

Policy Brief

Environment for Development

Gender-Inclusive Skilling for an Equitable Workforce

This policy brief addresses the critical issue of gender gaps in skilling within India's workforce. It highlights the importance of addressing these disparities to ensure equal employment opportunities for women, which is crucial for their economic empowerment and the nation's overall growth.

The Problem

The gender gap in skilling presents a major barrier to women's full participation in the labor force. According to the [Periodic Labor Force Survey 2022-2023](#)¹, only 37% of women participate in the labor market compared to 78.5% of men. This issue is worsened by a lack of access to quality skilling opportunities, insufficient vocational training, and inadequate courses that meet current job market demands. Women often face additional challenges such as societal expectations and unpaid care work, further limiting their ability to acquire essential skills.



Background

Skilling plays a significant role in shaping women's career paths by broadening their employment options and enhancing their occupational choices. Despite progress in the educational system, the gender gap in vocational training and skilling remains a great challenge. Social norms, mobility restrictions, and a lack of quality jobs affect women, limiting their participation in the labor market. The skilling programs often do not align with the new demands of the economy, further marginalizing women. Addressing these disparities is crucial for ensuring that women can fully participate in and contribute to the workforce.

Policy Recommendation

To bridge the gender gap in skilling, experts (see below!) recommend to implement

- Women-centric awareness programs on skilling initiatives
- Holistic approach toward skilling
- Providing vocational training within the school education system
- Enhancing the choice and quality of skills offered
- Improving physical and financial access to skilling centers
- Improving matching with employers

Rationale

The policy recommendations are grounded in insights provided by experts during a virtual panel discussion on *Gender Inclusive Skilling for an Equitable Workforce* held on May 15, 2024. These experts, with extensive experience as researchers and policymakers in the domain of women's economic empowerment, quoted several studies and field experiences. The panel highlighted that distance to skilling centers, credit constraints and the heavy burden of care work at home disables women to access skilling programs.



Potential Impact

Implementing these policy recommendations is likely to significantly improve women's access to skilling opportunities, leading to higher enrollment and completion rates. By increasing awareness and providing comprehensive support throughout the skilling process, more women can develop relevant skills that enhance their employability and career progression. Integrating vocational training within the school system will equip young women with the tools needed to succeed in the modern economy. Additionally, improving physical and financial access to skilling centers, along with better job matching, will enable more women to secure employment. However, these initiatives face several challenges, including the high costs and logistical complexities of implementing and scaling these programs, particularly in rural areas.

While evidence on the effectiveness of some of these policy measures is more robust than the others, all of them require regular evaluation at various stages to understand the effectiveness and the need for scaling up. Additionally, with the increasing need for analyzing employment outcomes after skilling, the [Digital Platforms and Women's Economic Empowerment](#) initiative's study on gaining deeper insights into matching frictions in the labor market has been a remarkable move. In collaboration with online job platforms, the study is developing targeted interventions to identify key patterns of demand and supply on these platforms and thereby reduce job-matching frictions to foster better economic outcomes, especially for women.

Key Points

This policy brief emphasizes the urgent need to address the gender gap in skilling through targeted interventions. By improving access, quality, and awareness of skilling programs, we can empower women and create a more equitable workforce.

References

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleases/framePage.aspx?PRID=1966154>

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