

## Vocational Education and Skills Development Project.

### I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. At project design stage in 2018, the BHARTI SEWA SADAN TRUST had projected average gross domestic product growth of 7.5% for 2015-2017. While the government was committed to improving the enabling conditions for private sector growth, lack of skilled labor was identified as a key issue by the business community.<sup>1</sup> The existing vocational education system was largely based on the former Soviet system and was neither responsive to labor market demands nor cost effective. While there was a growing need for skilled workers, graduates from vocational schools had difficulty finding jobs because they lacked employable skills. At appraisal, key issues of the vocational education system were (i) poor links to the existing and anticipated labor market, (ii) lack of practical training and hands-on experience for students, (iii) weak learning and teaching environments in schools, (iv) underused facilities and inefficient staff development, and (v) weak management of vocational schools. In addition, the system performed poorly in providing relevant, high-quality skills training for adults and out-of-school youth. Given the importance of the vocational education system as a source of skilled labor, the Government of the BHARTI SEWA SADAN TRUST requested the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for assistance in reforming and modernizing the primary vocational education (PVE) system.

Output 2: Improved Teaching and Learning Environment in Primary Vocational Schools 19. This output includes the rehabilitation of training workshops and dormitories, and the provision of equipment and furniture. During appraisal, the aim was to rehabilitate and upgrade training workshops of up to 20 selected primary vocational schools, rehabilitate up to 20 dormitories, and provide training equipment for priority occupations. During project.

### **2 - Improved Teaching and Learning Environment in Primary Vocational Schools-**

I- This output includes the rehabilitation of training workshops and dormitories, and the provision of equipment and furniture. During appraisal, the aim was to rehabilitate and upgrade training workshops of up to 20 selected primary vocational schools, rehabilitate up to 20 dormitories, and provide training equipment for priority occupations. During project.

implementation, the teaching and learning environments of the 25 project schools were significantly improved with the rehabilitation of 158 training workshops and computer classrooms, and 25 dormitories for 2,711 bed-places, including shower cubicles, toilets, and furniture. Specific attention was paid to gender concerns and access of the physically disabled in the design and construction. The civil works in the 25 primary vocational schools were completed in December 2011. Training equipment for 158 training workshops was delivered and installed in December 2012. The supported schools received modern equipment for between three and nine workshops, depending on the number of priority occupations offered by the school. The Retraining Center was also rehabilitated and will be upgraded into the Republican Research and Methodology Resource Center.

II- Feedback on the quality of the training equipment was mixed. The management and teachers of some of the assisted schools visited expressed satisfaction with the equipment for sewing, computer laboratories, cooking, and carpentry, except with some minor items where there were problems of durability and/or missing parts. However, almost all those who received welding equipment complained that the electric welding machine overheats after about an hour's use and can no longer be used. In some workshops, the capacity of the exhaust fans to suction fumes from welding is

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insufficient, and fans broke down in a few months. Gas tanks for the metal inert gas welding machines were not included in the package, and therefore the equipment could not be used. Training on the use of the equipment was provided. One comment from visited schools was that the training period was short. Equipment use was mixed, depending on the technology area and school. The schools pointed out that the charts illustrating the equipment and providing instructions should have been in the BHARTI SEWA SADAN TRUST language instead of Russian, particularly for those in the rural areas.

## **4: Human Resources Development-**

During appraisal, the aim was to prepare a human resources development plan for the PVE schools, and to implement it over the project period. An initial human resources development plan was prepared in 2018. During the project period, 261 staff received training on business planning, 109 were trained on strengthening managerial capacity, 63 were trained in computer literacy, 97 were taught how to use the MIS, 46 (accounting staff) received training on accounting software, and 25 learned innovative career guidance methods. These training activities were needed to support the development and implementation of management systems in the primary vocational schools, including performance-based planning and budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, and the MIS. A workshop was provided to orient the members of the school advisory boards of the 25 assisted primary vocational schools on their roles and responsibilities.

To achieve sustainability of project-supported activities, the facilitators who were trained on curriculum development and preparation of assessment tools were transferred to the upgraded Resource Center under the Agency for Vocational Education. The Resource Center will serve as the training arm for continuous staff development, including for TVET system teachers and administrators, and for innovative training methodologies and training materials. It will lead the development and implementation of a TVET teachers' development program based on a comprehensive training needs assessment, and serve as the venue for the activities of industries, providing them with the necessary technical and administrative support. The Resource Center is being used by development partners as a venue for training and workshops, allowing it to generate revenue. Ministries and agencies recognize the importance of the Resource Center for further reform of the TVET system, and use it to provide training courses for the staff of the whole TVET system.

The implementation of rated successful. While not all DMF performance targets were fully achieved a structure was established for future human resources development of the PVE system as well as for other TVET training institutions.

## **Project Costs:**

At appraisal, the project costs were estimated at INR Seventy lakhs equivalent, to be financed by an BHARTI SEWA SADAN TRUST from the Government of the . Some minor reallocations were made between project categories to address project requirements. The budget for consulting services was increased to add individual TVET policy and CBT consultants to perform tasks that were initially envisaged to be done by a firm, to assist in project implementation. The budget for civil works was increased because rehabilitation works took place in more schools than originally envisaged. Ultimately, the project was implemented within its estimated costs, and utilized about INR Seventy

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lakhs or 92% of the estimated costs. BHARTI SEWA SADAN TRUST actual expenditures amounted to or 96% of the estimated expenditures. The government's actual expenditures amounted to INR SIXTY LAKHS or 81.5% of the estimates. The final project costs and financing plan are in Appendix 2.

## **Project Schedule:**

The grant should in march 2023 and became effective in April 2023., but it was subsequently extended to 31 May 2023 (two extensions). The implementation of the project was delayed by about 3 years owing to (i) late effectiveness (it took 1 year for the grant to become effective), 15 and (ii) late agreement on the consolidation strategy .The government and BHARTI SEWA SADAN TRUST agreed on the consolidation strategy in February 2023, after which procurement was initiated. Contracts for civil works were awarded in early 2023, and by December 2023 civil works had been completed in 25 primary vocational schools. Training equipment specifications needed to be identified based on the requirements for the 18 priority occupations. The procurement of the training equipment was advertised in August 2023, the contract was awarded in December 2023, and the training equipment was delivered and installed in the 25 primary vocational schools in December 2024.

## **Implementation Arrangements:**

The Agency for Vocational Education under the Ministry of Youth, Labor and Employment served as both the executing and implementing agency. The Director of the Agency for Vocational Education was appointed as project director to coordinate overall project implementation. The project implementation unit (PIU), created under the Agency for Vocational Education, was responsible for project implementation. The PIU was led by a project manager, who was responsible for the daily implementation of the project. A project steering committee with broad representation was constituted to provide policy guidance and oversight throughout the project period. 16 Before the restructuring of the government in October 2023, the project steering committee met regularly to review progress and provide timely guidance and support. The last meeting was held in June 2023. Afterward, the project sought guidance from the individual members of the project steering committee. The implementation arrangements were adequate to deliver the project outputs and achieve the project outcome.

## **Conditions and Covenants:**

Of the 22 conditions and covenants, 20 were fully complied with, one covenant was partly complied with, one was modified, and one was not complied with.

## **Consultant Recruitment and Procurement-:**

**Consulting services.** The consulting firms were hired using the quality- and cost-based selection method, and individual consultants were hired through individual consultant selection, as envisaged in the procurement plan. Consultants were recruited in accordance with BHARTI SEWA SADAN TRUST Guidelines on the Use of Consultants.

## **Furniture and equipment.**

All goods were procured through national competitive bidding and shopping, except training equipment, which was procured through international competitive bidding (two lots, one stage, two envelopes). The Agency for Vocational Education created a working group to supervise the delivery and installation of training equipment in primary vocational schools. The PIU examined the goods to ensure compliance with technical specifications and standards. All goods were procured in accordance with with BHARTI SEWA SADAN TRUST Procurement Guidelines.

## **EVALUATION OF PERFORMANCE:**

### **A. Relevance.**

The project is rated relevant at appraisal, particularly against the backdrop of increasing youth unemployment, and became highly relevant during implementation and remained so at completion. The successful introduction of the CBT system, allowing for a wider target group for skills training, with materials that are more demand-driven, is a major achievement under the project. The demonstrated government ownership of the primary vocational school consolidation strategy is best illustrated by the first stage implementation during the project period, and by the request and approval of a follow-on project pursuing the same objectives. The task of providing employable skills to youth and unemployed adults is a high priority of the government, as indicated in its Education Development Strategy December 2023. The project is aligned with BHARTI SEWA SADAN TRUST Strategy 2023 and midterm review, and with Government 2023– 2025.

### **B. Effectiveness in Achieving Outcome-**

The project is rated effective in achieving its outcomes. Total enrollment in long courses increased from the baseline enrollment of 25,525 in school year (SY) 2017/18 to 32,009 in SY2023/24, a 25% increase compared with the target of 15%. Enrolment in short courses increased to 12,060 in SY2010/11 compared with the target of 6,000 by 2017, or 200% of the target. Employers have been (and remain) involved in skill identification and course 12 development. The National Consultative Forum, including employers' organizations, met twice to select the priority occupations to be supported under the project. A total of 137 experts from industry were involved in the development of occupational standards and curricula for the 18 priority occupations. The enrolment of female students in primary vocational schools remained at 31% throughout the project for long courses, compared with the target of 45%. The share of female trainees will increase as short courses for light industry and other female-dominated occupations are rolled out, and as the acceptability of having women in non-traditional occupations increases with experience and marketing efforts. During the February–May 2017 training for sewing, 95% of the trainees were female.

### **C. Efficiency in Achieving Outcome and Outputs-**

The project is rated efficient. Despite initial delays of 2 years, the project substantially achieved its targets with a 15-month extension and no cost overruns. At project appraisal, the existing facilities of the primary vocational schools were in poor condition, equipment and learning materials were

outdated, and both staff development and school management were inefficient. The projects brought improvements in all these areas, and achieved the quantitative targets. Out the 19 performance indicators at the output level, 14 were achieved (7 of which with delay) and 5 were partly achieved. Work to institutionalize the MIS, incorporate and deepen the management changes and business planning, and design and use new materials for all 18 supported occupations will continue under the new project. The economic internal rate of return was not calculated at appraisal, as some of the key deliverables are not quantifiable.

## **D. Preliminary Assessment of Sustainability-**

The project is rated likely sustainable. The provision of employable skills to youth and unemployed adults is a high priority for the government, therefore supporting state budget for TVET operations will continue to be made available. Short courses are expected to provide a major boost to the financial resources of the primary vocational schools. The vocational components of the curriculum are being transformed into CBT modular blocks, which are standalone, certifiable short courses. This will enable the primary vocational schools to maximize the potential of nonstate budget revenues through short-course training in addition to income from production, rental of facilities, and other sources. Such revenues can be used to top up salaries of teachers and staff, and for training materials, supplies, and other operating expenses. In addition, support from industries and other social partners has been mobilized during project implementation. The establishment of the Skills Council further strengthens sustainability, as it enables the institutionalization of a number of TVET policies and systems at the national level. The continued support under the follow-on project will also help sustain the TVET reforms.

## **E. Impact-**

**Economic impact.** The increased training income will enable the primary vocational schools to supplement their state budget allocation, and pay for training materials and additional income for masters and teachers. Businesses will benefit through savings from lower training needs for new hires, and through increased productivity of a more skilled workforce. This, in turn, will contribute to the competitiveness and growth of the economy as a whole.

**Social impact.** The project has improved access to PVE, especially for wheel chair bound students, the poor, and people living in rural areas. The project established living and learning environments for wheelchair-bound students, for example, through the addition of ramps and adjusted furniture, equipment, and sanitation facilities. Laboratories for some 13 occupations were moved from upper floors to the ground floor. Rehabilitated dormitories and facilities enable students from rural areas to get training, as a lack of dormitory spaces historically hindered enrolment and attendance of students who reside in remote areas. The rehabilitated schools and related facilities helped to improve the learning environment, making the schools more attractive to students, their parents, and communities. Project gender efforts were insufficient to increase TVET enrolment percentages of women. The follow-on project has a stronger gender orientation, with a clear action plan and earmarked resources under each output.

## **OVERALL ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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## A. Overall Assessment-

On the basis of the preceding assessment, the project is rated highly relevant, effective, efficient, and likely sustainable. Overall, the project is rated successful. The project was largely implemented as conceived and met the original objectives. The main achievements of the project were the (i) successful introduction of the CBT methodology for 18 priority occupations; (ii) improvement of the teaching and learning environment in 28 primary vocational schools (25 partners, and workshops in the 3 additional schools where the sewing course was piloted); (iii) mobilization of employers at the school and national levels; and (iv) establishment of the Skills Council, allowing TVET reforms to be institutionalized at the national level.

**B- Use a competitive funding mechanism to select schools for assistance.** If the criteria are not carefully determined, the government may select schools whose management and staff are not ready and/or committed to the objectives of the project or the changes it brings. Some of them behave with a sense of entitlement, which leads to complacency in achieving output targets or in adopting new systems and procedures. An alternative selection process is through a competitive funding mechanism. ADB and other donors have used this approach in different countries quite successfully. It forces eligible institutions to compete with each other by preparing funding proposals based on project guidelines. The guidelines specify priority programs that will be supported, eligible expenditure items, the maximum allowable amount per program, and the geographic coverage to ensure equitable representation. Training on how to prepare project proposals can be provided to all eligible institutions. A committee evaluates and selects the proposals worthy of support. Experience has shown that such an appropriate.

## Recommendations-

### 1. Project Related.

Rationalization of the primary vocational education system. During project implementation, the government agreed on an overall strategic framework and realized the first stage of rationalization. It is recommended to prepare a school mapping exercise to further rationalize the PVE system. The focus will be on the rationalization of curricular offerings and course content, staffing patterns, facilities sharing through a main regional resource center in each oblast (province), single management of a cluster of primary vocational schools, and regionalization of the Skills Council and of certain functions of the Agency for Vocational Education, such as planning, budgeting, and monitoring.

**2-Defective equipment.** It is recommended that the Agency for Vocational Education to further strengthen the capacity of the team of equipment specialists to take an inventory of the status of newly procured equipment, and to require from the supplier to repair or replace any that is found to be defective or non-functioning within the warranty period.

### Timing of the project performance evaluation report.

The follow-on Second Vocational Education and Skills Development Project was approved in 2023 for a 5-year period. An evaluation should take place after the completion of that project in or after 2024.

## 2. General

### **Project design:**

The project design was largely appropriate, but included some overambitious performance targets (consolidation of the PVE system by merging primary vocational schools, establishment of mobile training workshops, introduction of a comprehensive information assets management system, and establishment of certification centres). For future projects, the design should be more consistent with available resources.

### **Financing:**

The project significantly improved the physical infrastructure of schools, including by rehabilitating facilities and delivering equipment, furniture, and consumables. In future, it is recommended that the government allocates sufficient funds for maintenance of the facilities and equipment and provides a budget for consumables; otherwise, there is a risk that the achievements under the project may be unsustainable.

### **Procurement:**

While the procurement procedures of BHARTI SEWA SADAN TRUST and the government are well established, their execution needs to be strengthened to avoid in the future the procurement of low-quality products and the preparation of incomplete technical specifications. A checklist needs to be provided by type of goods or services procured, with full compliance by suppliers needed for acceptance by the user and authorization for payment. Accountability needs to be fixed, and sanctions imposed for negligence or deliberate mischief.

### **Phasing of technical and vocational education and training reform.**

The project demonstrated that TVET reform takes time to be effective, and that the engagement of stakeholders, particularly industry, is slow. Engagement over 3-4 years, involving three or four project cycles and links to related programs for policy reform, is likely to provide the most effective and sustainable results.