

STUDY ON THE RESULTS OF DECENT WORK INTERVENTION IN THE WORKPLACE

Submitted to:

BRAC Skills Development
Programme (SDP)

Submitted by:

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ACRONYMS

ACIP:	Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices
AF:	Aluminium Fabrication
BBS:	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BIDWP:	BRAC Introduced Decent Work Programme
BIGD:	BRAC Institute of Governance and Development
BILS:	Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies
BPDW:	BRAC Promoted Decent Work Programme
BQF:	Bangladesh Qualification Framework
BRAC ISD:	BRAC Institute of Skills Development
BS-F:	Beauty Saloon Female
B-SkillFUL:	Building Skills for Unemployed and Underemployed Labour
BTEB:	Bangladesh Technical Education Board
CPD:	Centre for Policy Dialogue
DW:	Decent Work
DWCP:	Decent Work Country Programme
FYP:	Five Year Plan
ILO:	International Labour Organisation
IST:	IT Support Technician
LEO:	Light engineering owners
LFS:	Labour Force Surveys
LMO:	Lathe Machine Operation
MCP:	Master-Craft Person
MPS:	Mobile Phone Servicing
NSDA:	National Skills Development Authority
OSHE:	Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation
PRI:	Policy Research Institute
PROGRESS:	PRO-poor Growth of Rural Enterprises through Sustainable Skills-development
PROMISE:	Promoting business Incubation for small entrepreneurs
PROSPER:	Promoting Skills and Productivity Enhancement for Resilience
PWD:	Person with Disabilities
RAC:	Refrigeration & Air Conditioning
SDG:	Sustainable Development Goals
SDP:	BRAC Skills Development Programme
SEIP:	Skills for Employment Investment Programme
STAGE:	Skills Training Access in General Education
STAR:	Skills Training for Advancing Resources
STEP:	Skills Training and Enhancement Project
TDM- F:	Tailoring and Dress Making Female
TVET:	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
WF:	Wood Furniture-Making
WMO:	Welding Machine Operation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Significance of Decent Work intervention in the informal sector

Bangladesh has an unemployed labour pool of approximately 10 million young people, and the problem of unemployment has been a long drawn one for the nation where the most common dilemma for employers remains a dearth of skilled workforce. Therefore, unskilled labour has historically resorted to the informal sector for livelihood options but, as discussed in this report, it is difficult to guarantee 'Decent Employment' in the informal sector. BRAC Skills Development Programme (SDP) has been working to create sustainable interventions in this regard since 2015. Its agenda is to equip young and disenfranchised people with the training and skills necessary for them to enable Decent Work (DW) in their workplaces, such that their dignities and rights are protected as workers. The programme focuses on achieving decent work standards in both formal and informal sectors as per the ILO's Decent Work Agenda and National Skills Development Policy 2011. BRAC SDP commits to meet the Decent Work agenda by ensuring that the skill trainings maintain quality, and are impactful and demand driven. BRAC SDP acknowledges that skills development trainings alone are not enough for sustainable interventions in the informal sector; participants' knowledge, attitudes, practices also need to be considered for effective outcomes in terms of decent employment. The significance of maintaining decent work practices is even more relevant given the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

Contextualisation of ILO's Decent Work intervention in the informal sector

The informal sector is characterized by inadequate wages, terrible working conditions, lack of social protection and employment benefits and to top of it off, lack of occupational safety and bare minimum legal protection for workers. Multiple evidences were uncovered which furthermore posed questions for achieving DW practices in the informal sector in accordance with the criteria set by ILO which, in turn, led to BRAC SDP's contextualisation of the DW Agenda for the informal sector of Bangladesh. In this contextualization of BRAC's DW Agenda, two kinds of benchmarks have been established: One is referred to as *ensured indicators* and the other as *promoted indicators*. The details of these two criteria have been further explored within the report.

Study Approach

A qualitative research methodology was followed to conduct the study on BRAC's DW intervention in the informal sector. Along with internal stakeholders, the beneficiaries and the operational team members of SDP programmes as well as some external stakeholders were also considered by the methodology to understand the national and local contexts and to build the process document for the expectations of a greater audience. An intensive observation technique was also devised to measure the indicators of Decent Work in the visited workplaces. The implemented data collection tools and techniques incorporated secondary data collection, such as collection of primary data from the BRAC's SDP Technology for Development team, the literature reviews of various supporting documents chosen to give multiple perspectives regarding DW, and primary data collection, such as the data gathered from the fields using different kinds of qualitative research tools.

Major Findings- BRAC-SDP as a bottom-up approach

It has been found that the inclusion of DW practices in BRAC SDP exercises a highly participatory method of teaching and learning. Moreover, the DW model (ILO-DW model induced) implemented by BRAC SDP is seen to be constructed from a bottom-up approach, taking up a formal shape gradually later on in the STAR and PROGRESS Project of the BRAC SDP and this model is produced both visually and narratively in the study.

Major Findings- Positive spillover of practicing DW

Positives include the acknowledgement of DW practices among the MCPs; most of them believe that such practices are imperative for their businesses' growth and sustainability. In general, mobile servicing shops and tailoring shops have performed better than other trades. Participants from PROGRESS project that work in welding or lathe machine operating workplaces have found the implementation of DW in their workplaces challenging despite understanding the need for doing so. Certain life saving measures, such as fire safety and preliminary medical treatment are impressively practiced in almost every workplace. However, maintaining a neat and clean workplace has proven to be difficult for most workplaces. Although learners seemed to have gathered few basic elements of DW, at least the *ensured indicators* of BRAC (discussed later on the report). From the perspective of MCPs, theoretical classes are crucial for them for a complete grasp of DW practices. Overall working environment was found to be conducive for women. These favorable working environments enhanced their aspiration to continue their works in the informal sector. More detailed analysis of the results, found in different trades, have been mentioned within the report.

Major Findings- Enhanced knowledge of the participants, changes in attitudes and adaptation of positive attitude among the participants

DW interventions implemented by BRAC in their STAR and PROGRESS programmes, so far, have engendered a number of changes in the knowledge, attitude and practices of their beneficiaries. Learners, for instance, have helped MCPs to grow their businesses. After completion of their trainings, graduate learners, in most cases, have been found to be working in other places/industries with better pay. In most working environments, MCPs and learners have exhibited a healthy relationship; employers protect their learners from any kind of inconvenience.

Major Findings- Ensured Diversity

Persons with disabilities feel comfortable and safe working under the supervision of their MCPs. Finding a means to learn, work and provide support for family is one of the major reasons behind the satisfaction of learners gained from STAR and PROGRESS. Changes in social norms have also been observed, particularly in terms of women inclusion in trades such as refrigeration and air conditioner repair shops (trades which are usually considered as domains only for men). Graduate learners seem to be carrying forward their lessons of DW; some of them have become MCPs themselves and are training their subsequent learners accordingly. More of such insights are presented within the report.

Major Findings- Changing Mindset

In a safe working place, employees not only protect themselves as individuals, but are also able to protect their co-workers. Safety features of the workplace can increase productivity and quality of the work and this is important for each and every employee. This study has revealed that employers think it is essential for all workplaces to have proper sanitation and sufficient toilet facilities for their employees. On the other hand, gender equality in the workplace achieves equal opportunities and outcomes for all genders, and in this regard, this study observed women working in trades like mobile servicing shops, IT support, computer and other technical shops defying the societal stigma of limiting women's scope of work. There are women learners among respondents from PROGRESS project as well in trades such as 'Refrigeration & Air Conditioning' service. Respondents have mentioned that they could provide home service to women if they have women learners in this trade. Inclusion of persons with disabilities has also been observed in workplaces.

Major Findings- Outcome of the DW practices

As a consequence of the training, lower accident rates have been observed in the field. They keep first aid kit boxes and check electrical lines and circuits regularly to avoid any accidents. In addition, the lists of contact numbers of local hospitals, police stations, fire services help the respondents to manage accidents. By following the 3s practice (sorting, set in order, and sweeping), respondents can organize their work and these habits help them stay productive. In addition, they use separate cabinets, box drawer for tools and equipment, therefore, effectively they keep the working environment neat and tidy, which in turn leaves a positive impression on their respective customers. A clean workplace provides quality products and services according to customers, so respondents try to maintain good organisational habits and cleanliness in their services. The training certificate also adds value to the impression on customers. Some of the respondents prepare monthly documents for their activities to maintain clean desks with paper folders. Decent work practices not only help the people who receive training but also supports the people around them. For example, people can now collect emergency phone numbers from these BRAC-SDP affiliated workplaces, receive primary treatment through their first aid boxes, and so on.

Challenges

Several challenges were faced during the study; for instance, trades such welding, lathe machine operation, or refrigerator and air conditioning repair shops find it difficult to maintain a neat and clean working environment and they also suffer from a lack of adequate working space. By and large, the biggest challenge of DW intervention seems to be the assurance of toilet facilities; few workplaces have clean, hygienic toilets and, in fact, separate toilets for women were difficult to find. Therefore, in order to address some of the challenges, a change in physical infrastructure of the workplaces may be required. Some women were found to be working from home after the completion of their trainings, however, working from home requires other assistance beside the craftsmanship. For instance, a graduate women learner from a dress-making shop would require a sewing machine to work from home, and therein lies the need for some financial assistance that may not be accessible for everyone. The field-level data collection was conducted after the first lockdown of COVID-19. Three challenges emanating from this pandemic; firstly, the

entire project's training duration was curtailed into 3 months from the 6 months. Basically, the practical elements of the training were not possible during this time. Secondly, projects were not able to include various group of participants such as the transgender community due to their unavailability at that time. And lastly, all trades suffered due to the reduced business activities which resulted in low-intake of learners.

Way forward

The scope of work for STAR and PROGRESS is still limited considering the fact that there are plenty more trades available in the informal sector and even more school dropouts who need such trainings. Few changes in social norms have been observed but these are not widespread yet; learners with disabilities are encouraged to work by their MCPs but on the commute to their respective workplaces, they still face discrimination from their surroundings. The only viable way to scale up BRAC's operations and ensure sustainability is by engaging the government, public and private partners and by creating a citizen platform that can be achieved through various promotional means. Such strategies would be beneficial in also ensuring that cases of repeated dropouts do not take place, for the greater the awareness among mass about BRAC's initiatives, the greater would be their acceptability, accountability and henceforth, achievements.



1. INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is one of the fastest growing economies in the world and yet, it is seeing an increasing and concerning rise in the number of unemployed youths¹. Approximately, 10 million young people are currently unemployed or underemployed², whereas employers tend to complain that they do not find enough skilled workforce for employment. The informal sector of Bangladesh accounts for 87% of its total employment³, and such a large workforce in the informal sector does not align with Bangladesh's goal of achieving a sustainable economic growth through the creation of Decent Work⁴ for all. The country is still facing the problem of scarce skilled human resource⁵. As a result, the youth are not getting their desired jobs, or not getting them at all. To sustain Bangladesh's economic growth, it is necessary to fully realise the potentials of its demographic dividend. Keeping this in mind, BRAC Skills Development Programme (SDP)⁶ has been working dedicatedly to equip people with necessary skills by means of well-structured training curricula which also include knowledge related to Decent Work in an effort to enable them to work in conditions that protect their dignity and rights both as employees and human beings.

BRAC SDP has been operating in Bangladesh since 2015 for the enhancement of employment opportunities through apprenticeships and skill-based training. The programme focuses on achieving Decent Work standards in both formal but mostly

¹ <https://cpd.org.bd/time-to-address-youth-unemployment-dr-fahmida-khatun/>

² Bangladesh Labour Force Survey 2016-17

³ <https://bea-bd.org/site/images/pdf/010.pdf>

⁴ Decent work means productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equality, security and human dignity. It involves opportunities for work that delivers a fair income, provides security in the workplace, and affords social protection to workers and their families (International Labour Organization (ILO)).

⁵ <https://www.dhakatribune.com/business/2019/05/05/36-employers-in-bangladesh-face-skilled-manpower-shortage>

⁶ <http://www.brac.net/program/skills-development/>

informal sectors as per the ILO's Decent Work Agenda and National Skills Development Policy 2011. As majority of youth end up working in the informal sector, BRAC's target has been to improve the skills set of youth incrementally who otherwise remain outside of good quality skills training.

As per the 2016-2020 strategy, the programme aims to provide training to 400,000 disadvantaged youths, men, and women. The projects (such as – STAR⁷, PROMISE⁸, PROGRESS⁹, STAGE¹⁰, BRAC ISD¹¹, SEIP¹², PROSPER¹³ etc.) executed by BRAC SDP promote Decent Work conditions through on-the-job apprenticeships, business incubation support, value chain development, and soft-skills trainings. BRAC SDP commits to meet the Decent Work agenda by ensuring that the skills trainings are demand-driven, impactful and of proper quality. These projects also disseminate knowledge and practices of Decent Work standards to trainers, Master-Craft Persons (MCPs) and learners through training sessions and in the process, employers are supported to meet Decent Work standards. Through the Decent Work initiatives, equal wages, toilet facilities for women inside or outside the workplaces and factories, access to clean drinking water, occupational safety and health are promoted.¹⁴¹⁵ BRAC SDP's work has been considered significant^{16 17} in the context of Bangladesh and has been playing a crucial role in developing skilled youth by imparting required skills and trainings to them.

1.1. CONTEXT AND RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

The notion of informal sector received global attention by ILO in 1993 at the 15th International Conference of Labour Statistics which took place in Geneva (ILO, 1993) and ever since then, developing countries have been trying via different means to measure the contribution of informal sector in national economies and Bangladesh is no exception. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) has conducted several Labour Force Surveys (LFS) since 2000 and in the latest dataset available from the survey conducted in 2017, a whopping 87% of the total employed population of the nation

⁷ Skills Training for Advancing Resources (STAR) is an on-the-job apprenticeship model that equips underprivileged youth with the skills that employers that employers need.

⁸ 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.

⁹ The PROGRESS project works to catalyse the development of micro and cottage enterprises in the light engineering sector.

¹⁰ The project integrates skills training (government-accredited NTVQF qualifications) into general education, and in this way provides an alternative vocational pathway for school students.

¹¹ BRAC-ISD provides market-driven skills training to young people following the National Technical Vocational Qualification Framework. It provides training on a wide range of sectors including construction, graphics, hospitality, ready-made garments etc.

¹² The skills for employment investment programme (SEIP) are focused on improving the quality of Bangladesh's workplaces.

¹³ Promoting Skills and Productivity Enhancement for Resilience is an on-the job training and apprenticeship that is similar to STAR.

¹⁴ <http://www.brac.net/publications/annual-report/2018/programmatic-area/employable-skills-for-decent-work-at-home-and-abroad/>

¹⁵ <http://rmg-study.cpd.org.bd/workplace-accidents-claimed-1242-workers-lives-2017-bangladesh/>

¹⁶ <http://blog.brac.net/how-brac-uses-field-data-for-continuous-improvement/>

¹⁷ The programme, as of now, has equipped around 87,868 people with necessary knowledge and training related to decent work and employment.

works in the informal sector (BBS, 2017). This comes as no surprise for the informal sector which, besides generating income and employment, also absorbs labour surplus (Huda & Islam, 2020). Surplus of labour and the existence of such an overwhelmingly large informal sector are not exactly detrimental per se for the economy since both factors can be intertwined and channeled towards an inclusive economic growth, which has been an important concern for policy makers and development practitioners lately (Rahman, Bhattacharya, & Hasan, 2018). Furthermore, Bangladesh is working towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) which also implies that the country has signed up for ILO's Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) in July 2018^{18 19}.

There are a few interesting facts about employment in the informal sector that must be noted. For instance, Policy Research Institute (PRI) of Bangladesh has reported that the informal sector, which accounts for more than 4/5th of total employment, accounts for 43% of the country's total GDP, whereas the formal sector, which employs roundabout 10-15% of total employment, contributes to the remaining 57% of GDP^{20 21}. This significant discrepancy is bound to affect labour productivity. Although both the sectors are dominated by men, ILO's report on the informal sector^{22 23} reports that 93.5% of the total employed women belong to the informal sector. The point of concern here is that this informal sector is characterized by inadequate wages, terrible working conditions, lack of social protection and employment benefits lack of occupational safety and bare minimum legal protection for workers. In 2017, 1,242 workers died in both of the sectors combined, but 912 of them belonged to the informal sector and in 2018, both sectors recorded 898 deaths, out of which the informal sector alone accounted for 741, according to Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation (OSHE)²⁴. The Labour Act of Bangladesh was last amended in 2006 but is "yet to include any provisions for the informal sector", as pointed out by the Executive Director of OSHE. These workplace casualties are not consequences of grand misfortunes rather an absence of something as simple as inspection of instruments. For instance, on 3 July, 2017, a boiler explosion in Multifabs Garment Factory in Gazipur led to the death of 13 workers and injuries of 53 others. The investigation revealed that the boiler responsible for the catastrophe was operating in higher-than-normal pressure, regardless of the fact that it had expired a month ago²⁵.

COVID-19 exposed a number of realities in the informal sectors. About 20 million workers who were working in these sectors lost their jobs and became temporarily unemployed (Riaz, 2020). During this time where most of the education sectors and

¹⁸ https://www.just-style.com/news/bangladesh-takes-new-step-towards-decent-work_id134127.aspx

¹⁹ <http://gsdrc.org/docs/open/con53.pdf>

²⁰ <https://www.pri-bd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/PRI-Policy-Brief-On-Income-Transfer.pdf>

²¹ <http://www.brac.net/publications/annual-report/2018/programmatic-area/employable-skills-for-decent-work-at-home-and-abroad/>

²² https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_626831.pdf

²³ *Skills and Training Enhancement Project*

²⁴ <https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/special/2019/04/30/may-day-legal-protection-for-the-informal-sector>

²⁵ <http://rmg-study.cpd.org.bd/workplace-accidents-claimed-1242-workers-lives-2017-bangladesh/>

training institutions were closed, however, SDP projects continued their operations (with a curtailed programme designed). The MCPs were able to receive training and the learners were also able to be placed at the workplace. Nevertheless, there is no denying the fact that COVID-19 significantly hindered the overall programme objective and the number of beneficiaries as well.

Therein, lies the importance of DW agenda, set forth by ILO, to include multiple aspects of work such as security in the workplace, social protection for families, fair income, productivity, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for workers to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives, and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men²⁶. According to ILO and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, DW for all would reduce inequality, increase resilience, fuel inclusive economic growth and thereby, reduce poverty²⁷. However, the DW term is quite broad²⁸ and encompasses numerous stakeholders and, for the time being, seems particularly challenging for the informal sector.

In February 2019, while conducting the ‘Understanding Employers’ Views on Decent Work Principles in the Informal Sector in Rangpur and Barisal, Bangladesh’ study, Oxfam found that the employers have a much narrower definition of DW. For instance, employers are aware of the standards for safety and security but find it difficult to meet them and gender equality is seldom practiced. Decent wages and gender-equal-wages are considered by the employers but are not always very popular among them; awareness of equal opportunities and treatment of all women and men were not visibly present, and no concerns were found for issues such as social security, freedom of association of workers, and work that should be abolished (child labour, forced labour).

As seen above, the notion of DW seems like a tough ask for the informal sector of Bangladesh and since it is still a rather new subject for the stakeholders, not many academic works are available in this context. Nevertheless, as BRAC’s SDP has begun to implement DW in their curricula for the informal sector, this qualitative study aims to report on the progress made so far and produce necessary suggestions as a result for the improvement of such a significant portion of the workforce.

1.2. OBJECTIVES, DELIVERABLES AND SCOPE OF WORK

1.2.1. OVERARCHING AIM:

The overarching aim of this report is to identify the *Process* and *Result* (story book) of BRAC’s Decent Work Intervention. It will further demonstrate how it has emerged as a new and unique model in Bangladesh, such that it is derived from ILO’s Decent Work Programme (DWP) agenda but is contextualised and customized for the informal sector. In doing so, the study has embarked upon a great deal of epistemological justification to investigate how it is that the BRAC promoted DW intervention complement and practically enforce the ILO’s DW model, so that it can

²⁶<https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm>

²⁷<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment>

²⁸ <https://sudokkho.org/>

therefore be termed independently (knowledge production). As envisioned, the Story Book is not just a compilation of success stories, but also an intimate documentation of the processes adopted and implemented by BRAC.

With these objectives in consideration, this study is structured in seven sections. Following the introduction, Section 2 elaborates upon methodology and literature review. Section 3 outlines the processes of SDP in general and elaborates upon DW interventions in particular. Section 4 presents findings from the field, whereas Section 5 showcases success stories, uses of DW and subsequent practices of DW from the perspectives of MCP and learners. Section 6 concludes the report with an attempt to evaluate the programme in general.



2. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research methodology was used for the purpose of this study. Trainees in BRAC SDP projects are provided with access to skills development through two approaches, i.e., apprenticeships and institution-based models²⁹, and the implemented methodology tried to cover both. However, the study prioritized the apprenticeship approach since it is meant to focus on Decent Work practices in the informal workplaces. Furthermore, internal stakeholders as well as some external stakeholders were considered within this methodology to understand the larger national and local context and, therefore, fit the process document into the expectation of a greater audience. An intensive observation technique was also devised to measure the indicators of Decent Work in the visited workplaces.

The implemented data collection tools and techniques were appropriately selected for both secondary and primary data collection. It is to be noted that mixed methodology was used for triangulation purposes. The detailed methodology of the study and the data collection approaches deployed in it are presented in the

²⁹ <http://www.brac.net/publications/annual-report/2018/programmatic-area/employable-skills-for-decent-work-at-home-and-abroad/>

following table:

Table 1: Process of secondary data collection

Tool	Secondary data (information from secondary sources)
Techniques/methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature review • National and International Policies and guidelines • Relevant document and reports from BRAC SDP • Parameter of ILO Decent Work Programme (DWP): Within Bangladesh and cross-country
Respondents' information/sources of information (Included but not limited to)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Skill Development Policy 2011 • National Youth Policy 2017 • ILO's Decent Work Agenda and standards • Sustainable Development Goal 2030 • 7th Five Year Plan of Bangladesh • Project documents of BRAC SDP including documents from district level • ILO's Decent Work Country Profile Bangladesh
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed in accordance with these objectives. • These were the guiding principles to differentiate BRAC Introduced Decent Work Programme (BIDWP) from the one formed by ILO.

Table 2: Process of primary data collection at national level

Tool	Primary data (information collection at national level)
Techniques/methods	Consultation workshops Key informant interviews (KIIs) and national level
Respondents' information/sources of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial consultation meeting with the SDP Team (an overview on SDP projects, Decent Work intervention and finalization of the methodology and work plan) • Consultation workshop with SDP Team, Decent Work and Quality Assurance Team and trainers of BRAC SDP (SWOT analysis, interactive discussion) • KIIs with the ISISC, BTEB, ACIP etc. • KIIs with Project Leads/ Directors of other similar government/NGO projects (STEP³⁰/ B-SkillFUL/

³⁰ Skills and Training Enhancement Project

Tool	Primary data (information collection at national level)
	DWCP of ILO etc.)
Process	2 (two) online consultation workshops were conducted at national/policy level. 5 (five) KIIs were conducted at national level. Actual sample selection was finalised after the first consultation workshop.

Table 3: Process of primary data collection at field level

Tool	Primary data (information collection at district/grassroots /field level)
Techniques/methods	FGDs In-depth Interviews (IDIs) at the sub-national level-In five cluster areas- (i) Jashore, (ii) Bogura, (iii) Tongi-Gazipur, (iv) Rangpur and (v) Cumilla
Respondents' information/sources of information	FGDs with the local beneficiaries as well as SDP's projects' staff (an overview on Decent Work intervention at field level, experiences of implementation, best practices, SWOT analysis) IDIs with master craft persons (MCP) related to SDP IDIs with light engineering owners (LEO) related to SDP IDIs with learners/graduates of SDP IDIs with a representative of the local community (including local employers, and parents of learners)
Process	5 FGDs were conducted at sub-national level (namely in Gazipur, Bogura, Jashore, Cumilla and Rangpur) In total 20 IDIs were conducted in five different major cities in Bangladesh. This was finalised after consultation with BRAC SDP team.

It must be pointed out that the methodology we applied had its share of limitations due to the ongoing pandemic of COVID-19. Our field visits had to be shortened, visiting the participants' homes could not be made extensively for safety concerns related to COVID-19. The duration of research has been curtailed to 3 months for this very reason. The entire exercise of collecting data, analysing them and writing had been a bit tight with such time and accessibility constraints that could not be avoided due to the global pandemic. Besides, due to the revised trainings (shorted from six months to three months), actual trainings related findings could not be derived.

2.2. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

The following two tables represent a fundamental demographic understanding of trainees and MCPs involved with BRAC's SDP programme, taking into account the actual number of respondents as well as their percentile share in the overall sample

population for each kind of personnel. Participants were selected through area based random cluster sampling approach where trades are taken as clusters. Research team acquainted with the BRAC-SDP team for identification of cluster of that particular area. Afterwards, research team selected the sectors randomly. For example, in Tongi field interview, BRAC team familiarise the team with the mobile phone servicing sectors in a market. The research team then picked two of the shops from the available 6 shops which were covered under the programme.

Table 4: Profile of the learners and MCPs

Particulars	Learners		MCPs	
	Respondents (n)	Percentage (%)	Respondents (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender				
Male	21	40	43	84
Female	31	60	8	16
Transgender	0	0	0	0
Age				
14-16 years	43	83	0	0
17-18 years	7	13	0	0
19-24 years	2	4	5	10
25-30 years	0	0	21	41
More than 30 years	0	0	25	49
Education				
No education	10	19	1	2
Up to primary level	11	21	18	35
Up to secondary level	22	42	12	24
Above secondary level	0	0	5	10
No response	9	17	15	29
Reasons for discontinuing study				
Poverty	42	81	--	--
Wanted to work and earn	10	19	--	--
Family Status				
Poor	33	63	--	--
Very Poor	19	37	--	--

Persons with disabilities	6	11	0	0
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Source: Field survey

2.3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literatures from national and international arena with regard to 'Decent Work' and its correlation with Bangladesh have been assessed, beginning from the inception of the term to its present-day scenario and implementation in both formal and informal sectors. This section is divided into four sections to ensure a cohesive flow for the stakeholders regarding the subject in hand.

2.3.1. IMPORTANCE OF DECENT WORK IN EMPLOYMENT

It has been over 20 years since ILO introduced the term 'Decent Work' which refers to 'productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity'. But only recently, specifically in September 2015, when more than 150 nations approved the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, the notion of 'Decent Work' became an imperative part of employment keeping with the vision of a sustainable development. Departing from the conventional figures of unemployment/employment as a measure of development, ILO's Decent Work (DW) Agenda (ILO, 2017) argues that 'people's welfare does not only depend on whether people are employed, but also on whether they receive adequate earnings and fair income, enjoy rights, and have good working conditions and access to social security'. Previously in 2008, ILO developed a framework to measure DW which comprises 10 indicators, and in fact, there is also an 11th indicator related to country-context called 'economic and social context for Decent Work', pivoted around the four strategic pillars of DW Agenda – full and productive employment, rights at work, social protection and the promotion of social dialogue (Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (European Commission), 2018). Within this purview, the major significance of integrating DW in employment, as proposed by ILO and the stakeholders of DW Agenda, can be considered an improvement in the living standards of workers. A decent job with fair pay and facilities for all and social protection can induce in people a sense of dignity which could very well lead to an inclusive growth, both at an individual and societal level. This argument is based on an intangible human logic that Decent Work could foster public trust, increase civic engagement, allow workers to understand and enjoy labour rights and thereby have a holistic feeling of being part of a community (Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (European Commission), 2018).

2.3.2. LINKAGE BETWEEN DECENT WORK AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

However, in order to create decent job opportunities, skills must efficiently match market demands. Therein lies the need for targeted quality education and training programmes, encompassing both government and private sector, as expressed by the European Commission with regard to DW Agenda (International Partnerships, n.d.). Consequently, ILO has placed a significant emphasis on skills development in their DWA; although they acknowledge the fact that education is a medium to landing a decent job, they also understand that lifelong learning is essential to keep up with the continuous change of labour market, in terms of skills, demand and supply. Additionally, the tripartite organisation believes that through skills

development, one can make the transition from the informal sector (wherein lies the daunting challenges of implementing DW practices) to the formal economy (Decent Work for sustainable development, n.d.).

2.3.3. DECENT WORK IN THE CONTEXT OF BANGLADESH, PARTICULARLY THE INFORMAL SECTOR

The informal sector is widely regarded as the most vulnerable group of employees and therefore, DW implementation in this sector becomes difficult (ILO, 2017). The rise of the informal sector stems from the core problem of unemployment for people who simply cannot afford to remain unemployed and this is evidently significant in developing countries like Bangladesh, where over 85% of the labour force (51.7 million workers) works informally (BIGD, 2018).

In a 2018 study conducted by ActionAid Bangladesh along with Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) on the country's informal sector, it was discovered that 98% of the labour force does not know what their minimum wage should be and 70% of them have not received any skill development training (Mahmud, 2019). Henceforth, employers in the informal sector of Bangladesh, as discovered in a study conducted by Oxfam, have little or practically no knowledge about DW. They consider issues like work environment, safety, hygiene and health as the responsibility of the employer instead of formal policies and benchmarks, meaning employers assume that decent wages should be set based on whatever profit margins their business are making (Saha & Veen, 2019). In the same study, it was found that respondents from the informal sector believe that their sector cannot pay a decent wage according to the minimum wage standards of the formal sector because of its high competition, low profits and/or lack of regulation regarding minimum wage. This discrepancy in wages is just one of the many challenges that the country's informal sector must overcome. However, this does not imply that the formal sector is doing well in the DW barometer of ILO either.

In the ILO DW country profile of Bangladesh, it was seen that workers in the formal sector "tend increasingly to work longer hours", especially urban workers who are affected by the urban sprawl and high commuting time. Moreover, a notable proportion of private formal sector employees were observed as non-participants of social security system (ILO, 2013). Therefore, for a developing country like Bangladesh, where the formal sector lags in terms of DW practices, it is safe to say that the working conditions in the informal economy is far worse. Nonetheless, the government of Bangladesh has committed to implement ILO's Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCP) from 2017 to 2020 with the hope of aiding the goals and 'core targets' of the 7th Five Year Plan (FYP) of the nation (ILO in Bangladesh, 2018).

2.3.4. FEW DECENT WORK INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN IN BANGLADESH

Despite various challenges of implementing DW in the informal economy, Bangladesh has been trying to achieve so through both government and non-government bodies. Access to Information (a2i), a Bangladesh government project, has developed skills of over 250,000 youth for decent employment and according to

its final project review, there has been an increase in the number of young people who have received decent jobs between 2017-2019³¹. Positive results can also be seen in the first phase (ran from 2015-2020) of the B-SkillFUL (Building Skills for Unemployed and Underemployed Labour) project, which aimed to raise awareness among enterprise owners about the benefits of Decent Work. Their initiative led to the formation of “1 cell within Informal Sector Industry Skills Council (IS-ISC) to promote Labour Rights and Decent Work issues among informal enterprises and mainstream it in the national curricula” (Projects, n.d.).

2.3.5. IMPORTANCE OF EXTERNAL FACTORS LIKE CHANGE IN SOCIAL NORMS FOR REALISING DW

In 2016, Tomoko Nishimoto, Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, urged the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) to work on changing the mindset of people for achieving Decent Work and social justice (Meetings and events, 2016). However, changing the mindset of an individual involves a change in social norms, which have an invisible but certainly valid effect on employers, employees and the workplaces themselves. For instance, the traditional gender norms and the patriarchal values mostly restrict women’s mobility and even suppress their activities, which is often common in the labour market of South Asian countries, resulting in both low participation and low-paid jobs for women in these parts of the world (Raihan & Bidisha, 2018). On the other hand, the expansion of “mixed gender” industries minimizes the occupational segregation in a country; Bangladesh itself has begun to show such trends. The number of mixed gender industries augmented notably, from 16 percent in 2003 to 75 percent in 2016 and in addition, the percentage of women working in women-dominated industries has fallen, from 15 percent in 2003 to only 4 percent in 2016 (Kotikula, Hill, & Raza, 2019). The expanded presence of mixed-gender employment could be a sign that Bangladesh’s labour market is now malleable enough to accept women into a wide variety of occupations, according to Kotikula et al. (2019), and that there is an increased social acceptability of women working with men.

Furthermore, knowledge, attitude and practice of the beneficiaries of DW need to be considered for a thorough understanding of DWA’s progress. This is because, although one of the underlying elements of DWA is workplace safety, which in turn, is an Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) concern, very few studies have been conducted in this regard in the developing countries. In fact, professionals and researchers, who are well aware of the importance of workplace safety, feel concerned about how to diffuse the knowledge of OSH to the whole society (Jilcha, Kitaw, & Beshah, 2017). In the meanwhile, attitudes toward safety, too, are vital for the social and professional operation of human beings. Attitudes govern the way information is processed and hence are inseparably related with one’s eventual behaviour (Dobrowolska, Sieradzka, & Kozuba, 2020). Once knowledge and attitudes are set forth, the practice of DW is most likely to be a natural phenomenon and that is bound to have effect on the overall performance of a shop/business etc.

2.3.6. DECENT WORK PRACTICES IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY IN COUNTRIES OTHER THAN BANGLADESH

³¹ https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/BGD/UNDP%20a2i-II%20closing%20report_Final.pdf

A thorough study of Decent Work practices in the informal economy of various countries around the world seem to produce mixed reactions about its effectiveness and sustainability. For instance, in the informal sector of Uganda, barriers of DW implementation mainly stem from insufficient resources, poor understanding of the challenges of the very sector and potential resolutions, and trust issues between employers and employees (Ventures, 2018). In another article, ‘Decent Work deficits’ have been discovered in the informal economy of Surat, a city in the Indian state of Gujrat, and questions have been asked by the authors regarding the difficulties of implementing “Decent Work for all” as conceptualised by ILO (Rani & Unni, 2016). Florian Sigmund for AWO (Arbeiterwohlfahrt)³² International’s Regional Office in South Asia reports that Nepal’s informal economy, too, has been struggling from Decent Work deficits, mainly in terms of rights, social protection and representation (Sigmund).

2.3.7. OTHER DISCOURSES AND CONCLUSION

The DWA of ILO have had its share of debates, most notably perhaps from Standing (2008), who was involved in the development of ILO’s position paper about Decent Work in 1999. On the one hand, he has commented, “Due to organisational problems within the ILO and the diffusion of an explicitly justice-oriented agenda, existing definitions of Decent Work are replete with vagueness and ambiguity.” On the other hand, Deranty and Macmillan (2012) shared a social philosophical feedback on DW stating that Decent Work needs to include the perspectives of the working people themselves. There have been legal concerns too, particularly made by MacNaughton and Frey (2011), who have clearly demonstrated the lawful complexities, intrinsically available, in the advocacy for Decent Work (Blustein, Olle, Kellgren, & Diamonti, 2016).

The literatures presented so far give a brief idea about DW, its correlation with employment and the stance taken by Bangladesh in this regard. Far fewer literatures are available that focus on the consequences of attempting DW practices, to say the least, in the vulnerable informal sector of the nation. The objective of the current study is to explore exactly that limitation.

³² The Arbeiterwohlfahrt (AWO) is a de-centrally organized German workers’ welfare association that builds on personal memberships in its local associations.



3. CONTEXTUALISATION OF ILO'S DECENT WORK IN BRAC SDP

It is important to know how ILO's DW agenda has been contextualized in terms of BRAC SDP's agenda. The following section is going to provide a context for the approaches of ILO and BRAC towards the implementation of Decent Work environment. The indicators of SDP have similarities to those of ILO's DW Agenda. However, they have been implemented in consideration of Bangladesh's labour market.

Table 5: Contextualisation of DW in BRAC-SDP

ILO Indicator	BRAC Indicator
1. Employment opportunities	Employment opportunities do not exist
2. Adequate earnings and productive work	
3. Decent Working time	Working hour
4. Combining work, family and personal	Weekly off day Sick leave/other leave

ILO Indicator	BRAC Indicator
life	
5. Work that should be abolished	Child labour
6. Stability and security of work	
7. Equal opportunity and treatment in employment	Workplace behaviour
8. Safe work environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electrical equipment maintenance • Workplace cleanliness • Adequate light and air • Fire extinguishers in the workplace • Pure drinking water • Hygienic toilet • First aid box • Arranging equipment and materials • Waste management/Dust bin availability • Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) • Good wiring system • Save and display the Emergency number • Adequate working space • Machine safety • Material safety
9. Social security	
10. Social dialogue, employers' and workers' representation	Participation in Decision making

Source: Authors' analysis derived from various sources

Indicators for SDP have been selected with consideration of the informal nature of the Bangladeshi labour market. As the marketplaces cannot always ensure all of these indicators due to its existing inadequacy of infrastructures and facilities, BRAC has defined the indicators in such a way so that it becomes easy to implement them within the local contexts. These indicators have been developed in accordance with the global guidelines of ILO's DW Agenda. The contextualisation of indicators is very important for a country like Bangladesh where the informal trades constitute a major

portion of the country's enterprises. BRAC recognises this and has taken a very crucial approach for promoting Decent Work in Bangladeshi workplaces.

3.1. BRAC PROMOTED DW PROGRAMME VIS-À-VIS OTHER SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

There are various ongoing skill development programmes in Bangladesh. Some of these programmes envision the inclusion of DW in their agendas. The following table provides a comparative analysis between SDP and two other similar skill development programmes that are ongoing in Bangladesh. These two programmes have been particularly chosen for this comparative analysis to show the differences in the approaches of skill development programmes in private sectors. Therefore, government launched initiatives for skill development have not been taken into consideration for this analysis. Besides, the modalities of these 3 programmes have considerable similarities.

Table 6: DW approached in other skill development programmes in Bangladesh

SDP (STAR, PROGRESS)	Sudokkho ³³	Uttoron ³⁴
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Almost 25 Trades selected for skills training purposes Aimed at school dropout youths between the age of 14-18 Training is given by trade specific local entrepreneurs of a particular area Students are chosen by SDP officials Both classrooms based and on-job training provided Percentage of inclusion of transgender, person with disabilities, and women are specified. SDP emphasizes on improving the working conditions of the informal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills training provided only for 2 sectors Aimed at people out of work in general Training is provided through privately-run registered training centers Private centers choose students for training programme Only on-job training provided Percentage of inclusion of women and disadvantaged communities is not specified Decent Work less prioritised relative to SDP and not contextualised considering the informal nature of trade in the country. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training focused less on informal sector (Auto Mechanics, Sewing Machine Operations and Welding) which accounts for 80% of total employment Hands-on training provided to many participants at a time by a single trainer whereas only 2 or 3 trainees receive training under a single trainer in SDP No involvement of parents in the process Decent Work standards are not promoted much The age selection criteria for trainees not specified Absence of community meetings

³³ <https://sudokkho.org/>

³⁴ <https://www.swisscontact.org/en/projects/uttoron-skills-for-better-life>

SDP (STAR, PROGRESS)	Sudokkho ³³	Uttoron ³⁴
sector along with skills training through promotion of Decent Work standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDP involves local small-scale businesses to provide training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudokkho involves private training centers and large business organisations to skills training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women friendly training like beauty parlour training and sewing machine training not promoted • More formal industry-based training, which might constraint participation

Source: Authors' analysis derived from various sources

3.2. INCLUSION OF DECENT WORK IN SDP

Inclusion of Decent Work Agenda in BRAC SDP training programmes can be labelled as an effort to link between the 'normative aspiration' and the 'ground reality'. To contextualise ILO's Decent Work Agenda in the veracities of the informal sector and relevant skills development in Bangladesh, BRAC SDP introduced a unique model labelled "BRAC Promoted Decent Work Intervention". BRAC SDP has been trying to motivate and encourage MCPs so that they continuously aspire to increase the level of Decent Work standards in their workplaces.³⁵ It incorporated 21 DW indicators in both the formal and informal sectors throughout 46 districts.³⁶ BRAC SDP's Decent Work intervention has tried to comply with ILO's convention to the best extent possible.

The findings of this study show that the inclusion of Decent Work practices in BRAC SDP is mostly derived from a bottom-up approach³⁷, which took a more formal shape later on. The formalisation incorporated inclusion of DW related contents in technical training modules, initialisation of app-based monitoring for DW indicators, orientation of MCPs, LEOs and learners on the indicators etc. According to the BRAC SDP staff members, when they started working with MCPs, they found that none of the workplaces had been practicing Decent Work agendas. The reasons are two-fold: firstly, the traditional *ustad-shagred* model has some shortcomings. It never considered Decent Work criteria (such as - working hours, certification of skills, job security, fair wage etc.). Secondly, there have been some inbuilt infrastructural challenges (such as – provision of hygienic toilets, light and air circulation in the workplaces, safe drinking water etc.). To address these issues, BRAC promotes Decent Work in SDP from the very basic to the advanced levels. It divides 21 indicators into two segments – 12 to ensure and the rest to promote Decent Work.³⁸ BRAC also considers issues related to gender and social inclusion while setting up its

³⁵ There is a clear expectation from the participants that once they would receive trainings, they would also get the opportunity for employment.

³⁶ Since, inclusion of transgender people was one of their targeted programme beneficiaries identified in the programme aim documents. Please see, <http://www.brac.net/program/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2019-3-19-STAR-Toolkit-External.pdf>

³⁷ Seen during field visits in most of such workplaces.

³⁸ BRAC's Internal Report 'Decent Work Interventions in SDP and its Impact'

Decent Work-related indicators. An internal assessment and grading system for the assessment of DW related progress has also been in place.

In the following table, Decent Work-related activities under BRAC SDP are highlighted.

Table 7: Decent Work-related activities under BRAC SDP

Decent Work Activity	
1.	Development of Decent Work practices, occupational safety and health related training materials (training module, trainer guide, ToT module, etc).
2.	Staff training on Decent Work interventions.
3.	Institute trainer ToT on Decent Work, occupational safety and health issue.
4.	MSME – Decent Work training for micro, small and medium enterprise owner in the informal sector and Light Engineering sector.
5.	OSH inspection in BRAC’s newly developed training institute and partner organisation institute.
6.	Tools development and provision of technical support for the implementation of Decent Work in the MSME workplaces.
7.	Sector-wise OSH module development
8.	Sector-wise assessment and development of Decent Work implementation tools.

Source: BRAC’s Internal Report ‘Decent Work Interventions in SDP and its Impact’

According to BRAC SDP data, a total 1,74,779 people (MCPs, LEOs, Learners and Staff) received knowledge on Decent Work since FY16. In the same time period, knowledge regarding Decent Work was imparted to 11,859 apprentices under STAR project and 27,623 apprentices under PROGRESS project.³⁹

3.2.1. INCLUSION OF DW INDICATORS: ENSURED VS PROMOTED INDICATOR

BRAC SDP divided its 21 indicators of DW practice into two categories: those that must be ensured and those that are promoted by and among the MCPs and their corresponding learners. This was done in accordance with the level of essentiality to ensure a safe and Decent Work environment. For example, indicators like workplace cleanliness, presence of firefighting equipment, availability of pure drinking water and first aid box, proper display of emergency numbers, etc. must be ensured in workplaces. On the other hand, SDP promotes indicators like working space, working hours, no child labour, decent workplace behaviour, hygienic toilet etc. The indicators are divided between the two categories based on their importance in the context of Bangladesh’s labour market.

³⁹ <http://www.brac.net/program/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2019-3-19-STAR-Toolkit-External.pdf>

Table 8: Inclusion of DW indicators: ensured vs promoted indicator

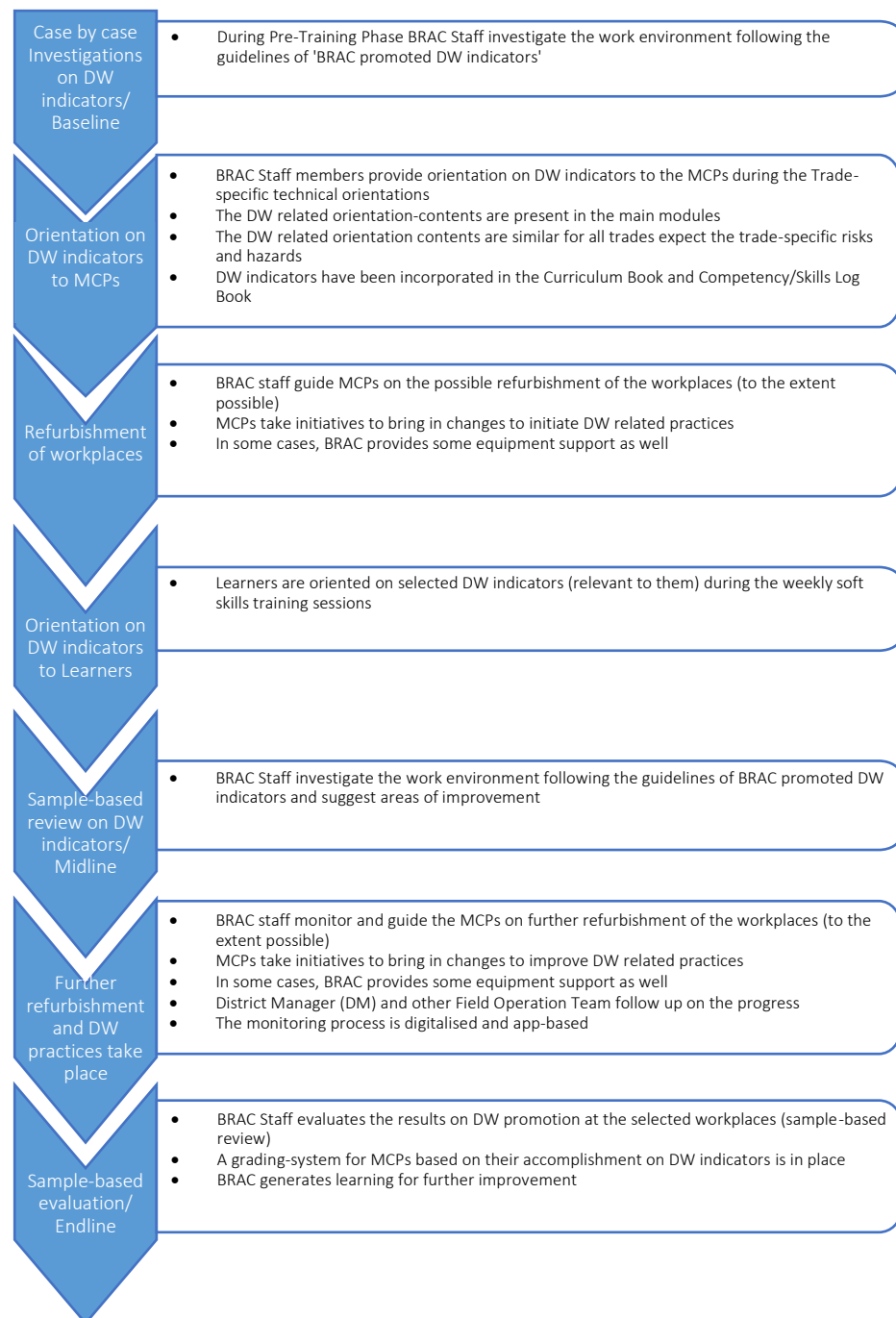
SDP Indicators	Description
Ensured Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace cleanliness • Adequate light and air • Save and display Emergency Contact Number • Fire safety equipment • Pure drinking water • First aid box • Arranging equipment and materials (3S implementation) • Waste management/Dustbin availability • Personal protective equipment • Weekly off day
Promoted Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hygienic toilets • Good wiring system • Adequate working space • Electrical equipment maintenance • Machine safety • Material safety • Working hour • Sick leave/other leave • Child labour • Workplace behaviour • Participation in decision making

Source: BRAC-SDP

BRAC has divided the indicators into two parts so that it becomes easy for the informal enterprises to fully implement the DW standards, giving more emphasis on Decent Work indicators which are essential to be implemented in the context of Bangladesh. Besides, the indicators have also been categorized on the basis of available resources within the informal trades. Informality in Bangladeshi labour market is still rampant, and it becomes a problem for these informal enterprises to ensure all of the Decent Work standards as per global guidelines. However, SDP officials keep encouraging and supporting the enterprises and MCPs so that they can adhere to all of the indicators. SDP also tries to raise the capacity of these enterprises so that they can increase the resources and infrastructure necessary to implement all of the DW indicators.

3.2.2. BRAC-SDP DW INTERVENTION: PROCESS FLOW CHART

Figure 1: BRAC Promoted Decent Work Intervention: Steps at a Glance



Source: Authors' analysis derived from various sources including KII with the Project personal

BRAC heavily emphasizes the promotion of Decent Work (DW) practices during the different phases of its skills training programme. One of the primary goals of SDP is to increase Decent Work practices in informal workplaces through effective interventions. Hence, Decent Work standards are given importance while selecting trades and market places as well. Before selecting an enterprise, SDP officials ensure that the workplace environment is safe for the learners. Besides, SDP follows a set of

eligibility criteria for the selection of MCPs. Before the training begins, the MCPs and TTs go through an orientation where they are taught about the basics of Decent Work practices. Moreover, the modules and curricula of the programme have been developed with a focus on the importance of achieving DW standards. Besides, SDP officials also meet with market committees to ensure clean toilets and safe drinking water facilities. SDP's commitment towards promoting Decent Work practices is evident from its emphasis on ensuring spacious and clean classrooms for training with proper hygiene facilities.

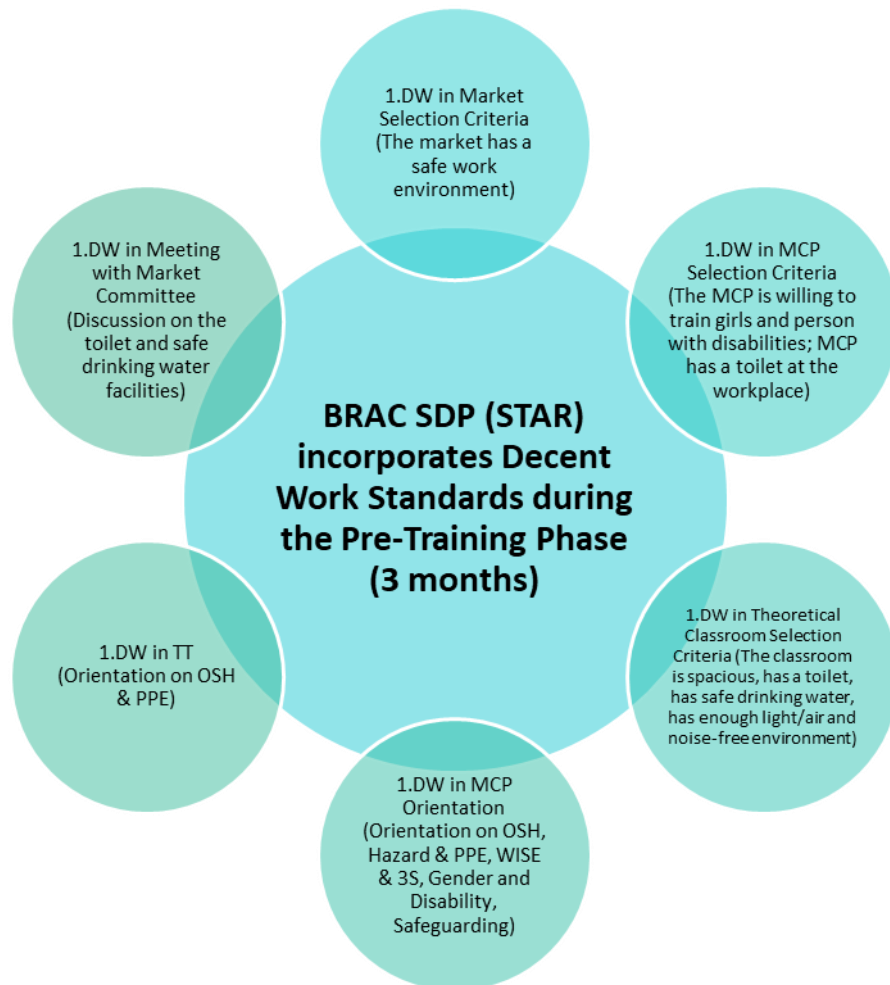


Figure 2: DW Practices in STAR Pre-Training Phase (3 months)

Source: Authors' analysis derived from various sources

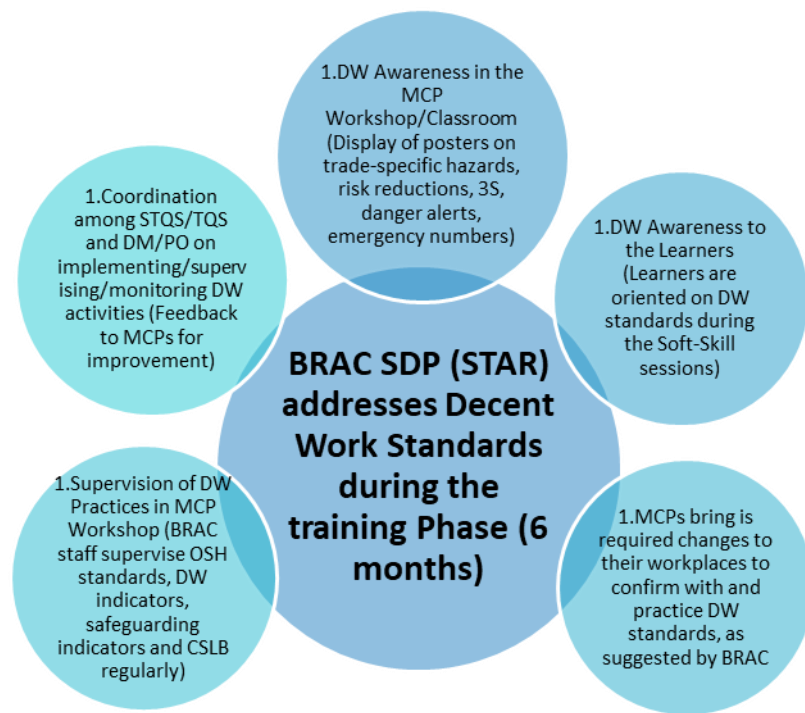
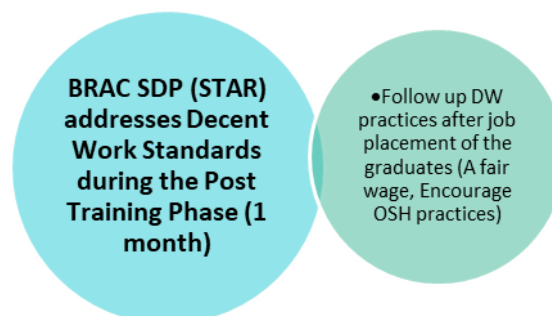


Figure 3: DW Practices in STAR Training Phase (6 months)

Source: Authors' analysis derived from various sources

The six-month training phase aims to achieve Decent Work environment in workplaces through coordinated efforts among SDP officials, MCPs, and learners. The classroom-based training provides knowledge about the importance and necessity of Decent Work practices in work-places. Moreover, the MCPs and learners are trained regarding the DW standards that need to be followed in their workplaces. To facilitate DW practices, SDP officials provide necessary support to MCPs. In addition, BRAC officials routinely monitor and investigate the workplaces according to the guidelines of BRAC-promoted DW indicators. They suggest areas of improvement and assist the MCPs as well as the learners to achieve DW standards in their workplaces. SDP officials continue to raise awareness about Decent Work standards even after the completion of training phase. For example, they keep reminding the learners about the importance of workplace safety, minimum wage etc. The officials also track the activities of MCPs to check whether they are maintaining basic DW standards or not.

Figure 4: DW in STAR Post-Training Phase (1 month)





Source: Authors' analysis derived from various sources

4. DECENT WORK INTERVENTION: FINDINGS FROM THE FIELD

The contents of this chapter not only put forth the findings of this study but also provides a thorough and critical analysis of the results which were gathered during the field visits. They are arranged in a manner that reflects the best possible evaluation of BRAC SDP's Decent Work intervention in the informal sector of Bangladesh. While preparing this segment, multiple facets of DW have been taken into consideration such as: the extent to which the participants are involved in practicing DW, the kind of materials or avenues they are using to do so, and whether there are any changes in social norms or conducts due to DW intervention, even subliminal ones which can only be measured qualitatively, that may have occurred within the participants or the community in general. All of these aspects have been rigorously examined, noted and portrayed from the researchers' point of view.

It must be noted that the collection of data for this context has been acquired through in-depth interviews, observation and field notes. Findings that are qualitative in nature, such as the 'change in social norms', have been extracted from

subsequent analysis of primary data; 'SWOT analysis' is an extended part of that analysis. The importance of collecting such a variety of findings and the lenses required to examine these findings stems from the fact that DW intervention for BRAC is a contextualised practice exclusively for the informal sector of Bangladesh and in that regard, it's still quite a new concept. This is because ILO, the very originator of DW agenda in the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) for Bangladesh for the year 2017-2020, considers the implementation of DW in the informal sector to be a major challenge. After all, according to ILO, "informal sectors fall outside of any intervention to promote workplace safety".

The need for an extensive analysis of BRAC's DW intervention seems far more important when ILO declares, in that very DWCP Bangladesh document, that formal industries lack enough data on occupational health and safety, let alone the informal ones. Considering the established negligence of the informal sector with regard to Decent Work in a country where the formal industries are struggling, BRAC SDP's intervention of DW and their approach as well as results so far call for an all-round evaluation and accordingly, multiple tables are prepared in the following sections of this chapter.

4.1. PROGRAMME PARTICIPANTS' KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES WITH REGARD TO DW:

According to ILO, DW agenda involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers: a fair income, security in the workplace; social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and, social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men. Consequently, all of these require a comprehensive assessment from the beneficiaries' (for whom Decent Work programme is being targeted) perspectives. Although BRAC has contextualised their DW intervention in accordance with the current scenario of the informal sector of Bangladesh, it was necessary to study how much of that contextualisation could be aligned with the initial idea of Decent Work for the sake of a comprehensive evaluation. Therefore, the following segment is prepared to find the particular qualitative changes that BRAC has been able to bring among the participants through their trainings and programmes.

The field-level data were gathered from in depth interviews with MCPs and learners of BRAC's SDP programme, and further categorized into four divisions: knowledge, practice, attitude and sustainability. The purpose of this stratification is to study the participants' awareness regarding DW and what changes, if any, have come across among them as a result of the training imparted by BRAC in this context. Additionally, at a grassroots level, the mere check-up of DW practice alone is not enough to draw a reasonable conclusion of BRAC's programmes. It is more significant to study to find out whether DW's orientation has a long-lasting impact either on the individual or the societal level or not, or to measure how much the participants have really extracted and implemented from these training sessions.

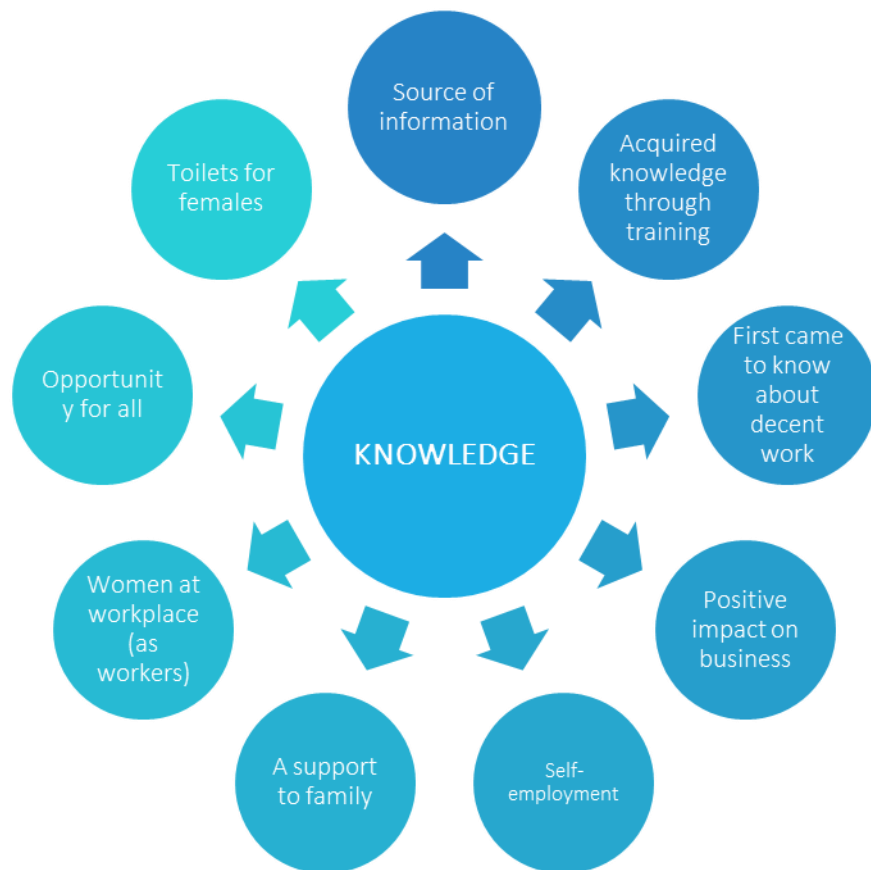
Knowledge:

Figure 5 (next page) indicates the knowledge regarding SDP training and Decent Work among the participants. Some of the respondents heard about the information regarding BRAC SDP from BRAC officials; some of them heard from neighbors and

during MCP/learner survey. Moreover, few participants mentioned that they saw some people involved within BRAC, participating in different types of workshops. On top of that, it has been observed that some learners were former students of BRAC School. Among all participants, they gathered various types of knowledge through training.

MCPs state that they have learned about business management, technical operation, workplace safety, Decent Work conditions, safeguarding, dowry, child marriage. Some of the graduate learners have exhibited similar knowledge like technical operation, workplace safety, Decent Work conditions, safeguarding, etc. However, almost all of the respondents had no idea about Decent Work before SDP training and the training has a positive impact on the businesses. MCPs have been able to increase the number of customers/orders and therefore revenue; though few of them mentioned that they did not experience any change in their businesses due to this training.

Figure 5: Understanding the DW Knowledge



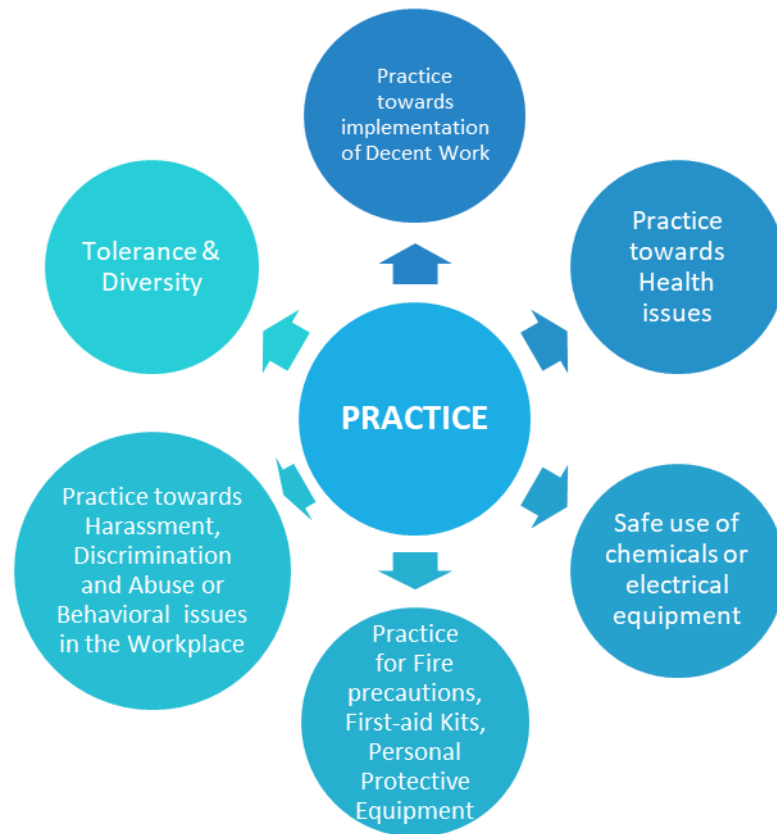
Furthermore, some learners find the opportunity of becoming self-employed and a provider for their families. In fact, graduate learners from SDP are continuing to work in other places that bring them higher payment. The women learners who are married have better acceptance in their in-law's houses due to this training. MCPs are usually very experienced and well behaved and most of them have taught and trained 6-8 learners so far. Significantly, women, persons with disabilities, transgender community people, all of them have equal opportunities to learn and work under the umbrella of SDP.

On the other hand, women were found to have gained knowledge in what is considered unorthodox trades for them, such as refrigeration and air conditioner repairing shop. When it comes to toilet facilities, beauty parlours and tailoring shops have shown more understanding of the subject matter and hence, provided better facilities than other trades, although separate toilets for women were hard to build for some trades.

Practice:

The summary of Decent Work practice has been placed in the figure below:

Figure 6: Illustration of Findings on Practice



Practice towards health issues: Participants have learned about health and hygiene measures both in SDP trainings and workplaces through BRAC officials. One of the learners, a person with disability of the programme stated that although he faced challenges to make the commute to his workplace, he is happy since the workplace is conducive to his health condition. However, most of the women learners tended to avoid going to the toilets available in/near their workplaces due to bad conditions and unhealthy washroom facilities, which may have adverse impact on their health.

Safe use of chemicals or electrical equipment: Respondents learned to handle the safety of equipment using the 3S technique: sorting, set in order and sweeping. MCPs held the responsibility for the safe use of chemicals and electronic equipment and good wiring system during work. At the very beginning of the training, MCPs taught their learners about the right handling and usage of electrical equipment and power supply. The trainers tried to focus on safety and awareness training first, and then the actual work. Employers instructed learners to be careful while working with electric machines or risky equipment. Furthermore, the use of waste bins, masks,

gloves and aprons during work was practiced.

Practice for fire precautions, first-aid kits, and personal protective equipment: In the visited workplaces, first-aid kits were often found and MCPs regularly stocked the first aid supplies. Most of the shops have an emergency number list, and sand and water buckets were also set up as fire safety precautions. However, fire extinguishers were found only in the markets given to the shop owners by market committees; MCPs could not afford buying them. Moreover, participants used glasses, masks, hand gloves and aprons, and very few faced challenges wearing gloves during working. Respondents stated that it became difficult to wear facemasks all the time during the summer season. The respondents from PROGRESS received safety helmets, fires and buckets, and first aid boxes. During the pandemic, some of the employers had extra facemasks for customers.

Practice in response to harassment, discrimination and abuse or behavioural issues in the workplace: Employers often attempted to secure their learners from any unexpected circumstances like harassment, discrimination and abuse. However, some trainers refused to train persons with disabilities for their safety. There were mixed experiences- both cooperative and non-cooperative- in terms of accepting persons with disabilities and women learners in workplaces. Some of the persons with disabilities faced unpleasant behaviour from outsiders even though employers were supportive. Additionally, trainers were dedicated, repeated their instructions and motivated their learners and employees when they faced any problems during work. Trainers advised their learners on how to behave with customers. All the women learners admitted feeling comfortable and safe in their workplaces. However, one of the learners lamented on the fact that women are underestimated in our society due to gender inequality.

Tolerance & diversity: Persons with physical disabilities were quite happy to be in prospective job markets. However, they were skeptical about the future both in terms of job placements and societal acceptance. Additionally, very few MCPs acknowledged the inclusion of persons with disabilities and transgenders in the programme. Others came to accept it as a programme requirement to be welcoming to these disenfranchised people.

Practice towards implementation of Decent Work: Participants had never practiced these Decent Work standards before their BRAC-SDP training. Most of them did not think maintaining Decent Work practice could be expensive or damaging to their work and hence, maintained proper documentation, workplace safety and protection. Some of the participants maintained Decent Work practices in their homes as well. MCPs tried to ensure enough working space and sufficient light and air for their learners and employees. Where there was a shortage of lights, additional lights were provided. Several employers are aware of child labour and few employers mentioned that the children that they did employ anyway, were not involved in any hazardous works. However, field observations revealed that children were employed in light engineering sector for the use of lath machine. Learners were taught to follow Decent Work practices not only for themselves but also for their families' safety. Some of the learners ensured Decent Work practices in their family life as well and this could be observed via the manners in which they kept their equipment and materials in a regular arrangement at their homes. One of the participants stated that Decent Work practices actually gave them a sense of protection and imbued the belief that there are solutions for anything challenging occurrence. This boost in

morale led to an improvement in their working processes, according to the respondents.

Table 9: Descriptive statistics of the DW indicator status among MCPs in the study areas

Indicators	Grade	Total 1753 MCPs of all available trades from five study area					
		Bogura	Cumilla	Gazipur	Jashore	Rangpur	Total
Adequate light	A	94%	78%	85%	93%	89%	87%
	B	4%	21%	10%	7%	11%	12%
	C	1%	1%	5%	0%	0%	1%
Hygienic toilet	A	92%	53%	68%	64%	86%	71%
	B	7%	39%	26%	34%	13%	25%
	C	2%	8%	5%	2%	1%	4%
Pure drinking water	A	89%	79%	70%	87%	86%	82%
	B	11%	15%	25%	13%	13%	15%
	C	0%	5%	5%	0%	1%	2%
Safe use of hazardous chemical	A	89%	45%	48%	71%	64%	61%
	B	10%	47%	33%	18%	30%	30%
	C	1%	8%	19%	11%	5%	8%
Machine safety	A	88%	48%	49%	70%	64%	62%
	B	9%	44%	37%	24%	33%	32%
	C	3%	8%	14%	6%	2%	6%
Dustbin availability	A	91%	60%	58%	71%	82%	72%
	B	5%	33%	25%	21%	13%	21%
	C	4%	7%	16%	7%	5%	7%
Fire extinguishers in the workplace	A	88%	42%	43%	34%	62%	52%
	B	7%	37%	40%	65%	34%	38%
	C	5%	22%	18%	1%	4%	10%
Protective Personal Equipment Use	A	64%	64%	68%	53%	82%	68%
	B	34%	30%	19%	47%	17%	29%
	C	2%	6%	13%	1%	1%	4%
Worker management	A	93%	73%	88%	93%	82%	84%
	B	7%	23%	10%	7%	17%	15%
	C	0%	4%	3%	0%	0%	2%
Good wiring system	A	81%	69%	70%	89%	75%	76%
	B	16%	27%	23%	11%	24%	21%
	C	3%	4%	8%	0%	1%	3%

Source: Authors' calculation based data collected by BRAC SDP team

The above table illustrates the comparative statistics about the performance rating of

each of the five studied locations (Bogura, Cumilla, Gazipur, Jashore and Rangpur) based on the implementation of DW practice. BRAC SDP team collects frequent data on the DW indicators from the MCPs. The above table is created based on the data provided by the BRAC SDP team for the year 2020.

Ten indicators of BRAC's DW intervention are considered to provide a grade for MCPs, which is then mentioned in their respective BRAC SDP's certificate. The grading process is divided into three parts: primary grading, midline grading and end line grading. The SDP officials usually eliminate grade 'C' MCPs and continue affiliation with grade 'A' & 'B' MCPs for future participation in their programmes. Most of the MCPs earn a 'C' grade in primary grading stage and thereby the SDP officials emphasize on capacity development for their improvement.

According to the table above, MCPs of Bogura are the best performers considering all the ten indicators, compared to other locations. Interestingly, workplaces in Bogura have higher light availability, hygienic toilet and pure drinking water than that of the other four locations. Next best implementation of DW can be seen in Jashore. Workplaces in Jashore maintain a better wiring system and the worker management of the MCPs is excellent. In terms of locations, grade A MCPs of Gazipur have shown the poorest performances in exercising the ten DW indicators.

However, what is intriguing about the table is the drastic fall of DW practices in grade B and grade C workplaces for all five locations, across all ten indicators. Only 7% of grade B workplaces in Cumilla have hygienic toilet facilities, and only 13% of grade B MCPs of Rangpur ensure a dust bin in their workplaces. Overall, 'machine safety', 'availability of fire extinguisher' and 'PPE' usage, seem serious concerns in the execution DW practice in the selected locations.

In terms of the ten indicators, the table clearly shows that on an average, any graded workplace, among the 5 studied locations, gives highest priority to 'light availability', 'pure drinking water' and 'worker management' (found in more than 80% workplaces).

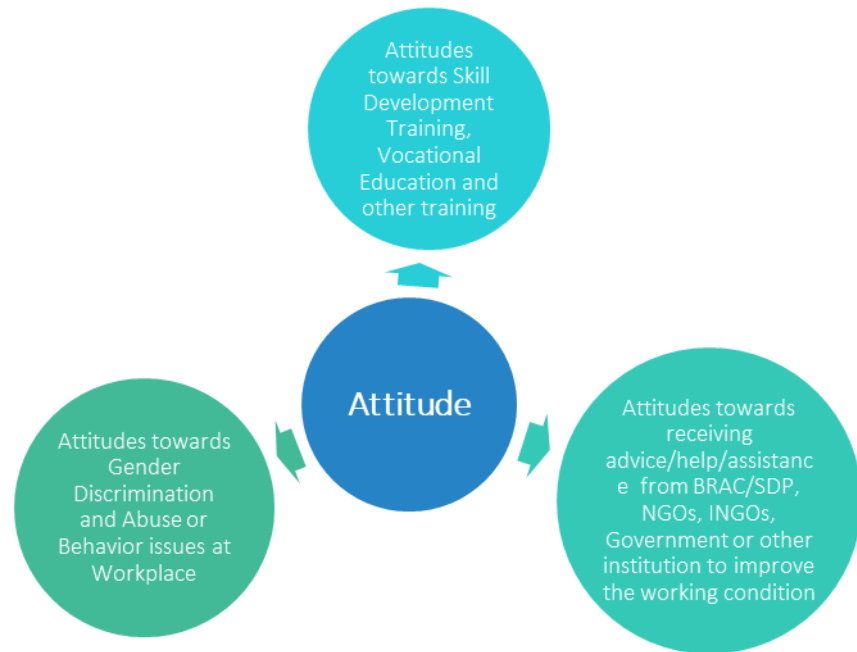
Attitude:

Attitudes towards receiving advice/help/assistance from BRAC/SDP, NGOs, INGOs, Government or other institution to improve working conditions: It has been observed that the financial situations of most of the MCPs and learners were not strong and that they would have benefited if they received loans or financial support from BRAC and/or other organisations. Some of the participants require practical trainings, theoretical classes and diploma courses like full-fledged vocational training programmes that the government could provide. According to the respondents, these types of trainings could develop their technical and mechanical skills. On the other hand, participants responded that the limited remunerations received by learners and MCPs from BRAC were not enough. Sometimes learners travel long distances to reach their workplaces and it is difficult for them to bear the costs of transportation. It would also be better for learners to receive technical support at the end of their trainings because nearly all of them want to start their own businesses. For example, the learners should at least complete their secondary school exam (SSC) before participating in such trainings, otherwise, it is difficult to properly train learners in certain trades.

Attitudes towards gender discrimination, abuse or behavioural issues in workplaces: Neither the MCPs nor the learners faced any discrimination, abuse or behavioural

issues in their workplaces. On the contrary, they tried to maintain a comfortable and friendly working environment. However, they often faced difficulties due to the structural conditions of the workplace, such as the lack of toilet facilities for women. Moreover, for the sake of safety and security, most of the women learners preferred to go home early.

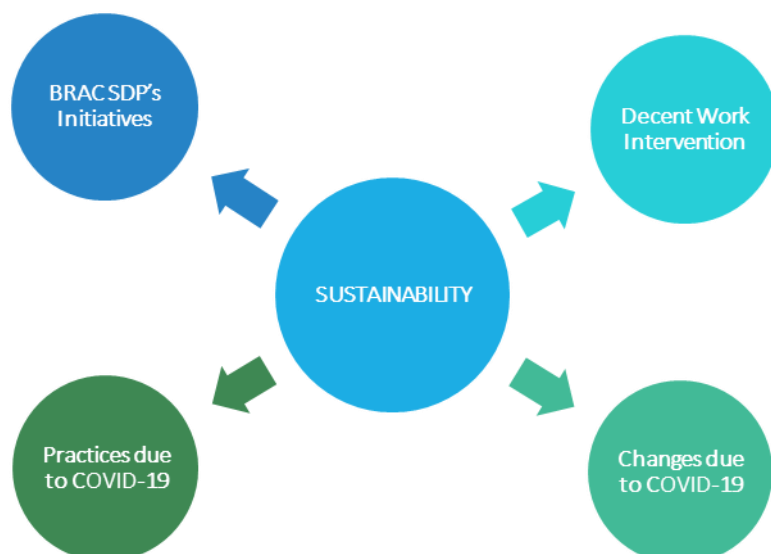
Figure 7: Illustration of Findings on Attitude



Sustainability:

BRAC SDP's Initiatives: The respondents were satisfied with BRAC SDP's training. The trainings were designed to address several issues such as, the management of employees and customers, management of accounts, maintenance of cleanliness, safety and security, etc. Respondents noted that the initiative creates opportunities for underprivileged people. A trainer also shared that BRAC has changed his entire

Figure 8: Illustration of Findings on Sustainability



perspective regarding disability and several learners think this training programme has changed their life's routines. They learned a lot in a short span of training period, especially on issues ranging from the bad effects of dowry and child marriage to women empowerment.

Decent Work Intervention: Decent Work practice is beneficial for everyone because after BRAC-SDP trainings, employers have tried to ensure quality working conditions, safety and security for their employees. They stated that the risks of injury have decreased and Decent Work practice also saves a lot more time now. Employers and employees can now work safely since they know that the appropriate safety equipment is installed in the workplace.

Changes due to COVID-19: Most of the shops were closed for 1/2 month during the epidemic. Many were unemployed during this time, and this led to reduced incomes as sales dropped. Similarly, some of the graduate learners from SDP were unemployed during the lockdown. Because of the pandemic, learners received only 3 months of training instead of the usual 6, and fewer people were able to work in their premises.

Practices in response to COVID-19: The COVID-19 situation has dramatically changed the regular lifestyles of people. Some of the shop owners now have facemasks, hand sanitisers, and hand washing facilities in response to the pandemic. Some of them even put awareness boards in front of their shops to ensure social distancing and learners maintain these practices at their workplaces and homes alike. This reflects that BRAC has added this awareness as well. It is to be mentioned that current training curriculum are designed including COVID-19 safety protocols. During this time BRAC has also provided a COVID-19 toolkit box which includes masks, hand-sanitisers etc.

An Analysis of MCPs and DW indicators:

A statistical analysis has been conducted using the data collected by the BRAC SDP (mentioned in previous section) unit to find a relation between the number of learners trained by an MCP with the DW indicator grading of that MCP workshop. The relation has been explored with the education qualification of the MCPs. Pearson Correlation Coefficient is being measured to understand the relationship.

Two correlation coefficient results have been drawn using two variables (table 10). Firstly, the number of learners has been analysed with overall MCP grading score (developed by the BRAC SDP team), with MCP education qualification and with ten DW indicators. Secondly, the number of learners being provided with a job by MCPs.

Table 10: Finding the correlation between DW indicators of the MCP workshop and the number of learners trained and receive job opportunities

Variables	Correlation Coefficients	
	# learners being trained by MCPs	# learners being provided with a job by MCPs
Overall MCP grading scores	0.11	0.15
Education qualification of MCPs	0.36	0.18

Variables	Correlation Coefficients	
	# learners being trained by MCPs	# learners being provided with a job by MCPs
Adequate light	0.08	0.11
Hygienic toilets	0.16	0.24
Pure drinking water	0.06	0.07
Safe use of hazardous chemical	0.08	0.09
Machine safety	0.11	0.11
Dust bin availability	0.08	0.13
Fire extinguisher availability	0.03	0.13
Use of personal protective equipment (PPE)	-0.02	0.03
Worker management by MCPs	0.02	0.06
Good electrical wiring system	0.11	0.11

Source: Authors' calculation

Result from the first analysis shows that the number of learners trained by the MCPs has positive relationship with all the variables except for the 'use of personal protective equipment (PPE)'. This may be related to the fact that all workshops do not require the use of PPE such as computer shops. However, strongest positive correlation is found with MCPs education qualification. It suggests that higher educated MCPs tend to train more learners than the others. The weakest positive correlation is found with the worker management of the MCPs. It suggests that there is not much connection between the worker management capacity of an MCP and the number of learners trained by that particular MCP.

Similarly, from the second analysis it has been found that all the variables related to the MCPs (DW indicators and education qualification) have positive relationship with the number of learners who were provided job opportunities by MCPs. The highest positive relation has been found with having hygienic toilet and second highest positive connection is seen with the education qualification of the MCPs. It suggests that MCPs with higher education provides more job opportunities to the learners and at the same time, these MCPs have more hygienic toilets.

4.2. EXTEND OF DW PRACTICES AMONG VARIOUS TRADE: FIELD OBSERVATIONS

The following table represents the performance rating of each of the 5 studied locations, namely, Gazipur, Cumilla, Bogura, Jashore and Rangpur, based on the

implementation of DW practice as per each trade. While rating this performance, only the ten ensured indicators of BRAC's DW intervention have been considered to measure the extent to which they were ensured in the respective trade and location. For findings based on mere observation, these ten indicators of BRAC have been considered as viable parameters for the judgment DW intervention's successes because the implementation of these indicators are considered imperative by BRAC SDP.

Note: The 10 ensured indicators are as follows -

1. Workplace cleanliness
2. Adequate light and air
3. Electrical equipment maintenance
4. Fire extinguishers in the workplace
5. Pure drinking water
6. Hygienic toilet
7. First aid box
8. Arrangement of equipment and materials
9. Waste management/Dustbin availability
10. Personal protective equipment

The locations that ensured eight or more indicators were referred to as 'Outstanding'; those that ensured five to seven indicators were referred to as 'Satisfactory'; and those that ensured less than five indicators were referred to as 'Unsatisfactory'.

Table 11: DW practices: Field observation findings

Trade	Location	Performance Rating		
		Outstanding	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Lathe Machine Operation	Gazipur	✓		
	Cumilla			✓
	Bogura		✓	
	Rangpur			✓
Refrigeration & Air Conditioning	Cumilla		✓	
	Bogura		✓	
	Rangpur	✓		
Welding	Cumilla			✓
	Bogura			✓
	Joshore			✓
Beautifications Ladies	Cumilla	✓		
	Joshore	✓		
	Rangpur	✓		
Aluminum	Cumilla		✓	

Trade	Location	Performance Rating		
		Outstanding	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Fabricator	Joshore	✓		
Wood Furniture Making	Cumilla	✓		
	Joshore	✓		
	Rangpur	✓		
IT Support Technician	Cumilla	✓		
	Bogura	✓		
	Joshore	✓		
Mobile Phone Servicing	Gazipur	✓		
	Cumilla	✓		
	Bogura	✓		
	Joshore		✓	
Tailoring and Dress Making – Female	Gazipur	✓		
	Cumilla	✓		
	Bogura	✓		
	Joshore		✓	
	Rangpur	✓		

In all the locations studied, the trade that is struggling the most in terms of DW implementation is ‘Welding’, which is concerning because this trade uses different kinds of hazardous machinery. Another trade that also comprises on many hazardous tasks is ‘Lathe Machine Operation’ and yet, it is seen to be performing better in comparison. In fact, one particular shop in Gazipur stood out by ensuring over eight DW indicators set by BRAC. A possible reason could be that the owners of ‘Lathe Machine Operation’ trades are far more aware about the benefits of DW than their counterparts in ‘Welding’ trades. Another potential explanation for this discrepancy could be the fact that Lathe Machine Operation has far wider scopes for business than welding, hence enabling their respective owners to spend on essentials like first aid boxes, regular inspections of wiring and machines, fire extinguishers and so on.

The most interesting insight must be the outstanding performances seen in the trade of Wood Furniture Making in all the locations studied, because this is the kind of trade that is commonly perceived to be operating in unclean environments.

Trades like IT Support Technician, Mobile Phone Servicing, and Tailoring and Dress Making have all shown outstanding performances in every location and from field-level observations, it can be concluded that DW practices can be implemented easily in these trades compared to others. There are several reasons behind their impressive performance though, firstly, none of these trades produce much waste and workers of these trades are not susceptible to many work hazards. In addition, an IT based shop has fewer materials to take care of other than the computers which are fairly easy to be maintained. A dress making shop, too, has fewer materials to take care of, and a mobile phone servicing shop is usually located in a shopping mall or a large market where various kinds of facilities can easily be availed.

Beauty parlours also performed outstandingly well in every location. This is because the nature of work in these shops require them to ensure indicators like workplace cleanliness, pure drinking water, first aid boxes, waste management and the arrangement of equipment and materials (which are fewer in numbers and smaller in sizes compared to materials of other trades) naturally to keep the business running and attract customers. Moreover, since these shops are run by women and the staff are women too, ensuring hygienic toilet facilities seem to stem from a generally gendered sense of responsibility for each other.

The only trade which could not be understood or measured much from field observations is that of Aluminium Fabricator because of the limited number of such shops studied. However, the ones observed exhibited positive results with regard to DW practices.

4.3. EXTENT OF DW PRACTICES WITHIN SELECTED TRADE: BRAC VS. NON-BRAC TRADE

The discrepancies, in terms of DW practice, between the trades which are affiliated with BRAC SDP and the ones which are not, are presented in the following table to better understand whether the indicators, contextualised by BRAC specifically for the informal sector, are noteworthy, unique and even challenging. DW agenda, as seen previously and as suggested by ILO, is not an easy notion to implement in the informal sector of Bangladesh. Therefore, the organisations, in this case BRAC, who are attempting such a feat need to have credible indicators that set them apart from the rest. Consequently, the following table has been established.

Table 12: Comparison - BRAC vs. Non-BRAC (Ensured Indicator)

Indicator	Trade															
	LMO		RAC		WMO		BSF		AF		WF		IST		MPS	
	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB
Workplace cleaning	MP	NP	P	P	N	NP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Adequate light and air	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Fire extinguishers in the workplace	P	NP	P	NP	P	NP	P	NP	P	NP	P	NP	P	NP	P	NP
Save and display Emergency number	P	NP	P	NP	P	NP	P	NP	P	NP	P	NP	P	NP	P	MP
Pure drinking water	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Weekly off day	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
First aid box	P	NP	P	NP	P	MP	P	P	P	NP	P	NP	P	P	P	P

Hygienic toilet	MP	NP	P	P	P	MP	P	P	P	NP	P	P	P	P	MP	P
Participation in Decision making*	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Adequate working space	P	MP	MP	P	MP	MP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Electrical equipment maintenance	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Machine safety	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Material safety	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Working hour	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Sick leave/other leave	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Child labour	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Workplace behaviour	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P

Source: Authors' analysis derived from field findings

Notes: Practiced (P) = Indicator practiced 100 percent, moderately Practiced (MP) = Indicator practiced 50 percent, not Practiced (NP) = Indicator practiced 0 percent, BRAC= B, Non-BRAC= NB. Personal protective equipment= PPE

BS-F - Beauty Saloon Female, TDM- F - Tailoring and Dress Making Female, IST - IT Support Technician, AF - Aluminum Fabrication, MPS - Mobile Phone Servicing, RAC - Refrigeration & Air Conditioning, WMO- Welding Machine Operation, WF - Wood Furniture-Making, LMO-Lathe Machine Operation

* denotes not observed

The most impressive, and in fact the only noticeable, takeaway from these findings for the BRAC affiliated shops of various trades is the practice of saving and displaying emergency numbers. Except for one mobile phone servicing shop, none of the other non-BRAC trades have shown this practice. This is particularly significant for it is one of the promoted indicators of BRAC rather than the ensured ones.

The slight change in performance between the two groups in another promoted indicator can be found among LMO, RAC and WMO trades. Adequate working space is strictly practiced by the BRAC affiliated shops of these trades whereas only 50% of non-BRAC shops adhered to this decent practice.

Nevertheless, all the other 11 promoted indicators of BRAC are practiced thoroughly by both kinds of shops, thereby, raising the question of the challenges involved, if any, in implementing these Decent Work practices since they are termed as 'promoted'.

4.3.1. AVENUE/MODALITY PRACTICE OF DECENT WORK: HOW DW HAS BEEN CONTEXTUALISED BY THE PROGRAMME

PARTICIPANTS

The following table is meant to portray a thorough understanding of the avenues used or not used by employers and employees of various trades for the practice of Decent Work. These findings are derived from field notes via observation and through in-depth interviews with the respondents. Both the ensured and promoted Decent Work indicators of BRAC's SDP have been considered while constructing this table and an overall collective perspective from the researchers' end is also shared for each of the indicators.

Table 14: Avenue/Modality Practice of Decent Work (Ensured Indicator)

Ensured Indicator	Findings	
	Equipment	Practice
Workplace cleaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broom • Trash bin/containers • Glass polishing clothes • Cleaning solvents and scrubbers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day-to-day cleaning of workplace. • Attempts to clean equipment before use. • Not every shop tries to sweep the shop's floors regularly; only Beauty Parlours, Tailoring & Dress Making shops do. • 3S practice maintenance (Sorting, Set in order and Sweeping). • IT Support and computer shops use dust covers or cases for their computers
Adequate light and air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large window or door or open space • Additional lights and air ventilations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to provide an adequate level of light and air facilities. • Where there is a shortage of lights, additional lights have been provided. • Employers have emergency light facilities.
Fire safety equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sand bucket • Water bucket • Fire extinguishers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeps water and sand bucket for emergency use. • Markets have the facility of fire extinguishers.
Save and display Emergency number	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearest fire service, police stations, and hospitals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shop owners have Emergency contact information lists in their workplaces.
Pure drinking water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tube well facilities • Water pump and water filter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to replace the water dispenser filter once every 2/3 weeks. • Use individual water bottles and bring water from home.
First aid box	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First aid box with saline, Viodin, Savlon, Dettol, cotton and bandage • Emergency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to maintain a fully equipped first aid box with essential supplies and medicines. • Regularly stock the supplies. • Replace expired or used products. • Use items from their first aid kits like antiseptic and bandages

Ensured Indicator	Findings	
	Equipment	Practice

medicines

in an emergency situation.

Arranging equipment and materials (3S implementation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet • Tool shelf • Toolbox or drawer • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to maintain boxes or drawers for the arrangement of equipment and materials. • Beauty products, tailoring items and gadgets are kept in a cabinet and rack. • Try to maintain a proper safe distance for machinery inside the shop. • Using labels and signs to arrange equipment and materials.
Waste management/Dust bin availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralized trash cans • Individual trash bins/cans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some shops maintained individual waste bins and regularly emptied into transportation bins. • Some employers have centralized trash bins/cans beside their shops.
Personal protective equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gloves • Forearm protection • Glasses • Steel-toed safety shoes • Facemask 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually wear aprons, glasses, masks, and hand gloves • Try to wear masks and protective glasses while they work
Weekly off day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually, BRAC-SDP learners get one weekly holiday on Friday.

The above table illustrates how the participants are practicing Decent Work agenda. The cost involved in Decent Work practice is not overly high and it is rather hassle-free to maintain as well. Employers practice and implement the indicators in their workplace willingly. They use their own mechanism to follow BRAC SDP Decent Work agenda even though the Decent Work team of BRAC provides them with guidelines. According to MCPs and learners, this has been enormously beneficial for their working life as well as personal life. The MCPs and learners are implementing Decent Work in their workplace through the use of available resources and the regular practices of all the members of the shop/workplace even without supervisor's instruction.

SDP officials and the Decent Work teams of BRAC provide training and orientation to the MCPs about the 10 ensured indicators in the preparatory phase. During the procedure of MCP selection and learners' training session, officials visit the

workplaces and check the MCP's progress regarding their Decent Work ensured indicator practices. In addition, officials conduct regular field visits to the workplaces to examine whether MCPs are taking Decent Work practices seriously. Every year, MCPs receive grades after they are observed to check whether the ensured indicator criteria that BRAC provides them with are achieved. According to the BRAC SDP officials, good grading helps MCPs and learners in the job sector as well, and that this practice improved the living standards of participants. Sometimes learners and MCPs received job offers based on good grading.

Most of the MCPs and learners consider Decent Work practice as a regular routine. Employers and employees try to clean their workplace daily and to clean their equipment before every use. They also turn the power source off before cleaning the electrical equipment. For the COVID-19 situation, employers tried to clean and disinfect their frequently touched items daily. However, Beauty Parlors, Tailoring & Dress Making and IT Support trades are usually cleaner and tidier than other trades. They also have adequate levels of light and air facilities for their employees. However, where there is a shortage of lights and air, additional lights and air ventilation facilities have been provided. Besides this, BRAC-SDP learners usually get a weekly holiday on Friday.

It has been observed that most of the welding and lathe machine workshops are not adequately clean due to their nature of production. Although, 'fire extinguishers in the workplace' were specified for fire-related hazards, most of the workplaces kept sand and water buckets instead. In fact, participants from PROGRESS project received a red sand bucket, safety helmet and first aid box from BRAC after their training. The shops that were located in markets had the facility of fire extinguishers and employees knew the location and use of the fire extinguishers. Moreover, employers briefed their employees about the emergency number list that was posted on the shops' walls. The contact numbers of the nearest fire service, police stations, and hospitals were displayed in every shop. To provide primary medical treatment, most of the workplaces had first aid boxes with saline, Viodin, Savlon, Dettol, cotton, bandage and emergency medicines for their employees, and they replaced expired or used products within the kit. To protect from injury, employers and employees used personal protective equipment such as glasses, masks, apron and hand gloves etc. The workers who work with electrical and mechanical equipment used gloves for hand and forearm protection, glasses for eye protection, and use steel-toed safety shoes. For the COVID-19 situation, employers also had extra facemasks for customers. However, some of the workers did not use gloves because it was difficult to hold the equipment properly. Consequently, majority of the shop owners had deep tube well facilities in close proximity to their workplaces, and some of them had their own water pumps and water filters. Some of the employees used individual water bottles and brought water from home, and it was observed that few of them had dirty and unhealthy drinking water bottles.

Even so, MCPs and learners were concerned about arranging equipment and materials. For electrical equipment and tools, workers use separate boxes or drawers. And beauty products, tailoring items and electronic gadgets were kept in cabinets and racks. Some of the employers used labels and signs outside the cabinet to ensure that each tool was easily returned to its correct storage. It has been noted that, Tailoring & Dress Making shops, Beauty Parlors and Mobile-servicing shops usually have dustbins available in their workplaces. They maintained individual waste bins and when these bins were full with trash, they were emptied into transportation

bins.

Besides the ensured indicators, Decent Work units also work with promoted indicators. During the training periods of MCPs, they were provided with information and knowledge regarding the 10 promoted indicators.

Table 15: Avenue/Modality Practice of Decent Work (Promoted Indicator)

Promoted Indicator	Findings	
	Equipment	Practice
Hygienic toilet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand wash • Soap and sanitizers • Toilet papers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers try to ensure clean toilet facilities for their employees. • Men usually go to a local house, market, or mosque to use their toilets. • Women usually avoid their workplace toilets. • Few employers have cleaners to clean workplace toilets. • There are no sanitary disposal facilities provided in women's toilets.
Good wiring system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automotive fuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to maintain electrical wiring systems. • Maintain voltage detector. • Practice frequent inspection of wires and cables to avoid accidents.
Adequate working space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually Tailoring, Beauty Parlours and IT service shops have enough working space for employees.
Electrical equipment maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circuit breakers • Adaptor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An accessible switch to cut off the power quickly in an emergency. • Practice frequent inspection of regularly moved electrical equipment. • Instruction provided to take additional precautions when operating around power lines. • Try to clean and inspect risky areas regularly. • Few employers keep their machines in another store, so that they are not affected by dust.
Machine safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand gloves • Safety glasses • Facemasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants wear masks. • Some of the workers did not wear hand gloves in welding and lathe machine shops. • Few shops have signs of danger alerts.
Material safety		
Working hour	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners from BRAC-SDP work 5 hours a day. • Regular employees work up to 6-8 hours. • Learners usually take their lunch breaks within 1-3 PM.

Promoted Indicator	Findings	
	Equipment	Practice
Sick leave/other leave	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees and BRAC-SDP learners get sick and/or emergency leaves.
Child labour	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCPs from PROGRESS project are aware of child labour.
Workplace behaviour	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCPs try to maintain friendly relations with learners and other employees.
Participation in Decision making	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only a few MCPs have an idea about participation in decision-making.

Besides the 11 ensured indicators, MCPs and learners try to practice the above 10 promoted indicators in their workplaces. BRAC-SDP field officials think it is difficult for an MCP to maintain all the Decent Work practices. Therefore, officials instruct and brief the importance of adequate working space, display emergency numbers, good wiring systems, machine and material safety, etc. aside from ensured indicators. Shop owners have shown concerns about electrical equipment maintenance, and they try to clean and inspect risky machines regularly. MCPs instructed their learners and other employees to take additional precautions when operating around electric power lines. Furthermore, some employers maintain voltage detectors in their shops and practice frequent inspection of their wires to avoid accidents, while electrical wiring systems were satisfactory at only few of the workplaces. On the other hand, Tailoring & Dress Making shops, Beauty Parlours and IT service shops have enough working space for employees, although some of the mobile servicing shops are built in narrow spaces. In addition, most of the welding and lathe machine workshops have not kept enough freedom of movement for their employees.

Adequate sanitation and hygienic toilet facilities are important for a workplace but there a lack of availability of clean and hygienic toilets has been observed. As a result, some of the female employees avoid their workplace toilets because of issues related to cleanliness and hygiene. However, employers try to ensure clean toilet facilities and only few of them have separate washroom facilities for their female employees. Regarding the issue of working hours, learners from BRAC-SDP did not work for more than 5 hours in any of the workplaces. For regular employees in the workplace, the working hour is up to 6 to 8 hours and they take their lunch break within 1 to 3 PM. Employees and BRAC-SDP learners get sick or emergency leave if needed.

However, employees of Refrigerator & Air Condition service and Wood Furniture shops use hand gloves, safety glasses, mask etc. and written danger alerts sign on the walls for machine and material safety. Most of the learners and MCPs were found wearing masks while employees working without hand gloves were found in welding and lathe machine shops.

In addition, MCPs who got training from PROGRESS project were aware of child labour. Those children who were working in some of the visited workplaces were not involved in any major work. They were just learning things by watching other employees. MCPs tried to maintain a comfortable environment and friendly relations

with learners and other employees. According to learners from BRAC-SDP, they did not face any discrimination or behavioral issues and their trainers helped them while they were working or when faced with any troubles. For example, MCPs taught them with patience sometimes when the learners faced problems with their work. Only a few employers knew the importance of employee participation in the decision-making process. Nevertheless, MCPs give employees the opportunity to raise and share their opinions with others.

Moreover, while looking into the various means of DW practice among the participants, one can get a holistic picture of each trade's limitations. And therefore, the scopes of DW intervention and this practice may as well have a subjective dimension.

4.4. IMPLICATIONS OF DW

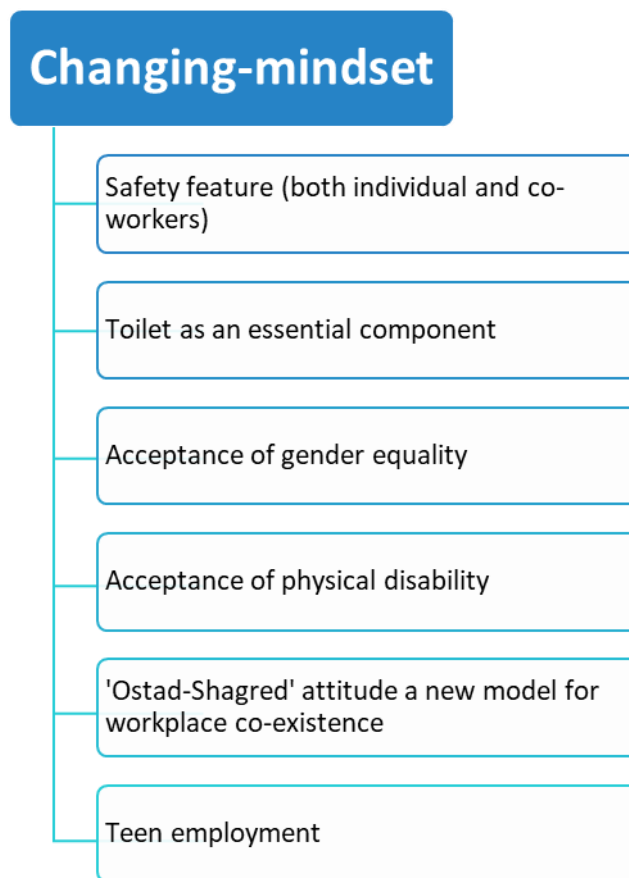
BRAC SDP prioritizes women's emancipation and social inclusion of marginalized population. However, such achievements rely a lot on changes in mindsets, social norms and/or stigma. Now that the STAR apprenticeship programme has been running since 2012 and PROGRESS has also finished its 36 months of operation, whether any of the programmes have led to any such changes is tabulated below:

4.4.1. UNDERSTANDING CHANGING MINDSETS:

In a safe working place, employees not only protect themselves as individuals, but are also able to protect their co-workers. Safety features of the workplace can increase productivity and quality of the work and this is important for each and every employee. This is necessary for protecting oneself from various health risks. Employers think it is essential that all workplaces should have sanitation and sufficient toilet facilities for their employees. On the other hand, gender equality in the workplace achieves equal opportunities and outcomes for all genders. Women can be seen working in trades like mobile servicing shops, IT support, computer and other technical shops which are societally considered unorthodox for them; in fact, there are women learners among respondents in trades such as Refrigeration & Air Conditioning service. MCPs mentioned that they could provide home service to women customers if they have women learners in their respective trade. Acceptance of persons with disabilities has also been observed in workplaces. One of the MCPs mentioned that it is difficult for a person with disability to work with mechanical things but the learners are doing well; he can make them understand and they are

Figure 9: Understanding changing-mindset

fond of their mentor as well.



However, 'Ustad-Shagred' attitudes were observed in almost every workplace. Most of the MCPs stated that the graduate learners still maintained communications with them. This is encouraging because communication between employers and employees is important for a workplace's success. These attitudes boost the employee's ability to develop relationships with their employers. Lastly, change in mindset regarding youth employment was observed. The parents most of the learners believe that a work environment can teach their children how to deal with real life issues or problems and build confidence and self-reliance. Youth employment also gives young people opportunities to establish contacts with employers and teaches them good work habits and responsibilities.

4.4.2. ADDRESSING SOCIAL NORMS:

The figure below illustrates changing social norms that were observed among the respondents. Gender ideologies and roles are changing now. Women are getting more involved in work outside their homes and entering men-dominated trades. Though BRAC-SDP teams try to balance the gender ratio equally but in some trades like tailoring and beauty servicing, women are more in numbers. Stereotyping and discrimination play vital roles in economic activities for women; people often assume that women cannot do hard labour or technical work like lathe machine operation or mobile servicing. However, after receiving SDP training, participants did not think so. There are currently several women learners who are working in the mobile servicing

trade and IT support trade. During the learner selection process, BRAC-SDP teams try to convince the families of women learners to allow them into such trades and trainings. According to BRAC staff, in the context of Bangladesh, women do not want to enter mobile servicing or similar trades.

Economic instability has negative impacts on a woman's development and wellbeing. Now, women with different skill sets are able to provide their families with financial support, but the economic opportunities are not the same for men and women. During the learner selection process, BRAC-SDP officials try to find victims of child marriage and convince their families to let them participate in the trainings. A respondent mentioned that in the case of home services, men colleagues accompany the women learners for her safety. Moreover, there is no discrimination in the workplaces against the hijab. In fact, almost all of the SDP's women trainees wear hijabs.

Besides, people also think that married couples cannot run business together. But, in the present climate, people are running their business with their spouses. To a great extent, a couple-owned business can promote a healthy work-life balance. A trainer in BRAC-SDP programme is leading her dressmaking shop with her partner, and they have shared their work responsibilities between each other. The MCP works as a dress-cutting master and her partner operates the sewing machine. Several small shopkeepers also expand their business over time. Many shop owners who had joined previously as regular employees, after earning enough experience, also establish their own businesses, and within 2-4 years, they gradually expand their shops as too.

On the other hand, there is a significant number of people with disabilities now working in various fields. In the SDP programme, a person with disability

Figure 10: Addressing social norms

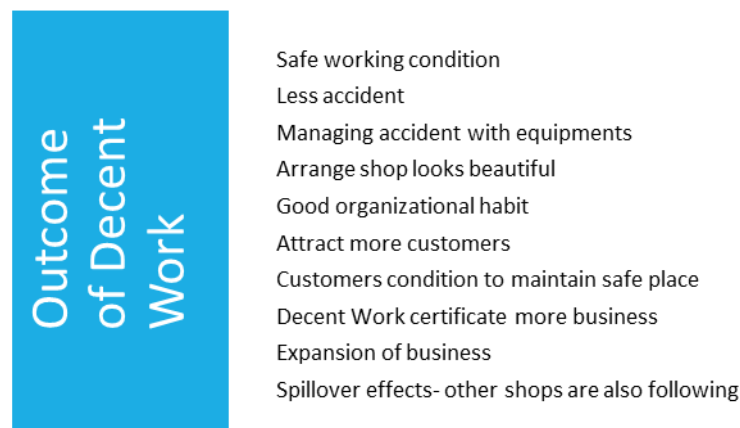


is now receiving his training in a mobile servicing shop. Another woman respondent with disability (hearing loss and speech disability) is currently working in a dressmaking shop as a learner. Person with disabilities have opportunities to develop their skill through SDP training programmes, and some of the physically disabled learners also received financial support from BRAC. Furthermore, for a transgender person, it is often difficult to secure a mainstream job and BRAC-SDP tries to create workspaces for the transgender community.

4.4.3. OUTCOME OF DECENT WORK:

This figure (figure 11) demonstrates the outcome of Decent Work practices in workplaces. Most of the respondents' concerns were about the importance of adequate working space, good wiring systems, machines, and material safety. They try to maintain safe working conditions for them as well as for their employers, and they were not aware of these know-hows before their SDP trainings. As a consequence of the training, lower accident rates have been observed in the field. They keep first aid kit boxes and check electrical lines and circuits regularly to avoid any accidents. In addition, the lists of contact numbers of local hospitals, police stations, fire services help the respondents to act instantly during accidents. By following the 3s practice (Sorting, set in order, and Sweeping), respondents can organize their work and these habits help them stay productive. Also, respondents use separate cabinets, box drawer for tools and equipment; they put everything where it belongs and this gives consumers a positive impression. Customers think a clean workplace provides quality products and services, so respondents try to maintain good organisational habits and cleanliness in their services. The training certificate also creates a pleasant impression on the customers; it looks important and successfully attracts a customer. Some of the respondents prepare monthly documents for their activities to maintain clean desks with paper folders. Decent Work practices not only help the people who receive training from BRAC-SDP but also support the people around them. For example, people can now collect emergency phone numbers from the workplaces, affiliated with BRAC SDP, receive primary treatment through their first aid boxes, and so on.

Figure 11: Outcome of Decent Work



5. DECENT WORK SUCCESS STORIES

A brief summary of the success stories and/or case studies is given in the following table, while highlighting the major elements of success for each case which have been chosen from an array of trades and locations. These stories are based on uniqueness as per field level findings.

Table 16: Summary of the Success Stories

Trade	Location	Details	Unique Elements of Success
Wood Furniture-making (WF)	Jashore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCP: Amol Kumar Shop: Amol Naksha Ghor Learners at present: 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocates for persons with disabilities. Utmost care for learners. Decent Work practice.
IT Support Technician (IST)	Cumilla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCP: Bishwajit Kumar Paul Shop: Computer Palace Learners at present: 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in perspective. Awareness of women protection. Decent Work practice.
Light Engineering Company Owner (LEO)	Gazipur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCP: Habibur Rahman Shop: Siam Rubber Learners at present: None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion of business. International correlation due to Decent Work. Decent Work practice.
Mobile Phone Servicing (MPS)	Gazipur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCP: MD. Jasim Shop: Jasim Telecom Learners at present: 2 Learner to MCP: Habibur Rahman Shop: Habib Telecom Learners at present: 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition from learner to MCP. Decent Work practice.
Tailoring and Dress making Female (TDM-F)	Rangpur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCP: Mohammad Shahed Ali Shop: Shakira Moni Tailors Learners at present: 2 (one of them disabled) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners being able to overcome barriers of marriage for work. Consciousness of mentor. Decent Work practice.

Trade	Location	Details	Unique Elements of Success
Refrigeration and Air Conditioning (RAC)	Rangpur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCP: Tarikul Islam Babu • Shop: Tamim Refrigeration • Learners at present: 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New dimension of women emancipation. • High maintenance cleanliness. • Decent Work practice.
Tailoring and Dress making Female (TDM-F)	Jashore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner: Tanzila 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of person with disability • Decent Work practice
Mobile Phone Servicing (MPS)	Cumilla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mohammad Shakawat Hossain Mojumder • Learners: Riyad Hossain & Zia Uddin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of person with disabilities • Strong support from MCP • Decent Work practice

Source: Authors' analysis derived from field findings

TALE OF A PASSIONATE MENTOR WHO BELIEVES IN INCLUSIVENESS



Image: Amol Kumar with his current learners

Amol Kumar, 45 years old, is a living embodiment of resilience and a shining beacon of hope for persons with disabilities of Jashore. Though Kumar's mother passed away when he was just 2 years old and he could not study beyond class five due to financial crisis, since the age of 15, he started working in wood furniture making. At present, he proudly owns a store called 'Amol Naksha Ghor' where he primarily focuses on wood furniture designing and at the same time, making a difference in people's lives.

Kumar is well known as an advocate for persons with disabilities. Since becoming a Master Craft Person for BRAC's STAR apprenticeship project in 2016, so far, he has taught 8 learners and 4 of them have been persons with disabilities.

However, Kumar, by no means, found it challenging or difficult to teach the learners with disabilities the craft of such an intricate work as wood furniture designing. In fact, he found great pleasure and satisfaction in doing so as he says, "I teach people regardless of their disabilities because if they learn something from me and goes somewhere to work, they can always say that they were under my tutelage and that means a lot to me. I will have their blessings."

His passion for teaching is further reflected in his management of employees. For instance, he does not hire any employee for his shop during the timeline he is training learners in order to avoid potential argument among them. He is patient

with his learners, gives them adequate rest and working space, teaches them the ways to work carefully with different machines and cutters, and also the measures to follow during any accident or emergency.

Workplace safety and cleanliness hold utmost priorities for Kumar; despite having both heart and back complications, he himself swipes dust off his shop at least 10 times a day. Little things like maintaining a first aid box can prove to be immensely helpful, for accidents can happen without any warning signs as Kumar recalls a story – “A man and a woman in a motorcycle had an accident few days back in front of my shop at around 1:30 PM. Most of the shops were closed during that time and later on, I aided them, tended to their wounds using my first aid box.”

Besides the expertise of the trade, his current learners, Jayanta Kumar Ray and Niloy Das, seem to have picked up their master’s principles of safety. “Now that I have got such a great master, I would like to learn more. I would like to work in a store where I feel comfortable and safe after the 3-month training, if possible, even here,” remarks Das.

It is perhaps because of Kumar’s commitment to disseminate wisdom and enable others, all of his learners are at present doing jobs at different places in Jashore. In fact, one of his former learners, a person with disability, currently owns a shop for making wooden tables and chairs. Kumar wants to teach more, wants to do more for people: “I wish to teach female learners too but this area is a bit conservative and not safe for women. But someday, I wish to teach them and help them get established.”

A lot has changed for Kumar since 2016 - people around his neighborhood nowadays come to his shop to take pictures of fire service and emergency phone numbers, customers rely on him more having seen his shop being affiliated with BRAC, his daughter’s in-laws feel proud of his work but most importantly, his awareness about workplace safety and cleanliness has heightened, he mentions.



DECENT WORK ENABLES BUSINESS GROWTH

Image: Entrepreneur Habibur Rahman sharing his journey

In 1990, Habibur Rahman was a simple car mechanic with few fundamental ideas about rubber items. In 2000, he joined another job where his first order came from an air conditioning company called Unitech; he supplied them outdoor cable connections. His monthly salary back then was only 3,500 BDT and the job was, in his words, unsatisfactory. Fast forward to 2020 - Rahman is an entrepreneur, the owner of a shop called 'Siam Rubber', a proud sole producer of machine parts in Gazipur, specializing in both rubber and plastic items, trading with various international pharmaceutical companies, while making a profit of 5,000 BDT per rubber item per week.

Rahman has been a self-made man, always eager to better himself and his craft. But his inspiring career took off in a new direction once he received training from BRAC in 2018 as a Light Engineering Company Owner (LEO) under their PROGRESS development project.

'Siam Rubber', the shop previously devoid of protective gears or fire extinguishers and good working conditions, was completely revamped by Rahman in the wake of his training. He arranged different PPEs (Personal Protective Equipment) for different machines, began to maintain a first aid box, a neat and clean working environment, thick gloves, glasses, adequate working space and so on. Rahman's initiatives enabled him to expand his business and strike a deal with some of the giants of

pharmaceuticals, the likes of Novartis.

“Foreign companies do not offer us work without this training certificate. They want to see whether we maintain safety or not and I think it’s the right thing to do” – says Rahman about BRAC’s certification for participating in their PROGRESS training.

Rahman has grown so much in confidence, thanks to the introduction of decent work practices, that he has employed a person with disability in his hand, with full assurance of his safety even while working on hazardous lathe machines. He himself gives hands-on training on occupational health and safety standards to each and every employee. Yes, all of his innovative and conscious steps, for instance the installation of CCTV for constant supervision of the workplace, cost him but he believes that these costs must be met as they are necessary for the growth of business. “None of the safety measures I have taken are needed on a regular basis. But having said so, accidents don’t take place every day, but must such a day come, I am well prepared,” boasts Rahman.

Rahman is undoubtedly a figure to look up to in the light engineering sector as he shares his vast knowledge and suggestions about the sector: “Today, the small business I started years ago is penetrating into major industries and I’m presentable and worthy of getting orders from big pharmaceuticals. I must say that this sector has huge potential and all we need is a more skilled workforce, learned engineers and technicians and more trainings.”



‘B’ FOR BEHAVIOUR, ‘B’ FOR BELIEF

Image: Mohammad Shahed Ali with his current learners

Bulbuli Khatun and Nargis Akhter, two young teenage girls from Rangpur, besides their friendship have another thing in common – coping up with the drudgery of societal pressure and contempt of women with regards to marriage.

While Khatun faced the problem of dowry and was left helpless with her baby by her unsupportive partner, Akhter felt the pressure of getting married at an early age from the society which deemed it as the only probable solution to her physical disability. However, none of them succumbed to their circumstances and started their training as learners of BRAC’s STAR apprenticeship project in a tailoring shop called ‘Shakira Moni Tailors’ under the mentorship of Mohammed Shahed Ali, the owner of the shop.

“I want to become self-sufficient and that’s why I would like to be hired as an employee in here after the training, save up and buy myself a sewing machine to work from home. Marriage is not everything for a woman,” says Khatun. Her friend, Akhter shows similar enthusiasm towards the training and the possibility of landing a permanent job in Shakira Moni Tailors.

What has fostered their belief on the training programme is the workplace behavior of their mentor and co-workers. Both girls feel comfortable working at this store and are grateful to their mentor for not only giving hands-on tailoring lessons but also

teaching them about workplace safety and cleanliness. For instance, Ali provides his employees and learners with thimble to protect their fingers during sewing and keeps the workplace neat and tidy by himself. He has also ensured sufficient working space for his employees and arranged separate toilet facilities for the learners in a family home behind his shop for their convenience. "I have definitely made a lot of changes after becoming a Master Craft Person for BRAC. I keep sand for fire safety now, I am well aware about the safety of women in my shop, I keep the electrical connections away from everyone's reach and check them on a regular basis," states Ali.

Although Ali gets an honorarium of 1,000 BDT per learner from BRAC, his primal motivation for teaching women or persons with disabilities stems from a responsible citizen's perspective; "I like to teach them for if they get to work and earn, it will eventually benefit the country. It's a chain reaction and it feels good to be part of it," he says. All of his previous learners, 3 of them, have been women who are now working from their homes using their own sewing machines and all of them are in touch with him, he says. "My door is and always will be open for them. If they need any help with orders, they invite me and I try my level best to aid them," says the generous Ali.

Both friends come to work from home by walking for around 30 minutes, which often gets difficult, especially for Akhter but these issues get overshadowed by their dreams. "Well, yes, it is sometimes difficult to come all the way to work but I want to do it for my family. I feel empowered with this training and someday, I'd like to have my own shop. I do not think women are any less capable than men, in fact, I feel privileged to be a woman," remarks Akhter.

JASIM AND HABIB ENCOURAGE WORKPLACE SAFETY IN A MARKET COMMUNITY



Image: Md. Jasim with his current learners

Thirty-three years old Md. Jasim began his business of mobile servicing back in 2006 in a market in Gazipur but it was not until 2012 that his business really started to flourish. In that year, he got involved with BRAC's STAR apprenticeship project as an MCP which triggered the transformation as he says – "I didn't have enough ideas about the business before and I was struggling. But after the training I received as an MCP, I learned how to do a business properly and maintain my workplace." Till now, every year, he has received and trained two learners from BRAC, the work of mobile servicing.

Jasim's tutoring has proven to be so effective that one of his former learners, Habibur Rahman now owns a mobile servicing shop in the same market. As a matter of fact, at present Rahman has also been assigned as an MCP and is spreading

knowledge among various learners, both from BRAC and outside sources.

To both these personnel, what stands out the most in their teaching methods is the importance of decent work practice. For instance, Rahman states: “The first and foremost lesson I provide is about safety, that is very crucial. Once my learners are well aware about the safety concerns, the likes of using first aid box properly or fire extinguishers or the inspection of electrical connections, only then I start teaching them real work.” He also hires employees or accepts learners in his shop in according to his working space for he believes that “one must have enough breathing space to perform such delicate tasks”. His consciousness of workplace setting appears to be an outcome of cascaded knowledge from his mentor, Jasim, for he, too, has shared similar opinions.

Rahman set up his shop in 2018, after the end of his training as a learner in 2017, with the help of a loan from BRAC. He currently imports his electronic products, starting from chargers to phones, from China and distributes across 5 districts in Bangladesh, Jashore, Gopalganj, Patuakhali, Sherpur and Cumilla. Within 2 years of his establishment, Rahman has taught three learners from BRAC and two learners from other sources.

Jasim quite proudly mentioned that some of his former learners, after getting training from him, are doing way better than him. On the other hand, students of Rahman are not only currently doing jobs and financially stable, rather some of them are working in this field abroad, in the likes of England and Malaysia.

The market, where these two masters operate, rely on their guidance for any kind of emergency; for instance, there was this one time when a fire broke out inside the market and it was Rahman’s extinguisher and instant wit that came to the rescue. Both of them seem to have set a standard for decent workplaces that is admired by everyone in their community; customers find their shops lucrative for neatness, other shopkeepers in the market approach them for fire service or emergency numbers and even for preliminary medical treatment, for the availability of first aid boxes in their shops.

However, their only regret is the fact that they cannot help women learners from their positions due to lack of adequate working space for them and dedicated toilet facilities. “Many women learners approach me and it is sad that I can’t help them much even though I want to because of certain limitations of the market,” – laments Jasim.

STARTING WITH MOTIVATION, PERSUING WITH DETERMINATION



Image: Bishwajit Kumar Paul, MCP, at his workplace

Bishwajit Kumar Paul's shop 'Computer Palace' has been a household name in Cumilla, he says, for besides offering IT services to customers, he has taught different kinds of computer-based skills, starting from Microsoft Office to graphics designing, to many students over the past 20 years. However, his recent experience with BRAC in 2019, when he received training as an MCP for STAR apprenticeship project, brought within him changes, in both perspective and actions.

Bishwajit says: "Before this training, I had no idea that even persons with disabilities could operate computers. But when I learned about this fact, I was so inspired that I found someone on my own in the locality who had disability and was inspired to see him respond to my lessons. When I saw him type on the keyboard effortlessly, I knew right then, that we truly can achieve anything we want."

Bishwajit is also determined to practice decent work rigorously in his workplace. For instance, since his shop is located in a market which has one common toilet and most of his students are girls/women, he has arranged a sweeper who cleans the toilet weekly. He, alone, bears the cost of the sweeper for he understands the importance of toilet hygiene. He does not allow anyone inside the shop without mask in times of coronavirus pandemic, checks on his electrical connections on a regular basis, maintains a first aid box and keeps everything neatly arranged in his shop. Every computer in his shop has its own electrical plugging setup rather than using a multiplug to connect all the devices, which poses more risks and despite putting so much effort, even monetarily, he says, "I do not mind spending extra amount on

safety and cleanliness as these are essential aspects of any business. I am certain if I am not careful enough and an accident occurs, that will cause more damage than the extra money I invest now on these things.”

His learners or students do get breaks from Bishwajit when they feel tired or bored, but not just any regular breaks. Over snacks and tea, he casually talks to them about how to face interviews or the potential job opportunities after finishing the training.

What is truly incredible is that a man of his stature, who has completed Masters in Management and took several trainings himself on computer related skills, one in India too, is conducting so much for his students, especially the learners of BRAC who are not charged like his usual students, out of sheer nobility. However, he has few recommendations for BRAC to make the STAR programme more effective. “I think the benchmark for MCP selection must be enhanced. This is because the kind of lessons I’m giving is only possible for an MCP to deliver if he or she has a strong background of IT. Now these learners of BRAC, after getting my training, will not be able to become MCP. They can get a job of course, but the possibility of them landing a good job, that pays well, increases with their level of proficiency, which in turn, is dependent on the MCP’s expertise,” suggests Bishwajit. He also thinks that as a decent work practice, for fire safety, if BRAC could provide the MCPs with small fire extinguishers, it will be of great help; according to him, sand on a bucket is not presentable and does not complement a neat and tidy shop like ‘Computer Palace’.

STORY OF A WOMEN-EMPLOYED REFRIGERATOR REPAIR SHOP



Image: Tarikul Islam Babu at his workplace

The visual imagery of a refrigeration and air conditioning repair shop in Bangladesh, usually, looks like a messy, dirty atmosphere and certainly not the right working place for women; however, Tarikul Islam Babu, the owner of the shop called 'Tamim Refrigeration', in Rangpur, has completely changed that narrative. Babu's business has been running since 2004 and in 2015, he received a training from BRAC as MCP for their STAR apprenticeship project.

Since then, he has so far taught 8 learners (given by BRAC) the work of repairing refrigerators and air conditioners, out of whom, two were women. From his experience with BRAC, he shares something insightful about having women employees in this line of work: "I would actually prefer hiring more women employees now. This is because when women customers need home service and they are alone at home, they feel comfortable asking for my service for I can send my

women employees. For other cases of home service, I ensure that a man accompanies her for the safety,” states Babu. In addition, according to him, women perform better when it comes to maintaining order, be it the maintenance of paper work such as attendance sheet and cash memos, or the organization of equipment. Men, on the other hand, in his words, tend to be more “restless”. Although he has not found noticeable difference in the learning capacity of both genders, Babu certainly feels, in all other aspects, women could outdo men in what is regarded as an unconventional sector for them.

Besides, the training has led Babu to incorporate tremendous changes in his business, particularly with regard to decent work. His shop itself is a rare sight - all equipment, materials have a regular arrangement, he checks all of his electrical connections after every 3 days, maintains a circuit breaker as well to avoid accidents, uses masks, gloves, first aid boxes, provides leaves, uses attendance sheet, cash memo, delivery receipt and to top it off a Thai glass door to keep his shop clean from roadside dust. “I have made most of these changes after the training because now I know their significance. I do believe safety should be our top priority. I consider it a responsibility now to keep my employees and learners risk-free. I think my shop now runs like a company” – remarks Babu.

Babu, or his employees and learners carry out most of the work inside the shop except washing, which is performed in the open place outside the shop. His cleanliness and hygienic practices are not limited to his workplace as he has instilled these conducts in his personal life to ensure the safety of his family members, he says. His sense of responsibility is found when he calls himself the *boro bhai* (an older brother) of his learners and feels proud of the fact of being able to teach them at an age, when they are mostly vulnerable, he thinks. “I love this sector and that is why I teach learners and this experience with BRAC has made me learn so many things, which changed both my business and personal life. I hope BRAC will help me to expand my business so that I can recruit more learners. Our young generation would then be greatly benefitted,” – says Babu.

Babu advises aspiring entrepreneurs to engage themselves in such trainings at the beginning of their startups. He also requests BRAC to provide a hundred percent job security to the learners after the training, for he believes that the learners will then be more motivated towards learning. Nevertheless, his current learners, Mohmmad Ziyad Hossain and Mohammad Nazrul Miya have become fond of their *boro bhai* for his behaviour and would like to continue working in ‘Tamim Refrigeration’ even after the training.

A YOUNG ARTIST WHO DEFIES CHALLENGES



Image: Tanzila is showing her works

Twenty-year-old Tanzila was born with hearing and speech disabilities. Though society had been unkind to her since childhood, at present, she is moving ahead in life and most importantly, she is happy, as discovered during an interview with her at her home. She is married to the love of her life, Dablu, who too, has hearing and speech disabilities, and works as an assistant to a mason. The couple is blessed with a child who has no form of disability. Tanzila has joined BRAC's STAR apprenticeship project in September 2020 as a learner of tailoring and dress making (TDM) trade. For that regard, fortunately, her inspiring tale could be heard with the help of an interpreter, Mehedi Hasan, Programme Organizer of BRAC.

It was Tanzila's mother-in-law who urged BRAC to talk to Tanzila and find out if she is interested in TDM or not. And an MCP of this trade also suggested her name because she has, over the years, become quite popular in the neighborhood for her unique

expertise of drawing. During the interview, she shows a diary filled with intricate mehndi (henna) designs she made from scratch; women living in the vicinity of her area love getting their hands and arms decorated by her, Hasan says. Though Tanzila's father is incongruous about her passion for art due to religious reasons, she has continued to pursue what she enjoys the most and has always received a stronger support from the rest of the family and others. Hasan says that she is so good at drawing and sketching that she could sketch a portrait of a person in no time at all.

Thanks to her mother-in-law's support, partner's encouragement and her inherent artistic aptitude, Tanzila has blended herself smoothly in a TDM shop, where she is learning the skills of tailoring from the MCP who recommended her. The support from MCP has been a key factor for Tanzila's significant growth in within 2 months of the training, in accordance to the time of the interview. "MCP does not know sign language but he knows how to convey basic messages required for teaching her. For instance, with hand gestures, he can tell Tanzila to observe his work and then perform it on the sample of clothing he provides," says Hasan. The programme officers and MCP every now and then consult with Tanzila's neighbors (those who have influence in her life) so that in no way, she feels that she lacks something or she is different from others. The MCP is supportive and patient with her but most importantly, treats her exactly the way he treats his other employees.

For persons with disabilities, fighting social prejudice is always a challenge and same goes for Tanzila and her partner. Hasan interprets Tanzila and says that there are definitely few people in the community who mock them or criticize them, but the good news is that the amount of positivity and support from the surroundings and family members is far greater, which gives her the strength to aim to, someday, own a business of tailoring.



TWO TEENAGERS' FIGHT AGAINST ODDS

Image: Zia Uddin and Rihad Hossain with Mohammad Shakawat Hossain Mojumder

Riyad Hossain and Zia Uddin have been classmates of a high school of BRAC in Gabtoli, Cumilla. But neither of them could pursue education beyond class 5 for financial constraints within their families; poverty hit them so hard that both of them, being the youngest members of their respective families, had to seek work. Before landing a job, the first and foremost thing these two teenagers needed to do were acquire skills, which seemed initially challenging for them. This is because both Hossain and Uddin were persons with disability.

In 2020, both of them were spotted and recruited by BRAC's STAR apprenticeship project as learners where they met their mentor, Mohammad Shakawat Hossain Mojumder, who owns a mobile phone servicing shop in a popular market of Cumilla and has been working as an MCP for BRAC since 2019.

With regard to teaching Hossain and Uddin, Mojumder says, "Yes, I will agree that it is difficult to teach them but that does not mean it is impossible. I am teaching them in my own way and I believe they will be able to finish the training successfully with a lot of takeaways." He further mentions that both the boys have so far shown no challenge in operating any appliances rather have shown curiosity in learning more than they need to about the devices.

The applaud of MCP is further justified while interviewing the youngsters as neither of them speak about any difficulties inside or outside of the workplace; their confidence however can be heard when they speak about their lessons so far. "I know how to wash a mobile phone and bring back power if it falls in water. I know how to change both the mouth speaker and loudspeaker of a phone. I'm learning new things every day and would like to continue doing so," jubilantly says Uddin. On the other hand, Hossain is focusing on how to change the IC of a phone but his

eventual goal is to learn all about all the necessary elements inside a phone.

Mojumder, who feels blessed to have found the opportunity to help persons with disabilities, has not kept his lessons limited to work-based skills only; he has been giving them instructions on decent work practice too. This became evident when both Uddin and Hossain begin explaining fluently and with precise details the measures to take during any accident or injury or for something as trivial as a headache, for instance, Hossain jumps to respond in this context: “I know, I know! I know what to do even if you have a headache. I’ll pour water in a glass, then add saline, stir it, let it dissolve and drink it. We didn’t have to drink saline as of yet though.”

Both the boys are quite fond of their mentor and wish to learn more work in this shop. There are few customers or locals around the market who tend to belittle the learners for their physical disabilities but Mojumder stand by them, and the boys thankfully do not pay any heed to anyone’s comments. “They can perform any work and I’m trying my level best to enhance their skills as much as possible. I do not see any reason why anyone would mock them. If there is any such occurrence, I make sure that it does not get repeated and I talk to the boys as well so that they don’t get affected in any manner,” states Mojumder.

5.1. A FEW HOURS AT A ‘DECENT’ WORKSHOP

In order to conduct a micro ethnographic study of DW intervention in one of the workplaces, operating under BRAC’s apprenticeship project, researchers selected an LMO (Lathe Machine Operation) shop at Bogura. The selection of the shop was done purposively; it was neither the best nor the worst example of DW intervention but rather a workplace that best represents the majority of the overall sample of the study. Besides conducting informal interviews, the researchers spent few hours, unannounced, at different times of a day at and around the workplace and gathered various notes. The observations from the lens of the researchers and their remarks are given below:

Workplace: Gear Engineering Workshop

Address: Matidali, Bogura Sadar, Bogura.

Trade: LMO

Observations:

The gearing engineering workshop is located beside a popular industrial area in Bogura city. Hence, the staff have to work in a noisy environment at all times. This particular shop is around 150sq ft. in size and has 5-6 employees, including two children whose ages must be within 11-13 years. However, during the entire length of observation, the children were not seen working with the heavy machineries or equipment inside the shop. In fact, their active participation was seen when the shop opens at 9 AM. They cleaned the frontal space outside the shop with a broom and sprinkled water to minimize the spread of dust.

In terms of space, the shop looked congested for the employees as there were heavy machineries inside and residues and scraps such as metal chips were seen scattered in different parts of the workplace. Protective gears, helmets and other things were

hanging on walls but when one of the older employees started working on a machine, he only wore glasses to protect his eyes. The dust gathering on the protective gears hanging on walls suggested that they were seldom used. None of the employees were wearing an apron or any other protective gear, except for the glasses. A first aid box was found but its contents were unsatisfactory; only disinfectant and cotton gauge were found inside. The members of staff collect drinking water from a nearby tube well and store it in a bottle. No fire extinguisher was found but a bucket of sand was kept outside the workplace. For toilet purposes, the employees either used the open space behind the shop or the toilet of a mosque in that region. The wiring of the workplace was not up to the mark as most of the wires were seen hanging loosely. All the emergency numbers were printed and pasted on walls inside the shop.

The employees seemed to have a cordial relationship with each other and also with their employer. All of them sat together for lunch, which they brought from their respective homes. In the evening, the employer provided snacks as well. After sunset, problems with inadequate lighting were observed. However, the shop did not remain open for long in the dark and shut down at 7 pm.

Remarks:

It seems that the employees of this shop are aware of DW but not quite keen on practicing it rigorously. For instance, they do have a first aid box but it is not maintained or updated properly; they do have protective gears but they only use the glasses. To sum things up, there are certain positive takeaways from the observation but there are also areas of improvement. Some of the inadequacies are understandable because something like the actual working space just cannot be increased even if one wishes to; it requires financial assistance. But the practice of keeping the workplace neat and tidy can be encouraged. There are also other aspects of their daily work routine that can be improved upon – toilet hygiene and wiring, for example. The mosque where they go to for access to toilets is located a bit far away from the shop, but this does not necessarily rationalise their need to use the open space behind the shop. DW practice for such kinds of trades are certainly challenging but the curricula or the guidelines set for such practices could also be more tailor-made, taking into account the limitations of each MCP and his/her workplace.

6. CHALLENGES, WAY FORWARD AND CONCLUSION

6.1. SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE DW INDICATORS OF THE SDP PROGRAMME

SDP-DW programmes: SWOT Analysis:

SWOT analyses are essential for the evaluation of any project, especially for the likes of BRAC's DW intervention in the informal sector of Bangladesh as it is both new and challenging. In order to aid the programmes of BRAC by identifying areas of improvement with constructive suggestions, a SWOT analysis is prepared as follows:

Table 17: SWOT of STAR/ PROGRESS

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost effective training due to traditional ustad-shagred model Targets the most vulnerable⁴⁰ households Ensures hands on training for effective learning of the trade Market oriented Inclusion of parents in the process Constant monitoring and evaluation through a dedicated team Makes use of technology to assess the progress of learners and stores data for future uses Promotes empathy towards minorities and persons with disabilities Promotes Decent Work practices Decreases workplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal setting of the trades. Though informalization is not a problem, mindset and owners' endorsement⁴¹ of this sector refers to a structural weakness. Markets with common toilets Insufficient transportation cost for the learners Inability to facilitate loans for learners after their graduation MCPs and learners do not always follow Decent Work standards in workplaces Unable to add more trades due to certain constraints, for instance, some trades are too hazardous for dropouts within the age bracket of 14 to 18. Non understandability of terms related to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving employability for school dropouts, person with disabilities, and other minority groups The workplaces attached to these projects are better equipped for protecting themselves from COVID-19 Reducing workplace hazards due to implementation of occupational safety protocols Empowering vulnerable women and aiding them towards increased independence Creating a more skilled workforce Creating awareness among workers about their rights and workplace safety standards Allowing learners to be skilled as per market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Light engineering workshops are more exposed to accident than other trades Lack of clean and separate toilet facilities may result in health issues Emotional sentiment is highly used for incentivising MCPs for the provision of training which may affect inclusion and expansion of the programme Decent Work standard is not always followed; it might result in sudden accidents Mere financial support to the MCPs and learners might constraint the expansion of the programme Training period might not be enough for persons with

⁴⁰ Both income and non-income led vulnerabilities.

⁴¹ Owners endorsed that certain formal environments cannot be established in an informal set-up.

<p>hazards and accidents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces medical costs for small businesses • Increases earnings for both MCPs and learners • Creates awareness regarding prevalent harmful social norms and stigmas • Emphasis on emotional attachments and sentiments • Follows NTVQF • Safe working and training environment • Has field officials who communicate in local social languages • Focuses on technical and vocational training • Information is rich and has an app • Gives preference to participants' field of interest for training • Providing knowledge on modern tools for light engineering 	<p>Decent Work like 3S</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in implementation of Decent Work standard in light engineering sector due to the informal nature of the trade • Difficulty in enforcement of equal opportunity, minimum wage, and occupational safety in informal sector • Unable to address reservations among some MCPs regarding training and employment of women learners • Inability to provide food/food costs which could have possibly resulted in more efficient training • Lack of women learners in light engineering sector 	<p>demand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing earnings and durable household assets of MCPs and learners • Improving working conditions in the informal enterprises • Impact national economy through reducing unemployment rate and increasing per capita income • Promoting entrepreneurship by encouraging youths to be more ambitious about life • Facilitating the use of modern tools and equipment in the light engineering sector • Creation of interest among the general mass about learning new skills 	<p>disabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barriers to financial market disrupts business growth • Reservation of some men MCPs about working with women in mobile service, refrigeration repairing, and light engineering sector might hamper project's goal of social inclusion
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Source: Authors' analysis from various sources

6.2. PROGRAMME INTERVENTION

This study reveals a number of challenges from the perspective of programme intervention. Some of these challenges can be overcome within a short to medium time period, whereas others may take a longer time. For example, though the programme target is well-defined in the project document, however, the term 'marginalized' is quite broad and could very well include people such as widows, acid-survivors, and persons with madrasa background. This is a mere practical or procedural issue which may be implemented within short span of time. Whereas, focus on gender priority both among the MCPs and learners are more of a structural issue which may require a substantial longer time to be achieved. The following table is a brief finding derived from the KII and field observation, where both practical and structural challenges have been outlined. The elaboration of each challenge has also been outlined in the comments section of this table.

Table 18: Challenges/Procedural/Structural

Challenges	Practical	Structural	Comments
Targeting the right audiences	✓	✓	Trade placement of learners is gender specific. Women are mostly seen in tailoring, IT support and computer service while men are seen in mobile servicing and refrigeration & air conditioning service.
Quality of training	✓		MCPs require hand-to-hand practical training or a diploma course
Quality/update of curriculum	✓		BRAC-SDP teams provide a manual book to both MCPs and learners alike during the orientation period. The teams provide learning materials that are easy to understand.
Convincing MCP	✓	✓	BRAC-SDP teams persuade MCPs to train women learners for mobile servicing or similar men-dominated trades.
Convincing Learners	✓	✓	BRAC-SDP Field operation teams persuade learners' families.
Job placement for learners	✓		After the completion of training, BRAC tries to ensure job placement for the learners.
Adequate job opportunity	✓	✓	In absence of proper opportunity and facilities, some of the SDP participants remain unemployed. More importantly, COVID-19 situation further complicated this situation.
A few concerning DW indicators	✓		There is a lack of clean and separate toilet facilities for women. Most of the markets have common toilets for men and women.
Implementation challenge	✓		Learners require theoretical classes to understand Decent Work practices better. It is to be noted that Before COVID-19 theoretical classes were mandatory.
Mind set of programme participants	✓	✓	Usually, women do not show interest in technical or labour-heavy work like welding, lathe machine operation or refrigeration & air conditioning servicing. They prefer tailoring, dressmaking and beauty servicing instead.

Challenges	Practical	Structural	Comments
Ensuring gender friendly workplace		✓	Women inclusion in the trade/business (e.g., refrigerator sector, women is working) has been considered, however, clean toilet which is an essential component both for men and women, is rather absent. According to the MCPs of some trades, since there are no women, hence toilet in those workplaces often remain unclean. Nevertheless, in few instances, field's staff of BRAC and MCP arrange a nearby toilet for the learner.
Evaluation of performance	✓		Most of the learners were found wearing aprons. However, some aprons seemed new and worn for the first time.

Source: Authors' compilation

6.3. CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS ENDORSED BY THE NATIONAL-LEVEL KII RESPONDENTS

With regard to the challenges and way forward mechanisms for DW intervention of BRAC SDP, a series of KIIs has been conducted among five national level stakeholders. They have shared their valuable opinions about the strengths of SDP projects, also the limitations and possible means of addressing them. The details of the questionnaire have been included in the Annex segment of this report and the responses of KIIs have been presented in the following table:

Table 19: Stakeholders' view regarding Decent Work Intervention in the Workplace

Stakeholders	Positive notes	Suggestions
Government Course accreditation- Bangladesh Technical Education Board	BRAC SDP training is an excellent initiative for the informal sector. Through this training, employer and employees gain knowledge regarding Decent Work agenda.	The sustainability of the project can be challenging. Private and public organisations are providing training regarding Decent Work practice in workplaces but they follow their own individual training module. It is better if both private and public organisations follow the same standard of skill development-training module for implementing Decent Work intervention for the formal and informal sectors. Moreover, it is important for a person who has received training in skill development from BRAC SDP or any other non-governmental organisation to have a certificate or accreditation from the Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB). The national training certificate helps them for their new job with better salaries. There should be a linkage between

		informal sector skill development training providers and formal sector training centers. A formal skill development center can provide the academic knowledge and other skills related information. It can minimize the gap between formal and informal skill development training knowledge.
National Association/ Development partners National Association of Small & Cottage Industries of Bangladesh, (NASCIB)	Through this BRAC SDP initiative, employers and employees from the informal sector have ideas about Decent Work practices. People are now more aware than before. This practice also helps them to maintain safety and security in the workplace.	<p>There is a huge Decent Work practice knowledge gap between informal sector's employers and employees. They have less idea about labour laws, labour rights, and workplace rights. For this reason, the institution's skill development training programme policies need to be changed; the policies have to be more employers-and-employees friendly.</p> <p>Also, there is a taboo and conventional mind-set about Decent Work practices. Employers think these practices can increase their expenses and it is an additional investment for any workplace. It can be challenging for a Decent Work-training provider. So, the training provider has to be an expert in this field.</p> <p>Furthermore, public and private institutions' partnerships are important in ensuring the practice of Decent Work agenda in the informal sector because they are contributing to national economy. It also helps to promote sustainable economic growth.</p>
National Skill Development Authority	The government has not taken enough feasible initiatives to include Decent Work standards in the informal sector. Without the government's intervention, DW cannot be scaled up only through NGOs.	<p>A regulation from the government's end needs to be in place. SME foundation can play a crucial role in introducing Decent Work agenda while sanctioning loans to the micro and cottage entrepreneurs. Again, while issuing trade license to the informal trade owners, City corporations and municipalities can apply some conditions on including Decent Work agendas.</p> <p>Decentralization can be a useful measure in this regard. However, corruptions can limit the scope of the expected results.</p>
B-SkillFUL, Swisscontact	The entrepreneurs are practicing some attainable standards. However, the indicators which require significant infrastructural and social norms' changes (for example – including women in non-traditional trades and providing them with hygienic toilet facilities) are yet to be achieved.	Decent Work practices are mostly being perceived as the responsibility of the owners/ entrepreneurs so far. However, the employees/trainees should be aware of their duties and roles as well. It should be a two-way effort.

ILO	<p>The inclusion of Decent Work standards in the informal sector would be a challenge itself because it is 'informal' and thus lags behind required financial strength than that of the formal sector. If initiatives are taken for its formalization to practice Decent Work to a large extent, many of the entrepreneurs in this sector will merely survive in their business.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decent Work-related knowledge needs to be placed in the secondary level education system. It also needs to be incorporated in the BTEB curriculums and NSDA, BQF modules. • Decent Work agenda is present in the National Skills Development Policy 2011. However, once the government updates the policy, more new clauses might be incorporated which would be reflected in the respective Action Plan.
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6.4. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

Targeting Challenges: The beneficiaries or the participants of STAR and PROGRESS were found to be gender polarized; women were mostly seen in shops like tailoring, beauty parlours and in some cases computer services – which in a way, is expected to be found according to societal norms. Whereas men were mostly seen in mobile servicing or refrigeration and air conditioning service shops, in fact, all the participants under the PROGRESS programme, as seen during the study, were men. Such polarization of gender limits the scope of social inclusion and also job opportunities. The definition of ‘marginalized’ encompasses various clusters in the society but limited variation⁴² was found in this regard, among the participants.

Gaps in training: MCPs had expressed their interest to receive more practical training from BRAC rather than a theoretical one, for it was found out in a handful of shops that the MCPs had forgotten some of the things they learned during the 2-day training session. Although both the MCPs and learners are given a manual book by BRAC SDP, it is important to point out that the learners chosen are dropouts who have no connection with education. It is to be noted that BRAC-SDP follow the Bangladesh Technical Education Board Competency Based Training & Assessment (CBT&A) method for learning, which required no education level at the preliminary level. This certainly makes it challenging for them to follow the trainings. This indicates that further focus should be given to practical training rather than theoretical training. On the other hand, MCPs do not attend training on a regular basis (every year or quarterly or of such kind); most of them had been found to have attended only one session years ago, that too for only 2-days, hence, for them to forget some of the lessons seems justifiable. Therefore, a follow-up session with them perhaps can refresh their forgotten memories.

Low Decent Work priority: First of all, the current learners of BRAC SDP, due to COVID-19 are not receiving any theoretical classes and are therefore unaware about many aspects of Decent Work practices. Their extent of DW understanding was seen to be limited to the knowledge shared by their mentors or MCPs. While speaking about MCPs, there were instances which showed that their major concern was not exactly Decent Work practice, rather the business operations and profit margin. Although most of the MCPs were well aware of DW, not everyone seemed

⁴² <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/rwss/2016/chapter1.pdf>

enthusiastic about practicing it imperatively – meaning practicing each and every indicator set by BRAC SDP rigorously. This could again be due to the previously mentioned challenge of not having an extensive and regular training session available for the MCPs and its evidence was found out in the field visits when some MCPs did have pamphlets related to ‘3S’ (Sort out, Set in order, Sweep/Scrub) inside their shops but could not tell what the pamphlets mean and were not seen to be implementing every aspect of 3S either. However, the biggest challenge of DW practice was found to be hygienic toilet facilities – it is a rare phenomenon as most workplaces are located in a market which have one common toilet, and no separate toilets for women.

Long way to go for changing social norms: Besides the earlier mentioned gender polarization found among trades, there were instances of patriarchal hegemony – women, themselves apparently do not show much interest in technical or heavy machinery-based work, as mentioned by some MCPs and them working in beauty parlours or tailoring seemed to be the accepted norm. Though bringing a change in social norms is a time-consuming process, a significant progress is made through this programme, especially in terms of inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Post-training challenges: For the STAR apprenticeship programme, 1 month of follow up of the learners is conducted by BRAC after ensuring them a job which is not always enough as seen during the field visits. For instance, some cases had been discovered where a learner left the job after 2 months or so or has not maintained any connection with his or her MCP. These cases could be avoided if there is a direct linkage of the programme to the subsequent industries so that learners can have a wide range of job opportunities and the MCPs themselves could benefit via that connection in different ways, for example, in terms of expansion.

Avenue to address challenges mentioned above: To put things in a nutshell, from what has been seen during the period of study, it must be mentioned that the DW intervention conducted by BRAC in their STAR and PROGRESS programmes, so far, have produced mixed results. Certain life saving measures, in terms of fire safety and maintaining a first aid box, are well practiced in almost every workplace but a neat and clean workplace is still a challenging aspect to work on for most of the workplaces.

Mixed enthusiasm among MCPs: On one hand, there were plenty of positives to take away from these programmes in the sense that most of the MCPs acknowledged DW practices and even deployed some of the DW elements but on the other hand, less enthusiasm was seen among both employers and employees to rigorously follow the guidelines of DW practices. However, this conclusion varies among trades; for instance, mobile servicing shops or tailoring shops usually cater to a decent set of customers, hence, maintaining cleanliness and hygiene and other paraphernalia of DW was quite easier for the employers of these shops rather than the ones who operate on lathe machines per se.

Need guidance for the learners to choose trades: Since the apprenticeship programmes focus on youth who have dropped out of education, therein lies a philosophical conundrum and it is because of the fact that the involved trades of the informal sector are sociologically seen as inferior work, basically work that does not give you dignity and respect in the community; therefore, when a dropout sees that he or she has no option but to work in a unclean lathe machine shop, it could act as

demotivating factor for the individual. This is a concern since not all dropouts could feel enthusiastic about working in the informal sector; some are maybe doing so out of sheer necessity, with the hope of landing a job in the future. In this regard, more dialogue with the learners lead to a more effective scaffolding of the two programmes.

Need more care for women learners in case of job placement: Job placement after the training must be an imperative part of the programmes, otherwise the apprenticeship would not be fruitful. Women, mostly, after training, as seen during the study, start to work from homes for they either get married or shift to a different location. But how many women are really making the best use of their training? How many women are buying sewing machines at their homes and continuing their work? Are these women finding it difficult to buy a sewing machine? What about the women learners of other trades then? Since most of the learners' hail from a vulnerable family, even if it is understandable for a woman learner to buy a sewing machine after the training and continue to work from home, if required, it is difficult for a woman learner of a trade such as IST to do so for buying a computer is most likely to be an unbearable cost for the respective learner. A public-private model is required where government in collaboration with the ADB/WB/ILO and private chamber bodies can aid such women and hence, benefit the society.

Overcoming post-training challenges: A training data base can be developed, shared and updated by the SDP programme management. Though TaroWorks is maintaining a large database, it needs to carry forward along with learners' updated information. Alumni of the learners can be created and there could be an alumna meeting once a year. These steps could potentially achieve twin objectives; the updated status of the learners could be known and could perhaps provide opportunity for employment of the learners and new business ventures for the MCPs.

Scaling up in coordination with relevant stakeholders The scope of work for these two programmes is still limited and the only viable way to scale up BRAC's operations is by engaging the government, public and private partners and creating a citizen platform, which can be achieved through various promotional means – such strategies would be beneficial in also ensuring that cases of repeated drop outs do not take place, for the greater the awareness among mass about BRAC's initiatives, the greater would be their acceptability, accountability and henceforth, achievements. A change in social norms is undoubtedly a time-consuming process and BRAC's DW intervention has at least, started the foundation of that change, as seen in some of the case studies presented above, but now it is time to build up on the progress and reach a greater audience.

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