

Terms of Reference (ToR) on Research Project 3

Title of the project: An investigation into the women participation in labour force in Bangladesh: Recent Trends

Context

The Female Labor Force Participation rate (FLPR) indicates the proportion of economically active females aged 15 years or older. Over the years, FLPR has increased in Bangladesh from 15.8% in 1996 to 36.3% in 2017. It is noteworthy that the rural female labor force participation has been 6.8% higher than the urban rate owing to increases in the rural non-farm employment, micro-credit facilities and so on. In addition to reducing gender inequality, women's labor force participation has several positive development outcomes. For instance, the positive association between female labor force participation and economic growth has been well established in development discourse. Many studies have demonstrated that female autonomy is enhanced by their accessibility to the labor market. This in turn leads to improved family wellbeing which is affected through changes in both consumption and education expenditure. According to World Bank's Human Development Report (2012), women spend 50-60 cents more of every dollar they earn compared to men on family wellbeing, child education and health.

Regardless of the steady increase through the decades, the current rate of FLPR in Bangladesh lags behind the average of East Asia and Pacific (ADB 2016). For instance, only about 29% of the total workforce consists of females whereas the other 71% are males (ILO, 2017). The employment patterns for females seen across Bangladesh seems highly inconsistent when compared to the female enrollment rates in both primary and secondary levels of education: secondary enrollment rates were 67% and 57% for females and males respectively and primary enrollment rates were 98% and 92% for females and males respectively.

This is concerning because, despite increasing access to education and the Government of Bangladesh's (GoB) continued effort to increase the FLPR, this has not been translated into better labor market outcomes for women. A variety of supply-side factors including education, skills, training, familial background, age, early marriage, unpaid household work, traditional gender roles etc. are considered to be responsible for this inconsistency. Multiple of demand side factors such as technology (i.e., fourth industrial revolution), training and skill needs, demand for employment, and availability of male workers and so on play crucial role in determining the FLPR in labour.

A growing body of evidence suggests that macroeconomic policies such as tax-and-spending policies of the government, public investment policy, micro-finance, labour intensive export-oriented industries are playing dominate role in ensuring women's participation in work force and reducing gender inequality, wage gaps, income inequality, and poverty. In this context, understanding the current trends of FLPR and their driving force in the context of Bangladesh can

contribute to the evidence based policymaking process of Bangladesh and encourage more gender sensitive approach in economic policies.

Rationale for the Study

Understanding the trends of FLPR in the context of Bangladesh is crucial for inclusive development and achieving the broader gender related development goals. Moreover, the government will be able to play a crucial role in addressing inequalities through public expenditure, investment and other policies.

Research objectives

The overall objective of the IPF research is to contribute to the knowledge creation and dissemination process undertaken by the Finance Division in order to enhance the outcome of the public finance across the Government of Bangladesh. More specifically, the study will look into the trends of female labour participation (FLPR) in Bangladesh and how different factors affect the FLPR. It is also expected that the research will explore the gender budgeting practice Bangladesh and how it affects the empowerment of women particularly women's participation in labour force.

Methodology

The consulting firm should describe how it will address the research questions of the Study. In particular, the proposed methodology should take into account the pandemic context and project timeline. The study may consider FGDs and KIIs to substantiate the findings from secondary data analysis and literature review.

Project Deliverable(s)

Research Paper: The paper will analyze the factors that affect female labour force participation and employment and articulate relevant policy recommendations.

Dissemination Process: The consulting firm will be required to arrange a consultation workshop comprising relevant stakeholders to disseminate the findings of the study.

Timeline

Sl.	Report/ Deliverables	Expected date of Delivery
1	Draft report	Within 20 weeks of contract signing
2	Submission of the final report	Within 24 Weeks of contract signing

