



International
Labour
Organization

► Skills Matter!

ILO's contribution to skills development
in Bangladesh





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► Contextual overview

Bangladesh has a strong track record of growth and development, even in times of elevated global uncertainty. Bangladesh reached lower-middle income status in 2015. It is on track to graduate from the United Nation's Least Developed Countries list in 2026. Poverty declined from 43.5 per cent in

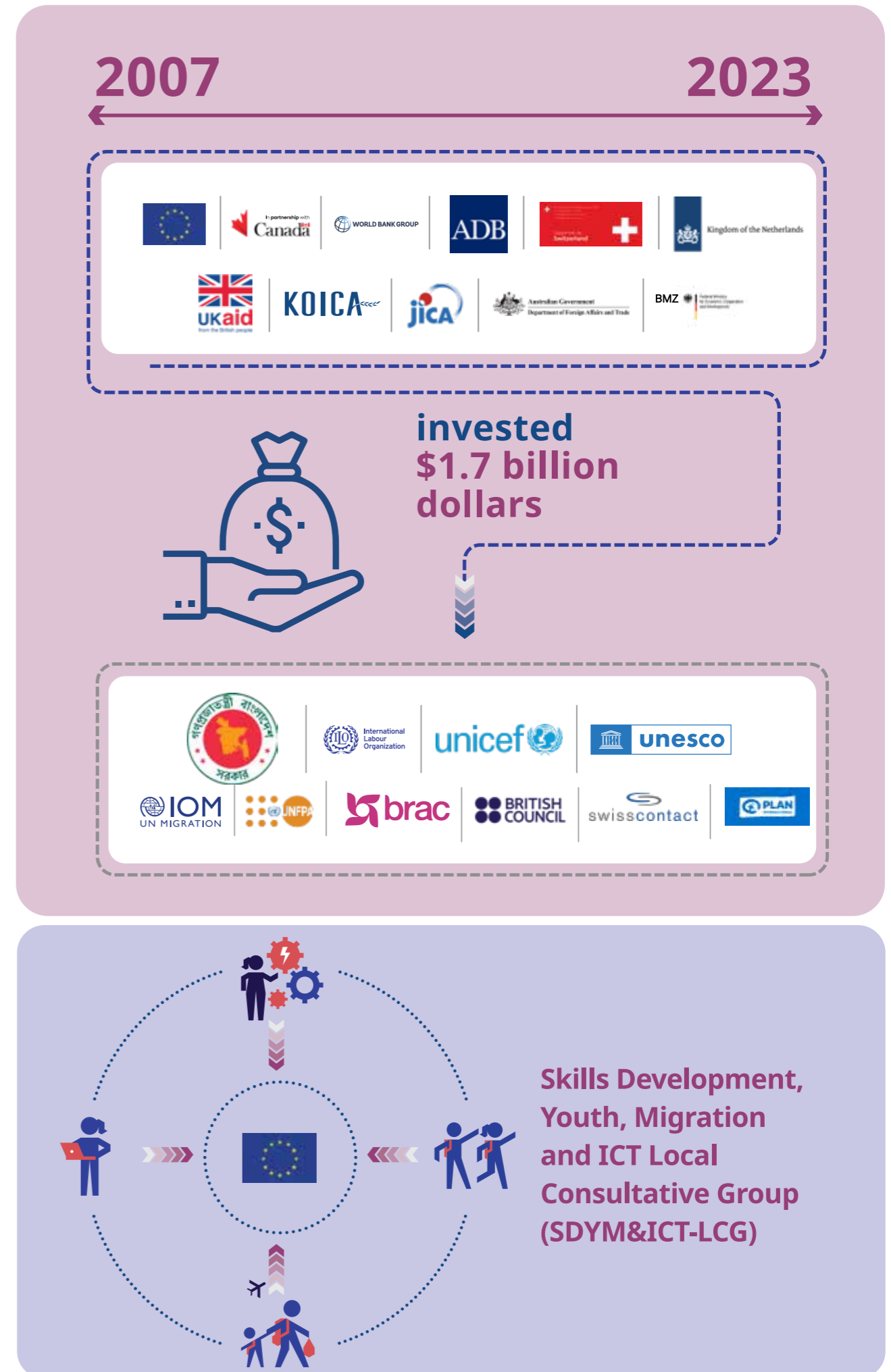
1991 to 14.3 per cent in 2016, based on the international poverty line of \$1.90 a day.

ILO's impact on skills development and TVET in Bangladesh

TVET is at the centre of Bangladesh development. The informal sector employs 85 per cent of the workforce, and 27 per cent of youth aged 15-24 were not in employment, education, or training (NEET) in 2020. TVET is crucial for equipping the youth (15-29 years) with skills to improve their employability and reduce poverty. However, the TVET system requires constant reform, and closer collaboration with the private sector for the trainings to be relevant to the market and aspirations of the learners.

The ILO has been working with the government and social partners to reform TVET and improve its access to vulnerable populations since 2007. From then, the European Union, Canada, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Swiss Development Cooperation, the Netherlands, UK Department for International Development, Korea

International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) invested close to **1.7 billion** dollars in skills development, including through project implemented by ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO, IOM, UNFPA, BRAC, British Council, Swisscontact, Plan International. The Skills Development, Youth, Migration and ICT Local Consultative Group (SDYM&LCG) that coordinates these initiatives is currently chaired by the European Union.



For the past 15 years, ILO has consistently provided support, directly and indirectly benefiting more than **300,000** young individuals through initiatives such as skills training (NTVQF), entrepreneurship development training, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), and apprenticeships. In order to facilitate these training programmes, the ILO

has also played a crucial role in enhancing the capabilities of nearly **7,000** TVET managers, officials, assessors, and trainers, ensuring the delivery of high-quality skills training, governance and management.



Female students at Khulna Mahila polytechnic institute © ILO



► ILO's interventions in skills development in Bangladesh since 2007

The continuum of interventions allowed for meaningful changes in people's lives, in institutions' capacity, in companies' productivity and in the way the TVET system operates. The ILO interventions, with the support of the European Union and the Government of Canada, aim to strengthen the skills system governance, the development of skills policies and qualifications frameworks; the delivery of quality skills training and certification, and the inclusiveness of TVET. They include the European Union funded **TVET-Reform project (2007-15)** and **Skills 21 project (2017-24)**, and the Government of Canada funded **B-SEP project (2013-19)**, **ProGRESS project (2022-27)**; and **ISEC project (2022-25)**; ISEC is partially funded by the Kingdom of Netherlands.



TVET-Reform Project

2007

2015



B-SEP Project

2013

2019



SKILLS 21 Project

2017

2024



ProGRESS

2022

2027



ISEC

2022

2025



Kingdom of the Netherlands

This brochure captures the main changes these projects brought forward for people, institutions, and companies.

► Shaping skills delivery in Bangladesh

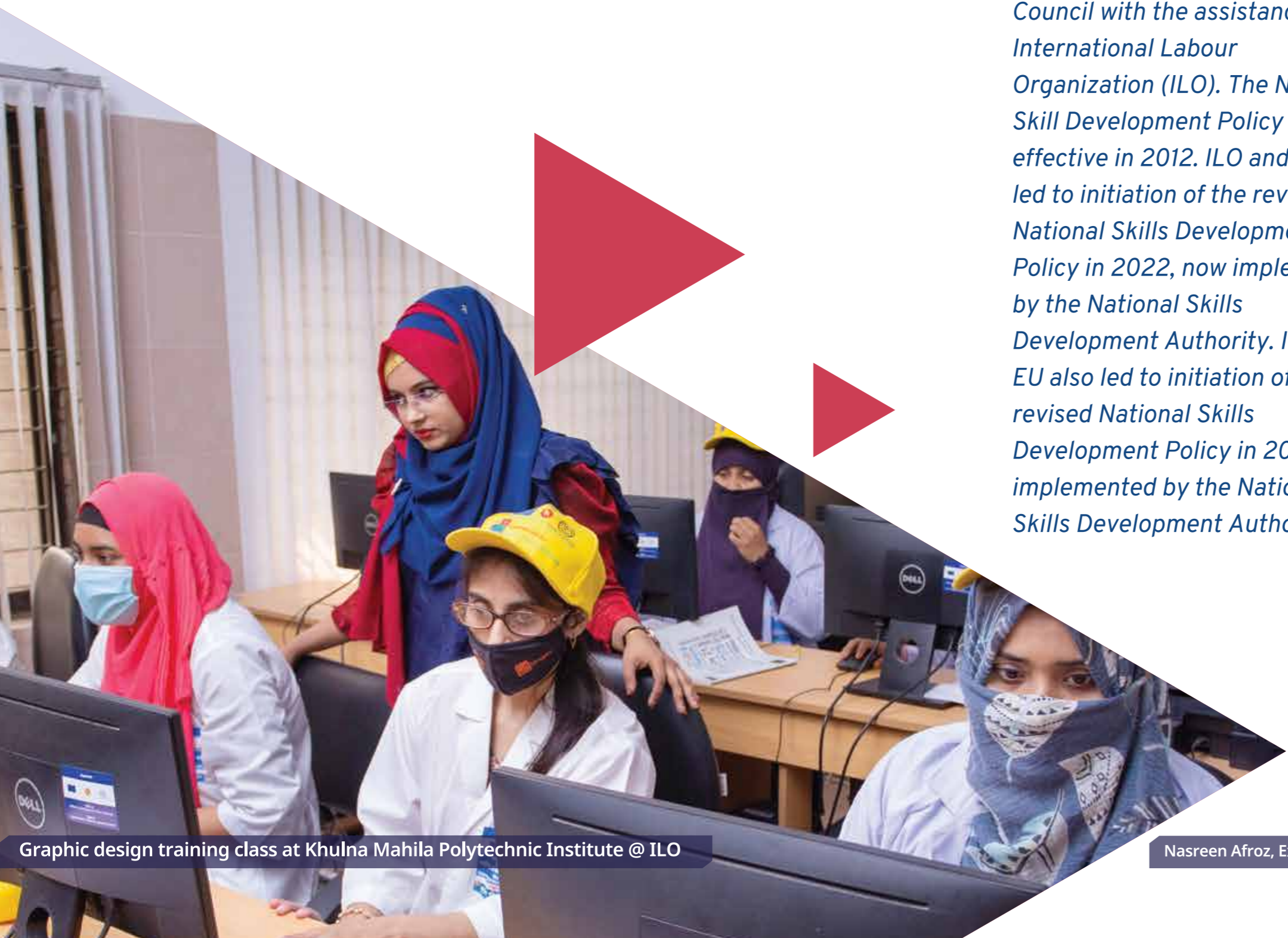
A coherent policy framework

With the support from ILO and the funding partners European Union and the Government of Canada, the Government of Bangladesh formulated the **National Skills Development Policy-2011** and set up the National Skills Development Authority in 2018. In accordance with the National Skills Development Policy, the Government of Bangladesh also launched the National Technical and Vocational Qualification Framework (NTVQF) as part of a shift to Competency-Based Training & Assessment in 2012. Till 2022, **160,000** students have been enrolled, completed and certified in NTVQF courses.

► Nasreen Afroz

Executive Chairperson
National Skills Development
Authority

► *The National Skills Development Policy 2011 was developed under the National Skills Development Council with the assistance of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The National Skill Development Policy became effective in 2012. ILO and EU also led to initiation of the revised National Skills Development Policy in 2022, now implemented by the National Skills Development Authority. ILO and EU also led to initiation of the revised National Skills Development Policy in 2022, now implemented by the National Skills Development Authority.*



Graphic design training class at Khulna Mahila Polytechnic Institute @ ILO

Nasreen Afroz, Executive Chairperson, National Skills Development Authority © NSDA

▶ Industry engagement

Industry Skills Councils (ISCs) are the primary point of contact for sector-specific skills issues. The ISCs are mandated to provide leadership and strategic advice to the government on skills development needs; monitor and evaluate skills development practices in industry sectors; support the delivery of industry-relevant training and professional development programmes for instructors and trainers; and improve partnerships between industry and both public and private training organizations. The ILO is currently interventions to improve the effectiveness of the ISCs.

▶ Moynul Islam

Senior Vice Chairman
Ceramic Industry Skills Council

▣ *Being a part of ISC allows us to offer strategic guidance to the TVET system regarding skills development, industry-specific needs, and priorities aligned with industry demands. After 25 years in the ceramic sector, my first visit to a ceramic institute was made possible through ISC membership. ISC serves as the ideal platform to bridge the gaps between industry requirements and educational institutes.*



► Towards seamless skills and education pathways

The European Union and ILO supported the development and implementation of the National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework (NTVQF) further extended in 2021 beyond TVET as the **Bangladesh National Qualifications Framework (BNQF)**, for all qualifications. It is expected to help Bangladeshis move easily and seamlessly between learning pathways and in the labour market. The Directorate for Technical Education, the

Bangladesh Bureau of Manpower and Training (BMET) institutionalized the NTVQF training in all their 100 Technical Training Centres. In 2022, BMET issued an office order for NTVQF training to become mandatory for instructors and students. The Technical and Madrasah Education Division is going to roll out the NTVQF training through a new World Bank project ASSET.

► Dr. Dipu Moni, MP Minister of Education

► *With technical support from the International Labour Organization and the funding support of the European Union we developed in 2021 the ten-level Bangladesh National Qualification Framework (BNQF). We hope that the ILO and EU, along with others, will continue to be with us to implement it.*



Dr. Dipu Moni, MP is speaking at the BNQF launching ceremony © ILO

► **Improved skills delivery**

Apprenticeships and workplace based learning for industry relevant experience

The European Union and ILO supported the National Skills Development Council (NSDC) to develop an apprenticeship strategy for Bangladesh in 2016. They also implemented an initiative to upgrade apprenticeships in the informal economy through **6,000** enterprises and benefited over **15,000** apprentices. The ILO and the Government of Canada also supported the Bureau of Manpower Employment Training (BMET) to work with industries and providers to train 45,895 apprentices. Additional projects under the Social Welfare Ministry, UNICEF, BRAC, and various NGOs upscaled this model. ILO also supported nine TVET institutes to establish Employers forum and Institutional

Management Advisory Board (IMAB), with membership from industry, local chamber of commerce, social organisations, persons with disability organization, workers’ association and parents’ groups. As a result, the TVET institutes established partnerships with **143** enterprises/industries to support on the job training and job placement.

► **M. Messbaul Alam**

Owner, Speed Holidays
 Chief Executive Officer,
 Tourism and Hospitality, Industry Skill Council

“*Through apprenticeship training, workers acquire the ability to deliver services in line with employer expectations, a feat often unattainable through conventional institutional training alone. Apprentices gain a comprehensive understanding of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), work discipline, cleanliness, and hygiene by working in a suitable and practical working environment.*



M. Messbaul Alam, CEO, Tourism and Hospitality, ISC © M. Messbaul Alam

► Mosammet Shanti Begum

Motorcycle Mechanic, Jamalpur

▀ *Initially, my only skill was sewing, which wasn't a lucrative option in my area. Thanks to the support of my neighbours and the ILO supported informal apprenticeship programme, I gained the skills to become a motorcycle mechanic and am now earning to support my children. My aspiration is to establish my own motorcycle workshop in the future—I aim to become an entrepreneur.*



Shanti Begum working in a workshop at Jamalpur © ILO



► Skills for green jobs and greening TVET

The Government of Canada and ILO also supported Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) to co-design competency standards and curricula, and to deliver trainings to Green Entrepreneurs in six occupations – waste collection and segregation, inorganic waste trading, organic fertilizer production, organic food production,

mushroom production and eco-tourism. At the same time the European Union and ILO supported the Ministry of Education to develop greening guidelines for TVET institutes which include guidance on energy efficiency, waste management and green training practices.

► Abdul Matin Howlader

Principal
Bangladesh Swedish Polytechnic Institute

✔ ILO and European Union supported greening TVET guideline is a very useful tool for us as the institute produces lot of waste that needs to be managed properly. Not only this, the using of energy efficiently us another feature that we have learned from this guideline, which we will maintain accordingly.



► Blended learning to make the most of digital opportunities

Long before COVID-19, ILO and the European Union supported one of the teachers' training institutes to establish the Instructional Materials Development Centre (IMDC). The IMDC is now operationalized with the modern IT facilities and a robust online learning management platform (e-campus) providing access to teachers and students to quality learning materials. The IMDC has trained over **1,200** trainers on online learning materials development which resulted production of over **400** e-learning courses.

► Mustafizur Rahman Khan

Chief Instructor
Vocational Teachers Training
Institute (VTTI), Bogura

✔ *VTTI is the only institution in Bangladesh for vocational teachers training. We have developed an Instructional Material Development Centre in VTTI. With the assistance of ILO and funding support from the European Union, the lab was also upgraded with modern equipment.*



Mustafizur Rahman Khan, Chief Instructor, Vocational Teachers Training Institute (VTTI), Bogura, Bangladesh © ILO

► Skills certificates that actually reflect competencies

With European Union and Government of Canada funds, ILO has been supporting the development of competency standards, curriculum and new teaching methods in order to improve the quality and market relevance of the country's TVET programmes. It also provided training to workplace-based and institution-based trainers and assessors, the development of a national quality assurance system manual for BNQF and the capacity building of the Directorate of

Technical Education and the Bangladesh Technical Education Board.

As a result of these interventions, BTEB developed **527 competency** standards in the last 10 years. The TVET system of Bangladesh now has a pool of **100 master** trainers and **1,819 trainers** with improved capacity on training delivery.

► Dr. Md Omar Faruque, PhD

Director General
Directorate of Technical Education

► *To reform the technical and vocational education system we introduced an assessment-based system which is known as CBT&A in 2012 with the support from the ILO. It is now applied to most of our training programmes.*



► Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The European Union and ILO contributed to the establishment of a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) system that validates the skills and knowledge that a person already possesses - against competencies listed in the National Training and Vocational Qualifications Framework (NTVQF). As part of European Union and the Government of Canada funded activities ILO trained **2,429** assessors on RPL and supported the Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB)

to certify **88,000** workers, including migrant workers, through this system. The expansion of the RPL system was included as an indicator of the National Skills Development Policy-2011 Action Plan. World Bank and Asian Development Bank funded projects further expanded the RPL system.

► MD. Al-Amin Trainer

“*I used to work with an electrician and had acquired a lot of knowledge and skills. After completing the RPL level 1, I applied and received a job offer from Thengamara Mahila Sabuj Sangha (TMSS) for a trainer’s position.*”



► Career guidance for multiple transitions on the labour market

The ILO also supports Career Guidance and Job Placement Cells in seven TVET institutes for **6,791 students**, to secure job placements and guiding them the career paths. During the training of these career guidance and job placement officers, a robust toolkit for career guidance was meticulously developed. This toolkit has proven instrumental in delivering effective counselling.

► Abdul Shukkur

“After my SSC exam in 2020, I couldn't find any job. At that time, I saw a banner with enrolment information on skills training courses for four months. Which offered job focused trainings with job placement support after the successful completion of the training. I got interested and enrolled myself in industrial furniture making training. When I completed the course, I got a job with the support from the career guidance cell.

Students are participating in a counseling session at the career guidance and job placement cell in Sylhet Technical School and College, Bangladesh © ILO

Abdul Shukkur student of Bangladesh Swedish Polytechnic Institute, Rangamati, Bangladesh © ILO



► Skills development for ALL

Gender strategy for TVET institutes

The Government of Canada and ILO supported the establishment of a National Strategy on Promoting Gender Equality in TVET that resulted in a massive increase of women involvement in TVET, the establishment of Four Polytechnic Institutes and eight Technical School and Colleges for women, the addition of separate toilets and changing rooms in almost all TVET institutes, a significant increase in the residential facilities for women, and systematic training of all instructors. The projects also promoted the skills training of disadvantaged women in non-traditional occupations. In 2022, **total 21,881 female students** enrolled in public TVET institutes across Bangladesh, constituting 15 per cent of the total enrolment for that year.

► Parveen Akhter

Wood Machine Operator
Akhter Furniture

“*This training opportunity gave me the skills I needed to enter the world of work. Otherwise, as with many girls, I might have ended up doing household chores only.*”



Parveen Akhter operating a wood machine at Akhter furniture factory, Savar, Dhaka © ILO

► Disability inclusion strategy

The Bangladesh Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act adopted in 2013 calls for quotas and stipends for learners with disabilities, and reasonable accommodation of their needs. The National Skills Development Policy, 2011, designed with the support of ILO and the European Union, established a **five per cent enrolment** target for persons with disabilities across all skills development programmes. Consequently, the Directorate of Technical Education (within the Ministry of Education) improves the accessibility of its TVET institutes to Persons with Disabilities. The National Strategy for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Skills Development was then approved by the Prime Minister in 2016. The Government of Canada and ILO also supported the establishment of the Bangladesh Business and Disability Network in 2016 as a means to sensitize employers about disability inclusion. BBDN supported the labour market inclusion of around 500 persons with disabilities since 2016. The number of trainees with disabilities increased from **56 in 2015 to 446 (69 female) in 2022**.

► Mosammat Maryam

Trainee
Khulna Mahila Polytechnic Institute

“*I am a person with physical disabilities. When I came to Khulna Mahila Polytechnic Institute to enrol in sewing machine operator course, I had seen that the machines were specially designed so that people with physical disabilities like me can also use them. That was very encouraging for me, and this was the first time I learned that these institutes are accessible for everyone.*”



▶ Skills for returning migrants

Because of the COVID crisis, the European Union and ILO supported the government to facilitate the labour market inclusion of **2,350 returnee** migrants and their family members through training, certification and job matching services. This initiative is now institutionalised through the establishment of two migration cells in TVET institutes.

▶ Abdul Ahad

Entrepreneur
Returnee migrant worker

“*I went to abroad for work purpose and had to come back in 2020. On my return to Bangladesh, I attended skills training from Sylhet technical school and college and acquired skills with certificate. After receiving this training, I have started my journey as entrepreneur. I have gained expertise and I have also provided skills training to my younger brother and sent him abroad as skilled migrant worker.*”





► Way forward

For close to two decades, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has played a lead role in reforming the TVET and skills development system in Bangladesh through extensive partnerships with the Government, Employers, Workers and other Stakeholders. Bangladesh will in the years to come continue to rely on its partnership with ILO for technical advice and support to build a skilled labour force to realize the Government's vision for a SMART Bangladesh, which is an important requirement for attracting business investment for economic diversification and growth, and for achieving Bangladesh's LDC graduation.

Advancing social justice, promoting decent work

The International Labour Organization is the United Nations agency for the world of work. We bring together governments, employers and workers to drive a human-centred approach to the future of work through employment creation, rights at work, social protection and social dialogue.

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