



STAR Toolkit

Introducing a successful
apprenticeship programme

Skills Development Programme

STAR TOOLKIT

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apprenticeship programme

Skills Development Programme

Purpose

The STAR Toolkit: Introducing a successful apprenticeship programme provides an overview of the flagship training project under BRAC Skills Development Programme (SDP).

Skills Training for Advancing Resources (STAR) is an apprenticeship based project and this document is designed to provide a cursory knowledge of this successful programme that began in 2012. This overview covers the basics of BRAC's apprenticeship based skills training programme and provides glimpses of the different phases of STAR as well as other aspects including social inclusion, decent work, knowledge management, communications, monitoring and evaluation.

The toolkit is intended for organisations that want to become familiar with STAR and gain a functional knowledge of how this apprenticeship programme is implemented in the field. Development practitioners and professionals, and organisations like NGOs and government agencies will find this toolkit useful. It should also be of use for national and international development partners in both public and private sectors, besides policymakers looking for some insight.

1.2 million
children and young readers
178,445 adolescents
12,409 primary school students
10,000 primary school students
37,442 adolescent groups
3.7 women and adolescent girls
14,927 children under 5
96.8% children under 5
2.7 million children
1.2 million people
10,000 primary school students
13,621 changemakers
9,432 potential young entrepreneurs
300 street children.
12,409 students
96.8% children under 5
1.2 million children and young readers

Acknowledgement

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Apprentices learning to repair mobile phones

Introduction

Bangladesh is at a unique juncture in its development path as the role of its main economic driver gradually shifts from rural agriculture to urban industries. Striving to transition into a middle income country, Bangladesh is poised to gain even more dividends from its demographic change that comes only once along the development path.

The demographic dividend, as it is called, happens when lower fertility coincides with lower mortality leading to a growing number of working population while the number of dependents (children and pensioners) decrease. In Bangladesh, this trend is expected to continue till 2040.¹

However, the extent of this dividend depends on the level of education or abilities of this working population that is growing. Bangladesh faces exactly such a problem with over two million youths entering the workforce every year according to the national labour survey.

One of the factors that impedes higher growth is low labour productivity due to lack of education among the youth. With about a third of Bangladesh's 170 million people between 10 and 24 years, it is rather unfortunate that a substantial proportion of them lack basic education and competencies that would make them more employable.²

STAR is a six-month apprenticeship training equipping school dropouts with technical, vocational and soft skills. The project helps employers create a 'decent work' environment and tries to foster decent work practices in the informal sector.

With two out of every five youths between 15 and 24 years having no job, no education or no formal training, these young people face uncertain and unsafe future due to the lack of opportunities and skills. Nearly half the population is illiterate or semi-literate with the youth accounting for a large portion of that segment. Most of them pursue informal sector³ jobs, which account for 87% of

- 1 Matin KA (2012). The demographic dividend in Bangladesh: An illustrative study. Paper prepared for presentation at the 18th Biennial Conference of the Bangladesh Economic Association held on 12-14 July, 2012 at Dhaka. (<http://bea-bd.org/site/images/pdf/40.pdf> last retrieved on 10 December 2018)
- 2 CAMPE (2013). Skills development in Bangladesh: Enhancing the youth skills profile. Education Watch 2011-12. Dhaka: Campaign for Popular Education
- 3 In general terms, informal economy is the unregulated portion of the market that produces goods and services for remuneration. Informal economy refers to all economic activities that are not covered or insufficiently covered by formal arrangements whether by law or in practice. It is usually characterised by low entry requirements in terms of capital or qualifications, small scale operations, skills often acquired outside formal education and labour-intensive production.



Female apprentices breaking barriers at a motorcycle repair shop

Bangladesh's employment. Immediate attention needs to be channeled towards skill development of this potential labour force, mostly by promoting vocational training to solve this problem effectively.⁴

Bangladesh government has also prioritised skills development of this large segment of young people and provide them with a better future. BRAC SDP has been operating since 2015 with a target of getting jobs for 400,000 disadvantaged youths through skills training. This is where BRAC's skills training bears the most significance in Bangladesh's context.

SDP's flagship project, STAR is a six-month apprenticeship training equipping school dropouts with technical, vocational and soft skills. The project helps employers create a 'decent work' environment and tries to foster decent work practices in the informal sector.

This toolkit is meant to provide an overview of STAR's main features and highlights. ●

4 Ali MA (2013). Informal labour force in Accumulation and alienation: State of labour in Bangladesh 2013. Editor, Titumir R A M, Dhaka; Unnayan Onneshan

World's largest family

The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, as BRAC was known then, began its journey as an initiative to rehabilitate returning refugees after Bangladesh's Liberation War. That humble initiative of 1972 has grown to become the world's largest NGO reaching about 110 million people in 10 countries of Asia and Africa with about 200,000 employees, workers and volunteers. Today BRAC boasts over 7 million micro-finance group members, 37,500 non-formal primary schools and more than 70,000 health volunteers.

BRAC focuses on poverty alleviation and empowerment of the socially disadvantaged. At present, BRAC promotes income generation for the poor through microcredit and other interventions like healthcare, literacy, and education and skills training.

BRAC tackles poverty from a holistic point of view, transforming individuals from aid recipients into empowered citizens to help them take control of their future. Over the years, BRAC has prioritised the marginalised poor and learned to understand their needs by piloting, refining and scaling up practical means to increase their access to resources,

support their entrepreneurship and empower them to become active agents of change.

Women and girls have been the primary vehicles of BRAC's anti-poverty approach recognising their vulnerabilities and thirst for change. BRAC strives to find practical and scalable approaches to eradicate poverty.

BRAC focuses on eight areas in its strategic plan, namely, elimination of extreme poverty, expansion of financial choices for the poor, employable skills for decent work at home and abroad, climate change and emergency response, gender equality, universal access to healthcare, nutrition, water and sanitation, pro-poor urban development, and investment on the next generation.

While continuing to work with the 110 million people it already reaches, BRAC will further its efforts to support 20 million extremely underprivileged men and women and increase their access to property management, decision making and other processes. ●

BRAC's ongoing programmes

- Targeting the Ultra-poor
- Microfinance
- Skills Development
- Disaster Management and Climate Change
- Gender Justice and Diversity
- Community Empowerment Programme
- Urban Development
- Human Rights and Legal Aid
- Health, Nutrition and Population Programme
- Education Programme
- Integrated Development Programme
- Agriculture and Food Security Programme
- Water Sanitation and Hygiene Programme
- Migration Programme



Targeting the Ultra-poor is one of BRAC's flagship programmes lifting millions out of poverty

BRAC's focus areas



Eliminating poverty from Bangladesh by 2020

Reduce the cost and increase the reach of Targeting the Ultra Poor Programme which can lift more than 500,000 people out of extreme poverty.



Increasing employable skills for decent work for the underprivileged

Create skill development and income generating opportunities for over 400,000 youths, out of whom half are women and a tenth are physically or mentally challenged or from minorities, and connecting them with suitable decent work opportunities.



Gender Equality

Educate and support women exercise their rights, develop leadership and support action against gender-based violence and injustice, within and outside the workplace. Set up a gender discrimination mitigation centre for technical support.



Universal access to healthcare, nutrition

Bringing health problems under the purview of healthcare, enhancing the standard of healthcare providers, and setting up paid products and services.

1

Expanding financial choices of the poor



2

Strengthen loan security measures, educate homeowners on financial management and initiate tailored financial services for people of all demographics. Create more opportunities for social businesses to thrive and thereby increase the number of jobs for the poor.

3

Climate Change and emergency response



4

Establish BRAC as a leading entity on humanitarian response and address the impact of climate change at national and international levels.

5

Pro-poor urban development



6

Deliver customised, affordable and quality basic services to people living in urban poverty and link them with government and non-government services. Empower communities on citizen's rights and entitlements, support low-income communities to benefit from urban growth and strengthen their capacity to develop, adopt and effectively implement pro-poor policies and services in urban spaces.

7

Investing in the next generation



8

Address educational needs from early childhood to tertiary level, including indigenous mother-tongue-based curricula for children from ethnic communities. Advocating the need for quality education on a national level.



BRAC works in diverse areas from gender equality to income generation

Skills Development Programme

The Skills Development Programme (SDP) evolved from BRAC's education umbrella to become a full-fledged programme in 2012 in the form of a single project. That project, Skills Training for Advancing Resources (STAR), is still the flagship of BRAC's fast expanding skills programme.

The skills training programme began in the mid-1990s when BRAC schools taught only at the primary grade level. As soon as the young pupils left the schools, many dropped out either because the government secondary school would be too far, or because the family was too poor to continue the education. But the few years of schooling did not amount to much since it was found that four or five years of formal schooling was not enough for retention of functional literacy. There was a small initiative at that time to offer these dropouts some skills training – book binding for boys and tailoring for girls – as a means of livelihood. However, BRAC

schools went up to the eighth grade soon afterwards and students then had the opportunity to continue education beyond the primary level.

Skills training began again almost a decade later for the graduates of BRAC's adolescent clubs. Socially aware and equipped with soft skills, these graduates did not have technical and vocational skills. The skills training began modestly in 2005 and continued for a few years before emerging as a project in 2009 with youth ministry funds.

This initiative gradually became STAR, which in turn formed the nucleus of SDP, an independent programme outside education. Today SDP has a number of other projects alongside STAR, all of which provide technical and vocational skills along with soft skills for decent work prioritising women and the disadvantaged youth that include persons with disabilities, transgender people and other minorities. ●



BRAC publicity material says: 'Become skilled. It will change your life'



BRAC Institute of Skills Development Programme uses a more typical and formal setting for training

Snapshot of SDP Projects

1 **Pro-poor growth of rural enterprises through sustainable skill development (PROGRESS)**

PROGRESS works to catalyse development of micro and cottage enterprises in light engineering sector. It leverages BRAC's experience with successful apprenticeship models to support enterprises and brings them together with young people. Bangladesh's light engineering capacity is improved through these partnerships and, in the process, young people gain valuable skills for employment.

2 **Promoting Skill and Productivity Enhancement for Resilience (PROSPER)**

This project works in a cost recovery model, meaning that it charges fees whereas STAR is completely free. Interested learners pay a fee to learn the skills they require in a specific trade. The trainees complete a three-month apprenticeship under a Master Crafts Person (MCP).

3 **Partnering reinforcement for integrated skills enhancement (PRISE)**

PRISE uses the apprenticeship model to strengthen craftsmanship by equipping local NGOs with essential skills. NGOs will teach these skills to create skilled manpower.

4 **BRAC Institute of Skills Development (BRAC-ISD)**

BRAC-ISD was established in 2017 in line with the National Skill Development Policy 2011, to provide market-driven skills training covering a wide range of sectors – from information technology to hospitality and tourism. BRAC Institute of Skills Development (BRAC-ISD) is a registered training organisation providing National Technical Vocational Qualification Framework (NTVQF) training designed for young people. BRAC-ISD provides market-driven skills training in a wide range of sectors, including construction, hospitality, ready-made garments, IT, graphic design, electrical engineering and many more. 81% of BRAC-ISD learners secure jobs after graduation, both in Bangladesh and abroad.

1

2

5 **Promoting Business Incubation for Small Entrepreneur (PROMISE)**

PROMISE supports young entrepreneurs in Bangladesh to successfully develop their businesses. Its goal is to create decent employment opportunities through establishment of youth-led enterprises in local communities. The PROMISE programme is open to all business-minded young people in Bangladesh, and also provides a natural next step for STAR graduates who wish to start their own businesses.

3

4

6 **Kormo**

Kormo is a digital job matching platform. The app connects job seekers to businesses that are looking to hire and allows job seekers to create and maintain a digital CV. It also allows employers to find suitable prospective candidates, thereby saving time and money for both parties.

5

6

7 **Skills Training Access in General Education (STAGE)**

Skills Training Access in General Education is a partnership project between BRAC and the Bangladesh Government's Access to Information (a2i) programme. The project integrates skills training (government-accredited NTVQF qualifications) into general education, and provides an alternative vocational pathway for students, especially those in danger of dropping out.

7



Two PROGRESS learners breaking the gender stereotype



STAR Operations

SDP evolved out of BRAC Education Programme as an apprenticeship based training. This training, which is called STAR, remains the flagship of the Skills Development Programme.

4.1 Introduction

STAR builds on the traditional “ostad-shagred” (which roughly translates to master-apprentice) system and focuses on the informal sector which accounts for an overwhelming proportion of employment in Bangladesh. The model essentially built on an old concept and eliminated the cost of training by placing apprentices at the workplaces of their trainers, who are referred as Master Craftspersons (MCP). The six-month apprenticeship gives special focus on trade specific skills along with soft skills and prioritises social inclusion.

STAR was first initiated by BRAC as a pilot programme in 2012 to produce a well-trained and empowered human resource among the youths to enhance their employability. The programme is designed for adolescents from poor households aged between 14 and 18 years who have been out of school for at least one year.

This unique model was initially developed by BRAC together with ILO and UNICEF to support a project of Bangladesh’s Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE). The specific criteria were finalised during the initial development of the project in light of the age and suitable trades. The age bracket was crucial because making children under 14¹ work is considered child labour. Another important aspect

STAR learners become work-ready in six months through a combination of theoretical and on the job training. They receive trade specific education including technical and vocational skills, as well as soft skills like financial literacy, customer relationship management and social awareness.

of the programme is to ensure that it does not encourage students to drop out. Hence it is part of the eligibility criteria that children are out of school for at least one year before they can get into this apprenticeship programme.

According to international labour conventions children over 14 may have up to five hours of training every day. But it has to be made sure that the learners are placed in decent workplaces. However, since they are still children, learners below 18 cannot be subjected to hazardous work. Thus trades for STAR are chosen with care.

As of December 2018, STAR graduated almost 30,000 apprentices, reducing early marriage by

1 Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)



Hands on training is one of the characteristics that sets STAR apart

62% and increasing income and employment by six times with a 95% job placement rate among the participants. Apprentices are paired and placed under the guidance of MCPs who already own businesses and have been trained in Competency Based Training techniques by SDP staff. The project is conducted in line with the National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework (NTVQF), which means learners become eligible to take government certification tests.

STAR learners become work-ready in six months through a combination of theoretical and practical training. They receive trade specific education including technical and vocational skills, as well as soft skills like financial literacy, customer relationship management and social awareness. The project promotes social inclusion and decent work by including marginalised groups, encouraging and motivating MCPs to meet certain standards, and providing assistive devices when needed.

4.2 Programme

One of the distinguishing characteristics of STAR is its robust groundwork. This leads to genuine and worthwhile selection of apprentices. Coupled with the sincere and dedicated nurturing, self-motivated learners and appropriately sensitised trainers, the programme has been successful in improving the living standards of the participants on a sustainable basis.

PREPARATION (3 MONTHS)

The groundwork begins with an internal meeting of BRAC programmes at a local branch office. Being a large organisation, BRAC typically has several programmes running in every sub-district of Bangladesh. This meeting serves as an orientation of STAR to other BRAC programmes of the area. Often the most useful outcome of this meeting is a list of leads about potential apprentices from the field workers of other programmes working in the locality from door to door.

Market selection criteria





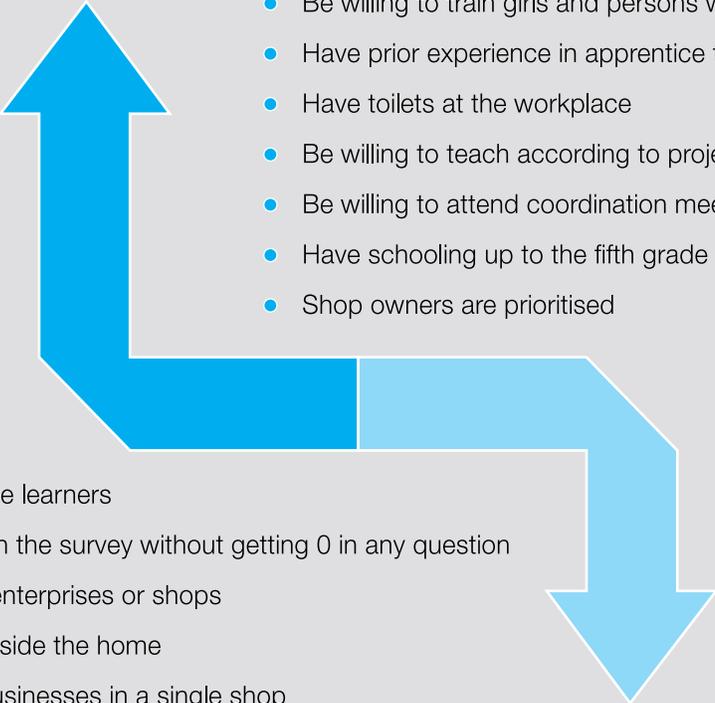
STAR official conducts a trade survey in a market

This meeting is followed by a number of activities beginning with market survey and selection, which virtually coincides with two other activities – survey and selection of trades and MCPs. The markets have to be within a reasonable distance from the learners' homes as well as from the branch office. The selected trades should be in high demand so that learners' skills are also in demand and they will always be sought after for jobs. The MCP should be of good reputation, be literate and have substantial experience in the business. Each selection – markets, trades and the trainers – is made according to the criteria of the project.

This is followed by meetings at the local communities briefing the people about the programme and thereby orienting parents and guardians of potential learners. Project staff explain how the apprenticeship benefits participants and consequently their households.

Field officials then conduct their survey picking the most deserving candidates. As mentioned earlier learners must be confirmed school dropouts between 14 and 18 years. Their family income must be below BDT 3,000 (about USD 40 as of 1 March 2019) and the prospective candidate's family must

MCP selection criteria

- 
- Have the mentality to train
 - Have social acceptance
 - Have a minimum of 5 years of experience
 - Have a provision of learners' employment in the shop
 - Be willing to train girls and persons with disabilities
 - Have prior experience in apprentice training
 - Have toilets at the workplace
 - Be willing to teach according to project guidelines
 - Be willing to attend coordination meetings
 - Have schooling up to the fifth grade
 - Shop owners are prioritised
- Not be related to any of the learners
 - Score at least 46 points on the survey without getting 0 in any question
 - Not be involved in a joint enterprises or shops
 - Not have the workplace inside the home
 - Not be running multiple businesses in a single shop



STAR programme organiser interviews a potential master craftsperson

not own arable land. The age limit may extend to 20-22 years in case of exceptional circumstances to facilitate social inclusion. This applies for young women abandoned by their husbands, persons with disabilities or if the apprentice is a transgender person or from a minority community.

Once the field official selects an initial pool of candidates, confirmation is given by their line managers at district, area and regional levels. This means that the frontline officials have little influence over who gets enrolled. Rather, there is a rigorous scrutiny at every step of the selection process. It is important to ensure neutrality and objectivity since the apprenticeship is completely free with stipends for every learner.

At this point there are several tasks that need to be completed, beginning with the interview and appointment of technical trainers (TT) and peer leaders (PL). While technical trainers conduct theoretical training, the peer leaders conduct sessions on soft skills in a classroom setup once a week for a few hours.

There is a fairly detailed headhunting process with screening, written exams and interviews of technical trainers and peer leaders. Both positions are paid on the basis of the number of classes.

The two-hour theoretical class and the two-hour soft skills session are the only times that the apprentices of this training programme come to a classroom setting. The technical trainer makes sure

Learner selection criteria



that the apprentices are well aware of the proper terminology and the correct methods. Field officials organise MCP-TT meetings to make sure that lessons covered at the workplace are in sync with those covered by the technical trainer.

It is important that the field officials regularly monitor every aspect of the learners' progress whether in class or at the workplace. But even before the training phase begins, all these parties – apprentices and their parents, MCPs, TTs and PLs go through orientation programmes, conducted by SDP technical team, to make sure they know about the project and their expected role.

The programme officials also meet with the market committees regularly where the MCP workplaces are located. This is particularly crucial for a number of reasons. A good working relationship with the market committee is beneficial for female learners working in a male dominated trade. The committee's acknowledgement of transgender learners coming to the market or a decision to build a toilet in the market goes a long way towards accommodating women and minorities by breaking barriers and countering exclusion.

Before beginning with the actual training field officials also make sure that all the equipment are in place and readily available. These include stationery, documents at the training rooms where the technical and soft skills classes take place, all kinds of registers, books of accounts and circulars at the branch offices and the competency based logbooks, attendance register, and worksheets at the MCP workplaces.

Specialised personnel – sector specialists (SS, please see pg 37 for details) – are brought in to assess the extent of learners' disability by qualified doctors and whether assistive devices would be helpful for them. Those devices have to be ordered and provided to the apprentices at the beginning of the apprenticeship. Although it is primarily overseen by the social inclusion team, the frontline officials work very closely with the sector specialists to address exclusion.

Finally, before commencement of the training, the learners and their parents are introduced to the MCPs and an agreement between the parents and BRAC is signed.



STAR district manager selects a learner following a household survey

TRAINING (6 MONTHS)

All this groundwork and preparation lead to a six-month training phase. This is when the field officials make regular visits to the markets monitoring the progress of the apprentices every week. Those falling behind are noted and taken care of. MCPs are also routinely monitored as are the TTs and PLs in the classroom. It is the responsibility of the field officials to make sure that the learners under their care perform well and attend work regularly. Hence, attendance and progress of each apprentice is strictly monitored throughout the training phase. By the fifth month of their training, the learners are fairly well conversant in their occupational skills when the field officials have a few more tasks to perform beginning with the exposure visit.

The learners are taken out to other markets to get an idea of their market value as an employee which helps them bargain for a better salary. In most cases these young men and women are retained by their MCPs or quickly lapped up by competitors in the same market. The advantage of this apprenticeship is that having worked at a market for six months, peers and prospective employers find out about their abilities and skills, and have no misgivings about hiring them.

The STAR field officials are also actively engaged to secure employment for the learners under their care and help bargain for an acceptable salary.

FOLLOW UP (1 MONTH)

After the sixth month, which marks the official end of their apprenticeship, learners are expected to start working. The programme officials are responsible for another month of follow up and routine visits to make sure that learners have adapted well to their new workplace.

A full cycle of the apprenticeship programme takes 10 months from the first meeting to the last visit.

Indicative list of responsibilities of a PO, STAR's frontline official



Conduct survey of learners, trainers, technical trainers, peer leaders and training room and short-list them



Coordinate orientation sessions for learners, MCPs, TTs and PLs



Ensure MCP-learners' introduction



Organise MCP-TT coordination meeting



Supervise learners, PLs, TTs



Inspect MCP workplace according to check list



Ensure regular monitoring



Submit reports to the supervisor



Identify problems and provide solutions



Create bank accounts for all learners



Ensure job placement of the learners



Follow up



Transgender learners are prioritised in STAR to ensure social inclusion



STAR arranges for appropriate assistive devices for learners with disabilities including wheel chairs

Selection criteria for persons with disabilities

1

In case of physical disabilities

Persons with mild, moderate and severe levels of disabilities who are able to come to the workplace by themselves or with the assistance of their parents

2

In case of vision impairment

Mild and moderate levels of vision impairment

3

In case of hearing and speaking disabilities

Mild, moderate and severe levels of hearing and speaking impairment can be considered

4

In case of mental disability

Mild levels of mental disability

5

Persons with multiple disabilities

Keeping the previously mentioned criteria intact, persons with partial blindness or mild to moderate levels of hearing impairment can be chosen

6

Age of persons with disabilities

Two years more than the normal criteria

7

Financial state

Children from financially disadvantaged families will be prioritised

8

Gender

Both boys and girls with disabilities can be selected, but girls are prioritised



STAR programme organiser on a follow up visit to see how learners have adjusted to their workplace

4.3 Highlights

TARGETING

Precise targeting is crucial for STAR's success. It is the robust groundwork that goes into surveys and selection of learners, MCPs and other personnel that sets STAR apart. Every aspect of the programme contributes to its successful completion.

The selection criteria for apprentices and their families make sure that the programme actually makes a difference in their lives. The criteria are such that they ensure selection of learners who are already motivated and convinced about the merits of the apprenticeship. Even the minimal monthly

stipend makes a difference for poor households that depend on the unskilled labour of the minors.

Market and trade selection are also carefully done following the guidelines and criteria. This includes such factors as distance from the community, and security and safety of the learners. In some cases and whenever needed, programme staff persuade family members or community members who may resist the idea of women going out to work every day.

With more time and growing experience, certain trends have emerged that make targeting even more effective. The huge pool of readily available data, collected by the operations team and managed by

Timeline



the technology team, helps identify the trends and successful routes for different regions or different trades. Appropriate targeting also involves suitable pairing of apprentices and MCPs. This is particularly important for the more sensitive cases like women, persons with disabilities and transgender learners.

WOMEN, PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

STAR has a particular focus to counter entrenched exclusion of marginalised communities. Social inclusion is one of the core principles of BRAC. As such STAR selection criteria requires at least 60% participation of women and 10% participation of persons with disabilities and transgender

people, ethnic minorities and other marginalised communities.

LOW TRAINING COST

Since STAR builds on the traditional master-apprentice model and places trainees at existing workplaces, there is no requirement to invest on a training institute other than the stipends and honorariums for apprentices, MCPs, TTs and PLs.

JOB PLACEMENT

One of the distinct characteristics of STAR is its job placement. Of the 29,856 graduates, 95% have secured jobs or went on to set up their own businesses as of March 2019. It is important to note

44,641

People received training

Master craftpersons are given orientation on a host of issues that continue to have an impact beyond the programme's tenure. Apprentices learn about their trade and acquire technical skills and soft skills.

29,856

Youth learners graduated

The six-month apprenticeship can turn out to be quite a challenge for poor school dropouts who are hardly in the habit of following a schedule.

9.9%

Social inclusion

Among the graduates, there were 2,764 learners with disabilities and another 205 transgender people, accounting for almost a tenth of the total.

95.6%

Job placement

Enrolling in the programme is as good as getting a job. Of the graduates, 24,273* apprentices secured jobs and another 447 started up their own businesses.

59%

Women's participation

With 17,576 female learners, three out of every five apprentices were women.

* Based on data collected since 2015 during which time there have been 25,856 graduates. Since then placement has been consistently over 95%.

that each apprentice is nurtured and monitored regularly ensuring that they do not drop out. It is part of the responsibility of the field officials to help each apprentice find employment and check up on them for one month after the apprenticeship.

LIMITATIONS

While the project is successful compared to other technical and vocational training programmes, there remain challenges too. STAR's criteria of school dropouts between 14 and 18 years and the informal sector precludes certain trades because of their hazardous nature. At the same time it is difficult to enforce generally accepted standards like equal opportunity, occupational safety or minimum wage in the informal sector. It takes substantial motivation and persuasion of all parties to promote positive inclusion.

VOLUME

This project has more potential in horizontal expansion rather than vertical because of the very nature of the programme. Since each MCP takes two apprentices per cycle, the volume of STAR learners will only rise with the inclusion of new trades, expansion into new regions and markets, and increasing the number of MCPs. Furthermore, relaxation of the age restriction would allow inclusion of a number of new trades. However, being a hands-on apprenticeship programme, STAR prioritises sustainability.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

STAR requires at least half its learners to be female, which is often a challenge from all sides considering the social, cultural and religious conservatism of Bangladesh's countryside. The female learners themselves may have to be motivated first. Sometimes it is the family that needs to be counselled or an influential member of community who might

STAR trades



Tailoring & dress making



Mobile phone servicing



Wood furniture



Beauty salon



Refrigeration & AC servicing



Basic electronics



Graphic design



IT support technician



Aluminum fabrication



Motor cycle servicing



Wood furniture designing



Electrical house wiring



Block & batik



Screen printing



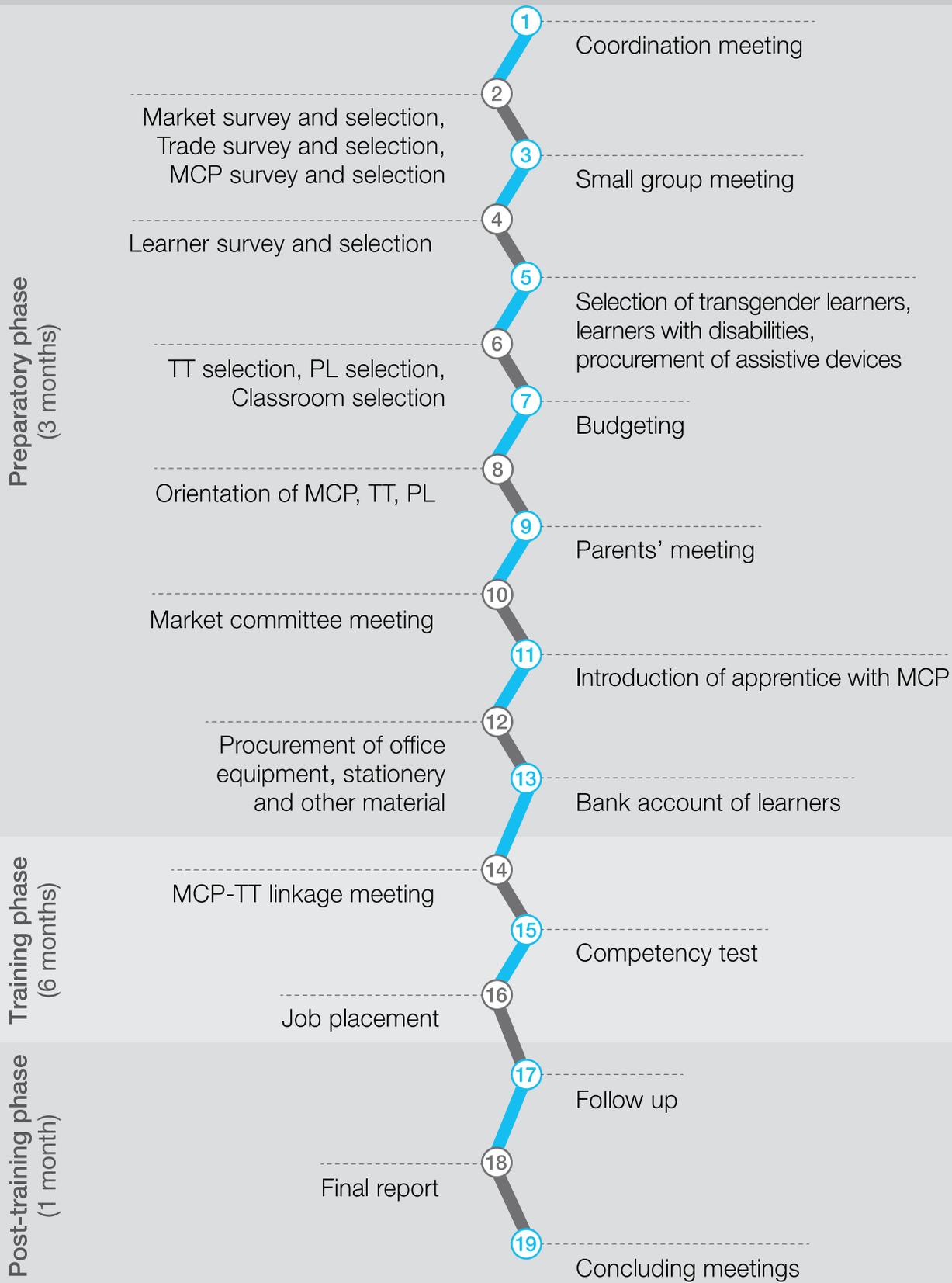
Zari & sequin

need to be persuaded. On the other side, there is the trainer who might need to be persuaded to have a female learner working at the shop, sometimes in close proximity.

Although field officials and their managers do their best to ensure that every interested and deserving female candidate is enrolled into the programme, raising women's participation, especially in non conventional trades, remains a challenge for STAR in Bangladesh. ●



STAR prides itself of the deep community involvement with the training programme as field officials hold meetings in the locality to brief parents and guardians



Social Inclusion

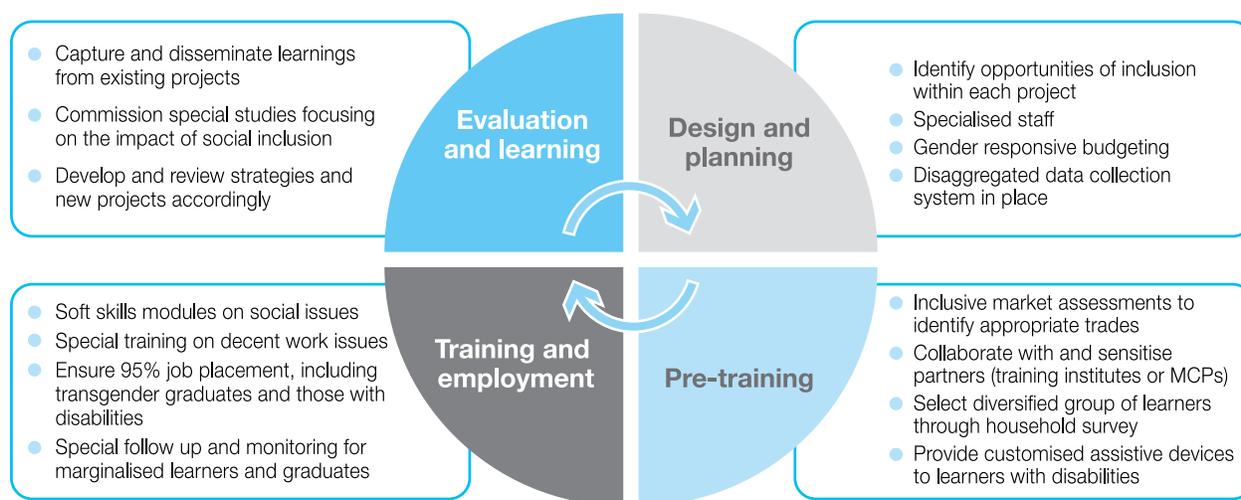
Social Inclusion can be both a process and an outcome. According to the World Bank, social inclusion is the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society – improving the ability, opportunity and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity.¹ In other words, it is to ensure an equitable and just society for all. As such, people who are marginalised or disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, religious belief, economic or other status, need to be integrated into development interventions through enhanced opportunities, access to resources and voice with due respect for their rights.

Social inclusion matters because it is the foundation for shared prosperity and because social exclusion is costly — socially, politically and economically. There are similar instances of social exclusion in Bangladesh in the informal sector enterprises. A

typical example would be the male-oriented image of skills training and subsequent employment, which creates social taboo for women to participate in many trades, especially in the informal economy where STAR operates. It is even more difficult for other marginalised groups such as transgender people, persons with disabilities, men and women belonging to ethnic and religious minorities to be part of this process or any other livelihood activities. These marginalised groups remain without viable means of livelihood, and thereby poor, because of social exclusion.

As an underlying theme, social inclusion is built into the project from design and planning stage to leverage every opportunity in countering exclusion. Accordingly, learner selection and targeting includes specific criteria to ensure social inclusion. The project has provisions for appropriate budget and specially trained staff to make inclusion more efficient.

Social inclusion in project cycle management



¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/social-inclusion>



Some STAR learners become entrepreneurs themselves after the six-month apprenticeship

SDP has a dedicated social inclusion team deployed in the field. The team is specifically recruited, trained and sensitised to ensure implementation of socially inclusive interventions.

While the social inclusion team is involved in orienting the project staff in general, they are also responsible for sensitising the MCPs during their orientation in the preparatory phase. The team conducts a session on social inclusion and discusses pertinent topics with the MCPs corresponding to the local context. The social inclusion team trains peer leaders on sensitive social issues including implications of child marriage, drug abuse, acid violence and dowry.

Once field officials identify marginalised candidates in the surveys, they refer those potential learners to the social inclusion unit's field officials (Sector Specialists). These field officials ascertain the severity of disability in case of persons with disabilities and ensure that appropriate assistive devices are procured. They provide all kinds of support and assistance to the potential candidates from marginalised groups for a smooth apprenticeship training.

9.9%

Excluded individuals like 2,764 persons with disabilities and 205 transgender people account for almost a tenth of STAR graduates. Compared to Bangladesh standards, 10% is a high proportion especially given the stigma surrounding transgender individuals and indifference about the prospects of people with disabilities

The social inclusion team regularly checks on STAR pupils with special needs and follow up on their welfare. They check with the MCPs and peer leaders about how the persons with disabilities and transgender learners are doing. This follow up continues through the training period up to one month after their placement. ●

Decent Work

The UN defines decent work as such that 'respects the fundamental rights of the human person as well as the rights of workers in terms of conditions of work safety and remuneration'. Decent work 'provides an income allowing workers to support themselves and their families'. The fundamental rights include 'respect for the physical and mental integrity of the worker in the exercise of his/her employment'.¹ Decent work also stipulates equal opportunity and treatment for women and men, sufficient wages for decent living, workplace safety and reasonable leisure.²

The overall decent work practice, especially in informal enterprises in Bangladesh is low compared to the global standards because of the 'informality' of the trades and weak legal coverage.

An ILO report³ finds that decent work practices have much to be desired. The report finds that although progress on adequate earnings and productive work have been modest, women continue to be at a disadvantage. The proportion of people working more than 48 hours a week (which is considered excessive) increased between 2000 and 2010. Thus there is little balance between work and social life.

Informal sector workers rarely get appointment letters or a fixed minimum wage. It is very unusual for informal enterprises to have provisions like annual leave or casual leaves other than during the major

Trying to ensure decent work could very well end up eroding the profitability of these businesses. Thus, it remains a matter of motivation and encouragement for the MCPs so that they continuously aspire for increasing levels of decent work standards.

religious festivals. Constricted unsafe passageways, insufficient workspace and poor toilet facilities are quite common at informal establishments. The ILO report also states that there is presence of child labour and limited opportunity to get into workers' associations.

Employable skills for decent work at home and abroad is a focus area for BRAC. As for the skills programme, and STAR in particular, decent work standards are woven into operations from the design phase starting with curriculum development and trade selection.

1 United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - The Right to Work, 2006. General Comment 18, adopted on 24 November 2005, Article 6 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

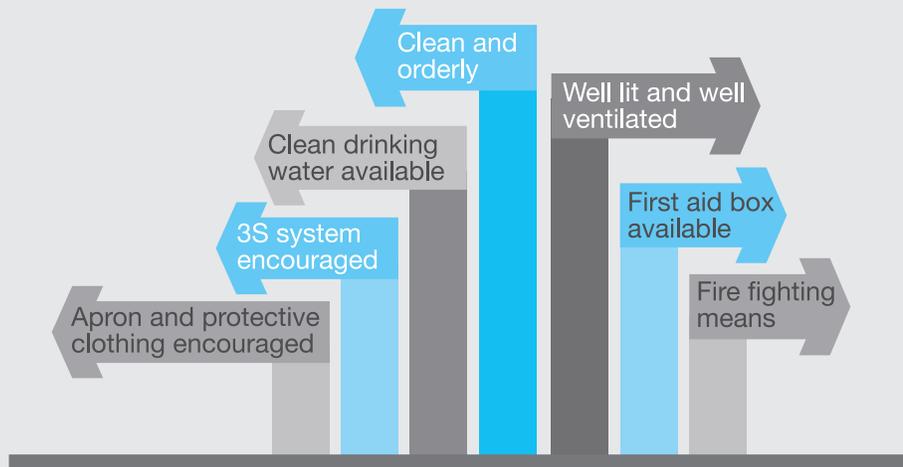
2 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

3 ILO, 2013. Decent Work Country Profile: Bangladesh



A STAR graduate's tailoring shop serves as an example of decent work standards

STAR workplace decent work standards



The decent work team is delegated with the responsibility of developing the Competency Skills Log Book (CSLB) used for recording learners' competency. The competency based testing was done manually before. However, the testing tools have been digitalised which allows STAR officials to test competency in the field and log in the data quickly and easily in real time. The decent work team was responsible for digitalising the testing tools for all the trades.

Another responsibility of the decent work team is to train and orient STAR operations personnel about the trades, the curricula and the testing tools. They also conduct orientation sessions for field officials about decent work standards.

The decent work unit's involvement in orientation session, trade selection and curriculum development

automatically ensures that decent work standards are intrinsic to project operations.

The decent work team provides training and orientation of the MCPs during the preparatory phase. They follow up on implementation of decent work standards in the workplace and assess the extent of compliance during the training phase. This team also assesses the robustness of the progress evaluation of the learners. They verify the learner testing results of the operations team with random field tests on a regular basis.

Quite understandably, it is a challenge in a developing country like Bangladesh to ensure decent work in the informal sector where even the formal sector has not implemented them fully. It becomes all the more difficult to implement it with the interventions of STAR, which exclusively deals with the informal sector.



STAR apprentice works at a tailor's shop

Trying to ensure decent work could very well end up eroding the profitability of these businesses. Thus, it remains a matter of motivation and encouragement for the MCPs so that they continuously aspire for increasing levels of decent work standards.

While the MCPs are encouraged to improve working conditions and strive for higher decent work standards, another means of ensuring decent work practices is to ensure that the learners carry it forward when they become employers. At a broader level, employees and employers may be targeted for awareness campaigns. Informal trade should be gradually brought under legal coverage and formal arrangements without jeopardising the profitability or viability of the businesses. ●

44,641

businessmen and youth learners have received decent work training through STAR, which will have lasting impact in their future ventures



Technology for Development

Technology for development refers to the application of information and communication technologies towards social, economic, and political development with an emphasis on helping the poor and marginalised people and communities.

With the government's goal of achieving 'Digital Bangladesh' by 2021, there are a number of initiatives to leverage the potential of information and communication technology for development. These include the National Portal Framework (NPF), which is a single platform providing easy access to all public information from any government organisation, multimedia classrooms and e-books that allow remote lessons, land services portal which allows remote paperwork for land related formalities and SDG tracker which helps tracking Bangladesh's progress in attaining the sustainable development goals among a host of other initiatives.

The technology for development team in SDP builds and deploys technology products to facilitate field operations and empower field staff with actionable insights. This team focuses on product development, business intelligence and operations.

Use of information technology was built into the project from its design phase. It was envisioned that the project operations would be entirely paperless and all field activities would be carried out digitally. The tech team tailored TaroWorks, an android app, with the potential to fully accommodate every aspect of STAR operations.

TaroWorks is used for every aspect of the project's field operations. All items of data and information are

A slight tweak changed the scenario overnight. District managers were told to sign off on each pupil with their signature in the app and the edit time shot up from barely five minutes to almost 45 minutes.

collected through this app which become available to the rest of the team in real time.

The app was customised for use at every level in the field and headquarters beginning with the frontline field official to the director of the organisation. Each person in the chain has a distinct dashboard and different levels of authority to enter or alter inputs.

The app is used to select the STAR learners, markets, trades and MCPs. The frontline officials use this app throughout the three phases of STAR. One of the hallmarks of STAR is its paperless field operations.



A STAR official conducts household survey on TaroWorks

The app records the names of potential candidates, their addresses and other details. Even their pictures are taken on the spot and attached to their records through this app. The app data is collated to map out the exact locations of all the learners in a certain area. A manager can easily find out where most of their learners with disabilities live or which trade has been the most popular with young women.

The obvious benefit of the app is that managers and senior officials can access real time data and information in a matter of clicks. This wealth of information has also led to better informed and

educated decisions and course corrections. It is also possible to track each official's activity on the app and find out when they were active and where they were at that time through the GPS location service built into the app.

The successful deployment of the app is in itself a success story and serves as an example, or good practice, of tapping into the data culture. ●

Knowledge Management and Communications

Knowledge Management is a collaborative effort to create a collective and cumulative evidence-based delivery of know how to inform development practice and improve implementation.

For SDP, knowledge management is part of an everyday process, maintained both online and offline. The online data generation platform, TaroWorks acts as a dynamic knowledge platform from which the project receives evidence based data analysis that helps steer projects. Apart from the online system, an offline system is also maintained starting from note taking to storing all documents in a computer based system, classified into appropriate sub clusters for common use. Once information is stored as documentation, it becomes a large knowledge base that others can utilise.

Depending on the importance of information, both quantitative and qualitative data is selected for further information gathering as research, impact assessment and case study generation which are then used for fund raising and communications.

The STAR project is an example where knowledge management is done both offline and online. However, like traditional projects, most of the information is shared among the staff members through meetings,

discussions and different online and offline sharing platforms.

As STAR shows success, with the support of BRAC's research and evaluation unit, the project was able to generate strong evidence systematically illustrating its impact. As such, SDP felt the need to focus more on creating a knowledge management hub for STAR so that the same approach can be utilised in scaling up the project in similar contexts. This toolkit is also an example of a knowledge management product for the STAR project.

Communications, especially for development projects, is a process of collecting, arranging and utilising information by using a broad range of tools and methods. It is also about pursuing change, that includes listening, building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating, and learning for sustained and meaningful change.

SDP defines communications as an important support function for achieving strategic objectives of the programme, engaging with stakeholders, demonstrating the success of the programme's work, ensuring that people understand what the programme does, changing behaviour and perceptions as well as ensuring client-focused communications for achieving the programme's target. ●



SDP knowledge management process



A technical trainer conducts a theoretical session in the classroom

Monitoring & Evaluation

Monitoring is a continuous assessment to provide early and detailed information about the status of certain activities (for instance, implementation status of a project).

Evaluation is a systematic and objective examination of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of activities in light of specified objectives.¹ The idea behind evaluation is to isolate errors, so that they are not repeated, and to promote the successful mechanisms for replication.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) help improve performance and achieve results. The goal of this process is to improve current and future management of outputs, outcomes and impact. It is used to assess the performance of projects and programmes run by governments, international organisations and NGOs.²

Monitoring and evaluation can be done externally by an independent body or internally by another team or department that is independent from the implementation or operations team. The credibility and objectivity of monitoring and evaluation depend very much on the independence of the monitors and evaluators, though.

Evaluations come up with recommendations and lessons for current and potential project managers and implementers. They are also a means of demonstrating efficiency and effectiveness to development partners.

BRAC has its own independent unit, which monitors every programme of the organisation as a matter

of routine and reports directly to the executive director who is the top executive. BRAC has its own separate research and evaluation unit as well, which has already published four reports on the impacts of STAR.

It is crucial that these units remain outside the purview of field operations to ensure objectivity. Only an effectively independent monitoring and evaluation unit can provide the necessary check and balance. An independent monitoring and evaluation team within SDP reporting directly to the head of programme would be a great asset.

Besides BRAC's independent unit, the STAR operations personnel have their own internal continuous monitoring. It is a matter of routine to monitor the activities of subordinates down the project hierarchy every day. However, such monitoring systems may not satisfy strict requirements for neutrality and objectivity since it is completely internal, done for increasing operational efficiency and accuracy.

The technology for development unit of the programme also monitors project activities regularly as data and information are available through the TaroWorks app in real time. The tech team flags discrepancies or irregularities, whenever they occur, to the operations managers.

The monitoring exercise continues through every phase of STAR's operations beginning with the survey and selection of markets and learners during the pre-training phase to assess learners' progress during the training phase to their placement in the

1 UNICEF Guide for Monitoring and Evaluation: Making a Difference? UNICEF.

2 Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results, 2002. United Nations Development Programme Evaluation Office.



A STAR district manager assesses learners' competency

post training phase. It is part of the frontline officials' responsibility to check on the young learners and report their progress.

BRAC's research and evaluation unit publications have found 62% reduction in child marriage among STAR graduates and six-fold increase in their household income as graduates secure employment. STAR also has baseline, midline and endline reports built into the project that feed into the evaluation process.

Monitoring and evaluation should be part of the project from the design phase. There should be provisions for an independent unit completely separate from operations which can be internal or external to the organisation. An efficient and well-developed monitoring and evaluation system is imperative for continuous improvement of the project and measuring its success. It is only with appropriate intelligence that the staff can determine the extent of expected change at every level. ●

Appendix A

3S

Workplace environment through 3S

1st: Sort out: Sorting out unnecessary things and keeping them aside

Activities:

- ✓ Classify things as much as possible
- ✓ Keep the shelves, table and closets neat and clean
- ✓ Make a list of the most necessary things
- ✓ Make it a practice to mark all the unnecessary things with red labels/marks
- ✓ Designate a place to store unnecessary goods and things and take them out as soon as possible

2nd: Set in order: Arrangement in orderly fashion

Activities:

- ✓ Organise according to importance as much as possible

- ✓ Keep the most necessary things and tools close at hand
- ✓ Keep the comparatively less important things further away
- ✓ Take out the unnecessary things as fast as possible.

3rd: SWEEP/SCRUB: Keeping the workplace neat and clean.

Activities:

- ✓ Sweep and scrub the workplace to make it neat and clean after sorting everything and setting them in order

Benefits of using 3S:

- ✓ It takes less time to find things when needed
- ✓ Ease of work
- ✓ Easy to put back in their place after use
- ✓ Clear idea where things are at the work place



STAR officials encourage women to go into non conventional male-dominated trades

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AM	Area Manager
BNFE	Bureau of Non-Formal Education
BTEB	Bangladesh Technical Education Board
CSLB	Competency Skills Log Book
CBTA	Competency Based Training & Assessment
DM	District Manager
ILO	International Labour Organization
MCP	Master Crafts Person
NSDP	National Skill Development Policy
NTVQF	National Technical & Vocational Qualification Framework
OSH	Occupational Safety & Health
PL	Peer Leader
PO	Programme Organiser
RM	Regional Manager
SDP	Skills Development Programme
STAR	Skills Training for Advancing Resources
TT	Technical Trainer
TVET	Technical & Vocational Education & Training
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund



This toolkit owes much to the dedicated field officials of STAR's Rangpur office who demonstrated every step and every aspect of the apprenticeship. Rangpur officials from right: District Manager Md Maznu Hossain, Programme Organiser Md Touhidul Islam, Programme Organiser Md Tohidul Islam and Area Manager Nitish Kumar Baowali. From left: Senior Manager Rezaul Mazid, Regional Manager Mohammad Moniruzzaman, Programme Manager and toolkit editor Mahenaw Ummul Wara, content writer Tanim Ahmed.

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