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Helpdesk Research Report

Non-state provision of skills development in South Asia

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Question

Present the lessons found in practitioner literature on the implementation and impact of skills development provided by non-state actors in South Asia. Specifically, look at models that combine skills training with employment support, identifying challenges, good practices and good approaches. Where possible, mention lessons about the linkages to social protection and livelihoods programmes. Where possible, identify what constrains the ultra-poor, youth, women and vulnerable groups in harnessing these opportunities.

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1. Overview

Development practitioners increasingly see skills development as a way to improve the employment and incomes of the poor. However, findings on the effectiveness of such trainings are typically mixed (Chun & Watanabe, 2011: 5). Only programmes that entail linkages with the labour market have had a significant impact (Betcherma, Olivas & Dar, 2004, cited in Chun & Watanabe, 2011: 6). Even with such linkages in place, what has worked and what has failed in implementation and impact?

This rapid review focuses on practitioner literature about non-state provision of skills development in South Asia[1]. Non-state providers discussed in the literature include for-profit training institutes, businesses, non-profit NGOs, and employers' and workers' unions. There is little rigorous knowledge about non-state provision of skills development in South Asia. Major findings are as follows:

- There have been **positive results and impact**:
  - A number of non-state providers have performed well (Bangladesh, India and Pakistan). They have offered good access for disadvantaged groups and have improved employment and income for their trainees.
  - One project involving the private sector in non-state provision through competency-based training led to a dramatic increase in completion rate in Sri Lanka.
  - Several approaches have supported skills development for women and girls in India, and for persons with disabilities in Bangladesh.
- Some **group-specific factors contribute to success** with the poor and ultra-poor, women and girls, persons with disabilities, and youth. One major theme is the importance of adapting training access, contents, support and post-graduation orientation to these groups' contexts, lived experiences and structural constraints. Participatory approaches with both trainees and private actors are crucial. Equipping trainers with specialised capacities to train disadvantaged groups is very important. Strong linkages to good employment or income generation also matter.
- However, a number of **limitations and challenges** are also documented. They range from the poor performance of many non-state providers in South Asia, to the lack of access and usefulness of trainings for disadvantaged groups (Bangladesh, India, Pakistan), and a lack of involvement by the private sector (Bangladesh, India).
- Major **cross-cutting factors creating challenges** include: i) the low social prestige, or even stigma, of TVET across the region; ii) the tension between the profit motive of some providers and their mission to build the capacities of the less skilled (e.g. India); iii) lack of resources and capacities to ensure training quality, especially in informal settings (India, Pakistan); iv) deficiencies in the institutional public framework for skills development (e.g. a focus on short-term trainings in India); and v) inequalities and stratification such as caste and gender, especially in informal sectors (e.g. India).
- Some **group-specific factors contribute to the difficulties** of the poor and persons from lower castes, women and girls, persons with disabilities, and youth (Bangladesh, India and Pakistan). One common problem is formal barriers, such as education requirements, and financial barriers, through direct costs and opportunity costs (e.g. transportation). Another is social norms and stigma that push these groups into lesser options. A third one is the inadequacy of training services, offers and connections to employment in light of these groups' special needs.

[1] For the purpose of this report, *skills development* can be defined as "the acquisition of knowledge and skills for the world of work […] (i.e., the outcome of the learning process […])" (ADB, 2009: 1). *Technical and vocational education and training (TVET)* can be defined as "the sources of skills acquisition" (ADB, 2009: 1).

2. Understanding non-state provision and the knowledge base

A rapid review of the literature shows that rigorous practitioner literature on lessons about non-state provision of skills development in South Asia is limited. First, there are **fewer non-state providers** of skills development than state ones in the formal sector. As for the informal sector, non-state providers are typically hard to identify and map. In either sector, non-state providers do not always serve poorer populations[2].

Second, there is also insufficient **quantity or quality of primary data** on the performance of skills development by both state and non-state actors. Available performance data generally fails to disaggregate by provider type and by disadvantaged groups.

In addition, there is **no solid body of research** on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), at both basic and applied levels (Veal in NORRAG, 2013: 13-14). This impedes the development of evidence-based lessons and recommendations (Veal, in NORRAG, 2013: 13-14). This is a problem throughout the literature on skills development in low- and middle-income countries (King & Palmer, 2013). No systematic cross-country reviews are available in practitioner literature on the query.

Most references from practitioner literature **do not provide methodologically robust knowledge**. Instead, many are descriptive. There is little on lessons for implementation, and even less for results and impact.

Lessons for some **disadvantaged groups** are unevenly researched, beyond general statements that such groups fare less well. Members of disadvantaged groups are also in widely different socio-economic positions from one another (e.g. poor and upper middle-class women). Overall, the situation of the poor, youth and women is mentioned fairly frequently, though not always in depth. The ultra-poor, lowest caste and dalits, persons with disabilities and migrants are discussed quite rarely. The *intersection* of structures of inequality (e.g. low-caste women with a disability) is nearly never considered.

Another gap is the **geographic coverage**. Some countries have been well researched (e.g. Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka), while few references were found on others (e.g. Bhutan, Nepal). Similarly, rural areas seem under-researched, despite the likelihood that findings will be distinct (Chun & Watanabe, 2011: 6). A number of references aggregate findings from several countries. However, major differences between countries undermine the validity of generalisations (Mehrotra in NORRAG, 2013: 53-54)[3].

The robust knowledge that *is* available has a number of strengths. The **methods** used are diversified, including quantitative, qualitative and mixed ones. Available knowledge sheds light on both cross-country commonalities (e.g. types of barriers to disadvantaged groups) and country specifics. The latter seems to stem from history, economy, demographics, and institutional arrangements for skills development.

[2] The literature does not often discuss linkages between non-state provision, and social protection and livelihoods programmes. It is unclear if linkages are not made in practice or are not documented.

[3] Due to time and length constraints, the report does not cover 'green skills' and skills at higher education.

3. Successes, good practices and good approaches

Positive results and impact

Good performance of non-state providers

In **India**, surveys of **private training providers** showed that employed workers improve their productivity when participating in private training (Dunbar, 2010: 12). In eight states, NGOs trained and improved the skills of youth from marginalised communities in 2007-2009 (Sharma, 2011). Some of the NGOs worked closely with potential employer organisations and designed course curricula in line with employers needs. They placed 80-90 per cent of their trainees into productive employment (Sharma, 2011).

NGOs with a history of close cooperation with marginalised communities have successfully expanded their training work to poor and marginalised youth, and linked it with job placements (Sharma, 2011). They have done so with financial support from the government. These NGOs have identified market-relevant training needs, designed curricula and delivered trainings. They have met the challenge of mobilising poor and marginalised youth, and of placing trainees in jobs that paid more than the minimum state wage (Sharma, 2011).

The centres affiliated with the **National Skill Development Council** have had remarkable success in obtaining post-training employment for students. In 2011-2012, 79 per cent of their students had found employment upon graduation (R4D, 2013: 1).

The **Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)** is a successful trade union whose goal is to organise women workers for full employment (Collett & Gale, 2009: 16). It now has nearly one million members across nine states in India. Its approach to employment and self-reliance is integrated: workers can obtain work, income, food and social security through it. It uses self-help groups to advance women's empowerment (Collett & Gale, 2009: 16).

The positive effects of its training have extended beyond work (Collett & Gale, 2009: 30). For example, business management training, including confidence building, has improved many women's position and practices in the home. In turn, this has allowed women to take on more productive work (Collett & Gale, 2009: 30). The heterogeneity of the self-help groups in villages has also meant that lower-caste and higher-caste women begin to interact. This has initiated slow cultural change towards equal participation and the tackling of marginalisation (Collett & Gale, 2009: 74).

Yuva Parivartan, the largest livelihoods NGO in India, trained over 85,000 students in 2011-2012 (ISESE, 2012: 81). It focuses on less educated and deprived youth who are out of school. It provides them with free short-term skills courses geared towards employment. The NGO has also trained first-time offenders and youth under trial. Yuva Parivartan is one of the few national NGOs in India with a scalable and replicable model for skills development and employment (ISESE, 2012: 81).

It reaches out-of-school youth thanks to an innovative model (ISESE, 2012: 82). One component is community engagement. A second one is livelihood training, “including vocational skills, work readiness and life skills” (ISESE, 2012: 82). Third, its partnerships with industry help it develop relevant curricula, as well as offer exposure to industry and on-the-job training. Fourth, it provides placement support. The NGO’s centres are typically located in informal urban housing or remote rural areas (ISESE, 2012: 82).

In **Pakistan**, apprenticeship is the most prevalent mode of skills acquisition in the informal sector (Janjua & Naveed, 2009). The system is well suited to poor families’ needs, because apprentices receive a small

income during training. Informal skills acquisition is also useful for a large number of persons who are engaged informally with formal businesses (Janjua & Naveed, 2009). In addition, the ILO's "Training for Rural Economic Empowerment" (TREE) has been successfully tested in Pakistan. This community-based model emphasises demand-driven, tailor-made training courses as well as post-training services, including micro-finance and other business development services (Janjua & Naveed, 2009).

In **Bangladesh**, BRAC has implemented a programme that provides an income-earning asset, such as a cow, to the poorest in rural areas – usually to women (UNESCO, 2012: 287). At the same time, it has provided them with training in marketing and microfinance for up to two years to make the most of the asset. Evaluations of the programme between 2002 and 2008, cited by UNESCO, found that the initial targeting of participants had been successful. It had sustainably improved participants' income, with household incomes nearly tripling (UNESCO, 2012: 287). Training was central to these results. Through it, participants realised the full potential of the assets. Entrepreneurial and marketing training also helped them maximise gains (UNESCO, 2012: 287).

Involving the private sector in skills development

In **Sri Lanka**, an Asian Development Bank (ADB) project on skills development introduced competency-based training (CBT) to ensure a closer partnership between institutions providing vocational training and the private sector. A 2008 independent evaluation found the project to be "successful, relevant, efficient, effective and likely to be sustainable" (Dunbar, 2010: 6). Staff development reached a critical mass of instructors and administrators skilled in and supportive of CBT. The convergence of standards, curricula, material and trained teachers around CBT raised the completion rates from 50 per cent to 90 per cent (ADB, 2008, cited in Dunbar, 2010: 6).

Supporting women and girls

In **India**, training supplied by NGOs in eight states in 2007-2009 helped women generate income (Sharma, 2011). Those who could not take regular employment worked part-time from home to supplement family income. The evaluation of the project noted "clear signs of socio-economic empowerment" (cited in Sharma, 2011).

Supporting persons with disabilities

In **Bangladesh**, the ILO facilitated a partnership between the government and a private provider for a pilot TVET course in the ready-made garment sector (ILO, 2012b: 4). The pilot course aimed to increase access to skills development for persons with disabilities, especially women with low levels of education (ILO, 2012b: 4). After completion, trainees have moved towards financial independence from their families, and become role models within their families and communities. They have also become confident advocates for disability awareness (ILO, 2012b: 21). A visible sign of removing stigma and changing mindsets is that graduating trainees "regularly face multiple marriage proposals from local families" (ILO, 2012b: 23).

The pilot also helped the participating NGO, which specialises in disability issues, to strengthen its linkages to industry (ILO, 2012b: 21). The industrial group involved has continued to mainstream inclusion of persons with disabilities into their workforce (ILO, 2012b: 21). The public TVET institution involved has acquired the capacity to work with competency-based approaches, to mainstream disability considerations and to forge links with industry (ILO, 2012b: 22). Overall, the pilot demonstrated that the mainstream competency-based programme could be reasonably adjusted to include persons with disabilities and trainees from disadvantaged groups (ILO, 2012b: 23).

In another project, Marks & Spencer implemented a two-month training for persons with disabilities called 'Marks & Start' in 2006, under its corporate social responsibility (ILO, 2012b: 7). The programme successfully included persons with disabilities and generated income sustainably. It consistently achieved high retention rates. Over 200 persons with disabilities had been successfully trained by 2012, and had then been employed by ready-made garment companies across Bangladesh (ILO, 2012b: 7).

Major factors and lessons of successes

Cross-cutting factors and lessons

The private sector can be very interested in supporting the training of members of disadvantaged groups. This not only fulfils corporate social responsibility, but also makes good business sense (ILO, 2012b: 23).

Informal training and employment systems are generally more accessible to the poor (Janjua, 2011). Qualitative studies on Pakistan indicate that most poor persons with no formal education or employment view informal skills acquisition as an alternative. They also associate it with economic independence and secure income (Janjua, 2011).

Persons living in poverty and extreme poverty

Sudarshan (2012: 8) notes that combining employment generation and training would improve outcomes for **informal workers**. For them, especially women, skills development would be improved by teaching methods that do not assume literacy (Sudarshan, 2012: 15). Building up many more opportunities for re-skilling would also help in sectors where new technology has displaced workers (Sudarshan, 2012: 15). For informal workers, training on the job is a must due to their need to keep earning a living (Sudarshan, 2012: 15).

The skills needed by the poorest **depend on individuals' economic position** (Sudarshan, 2012: 8). For example, in India, the most insecure street vendors would needs skill training linked to alternative employment or income generation. The most secure ones would be viable trainees in technical and business skills to support their entrepreneurship (Sudarshan, 2012: 8). Similarly, the right content in trainings for home-based workers largely depends on the anticipated growth of the sector. Sectoral decline or very slow growth mean that skills acquisition needs to be linked to finding new work (Sudarshan, 2012: 14).

Women and girls

Tailoring all activities to the community's geographical, social, cultural and economic context is cited as essential by many authors. For example, women often seek livelihood security rather than enterprise growth (Sudarshan, 2012: 13). They combine paid work with household work and are reluctant to convert to full-time workers. Udyogini, an Indian organisation that provides micro-enterprise management training to poor rural women, has learned this from experience. Its tailored approach requires "substantial hand holding" and adapting project design to context (Sudarshan, 2012: 13).

SEWA in India has used **participatory** methodologies to ensure that it is aware of women's domestic constraints. A SEWA worker or member will stay with a family for three days and do all the tasks that women accomplish. This has brought to light constraints that could prevent access to training, and help SEWA identify those most in need of direct assistance (Collett & Gale, 2009: 30).

SEWA has also made sure to make literacy training practical and functional for daily life, anchoring it around women's experiences and concerns (Collett & Gale, 2009: 29). Its use of peer literacy training has had advantages for accessibility, relevance, recruitment, confidence and removal of stigma (Collett & Gale, 2009: 29).

SEWA has used various methods, such as couples training, to encourage women to join self-help groups, but also to expose men to the benefits of the group and to change their attitudes (Collett & Gale, 2009: 37). The NGO has also developed intensive, well-organised processes for first contacts, follow-ups and mediations in villages (Collett & Gale, 2009: 38).

For SEWA, creating an environment that **supported learning and innovation** was essential to the success and reach of its enterprise development (Collett & Gale, 2009: 22). Training that did not depend on literacy has ensured that all women could access trainings in the short term. For example, when groups became too large to train through demonstrations, SEWA used pictures and videos effectively (Collett & Gale, 2009: 28). At the same time, literacy training has proven valuable in building women's confidence and reducing illiterate women's perception of being excluded from training (Collett & Gale, 2009: 29).

For women to grow to their full potential, thoughtful guidance, counselling and **empowerment** are thus needed alongside the development of their trade skills (ILO, 2012a: 15). This is to counter their low self-confidence and fear of challenging the *status quo*, as explained in a study on Bangladesh (ILO, 2012a: 15). In a SEWA project in India, building up women's self-confidence has also led women to obtain fair prices for their produce (Collett & Gale, 2009: 24). Women's improved understanding of the market and their increased links to markets also contributed to their business success (Collett & Gale, 2009: 24).

Persons with disabilities

The **quality of preliminary consultation and research** was integral to developing a relevant, industry oriented and flexible pilot course for persons with disabilities in Bangladesh (ILO, 2012b: 6). Preliminary desktop and field consultations were carried out over several months. They included government training institutions, private organisations and disability-focused organisations. Extensive research was also conducted on the disability, labour, training and employment in Bangladesh (ILO, 2012b: 6).

These preliminary steps informed the choice of the ready-made garment sector for the pilot course (ILO, 2012b: 6). This sector has available employment after graduation, with a need for skilled workers and scope to meet this need through training. It contributes to the national economy. It has a history of implementing trainings successfully, as well as industry enthusiasm for including disadvantaged groups (ILO, 2012b: 6).

The **selection of partners** for training provision in the ILO pilot course in Bangladesh was successful (ILO, 2012b: 8). Partners had to be committed to the project goals and to developing a sustainable model which could be replicated by industry (ILO, 2012b: 8). Beyond this project, the ILO recommends choosing partners with a long-term sustainable commitment. If the industry and training provider do not have expertise in disability, one key partner should be a local organisation with such an expertise. One of the partners must be able to deliver life skills training as a complement to technical skills development (ILO, 2012b: 24).

All selected parties were then **involved in both planning and implementation** (ILO, 2012b: 8). In particular, industry involvement was essential to the success of the ILO pilot course in Bangladesh (ILO, 2012b: 13). It ensured that the skills would match current industry needs and that trainees' likelihood of getting employment after graduation would be vastly increased (ILO, 2012b: 13).

For example, consultations checked with industry representatives the skills selected would be relevant industry-wide. Consultations with disability experts then helped identify the combination of skills most feasible for trainees given there are specific physical limitations (ILO, 2012b: 9). Extensive consultations also took place with experts in the international fashion industry, disability and production industry before choosing a venue and procuring equipment (ILO, 2012b: 10). This made it clear that special training facilities do not have to be built in most cases. Existing facilities just need to be assessed and modified if necessary (ILO, 2012b: 12).

Building the capacity of all involved partners and staff helped the ILO pilot course in Bangladesh succeed (ILO, 2012b: 13-14). Trainings would typically cover the industry, public policies on skills development, competency-based training and assessment, and disability inclusion (ILO, 2012b: 13-14). To maintain consistency, staff members were recruited for the entire programme and staff turnover avoided (ILO, 2012b: 15).

The **experience and skills of the partner specialised in disability issues** is essential at all stages. This includes trainee recruitment, from pre-screening to interview, induction and familiarisation. The latter is a stage where support for trainees with disabilities is crucial to their self-confidence and success (ILO, 2012b: 16-17). All involved staff and trainers must coordinate their approach to show respect, care, empathy and sensitivity (ILO, 2012b: 17). The learning environment must be positive and fun, for example thanks to socialising during breaks between instructors and trainees. It must reduce fear of failure and incompetence, and cope with any stigma the trainees feel. Life skills sessions covering health (including sexual health) were also used in the project. Adequate support networks must have been prepared (ILO, 2012b: 17-19).

Youth

A comparative study by R4D (2013) reviewed six promising initiatives in secondary education for skills enhancement. Three of the programmes are in India and involve non-state providers, alone or in partnership with state actors[4]. Characteristics have made the initiatives successful include (R4D, 2013: 1):

- Employing **active, experiential learning** methods and exposing students to industry.
- Focusing on developing a **broad set of non-cognitive and ICT skills**. These are crucial in the labour market. Some initiatives even develop particular skills in depth (e.g. teamwork).
- Orienting activities towards **marginalised populations**, based on a clear, well-defined mission.
- Seeking **buy-in with key stakeholders** and building strong partnerships with industry (e.g. using local tradesmen to lead instruction on technological skills).

Three lessons matter for **replicating and scaling** initiatives, R4D found (2013: 3):

- Replication is context dependent. Adapting a programme to a new context therefore requires market research and validation with locally rooted partners.
- Work within governmental frameworks and collaborating with local policy-makers are beneficial approaches. This helps pursue scale and can lead to systematic reforms.
- Financial sustainability underpins the capacity for replication and skill. Experimenting with financial innovations can advance the financial sustainability of programmes.

[4] The three initiated are: Land a Hand India; National Skills Development Corporation; Yuwa. For details on the activities and impact of each, see: R4D (2013).

Youth are typically expected to **move** to the place of their new job after completing their training (Sharma, 2011). As the 2007-2009 projects in eight Indian states showed, this is challenging for them. They look to the training institution for preparation and support with their move (Sharma, 2011).

With **self-employment**, providers can support youth trainees by extending them regular support through linkages for development such as financing and marketing (Sharma, 2011). They can also help through occasional guidance on issues such as accounting and client management in the initial stages (Sharma, 2011).

4. Limitations, challenges and barriers

Limitations and challenges

Poor performance of non-state providers

There is a consensus in the literature that state and non-state actors largely fail to generate and use data in **South Asia**. This creates severe obstacles to learning from and including the implementation and impact of non-state provision of skill development, particularly for disadvantaged groups.

In **India**, many public and private training centres are of low quality and have weak links with industry (Dunbar, 2010: 12). Many create crude curricula with no relevance to market needs (Sharma, 2011). For example, in the initiative for marginalised or poor youth, business skills such as marketing and accounting are missing from trainings for self-employment and income generation (Sharma, 2011). Many trainers also have limited skill in training management (Sharma, 2011).

Lack of access and usefulness for disadvantaged groups

In **Pakistan**, the formal TVET system is “heavily biased towards the more educated, urban and relatively well off” (Janjua & Naveed, 2009). Its lack of inclusion marginalises almost two thirds of the labour force and overlooks the skill needs of the less educated, rural and poor populations (Janjua & Naveed, 2009).

In **Bangladesh**, women's participation in TVET provided by private entities stands at only 33 per cent (ILO, 2012a: 6). The overall number of female instructors in such organisations is also very low (ILO, 2012a: 6). Some well-intentioned initiatives have not been based on an adequate gender analysis of the underlying issues. Consequently, they have been focused inaccurately and failed to take targeted measures on gender. They have led at best to *ad hoc* progress, at worst in unforeseen regression (ILO, 2012a: 15).

In **India**, the main focus has remained on formal training institutions such as the private Industrial Training Centres. Those work in high-growth sectors such as automobiles, textiles, food processing, tourism and banking. Access to such training and employment is difficult for marginalised urban youth (UNESCO, 2012: 264).

Private providers generally lack close ties to marginalised communities. As a result, they have found it difficult to mobilise youth from rural areas and other poorer communities and to place them after skills training (Sharma, 2011).

Trainees from marginalised or poorer communities in India have not all been satisfied with the income they earn through placements (Sharma, 2011). They have had to change occupations or compensate for the low income with other activities like farming (Sharma, 2011).

Left to their own devices, many youth from marginalised communities who had been trained by non-state providers in eight Indian states in 2007-2009 could not find employment (Sharma, 2011). They engaged in casual work or income generation. Their training led to an only marginal increase in income, compared to their prior situation as unskilled workers or to public works (Sharma, 2011). Where training has not resulted in better income, trainees have developed no sense of empowerment (Sharma, 2011).

Lack of involvement by the private sector

In **Bangladesh**, a systemic TEVT reform project was funded by the European Commission and implemented by the ILO. It entailed a national qualification framework with competence-based qualifications and the support of sector bodies. Despite some successes, the project has run into a number of obstacles. Employers have not engaged with sector bodies in some industries (Dunbar, 2010: 8, 10). Policy documents have largely been the work of consultants, while slow legislation has delayed implementation. Sustainability after the project relies on continued donor activity (Dunbar, 2010: 10).

In **India**, private employers have sometimes employed young trainees who are poor for wages that are below state minima (Sharma, 2011).

Major factors and lessons from challenges

Cross-cutting factors and lessons

One factor widely mentioned in the literature is that TVET carries **little social prestige, or even stigma**. The literature suggests this is due to both realities and perceptions of lower quality of education and employment in TVET pathways.

The **profit motive** of some non-state providers can generate a tension between building the capacities of the less skilled as opposed to working with the most skilled (Sudarshan, 2012: 8). For example, in India, an organisation that exports handcrafted goods through fair trade channels has increasingly built partnerships with profit-making businesses that guarantee efficiency and quality thanks to their skilled labour. As it grows, it has fewer incentives to engage capacity building for 'riskier', less skilled, partners. For instance, the organisation and its producers discourage women's participation activities because they see training men as bringing greater returns (Das, 2011, cited in Sudarshan, 2012: 8). A similar contradiction arose in the 2003 partnership between non-profit SEWA and private manufacturer ITC (Sudarshan, 2012: 13).

More attention needs to be paid to **inputs** for quality to improve among private providers, the World Bank argues based on surveys of training providers in India (cited in Dunbar, 2010: 12). These institutions reported their lack of access to resources as a constraint, and "excessive government regulations as a major concern" (Dunbar, 2010: 12). NGO providers in India have suffered from limited capacities in training management (Sharma, 2011). The quality of training will often depend on the individual provider and trainer (Sharma, 2011).

Informal enterprises are 'typically trapped in a cycle of low skills, low technology, low productivity' and low wages (Janjua, 2011; see also Janjua & Naveed, 2009). As informal training typically happens on the job, these **deficiencies** spill over into skill training (Janjua, 2011). Informal businesses also lack access to re-training and financial or business development services (Janjua, 2011; Janjua & Naveed, 2009).

For example, poor uneducated children in Pakistan are generally enrolled as apprentices in informal businesses at an early age (Janjua & Naveed, 2009). The methods, skills and technologies employed in

such apprenticeships are often outdated. After completion, participants often continue as wage employees for a few years and ultimately establish their own businesses. Without certification for their skills, they are generally excluded from formal retraining and employment opportunities. From training to employment and self-employment, there is scarcely any institutional support responsive to the realities of the informal sector (Janjua & Naveed, 2009). This formal-informal divide leaves few possibilities of inter-sectoral mobility (Janjua & Naveed, 2009).

Deficiencies in the **institutional public framework** for skills development have limited impact in India, even for successful projects (Sharma, 2011). For example, the scheme for training youth has focused on entry-level, short-term, skill-specific training before employment, without options for further training. As a result, trainees from marginalised or poorer communities have lacked the option of improving the overall academic or vocational qualification and of building a career through skills development (Sharma, 2011). In addition, the scheme includes no framework for the training of trainers and for quality control (Sharma, 2011). In fact, even donors such as the EU could not enforce quality controls on the NGOs they fund for skills development (Sharma, 2011).

In Pakistan, public as well as private formal support systems have almost completely neglected the informal sector (Janjua & Naveed, 2009).

In informal sectors, **inequalities and stratification** such as caste and gender can prevent mobility within a sector or into a new occupation (Sudarshan, 2012: 15). The link between training and better paid work therefore remains weak, whether through self-employment or other work (Sudarshan, 2012: 15).

Persons living in poverty and extreme poverty

Many poor workers have low levels of **literacy and formal basic education**, especially in the informal sector (Janjua, 2011; Janjua & Naveed, 2009; Sudarshan, 2012: 15). This typically restricts their access to formal training providers, for example in Pakistan (Janjua, 2011). Even in informal trainings, trades with relatively high technology, such as electronic or automotive repair, require formal education (Janjua, 2011).

Any direct **costs** for trainings constrain poor people's access to them (Janjua, 2011). Yet formal training, for example in Pakistan, involves significant expenditures (Janjua & Naveed, 2009). Opportunity costs matter as well (Janjua, 2011). For example, as informal workers must earn a living and survive, most cannot take time off for training, even if it is free (Sudarshan, 2012: 15). Nominal stipends for new trainees in Pakistan do not compensate the opportunity costs of longer-term training (Janjua, 2011).

Opportunities for informal training are often accessed through social and family **connections**, which disadvantage the poorest (Janjua, 2011).

Women and girls

- **Low prospects for decent work**

Above all, women and girls need very clear incentives for participation that translate into viable employment and income generation, a study on Bangladesh found (ILO, 2012a: 14-15). This means all trainings must lead to worthwhile apprenticeships or jobs (ILO, 2012a: 14-15). In addition, TVET trainings are widely seen as being of low quality and leading to low-prestige jobs (ILO, 2012a: 15).

Yet very often, female participants are locked in courses that are not highly productive (ILO, 2012a: 14). To accelerate employers' shift in attitudes towards female employees, training providers would need to

prepare more women with skills used in productive trades that have not been traditionally female (ILO, 2012a: 14).

Even when women opt for non-traditional skills with a high market value, employers' prejudices against women in these sectors can be an obstacle, the experience in Bangladesh has shown (ILO, 2012a: 15). Gender norms can thus limit sectoral mobility (Sudarshan, 2012: 8). For example, in India, SEWA has promoted a cooperative of trained and organised women who are construction workers. It develops members' skills through technical trainings and facilitates linkages with the market. Experience showed that training alone would not enable women to access different opportunities. One important reason is that male builders, engineers, supervisors and clients have a negative perception of women construction workers' capacities (Sudarshan, 2012: 8).

- **Social norms and attitudes promoting women's and girls' subordination**

Lack of social acceptance, inclusion and equity within the household, community, local market and local labour severely limits women's access to skills development and employment, a study on Bangladesh found (ILO, 2012a: 12). This is tied to **broad social discrimination** against women, such as family restrictions, social conservatism, biases against girls, early marriage and assignment of household responsibilities (ILO, 2012a: 12).

The **training and work environment** also tends to disadvantage women, as the situation in Bangladesh shows (ILO, 2012a: 12). Transportation, lack of physical and sanitary facilities, and harassment hinder women (ILO, 2012a: 12).

In addition, dominant norms assign women and men to **distinct gender roles**. For example in Bangladesh, women and girls are deemed less capable and are required to abide by perceptions of propriety (ILO, 2012a: 13). Young women are therefore pushed towards occupations that are home-based or regarded as suitable, i.e. traditional, deemed easy to learn, and without public contacts (ILO, 2012a: 12-13). Occupational segregation by gender is a reality, particularly in rural areas (ILO, 2012a: 13). There is little support for young women and men to have equal job and education opportunities in South Asia (ILO, 2012a: 12-13; R4D, 2013: 2).

TVET both reflects and reproduces gender inequality and stereotyping. It reinforces the gendered division of labour, which prevents women from entering new, non-traditional professions that bring higher incomes (ILO, 2012a: 13). In TVET institutes, more women enrol in trainings on sewing, tailoring, housekeeping, computer and electronic assembly. Men dominate skills training on productive industries such as automobile repair, welding, machine operation and electrical repairs (ILO, 2012a: 13).

- **Social perceptions of financial constraints**

Women's skill development is constrained by the financial costs of attendance. In Bangladesh, while fees were seen as manageable, all additional costs, including transport, are a financial burden on women's families (ILO, 2012a: 13). However, perceptions of financial constraints may result more from traditional views than real economic barriers. In particular, investment in girls' training is commonly viewed as unnecessary, because girls will be married off and bring no return to their parents' family (ILO, 2012a: 13).

- **Lack of safe accommodation or hostel facilities**

Security is a serious issue for girls, a study on Bangladesh shows (ILO, 2012a: 13-14). The risk of sexual harassment makes training not worth attending. Many families are reluctant to send their daughters to training institutions which do not provide hostel facilities (ILO, 2012a: 13-14). Without safe accommodation, women who live out of town cannot attend the courses (ILO, 2012a: 13-14).

- **Training environment inappropriate to women's and girls' needs**

Training institutes generally fail to support their female students with a range of important services and facilities, the case of Bangladesh shows (ILO, 2012a: 14). Female participants "look for safety, respect, accountability and equality within the learning environment" (ILO, 2012a: 14).

Yet training institutes typically don't provide counselling on academic issues, occupations and careers. Job placements tend to be absent too. Nor do training institutes offer facilities for transportation, healthcare, maternity or day care. There are typically no programmes for community support and outreach (ILO, 2012a: 14). Often, training institutes offer no accommodation and no boarding (ILO, 2012a: 14). Where they do, top barriers include the lack of women-only washrooms, rooms for baby care and nursing, and prayer and sitting rooms (ILO, 2012a: 14).

The low number of female instructors makes it hard for women to find role models for their prospective careers, as documented in Bangladesh (ILO, 2012a: 14).

Sexual harassment is a widespread and persistent problem (ILO, 2012a: 14). In Bangladesh, a number of girls drop out due to harassment they face on their way to training school (ILO, 2012a: 14).

- **Gaps in information and knowledge**

Girls and women have more restricted mobility and a lack of exposure to information and knowledge compared to boys and men, in Bangladesh (ILO, 2012a: 14). Potential female participants have a very low likelihood of securing information on skills development on their own, without TVET providers making concerted efforts to reach out to them through special promotion (ILO, 2012a: 14).

- **Low self-confidence and fear of challenging the *status quo***

Many women lack self-confidence, are afraid to challenge the *status quo* and have resigned themselves to their position. This is "one of the most crippling the barriers" identified in Bangladesh (ILO, 2012a: 15). Most women rely on their family and community for support. Without it, they are frequently unwilling to move forward. Yet this support comes with internalised perceptions of women's lower capacities.

- **Other gendered socio-economic constraints**

Women trainees who ended up opting out of production in the 2003 partnership between SEWA and ITC in India cited reasons such as health, lack of time and rates offered (Sudarshan, 2012: 13). Illiteracy has remained a major disadvantage, even where projects have used accessible practical training for illiterate audiences (Collett & Gale, 2009: 29). For example, a SEWA project manager in India observed that illiterate women were shyer and less confident in participating and asking questions in self-help groups. Inequalities in literacy "can widen gaps within communities and even within groups after training" (Collett & Gale, 2009: 29).

In rural trainings, integrating women's needs into the development of agricultural technology has proven to be very difficult, even in successful projects (Collett & Gale, 2009: 52). Within SEWA in India, there have been communication gaps between sources of new inputs (researchers or sellers) and women. This has led to misunderstandings on the feasibility of new technologies, such as women's ability to use a new type of sickle (Collett & Gale, 2009: 53).

Persons with disabilities

Inconsistency in training or staff turnover occurs can significantly disrupt the programme and delay progress (ILO, 2012b: 15).

Youth

Marginalised urban youth in India typically lack the foundation skills they would need to access formal private-sector training (UNESCO, 2012: 264). In addition, marginalised urban youth typically cannot take time off, even for free training (UNESCO, 2012: 264).

Marginalised urban youth are also constrained by gender- and caste-based discrimination (UNESCO, 2012: 264). For example, traditionally, barbers belonged to a low caste. The current fast-growing hair care industry does not want to be associated with this legacy. Traditional barbers thus find themselves excluded from the new opportunities, as they lack economic capital, language skills and the "demeanour associated with new, air-conditioned, state-of-the-art hair salons and spas" (Sudarshan, 2012: 8, based on Gowda, 2011).

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Practice-oriented references from academic sources

The query for this report called for practitioner literature only to be used, excluding academic literature. However, during the literature search, the report author came across several practice-oriented references from academic sources which fit the query topic. These references were not used in the body of this report, to remain within the scope requested by enquirers. There are listed below:

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Key websites

- ADB - Labor Market Programs: http://www.adb.org/themes/social-development/social-protection/labor-market-programs
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