Women in STEM workforce readiness and development programme

International Labour Organization

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The programme seeks to provide women with critical soft and technical STEM-related skills to help women gain quality employment and support career advancement of women in STEM sectors in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand.

Programme at a glance

Donor	J.P. Morgan Chase Foundation
Duration	September 2017 - December 2020
Partners	Sectoral business associations, private sector firms, TVET institutions and relevant public ministries and agencies.
Development objectives	(1) Improve enrolment and school-to-work transition of women from STEM-related TVET programmes to the labour market and with this prepare women for the future of work. (2) Strengthen retention and advancement of female workers in STEM sectors and with this mitigate their risk of being displaced by automation. (3) Increase labour productivity and with this improve living standards of women.
Countries	Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand
Sector focus	• Indonesia: Automotive and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) • Philippines: Information Technology and Business Process Outsourcing (IT-BPO) • Thailand: Electrical & Electronics (E&E)

Programme background

Working in three sectors in three countries –the Electrical and Electronics sector in Thailand, automotive and ICT sectors in Indonesia and IT-BPO sector in the Philippines–, the ILO programme seeks to strengthen linkages between private sector firms, social partner institutions and vocational training centres to ensure greater opportunity through higher entry, retention and advancement of women workers in STEM sectors.

Women in STEM sectors in Southeast Asia face a variety of challenges that reduce entry, retention and advancement in these sectors. First, for a variety of reasons fewer women tend to enter the vocational training programmes related to these sectors. Second, those that do often face challenges of placement vis a vis their male counterparts. Once within firms, women employees in these sectors are typically faced with challenges both within their firms and from societal expectations, resulting in a higher tendency to drop out than males. And finally, they often are overlooked in terms of career advancement, at both the lower levels and with regard to their moving into senior managerial roles.

To address these issues, the automotive and ICT, IT-BPO, and electrical and electronics sectors are identified as high-growth in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand respectively, presenting significant projected skills gaps and opportunities for growth for women over the next decade. These sectors are rapidly evolving and becoming more innovative, requiring critical soft and technical STEM-related skills. As a result, low skilled-jobs are declining and traditional blue-collar jobs are shifting to more skilled occupations. Therefore, the programme aims to improve enterprises' productivity along with career prospects of women in STEM sectors. In turn, productivity is a key source of improved living standards for women and also a major contributor to economic growth.

Target beneficiaries

The Women in STEM Programme aims to empower, connect and support career development of three groups of women across target countries and sectors:

1. Underprivileged female secondary or post-secondary TVET graduates.
2. Low-skilled women working in entry level STEM-related jobs.
3. Mid-level skilled women working in STEM occupations.

Main activities

1. Skills gap identification

Consultation with sectoral business associations, private sector firms and social partners to identify and prioritize industry specific skills and occupational needs and with this develop action plans for skills development. The design of training plans and curricula seeks to be demand-oriented and include industry-specific STEM-related skills development and employability plans for women.

2. Skills upgrading

Upskilling and broadening critical soft and technical STEM-related skills, targeting three categories of women, which each category being offered a different type of training:

(a) Pre-employment technical and employability skills for TVET graduates to facilitate their entry into full-time jobs;

(b) Skills upgrading for those who are already in employment but in low-skilled jobs with limited mobility to expand their career prospects;

(c) High-end technical skills, or leadership and managerial training for those who are already in supervisory or mid-skilled positions;

3. Job placement

Maximize job placement through continuous collaboration with private sector firms throughout programme implementation.

4. In-company developing and mentoring

A programme of company-level peer support and mentorship organized by and within participating firms. The in-company development and mentoring seeks to strengthen retention and advancement of women workers through a comprehensive workplace-based learning programme to boost critical soft skills. Participating firms will benefit from an innovative learning approach designed by the ILO to deliver soft skills training, leveraging peer learning networks to support development, growth, and enhancement of enterprises.

The ILO *In Business* training methodology offers private sector firms a suite of training modules that apply activity-based and peer learning designed to empower female employees and connect them with role models and mentors. Topics for soft skills modules include:

- Vision setting and professional development
- Creative thinking
- Problem solving
- Teamwork
- Reaching consensus
- Interpersonal communication
- Public speaking
- Critical thinking and reasoning
- Time management and self-organization
- Starting to manage
- Leadership
- Personal awareness
- Working across cultures
- Managing upwards

Expected outcomes

- Successfully transition underprivileged female vocational school graduates into STEM-related employment with sustainable career and livelihood prospects;
- Successfully transition women in low-skilled jobs to quality STEM-related employment with sustainable career and livelihood prospects;
- Successfully transition mid-skilled women in STEM fields into leadership and management positions to ensure women not only enter, but also stay and get promoted in STEM fields;

**"Jobs are not decent by definition,
They are decent by design"**

Guy Ryder, ILO Director-General

Contact information

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