

BIDS for steps to ensure more female supervisors, managers

Staff Correspondent

Removing barriers, ensuring access to education and relevant training are crucial for increasing the number of women at supervisory and mid-level management positions in the country's apparel sector.

Experts made the recommendation at the annual conference of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) on Friday, also putting an emphasis on increasing participation of female production workers in export-oriented apparel manufacturing and related industries.

They suggested implementing programmes to attract and retain female workers, offer internship opportunities, skill-specific training to up-skill female production workers and include more women in mid-skill occupations.

At the event, BIDS unveiled a research paper titled "Jobs to Careers: Apparel Exports and Career Paths for Women in Developing Countries," prepared by Gladys Lopez-Acevedo and Mexico Vergara.

The study mentions a number of as policy recommendations, such as focus programmes on supplying graduates who are employable, and aligned with industrial policy development, and increase access to education to promote female participation in careers.

It also suggested breaking the glass ceilings, which are the career barriers for female employees in the readymade garments industry.

According to the World Economic Forum, Bangladesh topped the South Asian countries in gender equality in 2018, ranking 48th among 149 nations. Moreover, Bangladesh is the only country in the world where the factor-weighted hourly wage gender pay gap is positive.

However, according to The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), around 4 million workers are working here and



A female quality control officer inspects a piece of readymade garment at a factory in Gazipur

- Rajib Dhar

more than 60 percent per cent are women. But only a handful of female employees work in the industry's mid-level management.

As recommendations for increasing female employment, BIDS said, "Reform legal barriers that reduce women's access to and permanence in employment opportunities, promote inclusive workplace practices, and engage foreign support and involvement."

The research team found that low demand for services due to insufficient national income and low educational levels are the main barriers to career development for women.

BIDS pointed out that high-income countries focus on research and development (R&D), design, marketing and post-sales service activities as their



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apparel export growth strategy, which also fits into the jobs to careers transition.

But middle income countries are focusing on design, logistic sourcing, logistic distribution and post-sales. On the other hand, low income countries are only focused on manufacturing activities.

According to the BIDS research, "To achieve the goal of having more women in higher-skilled, better paid, and life-fulfilling occupations, national programmes should consider their simultaneous implementation.

"Fortunately, today, thanks to vast empirical evidence on successful policies, the quiet revolution of women's advancement from jobs to careers need not take the 100 years that it took in the United States."

31% women feel unsafe outside: BIDS

Staff Correspondent

One in every three women says they feel unsafe outside, the Bangladesh Institute Of Development Studies (BIDS) found while researching the gender gap in safety perceptions.

The issue was discussed on the closing day of a three-day programme at the Annual BIDS Conference on Development 2021 at Lakeshore Hotel in the capital on Friday.

The session's topic was Women's Employment and Safety Perceptions: Evidence from Low-Income Neighborhoods of Dhaka, Bangladesh. The correlation between female labour supply and safety perception was also highlighted at the conference.

A survey was conducted between women and men aged 15-64 years and the collected data represented the slums and low-income areas of Dhaka city and a low-income area from the Greater Statistical Metropolitan Area.

The survey's finding is that 31 per cent of women feel unsafe outside where only 4 per cent of men feel unsafe

outside. The gender gap is 27 per cent.

The safety perception indicates that if individuals respond feeling physically safe all the time on the streets on which their homes are located, or they feel physically safe when on their own outside their communities.

On the other hand, if individuals do not go outside their communities, if they report only feeling physically safe in the daytime, or they do not at all feel safe in their streets or going outside their communities.

Providing women equal opportunities to grow by establishing an environment where they feel safe is necessary to achieving economic development.

BIDS recommended some short- and long-term solutions to reduce the gender gap and ensure women's workplace safety.

The short-term or immediate measures are ensuring adequate streetlights, providing gender sensitive training to law enforcement, and making security officers and city surveillance widely available.