SYSTEMATIC REVIEW ON
WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT
JUNE 2021

South Asia Gender Innovation Lab

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT INTERVENTIONS TO INCREASE WOMEN'S ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT IN SOUTH ASIA?

SKILLS AND TRAINING INTERVENTIONS

BACKGROUND

The World Bank's South Asia Region Gender Innovation Lab is conducting a systematic review and meta-analysis of interventions with direct or indirect effects on measures of women's economic empowerment. The review focuses on changes in labor force participation, employment, income, and empowerment outcomes. The goal is to document what has worked and has not for women in the region (covering all countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka), the types of interventions implemented, and identifiable gaps in knowledge and action. The review organizes interventions in six broad categories: skills, assets, credit, labor market, entrepreneurship, and empowerment. This note summarizes the main findings from skill-building interventions.

WHAT IS A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW?

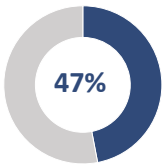
Women's economic participation in South Asia remains low despite rising overall incomes and improvements in women's health and educational outcomes (Figure 1). Women in South Asia have a low level of labor force participation, 24 percent, well below the global average of 47 percent and only higher than the Middle East and North Africa region's 20 percent participation rate. Of the women who are active in the labor force, only 5 percent are unemployed, in line with the global average and similar to levels of male unemployment (World Bank 2020). Several barriers prevent women from participating in the labor market, among them are limited educational opportunities, mobility restrictions, unpaid care work and gendered domestic roles, and legal barriers (World Bank 2020). Limitations on access to services, such as electricity and transport, together with limited trade and low wages are among the barriers to female employment (Samad and Zhang 2016, Lopez-Acevedo and Robertson 2016). These barriers add to or are reinforced by the restrictive gender norms that prevail in the region (Das 2006).

Policy interventions to increase economic participation from women have multiplied globally as investments in women and gains in their participation have grown; the South Asia region is no exception. From government-led policy interventions and projects to interventions led by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and those supported by donors and researchers, attempts have been made to increase women's labor force participation and economic empowerment. These activities have focused on supply-side interventions, equipping women with skills, assets, access to credit, and more, seeking to close gender gaps. This note, and the others in the series, look at those policies and programs that have been evaluated and review their success in achieving these goals.

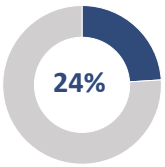
WHAT IS INCLUDED?

The review includes experimental and quasi-experimental evidence for policies and programs that directly aimed to change women's economic outcomes (labor force participation, employment, and income-generating activities) or have indirectly done so. This note focuses on those programs that have approached achievement of these

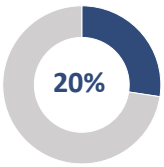
Women's Participation in the Labor Force



Global

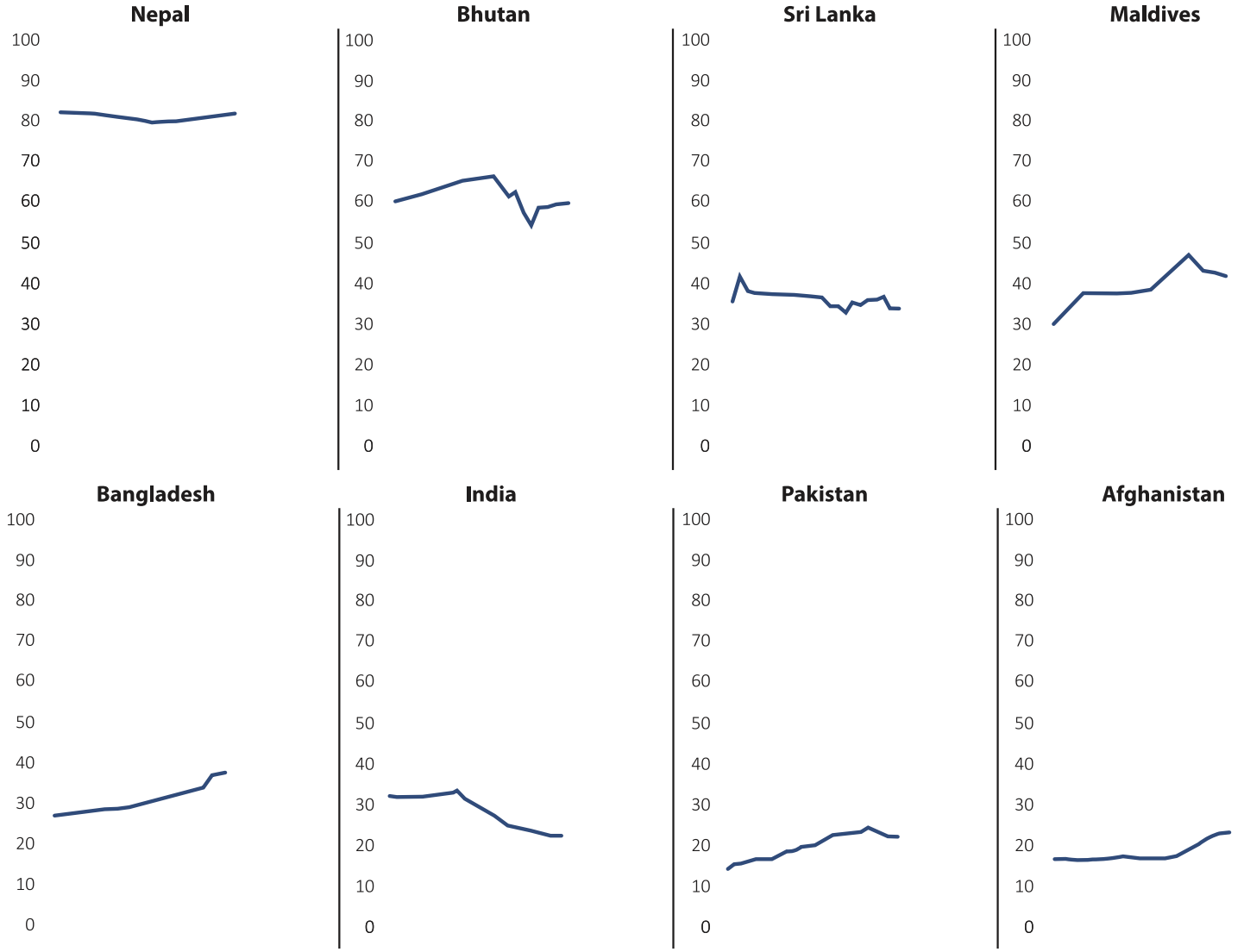


South Asia



Middle East and North Africa

Figure 1. Labor Force Participation Trend (1996–2019)



Source: World Bank Gender Statistics at https://data.worldbank.org/

outcomes through skills-building interventions designed for labor market participation. For purposes of this review, skills interventions are defined as technical, professional, and soft skills programs, and do not include general education (secondary or tertiary) or adult literacy programs.

The review includes English-language studies published between January 1990 and March 2020 across white and gray literature (peer reviewed journals, working papers, program or agency reports, and academic thesis, among others) identified via an extensive search of multiple databases.[1]

Two reviewers independently searched and extracted data and information about projects, including impact effects, design, and intervention components. Additional outcome-specific data, such as units of reporting, coefficient significance, and standard errors were also extracted. If a study reported impact estimates using more than one specification, all were recorded, but only the researchers' preferred specification is used in this note.

The inclusion of studies was restricted to experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations (such as randomized controlled trials and natural experiments) of policies or interventions implemented in any South Asian country, irrespective of date. Intervention inclusion was not limited by time, duration, frequency, or method of intervention exposure. Figure 2 summarizes the paper identification

[1] The search spanned databases that included Econlit, Web of Science, Science Direct, National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), Google Scholar, World Bank e-Library, UNWider, Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), Institute of Labor Economics (IZA), Center for Global Development (CGD), International Growth Center (IGC), American Economic Association (AEA), AEA Registry, International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3iERePEc Research Papers in Economics IDEAS database, and JSTOR.

process. Final studies were selected using a three-stage filtering process. The first stage filtered select papers relevant to the region and programs that were women-specific or included female beneficiaries. The second stage filtered for intervention type and the third for methodology.[2]

Eligible studies were those that:

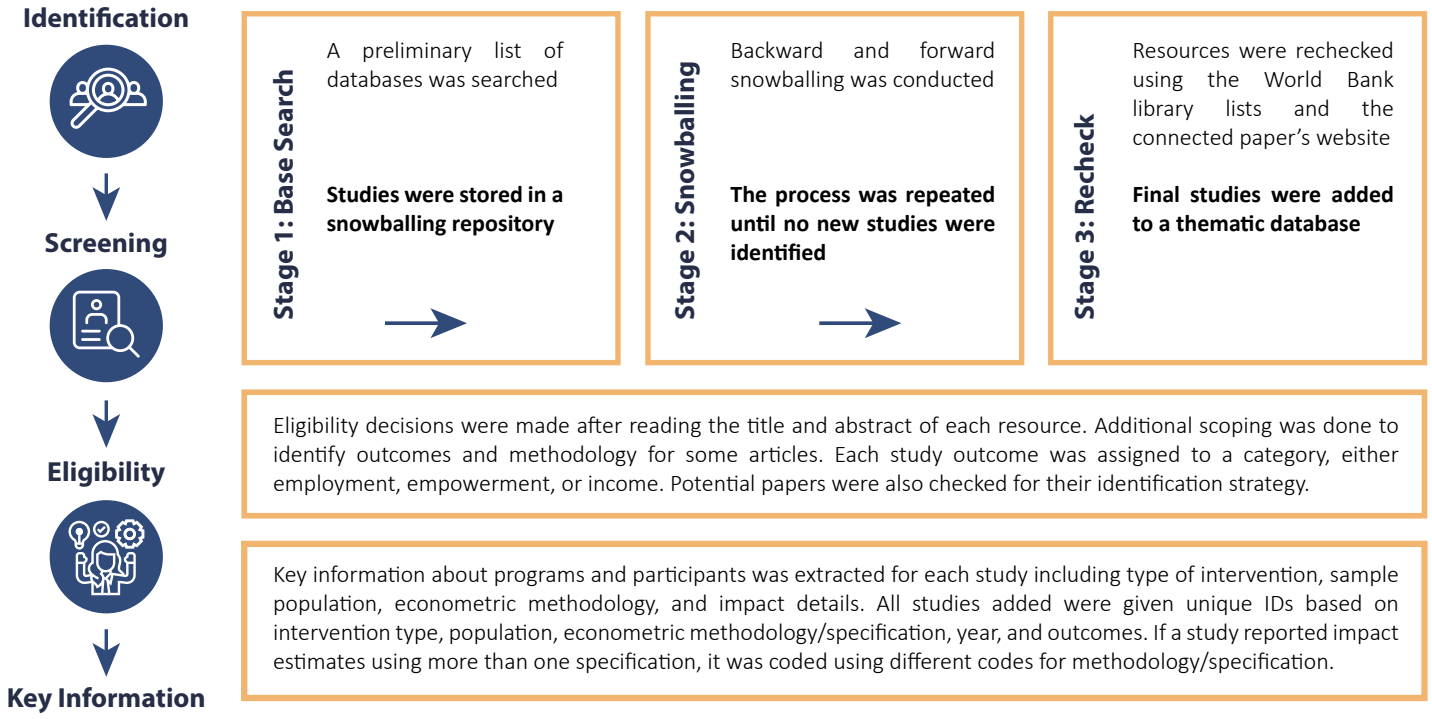
- Evaluated a skills program: business skills training (financial literacy, business planning, marketing, etc.), trade-specific hard skills training or vocational training (such as tailoring and sewing skills), market access training (for example, how to link to the market, market information, market expansion), and soft skills training (such as communication, problem-solving, job search, and others).
- Used experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation methods.
- Reported outcomes for women: either because they were the direct target population or impacts for them as a subpopulation are reported.
- Reported required outcomes: employment (including labor market outcomes, income, earnings, self-employment) and empowerment (agency, well-being, happiness, etc.).

SKILLS INTERVENTIONS

Skills-based interventions can improve income, empowerment, and labor market outcomes for women through increased business knowledge (such as financial planning, marketing, and other business-related skills), improved life skills (such as outlook on life, motivation, self-esteem, and career aspirations), and greater decision-making inside and outside homes (Chinen et al. 2017). In return, these benefits can increase the likelihood of entrepreneurship and business or job performance, including growth in income opportunities. Finally, improved skills can improve women's empowerment across social, educational, economic, political, and psychological dimensions.

Existing systematic reviews analyzing the impact of skills training on women's labor market outcomes are limited, and the few that exist focus on a broader global landscape, and in most cases involve high- to medium-income countries (Filges et al. 2015, Betcherman et al. 2004). Other reviews (Kluve et al. 2017, Betcherman et al. 2007, IEG 2012, and Tripney et al. 2013) analyze the impact of skills training and employment programs for the total population or focus solely on young population, and do not always report differences in impacts by sex or programs designed to target women. The South

Figure 2: Search Methodology



[2] Second stage search terms included: skills, training, female skills, soft skills, adult literacy, ICT (information and communications technology), skills development, vocational training, and skills training. Third-stage search terms included: impact, impact evaluation, assessment, intervention, RCT, and randomized control trials.

Asian region accounts for only a few of these systematic reviews, each including only a handful of impact evaluations.

While studies were found for countries in the South Asia region, they did not fit the selection criteria. For example, although numerous national and subnational programs offer training programs for women, only a few studies gauge the impact of skills training using a rigorous evaluation methodology, others did not report outcomes for women, and so forth. As filters were applied to select papers from the documents identified after the first stage (339,688,621), about 90% were dropped in the second stage (33,370,352 remained), and further refinement for the third stage left an initial pool of 3,134,907 studies for further review. After removing repetitions, refining by title and abstract and other filters, a preliminary list of 104 studies were identified. This list was scoped further for relevant outcomes, methodology, and sample. This resulted in a final list of only nine studies that were considered to have adequate methodological rigor and content for inclusion in the meta-analysis.

The inclusion criteria are multilayered and has limitations. The rigorous methodology only includes experimental and quasi-experimental studies, those with a clear comparison/control group, or a design manipulation that separates effects from other changes or existing trends. Hence, the final database did not include assessments that focus on outputs, such as women trained or pre-post test scores to measure training effectiveness (USAID Bangladesh 2017, IMPACTT 2013). Evaluations of programs that report null or negative findings for the primary outcome might not end up in a publication and would not show up in the screening process. In addition, skills programs might suffer from design challenges, high dropouts, low uptake, information asymmetries, and unsustainable costs. These may undermine program effectiveness and consequentially fail to produce significant impacts or negatively impact a successful evaluation.

The selection process also does not account for impact evaluations published in local languages. Lastly, the criteria privilege outcomes are measured at the extensive margin, that is, women who previously were not in the labor market who decided to engage in an income-generating activity or unemployed women who found jobs, rather than transitions into better employment for women who were already economically active or business performance improvement for female business owners (although when reported in papers that meet the criteria, these effects are included in the database).

The final set of skills interventions identified for this review were in five countries: Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Figure 3 maps the geographical distribution of the evaluations, including intervention dates, sample characteristics, and training types. Table 1 provides details of the programs identified.

Most skill-based impact assessments started after 2006. Programs conducted training sessions for hard skills (business, finance, and tailoring) and soft skills (communication, time management, and problem-solving) in conjunction with local banks and NGOs. Most programs focused on women from disadvantaged backgrounds or poor socioeconomic status, with low formal education levels. Most evaluations covered trainings in selected districts and gauged impacts for programs with a small to medium scope. The evaluation by Chakravarty et al. (2019) is the only one to assess a nationwide training program spread across 56 districts in Nepal.

PROGRAM TYPE AND CHARACTERISTICS

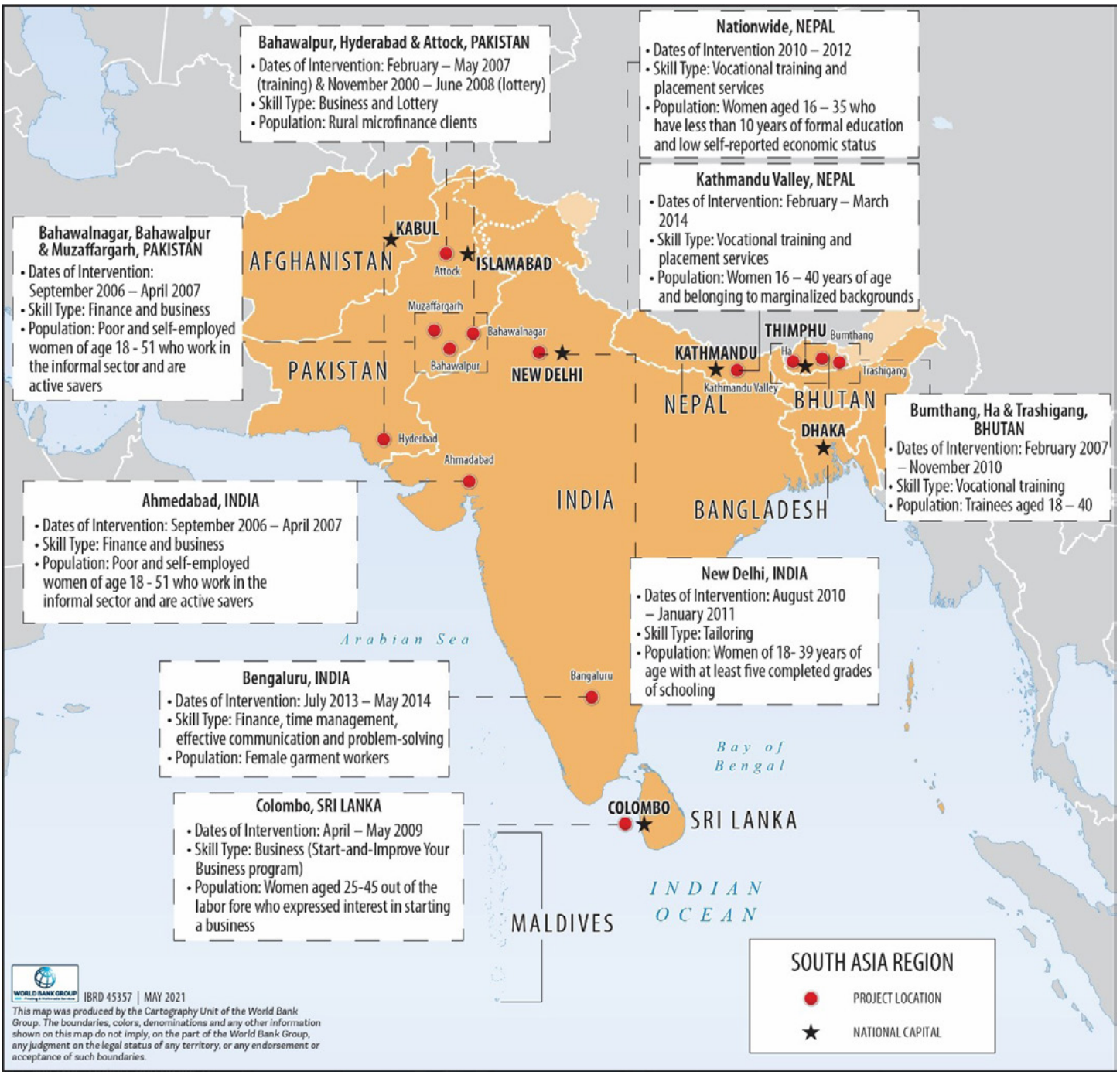
The nature and scope of interventions varies by country and program (Table 2). We identified the following types of training: technical skills focused on specific trades; business skills, such as financial literacy; marketing and business planning; and soft skills, such as communication, time management, and problem-solving. Women targeted by these training programs, either as intended beneficiaries or as a subsample, generally have low levels of education, are poor or from marginalized backgrounds, work in low-skilled occupations, or are active in the informal sector.[3] Programs differ on training type, structure, and the level of uptake. While all programs document positive effects for economic participation, the ones with the largest effects had a greater gender focus in training design/implementation and, delivered their training through local providers.

TRAINING DELIVERY

Participants received an average of 136 hours of training. This includes high-intensity training from 240 to 390 hours (Maitra and Mani 2017, Cheema, et al 2019, Bhatta et al. forthcoming), medium intensity training (63 hours in the case of de Mel et al. 2014), and more compressed training of 35 hours (Chun and Watanabe 2012, Field et al. 2010). Training sessions were mostly delivered using a classroom model following nationally and internationally approved curriculums; a few added on-the-job learning through apprenticeships or internships. Most impact assessments do

[3] An exception is the Sri Lanka program (de Mel et al. 2014) whose beneficiaries have on average 10 years of education, are urban, and have previous work experience.

Figure 3: Selected Skills Training Programs



not detail the program curriculum and content. When details are provided, as in Bhutan, general characteristics of the program are outlined. For example, the program was three months long under the Rural Skills Development Project, providing training in three stages: stage 1 delivered theory lessons and basic concepts related to the skills, stage 2 put the theory into practice, and stage 3 provided trainees with on-the-job training for four to six months. Similarly, while in the Sri Lanka case the authors do not provide extensive details on content, the program delivered is the International Labor Organization (ILO) Start and Improve Your Business training program, for which a complete repository of materials is available online.[4]

[4] The Bhutan study assesses impact for the first 2 stages only (Chun and Watanabe 2012). Training packages and implementation models of the ILO program are available at https://ilo.org/empent/areas/start-and-improve-your-business.

Table 1: Summary of Included Programs

ID	Title	Resource type	Authors	Year	Country	Subregion	Intervention	Methodology
1.	Skills for Market (SFM 2013-14)—Market Linkage (ML 2015–16): Final Impact Evaluation Report	Report	Ali Cheema, Asim I. Khwaja, M. Farooq Naseer, and Jacob N. Shapiro	2019	Pakistan	Bahawalnagar, Bahawalpur, and Muzaffargarh	Skills training	Randomized control trial
2.	Money or Ideas? A Field Experiment on Constraints in Rural Pakistan	Journal article	Xavier Giné and Ghazala Mansuri	2014	Pakistan	Bahawalpur, Hyderabad, and Attock	Business training and access to loan lottery	Randomized control trial
3.	Do Traditional Institutions Constrain Female Entrepreneurship? A Field Experiment on Business Training in India	Journal article	Erica Field, Seema Jayachandran, and Rohini Pande	2010	India	Ahmedabad	Business skills training	Randomized control trial
4.	Can Skill Diversification Improve Welfare in Rural Areas? Evidence from the Rural Skills Development Project in Bhutan	Journal article	Natalie Chun and Makiko Watanabe	2011	Bhutan	Bumthang, Ha, and Trashigang	Vocational training	Matching estimators
5.	Vocational Training Programs and Youth Labor Market Outcomes: Evidence from Nepal	Journal article	Shubha Chakravarty, Mattias Lundberg, Plamen Nikolov, and Julian Zenker	2019	Nepal	Nationwide	Vocational training	Regression discontinuity
6.	The Skills to Pay the Bills: Returns to On-the-Job Soft Skills Training	Journal article	Achyuta Adhvaryu, Namrata Kala, and Anant Nyshadham	2018	India	Bengaluru	Skills training and job placement services	Randomized control trial
7.	Learning and Earning: Evidence from a Randomized Evaluation in India	Journal article	Pushkar Maitra and Subha Mani	2013	India	New Delhi	Vocational training	Randomized control trial
8.	Impact of Short-Term Vocational Training on Labor Market Outcomes: Evidence from Nepal	Journal article	Saurav Dev Bhatta, Sangeeta Goyal, and Dhiraj Sharma	Un-published	Nepal	Katmandu Valley	Vocational training	Randomized control trial
9.	Business Training and Female Enterprise Start-Up, Growth, and Dynamics: Experimental Evidence from Sri Lanka	Journal article	Suresh de Mel, David McKenzie, and Christopher Woodruff	2014	Sri Lanka	Colombo and Kandy	Business training	Randomized control trial

Attendance, or uptake, ranged from 56 percent to 98 percent across all training offerings. Participants in programs with high uptake (Cheema et al. 2019, Chun and Watanabe 2012, Giné and Mansuri 2014, and de Mel et al. 2014) had an active interest in the training and fewer logistical barriers. Among the reasons women reported for not attending were lack of childcare, friends not being selected for training, lack of interest, and most significantly, distance to the training center. Maitra and Mani (2017) report a 21 percentage point increase in training attendance for women with a secondary school education and proximity to the training center. They further estimate that a 10-minute increase in the time taken to walk to the training center results in a 1 percentage point reduction in the likelihood of program completion. In Cheema et al. (2019) the program increased uptake when it applied learning from previous training schemes and limited travel constraints by offering training within rural villages—even though this cost more. The program combined this approach with social mobilizers to engage women in the community to participate. Following on other active labor market policies and vocational training programs, Chun and Watanabe (2012) select participants based on demand, and hence select participants having an active interest in training. De Mel et al. (2014) also gauged demand and offered an allowance for transportation, food, and other costs, as well as an incentive—a subset of those completing training were eligible for a grant. Finally, religious and cultural factors, such as observance of purdah was also a factor for low training demand among women; women less observant of purdah had a higher interest in training.

Nongovernmental entities deliver more programs than governments. Field et al. (2010) evaluate business training by SEWA Bank, whose clients are primarily women from low socioeconomic backgrounds that work in the informal sector. SEWA Bank has an existing financial training program for its female clients consisting of basic training that includes accounting skills, business life cycle planning, customer service, and cost reduction. Maitra and Mani (2017) evaluate a program by two local NGOs that provides vocational training in stitching and tailoring: Pratham and SATYA (Social Awakening Through Youth Action). Adhvaryu et al. (2016) partnered with the largest ready-made garment export firm to evaluate the P.A.C.E. training program and on-the-job training. De Mel et al. (2014) worked with a non-profit, the Sri Lanka Business Development Centre (SLBDC), a training institution that had been delivering the same program for eight years. The remaining programs collaborated with government partners to evaluate existing vocational training programs at the national or subnational levels.

ADDING A GENDER FOCUS

Training interventions with a gender focus have a stronger impact on women's labor market and empowerment outcomes (Fawcett and Howden 1998, Mohapatra and Mahapatra 2016). Among those programs that reported a high gender focus or a design intended for women, this meant that the training design not only addressed gender-specific barriers to access but also enhanced and sustained benefits after training completion.

Social and logistical constraints, such as household work, family obligations, childcare, and gendered norms against travel have prevented women from taking full advantage of skills training. Cheema et al. (2019) and Chakravarty et al. (2019) evaluate programs that address these barriers by providing monetary incentives, childcare services, mentoring for life skills, and organizing training sessions in villages and closer to women's homes. Maitra and Mani (2017) evaluate a program that targets demand-side constraints, such as lack of information on training and benefits, through an extensive advertising campaign using social mobilizers. Programs also included additional women-specific modules to enhance training benefits. Female trainees received 40 hours of additional life skills training on topics such as negotiation skills, worker rights, sexual and reproductive health, and discrimination (Chakravarty et al. 2019, Bhatta et al. 2020). Field et al. (2010) collaborated with the SEWA Bank to provide an additional module that focused on empowerment and aspirations. The aspiration module consisted of a video that showed successful SEWA clients telling stories of how good financial practices helped them out of poverty. Trainees were also asked to identify financial goals and how they wanted to achieve them over the next six months. The training also encourages women to save and avoid "frivolous" spending. Giné and Mansuri (2014) also review a program that adapts training delivery to accommodate women from low-literacy backgrounds and includes visual and stimulation-based training material.

TRAINING PLUS PROGRAMS

Programs also added modules to training formats to sustain benefits after training by providing participants with market links, job placement services, and internships. Cheema et al. (2019) evaluate a program that includes an additional market link intervention that provides a subsample access to a commercial market through sales agents. Adhvaryu et al. (2016) look at a program that conducts additional sessions with participants after training to review their experiences and how learning from their training is being used in professional and personal situations. Government

Table 2: Summary of Training Programs

ID	Training type	Complementary intervention	Duration	Frequency	Implementation partner	Training uptake	Sample characteristics	Women trained	Impact measured
1.	Tailoring, functional literacy, numeracy, and financial literacy	Market link	4 months	384 hours [a]	Pakistan Skills Development Fund (PSDF) [b]	97%	Women with low education levels, poor socioeconomic status, and mostly unemployed	NA	6 months, 1.5 years, and 2.5 years
2.	Marketing, business planning, and financial management	Loan lottery	4 months	56 hours [c]	National Rural Support Program (NRSP) and the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) [d]	93%	Rural microfinance clients–men and women, mostly small business owners	651 trainees	22 months
3.	Financial literacy and business skills	NA	8 months	35 hours [e]	SEWA Bank [f]	70%	Women working in the informal sector, ages 18–50, who are active savers within the past 2 years	289 women	NA
4.	Construction skills and hairdressing	NA	3 months	35 hours [g]	Government partners [h]	98%	Men and women ages 18–40, living in rural areas and working mostly in agriculture	451 trainees	12 months months
5.	Technical training	Job placement services	1 to 3 months	Variable [i]	Government partners	70%	Men and women who are young, low educated and relatively poor	NA	9–11 months
6.	Time management, communication, problem - solving, and financial literacy		12 months	80-hours [j]	Private garment export firm	NA	Women garment workers, with an average age of 37–28, most high school educated and speak kannada	1,341 women	9 months
7.	Stitching and tailoring services	NA	6 months	240 hours [k]	Partnered with two NGOs: Pratham and SATYA	56%	Migrant women settled in slums, ages 18–39, who have completed at least five grades of schooling	442 women	6 months
8.	Vocational training	Job placement Incentives	4 months	390 hours	Ministry of Education	67%	Men and women ages 18–45 from marginalized and low socioeconomic background	727 trainees	12 months
9.	Business training	Cash grant	2 months	63 hours [l]	Sri Lanka Business Development Centre (SLBDC) [m]	67%	Women, ages 25–45, who are out of the labor force and expressed interest in starting a business	268 women	3–4 months, 1–1.5 years, and 2 years [n]

Table 3: Reported Outcomes and Impacts

Outcome category	Outcomes	Effect[9]
[01 PAK] Skills for Market (SFM 2013-14)—Market Linkage (ML 2015–16): Final Impact Evaluation Report		
Employment	Engaging in any tailoring-related activity in the last month	11.500***
Earnings	Monthly income	13.769**
Empowerment	Civic engagement	19.200
	Well-being	-18.000
	Happiness	-0.100
	Female empowerment	53.700
[02 PAK] Money or Ideas? A Field Experiment on Constraints in Rural Pakistan[10]		
Employment	New business	6.200**
Empowerment	Outlook on life	11.200*
	CO cohesion	-11.100*
[03 IND] Do Traditional Institutions Constrain Female Entrepreneurship? A Field Experiment on Business Training in India		
Earnings	Any personal labor income over past week	19.000***
Empowerment	Talk business	0.100***
[04 BHU] Can Skill Diversification Improve Welfare in Rural Areas? Evidence from the Rural Skills Development Project in Bhutan		
Earnings	Income diversification	10.000***
[05 NEP] Vocational Training Programs and Youth Labor Market Outcomes: Evidence from Nepal		
Employment	Any income-generating activity	8.000*
Earnings	Earnings	189.000***
[06 IND] The Skills to Pay the Bills: Returns to On-the-Job Soft Skills Training		
Empowerment	Expectation of promotion in the next 6 months	7.670*
	Skill development training	14.800***
	Production award or incentive	2.810
	Self-rating relative to peers having same skill	13.000**
	Line co-worker self-assessment	7.840
	Saving for education	6.070*
	Saving for other reasons	-3.320
	Community self-help group	-3.460
	Conscientiousness	5.300
	Locus of control	2.640
	Perseverance	-10.500
	Extroversion	15.900**
	Self-sufficiency	3.830
	Self-esteem	-15.800
	Hope/optimism	-6.340
	Moderate distress	-4.190
	Child's expected age at marriage	7.930
	Child educated beyond college	8.080***
[07 IND] Learning and Earning: Evidence from a Randomized Evaluation in India		
Employment	Any employment	6.00**
Empowerment	Own sewing machine	8.000
	ROSCA (rotating savings and credit association) membership	-0.080
	Happy at home	-8.000
[08 NEP] Impact of Short-Term Vocational Training on Labor Market Outcomes: Evidence from Nepal		
Employment	Labor force participation rate	13.00***
[09 SL] Business Training and Female Enterprise Start-Up, Growth, and Dynamics: Experimental Evidence from Sri Lanka		
Employment	Any new business	12.00**

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Note: For studies with multiple rounds, we select the highest reported value.

[9] Employment outcomes are measured in percentage points and income is measured in logs.
[10] Measures are reported in percent of standard deviation.

vocational training programs in Nepal have an essential job placement module along with the training program, which requires trainees to intern with trade-specific employers for six months (Chakravarty et al. 2019) to sustain learning benefits. Similarly, the program evaluated by Giné and Mansuri (2014) provides post-training handholding sessions, where trainers visit trainees at their home or place of business to observe and answer training-related questions. This program also relies on a community organization model that requires individuals to be part of a community organization. De Mel et al. (2014) added grants to the training program.

PROGRAM IMPACTS

Program impacts were sorted into three broad categories: employment, income, and empowerment.[5] The measurement of labor market outcomes varied significantly, from labor force participation rates to indicators for self-employment. Labor market impacts vary in effect sizes between 6 and 13 percentage points (Figure 4) depending on the program. For example, Bhatta et al. (forthcoming) report a 13 percentage point increase in labor force participation and a 17-percentage point increase in gainful employment for women in Nepal. Where measured, the incidence of income-generating activity for women increased by 8.5 percentage points on average.[6] Giné and Mansuri (2014) report impacts in percentage of standard deviation, for example women who have received business training and a loan are 6.2 percent of a standard deviation more likely to create a new business on their own and without involvement of other community members.[7]

The results for empowerment indicators are mixed; only three studies report significant and positive impacts that range between 6 to 11 percentage points (Giné and Mansuri 2014, Field et al. 2010, Adhvaryu et al. 2016). The improvements are recorded for social, psychological, and decision-making outcomes, including a woman's self-reported outlook on life, level of engagement in the community, extroversion levels[8], and whether a woman has a greater say on saving and decisions about children's education.

Most studies gauge impacts 6 to 12 months after training; two report medium-run impacts 18 to 22 months post intervention (Cheema et al. 2019, Giné and Mansuri 2014). De Mel et al. (2014) measure impacts at four points: 4, 8, 16, and 25 months after the training. This is the only study reporting impacts of skills training beyond 22 months; hence, it is difficult gauge whether impacts are sustained in the long run. The multiple rounds in the de Mel et al. (2014) study show that effects of the training-only intervention, while significant and positive 3–4 months after the training, dissipate over time and disappear by the 15–16 months measure.

CONCLUSION

Several observations emerge from this review and highlight potential priorities for practice and policy. The most salient of these is the significant lack of rigorously evaluated interventions and policies targeting women's skill-building in the South Asian region. No training impact assessments were found in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, or Maldives even though numerous training programs are active in these countries, as they are throughout the region, by national and local governments, civil society and NGOs, and private providers. The low number of reports and evaluations suggests that most of these programs are not being evaluated for impact, instead, they appear to rely on metrics such as number of women enrolled or number of women who complete the training. Hence, it is difficult to gauge how effective skills training is in improving labor market and empowerment outcomes for women.

Second, while all programs that were evaluated successfully improved economic empowerment and participation outcomes, interventions sensitized to the prevailing social and logistical barriers for women had larger impacts. However, programs that tailored design and implementation to address these barriers incurred higher implementation costs than those that did not.

Third, most studies gauge impacts 6 to 9 months after training while three report medium-run impacts 12 to 22 months after intervention. Some programs included design elements to sustain and enhance learning benefits for longer periods. However, more evidence is needed to understand the impacts of skills training on long run outcomes.

[5] Table 3 shows details of all employment, income, and empowerment variables reported in the selected studies.
[6] This includes any income-generating employment and new business generation.
[7] All participants are required to be a part of a community organization to be eligible for uncollateralized loans and training.
[8] A personality measure that captures the net number of beliefs workers identify with that are predictive of extraversion.

Figure 4: Effect Sizes of Selected Studies

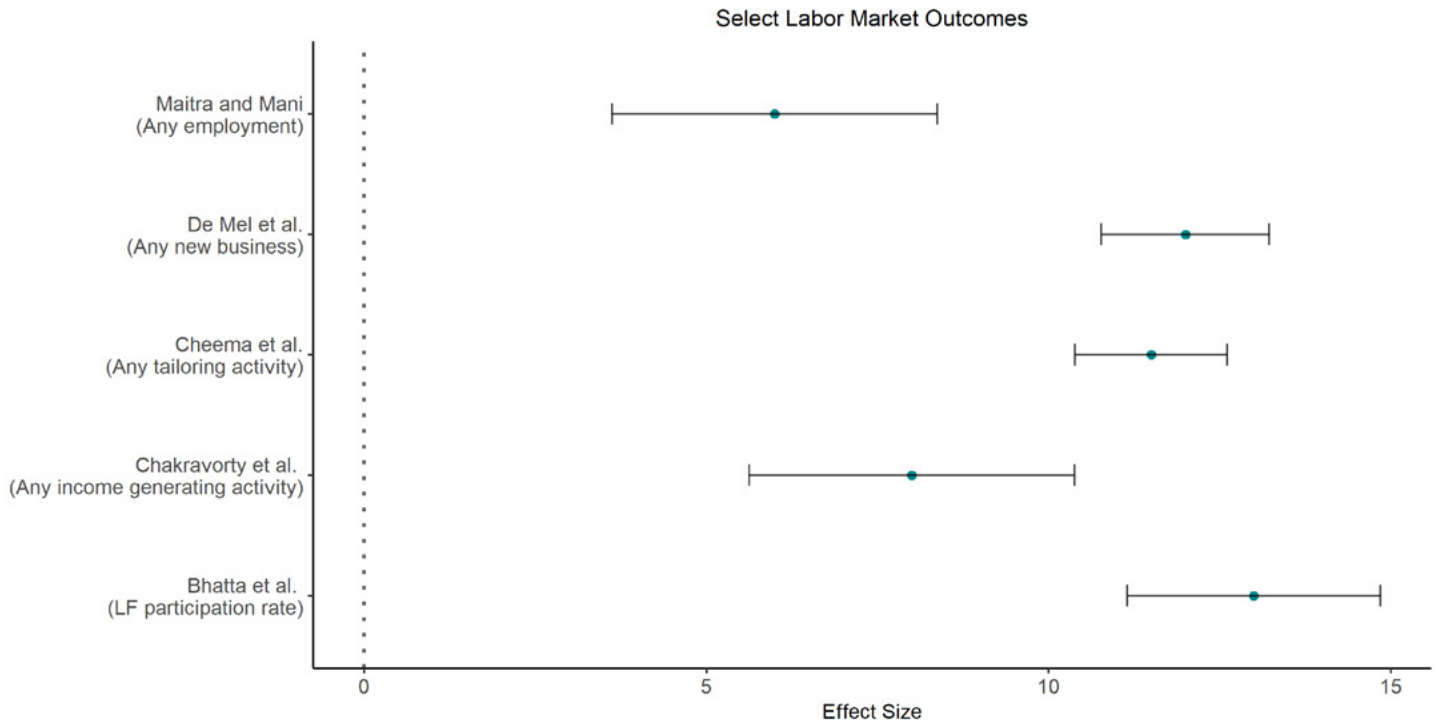


TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF TRAINING PROGRAMS - FOOTNOTES

a. The training program was held fivee to six days per week in the morning, from 9 am to 1 pm
b. Punjab Skills Development Fund (PSDF), established in 2010 by the government of Punjab in collaboration with UK's Department for International Development (DfID), is a not-for profit skills financing company established to provide high-quality skills training to poor and vulnerable populations in Pakistan to generate sustainable income and employment opportunities. PSDF does not conduct training itself, instead, it asks training service providers (TSPs) to submit their vocational training proposals and bid for PSDF funding.
c. Forty-seven training sessions were conducted, with each session having 5 lecture days (9am–4pm with a 20-minute tea break and a 40-minute lunch break), one day visit to a local market and an awards ceremony.
d. PPAF is an apex institution created in 2000 with World Bank funding that provides capacity building and funding to numerous partner microfinance institutions and NGOs. NRSP provides uncollateralized microloans to individual clients who are required to become members of a community organization.
e. A total of 57 were conducted over eight months., with each having 5 training days
f. SEWA Bank, based in Ahmedabad, offers a wide array of financial products. All clients are required to have a savings account. Roughly a quarter of clients have ever taken out a loan from the bank. It has a five-day financial literacy training program. The curriculum, developed by Freedom from Hunger and used widely around the world, covers basic accounting skills, interest rates, and life cycle planning.
g. Training were conducted for 7 hours for 5 days
h. The Rural Skills Development project has a third stage that provides on-the-job training for 4-6 months. The impact evaluation only studies the first two stages and skips the job training module.
i. The Nepal employment fund sponsors 600-700 trainings every year, with each training having variable frequency
j. Trainings were conducted on-the-job for two hours every week. Management allocated one hour of workers' production time a week to the program and workers contributed one hour of their own time.
k. Trainings were conducted for 2 hours per day for 5-day week
l. Training was conducted for 7 hours a day for 9 days
m. A Sri Lankan nonprofit training institution established in 1984, to provide the business training. The institute introduced the Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) program to the Sri Lankan market in 2001 and is a leading partner organization of this program.
n. Significant effects are reported only for 3–4 months post training.

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