

Towards Employability and Better Livelihood

An Evaluation of
BRAC's Skills Development Initiative

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ACRONYMS

BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BEHTRUWC	Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children
BNFE	Bureau of Non-Formal Education
DID	Difference in Difference
DM	District Manager
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
HH	Household
IDI	In-depth Interview
IGA	Income Generating Activity
ILO	International Labour Organization
MCP	Master Craft Person
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PO	Programme Organizer
PSM	Propensity Score Matching
STAR	Skills Training for Advancing Resources
TT	Technical Trainer
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BRAC initiated 'Skills Training for Advancing Resources (STAR)' as a pilot project in 2012 with the aim of providing skill development opportunities to urban youth for securing better employment. Several rounds of quantitative and qualitative data were collected in the years 2012 and 2013 to assess whether the pilot project was able to achieve its goal and also to identify its strengths/weaknesses. Quantitative findings indicate strong positive impact of the project on the participants' employment and earnings. In other words, the project appears highly successful in developing the skills of the participants leading to their involvement with different types of income generating activities (IGAs) in the post-intervention period, and consequently in increasing their earnings. Mentionable change has also occurred in the per capita annual income of the programme participants' households, possibly as a result of the children's successful participation in the project and consequent increase in earning. In 2012 (pre-intervention), the average annual per capita income of households from the comparison group was found to be about BDT 3,713 more than that of households from the treatment group. But the direction of the difference changed drastically in 2013 (post-intervention), with the average annual per capita income of households from the treatment group being about BDT 2,529 more than that of households from the comparison group. Similar change was observed in case of a few more indicators of households' socioeconomic condition as well.

Qualitative information collected from a smaller group of programme participants shortly after the training period revealed that all of them were involved in their respective trades in the post-intervention period, i.e. the trades on which they have received training under the STAR project. When asked in detail about their post-intervention IGA involvement, most of them mentioned that the project personnel have been directly involved with their job placement process. Majority of them have been recruited by their former trainers (i.e. the master craft persons or the MCPs). One participant was even found to have started working independently on her respective trade. The programme participants also shared their dreams and future plans that they have developed following participation in the project. This enabling of the participants to have a dream for a better future and realistic plans to make that dream come true appears to be one of the greatest achievements of the STAR project.

As for the project's strengths and weaknesses, the MCPs as well as the field level project staff provided some important insights. Among the strengths, the followings are particularly worth mentioning: systematic implementation and through monitoring process, specified detailed logbooks for respective trades, and the project's overall ability to develop a strong sense of hope among the participants. Challenges identified include- underage of participants for certain trades; participants' low level of education, lack of interest (in some cases), irregular attendance, lack of obedience; complicated wording and problematic sequencing of steps in the logbooks; participants' limited scope of working with actual customers' products (following MCPs' instructions); and some administrative and staff issues. The research team also identified some gaps between preset rules & guidelines and actual implementation. Examples of such gaps include- lack of coordination between the MCPs and the technical trainers (TTs), limited participation of senior staff in stakeholder meetings, limited choice of trades for programme participants to choose from depending on their locality, and irregularity in holding coordination meetings with different stakeholders. These require proper and timely attention for better implementation of the project activities and achievement of expected results.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 COUNTRY CONTEXT

Bangladesh is currently experiencing the demographic dividend¹. This is expected to continue until 2040 (Matin 2012). In spite of this large supply of working age population, one factor which is holding Bangladesh back is the low productivity of the available labour force. Age-disaggregated data shows that about one third of the country's population falls within the age group of 10-24 years, with a substantial proportion of them lacking basic education and competencies required for growing up as competent adults with high employability (CAMPE 2013). Immediate attention needs to be channeled towards skill development of the labour force, mostly by promoting vocational training in order to solve this problem effectively (Ali 2013).

This particular young group draws special attention in this regard given the large number of working children in the country. Therefore, providing this particular group of individuals with basic education along with appropriate skills training can help achieve the goal of developing a highly productive work force. Fortunately, in the recent years, government and non-governmental organisations/institutions alike have put a lot of emphasis on development interventions aimed at the betterment of the adolescent/youth population in Bangladesh (UNICEF 2002, Bhuiya *et al.* 2004). These interventions have focused on various aspects of individuals' lives. Significant achievements have already been attained in the fields of health, nutrition, education, etc. (WHO 2006, GoB 2015). Remarkable progress has been made in increasing primary enrolment rates as well as in achieving gender parity in primary enrolment (Amin and Chandrasekhar 2009). But these achievements are counter-balanced by high drop out rates and poor quality of in-class education (UNICEF 2008, Kalam 2015).

As is evident, educational interventions (for various age groups) are not new. But, only in 2010, the first ever National Education Policy has been developed supporting the educational commitments of the government. This new policy explicitly puts

¹ Demographic dividend is defined as the potential economic benefit offered by changes in the age structure of the population, when there is an increase in working-age population and an associated decline in the dependent age population. Such change occurs during the demographic transition.

emphasis on turning students into competent and productive human resource through vocational training and technical education. This is extremely important,

given that one possible reason of dropping-out of school is the availability of better alternatives, which most often take the form of employment opportunities. School dropouts mostly tend to seek employment opportunities that require low or no skills; but these are also the jobs that pay the least. Ultimately, individuals taking up such jobs get stuck within a vicious cycle of low skill-low productivity-low income. Due to the lack of sufficient skills training opportunities, they cannot improve their potentials, and consequently cannot earn higher income.

Earlier development literature focused mostly on disparities between the rural and the urban sectors of the country. Over time, however, it was noticed that even within the urban sectors, disparities exist. High density of population in the urban slums of Bangladesh is a well-known issue that does not require any further introduction. But, just for a quick refresher, it is worth mentioning that population density in the urban slums is 7.5 times higher than the national average (as of 2010). The MICS 2006 reports that children living in the urban slums have the lowest rate of net school attendance (27% below the national averages) at all levels (UNICEF 2007). Most of these children are engaged in a wide range of informal sector economic activities, many of which require highly risky/hazardous tasks. Their vulnerability is further intensified by the fact that majority of informal sector workers are forced to work without - proper contracts, fixed working hours and wage rates, and compensation for work-related injuries (Alam 2012). Given this situation, it is of immense importance to provide these urban children (who are working/looking for work) with systematic skill development opportunities as well as additional support to help them grow personally into competent individuals with specially developed skill sets and jointly as a highly productive work force.

1.2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

In order to provide alternative education to out-of-school children, the Bureau of Non-formal Education (BNFE) has been implementing two projects: i) Post-Literacy and Continuing Education Project; and ii) Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC) project. Livelihood skills education is one of the main components of the on-going BEHTRUWC project. More than 12,000 urban working children have been provided competency based vocational skills training under this particular component. Currently, this component only targets 13+ years aged children with minimum education level.

Following a long competitive bidding process, in November 2010, BNFE signed contracts with five selected partner NGOs (including BRAC) who would be responsible for providing livelihood skills training to 1000 participants in its first stage in Dhaka and Chittagong. Following successful completion of the first phase, these five NGOs were given the responsibility to perform the same task under the second phase.

Detailed description of the STAR project implemented by BRAC along with its various activities and components is provided in Section 2 of this report.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of this study are:

1. to have a thorough understanding of the profile (including family background) of the programme participants and non-participants;
2. to assess short term impact of the pilot phase of the project on participants' involvement with income generating activities, their understanding of standard/ acceptable workplace features, their ability to make realistic future plans for a better future, etc.
3. to assess the challenges faced by different stakeholders during project implementation;
4. to compile the recommendations made by different stakeholders involved for improving/strengthening the project in future.

1.4 ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT

The different sections and sub-sections of this report are organised as follows. Following the introduction in Section 1, Section 2 provides basic details of the STAR project. Section 3 discusses the methodology of the study. Section 4 covers descriptive statistics, while Section 5 discusses the main findings related to the impact of the STAR. Section 6 presents additional study findings (mostly qualitative) on various issues, including- participants'/their parents' expectations from the project, participants' opinions regarding the trainers providing hands-on training, challenges faced and recommendations proposed by the major stakeholders, as well as some further issues of concern identified by the research team. Finally, Section 7 concludes the report with a summary of the main findings and their implications.

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2. STAR - THE PILOT PHASE OF THE PROJECT

The STAR project of BRAC initiated its pilot phase in five divisional cities: Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet, Rajshahi and Khulna. In the year 2012 during its pilot phase, the project provided livelihood skills training to a pool of 1000 urban youth. The target group of the project in this pilot phase were urban youth aged 14-18 years who completed class five under BEHTRUWC of BNFE and were out of school for at least one year. They were selected by the programme organizers (POs) of STAR based on the list of participants provided by UNICEF.

In addition to the characteristics of the targeted youth mentioned above, the following issues have been taken into consideration while selecting the participants.

- ▶ Distance from project's branch office to the participants' residence;
- ▶ Distance from the participants' residence to the MCPs' workplace;
- ▶ Matching between local demand for particular trade and participants' area of interest with regards to vocational training;
- ▶ Ratio of male and female participants.

To provide technical skills to these underprivileged urban youth, the project identified a pool of Master Crafts Persons (MCPs) using the following criteria.

- ▶ Experienced as a skilled crafts person in the particular trade;
- ▶ Sufficient space in his/her workplace to accommodate apprentice;
- ▶ High demand for the particular trade in the market to increase the participants' chances of finding decent employment upon completing the training;
- ▶ Short distance between his/her shop and the participants' residence;
- ▶ Previous successful experience in managing apprentices.

The selected MCPs went through a training to improve their understanding of decent employment.

The POs matched the selected participants with trades and MCPs by using market evaluation information collected through a market survey and repeated discussion with the parents and the MCPs. Following the matching of participants with trades and MCPs, the participants were placed with the designated MCPs to receive hands-on training for a period of six months. Each MCP was assigned two participants. During the pilot phase, the MCPs were paid BDT 2,000 per participant per month (for a total of six months); and the participants were paid BDT 1,200 per month (for a total of six months). Each participant received BDT 11,000 at the end of the training period as seed money². During the course of the project, in addition to the hands-on training, the participants were also provided with a theoretical class and a classroom-based soft-skills training (on issues such as financial literacy, market assessment, basic communicative English) on a weekly basis.

² This was provided only during the pilot phase of the project.

3. EVALUATION DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION

In order to have an understanding of the profile of the target group of STAR, the project activities, their strengths and weaknesses, and to assess the impact of the project on its beneficiaries, several types of data have been collected in different times of the years 2012 and 2013. The different types of data include- two rounds of quantitative data on a total of 747 children (including both participants and non-participants), qualitative data collected immediately after the completion of the six month long livelihood training period and data from process documentation research. All these have been used in this report for the purpose of understanding the STAR project and assessing its operations as well as its short-term impact on the participants. The non-participants surveyed during the quantitative data collection were selected based on criteria such as age, school enrollment status and socio-economic background (of family) in order to have a comparison group as close in characteristics to the treatment group as possible.

For the quantitative surveys, the sample size calculation for the treatment group involved the following considerations: aiming for 95% confidence level and a precision level of $\pm 4\%$ for a total population of 1000 (intervened children in the pilot phase of the project), required sample size turned out to be about 375. For the treatment group, we rounded up this number to 400. For the purpose of assessing impact of the project, we also needed to have a suitable comparison group. Therefore, we surveyed 600 non-participants from the same communities so that we could have a decent sized comparison group after using Propensity Score Matching (PSM) method for identifying best matched/suitable comparison group. In this way, our total sample size for the quantitative survey became 1000. This total sample of 1000 children were interviewed with a structured questionnaire in round 1 survey; for the follow-up survey, about 75% of them could be revisited as the rest had mostly migrated to different areas and could not be located. But majority of the attrition was from the comparison group, leaving us with two rounds of information on a satisfactory number of treatment and comparison group individuals (treatment- 348, comparison- 399; total- 747). Throughout the report, statistical significance of the difference between the treatment and the comparison groups have been determined using t-test statistics.

It should be mentioned here that the first round of data collection took place during September-October, 2012 when the project intervention was already underway. Therefore, the survey instrument was designed to recall some information for the pre-intervention period. During the follow-up survey conducted in 2013 (about six months after training completion), some additional information for pre-intervention period was recalled, as these were not collected during the round 1 survey.

For the purpose of qualitative assessment, a combination of various data collection tools has been used. In particular, we have conducted in-depth interviews (IDIs) of programme participants, focus group discussions (FGDs) with different stakeholders, observation of implementation process (mainly for the purpose of process documentation) and informal discussions. A total of 38 IDIs of participants, three (3) IDIs of district managers³ and five (5) FGDs of other project staff (one for each of the five areas), and 21 FGDs of MCPs (one for each trade in each of the five areas) have been conducted following the end of the project's training period from all of the five (5) divisional cities under project coverage. In case of the process documentation, two (2) out of the five (5) divisional cities (Dhaka and Chittagong) were selected purposively. The main reason behind this choice was the availability of almost all of the selected trades in these areas. Then branches were selected mainly based on two criteria- i) availability of both male and female participants in same trade, and ii) availability of female participants in rather unconventional trades. After selecting the branches, if only one (1) MCP was working in a particular trade, that MCP was selected straightaway. In case of multiple MCPs in any trade, one (1) MCP was selected randomly. However, if in any trade there were female participants training under male MCP, that MCP was selected purposively. All participants assigned to the finally selected MCPs were considered for data collection.

³ During the pilot phase, three district managers (DMs) were in charge of the five areas. Therefore, through IDIs, we covered all the relevant DMs.

4. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Throughout this report, targeted youth from the treatment group and their counterparts from the comparison group are commonly referred to as programme participants and non-participants, respectively.

We begin by going through a brief baseline profile of the urban youth included in the two rounds of quantitative survey (Table 4.1). The average age of the programme participants and the non-participants was found to be about 16 years in 2012. As for sex wise distribution, 46% and 49% of the participants and the non-participants were male. Almost none of them were married in 2012. In consistency with the targeting criteria of the project, the school dropout rate was also found to be very high in our sample. The average years of education for both groups were found to be just around five (5) years which is realistic given the targeting criteria of the project.

Table 4.1 Basic profile of the surveyed youth

Socio-demographic Indicators	2012		
	Treatment (1)	Comparison (2)	Difference (3 = 1-2)
Age (average, in years)	15.84	16.11	-0.27**
Male (%)	45.54	48.69	-3.15
Married (%)	0.00	1.01	-1.01**
Education (average, in years)	4.99	4.67	0.32**

Note. ** denotes statistical significance at 5%.

During the qualitative data collection, the programme participants were asked about the reasons of their dropping out from school. Most of them identified financial problem as the main reason. Few of them expressed that their involvement with income generating activities (IGAs) was responsible for forcing them to drop out of school. But this again might go back to the problem of financial crisis of the respective families, as without any financial problem many of them probably would not have taken up employment whether formal or informal. It is worth mentioning here that

among the total of 38 respondents interviewed during qualitative data collection, four (4) girls and nine (9) boys were involved in work even before participation in the project. Another respondent mentioned the lack of public schools and the inability of the poor families to bear the huge cost of private schools as the reason of dropout. Some of the other binding factors mentioned by the respondents were distance of school, failing in class, little or no interest in education, absence of guardian and carelessness of guardians- which they considered as the reasons of their dropping out from school.

Table 4.2 presents some basic characteristics of the surveyed households and the household heads. All the results presented here are based on information collected from the first round of quantitative survey. As can be seen, average household size for both the treatment and the comparison households was about five (5). The average age of the households head was around 46-47 years, and vast majority of them were males. Most of them were also married, with very few instances of divorce/separation/widowhood. The average years of education of the household head was also very low (just around 2 years), with majority of them being self-employed.

Table 4.2 Characteristics of household and household head

Indicator	2012		
	Treatment (1)	Comparison (2)	Difference (3 = 1-2)
Household size	5.39	5.39	-0.01
HH heads' information:			
Age (in years)	45.96	46.84	-0.88
Male HH Head (%)	90.75	92.72	-1.97
Marital Status			
Married (%)	89.55	92.36	-2.81
Divorced/Separated/Widowed (%)	9.25	5.79	3.46
Years of education	2.43	2.29	0.15
Main occupation of HH head:			
Day Labour (%)	12.84	19.40	-6.57**
Self-employment (%)	59.70	55.22	4.48
Service (%)	17.91	17.31	0.60
Distress occupation (%)	2.99	4.54	-1.55

Note. ** denotes statistical significance at 5%.

Households' socioeconomic condition is often closely related to their children's involvement with income generating activities (Banu *et al.* 1998, Khair 2005, Hossain and Rahaman 2011, ILO 2012). Here, we have considered indicators related to housing condition as a proxy for the surveyed households' socioeconomic status. The findings using data from 2012 are presented in Table 4.3 which shows the proportion of treatment and comparison group households living in different types of residence. The proportion of treatment households residing in *pacca*/tin houses of their own was found to be significantly lower than that among the comparison group. The direction of the difference is reverse for households residing in rented *pacca*/tin house. Only a very small proportion of households from both treatment and comparison groups were found to be residing in slums or clay-built houses.

Table 4.3 Housing condition

Indicator	2012		
	Treatment (1)	Comparison (2)	Difference (3 = 1-2)
Type of residence (% of HHs):			
Slum	5.37	2.15	3.22**
<i>Jhupri</i> ³	0.00	0.00	0.00
<i>Pacca</i> /tin house (owned)	21.79	33.79	-12.00***
<i>Pacca</i> /tin house (rented)	68.96	62.03	6.93*
Clay-built	3.88	2.03	1.85

Note. ***, ** and * denote statistical significance at 1%, 5% and 10%, respectively.

⁴ A delapidated temporary hut made of low quality materials.

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5. IMPACT ESTIMATES

As mentioned in Section 3, during both rounds of quantitative data collection, some information for pre-intervention period was collected using recall method. The recalled pre-intervention data for the two groups have been used to conduct PSM for identifying a suitable comparison group. To be specific, baseline characteristics such as- adolescents' age, enrollment status, involvement with earning activity, father's educational and occupational information, indicators of households' socioeconomic condition, etc. have been used for the purpose of matching non-participants with programme participants. Comparison between participants and non-participants have been conducted on this matched sample, except for estimating the project's impact on IGA involvement where simple Difference-in-Difference (DID) method has been used⁵. Given that the indicators related to IGA involvement (e.g. whether involved with IGA, type of IGA involved with) are dummy variables, a simple DID on full sample is preferable than DID on the matched sample.

5.1 IMPACT ON IGA INVOLVEMENT AND INCOME

Table 5.1 shows detailed analytical findings related to IGA involvement of the surveyed youth. It is found that prior to project intervention (in 2012), about 28% and 38% of the participants and non-participants were involved with different types of IGAs. In the post-intervention period (in 2013), the proportions were found to be about 99% and 61% for the participants and non-participants, respectively. The DID value for IGA involvement is found to be statistically highly significant, which implies that the project has been highly successful in developing the skills of the participants leading to their involvement with different types of IGAs in the post-intervention period. The next set of indicators presented in Table 5.1 shows the types of IGA involvement of the working youth in both pre and post intervention period. Majority of them (from both groups) were found to be involved with skilled labour activities, with the proportion being much higher among the treatment group in the post-intervention period (i.e. in 2013). The proportion of youth involved with self-employment increased over time for both the groups, with the increase again being significantly higher among the treatment group. For both skilled labour and self-employment, the highly

⁵ However, impact estimates for impact on IGA involvement considering only the matched (using PSM) sample has been presented in Annex Table A1.

significant positive DID values show promising evidence of the project's impact on the participants' type of employment. Moving on, the proportion involved in services went down for treatment group while it increased for the comparison group over time. The instances of day labouring were highly rare among both groups in 2012, and became even lower among the treatment group in 2013 while becoming slightly higher for the comparison group.

Table 5.1 Impact on IGA involvement⁶ (Simple DID)

Indicator	2012			2013			DID
	Treatment (1)	Comparison (2)	Difference (3=1-2)	Treatment (4)	Comparison (5)	Difference (6=4-5)	
IGA involved (% of youth)	27.30	37.59	-10.30***	99.43	61.15	38.27***	48.57***
Type of IGA (% of youth)							
Skilled labour	20.11	16.04	4.07	73.28	26.82	46.46***	42.38***
Self-employment	3.45	7.27	-3.82**	23.56	13.53	10.03***	13.85***
Service	3.45	13.53	-10.09***	2.30	18.05	-15.75***	-5.66*
Day labour	0.29	0.75	-0.46	0.29	2.26	-1.97**	-1.50
Domestic help	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.50	-0.50	-0.50

Note. ***, ** and * denote statistical significance at 1%, 5% and 10%, respectively.

Table 5.2 shows the average annual income for both groups in 2013 (as data was unavailable for the pre-intervention period). As we can see, the average annual income for programme participants was about BDT 27,716, compared to that of the comparison group being about BDT 17,902. The difference between the two groups was found to be statistically highly significant.

⁶ As mentioned in Section 3 on Methodology, unlike other parts of the report with comparative analysis between participants and matched non-participants, simple DID results (considering the full, unmatched sample) have been presented here.

Table 5.2 Impact on annual income

Indicator	2013		
	Treatment (1)	Comparison (2)	Difference (3 = 1-2)
Annual income of the youth ⁶ (mean, in BDT)	27,716.48	17,901.86	9,814.61***

Note. *** denotes statistical significance at 1%.

During the qualitative survey conducted on a smaller group of programme participants shortly after the project's training ended, information was collected on their post-training IGA involvement. Here we found all of them involved in their respective trades, i.e. the trades on which they had received training under the STAR project. Majority of them have been recruited by their former MCPs. We found one participant who has started to work independently on her respective trade. When asked in detail about their post-training IGA involvement, most of the participants mentioned that project personnel like the POs have been directly involved with their job placement process.

5.2 IMPACT ON WORK ENVIRONMENT

While discussing the issue of informal sector employment, one important issue is the type of working conditions/environment in which the workers have to work often for long hours (Khair 2005). In addition to low wages, another major problem with informal sector employment is the prevalence of extremely poor working conditions which is particularly hazardous for children involved with such employment (Ali 2013). This situation intrigued us to explore the working conditions for our survey sample. Among the surveyed youth, those involved with IGAs were asked during the second round survey about various details of their workplace to have an understanding of their working environment. The findings coming from analysing relevant quantitative data are summarised in Table 5.3. Given that proper and detailed information on working environment in pre-intervention period was not available, findings only on post-intervention period are presented and discussed here as well as in the following subsection (5.3) on workplace safety.

⁷ The average annual income values reported here are calculated considering all children (i.e. both working and non-working) from both groups. Even when only working children from both groups are considered, the average annual income of a programme participant remains higher than that of a non-participant, with the difference between the two being smaller than what it is in the first case.

Table 5.3 Impact on work environment

Characteristics of workplace (% of working youth)	2013		
	Treatment (1)	Comparison (2)	Difference (3=1-2)
Enjoys the following features at workplace:			
Electricity connection	99.69	99.75	-0.06
Electric fan	99.07	97.69	1.37
Sufficient light & air	98.44	94.70	3.74*
Clean workplace	81.93	57.82	24.11***
Drinking water facility	96.26	97.76	-1.50
Sanitary latrine	92.88	89.83	3.05
Other issues			
Have to use heavy machinery	26.48	40.44	-13.96**
Have to use chemicals	31.15	26.60	4.55
Have to stay surrounded by hazardous smoke/chemical elements	15.59	12.61	2.98
Uses safety items (helmet/mask/gloves) at workplace	43.39	15.19	28.20***

Note. ***, ** and * denote statistical significance at 1%, 5% and 10%, respectively.

With regard to several of the indicators presented in Table 5.3, no significant difference is found between responses from programme participants and non-participants. But in case of issues like availability of sufficient light and air and cleanliness of the workplace, statistically significant positive change could be found in favour of the programme participants. For drinking water facility and sanitary latrines, the proportion having access to these facilities at respective workplace was found to be quite high among both groups, with the differences between the two groups being statistically insignificant.

The proportion of youth having to use heavy machinery at work was found to be significantly higher among the non-participants. Combining this finding with the significantly higher proportion of programme participants using safety materials at workplace, it is quite safe to conclude that programme participation does have some positive impact in case of ensuring decent working environment for the participants. A lot of this possibly happened due to programme staff's dissemination of knowledge on features of decent working environment among programme participants, thereby creating demand for these facilities/features among them while looking for employment opportunities. Another point worth remembering while looking at these findings is that a substantial proportion of the programme participants continued working with

their previously designated master craft persons even after training completion. Since these were places selected by the programme staff based on several specific categories, it is not surprising that many of these places would actually have features satisfying the basic definitions of a decent working environment. Therefore, this might be another factor contributing to the significant differences in favour of the programme participants.

5.3 IMPACT ON WORKPLACE SAFETY

During the second round survey, the youth involved with various types of IGAs were asked to assess the safety measures at their workplace as very good/good/moderate poor and very poor. Results against all the five answer choices are shown in Table 5.4 to see the detailed difference among responses from programme participants and non-participants. It is noticed that significantly higher proportion of the participants were happy with the safety measures at their workplace (as indicated by assessing it as 'very good') compared to the non-participants. The second option of 'good' was chosen by about 45% of the participants and 51% of the non-participants. But the difference between the two groups turned out to be statistically insignificant. None of the youth in the two groups identified their safety condition as very poor, while only around 2% of the non-participants labeled it as 'poor' with the difference between the participants and the non-participants again being insignificant.

Table 5.4 Impact on workplace safety

Self-assessment of safety measures at workplace (% of working youth)	2013		
	Treatment (1)	Comparison (2)	Difference (3=1-2)
Very good	28.35	9.53	18.82***
Good	45.48	50.90	-5.42
Moderate	26.17	37.38	-11.21*
Poor	0.00	2.18	-2.18
Very poor	0.00	0.00	0.00

Note. *** and * denote statistical significance at 1% and 10%, respectively.

5.4 OVERALL IMPACT ON HOUSEHOLD WELL-BEING

For an understanding of the project's overall impact on household wellbeing, we analysed information related to household income. Mentionable changes were noticed among the two groups with regard to per capita annual income (Table 5.5). In 2012, the average annual per capita income of households from the comparison

group was found to be about BDT 3,713 more than that of households from the treatment group. But the direction of the difference was found to have changed drastically in 2013. To be specific, in 2013, the average annual per capita income of households from the treatment group was found to be about BDT 2,529 more than that of households from the comparison group. The DID value of BDT 6,241 was found to be statistically significant, indicating that the average annual per capita income of the treatment households increased substantially compared to that of the households from the comparison group during the study period.

Table 5.5 Impact on household income

Indicator	2012			2013			DID (7=6-3)
	Treatment (1)	Comparison (2)	Difference (3=1-2)	Treatment (4)	Comparison (5)	Difference (6=4-5)	
Per capita annual income (in BDT)	21,771	25,484	-3,713**	27,043	24,514	2,529	6,241***

Note. *** and ** denote statistical significance at 1% and 5%, respectively.

6. STAKEHOLDERS' EXPECTATIONS, OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 PERCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS OF PROGRAMME PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR PARENTS

During the first round of survey, the parents of the programme participants included in the survey as well as the participants themselves were asked to reflect on the training and also their expectations from this training. It is worth knowing about their expectations and their perceptions regarding the training as these might provide important insights into revising this project or designing other similar projects. We first discuss the opinions of the parents and then move on to that of the participants.

Perception of parents

As can be seen from Table 6.1, about 99% of the parents expressed their high hopes regarding the enhancement of their children's skills through participation in the STAR project. About 97% of the parents reported thinking that it would increase their children's chance of finding a job. One typical concern parents very often seem to have regarding vocational/skills training initiatives is that of their children's safety. However, among our survey sample, only about 9% of the parents reported thinking that the skills training provided by the STAR project would be hazardous/risky for their children. About 9% of the parents were also concerned that this training might hamper their children's study. This finding is understandable given that most of the participants were dropouts from formal school system to begin with. In response to whether the parents think that their children's participation in such project would lower their reputation in the society, just about 2% of them were found to be concerned about this issue, while majority thought that there is no such possibility. Vast majority of the parents (about 98%) agreed with the statement that standard school curriculum should include opportunities for vocational training, indicating high demand for such training among the mainstream society.

Table 6.1 Parents' initial opinion regarding STAR training

Indicators (% of parents)	Agree (1)	Indifferent (2)	Disagree (3)
It will enhance my child's skills	98.98	1.02	0
It will increase my child's chance of getting a job	96.93	3.07	0
School curriculum should include opportunities for such training	98.21	0.77	1.02
It will be hazardous/risky for my child	9.46	5.88	84.65
It will hamper my child's study	9.21	13.81	76.98
It will lower my/my family's reputation and honour in society	1.79	0.51	97.7

Expectations of the programme participants

Qualitative information collected from the programme participants clearly explains the kind of expectations and background situations that motivated them to join the STAR project. The most common reason has been found to be desire to break free from the grip of unemployment and poverty by achieving technical skills. One participant justified his joining the project in the following words:

I used to sit idly at home or roam around without any purpose. I have spent days without eating properly. Due to my family's poor financial condition, I haven't even been able to study in school. So, I thought that if I can participate in this training, it will give me the necessary skills to do something in life, to earn money.

Others have mentioned that usually it is required to spend money for receiving training. But that was not the case with STAR. Instead, they were receiving a lump sum amount (the seed money) at the end of the training to kick start a new initiative or improve an existing one. So, they did not want to miss such a great opportunity for receiving free training and then some money at the end which would give them the initial support required to be established in life.

Quantitative findings related to the participants' initial expectations from the STAR project are presented in Table 6.2. A very high proportion, about 94%, of them expressed their hopes of having higher income in future due to participation in STAR training. When asked what kind of monthly income they expect to earn following skills development through participation in training, their responses were found to average out to just above BDT 8,000. As we know, the STAR project offers hands on training to the participants for a period of six months. The participants were asked to reflect on their initial ideas regarding the sufficiency of this duration. In this case, it was found that majority were not initially happy with the duration, as only about 28% of them reported thinking initially that the duration of the training would be sufficient.

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Those expressing dissatisfaction with the duration were further asked how long they would have preferred it to be, and the average response was found to be about 12 months, i.e. a year.

Table 6.2 Participants' expectation from STAR training

Indicators	Number/Percentage
This training will help me to have higher income in future (% of participants)	93.6
Expected monthly income after receiving training (in BDT)	8,128.0
Duration of the training will be sufficient (% of participants)	27.7
If not, how long should it be (average, in months)	11.5

Participants' opinion regarding behaviour of the MCPs

Here we have a brief look at the participants' opinion regarding the MCPs' behaviour during the hands on training sessions. This information was collected while they were participating in the training sessions. The findings are summarised in Table 6.3. Almost all the participants mentioned that the respective MCPs explained details of the training very clearly and also repeatedly, when necessary. Most of them were also satisfied with the friendly attitude of the MCPs towards them, with very few exceptions. About 83% of the participants mentioned that the MCP never misbehaved with them, while the proportion thinking otherwise was found to be about 12%. With regard to abuse, about 81% of the participants reported that the MCP never abused them physically or mentally. But about 15% of them disagreed with the statement, indicating that they have faced such cases of abuse from the MCPs. When asked to give an opinion on physical/mental punishment in general, about 81% of the participants opined that trainees should never be given physical/mental punishment for their mistakes. About 16% reported thinking otherwise, possibly indicating their belief that physical/mental punishment is an integral part of learning especially when mistakes are made.

Table 6.3 Participants' opinion regarding MCPs' behaviour

Participants' opinion regarding MCPs' behaviour (% of programme participants)	Agree (1)	Indifferent (2)	Disagree (3)
Explains everything very clearly	100	0	0
Explains things repeatedly if needed	99.71	0.29	0
Maintains friendly behaviour with the trainees	94.25	3.16	2.59
Never misbehaves with the trainees	82.47	5.46	12.07
Never abuses the trainees physically or mentally	81.03	4.31	14.66
Trainees should never be given physical or mental punishment for their mistakes	80.46	3.16	16.38

Participants' future plans and aspirations

The last issue to be analysed and discussed directly concerning the participants is their future plans and aspirations that they have shared with the qualitative research team. Most of them expressed having a strong desire to establish own business in respective trade in future. Some of them wanted to go abroad as a skilled worker, while some others wanted to continue working in the country but at a better position and with a better salary. But they all had realistic expectations and understanding of their own abilities as all of them stated at one point or another that they understood they did not yet have the necessary level of skills to pursue these dreams right away, and that it could be attained only through continuous effort to learn more and to practice what they have learnt. Many of these youth expressed that they wanted to continue working under the MCPs for achieving more skills. They also mentioned their plans to save money from their earnings in order to initiate something of their own in future. This enabling of the participants to have a dream for a better future and realistic plans to make that dream come true appears to be one of the greatest achievements of the STAR project.

6.2 STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS: MCPs' OBSERVATIONS

The Master Craft Persons or the MCPs are another crucial group of stakeholders of the STAR project. Earlier in this report we have discussed who they are and what their role is in this particular project. Through our qualitative exploration we wanted to have an insight into the MCPs' opinions and observations regarding various activities and features of the project. The findings are summarised in this section. Beginning with the strengths of the project identified by the MCPs, we then move on to discussing the challenges and other observations they have shared with the research team, and finally the recommendations made by them for improving the project.

6.2.1 Strengths of the project

Almost all the MCPs participating in FGDs have spoken highly of the integrated nature of supports provided to the children under the STAR project. This package of supports included - hands on training, TT classes, English language classes, market evaluation classes, and financial support, among other direct and indirect supports. The MCPs identified this holistic approach as the main strength of the project. The following words of a MCP explain it all quite well:

This project is providing them [the targeted youth] with all the elements that are required for learning a skill properly and building a career using that skill. In addition to getting training support, they are also receiving financial support. This would give them the chance to initiate something and get established in life. They can't receive such support from anywhere else.

6. Stakeholders' expectations, observations and recommendations

The MCPs identified the implementation process and monitoring of project activities as quite systematic. In their opinion, the strong monitoring at every level of implementation has played an important role in ensuring the success of the project. Monitoring in the form of tracking participants for an extended period of time has been recommended by several of them for proper realisation and sustainability of the project's achievements.

Using specified and detailed logbooks for training has been acknowledged as another positive aspect of the project. In the MCPs' opinion, such systematic training following a pre-determined syllabus has been highly beneficial for the participants as it help cover the trade specific training topics in a comprehensive manner. It also worked as a check point for the MCPs themselves and in some cases they even benefited by learning bits and pieces of new information presented in a structured format.

There is another point which has been emphasised by all the MCPs as a highly appreciable feature of the STAR project, and that is, its ability to develop a strong sense of hope among the participants. They felt that the project enabled the youth to have realistic dreams of a better future for themselves and their families and the confidence in their capabilities as human beings to make these dreams come true. While it is rather difficult to 'measure' this effect of the project on its participants, it is open and clear for the human eye to see whenever interacting with them. In this regard, the following words of a MCP are worth mentioning.

Those that have received training from me and the other ustads [MCPs] are now able to think positively about their future. They are thinking of ways to improve their and their families' lives. They feel confident about their newly learned skills and about contributing to their families' financial well-being.

6.2.2 Challenges faced

Aside from talking about the highly beneficial, positive aspects of the project, the MCPs also shared with the research team the various challenges they have encountered and other crucial observations they made during their involvement with the STAR project. These issues are very important for identifying the possible areas of improvement of the project.

While the MCPs were very excited about the nature of project implementation and their roles in it, they could not help expressing their concerns regarding some issues pertaining to the youth they were training. Many MCPs felt that some of them were underage, considering the type of trade they were involved with. For example, an MCP providing training on refrigeration work explained that participants at the lower end of the age spectrum were a bit too young for the different tasks to be handled in this trade; they needed to be slightly older and stronger to properly handle the tasks assigned and to ensure proper realisation of the training they were receiving. Concerns about age were also expressed as several MCPs believed that those

receiving training from them were not that attentive or interested in the particular trade(s) as they were too young to understand its value and importance. But age was not the only reason cited for lack of interest. On this note, one MCP said:

Firstly, it is now their [the participants] age to play. Secondly, the places where they live are not that good and healthy for growing up. They are not coming to us willingly. They have come to receive this training under pressure from their parents and/or for their poor financial condition. These are the reasons why they lack the enthusiasm or interest in learning the skills. Due to this problem, we also have to give extra effort into training them.

For some others, the concern was the lack of ‘smartness’ and poor outward appearance of the participants. This was an issue particularly for those receiving training in beautification and working in beauty parlors as part of their hands on training. Most of the MCPs of beautification thought that their clients were not willing to take service from the STAR participants due to their lack of ‘smartness’ as well as their poor getup. In the words of one such MCP,

The customers always want to get their service from the smart girls. And smartness has a lot to do with family background and living status. Since the STAR participants are mostly from slums, they lack the required background, and fail to communicate smartly with the clients. Their low level of education also has a part to play in it. Growing the sense of smartness among this group has therefore been a big challenge for us.

Several MCPs also felt that the participants’ low levels of educational attainment was responsible for their problems with reading and memorising the names of tools, machinery parts and other trade specific terms.

The participants’ irregularity in coming to the workplace and the guardians’ overall carelessness about their children’s training were also cited by a few MCPs as problematic for project implementation and achievement of expected outcomes. There were also complaints of showing up late to work and forgetting lessons from the previous days. Unfortunately, some of the parents were rather indifferent about these issues. One MCP expressed his dissatisfaction regarding this issue as:

One day the boy [the participant assigned to him] did not come to work in the morning. As I made a phone call to his mother to check on him, she told me, “How can my son go to work this early! And what’s the big deal if he does not go there every day? It is quite normal to skip a day or two.” Now you tell me how I deal with children like these if the parents are not caring enough about their children’s training.

The last issue of concern expressed by the MCPs on the part of the participants was their occasional lack of obedience. Even though it was raised by only a few MCPs, it is still one of those issues that require attention. The concerned MCPs reported of

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incidences when the programme participants have picked up a fight or an argument with others, and were disrespectful and disobedient towards them (the MCP) when they tried to put an end to it. According to the MCPs, this disobedience and arrogance originated from the fact that they were BRAC participants and therefore, the MCPs had no authority over them. The participants knew that because of project rules, the MCPs were not allowed to deal with them harshly; and this seemed to have given them an air of arrogance.

These are all concerns related directly to the participants that the MCPs not part identified as challenging for successful implementation of the project. But there are other issues related to project design and implementation which they found problematic during the course of the project. For example, almost all the MCPs complained about the duration of the training (six months), as they found it inadequate for thoroughly teaching various aspects of the particular skill/trade they were dealing with. They opined that only the basics could be taught during this time period, and not the intricacies. Following the logbook provided by the project within this time period was also challenging for the MCPs. According to one MCP:

The logbook that I have been provided and told to follow by STAR project staff lists A to Z of the tasks. But given the timeline it is impossible to complete all of it properly. If I try to do that, I will only be able to touch upon the basics and won't even have time to explain the things properly to the children.

The (initially decided) fixed time period of 9am to 2pm that the participants were supposed to spend at the MCPs' workplace for receiving hands on training also caused problems for some specific trades. Based on the information received from the MCPs we found that two such trades were beautification and motor cycle repairing. In a beauty parlor the busy hours usually start after evening. But that was the time the participants left the parlor each day. Therefore, even though the participants spent quite a long time in the parlors during the day time, they had to spend it rather idly for lack of enough customers coming in. Those working in motor workshops faced similar situation. This was articulated by an MCP of motor cycle repairing as:

If the participants want to learn the skill properly, they need to be here [the workshop] and work for longer hours. Various types of tasks to fix engines are usually performed during the evening/night as there is less chaos at that time. But the kids from the project leave at 5pm. How will they master the tasks required to fix an engine?

Upon encountering this problem, programme management quickly revised the rule by keeping the five hour long period same while removing restrictions on when it had to start/finish.

Many MCPs also found the wording of the logbook very difficult to follow and thought that ordering of the tasks in the logbook was not always appropriate. One reason for the difficulty to follow the terminology used in the logbook might be the fact that many

of these MCPs were not that well educated and had themselves received training in their early days in a rather unorthodox manner from other practitioners in that particular trade. Because of their low level/lack of education, many MCPs were also unable to fill up the required sections in the logbook after completing a particular section.

Some MCPs complained of damage to products and tools by participants during the training period. As much of the machineries and tools used by the MCPs as part of their work was new to the participants, they were often uncomfortable and unsure of how to handle these. This is what led to occasional damages. There were also mentions of damage to customers' valuable products being serviced. Given that the project has no provisions to compensate for such incidences, the MCPs had to pay for the damaged products.

Another challenging issue mentioned by some of the MCPs was the occasional lack of attention to gender sensitive issues. To be specific, some of the MCPs of beautification complained about problems they had to deal with when their workplace (i.e. the beauty parlors) was visited by male project staff as part of regular monitoring. The beauty parlors operated by MCPs working with the STAR project, as like most other parlors, are all exclusively for female customers, and no males are allowed in the premises of these parlors. When these were visited by male project staff, the MCPs had to face negative approach and comments from the surrounding establishments and neighbours. One MCP stated the problem as follows:

We face lots of problems when male staff come for follow-up. Others around us do not know and understand what this is for. When they see them coming in and going out, they start asking why suddenly guys are entering my parlor. They might even start spreading rumours and ill words about me and my parlor which would cause harm to me both personally and professionally.

6.2.3 Recommendations

In this sub-section the noteworthy recommendations made by the MCPs are summarised and presented for a quick glance at what they think are necessary for improving the project in its future phases.

- The lower bound of the age range and the educational level of the participants need to be slightly higher.
- Participants and trade should always be matched based on the children's interest and abilities.
- Duration of training should be extended from 6 months to 12 months. Duration of working time in a day should also be extended.

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- Weekly holiday needs to be customisable based on type of trade and location of MCPs' workplace, as different markets/areas often have different weekly holidays.
- At least one set of the basic machines and tools required should be provided in the theoretical classroom so that it becomes easy to match theory with practice.
- The MCPs' participation should be ensured while preparing the logbook.
- The sequencing of the items in the logbook needs to be revised in some cases.
- The participants should be instructed by the project staff to be obedient to the MCPs and abide by their instructions.
- In case of substantial damage caused by the participants to customers' products or to the machineries at the workplace, the project should provide support to compensate for it.
- The honorarium provided to the MCPs can be increased. While the social and ethical value of the task assigned is of great importance, at the end of the day everyone is concerned about the financial dealings.

6.3 CHALLENGES FACED AND RECOMMENDATIONS PROPOSED: PROJECT STAFF'S FEEDBACK

During the qualitative data collection, the STAR project staff working at the field level were requested to share their experiences, the challenges they identified during their work, and their recommendations for improving the project and its outcome. Research findings based on these information are the focus of this sub-section.

6.3.1 Challenges identified

The staff discussed in detail the various problems encountered in the different trades as well as different administrative issues they had to struggle with during the course of their work. Both types of issues are analysed and presented here. While some problems were common for several trades, some were specific to one or two trades. The major problems/challenges as mentioned by the staff are discussed below.

Problems in different trades

The participants' low level of education has been detected as a problem in most of the trades as it affected their ability to learn lessons, remember those properly and then to implement those. The staff also noticed that in some trades, the daily work

tended to start a little late as customers usually did not come to seek service very early. In these cases, the participants started to show up late as well. But they would always leave at the time specified by the project even though there was a lot of work left at that time or a lot of customers were arriving. The staff felt that this was seriously affecting the participants' learning process. Some of the staff also felt that the given time of six months for training was inadequate for some trades.

The concerned staff also spoke of parents' stereotypical perception of particular trades/activities as a problem. For example, many of them had to face problems when they approached the participants and their parents about the prospect of beautification, as some of the parents considered this as an act of sin or against religious beliefs and practices. It proved to be rather difficult for the staff to work in these situations. Many of the guardians were also against electrical work as they thought that these tasks were not at all safe for their children irrespective of the safety mechanisms/measures adopted.

Another observation made by the staff was that very often the MCPs would not allow the STAR participants to work on the customers' products as they feared the children might cause damage. This is understandable given that they were rather unskilled. But the issue raised by the staff was that this was limiting the learning opportunities for the participants. The lack of scope to work also resulted when the service delivery was home-based. For example, for refrigerator repairing the service is very often provided by going to the customers' home. But in such cases, the STAR participants missed the scope of learning as they stayed in the workshop.

The staff received complaints from MCPs that in the case of tailoring the names of various tools and machine parts were given in the logbook without any accompanying images which was problematic for the MCPs and the participants to understand. There were also complaints about the fact that only ladies' dress items were included in the logbook even though there was huge demand for gents clothing items in the market. Additionally, there were complaints of printing mistakes and problematic sequencing of tasks/steps in the logbooks.

Administrative and staff issues

Several staff mentioned that in the absence of a full time district manager assigned for each district, they faced challenges in the areas of instant decision making, paper signing, report submission, timely payment of MCPs and overall project operation. They were also concerned about coordination gap among different stakeholders involved with the project.

At the initial stage the grassroots level staff were not fully aware of different steps of project implementation. As a result, they were not able to provide the MCPs with adequate information and often had to face awkward situations for not knowing the little details of the project. Some of the staff initially told the MCPs that they have to build the capacity of the targeted youth up to the level of helpers. But later on instruction was given to fully train them up as skilled workers in the particular

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trades following the logbooks provided. The fact that the logbooks were supplied two months after project initiation was also mentioned by several staff as a big challenge.

6.3.2 Recommendations

The recommendations received from the project staff are summarised below.

- Some changes are required in the participants' selection criteria as importance should be given on age, size and educational qualification.
- The responsibility of participant selection should lie solely with the project staff.
- Educational qualification of MCPs should be at least SSC, as otherwise it becomes problematic to deal with them and explain to them their roles and responsibilities in line with the project's rules.
- A combined training for MCPs should be organised following the logbooks where representatives from BRAC, UNICEF and ILO would also join. This would help the MCPs to get a clear understanding of the project's objectives and activities.
- The duration of training should be increased to properly cover all parts of the logbooks.
- The language and steps of the logbooks and the market evaluation module should be made easier to follow and understand.
- Some instruments/machinery/tools and trade related materials may be supplied in TT class for combining theory with practice.
- Instead of giving the lump sum money to the participants at the end of the training period, they might be directly provided with some basic necessary machineries/instruments on respective trades.

6.4 ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS MADE BY THE RESEARCH TEAM

Like any other development intervention, the STAR project also has some preset rules and guidelines for effective implementation. But during process documentation exercise, some gaps between the rules and the practices have been observed by the research team. It is worth having a look at these observations since focusing on them might help with better implementation of project activities and achievement of expected results. The notable observations made by the research team are presented below.

- ▶ During the pilot phase, the field based project staff were provided with an additional instruction to keep four (4) trades in every branch and six (6) participants in every trade for the purpose of structural management and consistency across branches. It is worth mentioning that this instruction also played a part in the matching process between participants and trades. Due to this instruction, in practice, the participants and their guardians only had the option to choose from the limited fixed list of trades operated under the respective branches.
- ▶ Limited/rare participation of the District Managers (DMs) was noticed in various stakeholder meetings, such as coordination meetings with guardians, MCPs and TTs.
- ▶ Even though there is provision of regular coordination meetings with different stakeholders and the POs claimed that all meetings take place as planned, the research team observed that usually only the guardians' meetings and the staff meetings took place. The guardians' meeting also appeared to just fulfill the purpose of formality, as it mainly involved the guardians' signing a register book and some preset speeches on selected topic(s) delivered by the POs. The guardians were present there only as listeners, and did not participate in any discussion or opinion sharing.
- ▶ Lack of coordination was observed between the MCPs and the TTs, particularly in the branch offices in Dhaka. This coordination is extremely important as both groups have the responsibility to train the children. Without proper coordination between them, it becomes impossible to ensure that the lessons from both sides are of acceptable and equal standard and that no gap exists between the theoretical and practical lessons received. The POs claimed that this coordination takes place as the MCPs and the TTs meet once a month during receiving their remuneration. But in reality, on these days, the MCPs and the TTs were seen to just come to the office to sign and collect their payment and leave afterwards. While occasionally informal discussion took place among the ones present at a time at the office on payment day, such little interaction was highly inadequate for proper and effective coordination.
- ▶ There also appeared to be some gap in information sharing between the field level and the central level of project administration. In one of the branches in Dhaka, an MCP dropped out causing interruption in training of the two (2) participants assigned to that particular MCP. The concerned DM initially decided that their training would be completed by the TT following the logbook. But that created new problems. So, then those two participants were assigned to another MCP who was located about 6km away from the participants' residences. In this situation, one of the participants dropped out and the other one became irregular. This was a rather serious issue. But it was found that this information had not been shared with the central project management.

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- ▶ Some of the POs were found to be lacking in their responsibility to observe/monitor the TT classes. The research team observed that they were often not being attentive in the classes, and were even talking on mobile phones inside the classroom during the class.
- ▶ The TTs often lacked efforts to make the theoretical classes interesting. The monotonous nature of their lectures often caused the participants to lose attention and interest which ultimately affected their learning process.

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7. CONCLUSION

The key objective of the STAR project is to provide underprivileged urban working children with the skills required to enhance their employability in the formal job market which would ultimately enable them to attain a better livelihood for themselves and their families. In doing so, STAR adopts an apprenticeship based model which has been found to be quite effective in various parts of the world with similar situations and context. This study analyses the short term impact of the project mainly on job market participation of the participants, their understanding of/aspiration for decent work environment, and their abilities to dream of and plan for a better future. Additionally, it also brings together recommendations made by different stakeholders for amending various aspects of the project for improved implementation and effectiveness in its future stages.

We find that participation in the STAR project has had significant impact on IGA involvement of the urban youth, with an associated increase in the proportion of them being self-employed. Qualitative findings add that they are mostly involved in trades they received training on as participants of the STAR project. Increased use of appropriate safety measures at workplace was also noticed among the participants which might indicate their improved understanding and desire for having decent work environment. Qualitative findings show a growing sense of hope and rise of dreams among the youth as they reported planning for improved livelihood through realistic steps.

We find that various challenges were faced by the staff and the MCPs during project implementation, perhaps because it was the pilot phase. Substantial volume of constructive recommendations has come from both these groups for improved operation and achievements of the project. Some of these recommendations deal with selection of the target group and the MCPs, while others involve various administrative and structural issues. Overall, suggestions have come for more careful targeting of participants, extended duration of training period, modification and timely provision of the logbooks, improved coordination between different stakeholders, increased and improved participation of different stakeholders in various stages of programme operation and monitoring, etc. Incorporation of the recommendations and the lessons learnt by the project staff into successive phases of the project

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can ensure achieving improved and sustainable results in the form of a strongly competent established young workforce in the country, and thus reduce the problems of youth unemployment, their involvement with low paying hazardous informal sector employment (due to poor skills) and so on.

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ANNEX

Table A1. Impact on IGA involvement (matched sample)

Indicator	2012			2013			DID (7=6-3)
	Treat- ment (1)	Compa- rison (2)	Diffe- rence (3=1-2)	Treat- ment (4)	Compa- rison (5)	Diffe- rence (6=4-5)	
Involved with IGAs (% of youth)	28.36	29.85	-1.49***	99.40	58.63	40.78***	42.27***
Type of IGA (% of youth)							
Skilled labour	20.90	13.37	7.52**	73.13	25.31	47.82***	40.30***
Self-employment	3.58	3.40	0.18	23.58	12.30	11.28***	11.10***
Service	3.58	12.84	-9.25***	2.39	18.93	-16.54***	-7.28***
Day labour	0.30	0.24	0.06	0.30	1.49	-1.19	-1.25
Domestic help	0	0	0	0.00	0.60	-0.60	-0.60

Note: *** and ** denote statistical significance at 1% and 5%, respectively.

Table A2. Testing for randomness of attrition

Indicator	Attrited	Non-Attrited	Difference
Youths' characteristics			
Sex (male=1)	67.33%	49.53%	17.80%***
Age (in years)	15.14	15.03	0.10
Education (in years)	4.38	4.74	-0.36***
HH Head's characteristics			
Sex (male=1)	89.24%	92.24%	-2.99%
Age (in years)	44.71	46.58	-1.87***
Education (in years)	4.69	4.80	-0.12
Household information			
Owns cultivable land	4.78%	4.82%	-0.04%
Owns homestead land	74.90%	68.14%	6.76%**
Has electricity connection at home	92.83%	94.91%	-2.08%
Type of residence (Own/rented <i>pacca</i> / tin house=1, Others=0)	96.81%	93.17%	3.64%**
Other aspects			
Programme participation (participant=1)	17.53%	46.59%	-29.06%***
Location (Dhaka=1, others=0)	49.00%	51.81%	-2.80%

Note: *** and ** denote statistical significance at 1% and 5%, respectively.

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