



UNITED NATIONS

ESCAP

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific



RAPID POLICY ASSESSMENT:

*The Impacts of the
COVID-19 Pandemic on
Women Entrepreneurs in
Bangladesh*



Catalyzing Women's Entrepreneurship Programme
<https://www.unescap.org/projects/cwe>

Copyright © United Nations, 2021. All rights reserved

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the United Nations or other international agencies. Mention of any firm does not imply endorsement by the United Nations.

Links contained in the present publication are provided for the convenience of the reader and are correct at the time of issue. The United Nations takes no responsibility for the continued accuracy of that information or for the content of any external website.

Reproduction and dissemination of material in this publication for education or other non-commercial purposes are authorized without prior written permission from the copyright holders, provided the source is fully acknowledged.

Enquiries on this report can be sent to:

Catalyzing Women's Entrepreneurship Programme
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
United Nations Building, Rajadamnern Nok Avenue
Bangkok 10200, Thailand
escap-cwe@un.org

How to cite this report:

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Rapid Policy Assessment: The Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women Entrepreneurs in Bangladesh, (Bangkok, United Nations 2021)

Cover photo credit: Rafayat Khan, Alamy Stock Photo

ABBREVIATIONS

AFI	Alliance for Financial Inclusion
ADB	Asian Development Bank
BB	Bangladesh Bank
BDS	Business Development Service
BDT	Bangladeshi Taka Currency
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CGS	Credit Guarantee Scheme
CMSMEs	Cottage Micro Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
COVID-19	Coronavirus
Crore	10,000,000 or 10 ⁷ , in scientific notation
CWE	Catalysing Women's Entrepreneurship Programme
DFS	Digital Financial Service
DCED	Donor Committee on Enterprise Development
FLFP	Female labour force participation
FSP	Financial service providers
FY	Financial year
FYP	Five-year plan
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ID	Identity documents
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IFC	International Finance Corporation
LFPR	Labour force participation rate
KYC	Know Your Customer
LDC	Least Developed Country
NFIS-B	National Financial Inclusion Strategy-Bangladesh
NIP	National Industrial Policy
MSMEs	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
MOI	Ministry of Industries
MIC	Middle income country

MoF	Ministry of Finance
MWCA	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental organizations
PPRR	Prevention, preparedness, response and recovery
SFYP	Seventh Five-Year Plan
SFDRR	Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
SMEF	SME Foundation
SMESPD	SME and Special Programmes Department
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USD	United States dollar
USSD	Unstructured Supplementary Service Data
UN ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WBL	Women, Business and the Law
WB	World Bank
WEAB	Women Entrepreneurs Association Bangladesh
WBCs	Women Business Centres

The currency exchange rate used in this report is: US\$ 1 is BDT 83.36 (as of 10 December 2020).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

vi	About this report
vii	Acknowledgements
viii	Executive Summary
16	Introduction
19	The pre-COVID-19 Context - Constraints to Women's Entrepreneurship
22	The Policy and Regulatory Context for Women's Entrepreneurship
27	The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women Entrepreneurs
27	<i>Factors Influencing the Impacts</i>
30	<i>Types of Impact</i>
32	<i>Coping Mechanisms</i>
41	<i>Demand-side Needs and the Ecosystem Response</i>
48	Conclusions and Policy Recommendations
48	<i>Response Phase</i>
51	<i>Recovery Phase</i>
53	<i>Prevention and Preparedness Phase</i>
57	References
63	Appendix

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report was commissioned by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific's (ESCAP) Catalyzing Women's Entrepreneurship programme at the request of the Bangladesh Small and Medium Enterprise Foundation (SMEF). ESCAP's regional programme 'Catalyzing Women's Entrepreneurship' is funded by the Government of Canada, through Global Affairs Canada. The programme is a five-year initiative, aimed at addressing three key overarching barriers faced by women entrepreneurs: (1) enabling policy environment and regulatory challenges, (2) access to finance, and (3) use of information and communication technologies (ICT) by women entrepreneurs.

This research is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through bilateral key informant interviews with a range of policy stakeholders from the Government of Bangladesh, the private sector, women entrepreneurs, women entrepreneur associations, among others. The preliminary findings of the research were validated through a stakeholder consultation meeting, which was held in January 2021, with key Bangladesh Government Ministries, stakeholders and women's associations.

This Rapid Policy Assessment provides recommendations to support women-owned enterprises affected by the pandemic; and provides recommendations towards building a gender-responsive business environment for women-owned CMSMEs in Bangladesh. Recommendations are focused on a phased recovery approach, ranging from short-term to long-term recovery measures.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) would like to thank the author of this report, Ms. Katherine S. Miles, Gender Finance Consultant, ESCAP.

The research was conceptualized and managed by United Nations ESCAP staff Ms. Deanna Morris and Ms. Sudha Gooty, who provided technical guidance and substantive inputs to the drafting of this report. The research also benefited from inputs from United Nations Programme Management Consultant Ms. Geeti Patwal, who provided comments to the drafting of the report. Mr. Md. Nazeem Sattar of SME Foundation, Bangladesh, further provided guidance and insights to the report. The author of this report would like to express gratitude to Irina Hauler in supporting research to inform the preparation of this report. This report has been produced under the Catalyzing Women's Entrepreneurship Programme, which is funded by the Government of Canada.

Furthermore, ESCAP would like to thank the Advisory Committee members for their valuable feedback throughout the preparation of the report, in particular: Professor Dr. Md. Masudur Rahman (SME Foundation), Ms. Rokeya Khaton (ERD), Dr. Md. Mafizur Rahman (SME Foundation), Mr. Md. Nazeem Hassan Satter (SME Foundation), Mr. Kazi Sakhawat Hossain (Ministry of Industries), Ms. Sabina Ferdous (Ministry of Women and Children Affairs), Ms. Farhana Islam (Ministry of Commerce), Ms. Husne Ara Shikha (Bangladesh Bank), Dr. Zahid ul Arefin Choudhury (University of Dhaka), Mr. Md. Shafiul Azam (Modhumati Bank Ltd.), Ms. Tina Jabeen (Startup Bangladesh Ltd.), Ms. Mantasha Ahmed (Association of the Fashion Designers of Bangladesh), and Mr. Shahid Uddin Akbar (Bangladesh Institute of ICT in Development).

This report was edited by Ms. Dana MacLean, and Ms. Su-Arjar Lewchalermvongs provided effective research assistance. Mr. Giovanni Congi provided design and communications support.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women's economic participation is integral to achieving economic growth and to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Bangladesh and the wider Asia Pacific region. The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) estimates that if female labour force participation increases to 45 per cent, GDP would rise by 2 percentage points.¹ However, the COVID-19 pandemic has threatened recent progress towards women's economic empowerment and participation in Bangladesh, presenting a new set of complex challenges and barriers for women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh.

In this context, this Rapid Policy Assessment provides recommendations to support women-owned Cottage, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (CMSMEs)² affected by the COVID-19 pandemic; and aims to contribute towards building a gender-responsive business environment for women-owned enterprises in Bangladesh. The assessment is based on desk research and bilateral stakeholder consultations, and builds on previous research on the impact of COVID-19 on women entrepreneurs undertaken by other international and national organizations in Bangladesh, as well as others elsewhere in the Asia Pacific region and internationally.

The majority of women's enterprises in the country are CMSMEs and operate informally and are concentrated in a few sectors – mostly in the wholesale and retail trade of textiles (23.8 per cent).³ However, increased access to technology is changing the profile of women entrepreneurs. For instance, it is estimated that 50 per cent of e-commerce stores on the most popular social media and digital trade platform in Bangladesh (chosen by 90 per cent of social-media users), are owned by females.⁴ The flexibility and limitless audience reach provided by platform-based businesses provide a solution to many of the constraints faced by women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh in a pre-COVID-19 context. For example, women business owners are more likely than men to face a lack of access to finance due to insufficient personal and business documentation such as trade licenses. Moreover, legal constraints to women's economic participation do exist. Bangladesh scored 49.4 out of

预览已结束，完整报告链接和二维码如下：

https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_32

