



Insights from qualitative, inclusive, participatory fieldwork with learners with deafblindness and women with disabilities in Bangladesh: Phase Two

TO12: Disability Inclusive Vocational Training and Youth Employment programme in Bangladesh

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Inclusive Futures

Promoting disability inclusion

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Insights from qualitative inclusive, participatory fieldwork with learners with deafblindness and women with disabilities in Bangladesh: Phase Two

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Summary

This paper describes and discusses a piece of inclusive and participatory fieldwork undertaken in January 2023, that followed on from and complemented an earlier piece of research in the same sites in Bangladesh in 2022. Please see the report from Shaw and Wickenden (2022) for more details of the first visit.

The current work was carried out in Rangpur and Rajshahi in Bangladesh in close collaboration with local and international NGOs working on disability as part of the UK government Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) funded Disability Inclusive Development (DID) programme. Informed by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN 2006), Task Order 12 (TO12) in the DID programme affirms disabled people's right to work and is modelled on and adapted from the mainstream STAR youth employment programme run by BRAC in Bangladesh.

Learners are given technical training and placed with a 'Master Crafts Person' (MCP) to learn their chosen trade over six months. The DID project (TO12) provided BRAC with support and disability awareness training to enable young people with disabilities to join their existing programme with some adaptations. The specific intervention we explored was part of TO12 but was tailored to include people with more complex and or marginalised types of impairments in an adapted version of the STAR programme. This involved the learners being more specifically supported over six months (longer than the main programme) and given additional support and training by a Technical Trainer (TT).

Our research fieldwork engaged groups of learners from the adapted STAR programme with specific identities (deafblind in Rangpur or young women in Rangpur) in two four-day workshops, using the theme 'World of Work' and aimed to understand their experiences as young people with disabilities, both in general and about this training and work-focussed programme. Phase Two involved two cohorts of learners both of whom had completed the training programme. Cohort One had previously engaged with the research during the first field visit, when they were still engaged in the training period (see Shaw and Wickenden 2022). Both cohorts had by this second visit completed their training period and were engaged in or seeking work in their new trade.

Inclusive, creative, visual and arts based multi-modal methods were used to encourage maximum participation, including with those learners with little or no spoken language or literacy. Some were accompanied by family members (e.g. parent or sibling) who also shared their perspectives on supporting their relative learn a trade and gain increased autonomy and independence. Local staff teams from collaborating INGOs and Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPDs) supported, participated in and learnt from the process. Detail about the workshop activities and data from the participants are presented and discussed.

Recommendations from the participants are provided as well as reflections on their experience of the programme and on how learning a trade had impacted on their lives. We conclude that the opportunity to be supported in learning a trade was very much appreciated by the learners and that this is now for most, transforming their life situation in positive ways.

The role of the local OPDs and INGOs was important as they had facilitated the placement of learners with a trainer, provided individual support including provision of assistive devices for some, monitored the quality of the training, and provided guidance at the end of the training period about next steps in transitioning to work, employment and developing a business.

On a personal level, most of the learners, in addition to learning the skills of their chosen trade, and having an increased income, more earning potential, positive future plans, had gone through other personal transformational changes, for example in self-belief, awareness of their rights, more positive relationships within their families (e.g. gaining respect as a person who can contribute financially), assertiveness and self-confidence as valuable members of the community. Many had a more positive sense of their own identity, moving from being seen as a burden to a contributor. These positive findings were however less marked for those learners with more severe and complex impairments, who are struggling to find a way to achieve their goal of employment and income from their trade.

Similarly, parents and carers of the learners reported positive changes in their relative, being proud of their learning in their trades so far and anticipating further development of their employment and businesses, which would benefit their families. Their belief in the learners was increased and they anticipated positive futures for them.

Both learners and carers however remain concerned about continuing stigma and discrimination against them as people with disabilities, which still occurs both within families and in the community. This was particularly marked for women with disabilities who were seen to experience more negative gender based negative attitudes and treatment than men in many situations.

It was clear that INGO and OPD partners had found the project both hard work and satisfying as they could see real change happening for the learners. With regards to this fieldwork, they reported enjoying the research process and finding the methods creative, innovative and flexible, so that all learners were enabled to join in on an equal basis. They expressed the intention to use some of the methodologies and activities in their own work.

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Acronyms and glossary

ADD	An international NGO focussing on disability
BRAC	An international development organisation based in Bangladesh running the STAR programme.
CDD	Centre for Disability in Development – an NGO in Bangladesh
DID	Disability Inclusive Development programme (FCDO funded)
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office, UK
MCP	Master Crafts Person – providing a training placement for learners
SI	SENSE International – an international NGO focussing on people with deafblindness
STAR	Youth livelihood training programme run by BRAC in Bangladesh
TT	Technical trainer – providing regular classroom training for learners.
TO	Task order – a project within the FCDO funded DID programme
OPD	Organisation of People with Disabilities (these may be local, national, or international)

1. Introduction

Globally people with disabilities are disproportionately represented amongst the poorest in any community, as well as being discriminated against and marginalised in many aspects of life (Grech 2009). One of the key reasons for this poverty is the difficulty that people with disabilities have in gaining access to education and to safe and secure inclusive employment (Bruyere *et al.* 2011, ILO 2015, IDA 2022).

Securing a job may be difficult because often employers have negative attitudes and beliefs about employing people with disabilities (Bredgaard and Salado-Rasmussen 2021). They may have inaccurate beliefs or assumptions about people's desire, motivation and capacity to work. People themselves may have little education and low self-esteem, therefore having internalised the oppression they have experienced from others and believing they do not have a right or possibility to work. Their families may also believe this or be worried about their safety. Community level discrimination and exclusion are also common, so there is little encouragement to seek employment or training in a trade. The expectation is then that they will remain at home and financially dependent on their families or others (Lengnick-Hall *et al.* 2008).

People with disabilities are individuals with various skills and life situations, and different types and severities of impairments, which generate unique access and support needs (for example needing physical adaptations to the environment, communication support such as sign language interpreters or picture-based communication, a slower pace etc). Some face greater barriers than others due to economic, geographical, education, gender and other identity-related factors. People with disabilities with some types of impairments are often more marginalised or stigmatised than others (e.g. those with intellectual, psychosocial, communication, deafblindness and multiple impairments) (Rohwerder 2019). These groups of people are more commonly excluded from 'mainstream' interventions (addressing employment, poverty, access to services for instance). They are also very often left out of specific disability programmes, and research and evaluation processes - even those that aim to be inclusive of all (Lengnick-Hall *et al.* 2008). Bangladesh is no exception, and in a context where many people are poor, those with disabilities are usually the most disadvantaged. Additionally, there is often a gender-based aspect, where women with disabilities are more excluded and experience more negative attitudes and treatment than men with disabilities (Thompson 2020).

This paper reports on Phase Two of in-depth qualitative participatory research fieldwork in Bangladesh with two groups of participants (one group with

deafblindness and one with women with various impairments in two different settings). The fieldwork aimed to learn about the participants' experiences in general, and during an employment initiative which involved training youth in specific trades, as part of Task Order 12 in the Disability Inclusive Development (DID) programme.

Programme background

The DID programme, funded by the UK government's Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO), aims to promote disability inclusive development and tackle systemic barriers to improve the long-term inclusion of people with disabilities¹. Task Order 12 in Bangladesh, the Disability Inclusive Vocational Training and Youth Employment programme, is led by BRAC in collaboration with other consortium partners including the Centre for Disability in Development (CDD), SENSE International (SI), ADD International and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). It is exploring how to include learners with disabilities in BRAC's established STAR² training programme, and additionally how to adapt the standard STAR programme to include those who need more input from trainers and supporters, as well as different approaches, to achieve meaningful inclusion in the workplace.

IDS is a DID consortium research partner, and its role across the wider DID programme is to promote and support the use of participatory, inclusive and reflective approaches (such as those detailed in Chambers 1999, Burns *et al.* 2021, Shaw and Lind 2022) during programme intervention, research and learning activities. We focus particularly on including people with disabilities who are often the most marginalised due to their impairment types (e.g. intellectual, communication, psychosocial multiple and complex) or their gender as we know that women with disabilities are usually more disadvantaged than men (CBM 2012, Wickenden and Lopez-Franco 2021). The IDS input in Bangladesh therefore explored how creative participatory and inclusive methods can be used to learn about the experiences of the more marginalised learners in the TO12 programme. It set out to understand the experiences of the learners, during their training period and then subsequently as they moved into the world of work and developed aspirations for their futures.

¹ To achieve this ambitious brief DID has brought together a consortium of 11 organisations, who are working in collaboration with international and local partners, including Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), in five countries over six years (2018-2024). There are over 50 Task Orders in the global DID programme, which address three key areas of disability inclusion (livelihoods, health, and education) and the overarching issue of marginalisation and stigma.

² BRAC's STAR programme provides training in 17 trades for disadvantaged youth in Bangladesh, through technical training and placement with a MCP, so that they learn their trade during a practical placement lasting three months.

The first report (see Shaw and Wickenden 2022) focussed heavily on the methodologies used, while the present report focusses more on the findings from the research.

Fieldwork outline

We visited Bangladesh to conduct the follow-up fieldwork in January 2023. The overall objectives of this fieldwork were:

- To continue to develop and model participatory methods, approaches, and tools suitable for research and learning activities with young people with deafblindness, intellectual impairments and complex disabilities.
- To convene and run targeted participatory research activities to explore the lived realities, TO12 programme learning and work-related experiences of the participants and build insight on their perspectives on the barriers and enablers to their inclusion in the 'World of Work', with the aim of understanding their perspectives and also informing future programming about inclusive employment and skills development.

Our fieldwork included in-depth and small-scale participatory research processes in two places, Rangpur and Rajshahi. In each location there were four-days of workshops with targeted groups of learners from the TO12 programme and consortium partners.

Here we synthesise our findings in relation to the objectives but with more focus on the second – to gather the insights about 'learners' (now trained) and carers' programme experiences, future aspirations and perspectives on how to build inclusive processes and practices in the world of work.

2. Overview of the research process

2.1 Project partners and fieldwork settings

We collaborated actively with a sub-set of TO12 consortium partners – the Centre for Disability in Development (CDD), and with SENSE International (SI) and ADD International (ADD). These organisations have recruited a wider range of youth with disabilities into their TO12 activities than are involved in the main BRAC STAR programme running in other districts. Specifically, in Rangpur, CDD, SI and the local TO12 implementing organisation Dristy Sangstha have focussed on providing opportunities for learners with deafblindness or multisensory impairments (Jaiswal *et al.* 2018). It should be noted that there is some controversy about these terms (Bright *et al.* 2023). In Rajshahi, ADD in partnership with the OPD Rojoniganda also aimed to recruit from groups that are usually more excluded from both mainstream and disability programme interventions either due to impairment type or other marginalising factors. In Rajshahi we asked the local partners to invite only women involved in the programme to join the workshop (young men are also involved in the programme), in order to explore women with disabilities' perspectives specifically.

2.2 The research team and fieldwork roles

The two IDS researchers (Mary Wickenden and Stephen Thompson), building on the previous fieldwork, co-designed the research processes, methodologies, and activities. They provided brief orientation, reminders and training for the wider team on the approach and support roles (the teams were mainly the same as the previous year when more extensive training about our research methods was given) and led the workshop activities in collaboration with local colleagues.

The team included staff members from CDD/SI or ADD and the local supporting organisations (e.g. OPDs) who provided logistical support and extra facilitation input during the workshops. Our team also included communication supporters/interpreters. Although the needs varied for individuals in the two groups this communication assistance included two Bangladesh-English translators in each setting, as well as sign-language and tactile communication interpreters as appropriate. It also included other personal support to accommodate participants' individual needs. In these contexts, local partners

decided that carers (predominately family members – e.g. mother or sibling) were best placed to provide the needed personal support. This was especially for participants with limited prior educational opportunities, who had not had the opportunity to learn standardised sign-language or tactile communication, and therefore relied on locally adapted or family-based communication strategies used by those who knew them best. Professional sign language interpreters would not have been appropriate in these cases.

Finally, the team included two documenters who took extensive notes, also gathering written information produced by participants and carers during activities, and photographing visual materials including maps, visual templates and a diverse variety of other creative products.

2.3 Introduction to the workshop participants

Table 2.1 shows more details of participants impairments as described by the local partners who know the individuals well, and their relationship with the carer who accompanied them. Participants’ approximate ages are also shown. All were adolescents or young people (less than 30 years old), apart from one deafblind woman who was older.

All the learners from Cohort One (who attended in 2022) returned for a follow up day on their own and then a joint day with the second group. Cohort Two were newly recruited using the same criteria and attended for one day on their own and the joint day with Cohort One.

Table 2.1 - Workshop participants - Cohort One (all names are pseudonyms)

Place and group type	Learners (approx. age) and gender	Impairment	Impairment details (as provided by partners)	Accompanying caregiver /relative
Rangpur - Deafblind (young) learners	Khadija (35) F	Deafblind	Total deafblindness. no education	Betty - Sister
	Saad (17) M	Deafblind	Partial deafness (has hearing aid but doesn't like it). Low vision (glasses). Some literacy	Dula - Mother
	Maryam (20) F	Deafblind	Deaf. Low vision (can see	Aalya - Mother

			with glasses). Good signer. Literate	
	Sami (16) M	Deafblind	Partial deafness (no hearing aid). Low vision. Mild intellectual impairment?	Safa - Sister
	Mamood (17) M	Deafblind	Partially deaf, blindness, mild visual and hearing impairments. Literate	Mayreen - Mother
Rajshahi – Young women learners with mixed impairments	Aamrira (22) F	Deaf	No speech. Some sign language, recently provided with a hearing aid which is increasing her lip-reading capacity.	Sabetri - Mother
	Ibtihaaj (17) F	Deaf	No speech. Limited/local sign language. Not literate	Fatema - Mother
	Asfiya (18) F	Deaf	Good sign language. Good literacy	Tasmina – Sister (and sign language interpreter for the three deaf young women)
	Badaya (15) F	Physical	Wheelchair user and restricted manual dexterity. Unclear speech. Mild learning difficulties	Jhorna - Mother

	Dana (28) F	Partially sighted	Minor difficulties – blind in one eye. Good literacy	
	Asma (29) F	Physical	Minor foot impairment. Literate	
	Chemoli (25) F	Psychosocial	Anxiety. Literate	

Table 2.2 - Workshop participants Cohort Two – all names are pseudonyms

Place and group type	Learners (approx. age) and gender	Impairment	Impairment details (as provided by partners)	Accompanying Caregiver/relative
Rangpur - Deafblind (young) learners	Rafan (22) M	Deafblind	Partially deaf, blindness, mild visual and hearing impairments. Literate	Mother
	Safina (20)	Deafblind + physical	Partially deaf, blindness, mild visual and hearing impairments. Physical impairments. Family signs Illiterate.	Mother
	Sadiq (25) M	Deafblind +	Partially deaf, blindness, mild visual and hearing impairments. Some psychosocial/ intellectual impairments. Illiterate.	Sister
	Malika (16) F	Deafblind	Partially deaf, blindness, mild visual and hearing	Father and sister

			impairments. Local sign language. Illiterate.	
Rajshahi Young women learners with mixed impairments	Sidra (20) F	Hearing Imp		Mother
	Roshni (20) F	Physical Imp	Mild	Came alone
	Samia (19) F	Hearing Imp		
	Malika (18) F	Physical Imp	Mild	Came alone
	Maha (17) F	Physical imp	Mild plus possible intellectual impairment	Mother
	Ilham (24) F	Visual Imp	Blind in one eye	Came alone
	Luna (18) F	Physical Imp	Mild	Mother
	Raha (35) F	Physical Imp	Wheelchair user	Mother/sister

2.4 Outline of the workshop and activities

The IDS fieldwork visit involved five days' work in Rangpur and five days in Rajshahi with the same programme in both places. Day One involved a briefing for staff and OPDs and fieldwork preparation, followed by the three-days of participatory research activities with participants and carers. Day Five involved working with partners, trainers and OPDs to reflect on the workshops and the programme.

2.4.1 Training and preparation

The training and preparation day involved approximately 12 core team members in each setting: two to three key organisational staff, plus the translators, interpreters and documenters; and three to four OPD representatives. The aim was to prepare the research support team for their roles during the participatory research process with participants. Nearly all the team members had been involved in Phase One in 2022, so had participated in the training on participatory inclusive approaches and had practiced some activities and tools before. During the briefing this time, we introduced the new theme 'World of Work' and some of the planned activities. We also provided a recap about the potential for some activities to be very emotionally powerful and that they could unlock or trigger strong responses from participants. We wanted to prepare them to expect some of these reactions and to deal with them appropriately if they arose.

The three days of participatory workshops activities with the learners involved the learners and carers, translators, communication/sign language interpreters, documenters and the key field staff all working together.

The fourth day involved reflection with the wider programme stakeholders. MCPs and TTs who are working with the learners in their trade placements and ongoing classroom training, as well as the OPD representatives who were asked to reflect on their experience of the programme, what they had learnt from being involved and for their recommendations on future actions to promote skills development and employment of people with disabilities.

For an example of a session plan for the first day of the workshop in Rajshahi, see Annex 1. Photographs of the activities are included in Annex 2.

2.4.2 Ethical processes

The qualitative research activities had been approved by the IDS research ethics process as well as through the Task Order research approval process in Bangladesh, administered by BRAC.

To ensure that all participants (learners, carers and staff teams) were safe, fully included and comfortable, we worked in deliberately ethical and inclusive ways and reflected on the activities and any issues at the end of each day. The approach involved making sure that everyone had received adequate information about the workshop (delivered to learners by the local staff in advance), so that people had a choice about whether to join in. Their right to opt out was emphasised and other key aspects such as privacy, confidentiality, acceptance and respect for each other. On the first day, each participant signed a consent form (or had it read/signed to them) to confirm that they understood what the workshop was and what would happen.

Additionally, during the first morning, an activity on 'group rules' generated ideas from the group about ways to look after each other, such as respecting others' needs and listening attentively. This then highlighted indirectly an ethos of inclusive ethical practice within the group and reminded everyone of the behaviour we would all expect of each other irrespective of our individual role, identity and status.

2.4.3 Outline of the Analysis process

In both groups there was a wide range of abilities, communication styles and support needs. These were not assessed formally, but participants' skills and needs for support were described in advance by the INGO team who know them all well. So, some people were confident to talk and write, others were

more comfortable with/or needed visual communication support, such as sign or tactile language, pictures, symbols and gestures. The data collected is therefore in a number of forms (written, spoken, visual images), with the learners 'speaking' for themselves independently as far as possible and sometimes with support from their carer/relative.

Our analysis compiles, summarises and reflects on the information we saw and heard from the participants and the extensive notes made by the documenters and ourselves. We use a broad and flexible version of the thematic analysis approach. This means that in addition to taking note of views and experiences of individuals, we looked for recurring themes and patterns, emerging from different people or across the groups which might tell us significant things about people's lives, the learners' experience of the training in a trade, how people are now building on the training and about the programme overall.

It is important to note that when working with people who may have little or no literacy and some of whom are using alternative forms of communication (such as (formal or informal) sign or tactile language, visual methods such as drawing or mime), and working across languages (Bangla to and from English), there is always the possibility of misinterpretation and misrepresentation. As far as possible we checked with participants (and those translating) to ensure that our understandings were accurate. However inevitably some nuance and detail may have been lost in the processes.

3. Findings from the data: Analysis of participants' lived realities and programme experiences presented thematically

Our analysis generated about 30 initial themes, with pieces of data coded, using qualitative analysis software NVivo, fitting into these themes across a variety of activities. If a quote did not obviously fit into an existing theme, a new one was formed for that data. Next we reorganised/grouped the initial themes into six key overarching themes. We present the analysis and our interpretations and commentary by theme here. We refer to the participants either as learners, by their trade (e.g. tailor) or as carers or as team members such as INGO staff, MCPs etc. We do not identify people by their gender or type of impairment.

3.1 World of Work

In general, the learners reflected very positively on their engagement with the programme and their relationship with their new or evolving World of Work. Several of the learners reported that after their training, they had secured work, putting their new skills to use. The majority had been taken on to work with their MCP, so had stayed in the same work setting. However this was not true of all. The reported incomes ranged from 2,000 to 4,500 taka per month. An NGO partner gave an overview of the status of work for the learners after the training:

'Some learners have a monthly salary; some have piece work (pay per order).'

'Our main aim is to make sure no one is without work, no one remains idle.'

Several learners with deafblindness and or other complex learning needs have not yet found work or put their new skills to use. They are staying at home and some are doing a small amount of trade related work from home with the support of their families. However they are not able to earn much yet.

The majority of the learners expressed very positive emotions about the training, their new skills, their current work and their aspirations for future work. One tailor:

'I love to work. Previously, I couldn't do anything for myself. But now I can cut the clothes properly to make beautiful dresses by myself. I work at the store. Sometimes I earn 3k, sometimes 2k or 2.5k. I also work from home. I want to make my own tailoring shop. I've improved a lot.'

Another learner who works in a beauty parlour said:

'My work enthusiasm has increased a lot during my training period.'

For the majority of learners, the programme has successfully developed their skills for their respective trades. It also affected how they felt about themselves:

'After the six months training, I can feel changes inside me. I can do my works by my own. I can also earn going outside throughout my work and skill.'

Some of the learners with severe and complex impairments, such as deafblindness, reported that the training had been successful. However, for some learners (specifically for one with deafblindness and one with learning impairments), the programme had not been long enough and they or their carers expressed the desire for a more flexible approach, particularly for those who may take more time to learn. Some of the other learners also wanted to learn more and called to move beyond basic skills to more sophisticated training. Some of the MCPs also felt that the training period needed to be longer and more flexible to suit different people's speed of learning.

For several of the learners, having the skills to work has brought them happiness. They feel more included in society and able to contribute to the wellbeing of their family. As one learner said:

'I am really so happy that now I work both from home and outside.'

The learners who are now working described different working environments that were highly contextually specific and mostly suited to their needs and skills. Some learners worked from home, others at their MCP's shop, while some had a hybrid approach of sometimes working at home and other times with the MCP. The location of work was found to depend on multiple factors, including the level of support needed/available, access to customers, family preference relating to security concerns (e.g. about travel), whether the MCP is working on a particular day, and whether special equipment was needed/available. One tailor said:

'We don't have machines at home. We learn things from shop. We do minor stuff at home.'

Another learner also working in tailoring, felt that the lack of equipment at home was holding them back, and that if he had his own sewing machine at home it would increase efficiency. Another described being sick (related to their impairment) for some time, but still being able to work from home. A carer of a learner who is deafblind and a tailor expressed some reservations about working from home from a financial perspective, stating that when working from home:

'Fewer people visit their shop but if she had a shop her earnings will increase.'

Many of the learners spoke of their strong aspirations to build their own business in the future. Some had already started to take steps towards achieving this (e.g. saving), while for others it was a dream for the future. For most of the learners, having their own shop represented the pinnacle of their ambitions. These dreams of future work were driven by different factors, including financial security, independence, becoming more desirable for marriage, ability to contribute to the wellbeing of their family, fame, and to find happiness. As one learner stated:

'I want to earn money and make my mother happy. I want to be the owner of a shop.'

One of the NGO partners stated that he felt the idea of financial independence was the most important factor to motivate the learners to participate in the programme:

'The most important thing is economic solvency. If you have no money then it will be difficult for you to survive.'

Some of the learners were also motivated to work by the desire to feel included. As this tailor explained, the desire to improve social inclusion (including of others) by contributing through work is a strong motivator:

'I don't want to be neglected by others. I want to work sincerely and stand by other girls providing them with tailoring jobs.'

They regarded gaining work and earning as a way to earn respect (both from within their family and in society more generally). For some learners, having a trade has given them a positive identity, which was regarded as bringing with it societal respect.

Many of the learners also expressed the desire to take the skills they now have and train others. As one learner explained,

'Now I've learnt well and know how to teach others.'

Some of the learners expressed the desire to help other people with disabilities. Others spoke of providing training on a more general basis. As a cohort, the groups recognised their potential to support future programmes focused on disability inclusion and skills development, as this feedback explains:

'The group discussed that successful learners of this group can have an important role in future projects for [person with] disability capacity building.'

If the current programme continues, it was suggested that learners from the earlier batches had the potential to contribute as mentors or observers, which would benefit future learners. Others however recognised that they would not be ready to do this for some years.

Some learners spoke of their aspirations away from their trade (e.g. to study something different, to be more religious, to have a beautiful house, buy a car, to get married, to travel etc), and saw their current trade as having potential to help them to achieve their life goals.

Many of the learners demonstrated their knowledge of business skills, as well as their trade skills. For example, they discussed the costs involved (e.g. capital investment in equipment), time, materials/consumables, employees, premises and business strategy that can contribute to making a business work. Many demonstrated an awareness of how to cost their services for different customers. For example, a learner (tailor) reported:

'For salwar kameez we charge 150 taka. But, for poor people we decrease the charge to 100/120 taka sometimes. About men clothes, these are tougher to make than women clothes. So, we charge higher than women's cloths usually.'

One of the tailors explained about employing a loss leader strategy - making a loss on some garments but with the intention of securing other work. There was also the recognition that higher prices can be charged in urban areas compared to rural areas.

To achieve their aspirations and build a business, some learners were aware that it would take time and money. As a beautician (who planned to team up with a friend) explained:

'It is obvious that it won't be possible for us to build our own parlour at first. We need to rent a room and work hard to save money. We need individual savings. Then we're going to buy the equipment at first. At least we need one or two years to build our own parlour. We can also take loans.'

Rent was identified as a major barrier to starting a business. The need for access to capital in order to make a business work was discussed by several learners. Some detailed how they had already started saving. Others discussed the possibility of taking out loans. Opinions on loans seemed to vary, and perhaps reflected appetite to risk, access to capital, as well as other personal contextual factors affecting each learner and their family and their trade.

We have included five storyboxes to illustrate longer pieces of text which we did not want to edit into shorter quotes.

Story 1

'I love dresses. I wanted to buy them but couldn't. I always wanted to make it for myself. I had a dream that someday I would learn tailoring to sew new dresses. First I came to know about tailoring stuff from ADD. I came here and finally learnt it. Now my wish is to build my own store and give jobs to others. I want to be self-dependent. This is my dream right now. Now I'm working as a tailor and I've improved a lot. I earn.'

In terms of timings of business development, some of the learners explained that they are continuing to learn their trade despite the formal training having finished, but that it might be a number of years (estimations ranged from two to five years) until they can have their own business. Some expressed their desire to collaborate with other learners or with friends or family members to develop their businesses. Some OPDs and other groups have started trying to support them to start businesses by providing equipment, for example one group provided sewing machines to help tailors establish a business in Rangpur.

The MCPs worked with the learners to develop their knowledge about running a business alongside providing knowledge about their trades. Engaged and committed MCPs were found to be pivotal to the success of the programme. They played a vital role in encouraging the learners and mentoring them to develop as workers. One of the learners stated:

'My MCP always encourages me. My MCP said in the future he will help me build my own shop.'

The MCPs who participated were found in general to have developed good relationships with the learners and were invested in seeing them succeed. One of the MCPs commented:

'My student is quite meritorious and hard working. After learning from me she has become self-sufficient. She has her own tailoring shop now. I hope she becomes successful in the future.'

The learners also were keen to talk about the support that the NGO partners and the OPDs had provided to them. The NGO/OPDs also provided soft skills (during the technical training sessions), not otherwise gained by the learners as many had not attended or completed schooling:

'The first priority is increasing confidence. Not everyone is earning so much, but confidence is so important. Social training for learners is being undertaken...as [the learners] were not taught basic social skills as children. Trust was low and confidence was low.'

Several of the learners reflected on their continued learning experience about their trade, despite the formal training having come to an end. For example, one learner who is working with computers reported,

'I believe my hand speed has increased.'

Recognising that the end of the formal learning was not the end of learning, another learner reflected that:

'Learning is an endless process to me.'

Selection of a trade

In terms of the trades available to the learners through the programme, these were chosen by the NGO partners, from the Government TVET list of trades which BRAC were working with in the wider STAR programme. Most of the learners appeared happy with their trade. One beautician hinted that she would like to learn other trades too and in general improve her education. Some of the learners had some experience with their selected trade before the programme started (e.g. one learner with deafblindness had some experience of working with computers before entering the programme to learn ICT). Other learners had no prior experience with their trade. The NGO programme staff explained that a lot of thought was put into which trades were offered, and selection was done after consultation with OPDs regarding what trades were most suitable. The trades offered to these four cohorts were ICT, tailoring, beautician, and embroidery. Careful consideration was given for learners with deaf blindness in particular.

The NGO staff felt that the success of the learners in some trades (for example beautician) might be limited by continuing social stigma relating to disability (a judgement that customers may not want to use the services of a beautician with disabilities), so this also contributed to how trades were selected. Thus despite, in theory, people having a free choice about which trade to enter, in reality their choices were more limited, influenced by enduring discrimination and perhaps assumptions about what someone was capable of or indeed should be doing (related to gender norms). So impairment related beliefs and disability related understandings still influenced what people trained as. Indeed there is clearly a gendered aspect to the trades selected, with women training as tailors, embroiderers or beauticians, the men as tailors or computer/IT technicians. Choosing 'non-conventional' gender related roles was not in evidence, but perhaps given the amount of stigma that had to be overcome, this was regarded as an unrealistic aspect to challenge by both INGO and DPO workers. Individual learners' capacity and interest were also considered, as were the families' preference, which the programme staff and carers reported were in part informed by their beliefs and expectations about the financial return of different trades.

3.2 Accessibility

Accessibility was found to have been given careful consideration by the programme partners as part of the implementation. Before the learners started at a workplace, the partner NGOs and OPDs ensured that assistive devices were available for those that did not have them (e.g. hearing aids, glasses, and a wheelchair in one case) and that the workplaces were as physically accessible as possible. An assessment was made for each learner and each workspace.

In addition to physical accessibility, the programme outline was presented in an accessible way (e.g. illustrated pictorially as well as being written in English and Bangla so it was accessible to those who were illiterate). This type of adaptation was continued by the MCPs, some of whom reporting using illustrated guidance to assist the learners to gain new skills. However, for learners with learning impairments (of whom there were only a very few), it was felt that more could have been done to ensure that their needs were accommodated. For example, the amount of training available was standard for all learners (six months), which resulted in those with learning impairments being left behind as their pace of learning is slower and more practice is needed. As the mother of a learner with learning difficulties who completed the training but is yet to start work commented:

'He needs more training since he is a slow learner.'

It was recommended that especially for those with learning impairments, a more flexible approach to training may be needed to ensure each individual learner's needs are accommodated.

The learners in Rangpur were all people with deafblindness (or with some vision and some hearing difficulties – although in some cases these were quite mild and some had other impairments too). People with these complex and multiple impairments are often excluded from society in general, but also from disability-focused and supposedly disability sensitive development programmes which still tend to favour and include people with less severe impairments. By purposefully including people with deafblindness, the programme was making a statement about the importance of including everybody and ensuring that the voice of people with complex communication needs are heard. However, in some cases the category 'deafblind' did not seem appropriate for individuals who had mild deafness and blindness, but also some complex physical, cognitive and or behavioural difficulties which may have been more significant than the sensory difficulties (e.g. one woman with cerebral palsy, one man who appeared to have challenging and rigid behaviours).

The point was raised that for some learners, there was the need to earn more money than others (nondisabled people) in order to cover the cost of the reasonable accommodations that they need (e.g. adapted space, accessible bathroom, adaptations for computer, more time). This is a motivating factor to do well in the training and in work, but it also means that the disabled workers have greater financial needs than others who do not have impairments.

Accessibility was found to impact the lives of the learners in terms of both the work itself and the travel to and from work. The travel situation in particular affected the women learners, where there were more concerns about safety in public spaces, while the accessibility issues in work itself affected both male and female learners. One young woman learner reflected on her position in a way that many others also agreed with:

'I couldn't go out alone. There is always a constant intimidation about strangers.'

The travel issues skewed the focus of the programme to urban areas where transport was easier to arrange. While the carers can and do assist the learners with travel and transport, those living in rural areas were harder to accommodate for. Someone who worked for a partner NGO explained:

'The guardians/carers may have been reluctant to travel into work.'

They went on to explain that it may have been harder to find a training placement with an MCP/TT in rural areas. As such, the programme

disproportionately recruited learners living in urban areas where there are more placement opportunities and transport is easier to arrange.

Accessibility considerations were shown to form an important part of the learners' future plans. For example, one learner who had hearing impairments said the following in relation to future business plans:

'I need to have a secretary as I can't speak. And the secretary will do the talking parts with customers on behalf of me. These are all our future plans for being self-dependent.'

As such there was an awareness from individual learners of what impairment related support they needed to be in place in order to make future businesses viable.

Story 2

'I was alone earlier. I was afraid of going out from home. Even the society used to seem terrifying to me. They didn't consider me normally. But after the six months training, I can feel changes inside me. I can do my works by my own. I can also earn going outside throughout my work and skill. My family also treats me well now. I'm also considered as an earning member in my family. My fear haunted me in my past that I can't hear, what would be happen to me. There occurred a terrible accident with the truck. It hit me out. But, with the help of hearing bud now I can hear the sounds of vehicles. I can go out, work and earn. My life is in a better position than my past life. I'm proud of myself.'

3.3 Family matters

Families play an important role in Bangladeshi culture. Members of families generally pool resources, rather than keeping individually earned income for themselves. It is unsurprising that our data shows that families play an important role in the TO12 programme and in the success of the learners' participation and learning. Any earnings that they may gain, would be expected to contribute to the joint family budget.

The ability of a family member to contribute to the family's solvency is regarded as important both from a symbolic position and a practical position. Developing the skills of a family member with disabilities moves that person from being regarded as 'another mouth to feed' to an 'active contributor' to the family's wellbeing. The learner gains the identity of someone who is contributing, as

well as actually earning money. This finding was summarised by one of the programme partners who commented:

'Before [the learners] were a burden, a minus figure, now they are a plus. It is a big achievement.'

The impact of the training was found to go beyond the ability to work. The relationship between the learners and their families was found to have improved and sometimes changed. Before the training, many of the learners were passive family members not having a say in family life. Through the training and the newly acquired ability to earn, learners reported that this changed the family dynamic, allowing them to have their say. One learner summarised this change as follows:

'Once I had no say in anything regarding family affairs. Now I've learnt well and know how to teach others. I've got my own identity... I can contribute to my family and I'm pretty happy to see their satisfaction'.

The positive change seems to have happened both in terms of how the families treat the learners now they have a skill, but also the learners feeling of self-worth, confidence and identity. The desire to please their families was common among the learners. In addition, many stated that they wanted to prove to them that they could work and be independent. The learners saw the training as not only a way to earn money but also to gain love and respect from their families. This desire drove many of the learners, inspiring them to work hard at the training and learn the necessary skills to succeed.

While some learners with severe impairments may continue to require care and support in the future, others regarded the training as an important step towards independence from their parents. Many parents were worried about their children achieving independence, particularly given awareness that one day they will not be there to be able to help or support their children. They also felt sad and worried when they saw bad treatment of their child. Different carers said:

'Neighbours don't accept her.'

'If they do something bad, I don't like it.'

'She can't participate in social functions.'

'When she doesn't get access to opportunities, I don't like it.'

'I feel bad when people say due to her disability, she won't get married.'

Many parents expressed relief and happiness to see their children learning a skill and improving their prospects for independence. As one parent shared,

'I am very happy...when I see my son participating in good works. He really tries hard and pays attention when learning.'

The parents often felt high levels of responsibility for their (young adult) children and wanted to protect them from harm. They regard learning a skill as a pathway towards independence and greater acceptance into society. The learners themselves also saw the ability to learn a trade and earn a living as highly important for their futures. Success would improve their marriage chances, as well as their ability to look after their own children, including paying for their education, paving the way for their own independence.

The general feeling from learners was that their families had been very supportive of the training process and in life in general. One learner stated:

'[My] father's constant support has helped me live my life'.

Another learner said:

'[My] husband, parents and sisters all are supportive'.

However, some learners reported negative experiences with regards to their families. There were some relatively minor complaints about communication challenges with family members and a lack of understanding. There were also some major complaints relating to previous abusive relationships with family members including parents or siblings. This was particularly the case with regards to women having troubled relations with in-laws, where bullying (both physical and mental) and teasing was reported. As one learner stated:

'I was tortured and humiliated by my in-laws'.

Often the parents have been supportive but are very unhappy about the treatment that their daughters have received from the families they have married into.

'However, now that she is earning money this relationship is beginning to change'.

One learner reported that despite learning a trade, their ability to work was blocked by the actions of their family, who created barriers to their business by demotivating potential customers. Despite the training being completed successfully, barriers to economic independence remained.

Families play an important role relating to safety of women and girls in Bangladeshi culture. This role is even more pronounced for women and girls with disabilities.

'[My] mother takes me anywhere for my safety.'

This was an important consideration for the programme implementation as the families' concerns about safety needed to be satisfactorily addressed for the training to be acceptable to all. A level of trust had to be developed between family members, the trainers, the programme partners and of course the learners.

While the issue of safety and security was found to particularly impact on the women learners, there were other issues that were found to specifically impact on the men. In Bangladeshi culture, sons (and in particular first-born sons) are expected to earn for the family and achieve economic independence from their birth family. To fail to do this could bring shame on both the son but also on the father. As such, men learners (and particularly those where were the oldest siblings) felt extra pressure to learn and subsequently earn to support themselves, parents and others such as a wife and children.

Story 3

'I got married when I was only 13. I've many siblings. Because of poverty, I didn't even get any chance to study. What I learned I learned by myself. I used to borrow books from others back to 2008/2009 when I was intended to study at Grade Eight. I've stopped studying after getting married. My in-laws family tortured me brutally. My husband used to beat me a lot. Even sometimes he turned on the music in loud volume so that the neighbours cannot hear my screaming and crying. He's changed. Now he accepted me well and doesn't torture me. I love doing makeup. Lately, inviting children and adults I did make up for free just because I love doing it.'

Story 4

'As I couldn't hear, I could not work either. I'm (was) totally dependent on my mother. Now I know how to make dresses and work for others being at home and taking orders from outside. I've got remarkable support from X [another learner] and Y [INGO worker] to be skilled. Now I've a shop and take orders. I'm pretty

happy to get a rhythm of life. I want to make my life decent and see my parents happy.'

3.4 Responses of others in the community and impacts on identity

Teasing, bullying and exclusionary experiences were reported to be regular occurrences by both the learners themselves and by their carers. Many participants mentioned the attitudes of others towards the learners as people with disabilities. Often these attitudes and behaviours had been very negative and discouraging, with people such as community members, neighbours, potential customers expressing negative views. Learners had been teased and bullied and the view had been expressed that these young people would not be able to work and that they would always be a 'burden'. Some community members said they would not use services provided by people with disabilities. These opinions and actions are thus hurtful and discriminatory. One young woman reported:

'Once I was walking to home, two of girls stopped and started taunting me, with my disabilities. Like why I can't walk properly! I feel so cursed sometimes. I didn't want this life. God gave me this life. There's no fault with me. I didn't choose anything.'

It was clear that stigma has been experienced during childhood by many and for some still is a recurrent theme during adulthood. This had an effect on the learners' self-perception (selfhood), causing them to doubt their own abilities and worth. However, the training and developing of a trade had for many started to shift in the responses of others (perceptions of others/personhood) and also in their own self-identity and belief in a positive future.

'Now things are changed only cause of learning the work. I learned the job, work from home and I earn. I make money. I've changed as a person, even a bit. But, not really enriched with money. Because my in laws family and the neighbours still demotivate people coming to me for doing beautification. They discourage my customers saying I'm not good at it. The changes are not big cause of the barrier. But I'm confident in myself.'

One of the INGO staff confirmed that there may be stigma against using the services of someone with a disability.

'Usually for wedding ceremony people are less interested to be dressed by a woman with disabilities.'

These kinds of discriminatory beliefs are clearly still common. One of the carers described the discrimination against her daughter who has cerebral palsy, which causes her to drool, and this is reacted to strongly by others (as saliva is often seen as unclean and taboo in South Asian cultures):

'Due to drooling nobody at her school sat near her, they didn't accept her at the school. I took her to school repeatedly till Class Five. But no one wants to sit beside her. Now she wants to work and open her own shop. She wants to continue her studies, but the school does not accept her. As for me, I think my daughter is still outside the society.'

This young woman drew a picture of herself and wrote that she wants to 'lead a happy life with her family through working as a tailor. She wants to be accepted by all' [documenters' notes].

One deafblind young man spoke very passionately and candidly about the stigma he had experienced over many years, but interestingly he saw it as his role to reverse this, rather than needing a change of attitude within the community.

'About half of the society still bullies me, so I have to earn their respect.'

On the more positive side, one carer felt that people would be interested and impressed that her sister who is totally blind and deaf could be a tailor:

'She believes since it is rare for a deafblind person to work as a tailor people will find it interesting. In this case her deafblindness is not seen as a burden. She can identify the type of cloth by touching it. She can receive the customers herself.'

Another young man who is now a tailor reported that he is treated well in the workplace by his boss and colleagues

'In the shop everyone is equally paid according to production despite my disability. Everyone in the shop is very helpful.'

An important motivation for many of the learners was making their families happy, being more independent and being respected by others.

'Previously, I was not able to work. But now with the help of training, I've learned really well. I go to the store but not regularly. I also work from home.'

Many participants, both learners and carers spoke about negative treatment by others and a need to change people's attitudes and beliefs about them. They were keen to show others that they could be productive members of society.

3.5 Disability and rights more broadly

Evidence emerged in the different activities of continued common discriminatory misunderstandings/beliefs about disability more broadly, not just in relation to particular individuals. This in turn helps to perpetuate exclusion from many activities in the community including education, training and employment. There was a strong understanding and motivation amongst OPD representatives that their work included promoting understanding of disability, disability legislation in Bangladesh, and people's rights to be accepted, to participate and so to contribute and be independent. The belief that people with disabilities are usually a burden to others is strong.

'If the programme is continued, our society will be benefited. [If] disabled persons can't work they are considered as a burden. If the programme continues they will become independent. They will be able to contribute to society.'

*The disabled people of our country need to unite in order to achieve their rights. OPD plays an important role in providing information, assistance and examples of how disabled people can be of importance to society.
We help the disabled people get access to Subarna nagorik card – a government card that allows disabled people to get assistance.*

We want to have access to our rights. Many people don't even know about the Disability Act 2013.'

Although the OPD representatives who attended the workshop (on day 4) were very strongly motivated and informed about disability rights and what needs lobbying for, this was not so obvious amongst the learners themselves. They had often only recently learnt about the OPDs more activist stance and rights-based arguments. As noted above, many tended to blame themselves for any bad treatment that they received, seeing it as their responsibility to change, rather than it being societies', as argued by the social model of disability.

3.6 Gender – the different experiences of men and women with disabilities

We ran specific sessions about gendered experiences in both places. The workshops in Rajshahi were anyway specifically for women with disabilities who had participated in the programme. Although there were men learners too in the programme, we did not invite them to join our research, as we wanted to explore the particular experience of the women.

In Rangpur where we had mixed groups, we ran the gender sessions separately for men and women initially. The gender focussed sessions encouraged the participants to reflect on and share their experiences and views about the way that gender intersects with disability. We ask all of them to discuss whether there is a difference in the experience of different genders (issues around sexuality or transgender identities did not arise). They considered the situation for men versus women at four levels, echoing the 'World of Work' symbols we used throughout the workshops: individual, family, work and community. The discussions were very animated and open, but also emotive and shocking at times, as people (mainly women) told stories of previously experienced gender-based discrimination and in some cases violence (emotional, physical, sexual), either in the home or outside. One of the women shared her story with support from her sister:

Story 5

'I am a deafblind girl living in the village. One day all my family members went to a function nearby. I was alone at home. Then a neighbouring man tried to rape me. I started screaming, all my family members came back. The man was punished. But since I am disabled and a woman this incident happened to me. If I were a boy, this might not happen. I feel sad thinking about these incidents.'

The women gave many examples of the ways in which life as a woman with disabilities was difficult and felt that it was usually more difficult for them than for men with disabilities. Some felt that women are born weaker and being accepted is difficult to achieve.

Some of these difficulties are probably similar to those that other women in Bangladesh experience, but these are exacerbated when a woman is disabled. There were many concerns about safety, about not being heard or being respected, being under-recognised as a person of worth in the family or society. One woman said,

'We have to face so many difficulties as women with disabilities. We can't move [around] properly. Men with disabilities can sit in grocery store and do their chores but as a women, this is impossible for us to carry on. We take long time to go one place to another. People, relatives, neighbours everyone taunt us. Men can do anything but we cannot. Some of women's husbands and fathers or brothers are supportive also. Sometimes, we really feel so cursed and helpless.'

Generally, the men also agreed that the women had a more difficult time than they did recognising the issues around their safety in public places. One man said,

'For a male it is less difficult to travel. There will be less tension. We just have to make sure that he reaches home but for a female it is much more difficult. Going to school or college alone is difficult for females. Often, they are harassed.'

Another man expressed another perceived advantage for men.

'Because of being a man, one has to do less household work.'

However, the men did describe the pressures they felt, to be a man who could support a family in the expected way as a provider. So, they felt an expectation to earn reliably and well in order to be able to marry, something that several mentioned as a strong wish for the future.

'Since most of work requires hard labor, people doubt whether a person with disabilities will be able to do the work.'

'Financial institutions do not allow him for loans.'

Parents (both mothers and a father) were particularly concerned about safety for young women with disabilities and concern about them travelling to work.

'Women with disabilities are particularly defenceless. There is a worry about the future. Parents will be gone one day. A big question is where will they work?'

Sometimes the women's choices were overridden by their parents' concerns to protect them from danger in public places.

'I wanted to do parlouring. But it's far away from my home. That's why, my parents changed the learning course into tailoring near my home. I'll learn how to do parlouring later on.'

However, several parents expressed very gender and disability equal views about their children which was good to hear:

'For me, son or daughter both are the same.'

'I have two sons, one of them is with disability but I love them equally.'

Some also emphasised that getting business customers was difficult as a woman with disabilities:

'At first it was difficult for me to work. I can make different types of clothes. Since I am a female I have difficulty getting work. Many people don't give me work as I am person with disabilities. I felt really bad about it at that time.'

One group discussed whether it was more difficult for women in a rural setting, and felt it was:

'There is a disparity between city and village working conditions. In the city there is more opportunity for female workers but in the village there are very few options.'

There was no overt discussion about the gendered nature of the training and work choices that they had been offered and had made. It seemed that tailoring being open to both genders, but the other options being suitable for one gender or the other (women doing beautician or parlour work, men doing ICT), was without comment or contention.

3.7 Relating to the programme (DID) and local project (TO12)

Feedback from participants about the programme (of training in a trade) was collected during a specific activity with each group. This comprised six prompt questions, presented as a dice game. Each question was discussed by the group of learners and carers together. The OPD and INGO partners were not present during this session to enable the participants to feel free to make honest and candid responses, which might involve positive or negative criticism of the partner organisation staff.

The questions asked and a summary of the responses were as follows:

1. What do you think about the information you were given before you joined the training?

The learners in general felt that they had been given a lot of information before the programme started. The DPO/INGO staff visiting them at home was viewed as a positive, as they had explained how the project would work. However, some felt that they didn't really fully understand it until they started. They were

given a choice of trades, but this was constrained by travel distances, their perceptions of how much money they would earn, their skills and needs for impairment related devices etc.

Several participants mentioned that the INGO staff had given them 'mental strength to continue', otherwise they would not have been able to manage as they were in very dire situations.

'When life deprives us of chances, the NGO staff provide a ray of light for them.'

'It has made a bond between us, so we will be strong, because we have had support.'

Several learners had been provided with assistive devices, such as hearing aids or a wheelchair and this had really made a difference for them in terms of being able to participate.

2. Did the training you received with your MCP meet your needs?

The support and welcome of the MCPs was appreciated, but some suggested that an assistant or a caregiver needed to be there as well. The MCPs had a lot to do, had too many duties and need extra help with supporting the learners in the workplaces.

They felt that the structure of the day needed to be clearer and transport needed more thinking about. In some cases there was uncertainty about what was included in the workplace (e.g. some learners had to pay for materials such as fabric (tailors) and some didn't, and some said that there was inadequate time to have breaks or lunch).

3. Was the training period the right length for you?

There were mixed opinions about the length of the training. There had been a pre-training period of three months which was appreciated, but many felt that the main placement in the trade settings was not long enough (six months). They felt that they still had much more to learn, and some specific more advanced skills they thought they needed in order to develop a good business. In contrast some were keen to be a mentor themselves, but most realised that this would take many more years to achieve.

4. Was your MCP disability friendly? Did they know about inclusion?

Most were very positive about their MCPs, finding their attitude encouraging. Some were aware that the MCPs had had some training about disability. Some felt that they needed more knowledge about how to teach them in inclusive ways and to make the work easy and possible for them to do.

5. What did you think of the TT sessions?

The participants felt that the technical training (TT) sessions were generally useful and taught them about things that they hadn't known before (e.g. about keeping healthy, safety, rights etc). Some felt that the sessions needed to be better organised, including more time for breaks and clearer arrangements. Some felt that they were not very well adapted for people who could not read and write. There were supposed to be some accompanying videos (made by BRAC), but they did not get to see these.

6. What support have you received since you finished your training period?

The groups felt that they had mostly been well supported by the NGO and OPD workers once their training had ended and, in some cases, had been given specific help (e.g. provision of a sewing machine to use at home) to continue their trade and build up business. Many of the learners had stayed on, working with their MCP and so had a workplace to go to that was familiar. They were mainly happy with the working conditions and financial arrangements, such that they were earning money. Some felt that the monetary deal was equal and inclusive, others that it was not so good at the moment. However there were one or two people in each place who had not been able to continue with their MCP. It seemed that their skill level was lower (possibly linked to their type and severity of impairment and the type of adaptations they needed) and so they needed more support and a longer training period. They were doing some trade related activities at home, but not necessarily earning yet. However, they did feel that the team had been supportive in trying to find solutions and that they had learnt new skills

The learners' and carers' understanding of the broader DID programme running elsewhere in Bangladesh and in other countries were understandably quite limited. Their knowledge and experience were more focussed on their immediate setting and the interactions they had in relation to joining the training programme and associated activities, facilitated by the DPOs and INGOs locally. Some of the learners and their families had known the individuals working for the DPOs and INGOS over a long period, others had only heard about them when they were offered the opportunity to join the project.

3.8 Perspectives from different team members

On the fourth day in each location, we ran a reflection workshop with the extended team who have been involved in different ways: Staff working for INGOs, OPD representatives, MCPs, TTs, and the team involved in the IDS workshops – interpreters and documenters. They participated as both a large group and in small groups to discuss their experiences of being involved in the

TO12 programme and or the IDS workshops. Their perspectives expressed about and across the activities are combined here. Prompt questions asked them to think about what they had learnt and what was new, and what they might do with any new skills during future work.

OPDs and INGOS perspectives

The training programme, using an adapted version of the BRAC STAR model, was generally felt to be very beneficial for the learners although there were aspects which needed more thought and adaptation to suit learners with a range of types and severities of impairments and often complex home/family situations.

The issue of supporting the learners to choose an appropriate trade generated a lot of discussion. The BRAC programme offers 17 trades (in line with government TVET guidelines), but at the local level a decision was made to offer just 5 trades, which it was judged might be possible for the young adults with disabilities to train in. Thus it is not a completely inclusive approach as promoted by the CRPD (UN 2006). It could be interpreted as a step in progressive realisation of this ideal.

Additionally, it was felt that:

'the criteria for selection used by BRAC were not sufficiently inclusive and that if they had been used, then no one would have been selected!'

DPO members emphasised that their input was valuable as they have the real-life experience to bring to the work and can be persuasive to others:

'Our opinions are more accepted regarding disability since general people understand we have a better experience and understanding related to disability.'

Both INGO and OPD members emphasised that they have the advantage of knowing the individual learners and their families very well, so they can provide very targeted and well-suited advice to them.

As a group they appreciated the extra funding, support and opportunities that the DID programme had brought to them. It had taught them new skills in being systematic and organised, about reporting what they were doing and planning. However, one woman with disabilities, a long-term INGO worker said

'I would be doing this work anyway, I will just continue.'

The same worker talked about 'little development' at local level, compared with 'big development' that comes along sometimes. So, funding transforms local knowledge and practice into formalised development. The impression she gave was that this had advantages, but also disadvantages.

They also emphasised the need for further funds to be able to offer continuation of a similar programme.

'There are many more people with disabilities who are at home and not working.'

They said that having 'seed funding' to support people to develop their businesses is really needed to build on the skills they now have and to make them self-sustainable in the long run.

MCPs and TTs

MCPs said they need to understand people with disabilities more in order to help them better and to be able to motivate people and give them the sort of help they need. One MCP said that the learners needed 'mental fortitude' to succeed. He also emphasised that he had had to find out what was interesting for the learners. As well as being 'cordial' with learners, many of them had gradually learnt the best ways to teach their particular learner.

'They (learners) were nervous at first.'

'I taught her physically what to do as she couldn't see well.'

'I had to use gestures, initially I thought it would be difficult, but I used hand gestures.'

'The training we give needs to be accessible and we need to be patient and repeat things if necessary, to make it easy.'

'I helped her to learn in a way that suits her.'

The MCPs and TTs had come to see the learners as individuals. They recognised that the learners had many aspirations which they could help them achieve.

'They are still human.'

'They have many dreams.'

They felt that some people need more than six months to learn a trade, so the MCPs sometimes offered more. The MCPs generally accepted the need for monitoring by the INGO of the learners' progress and how things were going.

'We need to keep track of how they are doing.'

Some MCPs were keen to stay in touch with their trainees even if they were not working with them after the training period, in order to advise and support them in their careers. The TTs have a syllabus of materials to cover, and they need to make sure the learners have understood. They also gradually learnt the best ways to teach the concepts on the curriculum, although they said they needed a training book with more disability aware adaptations in it. The MCPs and TTs tended to keep in touch with each other in order to support the learners well.

The groups felt that some sort of internship would be good after the initial training, in order to learn more skills. People may lose motivation and need encouragement. There are lots of things they need to learn about including safety, technical information etc. The MCPs and TTs clearly took their role very seriously and they said that they had learnt about people with disabilities during the time, and some had been surprised how much the learners had developed over the time.

Finally, the MCPs and TTs themselves seem to have become allies of people with disabilities through this experience, now understanding their situation more and recognising a need for more actions at the structural level to support them.

'People in the political sphere should take note and take more steps/policies to be more disability friendly.'

3.9 Feedback on the workshop itself

The feedback about the four days of workshops was collected through a range of group and individual methods. At the end of each day we encouraged the participants to say a few words about how they were feeling, what they liked, didn't like etc. We also had a team reflection after each session, exploring what had gone well, and any issues that had arisen. On the last day with the learners in groups, we had a flipchart circus, four questions about the workshop were circulated around the groups, so that each person and group had an opportunity to see others' comments, agree or disagree with them and add to them to create a joint list.

Overall, the feedback was very positive. People liked the range of different types of activities including ones which were physically active and fun (a good atmosphere, feeling relaxed), using different creative materials which they were

not used to, using words, symbols and pictures, sharing stories, feeling listened to, feeling equal. The venue and activities were seen to be accessible (including for wheelchair users in the two groups, for people with restricted mobility and vision, as well as support for communication through signing, gesture, visual materials (e.g. using a visual timetable). The food and accommodation were positively rated, although some people found travelling a long way in cold weather very tiring.

The 'staff team' of INGO, OPD representatives mentioned planning to use some of the participatory activities they experienced in the workshops in their own work (e.g. energisers, dice game, using visual/art materials, modelling, storytelling etc). They were also interested in the idea that people can be enabled to talk about difficult subjects safely in a group and that supporting people to express feelings needs to be done carefully and with some expectation that difficult emotions may arise. People's vulnerability needed to be thought about carefully.

The INGO teams were understandably more focussed on their overall project work in their reflections and were pleased that most of the learners have increased their earning power and have gained in confidence. They gave many examples of the learners now being able to come out of their homes and having gained self-esteem and respect from others. Some had 'changed in appearance' (or perhaps in countenance?) – having gained skills and status. It was very motivating for the team to see these changes in people.

The translators and documenters had learned more about disability. They intended to take these understandings into their future work. Some individuals in particular had become skilled in sensitive support of participants during activities. There were some reflections about the way that the activities ran, including making sure that translation from English to Bangla and vice versa was short and to the point. Translators need to keep to an exact translation rather than adding extra material of their own and use simple words and short sentences.

4. Discussion

Here we revisit our aims which were:

- To learn about the about the lived experiences and programme experience of the learners and their carers/supporters.
- To develop, introduce, model and assess participatory approaches, methods and tools suitable for research and learning activities with young people with deafblindness, intellectual impairments and complex disabilities.

4.1 Overall insights on lived experiences and the programme

The key insights which emerged from the data across activities were:

- The training, work placements and accompanying support were found to be successful and appreciated. However, the training period needs to be more flexible and often longer than six months.
- The learners were highly dependent on the support of the INGOs, DPOs, MCPs and TTs to gain entry to the training and to continue with it into the world of work.
- Learners are usually well supported by their families, who are proud of them and appreciate their new skills and earning power/contribution to the household.
- Provision of assistive devices was highly appreciated and for some essential to enable them to become more independent and able to participate.
- Learners have acquired new skills in their trades and have started to have increased income from working, they have many aspirations for developing their businesses and becoming role models for others.
- Financial support to start and develop new businesses is needed as saving is difficult and loans hard to get.
- Some learners are not yet working/earning and need additional support and further training to use their skills and gain more.
- Learners' self-esteem and confidence as well as respect and acceptance from others have increased and family relationships have mainly improved.

- Many learners still experience worrying levels of stigma and discrimination both inside the family and in the community. Some experience gender based, physical, sexual, verbal or emotional violence, (teasing and bullying).
- Gender and impairment related concerns remain, with some women with disabilities and those with more severe and complex impairments still not being fully able to participate in work in the way they would like. Choices can be restricted because of transport, safety and exclusionary attitudes.
- Organising training and business development in urban areas is easier than in rural ones, so those living rurally have fewer opportunities.
- Some learners would like the option of a wider range of trades to enter.
- In some cases the learners' impairments are comparatively mild and arguably they could join a 'mainstream' vocational training programme if stigma and discrimination in these arenas was removed.
- The need for heavy investment of time and effort specifically to promote inclusion and employment suggests that there is still a long way to go in achieving an inclusive training and employment environment for all.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the fieldwork met our objectives of gathering insights from the learners about their training programme and work experiences, and learning more about participatory, inclusive methods that could be used in disability related research with the most marginalised groups.

We have gathered in-depth real-life data from a range of stakeholders in the project, most importantly from the learners now tradespeople themselves, but also from their carers/supporters and from those involved in their training programme and support (NGO, OPD representatives, MCPs, TTs). This shows that overall the programme has been successful in supporting the learners entry into the world of work and has helped them to see themselves as part of the workforce, importantly increasing their self-confidence and status in their families. Much of this increased respect and reduction in stigma is mediated by their capacity to earn money and thus contribute financially to their households. Additionally, they are ambitious for their futures and anticipate reaching goals such as creating their own business, marriage, and supporting/mentoring others in their trade. However, some barriers and difficulties remain, such as endemic discrimination (including gender based) and violence, bullying and negative attitudes and extra challenges for those with more severe and complex impairments. The project demonstrates the success of a targeted approach to achieving inclusion but remains an example of small-scale progressive realisation of this ideal, rather than necessarily changing the broader employment landscape.

The methods used in these workshops demonstrate that using creative, participatory methods, which are multi-modal and importantly last over a few days (rather than one off engagements) can achieve the participation of those with impairments seen as the most challenging. Adaptation of methods and continuous awareness of the needs of those with diverse support needs, enables the lifeworlds of these usually excluded group to be revealed and understood.

6. Annex 1: Example of workshop programme

IDS - TO12 Fieldwork Plans Rajshahi - Day 1

Time	Topic	Activity
9.45		Sign consent forms Colour in self-badges
10.00	Welcomes Introductions Aims of workshop Ethics	Name game with ball Reminder of group rules Ask for volunteer for bell and visual timetable Give out folders Introduce world of work
10.20	Story pot	Each learner to tell the story of their work since last time.
11.00	Break	
11.20	Energiser	Blue ink Sports centre Mosquito
11.30	World of work	Introduce idea of World of work symbol & Concentric circles self, family, community, work environment, wider society (eg local government etc). Stickies on big 'world' – green for positive, orange for what is a barrier in your work, Do individually on their table and then discuss together as they get stuck on big 'world'.
1.00	Lunch	
2.00	How have you changed?	Make models to show how you have changed as a person since you started the training in a trade. Paper with divide in the middle for before and after.
2.50	Energiser	
3.00	Aspirations/dreams for you in your world of work	Dream bubbles - individually. Think about your future. What would you like to do next?
3.35	Ending activity	A Word to say what you thought of today Dance if time Remind participants they will be coming back on Wednesday
4.00	Finish + tea	

7. Annex 2 - Gallery of photos

Below are some images of participants doing activities and related visual outputs. Photographs by report authors.

Places of Work

A series of activities were undertaken to let the learners themselves communicate their thoughts on their places of work. Discussions were facilitated to explore current experiences, who they work with, what they do, and how their work situation could be improved.



Learners used plasticine and pipe cleaners to model their place of work, allowing them to think carefully about their work.



Learners 'mimed' their work, demonstrating to other learners the types of activity they do during their working day. This helped to draw out key activities that they undertook at work and encourage the learners to think about their place of work in detail.



World of Work

Learners place their positive and negative aspects of work on their own World of Work circle and then these were clustered on the big symbol to see the groups views. Green and Blue are positive aspects, Orange and Yellow are negative aspects from the different groups.



Discussion on gender

Safe spaces were created for facilitated discussions on gender to take place.



What the carers think

Carers were given some time to reflected on positive (thumbs up aspects) and negative (thumbs down) aspects of being a carer, using writing and or drawing.



Dreams and aspirations

The learners were encouraged to design 'dream bubbles' based on their individual aspirations for the future. They were asked to think about what they would like to do next. We then collected all the dream bubbles together and added the aspirations to a group timeline to show when the learner hoped to achieve that dream. We then had a discussion about what would hinder or facilitate achieving the aim. Where possible, the learners were encouraged to

do their own. Although the focus here was on the learners, the carers were also encouraged to also reflect on their aspirations.



Group photograph from Rajshahi

Photo of all the participants and the wider team on the final day in Rajshahi.



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