for men.

Gender-based occupational segregation is also evident in Bhutan. A higher percentage of men are employed as regular or casual paid workers, while a larger proportion of women work as own-account workers in non-agricultural sectors or as family workers in agriculture and non-agriculture sectors. More men hold positions as managers, professionals, plant and machine operators, assemblers, and in armed forces occupations, whereas more women work as skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers, in services and sales, and in clerical support roles.

The gender gap in earnings is another issue. According to the 2021 Labor Force Survey, men earned a median monthly income of Nu. 15,000 compared to Nu. 10,000 for women. Even in sectors where the gender gap in employment is not substantial, men still earn higher wages than women. For example, in the elementary occupation group where the skill level variation is not significant, 52 percent of men earn more than Nu. 15,000 per month compared to only 13 percent of women.¹ The situation is similar for TVET graduates as well. Male graduates reported earning an average monthly income of Nu. 18,200 while female graduates reported earning an average monthly income of Nu. 13,600.²

Gender-based occupational segregation is influenced by multiple factors such as gender bias, social and cultural roles, and disparities in education and training. Gender-based discrimination and stereotypes perpetuate the unequal distribution of employment, favoring male dominance in certain sectors. The underrepresentation of women in specific occupations leads to assumptions that women lack skills and capabilities, ultimately affecting productivity. Additionally, the inclusion of women in male-dominated occupations can be perceived as a threat to masculinity, resulting in discrimination to preserve social power.

Gender roles and societal expectations have detrimental effects on women's education and employment. Cultural norms, gender stereotypes, and household responsibilities curtail girls' study time, career options, and advancement opportunities³. This is particularly evident in the segregated enrollment of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), where traditionally male-dominated fields witness low female participation, while women dominate fields

¹ National Statistical Bureau. 2022. Labour Force Survey Report Bhutan 2021. Thimphu

² Ministry of Education and Skills Development. 2023. TVET Statistics of Bhutan 2022. Thimphu

³ National Commission for Women and Children. 2013. Bhutan Gender Policy Note. Thimphu

traditionally associated with them. Similar patterns emerge in non-CBT⁴ courses. These disparities underline the urgency to challenge norms, stereotypes, and unequal distribution of household responsibilities to enable women's equal participation and progress across all areas of education and employment. Additionally, in Bhutan, women typically give birth in their 20s, with mean ages at first birth at 22 years in urban areas and 21 years in rural areas⁵. Consequently, women often assume household care responsibilities, limiting their engagement in leisure activities, paid work, and skills acquisition.

Women's limited access to education and vocational training, as well as the mismatch between their qualifications and job requirements, pose additional challenges. There are marked differences in educational attainment levels between females and males in Bhutan, with a higher percentage of females having no education and fewer females with bachelor's degrees or higher qualifications. Gender disparity in TVET in Bhutan is currently high with a gender parity index of 0.42 from 2015 to 2019⁶. This indicates that for every hundred men participating in TVET, only 42 women are involved. Furthermore, the emphasis on boys' education often negatively impacts girls' education within the same household. Studies have shown that for every additional year of education completed by boys, female siblings experience a reduction in educational opportunities.

Reducing gender-based employment segregation and disparity requires addressing gender gaps in earnings, improving organizational climate and productivity, and increasing female labor force participation. One strategy to achieve this is to enhance female participation in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). To promote gender equality in TVET, this Strategic Plan comprises four parts: the status of TVET, identifying opportunities and barriers to women's participation, outlining a vision for gender equality, and identifying strategic action areas.

⁴ non-CBT is a non-competency-based training which is certified by the institute that provides the training. The certificate is not recognized by the Bhutan Qualifications Framework as a formal qualification. However, employers may consider the certificate for employment purpose.

⁵ Royal Government of Bhutan. 2018. 2017 Population and Housing Census of Bhutan. National Statistical Bureau. Thimphu

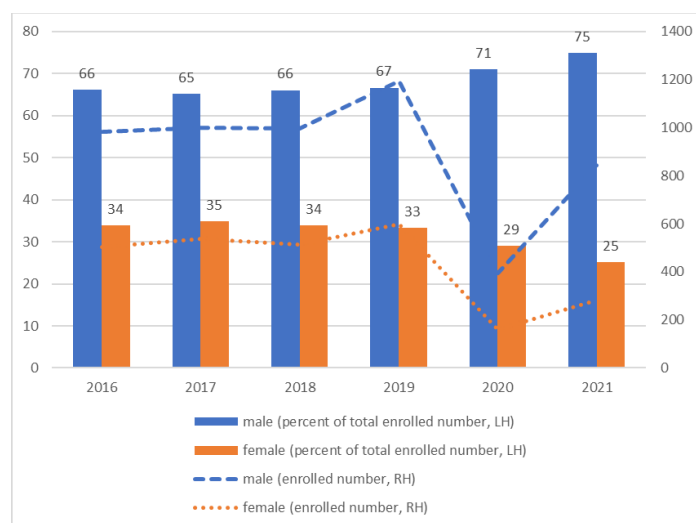
⁶ Royal Government of Bhutan. 2021. TVET Statistics of Bhutan - In the Quest for Transforming TVET through Data-Driven Approach. Ministry of Labour and Human Resources. Thimphu

Chapter 2

Current Status and Nature of Gender Inequalities in TVET

Gender disparities in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) persist in Bhutan, with significant under-representation of female students. This disparity in TVET enrollment persists. The female enrollment ranging from 25 to 35 percent, and male enrollment ranging from 65 to 75 percent⁷ between 2016 to 2021. In 2022, the female enrollment was reported at 38.8 percent (7,277). The proportion of female enrollment is lower at 32.2 percent in public TVET institutes which are administered by the Department of Workforce Planning and Skills Development (DWPSD), MoESD with around 32 percent female (footnote 2).

Figure 1. Enrolment in TVET (TTIs) by gender during 2016-2021



Source: TVET MIS Database, Government of Bhutan, Ministry of Education and Skills Development

The gender parity index (GPI) of 0.42 in Bhutan's vocational education during 2015-2019 indicates low female representation, particularly in traditionally male-dominated fields⁸. Conversely, vocations traditionally associated with women have high female enrollment. The analysis of the CBT TVET Management Information System (MIS) data from 2020 to 2023 (Annex 2) reveals that certain vocational courses, including panel beater, tree-zop, and jim-zob, did not have any female participants during the specified period. These vocations have traditionally been perceived as male-dominated, which contributes to the low female participation. Conversely, in vocations traditionally associated with women, such as hair and beauty therapy, fashion design, and embroidery, women comprise approximately 90 percent of the enrolment. Similar results were observed in non-CBT courses during the same period (Annex 3). Courses focused on care services, weaving, and tailoring, as well as beauty and wellness, exhibited significantly higher female participation rates. Conversely, training programs centered around construction,

⁷ UNESCO. 2020. UNESCO report illustrates leap forward in girls' education over past 25 years, now threatened by Covid-19. Accessed on 17 May 2023.

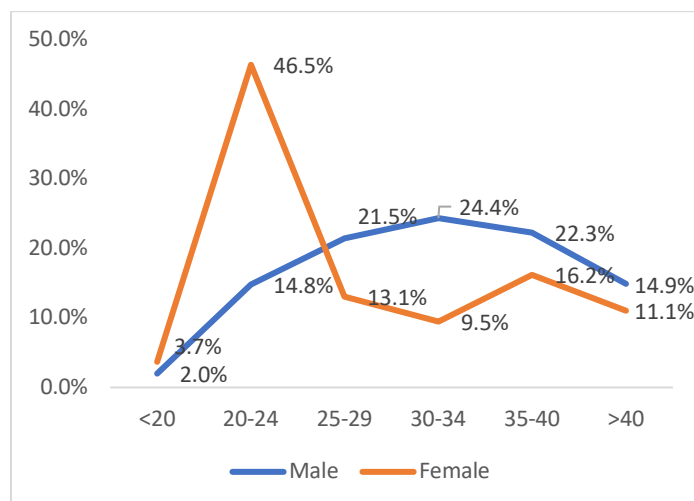
⁸ Royal Government of Bhutan. 2021. TVET Statistics of Bhutan - In the Quest for Transforming TVET through Data-Driven Approach. Ministry of Labour and Human Resources. Thimphu

mechanical engineering, and furniture making witnessed significantly higher male participation rates. Those data reveal a gender-based division in enrollment, with females underrepresented in certain fields.

Furthermore, gender segregation is also observed among TVET institutes based on the courses they offer. For instance, the Technical Training Institute (TTI), which provides training for automobile technicians, exhibits the highest gender disparity with a GPI of 0.05. Even in institutes where female enrolment is high, the enrolment is divided sharply along gender lines. For instance, 47 percent of the total enrollment are female in the College of Zorigchusum. However, enrollment in various courses of at the institute is determined based on gender roles. While more than 90 percent of males are enrolled in Patra (wood curving) courses which is considered a male vocation, more than 90 percent–of females are enrolled in Tshemdru (embroidery) courses which is considered a vocation suitable to females. Private training institutes also reflect gender-based enrollment choices. The field of fashion and tailoring shows the highest disparity with a GPI of 11, indicating a significant over-representation of female students. Conversely, fields such as driver training, tourist guide training, and security service training have a significant under-representation of female students. These enrollment patterns suggest that traditional gender roles and societal expectations continue to exert influence on the educational and career paths chosen by females and males in the TVET sector.

Female enrollment in TVET is highest among the age group of 20 to 24, even higher than male enrollment for the same age group, but drops significantly afterward (Figure 2). Responsibilities related to childbearing, family care, and household chores may discourage females from pursuing TVET education beyond a certain age. Males, on the other hand, experience fewer hindrances to their education in this field. Understanding these factors and addressing them could help to increase female enrollment in TVET programs and reduce the gender gap in this field.

Figure 2. Enrolment in TVET (TTIs) by gender and age group in 2021



Source: TVET MIS Database, Government of Bhutan, Ministry of Education and Skills Development

Most enrolled in TVET reported their parental occupation as farmers residing in rural areas of Bhutan with higher poverty and lower adult literacy. More than 70 percent of the students enrolled in TVET reported their parental occupation as farmers who reside in rural areas. Less

than 10 percent reported their parents work either in the civil service or in a corporation. With a significantly higher poverty rate and lower adult literacy rate in rural areas, TVET is mostly pursued by students belonging to poorer households.

Females tend to prefer shorter-duration TVET courses, with a duration of 6 months to one year, while a higher proportion of males opt for longer-duration programs (Table 1). For example, more than two-thirds of the total female students took courses with a duration of less than one year. On the other hand, around 10 percent more males compared to females enroll in courses with a duration of more than a year. Low female enrollment in TVET and even lower enrollment in courses with a duration of more than a year, it contributes to the disadvantage faced by females in the job market in terms of employment opportunities and earnings, as longer-duration courses often lead to better employment opportunities. This highlights the need to encourage and support females to enroll in longer-duration TVET courses to improve their job prospects and reduce the gender gap in this field.

Table 1. Enrolment in TVET by the duration of the programme and gender

Duration of TVET course	Female		Male		Total
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	
6 months or less	346	42.2%	641	44.8%	987
7 months to 1 year	284	34.6%	316	22.1%	600
1 to 2 years	190	23.2%	463	32.4%	653
more than 2 years		0.0%	10	0.7%	10

Source: TVET MIS Database, Government of Bhutan, Ministry of Education and Skills Development

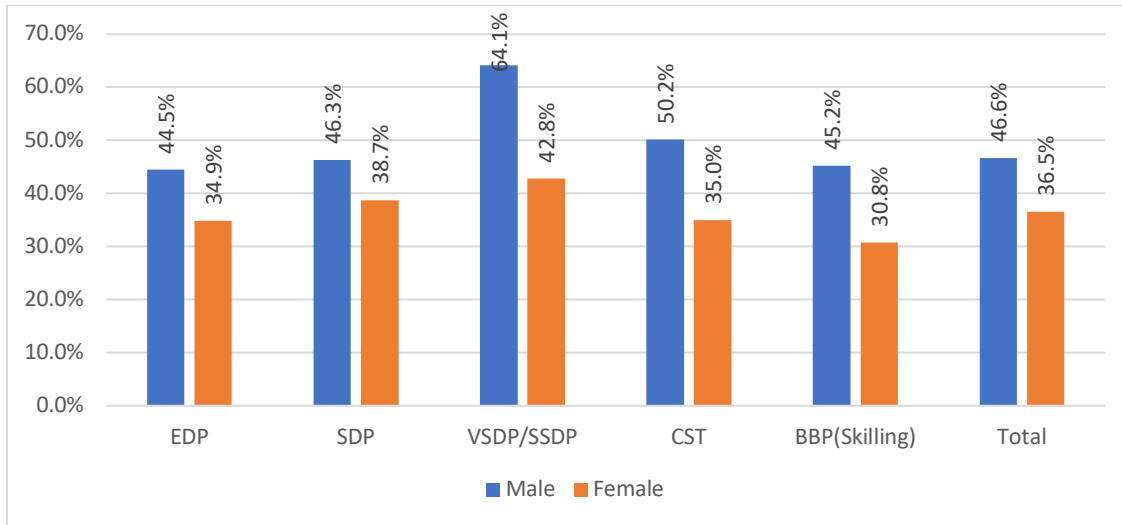
The number of female instructors within technical institutes remains significantly lower compared to the male. Of the 157 instructors, only around 30 percent of the trainers are female in TVET institutes administered by DWPSD. The proportion of female instructors is even lower in institutes that offer vocational courses in male-dominated sectors. For instance, at the National Institute of Zorig Chusum, which offers courses in 13 traditional arts and crafts, primarily male-dominated vocation, only 14 percent of the instructors are female. The under-representation of female teachers and role models in TVET, particularly in male-dominated vocational courses would not help female students develop a self-motivated attitude and foster independent learning.

The employment outcomes upon completion of TVET also demonstrate a gender disparity between men and women. A tracer study conducted during the TVET Convocation 2023 reported that 93.7 percent of male graduates who participated in the survey are currently employed while only 80.8 percent of females were employed⁹. A recent tracer study of SDP graduates also suggests similar outcomes (Figure 3). Irrespective of the type of program, males are more likely to be employed within 6 months after graduation. While the employment rate for female graduates within six months of graduation ranged between 30 percent to around 42

⁹ Royal Government of Bhutan. 2023. *TVET Convocation 2023: Multi-Cohort Tracer Survey*. Ministry of Education and Skills Development

percent, the employment rate for males ranged between 45 percent and 64 percent. Employers' preference for male employees and the gender wage gap further contribute to the lower employment and earnings of female graduates. Around 36 percent of the employers stated their preference for males in the survey of TVET employers¹⁰. In addition, male employees reported a higher average monthly earnings of Nu. 18,429 as opposed to Nu. 16,800 for females.

Figure 3. Percentage of males and females employed within six months of graduation by training and gender



Source: SDP data report, 2022, MoLHR

¹⁰ Royal Government of Bhutan. *TVET Graduate Employer Survey Report 2022*. Ministry of Labour and Human Resources. Thimphu

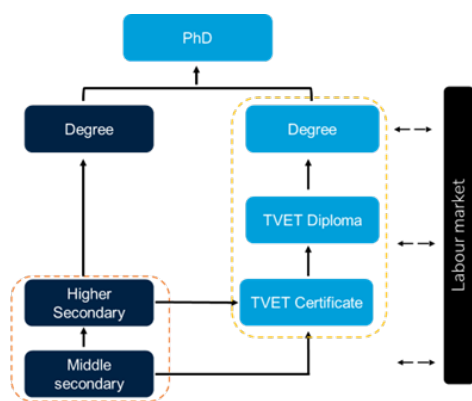
Chapter 3

Opportunities and Challenges to Female Participation in TVET

Lower enrollment and gender-based employment segregation are influenced by various factors, such as supply-side and demand-side constraints, macro-fiscal, legal, and regulatory frameworks, as well as local context and social norms. An assessment conducted by ADB in Vietnam reveals that sociocultural norms still impact women's participation in education and employment¹¹. Gender-based stereotypes that determine the selection of TVET courses act as barriers to female participation in TVET. Similar observations were also made in Bangladesh and Nepal¹², and Bhutan is no exception. The National Commission for Women and Children in Bhutan has identified a lack of confidence among young female job seekers as a factor impeding their opportunities in the labor market. Additionally, it has been observed that youths lack awareness and confidence in the employability of technical and vocational skills¹³.

This section discusses the opportunities and challenges for female participation in TVET, using a dual pathways approach based on the Bhutan Qualifications Framework (BQF) (Annex 4) to identify opportunities and challenges. In Bhutan, after middle secondary education, students have the choice to pursue higher secondary school or opt for TVET. Following TVET, a trainee can choose to pursue an applied degree or master's in their vocation, enter the labor market, or pursue an academic degree. Most students reportedly join TVET after higher secondary education. Upon obtaining a vocational certificate or diploma, trainees enter the labor market. Therefore, the pathways can be categorized into three phases: pre-TVET (while in school before opting for TVET), vocational education at Technical Training Institutes (TTIs), and the conditions in the labor market after graduation. Opportunities and challenges are identified for each stage.

Figure 4. Education and TVET Pathways



Note: The Bhutan Qualification Framework 2003 provides qualification pathways for Community Education, School Education, TVET, Higher Education, and Monastic Education. An individual may enter the labor market after obtaining a qualification from any of the education pathways and can continue their education even after entering the labor market.

¹¹ ADB Briefs (January 2020). ISBN 978-92-9262-007-3 (print).

¹² International Labor Organization. Gender Mainstreaming into Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Bangladesh

¹³ National Commission for Women and Children (2013). Bhutan Gender Policy Note.

The First Stage: Pre-TVET

A relatively higher level of motivation is observed among registered trainees, which presents good opportunities in Bhutan's TVET programs. A relatively higher level of motivation is observed among registered trainees as it presents good opportunities in Bhutan. Trainees enroll in TVET programs for various reasons. According to a qualitative interview conducted in June, some express interest in a specific vocation, while others believe that TVET enhances their employment prospects. For example, one female trainee chose TVET over a Bachelor of Arts degree after conducting extensive research. Another male candidate opted for TVET after realizing that a TVET graduate with an NC II qualification had an advantage in a job interview. Some trainees pursue vocational education with the intention of going abroad, as they believe that skilled individuals have better employment and earning opportunities. Additionally, some students join specific courses because their parents or family members own businesses in related trades. For instance, a girl joined masonry because her father owns a construction company. Another girl enrolled in a baking course to support her brother's bakery business. Overall, many students choose TVET because they feel idle at home with limited opportunities.

Like in other countries, TVET in Bhutan, however, also faces negative public perception and is often viewed as a program for students who are unable to qualify for university or for individuals from lower-income backgrounds. This perception serves as a significant barrier to women's participation in TVET. Kuensel, a local news outlet, reported the existence of a negative stigma attached to TVET, "*people hold the view that TVET is good for students who do not qualify for admission into the university and meant for lower-income groups*".¹⁴ The trainees mentioned during the interview that their parents and families discouraged them, especially the girls, from enrolling in TVET. Despite this discouragement, the parents eventually allowed them to enroll after repeated insistence of the children. It is also worth noting that a considerable percentage of candidates who confirm their enrollment do not report to the institutes. Similar perceptions of TVET as a program for the less fortunate, school dropouts and those with lower academic achievements can be observed in other countries. Additionally, TVET graduates may be seen as lacking the necessary communication, problem-solving, and critical-thinking skills to be resourceful and self-reliant¹⁵.

Traditional gender roles and stereotypes also hinder female TVET enrollment. In Bhutanese society, traditional gender roles define women as caretakers at home, while men are expected to provide economic support as the family's breadwinners. Such a cultural perspective heavily shapes individual social identities and influences educational and occupational choices, emphasizing men's education and career development. Most trainees responded that their parents did not support them in pursuing a vocational career, especially when girls applied for traditionally male-dominated vocations such as mechanics, welding, carpentry, and masonry. They were often told that these vocations were unsuitable for women and were instead encouraged to pursue IT, office management, or other fields considered more suitable for women.

¹⁴ Wangdi, B. (2019, June 15). The Status of TVET in Bhutan. Kuensel.

¹⁵ - Okae-Adjei, Samuel, " Public Perception towards Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Ghanaian Polytechnics", Asian Research Journal of Arts & Social Sciences 2, 3 (2017): 1-10
Aldossari, Abdulaziz, "Vision 2030 and reducing the stigma of vocational and technical training among Saudi Arabian students", Empirical Research in Vocational Education and Training. 12, 3, (11 April 2020) <https://ervet-journal.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40461-020-00089-6>

The management and trainees also noted that female applicants preferred the house wiring course as it does not require physical strength. Similar views may be shared by the administrative staff of the TTIs. In one instance, a male trainee shared a humorous experience where he mistakenly applied for a weaving course and was referred to as "sister" by the institute staff due to the assumption that the course was for women.

Low-level awareness of TVET is also considered one of the challenges for TVET training. Most trainees enroll in TVET without understanding TVET and the trade they choose to pursue. While many stated that they would not have considered TVET if they had received scholarships for bachelor's degrees, few of them were aware of TTI and vocational training opportunities in Bhutan. Some trainees learned about TVET and employment prospects when staff from TTIs visited their schools for awareness-raising campaigns. In a few cases, school-based counselors also shared information on vocational training in their life skills classes. If it weren't for their friends' sharing links to announcements for vocational course applications, most trainees said they would not have learned about TVET in Bhutan. Similar low-level awareness of TVET was observed in other countries. For instance, in Pakistan, a qualitative assessment of awareness of TVET among students suggested that even those living near TVET institutions were unaware of vocational education¹⁶. A review by UNESCO identified low public awareness as one of the challenges facing TVET in Malaysia¹⁷. Such low awareness among the public, including parents and employers, results in an inferior perception of TVET and its graduates.

Moreover, limited dissemination of detailed course information negatively impacts TVET training. Apart from the title of the training, the number of available slots, the duration of the training, and the qualification requirements, no other information about the course is published or disseminated. Except for a few who learned about the course from friends or family members who graduated with similar vocational certificates, most did not know the requirements of the vocation and its prospects. One female trainee remarked, "I brought a lot of kira thinking that the courses would be classroom-based. I hardly get the opportunity to wear it. Instead, I should have brought other clothing suitable for the course." Furthermore, information on training opportunities is posted on the respective websites of the department and TTIs, a few other private websites, and social media pages, limiting its reach. The trainees did not recall seeing advertisements in national media or popular social media pages. Such limited information disadvantages girls, as their choice of trade is based on the title, which discourages girls from applying, assuming the courses may only be relevant to men. For instance, most girls said they did not want to apply or were discouraged from applying to welding courses or other male-dominated vocations because they and their parents felt that their physical strength was not suitable for the trade.

The limited connection between TVET institutes and employers also poses a considerable obstacle, particularly for employers seeking to hire TVET graduates. The involvement of employers in the development of TVET curricula is crucial as it ensures the provision of practical skills that are relevant to industrial needs and enhances employability. This lack of collaboration

¹⁶ Chamadia, S, and Shahid, M, "Skilling for the Future: Evaluating Post-reforms Status of "Skilling Pakistan" and Identifying Success Factors for TVET Improvement in the Region" *Journal of Technical Education and Training (JTED)*, 10, 1 (June 2018), 1-14.

¹⁷ United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization, "Sub-Education Policy Review Report: Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)", https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/tvet_final_-_january_2021.pdf

between TVET and industries also impedes graduates' capacity to connect with potential employers, understand their specific skill requirements, and effectively pursue suitable career opportunities. To address this disparity, it is essential to improve the exchange of information between employers and TVET graduates, fostering a more streamlined and successful job market for both parties. The Second Stage - During the TVET

The Second Stage: During TVET

During TVET, there are various opportunities and challenges that need to be addressed.

The opportunities include the high acquisition of vocational skills and competencies, with none of the trainees expressing dissatisfaction with enrolling in a vocational training program. After gaining skills and understanding the prospects, most trainees now prefer vocational training over other academic degrees. They believe that both males and females are equally capable of pursuing any vocation, challenging traditional gender roles. For example, they mentioned that women's superior balance and greater hand stability make them better welders, and women excel in bricklaying and plastering. Both trainees and trainers believe that males and females are equally competent in any vocation.

Moreover, both trainers and trainees express satisfaction with the improved learning environment in diverse classrooms where both males and females participate. This diversity makes teaching more relatable and provides opportunities to understand the needs of different genders. For instance, trainees in beauty and wellness find it easier to learn about men's hair preferences from their male classmates. Instructors and lecturers also find it easier to impart value education and communication skills in diverse classrooms. The trainees report receiving support from their peers, irrespective of their gender. However, some trainers feel that most TTIs lack universal access design and facilities to support persons with disabilities and married women. The significant drop in female enrollment after the age of 25 may be due to a lack of facilities that support married women, particularly those with children.

Nevertheless, there are challenges that undermine the attractiveness and inclusivity of TVET. Most practical sessions at TTIs involve labor-intensive tasks with limited use of technology, discouraging female trainees from pursuing physically strenuous vocations. Tasks such as mixing concrete, lifting heavy automobile parts, welding with steel, carpentry with wood, and breaking stones are still done using traditional methods. Both trainers and trainees express the need for automated tools or machines to perform these physically strenuous activities.

Another challenge is the presence of gender-biased imagery across TVET courses. Textbooks and training materials often depict men performing the vocations, creating a gender bias. For example, in a masonry module, there is no depiction of a female mason, and signage for occupational health and safety only shows male workers in one institute. Efforts are being made to address this issue, such as redesigning imagery to include at least 50 percent females in posters. However, gender bias in textbooks remains a widespread issue found in many countries and may persist despite efforts to address it¹⁸. A review of Bhutanese school textbooks

¹⁸ Blumberg, Rae. 2007. "Gender Bias Textbooks: A Hidden Obstacle on the Road to Gender Equality in Education", Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2008. United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

revealed gender biases and stereotypes in the content and illustrations of student activities, as well as an imbalance of gender among authors, reviewers, editors, and designers¹⁹.

Furthermore, limited interaction between different cohorts and programs hampers equal participation and peer mentorship. Non-standard admission dates or cycles in TTIs result in limited interaction between different batches, disadvantaging female trainees who miss out on experiences shared by their seniors. Moreover, limited interaction between trainees pursuing different vocations hampers the cross-benefits of increased female participation in one course for other courses.

In addition, there are limited courses suitable for women in traditionally male-dominated vocations, and similarly limited courses suitable for men in women-dominated sectors. The social acceptance of women in traditionally male-dominated sectors is low, although they are often recruited and considered suitable as managers or administrators. Efforts are being made to introduce courses such as automobile store management and construction management to attract more female participants. A case study in the Philippines showed increased female participation in all colleges after introducing courses suitable for women, such as information technology. This further led to girls enrolling in traditionally male-dominated vocations such as automobiles and welding²⁰.

Financial constraints are also a significant challenge, as many vocational students come from agricultural backgrounds in rural areas. Female participants, in particular, shared that the stipend they receive, after deducting institute expenses, is barely sufficient to buy sanitary pads. With lower employment prospects, low public perception of TVET, and traditional gender roles, parents are often unwilling to support female participation in vocational education if it requires the same financial support as other academic programs²¹. Financial constraints have also been found to hinder female participation in TVET in countries like Nepal and Bangladesh.

Moreover, public TTIs provide residential facilities, but trainees availing these facilities are subject to hostel rules that restrict their freedom. They are not allowed to go outside the campus, invite family members to the hostel, or visit hostels designated for the opposite sex. While trainees may not see it as a problem, these rules may discourage married women from pursuing training at TTIs, as their families are not allowed to reside with them or visit them occasionally. Women with children may opt for day-scholar programs to live with their families, but they may lack the economic means to support it.

The Third Stage - Post-TVET

On-campus recruitment is ad hoc and limited. The institute organizes on-campus recruitment events for graduates, inviting prospective employers to conduct recruitment sessions as the trainees near completion of their training. However, this process is not institutionalized and relies

¹⁹ Yuden, Yuden, Sonam Chuki and Tshewang Dorji, 2021. "Gender Sensitivity in Textbooks in Secondary Education in Bhutan". *European Journal of Education Technology*. 4(1). 14-30.

²⁰ Misola, Nehema. 2010. "Improving the Participation of Female Students in TVET Programmes Formally Dominated by Males: The Experience of Selected Colleges and Technical Schools in the Philippines." International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, UNESCO.

²¹ Lamichhane, Ram. 2014. "Hindering Factors of Female Participation in TVET in Nepal." *Scholarly Technical Education Publication Series (STEPS)*. 2. <https://www.cpsctech.org/2014/07/hindering-factors-of-female.html>

on the personal relationships of the management. The trainees mentioned that such employment opportunities immediately after graduation encourage them to pursue vocational training.

Furthermore, the limited availability of employment services for TVET graduates is indeed a concern. While TVET programs equip students with technical skills and knowledge, it is essential to provide them with employment or entrepreneurship support services, such as job search assistance, career counseling, and business management skills to enhance their prospects in the job market or encourage them to start their own businesses. Currently, the MoICE manages six Employment Service Centres in Thimphu, Phuntsholing, Gelephu, Samdrup Jongkhar, Trongsa, and Mongar with a sub-office of Mongar in Trashigang. These centers primarily offer online registration services and do not focus on job placement and briefing. The trainees expressed the need for more comprehensive support in seeking employment, as they were unaware of the employment prospects after graduation.

Gender biases and earning gaps are observed during their on-the-job training. The trainees experienced gender-based job assignments and biases at workplace. One female trainee shared an instance where both the employer and customers expressed reluctance to utilize her skills and services. Customers would closely monitor her work, which she perceived as a lack of trust. Female graduates from automobile courses were often employed in managing spare parts and stores, regardless of their skills. Additionally, the trainees noticed an earning gap between men and women, with men receiving higher tips compared to women for the same services. Such gender attitudes perpetuate the preference for men in male-dominated sectors. A 2022 survey of employers revealed that approximately 36 percent expressed a preference for male candidates.

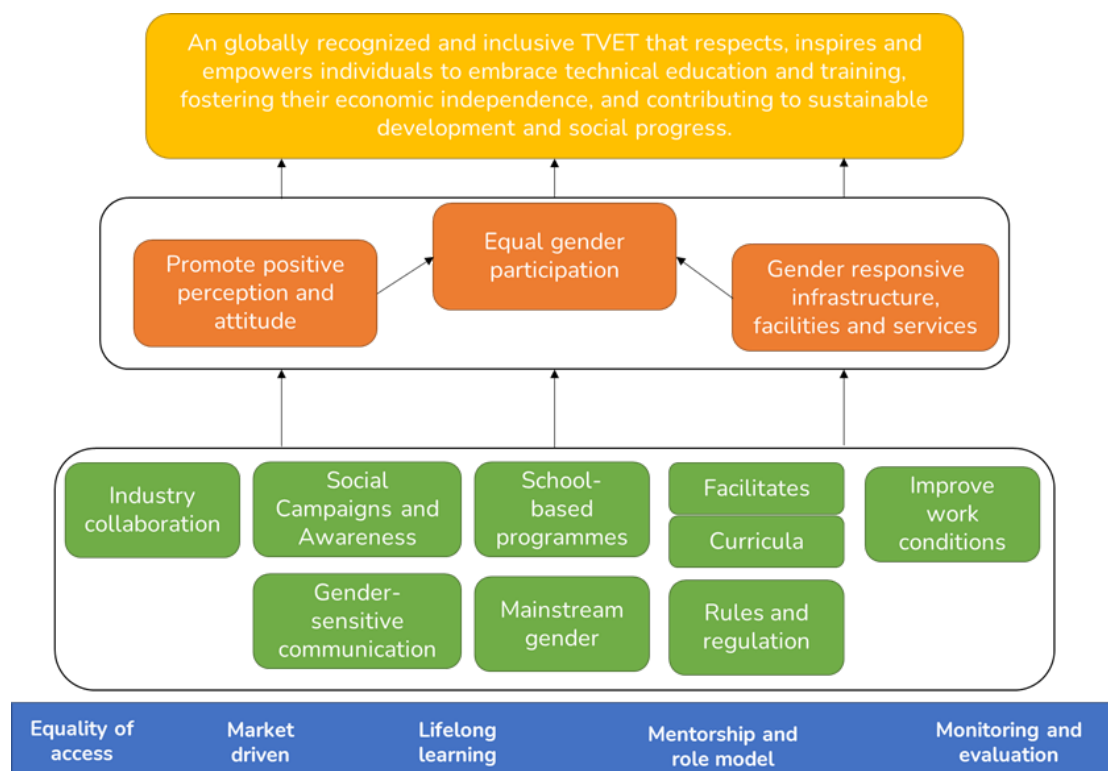
Poor work conditions and environment discourage employment after acquiring skills. For example, the living conditions on construction sites, where trainees often reside during on-the-job training, are generally substandard. Trainees reported living in temporary camps alongside Indian workers, with limited facilities such as a single toilet and an open bathroom. Female trainees highlighted the challenges they face in these living conditions, particularly when camps are made of tin sheets, making them uncomfortable and unbearable. Campsites often flood during rain due to a lack of drainage systems. The trainees emphasized the need for improved living conditions, expressing a preference for alternative jobs if the situation does not improve. A baseline assessment of women engineers in the power sector revealed that utility companies prefer male candidates for technical field-based positions that involve living in campsites under harsh conditions and performing tasks such as climbing electric poles and towers. The assessment also noted instances of workplace sexual harassment faced by women, which often goes unreported. These difficult work conditions and the preference for males in such environments pose disadvantages for women pursuing vocational training and career growth.

Chapter 4

Strategic Framework for Promoting Gender Equality in TVET in Bhutan

The following figure summarizes the strategic framework for promoting gender equality in TVET in Bhutan (Figure 5). The overall vision is to create an inclusive TVET system, which will be achieved through three strategic areas: creating a positive perception, developing gender-responsive infrastructure and facilities, and promoting equal gender participation. Enablers are activities that will contribute to achieving these favorable strategic areas. The implementation of all activities and programs will be guided by six principles. These principles include equality of access, designed based on the market's needs, promoting lifelong learning, mentorship, and role modeling, and monitoring and evaluation that recognizes gender as a cross-cutting issue.

Figure 5: Strategic framework for promoting gender equality in TVET



Vision, principles, and strategic objectives

Vision

A globally recognized and inclusive TVET system that respects, inspires and empowers individuals to embrace quality and wholesome technical education and training, fostering their economic independence, and contributing to sustainable development and social progress.

Objectives

- Increase female participation in formal TVET institutions and employment.
- Promote a positive perception and attitude towards women in training and employment, particularly in "non-traditional sectors."
- Enhance gender-responsive infrastructure, facilities, and environments to provide appropriate support at all stages of vocational education and training.

Guiding Principles

- **Equality of Access to Training and Employment:** Ensure equal opportunities for both women and men to access technical education and training programs, eliminating barriers and biases that hinder their participation.
- **Market- and Technology-Driven Approach:** Offer courses that are relevant to local needs, respond to changing global markets, and incorporate technological advancements to enable gainful employment for all individuals.
- **Care and Wellbeing:** Create a conducive infrastructure, system, and culture that cares for all individuals and promotes the well-being of all individuals.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Create an inclusive environment with appropriate support systems that recognize individuals' natural drive to explore, learn, and grow, fostering a culture of lifelong learning.
- **Cross-Cutting and Holistic Approach:** Integrate a gender perspective into all aspects of technical education, including curriculum development, teaching and learning methods, assessment, and resource allocation, to address gender disparities comprehensively. Foster partnerships among technical education institutions, employers, civil society organizations, and government agencies to collectively promote gender equality, share best practices and develop initiatives supporting women's participation and advancement in technical fields.
- **Mentorship and Role Models:** Encourage the participation of female role models and mentors in technical education to inspire and guide aspiring women, helping them overcome challenges and envision successful careers in traditionally male-dominated fields.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regularly monitor and evaluate the progress of gender equality initiatives in technical education, and collect gender-disaggregated data on enrolment, retention, completion rates, and employment outcomes. Use the findings to identify areas for improvement, inform evidence-based policies and interventions, and ensure accountability in promoting gender equality.

Four Strategic Areas

Strategic Area 1: Cultivating a Positive Perception of Gender in TVET

Objective: TVET in Bhutan and most developing countries face a significant challenge from negative public perception. Currently, TVET is often regarded as a second-rate educational and training option pursued only if students are not able to pursue higher education. Females aspiring to pursue vocational education and training face double discrimination because of gender roles and stereotypes. Changing the perception of TVET is crucial to recognizing its value and promoting its growth as a viable and rewarding career pathway, as well as empowering women and girls. To cultivate a positive perception of TVET, various activities will be initiated.

Activities:

- **Promote role models:** Highlight successful individuals, both male and female, who have excelled in TVET fields to challenge stereotypes and demonstrate gender equality in potential and achievements.
- **Conduct social campaigns and awareness-raising initiatives:** Educate students, parents, and the community about the opportunities available in TVET, with a focus on equal participation and encouraging girls and women to explore TVET pathways.
- **Enhance mentoring and support:** Establish mentorship programs to connect female students with successful professionals in their respective vocations, providing guidance and support to overcome gender-related challenges and biases.
- **Improve career guidance:** Offer comprehensive and gender-responsive career guidance and counseling services in schools, challenging gender stereotypes and highlighting the opportunities for personal growth, economic independence, and recognition in TVET.
- **Foster collaboration with industry:** Develop partnerships with industry stakeholders to promote gender diversity and inclusion in TVET through internships, apprenticeships, and job placements that provide equal opportunities for both genders. By working closely with employers, relevant data can be collected on the specific industries and sectors where TVET skills are in demand. This information can include the types of skills, qualifications, and experiences sought by employers, as well as the projected growth and trends in these industries. Publishing this data widely, through platforms such as the existing LMIS, will allow students and prospective job seekers to gain a better understanding of the actual demand for TVET in the labor market. Bhutan already has a labor market information system (LMIS) at <https://data.bt/>, but additional efforts can be made to present comprehensive statistics and data specifically related to TVET and its demand from the employer's perspective.
- **Introduce TVET courses as electives in schools:** Implement TVET courses as elective or optional subjects in higher secondary schools, ensuring support by locating them near Technical Training Institutes (TTIs).
- **Provide policy dialogue forums:** Engage policymakers and educational institutions in policy dialogue to promote gender-responsive policies and practices in TVET, advocating for inclusion and gender equality through collaborative efforts.

Strategic Area 2: Encouraging and Promoting Women and Girls' Participation in TVET

Objective: Female participation in TVET remains low due to several challenges that female students face while pursuing TVET. One objective of these activities is to promote and enhance female participation in TVET by addressing gender-related barriers and creating an inclusive and supportive environment.

Activities:

1. **Enhance and promote gender-sensitive communication:** Develop a communication strategy or guide and provide training to officials to promote female participation in TVET through gender-sensitive messaging.
2. **Develop gender-responsive infrastructure and facilities:** Create gender-responsive residential and other facilities, including childcare facilities in TTIs located in populated urban centres, ensuring safety and security for both males and females. Establish childcare facilities in selected TTIs to support women with children. It is promising that the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD) has made efforts to enhance ECCD access by constructing ECCD centers and providing additional training to ECCD facilitators. These initiatives in early childhood learning and development have the potential to enable women to utilize ECCD centers, granting them free time to join TVET programs and improve their skills and employability.
3. **Provide financial support:** Offer stipends and allowances, including tuition support for training from private providers, prioritizing support for female trainees. Specifically, it is recommended to ensure a focus on low-income women and those from rural areas by introducing transportation stipends. The provision of these stipends would help alleviate the financial burden of commuting, enabling more women from rural areas to actively participate in ECCD programs and subsequently join TVET programs.
4. **Strengthen gender-responsive curriculum:** Promote curricula that challenge gender stereotypes, promote gender equality, and create an inclusive learning environment. Enhance the capacity of lecturers and instructors to ensure a gender-responsive pedagogy.
5. **Develop the capacities of trainers and administrators:** Provide capacity development training for trainers and administrators in gender equality and inclusion, covering topics such as the importance of a gender-inclusive environment, gender stereotypes, and unconscious biases.
6. **Adopt gender-sensitive policies and rules:** Review and revise policies and rules to ensure they are gender-sensitive, including policies prohibiting discrimination, addressing sexual harassment, and providing support services such as counseling.
7. **Mainstream gender in staffing, programs, and budgetary processes:** Ensure fair and adequate allocation of resources by mainstreaming gender in staffing, programs, and budgeting. Implement gender-responsive HR management practices and adopt gender-responsive planning and budgeting approaches.
8. **Develop courses suitable for females in non-traditional sectors:** Create courses in non-traditional sectors that are considered suitable for women, promoting their participation in these fields.

Strategic Area 3: Increasing Women's Employment in All Sectors

Objective: The primary objective of these activities is to enhance employment opportunities and provide support for women graduates of TVET programs. Further, considering the presence of gender-based employment segregation, one of the objectives is to promote the participation of both men and women in non-traditional sectors.

Activities:

1. **Enhance employment support services:** Establish linkages between employment service centers and TTIs to facilitate employment after graduation. To strengthen the gap, the MoICE could consider expanding the services provided by the Employment Service Centres. This expansion includes job search assistance and placement, career guidance and counseling services, and business management support. Strengthen linkage between other employment promotion services provided by MoICE and TTIs. MoICE operates a wage subsidy program (YELP), and more efforts could be made to support TVET female graduates in participating in that program. Furthermore, MoICE runs incubation centers that offer entrepreneurship and acceleration services, and additional support could be provided to help TVET female graduates with entrepreneurial aspirations access these services and centers. Bridging programs, networking events, and mentorship sessions for female graduates should be organized to connect them with experienced female professionals in their respective fields. This would enable them to benefit from guidance, advice, and networking opportunities.
2. **Strengthen public-private partnerships for women's employment:** Strengthen on-campus fair by implementing targeted outreach programs to connect female graduates with employment opportunities, supporting recruiters in developing inclusive job descriptions with the provision of guidance and resources, and engaging private companies in vocational programs, such as offering internships or apprenticeships and supporting training initiatives that specifically target women
3. **Support apprenticeship and internship opportunities:** Strengthen collaboration with employers, particularly SMEs, to support female trainees in non-traditional sectors which could be achieved through various strategies, including on-the-job training, field attachments, or internships. One approach to enhancing collaboration is by enabling employers to deliver some of the training directly on their premises. This approach encourages a split between classroom-based training and on-the-job learning, providing trainees with practical experience in a real work environment. Moreover, sharing the costs of training between employers and relevant stakeholders can help make the programs more sustainable and accessible.
4. **Promote entrepreneurship among women TVET graduates:** Provide entrepreneurship training for female graduates to empower them and offer collateral-free loans or guarantee schemes in collaboration with banks.
5. **Conduct awareness-raising campaigns for associations and major employers:** Organize campaigns to raise awareness and advocate for diversity and inclusive workforce practices in collaboration with mutual-benefit organizations such as construction associations, hotel associations, and guide associations.

6. **Enhance and implement gender-related provisions and work conditions:** Review and improve work conditions to make them more gender-sensitive, collaborating with regulatory agencies to ensure implementation and enforcement.

Strategic Area 4: Strengthening Monitoring, Data Collection, and Knowledge Generation

Objective: Access to comprehensive data on TVET graduates' achievements can revolutionize perceptions, highlighting TVET's role in enhancing employability, fostering a skilled workforce, and contributing to economic growth. Specifically, by providing information on employment outcomes, salary growth, and career advancement, individuals can witness graduates' success in securing jobs and advancing their careers. In this sense, the Workforce Planning and Information Division of MoESD has set the tracer system on post-training employment outcomes, playing a crucial role in monitoring TVET graduates and assessing the effectiveness of the training programs. This data-driven approach can reshape public perceptions, reinforcing the value of TVET as a viable pathway for professional development.

Activities:

1. **Establish a system of voluntary and participatory gender audits for TVET institutes:** Implement a voluntary and participatory process for assessing gender equality policies, practices, and outcomes in institutions, conducted periodically to create a gender-friendly TVET environment.
2. **Periodically monitor gender equality initiatives and evaluate programs:** Establish a system to monitor gender-related plans and programs regularly, enabling evidence-based decision-making.
3. **Create a system for collecting and using disaggregated information:** Set standards for data collection, management, and use at all stages of TVET to ensure the validity of gender-disaggregated data. Ensuring accessibility of this dataset to employers, TVET students, and graduates is crucial. It enables employers to understand TVET graduates' profiles and assess their suitability for job vacancies. Moreover, accessible data on employer hiring needs, vacancies, and in-demand technical skills empowers prospective TVET graduates and students to make informed decisions. While publishing such data on the TVET MoESD website is a positive step, collaboration between the TVET MIS division and the labor market information system (<https://data.bt/>) should be strengthened. This collaboration can provide a more comprehensive and up-to-date view of the labor market, benefiting both TVET graduates and employers seeking skilled professionals.

Chapter 5

Implementation Plan

The strategic plan, scheduled for implementation from 2023 to 2027, will primarily be led by the Department of Workforce Planning and Skills Development (MoESD) (Table 2). However, effective implementation requires collaboration with other departments of MoESD, the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Employment (MoICE), as well as business associations and development partners.

To ensure a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation process, the department will work closely with Technical Training Institutes (TTIs) and other key stakeholders. Through this collaboration, they will assess the achievements, challenges, and overall impact of the plan's activities on an annual basis. The findings from the monitoring and evaluation efforts will be compiled into reports, providing valuable insights and recommendations for further improvement. These reports will be shared transparently with relevant stakeholders, fostering accountability in the implementation process. In response to the monitoring and evaluation results, the Department of Workforce Planning and Skills Development will make strategic and timely interventions to offer support and ensure effective implementation of the plan. By closely monitoring the progress and regularly evaluating the implementation of the strategic plan, the department aims to keep activities on track and make necessary adjustments to achieve the desired outcomes.

Table 2. Implementation Plans 2024-2028

Strategic objectives, activities, and indicators		Measurement unit	Baseline	Target				
				2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Strategic objectives 1: Cultivate a positive perception of Gender in TVET								
	Female trainees enrolled in TVET programs first hear about the programs from their schools	Percent	8.8% (2022)	10%	15%	30%	35%	50%
	Female trainees enrolled in TVET programs are recommended to undertake the program by their family/friends/relative	Percent	59.5% (2022)	60%	70%	70%	80%	80%
Activities								
1.1	Promote role models (success stories)							
	<i>Female TVET Role models identified in different trades to inspire youth</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>NA</i>	2	3	5	8	10
	<i>Identified role models visiting a number of schools and institutes</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>NA</i>	2	5	5	5	5
1.2	TVET Promotional materials developed to promote female participation in TVET	Date	NA	X	X	X	X	X
	<i>All announcements/posters/advertisements on TVET programs incorporate gender element</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>NA</i>	X	X	X	X	X
1.3	Enrollment of female candidates in vocational clubs in schools	Percent						
	<i>Number of female candidates in vocational clubs</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>NA</i>	100	200	300	500	500
Strategic Area 2: Encourage and promote women and girls' participation in TVET								
	<i>Females enrolled in TVET programmes</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>32.8 % (2022)</i>	34%	35%	40%	43%	45%
2.1	Enhance and promote gender-sensitive communication							
	<i>Communication strategy/guideline to ensure gender-sensitive communication is developed and implemented</i>	<i>Date</i>		X				
	<i>All staff reported adequate skills to ensure gender-sensitive communication</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>NA</i>	40%	50%	70%	80%	95%
2.2	Develop gender-responsive infrastructure and facilities							

	<i>Female trainees reported satisfaction with the infrastructure and facilities (accommodation)</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>73% (2022)</i>	<i>75%</i>	<i>75%</i>	<i>80%</i>	<i>80%</i>	<i>80%</i>
	<i>Crèche/Childcare centres established with adequate resources and facilities for female trainees and staff in all public TVET institutes</i>	<i>Cumulative Number</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>10</i>
	<i>Gender-segregated toilet facilities in all public TVET institutes</i>	<i>Percent</i>		<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>
	<i>Gender-segregated hostel facilities in all public TVET institutes</i>	<i>Percent</i>		<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>
2.3	Design and develop courses that encourage women's participation in TVET							
	<i>Percent of female-friendly CBT courses implemented in the public training institutes</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>50%</i>	<i>60%</i>	<i>70%</i>	<i>80%</i>	<i>90%</i>
2.4	Promote gender-responsive pedagogy							
	<i>Gender-sensitive textbooks, facilitators' manuals, and guides adopted</i>		<i>NA</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>
	<i>Trainers/teachers reported being competent in implementing gender-responsive teaching and learning process</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>30%</i>	<i>50%</i>	<i>60%</i>	<i>80%</i>	<i>90%</i>
2.5	Adopt gender-sensitive policies/Gender Equality Strategic Enrolment Plan							
	<i>Gender-sensitive policies, rules, and regulations adopted</i>			<i>X</i>				
	<i>Staff reported understanding of gender and their need</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>40%</i>	<i>50%</i>	<i>70%</i>	<i>80%</i>	<i>95%</i>
	<i>Gender Equality Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM) Plan implemented by the TTI/IZCs</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>20%</i>	<i>30%</i>	<i>40%</i>	<i>50%</i>	<i>60%</i>
2.6	Proportion of female TVET trainers in the public TVET institutions	<i>Percent</i>	<i>29.9%</i>	<i>30%</i>	<i>35%</i>	<i>35%</i>	<i>40%</i>	<i>40%</i>
2.7	Enhance collaboration with the industry to promote internships and apprenticeships							
	<i>Female trainees reported satisfaction with on-the-job training</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>wba in 2024</i>	<i>60%</i>	<i>60%</i>	<i>70%</i>	<i>75%</i>	<i>85%</i>
Strategic Area 3: Promote women's employment in all sector								

	Female employment of TVET graduates increased	Percent	44.8% (2022)	47%	50%	53%	55%	58%
	Percent of Females confident about securing gainful employment upon graduation	Percent	wba in 2024	60%	65%	65	70%	70%
3.1	Enhance employment facilitation support initiatives							
	<i>Female graduate employed within 12 months of graduation</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>63.8% (2022)</i>	<i>65%</i>	<i>67%</i>	<i>70%</i>	<i>70%</i>	<i>70%</i>
	<i>Female graduates employed as a result of the OJT program</i>	<i>Percent</i>		<i>25%</i>	<i>30%</i>	<i>35%</i>	<i>40%</i>	<i>45%</i>
	<i>Female graduates employed as a result of on-campus recruitment</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>7.5%</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>15%</i>	<i>15%</i>	<i>20%</i>	<i>25%</i>
3.3	Promote entrepreneurship among female TVET graduates							
	Percentage of female graduates employed in self-employment, freelancing, and own business	<i>Percent</i>	<i>5.7% (2022)</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>10%</i>
	<i>Percentage of female graduates satisfied with the entrepreneurship and self-employment training provided in the public TVET institutes</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>73.9% (2022)</i>	<i>75%</i>	<i>75%</i>	<i>75%</i>	<i>75%</i>	<i>75%</i>
	<i>Percentage of female graduates aspiring to take up entrepreneurship or self-employment after graduation</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>wba in 2024</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>10%</i>
3.4	Implement gender-related provisions and work conditions							
	<i>Sexual harassment prevention and response policy and procedures adopted by businesses in Bhutan.</i>	<i>Date</i>			X			
	<i>Occupational health and safety policy and standard adopted by businesses in Bhutan.</i>	<i>Date</i>		X				
Strategic Area 4: Strengthen monitoring, data collection, and knowledge generation								
	Knowledge papers and thematic reports on TVET published		2	2	2	3	4	5
4.1	Conduct voluntary and participatory gender audits for in TTIs							
	<i>A comprehensive gender audit was conducted in all TTIs</i>	<i>Date</i>				X		

4.2	Conduct periodic monitoring and evaluation of gender equality initiatives							
	<i>Evaluation of programmes promoting gender equality conducted</i>	<i>Date</i>						X
4.3	Create a system of data collection and management							
	<i>Key TVET statistical reports, tracers, and indicators (with gender-segregated data) made accessible to the public online</i>	<i>Publication of report</i>		X	X	X	X	X

Annex 1. TVET Development, Legal Foundation, and Institutional Arrangement in Bhutan

Historical Development of TVET in Bhutan

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Bhutan have undergone significant developments since its inception in 1964. The key milestones in the development of TVET are as follows:

- In 1964, the Kharbandi Technical Institute was established, marking the country's first TVET institute. It was later renamed the Royal Technical Institute (RTI) and offered vocational training in disciplines such as automobile engineering, general mechanics, building construction, civil draughting, and electrical engineering.
- The Royal Bhutan Polytechnic (RBP) was established in 1974 to train mid-level technicians in civil, electrical, and mechanical engineering. The institute offered certificate and diploma programs to equip students with practical skills in these fields.
- In 1999, the National Technical Training Authority (NTTA) was established to develop a vocational education and training (VET) system that would produce a skilled and productive workforce for the country. NTTA also took on the responsibility of regulating TVET in Bhutan.
- The Ministry of Labour and Human Resources (MoLHR) was established in 2003 through the merger of NTTA and the Department of Employment and Labour. MoLHR implemented a comprehensive regulatory framework and strategic plans to promote TVET in Bhutan. These initiatives aimed to enhance the quality and relevance of TVET programs and ensure the development of a skilled workforce.
- Currently, under the initiative "Transforming Our Civil Service," the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD) has been mandated to develop and promote TVET in Bhutan. The Department of Workforce Planning and Skills Development, operating under MoESD, is responsible for implementing TVET initiatives. Its mandate is to establish and maintain a TVET system that produces a workforce equipped with the necessary skills for the present and future job market.

These milestones reflect the continuous efforts made by Bhutan to strengthen and expand its TVET system, ensuring that it meets the demands of the country's workforce and contributes to national development.

Legal Foundation

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan, specifically Article 9 (15), emphasizes the state's commitment to providing education aimed at enhancing knowledge, values, and skills for the entire population. It guarantees free education for all school-age children up to the tenth standard, promotes the availability of technical and professional education, and ensures equal access to higher education based on merit. Article 9 (12) also ensures the right to work, vocational guidance and training, and fair and favorable working conditions.

The draft National Education Policy (NEP) in Bhutan provides a comprehensive framework for the development and promotion of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). The policy acknowledges the transformative potential of TVET in improving livelihoods, enhancing

productivity, and meeting the national skills requirements. In alignment with the Tertiary Education Policy 2010, the Bhutan Qualifications Framework (BQF) was revised in 2023. The BQF integrates and harmonizes qualifications from various education providers, including schools, monastic institutions, vocational institutes, and tertiary education institutes. It defines learning outcomes and credit systems to facilitate program comparison and promote the mobility and portability of qualifications.

The National Human Resource Development (HRD) Policy 2010 addresses the shortage of technical and vocational skills by emphasizing the development of TVET. The policy focuses on relevance, quality, and demand in planning and implementing vocational courses. It promotes competency-based vocational education and training and provides a framework for quality assurance in TVET. The policy also encourages flexible career pathways, allowing individuals to transition smoothly between general education and vocational education. Additionally, the policy recommends introducing vocational and technical education in middle secondary schools and monastic institutions.

The development of TVET in Bhutan is guided by five-year plans and other sectoral plans. The TVET Blueprint (2016-2030) serves as a long-term vision for reforming technical and vocational education. It aims to create an efficient TVET system that can meet the demand for skilled workforce and professionals, contributing to the development of various economic activities in the country. The blueprint aligns with national five-year plans and includes initiatives to diversify and strengthen curricula to ensure relevance. In 2021, the National TVET Reform Strategic Plan was adopted to modernize and revolutionize TVET in response to changing technological and economic landscapes. The plan envisions transforming TVET into an attractive learning and career pathway and provides a detailed action plan with resource requirements until 2026.

Governance and institutional arrangements

Governance and institutional arrangements for TVET in Bhutan have evolved to strengthen the system and ensure its effectiveness. The following details the current governance and institutional structure:

- Department of Workforce Planning and Skills Development (DWPSD): Following the Civil Service Reform Initiatives in 2022, DWPSD was established by merging the Department of Technical Education and the Department of National Human Resource Development under the former Ministry of Labour and Human Resources (MoLHR). DWPSD is responsible for formulating and implementing policies, programs, and initiatives related to TVET in Bhutan. Their focus includes improving the quality and relevance of training, preparing the young workforce for employment, and providing continuous training opportunities to enhance the productivity of the workforce. The department's mission is to build and sustain a TVET system that produces a work-ready, world-ready, and future-ready workforce.
- TVET Quality Council: The TVET Quality Council operates under the Bhutan Qualifications and Professionals Certification Authority and is responsible for accrediting technical training institutes (TTIs) and vocational training providers. The council ensures quality TVET by setting standards for vocational courses, accrediting institutes, conducting student assessments, and designing and implementing the Bhutan Qualifications Framework (BQF), which outlines all qualifications in Bhutan.
- Technical Training Institutes (TTIs): TVET is offered by both public and private TTIs in Bhutan. There are currently 10 public TTIs and around 120 privately owned TTIs. These

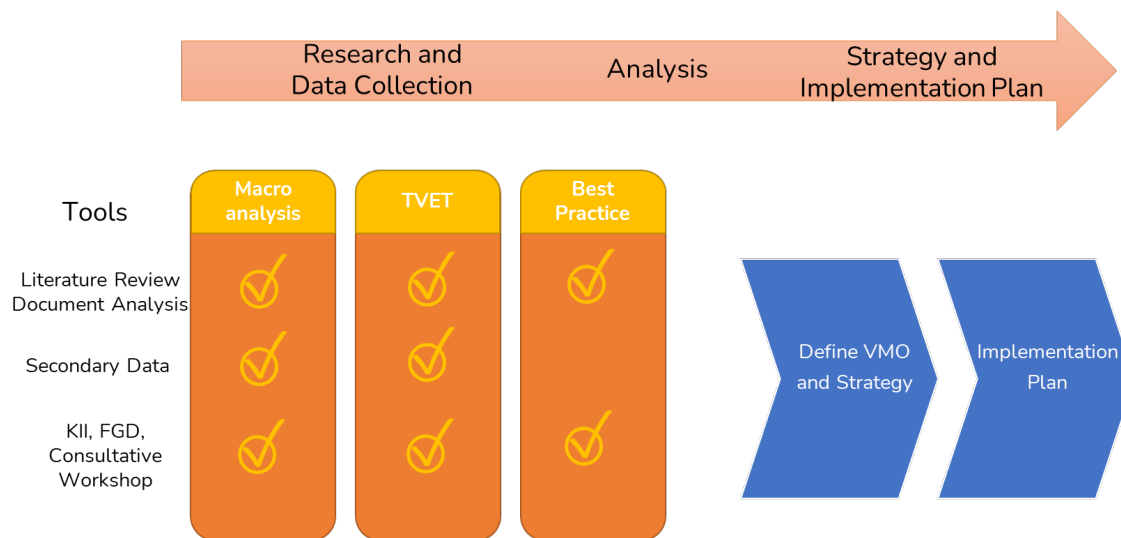
institutes provide national-level certificates and institute-level certificates. The national-level certificates, known as National Certificates, are awarded to graduates of TVET courses accredited by the TVET Quality Council. These certificates are recognized qualifications within the Bhutan Qualifications Framework, enabling further studies, employment, and career advancement. Institute certificates, on the other hand, are non-accredited courses and are not recognized as qualifications by the BQF.

- Skills Training Programme (SDP): The SDP was launched in 2021 in response to unemployment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It was initiated through a Royal Command to mitigate unemployment issues and support inclusive and sustainable recovery. The program aims to enhance the country's economic resilience by providing skills training and professional development interventions. The SDP targets job seekers, laid-off employees, and overseas returnees. It offers a range of 108 different courses in nine priority sectors to develop skills and facilitate employment opportunities.

The current governance and institutional arrangements reflect Bhutan's commitment to improving the quality and relevance of TVET, providing diverse pathways for skills development, and addressing the workforce needs of the country.

Annex 2: Methodology of the National Gender Strategy

To understand the current situation, and identify opportunities and challenges for female participation in TVET, the study employed document analysis and collection of primary and secondary data from key actors. The following figure depicts the methodology employed in developing the current strategy. The development of the strategic plan was implemented in three phases. The first phase focused on the literature review and collection of primary and secondary data. In the second phase, the findings from primary and secondary data were triangulated with the literature and policy review. Based on the analysis, the vision, objectives, strategy, and implementation were developed.



The following methods and tools were used for the strategy development:

- Document Analysis:** The document analysis consisted of a review and analysis of key documents governing TVET in Bhutan. The document reviewed includes the draft Education Policy, Bhutan Qualification Framework 2023, TVET Blueprint, TVET Reform Strategy, National Gender Equality Policy, and VET Policy, among others. These documents provided a governance framework and strategic areas for TVET development in Bhutan.
- Secondary Data:** The secondary data consisted of data from the TVET management information system (MIS). Data for five years maintained with TVET MIS were analyzed to identify trends, gender disparities in enrollment, preferred courses, and other key indicators. Data for both CBT and non-CBT were analyzed.
- KII and FDG:** Key informant interviews and focus group discussions with the principals, instructors, and trainees of the TTIs were conducted in June 2023. To cover a wide range of perspectives, different TTIs and trainees from different courses participated in the KIIs and FDGs. The interviews were conducted in 6 TTIs which are directly supervised and supported by the government.
- Consultative workshops**

Annex 3. Qualification levels and pathways

BQF Level	Community Education	School Education	TVET	Higher Education	Monastic Education
8				Doctoral Degree	<i>Khewang</i>
7			Master's Degree Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Certificate	Master's Degree Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Certificate	<i>Tsugla Gongma</i>
6			Applied Degree	Bachelor's Degree Graduate Diploma Graduate Certificate	<i>Tsugla Wongma</i>
5			Advance Diploma	Advance Diploma	
4			Diploma	Diploma	
3		Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate	Certificate 3		<i>Dringrim Gongma</i>
2		Bhutan Certificate for Secondary Education	Certificate 2		<i>Dringrim Barma</i>
1	ALC		Certificate 1		

Source: Bhutan Qualification Framework 2023.

Annex 4: Enrolment in CBT TVET from 2020-2023 by gender

Course	Female		Male		Gender parity
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	
Hair and Beauty Therapist	58	93.5%	4	6.5%	14.50
Fashion Designer	28	93.3%	2	6.7%	14.00
Tshem-Zop	90	88.2%	12	11.8%	7.50
Computer Application Assistant	25	86.2%	4	13.8%	6.25
Tshemdrup	38	84.4%	7	15.6%	5.43
Commercial Accountant (Certificate)	63	82.9%	13	17.1%	4.85
Baker	66	82.5%	14	17.5%	4.71
Beautician	31	81.6%	7	18.4%	4.43
Building Painter	7	70.0%	3	30.0%	2.33
Heavy Vehicle Driving	7	63.6%	4	36.4%	1.75
Computer Hardware & Networking Tech	27	62.8%	16	37.2%	1.69
Bhutanese Food Production Associate	30	57.7%	22	42.3%	1.36
Food Production Associate	35	54.7%	29	45.3%	1.21
Tour Operation Supervisor	9	50.0%	9	50.0%	1.00
Hotel Operation Supervisor	15	46.9%	17	53.1%	0.88
Mason	48	42.9%	64	57.1%	0.75
Plumber	34	38.2%	55	61.8%	0.62
Const. Carpenter	25	35.2%	46	64.8%	0.54
Domestic Electrician	58	32.2%	122	67.8%	0.48
Auto Electrician	28	31.5%	61	68.5%	0.46
Earth Moving Equipment Mechanic	3	27.3%	8	72.7%	0.38
Mobile Application Developer	8	25.8%	23	74.2%	0.35
Wooden Furniture Maker	21	21.6%	76	78.4%	0.28
Visual Effect Artist	6	21.4%	22	78.6%	0.27
Mechanical Fitter	4	13.8%	25	86.2%	0.16
Welder	9	13.2%	59	86.8%	0.15

Refrigeration & Airconditioning Tech	7	13.2%	46	86.8%	0.15
Lhadrip (ND)	3	11.1%	24	88.9%	0.13
Automobile Painter	2	11.1%	16	88.9%	0.13
Auto Mechanic	27	11.0%	219	89.0%	0.12
Shing Tshenpa	2	10.5%	17	89.5%	0.12
Cultural Tour Guide	5	7.4%	63	92.6%	0.08
Lhadrip	5	4.1%	116	95.9%	0.04
Patrap	2	2.3%	85	97.7%	0.02
Excavator Operator	1	1.8%	56	98.2%	0.02
Jim-Zop		0.0%	35	100.0%	0.00
Troe-Zop		0.0%	16	100.0%	0.00
Panel Beater		0.0%	13	100.0%	0.00
Shag-Zop		0.0%	7	100.0%	0.00
Mobile Phone Technician		0.0%	1	100.0%	0.00

Source: TVET MIS Database, Government of Bhutan, Ministry of Education and Skills Development

Annex 5: Enrolment in non-CBT TVET from 2020-2023 by gender

Course	Female		Male		Gender Parity
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	
ECCD Facilitator	149	88.17%	20	11.83%	7.5
Tailoring	119	84.40%	22	15.60%	5.4
Accounting	59	78.67%	16	21.33%	3.7
Bakery	186	77.50%	54	22.50%	3.4
Wellness and Beauty	127	76.05%	40	23.95%	3.2
Weaving and embroidery	65	75.58%	21	24.42%	3.1
Hospitality	198	64.92%	107	35.08%	1.9
Driving	8072	51.44%	7620	48.56%	1.1
Food processing	391	51.38%	370	48.62%	1.1
Information and Technology	197	50.13%	196	49.87%	1.0
Others	202	49.27%	208	50.73%	1.0
Farm production	215	43.61%	278	56.39%	0.8
Mechanical	222	37.44%	371	62.56%	0.6
Home appliances	26	30.95%	58	69.05%	0.4
Construction	131	21.23%	486	78.77%	0.3
Furniture making	26	17.22%	125	82.78%	0.2

Source: TVET MIS Database, Government of Bhutan, Ministry of Education and Skills Development

Annex 6: FDG and Consultative Workshop Participants

Sl#	Name	Position	Organization
1	Chencho Dorji	Trainee	TTI Thimphu
2	Christopher Ribes Ros		World Bank
3	Damchoe Dem	Founder and CEO	Bhutan Association of Women Entrepreneurs and Pelden Group of Companies
4	Dechen Tshomo	Programme Officer	Department of Workforce Planning and Skills Development
5	Jamuna Maya Mongar	Assistant Lecturer	TTI Thimphu
6	Kinley Tenzing Yangden	Business Development Officer	Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry
7	Kinley Yangden	Trainee	National Institute of Zorig Chusum
8	Kunzang Lhamu	Director General	Department of Employment and Entrepreneurship, MoICE
9	Lobzang Dorji	Country Coordinator	BEST Project
10	Pema C Lhendup	Programme Officer	Department of Workforce Planning and Skills Development
11	Ravi Dhanuna		World Bank
12	Rinzin Dema	Project Officer	RENEW
13	Sonam Phuntsho	Business Development Officer	Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry
14	Suman Pradhan	Executive Specialist	Department of Labour, MoICE
15	Tashi Tobgay	Assistant Lecturer	National Institute of Zorig Chusum
16	Thelma Choi		World Bank
17	Tshering Choden	Offtg. Principal	Royal Institute of Hospitality and Tourism
18	Tshering Lhamo	Choef Programme Officer	Department of Workforce Planning and Skills Development
19	Tshering Yangki	Planning Officer	Department of Employment and Entrepreneurship, MoICE
20	Ugyen Tshomo	Chief Programme Officer	National Commission for Women and Children
21	Changa Dorji	Consultant	

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Department of Workforce Planning and Skills Development (DWPSD)
Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD)
Royal Government of Bhutan

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