B-SkillFUL
Building Skills for Unemployed and Underemployed Labour

Learnings from B-SkillFUL Pilot Apprenticeship Training
and
Future Direction on Industry led Apprenticeship in Bangladesh

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List of Abbreviations

Acronym	Definition
BDT	Bangladeshi Taka
BTEB	Bangladesh Technical Education Board
BWCCI	Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CBT&A	Competency Based Training and Assessment
CLBT	Classroom Based Training
EU	European Union
ILO	International Labour Organization
IS-ISC	Informal Sector Industry Skills Council
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LRDW	Labour Rights and Decent Work
MCP	Master Crafts Person
NEET	Not in Employment, Education of Training
NGO	Non-government Organization
NSDA	National Skills Development Authority
NSDP	National Skills Development Policy
NTVQF	National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
ToT	Training of Trainers
TSP	Training Service Provider
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNO	Upazila Nirbahi Officer
WBT	Workplace Based Training

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Background

The current Apprenticeship training was implemented by Swisscontact on a pilot basis between October 2019 and April 2020 under the project B-SkillFUL in two districts of Bangladesh. It was funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the European Union (EU). Prior to implementing the current Pilot Apprenticeship training, Swisscontact had implemented two other skill development programs viz., the SkillFUL, and the subsequent B-SkillFUL Phase I, also funded by SDC and the EU. These projects focused on skill development and labour market insertion of vulnerable sections of society, and were implemented across several districts of Bangladesh. Together with their training providers and selected enterprises, B-SkillFUL offered demand-oriented centre based learning for two months, combined with a Workplace Based Training (WBT) of one month, leading to increased employability of learners and a remarkable labour market outcome of 79.55% placements. At the end of B-SkillFUL Phase I the current project was piloted as a fully workplace-based apprenticeship training (without any classroom training) within informal enterprises in two districts Bogura and Tangail. The apprenticeship pilot evolved out of the consultation meetings held by the B-SkillFUL Phase I project team with informal enterprises and Training Service Providers (TSPs) during the last year of project operations. The enterprises recommended that if the one-month's Workplace Based Training (WBT) portion of the existing B-SkillFUL Phase I approach could be extended to three months it could lead to better skill development outcomes and improve employability of the apprentices. This recommendation was taken forward as a pilot implementation of an apprenticeship training exclusively at the workplace, therefore keeping a strong focus on relevance and quality of skills delivery but without any classroom training

Design of the Pilot

The B-SkillFUL pilot apprenticeship training primarily targeted training unemployed youths in informal micro and small enterprises and secure subsequent employment in those enterprises for the apprentices on completion of training. The pilot was implemented in two districts, Bogura and Tangail. The main features of the pilot apprenticeship training design were:

- *Six months of exclusive on-the-job training without any classroom component*: In all 200 apprentices were selected for apprenticeship training in 97 selected enterprises for six months. The pilot was implemented across eight occupations.
- *Cost Sharing Model*: B-SkillFUL would pay a total amount of BDT 3,000 to each apprentice for the first three months of the six months with the understanding that enterprises would also pay the same amount to the apprentices as allowance for the next three months. In addition, the project would pay the Master Crafts Persons (MCPs) in the participating enterprises a token amount of BDT 4,500 for the first three months as training allowance.
- *Employment assurance after six months*: On completion of the six months' training, the apprentices would be absorbed as employees in the enterprises they have trained with.
- *Minor upgrading of enterprises:* A few employers made minor upgrades in their workplaces at their cost to bring positive changes in the work environment such as improving ventilation, and providing basic amenities (drinking water and sanitation). These changes by the employers may be attributed to their increased awareness about LRDW norms and knowledge about structured format of training delivery acquired during the project.
- *Monitoring of the apprenticeship training:* As per the design, two Training Service Providers (TSPs), one in Bogura and the other in Tangail, would be in charge of monitoring the progress of the apprenticeship training. On completion of six months' training, they would verify if the interested apprentices were employed by the enterprise they had trained with.

- *Orientation workshops on Labour Rights and Decent Work (LRDW)*: These workshops were organized in the initial phases of the pilot for generating awareness among employers as well as apprentices on the LRDW components. The aim of organizing these sessions was to advocate practicing decent work norms and providing basic facilities at the workplaces during the apprenticeship training.

Study Objectives

This ex-post study assessed the pilot for drawing insights about its design appropriateness and implementation efficacy. It also aimed to appraise the capacity of local enterprises and identify gaps for them to sustain implementing such an apprenticeship training programme; thereby paving the way for recommending a possible roadmap for replication and scaling up.

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed method approach combining data collection methods. Primary data was collected through a survey of two main constituents, enterprises and apprentices, using structured questionnaires. The survey was complemented by Key Informant Interviews (KII) with TSPs, employers' associations, quasi-government representatives and experts from non-governmental agencies.

One of the challenges of the study was operationalization of the data collection process during COVID-19 times. Lockdown measures ruled out travel to districts, and social distancing requirements restricted conducting face-to-face surveys by district level personnel. The entire data collection process was executed through tele-survey and interviews over digital medium. Pre-survey online trainings were organized for enumerators by combining tutoring on the questionnaire, role plays and practice sessions. Analysis of audio-recording of interviews were used to aid extraction of data.

Key Findings

Profile

- *Enterprises:* 47 enterprises from Bogura and 50 enterprises from Tangail participated in the pilot, totalling to 97 enterprises in the two districts. About 25% of the enterprises were women owned who imparted training in two occupations: 'beautician' and 'tailoring'. While enterprises delivering training in beautician' courses were all women-owned, 67% of the enterprises in tailoring were owned by men.
- *Apprentices:* 69% of the surveyed apprentices were men and 31% were women. The top three trades in which the apprentices were trained on were 'beautician', 'electrical house wiring', and 'refrigeration and air conditioning (AC) technician'. Women apprentices were enrolled for training in only two occupations 'beautician' and 'tailoring'.

Reasons for participation

- *Enterprises:* The main reason for participation of enterprises in the pilot apprenticeship training was the opportunity they got to train apprentices according to their skill needs and thereafter recruit them. More than 70% of the enterprises reported this to be their primary reason for participation.
- *Apprentices:* Providing labour market insertion opportunities to young men and women who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) was one of the overall B-SkillFUL project targets, and accordingly a target of this apprenticeship pilot in informal enterprises as well. The key reason given by apprentices for joining the pilot apprenticeship training was to avail ~~of~~ an opportunity to get structured skill training which, they expected, would to lead to better employment prospects for them. This finding confirmed that the aim of the pilot was achieved.

Reviews on Design

Enterprises' views

- The cost sharing model was largely accepted by enterprises. Close to 90% of the enterprises stated that they are prepared to continue apprenticeships without financial aid in future although they expressed the need for other kinds of financial support to compensate for equipment wear-and-tear and procure consumables. They also requested that the assistance amount be reconsidered during COVID-19 times.
- The six-month duration of on-job-training was well accepted and considered adequate for apprenticeship training. This validated the initiative taken by B-SkillFUL to act on the recommendations received during stakeholder consultations last year before designing the pilot.
- Trainers' acceptance of the logbook as an effective instruction tool was a step forward to move the needle from 'informal' apprenticeships and term future structured initiatives as 'non-formal' apprenticeship training. Once enterprises realize the benefits of a structured apprenticeship training programme, they might inculcate this practice even without being monitored.

Apprentices' view

- The apprentices appeared well aware about their jobs, essentials of the logbook, relevant LRDW conditions, and employment arrangements. This confirms that the pilot intervention successfully achieved its aim to make the NEET youth more employable.
- A significant majority (87%) of the apprentice respondents expressed their need for undergoing simultaneous theoretical sessions as classroom-based training in addition to their workplace training. In a structured apprenticeship format, such a need translates into the need for developing a dual apprenticeship framework tailored to local context.

Training Delivery

- The training delivery showed commitment from the enterprises. About 92% of the employers had attended the pre-training workshop, and 86% of employers themselves delivered the training.
- Majority of the enterprises attempted to provide facilities of access to safe drinking water, sanitation facilities and ventilation in the workplace in an attempt to align with decent work norms. However, some scope for improvement remains in regard requiring enterprises to adhere to decent work norms of providing weekly holidays and practising Occupational Health and Safety (OSH) in the workplaces.
- 17% of enterprises reported that apprentices worked seven days a week. Some gaps were found with regard to availability of first aid kits and fire safety arrangements in the workplaces. More advocacy and mentoring are needed to further orient the enterprises to adopt decent work practices in future initiatives.
- The enterprises could not diligently follow the documentation process and task sequence as set out in the logbooks. Some of their challenges emanated from the ad-hoc nature of their job-works and customer orders. The enterprises tried to align skill training needs with their business needs thereby attempting to converge both needs at the workplace.
- Apprentices were largely satisfied with the quality of training delivered and a majority of them felt confident enough to work independently on assigned tasks. Logbooks were used extensively.

Monitoring

- The TSPs acted as the interface between the project and the participating enterprises. They monitored the apprenticeship training and, on completion of the six-month training, kept track of employment of the apprentices. The TSPs were also responsible for receiving project funds and disbursing to the enterprises and apprentices through e-payments.

- Overall, the survey shows that TSPs made regular weekly visits to the enterprises, checked logbooks and offered necessary advice on technical, occupational safety and health (OSH), and decent work matters. Almost all enterprises (98%) reported that they received regular feedback from the TSPs and 92% of the enterprises reported that they, in turn, regularly reviewed apprentice's work as a result of this disciplined monitoring by the TSPs.
- However, the absence of women members in the TSP monitoring team proved a deterrent to monitoring women owned enterprises and their apprentices. We recommend that initiatives in future must include women members in the monitoring team.

Benefits for Enterprises

- The survey indicated that enterprises gained by participating in the pilot apprenticeship training. Enterprises perceived a multitude of productivity gains by limiting time and cost overruns, increased coordination among team members and, enhanced reputation of enterprises due to quick and efficient service. A significant number of enterprises (88%) reported that they are willing to continue with hiring apprentices even if financial aid is unavailable in future.
- Enterprises' experience with apprentices in this pilot were, on an average, better than their past experience of hiring trainees / workers on their own and trying to develop them through unstructured training mechanisms. The enterprises had mixed responses on the workplace competency achieved by the pilot programme apprentices: they were either at par or were more competent than trainees developed through unstructured training mechanism. However, most of them reported gains from lower absenteeism and dropout rates, better work habits of apprentices in this pilot programme than their peers would demonstrate under an unstructured program.

Benefits for Apprentices:

- The study indicates the pilot was successful in enhancing the employability of apprentices and ensuring employment. Almost all (98%) the apprentices reported satisfaction with the pilot. Nearly 90% of the apprentices reported that they would be absorbed as employees in the enterprises where they had trained, confirming achievement of pilot objectives. Most of the apprentices, among the remaining 10%, reported COVID-19 uncertainty as the main reason for not getting their employment assurances. Of those assured employment, more than 90% apprentices were communicated that they would get a salary raise as employees.

Recommendations

A. Strategic considerations

Scaling up strategy: Considering the benefits of the structured intervention in informal micro enterprises, it is recommended that future programs scale up this structured model of apprenticeship training. A mechanism needs to be put in place to include more occupations within the ambit of apprenticeship training and replicate it across districts.

Differentiated approach of apprenticeship training in micro, small and medium enterprises: The MSMEs form a heterogeneous basket and the challenges of partly formal medium sized units (but they may still operate informally on some aspects, especially on matters of labour) are different from those which are micro and small, and operate almost fully informally. Thus, a one-size-fits-all scaling up approach may not be suitable for adoption by all MSMEs. There is a need to devise differentiated strategies for promoting apprenticeships in micro, small and medium enterprises.

Inclusion of a formal apprenticeship component in the programme: It is recommended that future programmes also have a component of apprenticeship training in formal sector enterprises, while keeping

the promotion of non-formal apprenticeships in informal MSMEs as its main goal. This would help in creating a transition link between the two strata of enterprises helping: (a) apprentices' transition from informal to formal enterprises after some years, thereby making the programme more aspirational for them, and (b) permeation of good practices from larger formal enterprises to informal MSMEs through programme supported networks.

Short term cash and non-cash assistance: Enterprises which show interest to take on apprentices for the first time should be given cash assistance for paying apprentice allowance, especially during COVID-19 times. Such assistance could be made available for apprentice batches which enrol over the next one year. A good first experience by the enterprises is likely to encourage them to see a business case and continue with their apprenticeship programme without expecting subsequent batches to be subsidized.

Three types of short-term assistance are recommended:

- Cash allowance to enterprises for training apprentices for a period of one year (i.e. limited to two apprentice batches in the enterprise): this would continue incentivizing new enterprises joining the apprenticeship system thereby expanding the coverage of the programme
- Cash assistance for purchasing consumables for a period of two years to all new enterprises joining the apprenticeship system (i.e. limited to four batches in the enterprise)
- Non-cash assistance to apprentices in terms of branded toolkit, PPE at the end of apprenticeship period for a period of two years to all new enterprises joining the apprenticeship system

Medium- and long-term support: In alignment with the longer-term policy direction of establishing a self-sustaining apprenticeship mechanism for the informal economy, we recommend that cash assistance to enterprises for paying apprenticeship allowance be withdrawn after the first year of the enterprise' enrolment in the apprenticeship system. However, if enterprises continue to recruit apprentices, they may be provided with a bouquet of financial and non-financial support. Medium- and longer-term support may be of the following nature

- Financial support for workplace uplift and minor refurbishment
- Technical assistance for training of trainers and customized training material
- Sponsoring toolkits and PPE for apprentices
- Support to trainees for qualifying in RPL Assessment

Expansion of women owned business and establishing market linkages: There needs to be a planned and sustained effort to engage with women entrepreneurs, assess their potential, and build capacities for fostering growth. Demonstrable business success will attract and sustain apprenticeships in women owned enterprises. To attract women apprentices, a well-rounded strategy needs to be contemplated to make inroads into the gendered occupational segmentation of skill training to make it more inclusive for women as well as other socially disadvantaged groups.

Institutionalizing non-formal apprenticeships: In the present institutional structure led by the National Skill Development Authority, this institutionalization process can be best anchored in the Informal Sector Skill Council and made operational at the ground level by involving the administration under the aegis of the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO). Both these institutions of Informal Sector Skill Council and the UNO's establishment need to be strengthened by deputing additional staff and other office resources to support and monitor a scaled up non-formal apprenticeship programme. These strengthened institutions could then be better aligned to work with other stakeholders to achieve a common objective ensuring better skills-to-job matches.

B. Design considerations

Initial induction training: An initial induction training of 1-2 months in a centre to deliver basics of an occupation might be envisaged which may be followed by apprenticeship training in the workplace

Duration of apprenticeship training in the workplace: The six-month duration of apprenticeships as implemented in the pilot project may be retained or even extended for some occupations. The study indicates that at least six months is needed for inexperienced apprentices to pick up the basic skills and start becoming productive at their workplace

Inclusion of a classroom-based training component: We recommend that a classroom-based training component be incorporated along with the workplace-based component in the design of the non-formal apprenticeship programme. This could start with a one-month classroom-based training to provide basic knowledge about the trade and the training course, followed by a one-day class per week, during the remaining time when the apprentice is working at the enterprise.

Soft-skill training: The programme design currently provides for 50 hours of soft skills through common modules that include Life Skills (13.5 hrs); Social Skills (7hrs), LRDW (14 hrs) and Entrepreneurship Development (15.5 hrs). While this design may be retained, some changes in the training modules may be brought in. The apprentices in the target group, who are mostly new entrants into the labour market, are likely to benefit more by acquiring digital skills and financial literacy than undergoing an entrepreneurship training which can be given after they have worked for at least a year in their respective trades.

Improving effectiveness of training material: Considering the levels of literacy and cognitive abilities of the target users, as well as the programme direction towards systematizing the non-formal apprenticeship training, it is recommended that the training material (including logbooks) be further restructured: one basic version that could be even more aligned to the limited resources available in the working environment of micro enterprises, while the regular version could be more aligned to the small and medium enterprises. Such an exercise may be undertaken in consultation with a wider group of stakeholders. Regulators such as Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) and Industry Skill Councils may also be consulted, as deemed appropriate.

C. Operational considerations

Improving quality of ToT imparted to the MCPs: It is recommended that trade-based ToTs be organized at periodic intervals to up-skill the MCPs. The Industry Skill Councils needs to be brought on board and, through them, the possibility of mobilizing experienced industry trainers may be explored. These experienced (master) trainers, supported by the TSPs, could hold several workshops for the MCPs at the project locations at an appropriate time before the beginning of the apprenticeship batches. The ultimate aim of this intervention would be to institutionalize these sessions between the industry (master) trainers and MCPs under the aegis of the Industry Skill Councils.

Encouraging enterprises to collaborate: As the apprenticeship programme begins to scale-up, it is desirable that participating enterprises begin to collaborate to exchange learning from their respective experiences to further improve the skills delivery processes – both at the classrooms and at the workplaces. However, this is especially important for informal micro and small enterprises who usually need more hand-holding and adapt themselves faster from shared experiential learning of similarly-sized enterprises in the same trade. Forum of such enterprises can be created at the project locations by activating local associations and meetings of this forum could be convened at the request of the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO). Such meetings could also discuss issues related to local infrastructure, and providing necessary services in the market premises. Creation of this forum, facilitated by the programme, would be an important step towards nurturing a consultative as well as a collaborative mechanism which would be essential to scale-up non-formal apprenticeships.

Financial disbursement: The project team used mobile money transfer to pay allowance to the apprentices and allowances to the MCPs, and maintained necessary records. However, when the programme scales up there is a need to streamline the disbursement process through institutional intermediaries or enlisted third-party aggregators who would have requisite capacity to undertake this work at scale, and at the same time be accountable to the programme authorities.

Monitoring and documentation: The TSPs did a commendable monitoring job within a short period of time and other logistic constraints. However, the assessment findings show there is a scope for improving the monitoring and documentation of the programme. There is need to find more ways of remaining in touch with learners through a process which is suitable to both enterprises and the TSPs. Some of the ways in which this could be achieved have been discussed in detail in the concluding chapter on recommendations. These include monitoring and interaction with learners at the pre-vocational initial training during the preparatory phase of the training, during site visits by the monitors when the apprentices are at their workplace, and during weekly classes, recommended for apprentices.

Another possibility is inducting a more robust digital monitoring process to supplement the present system of on-site monitoring. It is important to begin tracking working hours and learning outcomes in classrooms and workplaces for each learner through digital systems. Initially there may be adoption challenges, but over a period of 2-3 years this is likely to become more prevalent.

As of now, the pilot did not get into collecting data to monitor productivity gains and employability outcomes of the apprenticeship training but may need to do so when the programme begins to scale-up. Once such data begins to get collected, it would help enterprises track the returns they are getting on the investments being made in the apprenticeship programme. The government can also use these analyses to allocate resources based on benefits that are likely to accrue to the country.

From a gender inclusion perspective, and for reasons discussed earlier, it is recommended that women monitors be inducted in the monitoring team.

1 INTRODUCTION

Before COVID 19, Bangladesh was experiencing a period of demographic dividend, expected to last up to 2040, which offered a rare opportunity to boost investment capacity and productivity growth. This stage of development has its own unique labour market opportunities and challenges which would have a profound impact on the country's macroeconomic growth trajectory in future. With the onset of the pandemic, a new set of challenges have emerged which the country must overcome with the pre-existing ones to capitalize on the demographic advantage.

Worldwide, the effect of COVID 19 is leading to mobility restrictions, temporary business closures, and social distancing measures are expected to significantly reduce growth in the economy. The impact has been similar in Bangladesh. These measures have led to reduced employment (in some cases leading to layoffs), abruptly stopping income generation for much of the labour force causing earnings loss to workers in almost all sectors of the economy.

According to simulations, with a negative income shock of 25%, the overall poverty rate in Bangladesh may rise to 40.9% as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic impact.[1] This means that another 20.4% of the population are at risk of falling into poverty. Besides this, most of the 8 million Bangladesh emigrants (more than half of them are in GCC countries) are struggling in their destination countries, and their income sources are affected. Thus, their remittances are likely to significantly drop, which otherwise is sized about a third of the national budget.

The window of opportunity in the period of demographic advantage for Bangladesh is small and the number of new entrants to the labour force far outweighs the employment opportunities available. About 2 million youths enter the labour market each year with most of the employment seekers being unskilled/ low skilled. Just about 46 percent of the population aged 15 years or above have attained secondary education and a fraction (4 percent) have tertiary education qualifications. Only 2.1 percent accessed formal vocational training. The low skills level of the labour force constitutes serious constraints on enterprises and country's labour productivity. The rapidly changing technological environment and the dynamic labour market demands point to the need for a skilled labour force that is highly adaptive to skill shifts[2].

The organized sector in Bangladesh is small and does not have a large employment base. 86% of all workers and 95% of female workers worked in informal economy[3] (Labour Force Survey, 2016). Even among non-agricultural jobs informal employment is the norm, accounting for 90% and 70% of jobs in industry and service sectors respectively. Informal economy is characterized by poor job quality, low labour productivity and limited skills attainment. Jobs in informal economy typically lack basic social and legal protection or other employment benefits.

The Government of Bangladesh recognized the significance of the informal economy and realized that any labour market reform must be inclusive. The National Skills Development Policy (NSDP) of 2012 reflects this understanding and regards skill development as a multi-stakeholder endeavour wherein role of the private sector and the contributions of formal, informal and non-formal actors are important in fostering forward and backward linkages.

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[1] South Asian Network on Economic Modelling (May 2020). https://sanemnet.org/sanem-researchers-assess-poverty-impacts-of-covid-19/

[2] World Bank (2018). *Bangladesh Skills for Tomorrow's Jobs: Preparing Youths for a Fast-Changing Economy*. Dhaka

[3] Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2017). *Quarterly Labour Force Survey Bangladesh 2015/16*. Ministry of Planning

1.1 Apprenticeship Training in Bangladesh

The world has increasingly looked to quality apprenticeships as a sensitive labour market instrument against the global youth jobs crisis.[4] The call for action on the youth employment crisis during the 101st International Labour Conference (June 2012) highlighted the importance of apprenticeships.[5] A G-20 Task Force on Employment comparative study on apprenticeships assessed the overall positive impact of well-designed apprenticeships on better school-to-work transitions and employability.[6] The study also highlighted aspects like duration, financing, involvement of the private sector and government, and most importantly strong labour market institutions and social dialogue as critical institutional arrangements, which determined the success of apprenticeships.

The Apprenticeship Rules 1976 were promulgated based on the Apprenticeship ordinance of 1962. Some apprenticeship regulations were further fine-tuned in the early 1980s for the state-owned enterprises and the further supersession came into being with the apprenticeship rules 1992. In 2006, the Government of Bangladesh enacted the Bangladesh Labour Act (2006) which supersedes the 1962 Apprenticeship Ordinance, as it contains Section XVIII on Apprenticeship. Yet the revised act also did not make any significant change in enrolment rates of apprenticeship and the apprenticeship training system did not permeate well into the private sector.[7] This was because formal apprenticeship as a mode of training remained insignificant and awareness regarding legal requirement for apprenticeship was also low: limited to a total of only 54 formal apprentices within three formal apprenticeship programs in the private sector for the year 2008.[8]

The National Skills Development Policy (NSDP) of 2012 led to the introduction of a new National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework (NTVQF)[9] in the country. NSDP aimed to promote Competency Based Training and Assessment (CBT&A) and, inter-alia, envisioned to re-vitalize the apprenticeship system in the country.

1.2 Informal Apprenticeship initiatives in Bangladesh

Informal apprenticeships have been traditionally practiced in particular trades in many South Asian and African communities and has been the case in Bangladesh as well. Usually, training is delivered by the craftsperson to children/members of his family and interested relatives from an early age, which continues over several years.

However, in the present-day transition stage of development, where Bangladesh is poised to move out from the group of Least Developed Countries, there is a need to develop the skills of 85% of the country's workforce still engaged in the informal sector. Since many enterprises in the informal economy may not be registered or may be outside the ambit of existing legislations along with capacity constraints these enterprises usually have, it is not possible to run a fully-structured formal apprenticeship programmes with them. However, by allowing some latitude and taking into account the local conditions, it is possible to incorporate certain elements of a structured apprenticeship training program when working with these informal enterprises. NGOs and development agencies have made successful interventions in this regard[10].

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[4] G20 Task Force on Employment position paper on Quality Apprenticeships (2013)

[5] Resolution on the youth employment crisis, 101st International Labour Conference (2012)

[6] Steedman, H. (2012); Hoffmann, Ch. Axmann, M. (2013)

[7] Cordier A., Gold E., Md. Habib A., 2012 'EU-ILO TVET reform Project Final Report: 'Apprenticeships in Bangladesh: Strengthening the apprenticeship system in Bangladesh through the application of a dual approach', September 2012, pp. 18, Box. 2.

[8] Mia A. and Md. Karim. R, National Skill Development Council (2015). *Survey of TVET providers Bangladesh*

[9] Government of Bangladesh, National Skills Development Policy 2011

[10] ILO, 2009. *Final Report: Survey and Assessment of formal and Informal Apprenticeships in Bangladesh*.

Structured apprenticeship programmes in micro and small enterprises have become well-accepted training modality in Bangladesh which can address the skill training need, although the potential of such skill training initiatives is still far from being optimally utilized.

Workplace-based apprenticeships in informal enterprises focusing on developing competencies through praxis have a special relevance in skill development of socially disadvantaged groups. Skills acquired through these programs often serve as an effective tool in securing employment which follow decent work norms and helps mainstreaming of these groups. The Informal Sector Industry Skills Council (ISISC), under the National Skills Development Authority (NSDA)[11] is mandated to administer and initiate key reforms in skill development that fosters apprenticeships in the informal economy in Bangladesh.

1.2.1 The ILO's experience

Taking advantage of Bangladesh's existing culture of training-learning through traditional apprenticeships, the ILO implemented a contemporary informal apprenticeship training model in its "TVET Reform Project" between 2008 and 2015. It was implemented in collaboration with UNICEF, BRAC and other partner organizations. The training was delivered through a structured, supervised and time-bound manner comprising of practical/on the job training and off the job classroom training. Another subsequent intervention by the ILO, designed in accordance with the NSDP 2012 policy, was initiated as a pilot intervention through its Bangladesh Skills for Employment and Productivity project (2014 – 2019) to activate the apprenticeship system in the private sector covering both the formal and informal economy. The design of the apprenticeship system, based on the CBT&A, was expected to support demand-driven training in partnership with industries and covered 6,000 apprentices in the informal economy.

1.2.2 BRAC's experience

Another important informal apprenticeship programme (termed STAR) is run by BRAC.[12] Like the ILO B-SEP programme, this is also a six-month apprenticeship training programme specially designed for school dropouts. The programme provides technical, vocational and soft skills through a combination of classroom-based training and on-job-training. Moreover, it also helps informal sector employers foster decent work practices in their enterprises. About 10% of STAR graduates are either persons with disabilities or transgenders; achieving such inclusion is another highlight of this programme.

We have briefly discussed the broader economic context of Bangladesh and the apprenticeship scenario in the informal economy in the introductory chapter. Remaining chapters of the report focus on project specific facts and insights. Chapter 2 gives a description of the project background; Chapter 3 focuses on the details of the design of the pilot apprenticeship training. The objectives and methodology of the study are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 6 is an analysis of the findings of the study obtained from three sets of respondents – Employers, Apprentices and Key Informants. Chapter 7 is a discussion on the recommendations that emerge from the study.

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[11] The Industry Skills Councils were initially formed under the aegis of National Skills Development Council (NSDC). Subsequently, in 2018, NSDC was legislated into the present National Skills Development Authority.
[12] For more details of the programme, see http://www.brac.net/program/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2019-3-19-STAR-Toolkit-External.pdf

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The SkillFUL (2011 – 2015) project was jointly funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the European Union (EU). Implemented across six districts of Bangladesh, the project delivered skills training and labour market insertion for disadvantaged and poor target groups. SkillFUL focussed on Private Training Service Providers (TSPs) who acted as the interface between donors and enterprises. The project enhanced the capacity of the TSPs to offer demand driven, flexible and affordable training to the target groups. The SkillFUL project also contributed to the establishment of Industry Skills Council as the apex body for the Furniture Sector and piloted private sector-led Skills Testing and Certification in the Furniture Sector for SkillFUL graduates and industry workers.

2.1 B-SkillFUL Phase I project

B-SkillFUL Phase I (November 2015 – July 2020), was jointly funded by the SDC and EU. It has been implemented by Swisscontact across six districts of Bangladesh. The project aimed to reduce poverty and improve well-being of 40,000 poor and disadvantaged women and men by increasing their access to the labour market and enhancing their incomes, while safeguarding their fundamental rights at work.

The project facilitated demand driven skills training programmes through local TSPs and supported the linkage of skilled graduates with financial institutions. B-SkillFUL's (Phase I) model facilitated skills training by combining a two-month Classroom Based Training (CLBT) component with one month of Workplace-Based Training (WBT) component in informal enterprises.

2.2 Rationale of this pilot intervention

During the last year of B-SkillFUL Phase I, the B-SkillFUL project team organized consultation meetings with employers and TSPs in five of the six implementation districts to learn more about the effectiveness of training and capture their suggestions for further improvement. Discussion in these forums brought out the inadequacy of a one-month Workplace Based Training (WBT) of the B-SkillFUL Phase I model and a skills mismatch was indicated for many occupations. The enterprise owners recommended that extending the duration of WBT from a period of one month to three months would be a better approach to deriving the demand for skills in the job market.

The present pilot intervention to test an apprenticeship model, was built on this recommendation of enterprise owners obtained during the B-SkillFUL Phase I. The B-SkillFUL apprenticeship pilot was redesigned to be exclusively workplace based with a strong focus on relevance and quality of skills delivery. It was expected that this model would ensure that apprentices are trained according to enterprise requirements, leading to increased employability and getting jobs in enterprises that they trained in. The aim of this intervention was also to test if the pilot can be scaled up as an alternate cost effective and inclusive training method where both apprentices and the employers benefitted.

3 DESIGN OF THE PILOT INTERVENTION

The B-SkillFUL Pilot Apprenticeship Training was primarily designed as an apprenticeship training modality for unemployed youths in micro and small enterprises with the objective of subsequent employment in those enterprises after successful completion of training.

3.1 Unique features of the design

Some unique design features of the pilot intervention were:

- *Six months of exclusive on-the-job training without any classroom component*: 200 apprentices were selected for apprenticeship training in selected enterprises for six months. The pilot was implemented in 97 participating enterprises across eight occupations.
- *Cost Sharing Model*: B-SkillFUL would pay a total amount of BDT 3,000 to each apprentice for the first three months of the six months and it was agreed that enterprises would pay some amount to the apprentices as allowance for the next three months. In addition, the project would also pay the Master Crafts Persons (MCPs) in the participating enterprises a token amount of BDT 4,500 for the first three months as training allowance
  Financial support from the project for the initial three months was seen as a way of incentivising employers to take up apprentice training. It was assumed that if the employers saw a business value proposition in imparting training to apprentices, they would be interested to continue with the apprenticeship training system on their own in future.
- *Employment assurance after six months*: The implicit understanding between the project and participating enterprises was that the apprentices would be absorbed in their jobs at the end of six months with higher wages, subject to the apprentice's performance during the training period.
- *Minor upgrading of enterprises:* A few employers made minor upgrades in their workplaces at their cost to bring positive changes in the work environment such as improving ventilation, and providing basic amenities (drinking water and sanitation). These changes by the employers may be attributed to their increased awareness about LRDW norms and knowledge about structured format of training delivery acquired during the project.
- *Monitoring by Training Service Providers (TSP):* Two TSPs were included as partners in the project. Their primary role would be to monitor that the apprenticeship training progressed according to the training design outlined. On completion of six months' training, the TSPs role involved verifying if the interested apprentices were employed by the enterprise they had trained with.
- *Orientation workshops on Labour Rights and Decent Work (LRDW)*: were organized (separately organized for employers and apprentices) in the initial phases of the pilot for generating awareness among apprentices and employers on LRDW components. The aim of organizing the workshops was to ensure that decent work norms and facilities were followed in practice, while delivering the apprenticeship training.

3.2 Selection and Enrolment

TSPs: The B-SkillFUL Phase I had already established strong partnership links with TSPs in the six districts where the project was implemented. In the selected districts of Bogura and Tangail two best performing TSPs who had a wide network base with local enterprises were selected as partners for implementing the current apprenticeship training.

Enterprises: The B-SkillFUL project team instructed the TSPs to create a repository of enterprises, across eight chosen occupational categories. The primary criteria of choosing enterprises was their capacity and willingness to participate in the pilot apprenticeship training and their agreeing to comply with the cost sharing arrangement. The TSPs initially provided a list of 200 enterprises from two districts which were

visited by the B-SkillFUL team. After close inspection of enterprise's workshop equipment and infrastructure and personal interaction by the B-SkillFUL team with the short-listed enterprises, 47 enterprises from Bogura and 50 enterprises from Tangail were finally selected for participating in the pilot project.

Apprentices: The B-SkillFUL project delegated the responsibility of mobilizing apprentices to the TSPs. The TSPs in their capacity spread the word about the pilot among the community. They also advised enterprises to inform prospective candidates, or their families, who would benefit from participating in such a project. The primary criteria of selection of applicants were poor and disadvantaged groups primarily comprising of youths 'neither in employment nor in education'. 200 trainees were mobilized from the two districts for participating in the pilot apprenticeship training.

3.3 Orientation

TSPs: As the TSPs were somewhat familiar with the overall project by dint of their participation in the B-SkillFUL Phase I, there was no formal full-fledged orientation programme conducted about the training course for TSPs. However, they were briefed by the B-SkillFUL team about the modalities of the project design and implementation, expected outcome and most importantly about their role in monitoring of enterprises. The TSPs' responsibilities consisted of:

- Signing an MOU with the participating enterprises
- Maintaining a complete profile of apprentices and ensure that profiles are signed by both apprentice and TSP representative
- Confirming e-payment for industry and apprentice
- Monitoring six-month apprenticeship training
- Keeping a track of employment of apprentices at the end of six-month apprenticeship training period

Enterprises: A one-day pre-training workshop was organized to orient enterprise owners about the design, implementation modalities and monitoring mechanism of the pilot intervention. The cost sharing arrangement employment of apprentices in the same enterprises after completion of six months of training were discussed. As the project progressed, another workshop was organized in the initial phases where LRDW components including working hours, leave rules, occupational safety and health (OSH) issues and creation of decent internal training environment were discussed.

Apprentices: B-SkillFUL organized a one-day orientation session with apprentices to brief them about the design and implementation of the pilot project, rights and duties of apprentices and other LRDW components[13]. The arrangement of financial allowance to apprentices, cost sharing and performance-based employment assurance were also discussed in the session.

3.4 Training Material

The design incorporated structured learning by promoting use of the logbook. The apprentice logbook is a document that contains a record of tasks and skills to be achieved by the apprentices in the course of the training. The apprentice had to record his/her daily tasks performed in the logbook and submit it to the supervisor for verification and comments. It was also useful for TSPs to assess the overall progress of

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[13] LRDW components: job-contract, minimum wage, one weekly holiday, legal working hour limit, compensation for overtime work, Use of Personal Protective Equipment, means of handling emergency situations such as fire, equal wage to men and women for equal work, labour rights, physical threat free work environment and child labour free policy.

the training. In the pre-training workshop with enterprises and the short orientation interaction with apprentices, the B-SkillFUL team and the TSPs explained the purpose and use of the logbook to enterprises and apprentices.

3.5 Apprenticeship Training Delivery

As mentioned in 3.1, the pilot apprenticeship training model was an exclusive on-the-job training. In the pre-training workshop with enterprises the B-SkillFUL team discussed the modalities of on-the-job training with the participants. Employers were advised on developing a training plan more or less in accordance with the task list given in the logbook and put into practice a regular feedback mechanism while delivering the training. Many of the employers/ MCPs shared that it would not be possible for them to follow the sequence of tasks enlisted in the logbook in a very stringent fashion. Certain tasks and related technical skills may take precedence over others according to business requirements. Moreover, if the task catalogue of the logbook had not been updated to capture the newest technical skills for a few occupations, trainers might need to impart the relevant skills to apprentices in accordance with business demand.

In the workshop on LRDW, the employers were advised to implement the training following some basic LRDW practices such as:

- One weekly holiday for apprentices
- Importance of conducive training and learning environment with sufficient light and ventilation
- Facilitating access to safe drinking water and clean sanitation & hygiene
- Provision of PPE (hand gloves, safety goggles, mask, helmets etc)
- Availability of First- Aid Boxes and fire- extinguisher

3.6 Monitoring

The primary role of TSPs would be to mentor and monitor the enterprises regularly and provide them with improvement feedback. The TSPs would keep a track of the training delivery mechanism of enterprises and oversee that the record of skills imparted is documented in the logbook. The TSPs would also occasionally interact with apprentices to learn about the progress of training and their experiences.

3.7 Certification

Apprentices would be provided certificate of training completion by employers and the name of the enterprise under which the apprentice has received training would be mentioned in the certificate. The certificate would be issued by B-SkillFUL and would include signatures of Swisscontact, TSPs and employer.

It was initially planned that after completion of apprenticeship training a meeting would be organized where all the actors, viz., employers, apprentices, TSPs and B-SkillFUL team would be present and they would get an opportunity to share their experiences. However, due to the onset of COVID 19 and adjoining restrictions, the meeting could not take place. There was also delay in issuance and distribution of certificates.

3.8 Post training Support

TSPs would ensure that the majority of apprentices are absorbed in the enterprise as employees on completion of the apprenticeship training. They would keep following-up to check the employment status of these graduates for a period of 6 months.

The above analysis highlights the important design elements of the Pilot Apprenticeship Training. The study undertaken reviews whether the training program has been implemented according to the planned design and examines its effectiveness.

4 STUDY OBJECTIVES

The B-SkillFUL apprenticeship training model, an exclusively on-the-job training, was launched on a pilot basis in October 2019 and was completed in April 2020. The pilot is now assessed for drawing insights about its design appropriateness and implementation efficacy and use it to recommend possible roadmap for replication and scaling up.

The specific objectives of the study were:

i.   Review the overall apprenticeship training scenario in context of Bangladesh and the effectiveness of B-SkillFUL's pilot intervention. Develop an understanding on similarities and differences among various apprenticeship training models in Bangladesh.

ii.   Examine the unique characteristics of the design of the B-SkillFUL pilot intervention. How is it different from other apprenticeship programs?

iii. Explain current engagement process of different stakeholders to conduct apprenticeship.

iv.   Identify and assess the strength and weakness of design and implementation of B-SkillFUL's pilot intervention. Will it increase employability?

v.   Assess the capacity of local enterprises and identify gaps to promote apprenticeship training.

vi.   Identify the areas of technical assistance required for enterprises to continue apprenticeship training.

vii. Determine potential entry points, with priorities and rationale, for furthering apprenticeship training through engaging and developing capacity of stakeholders i.e. enterprise, service providers.

5 STUDY METHODOLOGY

The study was based on a mixed method research design that used desk research and a combination of data collection methods. Primary data was collected through a survey of two main constituents viz., enterprises and apprentices, complemented by Key Informant Interviews (KII) with training services providers (TSPs), employers' associations, quasi-government representatives and experts from eminent non-governmental agencies (see Annex 1 for list of key informants interviewed).

Two structured survey questionnaires were developed for collection of responses, one from employers and the other from apprentices. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data from KIIs.

Our methodology for data collection and analyses has been illustrated in Figure 1.
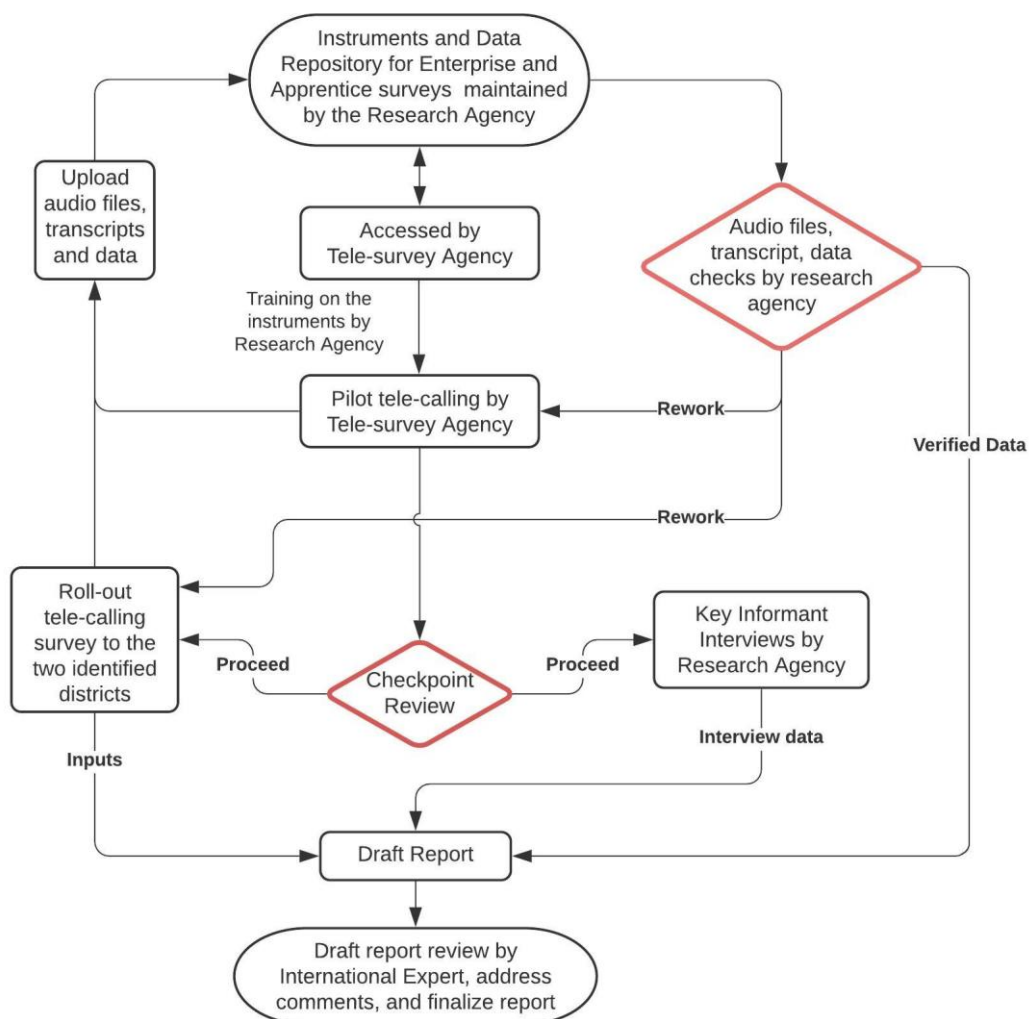
Figure 1: Approach to data collection

One of the challenges of the study was operationalization of the data collection process. In view of the COVID-19 lockdown measures and social distancing norms, conducting face-to-face surveys was not possible. The entire data collection process was executed through tele-interviews and communication over online meeting platforms. Pre-survey online trainings were organized for enumerators by combining tutoring on the questionnaire with role play and practice sessions. Audio-recording of responses aided extraction of the final data.

For collecting information from enterprises and apprentices, efforts were made to contact all the 200 apprentices and 97 enterprises who participated in the pilot apprenticeship program but the final set of respondents were limited to a sample of 166 apprentices and 88 enterprises who could be contacted through telephone. KIIs were conducted either online or through tele-interviews. Out of 8 KIIs, 5 were conducted online and 3 were conducted through tele-interviews.

The analytical method triangulated survey data, KII inputs, and literature review findings to draw insights from the apprenticeship pilot and capture the lessons learnt.

6   FINDINGS

6.1   Enterprise Survey

There was almost equal participation from enterprises in the districts where the pilot programme was implemented: 47 enterprises participated from Bogura and 50 enterprises participated from Tangail, totalling to 97 enterprises in the two districts. About 25% of the enterprises were owned by women. Of the 88 enterprises who responded to the survey, 47 enterprises were from Bogura (100% response rate), and 41 enterprises were from Tangail (82% response rate). The survey findings are presented below.

6.1.1   Profile

The distribution of enterprises by the eight occupations is shown in Table 1. Six of the eight occupations belonged to enterprises owned by men while two occupations, viz., beautician and tailoring, had a majority of women enterprise owners. This points to a skewed gender pattern where training in women owned enterprises was limited to two occupations traditionally considered suitable for women.

Table 1: Gender-disaggregated distribution of enterprise ownership, by occupations

Occupations	Men	Women	Total
Beautician	1.5%	86.4%	22.7%
Electrical house-wiring technician	28.8%		21.6%
Refrigeration & AC technician	19.7%		14.8%
Plumbing	13.6%		10.2%
Tailoring	9.1%	13.6%	10.2%
Consumer Electrical Technician	10.6%		8.0%
Welder	10.6%		8.0%
Mobile phone technician	6.1%		4.5%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%

Most of the enterprises who participated in this pilot apprenticeship intervention had not participated in Swisscontact Phase I skills development program. Only three out of 97 enterprises had participated in the same (Phase I skills development program).

6.1.2   Reasons for participation

The main reason for enterprises to participate in the pilot intervention was the opportunity they got to train apprentices according to their skill needs and thereafter recruit them. More than 70% of the enterprises reported this as their primary reason to participate. Other reasons (about 30% of the responses) for participation were reduced hiring and recruitment cost and attractive Swisscontact offer of providing training allowance to MCPs for the first three months of the training. Some enterprises reported that the opportunity to provide employment to unemployed youths and make them employable through skills training was also a motivator for them to participate.

6.1.3   Findings on the design

Pre-training workshop: Representatives from all the 88 enterprises who participated in the survey reported that they had attended the one-day pre-training workshop. In all, 92% of the enterprises reported that their employers attended the workshop, while 5% reported that both MCPs and employer attended the workshop and 3% shared that only the MCP / Supervisor attended the workshop. The survey responses indicate that the workshop discussed a wide range of design related issues ranging from expected employment arrangement of apprentices, training allowance to MCPs for the first three months,

apprentice's allowance arrangement, instructional and monitoring processes and decent work and OSH conditions. 57% of the enterprises reported that they were agreeable with the design features- training material and one-day orientation of the employers/ MCPs, while 43% felt that there was some scope of improvement.

Insights: *The pre-training workshop was an important platform where the design structure and implementation modalities of the pilot apprenticeship training were thoroughly discussed with the enterprises. This interaction set the expectations from the pilot intervention in place for all the three participating actors: employers, TSPs and B-SkillFUL project team. Such large participation by enterprise owners at the beginning of the training indicate their commitment to implementing the pilot apprenticeship training.*

Cost sharing arrangement: 97% enterprises considered self-financing of apprenticeship training for the last three months of the six-month long apprenticeship to be a good financial investment. Many stated "they did not regret investing in interested trainees", as induction of skilled workers expanded their businesses and increased earnings. Out of the enterprises who considered self-financing of apprenticeship training for the last three months to be a good financial investment, 83% were satisfied with the amount of training allowance for MCPs while 17% were not. Those who were not satisfied reported that the amount was not commensurate with the expenses as it did not cover consumables expenses or equipment damage cost. About 30% among the 'dissatisfied' employers also stated that the training allowance amount was less than what they considered the 'market rate'. Segregated by occupations, dissatisfaction with the amount of training allowance was highest among mobile phone technicians, plumbers and beauticians.

Insights: *We suggest that the financial model should consider providing assistance to compensate the enterprises of equipment wear and tear (the learners can damage them as well) and consumables. Also, the present COVID-19 situation needs to be considered to redefine the assistance amount.*

Benefits of the logbook: The logbook was well accepted as an effective instruction tool. Almost all enterprises (98%) reported that the logbook design was suited to this type of training. The benefits derived by the enterprises from the logbook were reported as: (a) it gave a framework of structured and sequenced plan of work which was useful as a teaching-learning tool, (b) it captured the attendance and detailed work done by the apprentices, that helped the supervisor track the progress of apprentices, and (c) it enabled the trainees to be more focussed to the work and directed their attention to OSH measures. However, around 20% employers shared that they had to tweak the sequenced task list in the logbook to align to technical requirements of their specific trades.

Insights: *Acceptance of the logbook as an effective instruction tool by trainers is a step forward in the direction of formalising non-formal apprenticeship training. Once the enterprises start realizing the benefits of structured training, they might themselves inculcate this practice in training even without mentoring or supervision of a third party.*

6.1.4 Findings on the implementation

The survey tried to assess how far the implementation process was aligned to the intended design. Questions on how and by whom the training was delivered, whether the training delivery met the relevant norms of decent work were the key aspects of this analysis.

Who delivered the training: The pre-training workshop intended that those who attended the workshop should deliver the training at the workplace. This actually happened during the course of the implementation. About 92% of the employers had attended the pre-training workshop, and 86% of employers themselves delivered the training. Only a few of them delegated the responsibilities of training to the supervisor / MCPs indicating minimal deviation from what was intended.

How was the training delivered: It was intended that lesson plans and documentation be a part of the instructional process. Only 59% of the enterprises reported that they attempted making lesson plans which indicates that had been a deviation during implementation. Most of the enterprises reported that they followed the logbook to deliver training. Of the enterprises that reported attempting making lesson plans, a majority of 51% enterprises reported that they planned workplace skill training aligned with business needs and did not follow any daily or weekly periodicity. Many enterprises had assayed this view in the pre- training workshop that during training delivery they might have to adjust the task sequence in the logbook based on business needs.

A significant majority of 86% of the enterprises reported that adequate time was given for MCP led demonstration and self-practice by apprentices while 14% admitted that MCPs could have given more time for demonstration.

Those enterprise that conceded that MCPs could have given more time for demonstration, when disaggregated across occupations it was found that the gap was highest for welding (29%), followed by mobile phone technician (25%), Refrigeration and Air Conditioning technician (23%) and beautician (15%), Consumer electrical technician (14%) and Electrical house-wiring technician (11%). Perhaps, higher business activity acted as a constraint for MCPs to allot more time for demonstration.

Insights: *The training delivery by and large showed the commitment of the enterprises to deliver the training. About 92% of the employers had attended the pre-training workshop, and 86% of employers themselves delivered the training. However, the enterprises were found somewhat lacking in following the documentation process or logbook task sequence very rigidly. They tried to rejig skill training aligning it with business needs.*

It may be noted that time allotted for demonstration and self-practice also did not follow a strictly structured format and had to be adjusted to business activity in the enterprise. During the initial phases of the training, most of the trainers found time in their schedule to demonstrate basic skills to apprentices so that they could start off with the work. Once the apprentices got acclimatised with the work and were able to cope with the basic skills, the trainer thereafter used the opportunity of lean business hours to instruct apprentices.

Decent work (weekly holiday): About 81% enterprises reported that apprentices worked six days a week and got a weekly holiday. This showed that although majority of the enterprises followed the decent work advisory, still 17% of enterprises reported that apprentices worked for seven days a week.

Deviation from decent work norms of 'no weekly holidays' was the highest among beauticians (50%), Consumer Electrical technicians (29%) and mobile phone technicians (25%)

Decent work (working hours): A significant number of the enterprises (70%) reported that the apprentices worked for more than eight hours. The employers stated that since they had to combine business and training, the apprentices had to be there throughout the day till the shop closed. However, many of them reported either paying them extra allowance or arranging for their food for over-staying and attributed these actions as a result of their learning from the decent work orientation workshop.

Decent work (workplace facilities): A majority of the enterprises reported that workers had access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities within the work premises, and that they used PPE as part of OSH measures. Though some employers had bought first aid kits and made fire safety arrangements as a result of their learning from the decent work orientation workshop, they were not commonly available at all the workplaces.

Insights: *With regard to decent work practices, majority of the enterprises attempted to follow the norms of weekly holidays and providing access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, although some gaps*

are visible. Considering opening and closing business hours, adhering to a strict 8-hour daily work schedule for apprentices was not found to be practical for most of the micro-enterprises. Many of the enterprises tried to compensate the overstay by paying apprentices extra allowance or arranging for their food. Gaps were also found with regard to availability of first aid kits and fire safety arrangements in the enterprises. Overall, the study shows that further advocacy and mentoring is needed to orient enterprises to adopt decent work practices for ensuring better compliance to decent work practices in future initiatives.

6.1.5   Findings on Monitoring

The TSPs were appointed as the monitoring agencies. As these agencies were also a part of the B-SkillFUL Phase I, they were somewhat familiar with the project workings and aware of their responsibilities. During B-SkillFUL Phase I, they had been trained in filling and checking the logbook, monitoring lesson plans etc., and a variety of other tasks.

During the project inception, briefing by the B-SkillFUL team to the TSPs clarified their specific role and responsibilities in the pilot project. They made regular weekly visits to the enterprises, checked the logbooks and offered necessary advice. They also provided technical inputs, advised on safety precautions and use of PPE, encouraged enterprises to regularly review apprentice's work, and gave coaching points to the apprentices for improving their quality of work. Almost all enterprises (98%) reported that they received regular feedback from the TSPs and 92% enterprises reported that they regularly reviewed apprentice's work as a result of this disciplined monitoring. Most of the employers were of the view that close monitoring helped them improve their training delivery.

6.1.6   Outcome of the pilot intervention

Business Outcomes: The enterprises envisaged significant gains in recruiting competent workers by participating in the pilot apprenticeship training, which they confirmed after completing the training. In fact, 97% enterprises reported experiencing productivity gains. They described productivity gains in terms of

- Generation of more business as jobs were completed within stipulated time.
- More satisfied customers which increased "goodwill" of the enterprise
- Efficiency increase through improved coordination among team member
- Properly trained workers were more reliable: "They take care of the shop even in my absence"

However, with regard to supervisors becoming better trainers or inculcating better workplace habits, moderate gains were perceived by enterprises.

Experience with Apprentices: Enterprise' experience with apprentices in the pilot apprenticeship training were on an average better than their experience with other trainees/ workers hired informally in the past. Absenteeism among the apprentices was low and there were hardly any dropouts. 98% enterprises reported no dropouts.

Regarding apprentices' performance in the pilot apprenticeship training, nearly 50% of the enterprise owners responded that apprentices under the pilot project performed better than their trainees/ workers they had hired in the past, while 25% felt that there was not much difference in their performances. Remaining 25% of the enterprises felt that their performance was worse. Disaggregation of the data by occupations show that the report of 'worse' experience was the highest among 'Electrical house-wiring technicians' followed by beauticians. These enterprises however, acknowledged that majority of the trainees/ workers they had hired in the past had prior experience while this initiative targeted inexperienced new entrants. A few employers also mentioned that the time they were required to spend with apprentices by themselves became a business constraint.

Challenges and Future Plans: About 39% percent of the enterprises reported facing some challenges in training apprentices. Reported challenges were equipment wear and tear during training (some reported equipment damage by learners) entailing losses and costs incurred on additional consumables.

There appears to be a visible support for apprenticeships to continue in future. 88% of enterprises reported that even if financial aid were to be unavailable in future, they would on their own continue to hire apprentices.

Insights: *From the enterprises' perspective, the overall gains from participating in the pilot apprenticeship training appears to outweigh the losses. Gains through participating in the pilot apprenticeship training are evident from the fact that a large majority (88%) of enterprises reported that they are willing to continue with hiring apprentices even if financial aid is unavailable in future. Large number of enterprises also perceived a multitude of productivity gains. The perceived gains were primarily in the form of productivity gains to business in terms of limiting time and cost overruns, increased coordination among team members and enhanced reputation of enterprises due to quick and efficient service.*

Enterprises' experience with apprentices were on an average better than their past experience of hiring trainees/workers on their own. On the work performance of apprentices, enterprises recorded mixed responses. Three fourths of surveyed employers reported that apprentices' performance was higher or at par with trainees hired informally while one-fourth reported that apprentices' performance was worse. However, most of the enterprises perceived external gains from lower absenteeism and dropout rates and development of better work habits of apprentices under a structured program.

Enterprises perceived major deficits on account of equipment wear and tear during training (due to equipment damage by learners) resulting in increased expenses for additional consumables used. We suggest financial assistance may be considered to enterprises for compensating these losses.

6.2   Apprentice Survey

Inputs from apprentices were collected through tele-interviews. In all, 166 apprentices responded to the tele-survey: 69% of the respondents were men and 31% were women. Findings from the Apprentice survey are summarized below.

6.2.1   Profile

The distribution of respondents, by districts, is shown in Table 2: about 51% of the apprentices were from Bogura and 49% were from Tangail.

Table 2: Distribution of apprentice respondents, by district

District	Men	Women	Total
Bogura	49	36	85
	42.6%	70.6%	51.2%
Tangail	66	15	81
	57.4%	29.4%	48.8%
Total	115	51	166
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The percentage distribution of respondents by occupations is shown in Table 3. The top three occupations where apprentices were trained were Beautician, Electrical house wiring, and Refrigeration and Air Conditioning (AC) technicians. Distribution of apprentices according to occupations clearly indicates occupational segregation on the basis of gender. Women apprentices were enrolled in two gender stereo-

typed occupations: Beautician and Tailoring, which are traditionally regarded as suitable for women. Women alone were trained as beauticians while a small number of men were also trained as tailors (out of a total of 15 respondents trained in tailoring, 3 were men while 12 were women).

Table 3: Distribution of apprentice respondents, by occupations

Occupations	Men	Women	Total
Beautician		76.50%	23.50%
Electrical House Wiring Technician	27.00%	-	18.70%
Refrigeration and Air Condition Technician	19.10%	-	13.30%
Plumbing	17.40%	-	12.00%
Tailoring	2.60%	23.50%	9.00%
Consumer Electrical Technician	12.20%	-	8.40%
Mobile Phone Technician	11.30%	-	7.80%
Welding	10.40%	-	7.20%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%

6.2.1.1   Background of apprentices who qualified for the pilot intervention and reasons for joining

Around 50% respondents reported that they were unemployed before joining the apprenticeship training and that this program would provide them with an opportunity to be employed. Another 29% shared that although they were not employed, they used to do odd jobs from time to time before they joined the pilot training program and were looking for a structured skill development opportunity. Clearly, this means that close to 80% of the apprentices was the intended target group of pilot intervention who were looking for skill training opportunities, such as the current pilot intervention. Only about a fifth (21%) of the apprentices reported having some previous job experience.

Most of the apprentices who reported previous job experience were not trained in any particular trade. They were mostly engaged in random jobs in the informal economy. Out of all apprentices, only 4% had previous jobs in trades which matched their current occupational training.

The primary reasons for the apprentices to join the training was a skill development opportunity. For all categories of apprentices- the unemployed as well as apprentices who had been previously employed, structured skill training opportunity was the prime motivating factor. Other key motivators were job assurance after completing the training, getting a certificate on completion and aspiration of starting their own business. The aspiration of starting a business was seen to be higher among those who had previous job experience. Interestingly, obtaining free training did not appear to be a key inducement for apprentices to join the program.

Insights: *The Pilot Apprenticeship training had mainly targeted disadvantaged young men and women neither in education nor in employment. The survey results show that in addition to this category who were in a majority, unskilled apprentices who might have been doing some odd jobs from time to time or had been previously employed also joined the training. They key reason for joining was structured skill training opportunity that is expected to lead to better employment prospects in future. Other motivators were expectation of getting a job in the same enterprise where they had trained, getting a certificate of completion and aspiration of starting their own business.*

6.2.2 Selection and enrolment of apprentices

As this intervention primarily targeted youth in the informal economy, the program relied upon informal community networks to reach out to them. A majority of the apprentices (51% respondents) were contacted by enterprise owners themselves while 35% respondents were informed by their parents, relatives, friends and acquaintances. Only 14% trainees reported they were directly informed by TSPs.

However, TSPs maintained a complete profile of apprentices and ensured that the profiles are signed by both apprentice and TSP representative.

6.2.3 Views on the design

The B-SkillFUL project had organized a short interaction session (see Chapter 3) with apprentices at the inception of the pilot to orient apprentices on the design of apprenticeship training- explaining 100% on-the-job training, allowance payment to apprentices for the first three months, use of logbook, expected employment on completion of training, rights and duties of apprentices and other LRDW components.

About 80% of the respondents stated that they had attended the one-day LRDW orientation workshop organized by B-SkillFUL. Besides learning about Labour Rights and Decent Work (LRDW), majority of the attendees reported that they were also briefed about overall training objectives, system of monitoring their progress, logbook usage and employment arrangements on completion of the training.

A significant majority (87%) of the apprentice respondents expressed their need for undergoing simultaneous theoretical sessions as classroom-based training in addition to their workplace training. They felt such classes would help them grasp underlying technical concepts relevant to their work. In a structured apprenticeship format, such a need translates into the need for developing a dual apprenticeship framework tailored to local context. The dual apprenticeship system is comprehensive as it combines theory, practice, soft and life-skills that enables apprentices to develop higher level of professional competencies.

Insights: *The short interaction session with apprentices at the inception of the pilot had intended that all apprentices attend the meeting and are explained clearly about the essential features of design, implementation and monitoring. The apprentices benefitted from the interaction as is evident from the survey responses. They appeared to be well aware about the essential design elements. We recommend that future initiatives may set a target to ensure all enrolled apprentices in the program attend the orientation session and get an opportunity to share their experience amongst a network of equals.*

Majority of the apprentices also expressed their need for relevant theoretical sessions along with on-the-job training. Experience of apprentices strongly indicate that the design should be anchored to the dual apprenticeship model.

6.2.4 Views on the implementation

The training delivery process appeared to be reasonably aligned to the intended design. About 90% of the apprentices reported that supervisors allotted them time separately for their practice and 80% of them felt confident enough to work independently after completion of their six-month training. Almost 95% of the respondents shared that they regularly used the logbook during the course of the training. The findings also show that a majority of the employers and MCPs briefed the apprentices on their duties at the workplace, working hours and weekly working days, and OSH measures and precautions at work.

There appears to be some divergence between apprentice's and employer's response on the question of who delivered the training. While apprentices reported that 75% of the enterprise owners who were also MCPs delivered the training, 86% of employers reported that they delivered the training. While apprentices reported that 16% MCPs and not the employer delivered the training, the corresponding

percentage reported by employers were 2%. Similarly, 6% apprentices reported that both the employer and the MCP delivered the training while the corresponding percentage reported by employers was 11%. 3% of apprentices reported that training was delivered by other workers, which indicates a deviation from the expected norms. This aspect needs to be carefully looked into so that quality of training delivery is maintained.

Insights: *Implementation of the Pilot Apprenticeship training appears to be reasonably aligned to the intended design, although the training delivery is not strictly structured according pre-defined schedule. The implementation seems to follow a loose format that converges business and training needs. Apprentices were more or less satisfied with the quality of training delivered and majority felt confident enough to work independently after completion of their six-month training. The use of logbook was also extensive.*

However, survey data shows some divergent views on the question of 'who delivered the training'. It appears that employer's responses to this question hint towards a 'desirable response bias'. We recommend that TSPs may be made aware about the tendency of discrepancy in response between employers and apprentices. The focal persons of the TSP monitoring team can increase their interaction with their point of contact (usually MCPs/ employers) in the enterprises to have more opportunities of interaction with apprentices.

6.2.5   Views on monitoring

Almost all apprentices (99% respondents) reported that they received regular feedback on the tasks assigned by trainers along with improvement guidance. The TSPs regularly interacted with enterprise owners and MCPs and advised them on work processes and other desirable workplace practices. The employers/ MCPs often incorporated TSP's advice in their improvement guidance to apprentices. Sometimes, the TSPs also interacted with apprentices to assess the training delivery process better and learn about apprentice's experience..

6.2.6   Outcome of the pilot intervention

Almost all (98%) of the apprentices reported that they were satisfied with the overall apprenticeship pilot intervention. Nearly 90% of the apprentices reported that they were told they would be absorbed as employees in the enterprises where they had trained. Among those who shared that they would be employed, more than 90% shared that they expected a raise in salary, as assured by the employer.

Out the 10% who reported they would not be absorbed in the enterprise where they had trained, most cited COVID-19 impact as the key reason. Either their employers had to discontinue their business or suffered a drop in demand that restricted their ability to hire.

A few apprentices also said they chose not to join as workers as they wanted to start their own business. They were more interested in freelance contract work which, according to them, was more remunerative.

Insights: *It may be reasonably concluded from the study that the pilot intervention has been successful in enhancing employability and ensuring assured employment. Reports of a salary raise for apprentices indicate better earning prospects for skilled workers*.

6.3   Key Informant Interviews (KII)

6.3.1   Views on design of the pilot

KIIs were conducted with TSPs, employers' association members, quasi government, and non-government agencies. TSPs are private intermediary bodies positioned as the main link between the skill development

actors viz., donors, employers and apprentices of the pilot project. Employers' associations are trade based representative organizations, usually operating at the district level, who drive the interests of the employers. This study conducted KIIs with two employer associations viz., Welding Association and Electrical Association. BWCCI and IS-ISC provided institutional and advisory support to the project. It may be worth mentioning that as distinguished from the industry skills council which promote skill development in priority sectors in the formal economy, IS-ISC is sector agnostic and has been mandated to steer and support labour market initiatives in the informal economy. Others like a2i and BRAC play an active role in the broader apprenticeship ecosystem of Bangladesh. A summary of their views on the design of the pilot intervention is given below.

i. The apprenticeship in general increased chances of immediate employment. They believed that most of the apprentices would be absorbed as employees in the enterprise where they trained.

ii. As compared to other skill development models such as WBT in B-SkillFUL Phase I, the extended period of six months on-the-job training in the current B-SkillFUL pilot apprenticeship training gave apprentices much needed practice time which helped improve their technical skills. This in turn increased their employability.

iii. This format of training is more effective in acquainting apprentices with the work environment and the transition from apprentice to worker happens smoothly.

iv. However, TSPs, representatives of employer associations and official from BWCCI shared that the piloted model of workplace-based training for the entire duration of six months, without any classroom-based training (CLBT) component, can have its own set of challenges as well. The TSPs shared that inexperienced apprentices (new-entrants into the labour market) were often 'quite clueless' when they join their workplace. Typically, they have issues adjusting to a structured, rigid schedule of a workplace. Moreover, many apprentices 'are shy' and if classroom sessions are conducted as a pre-apprenticeship preparatory activity before the apprentices are placed at their workplaces, it could facilitate the workplace induction process.

v. The apprentices also miss out on the relevant theoretical knowledge in an exclusive workplace-based training model which may act as a barrier to their career growth in the long run. It was emphasized that CLBTs can be effectively designed to incorporate much needed communication and soft skills, financial literacy, digital skills, business development and entrepreneurship skills which would help in widening the career development prospects of apprentices. In addition, with a component on CLBT, one can monitor the learning in the enterprise and strengthen practice with theoretical foundation.

vi. The logbook was useful in providing a framework for structured and sequential learning although there might be a few adjustments and improvisations needed. It helped enterprises in tracking the progress of apprentices. The logbook might prove useful for apprentices seeking employment in other enterprises as it helped them showcase their skills acquired.

vii. The LRDW component is relevant and helps bring about positive workplace changes

viii. The employer associations have strong backward and forward linkages and can influence apprenticeship/ skill training programmes at the local level. They can also improve the alignment of supply and demand for skills. B-SkillFUL team and TSPs developed connections with a couple of local employer associations. Some of the members of these associations were direct participants in the pilot training. One of the reasons of conducting KIIs with employers' associations was to understand their views about the pilot apprenticeship training and assess their role in future scaling-up of the programme. The members were of the view that the design of the pilot needs to be improved to account for wear and tear of equipment and use of consumables while training apprentices. Also, in their opinion enterprises would benefit more if financial support can be

customised to supplying toolkit and PPE to apprentices instead of paying MCPs a token training allowance amount as allocated in the pilot training design. If the apprenticeship model is to be scaled up, it is important that trade specific apprenticeship delivery plans be created in collaboration with respective employers' associations.

The form and quantum of financial support by donors was one area where viewpoints diverged. TSPs opined that 90% of the enterprises were so small that they will not be able to carry on the apprenticeship program without any financial support. Employer associations stated that they needed financial support but not necessarily in the form of cash allowance to apprentices. The assistance could be in the form of sponsoring toolkits for apprentices, reimbursement for consumables, workplace improvement, and providing PPEs particularly in the post COVID-19 situation. The government opinion gravitated towards looking at selective financial support to components that were needed for activation or expansion of the programme, but not for those components which could impact the sustainability of the programme whenever such financial support ended. In other words, if the financial support were to end after a certain period, the apprenticeship training program would continue to run on a self-financing basis by the employers, their associations may be by availing limited government assistance, if needed at all. However, to scale up and make the informal apprenticeship programme more sustainable in the COVID-19 impacted economy, there is a need for public funding support to it for about two years; after which the funding of the programme may be made more equitable and selective between employers (and their associations) and the government.

6.3.2   Views on how apprenticeships were structured and paced

Overall, the KIIs felt the design of the apprenticeship pilot intervention provided a better implementation platform than many other skill training and contemporary apprenticeship models. KIIs with the TSPs and employer associations revealed that the logbook provided the necessary framework for a structured and sequenced training-learning process despite the fact that enterprises could not follow the task sequence rigidly as given in the logbook. They made adjustments in training according to business demands. The enterprises were also able to track the progress of apprentices better by using the logbook.

The structured framework of the training inculcated discipline, reliability and punctuality among apprentices. Apprentices were regular in their work and absenteeism and dropouts were comparatively less.

The pre-training orientation on LRDW appeared to have created an awareness that translated into desired workplace changes. The TSPs shared that there were some instances where the enterprise owner made efforts to improve ventilation and take up OSH measures. It also appeared that the apprentices under this pilot intervention were on an average treated better by enterprise owners and MCPs.

6.3.3   Views on Monitoring

The role of TSPs underwent a change under this pilot. In the previous programmes, they arranged for classroom training and hired trainers who would impart training in various non-technical areas. In this pilot, their role incorporated mobilizing apprentices for the project, orientation of trainees on soft skills and primarily monitoring and providing feedback. The TSPs made monitoring visits to enterprises twice a week. Around 97% of the enterprises responded that they received regular feedback from TSPs, and made several changes based on such feedback. The changes included: (a) advise on the use of PPEs (b) TSPs would regularly monitor logbook entry and advise making necessary corrections, and (c) TSPs also advised on 'correct behaviour with apprentices.'

However, the absence of women in the TSP monitoring team posed as a hurdle for the men to monitor women owned enterprises (such as beauty parlours and tailoring premises), discuss implementation

challenges with women entrepreneurs, assess progress of women apprentices and provide coaching points that may have been needed by them.

6.3.4 Gender Dimensions

In traditional informal economies gender roles are often rigidly defined and women face social, cultural, economic and practical constraints at multiple levels and life stages which limit their labour market participation. Women have to routinely balance education or training outside the home with household and care responsibilities. Families are generally less willing to invest in women's education and skilling due to a variety of reasons which could range from concern about women's safety, access to basic services at the workplace, or limited information about a possible career roadmap and entailing social and economic gains from women's work.

Increasing women's participation: The KIIs confirmed some of these commonly known gender related challenges were applicable to both women entrepreneurs and apprentices in this pilot project as well. Around 26% of enterprises participating in this pilot were owned by women in two trades: beauty parlours and tailoring. Future projects may explore increasing women's participation in apprenticeships in general and in trades that might not be traditionally regarded as suitable for women. New occupations which have a potential to include women should also be considered.

Facilities at workplace: Limited access to hygienic sanitation facilities and safe drinking water, often affect women's participation at work. Many women do not feel safe using sanitation facilities in market places (where the informal economy shops are typically located) and have to fend for themselves looking for safe sanitation alternatives in the vicinity.

Participation of women as monitors: The TSPs reported that the monitoring team was often placed at a disadvantage when they visited workplaces of women owned enterprises. Cultural constraints restricted entry of men (belonging to the monitoring team) in these workplaces, and interacting freely with women entrepreneurs / MCPs and their apprentices. There is a need for inclusion of women members in monitoring teams.

6.4 Summary of assessment findings

The assessment findings are mapped to the study objectives (Section 4) and summarized in Table 4. The corresponding sections where the detailed findings have been discussed are also indicated.

Table 4: Summary of assessment findings

Study Objectives	Key findings
Objective i: Review the overall apprenticeship training scenario in context of Bangladesh and the effectiveness of B-SkillFUL's pilot intervention. Similarity and differences among various apprenticeship training models in Bangladesh	The overall apprenticeship scenario in Bangladesh briefly discusses how the system evolved through four decades from the 1970s to its present anchoring in the National Skills Development Policy, 2011 and subsequent aims to promote Competency Based Training and Assessment (CBT&A). (See section 1.1 for details)
	There have been various attempts to incorporate apprenticeships in the informal economy in Bangladesh through structured interventions of NGOs and international development partners such as BRAC and the ILO. (See section 1.2 for details)
Objective ii: Examine the unique characteristics of the design of the B-SkillFUL pilot	Unique features of the pilot apprenticeship training design were
	i. *Six months of exclusive on-the-job training without any classroom component*

Study Objectives	Key findings
intervention. How is it different from the other apprenticeship programs?	ii. *Cost Sharing Model* iii. *Employment assurance after six months* iv. *Minor upgrading of enterprises* v. *Monitoring by Training Service Providers (TSP)* vi. *Workshop on Labour Rights and Decent Work (LRDW)* (See Chapter 3 for details)
Objective iii: Identify and assess the strength and weakness of design and implementation of B-SkillFUL's pilot intervention. Will it increase employability	***Strengths*** – Cost sharing model largely accepted. Close to 90% of the enterprises stated that they are prepared to continue apprenticeships without financial aid in future although they expressed the need for other kinds of support – Enterprises see this apprenticeship as win win – Enterprises are able to visualize productivity gains to business which is an incentive to continue apprenticeships – 6-month duration of on-the-job training well accepted and considered adequate – Extensive use of logbook – Dropouts and absenteeism minimal – Job assurance after 6 months broadly successful as 90% apprentices reported that they would be absorbed as employees in the enterprises they trained in ***Weaknesses*** – Design gap: only on-the-job training without classroom component, no theoretical or soft-skills training. Apprentices expressed the need for a dual apprenticeship component – Implementation gap: deficits in lesson planning & documentation – Although some basic decent work norms followed, scope of improvement remains. 17% enterprises reported that apprentices worked without weekly holidays. – Monitoring: no women members (Based on insights drawn from enterprise survey, apprentice survey & KIIs: See sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 for details)
Objective iv: Assess the capacity of local enterprises and identify gaps to promote apprenticeship training	***Capacity*** in terms of – Supporting the 3-month self-financing component – Continuing apprenticeship training in future without financial help – Skill training & Employability – Employment generation ***Gaps*** – Informal micro enterprises have capacity constraints to generate jobs – Coverage has to be increased to scale up the program – Training of Trainers and periodic refresher courses – Financial constraints, market access, access to finance (Based on insights drawn from enterprise survey, apprentice survey & KIIs: See Sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 for details)
Objective v: Identify the areas of technical assistance	***Technical assistance***

Study Objectives	Key findings
required for enterprises to continue apprenticeship training	– in imparting theory classes (based on demand expressed by apprentices – imparting soft skills training – business development, entrepreneurial skills – ToT to be of longer duration (Based on insights drawn from enterprise survey, apprentice survey & KIIs: See sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 for details)
Objective vi: Furthering apprenticeship training through engaging and developing capacity of stakeholders	See section 7 on Recommendations

Overall, it can be concluded that the **pilot apprenticeship programme shows promise** in achieving its objectives and could provide the requisite learning that would be needed to scale up the programme. The recommendations made in the following section draws upon the findings of this assessment with adaptations as deemed necessary.

7   RECOMMENDATIONS

A synthesis of findings from the survey, KIIs, and studies of other current initiatives (such as those of the ILO and BRAC discussed in Section 1.3) leads us to recommend some measures which may be considered while conceptualizing, designing and implementing future programmes. The recommendations are grouped under three dimensions: (a) strategic considerations while preparing programmes to replicate and scale-up the present pilot and similar apprenticeship programmes, (b) design considerations for enhancing the effectiveness of planned interventions, and (c) operational considerations for further improving the efficacy of programme implementation. Each of these dimensions are discussed below.

A. Strategic considerations

The pilot apprenticeship programme was a well-structured intervention implemented in micro and small informal enterprises. All enterprises and their apprentices followed a standardized system of training of uniform duration, used log books, were appropriately monitored, used contracting processes (albeit rudimentary), and adopted formal payment gateways for disbursements. This leads us to conclude that this intervention was a non-formal apprenticeship training, where a structured apprenticeship training delivery takes places in informal enterprises but does not lead to certification and recognition of the acquired skills under the national qualification framework. This pilot programme distinguishes itself from informal apprenticeship training where the training delivery in informal enterprises are typically less structured and less standardized, and does not culminate in skills certification. It is thus recommended that future programmes to scale up this structured model of apprenticeship training in informal enterprises be termed **non-formal apprenticeship training**. Key considerations of the scaling up plan is discussed below and illustrated in Figure 2.

Staged scaling up: In the present COVID-19 times (the socio-economic impact of which may be there for at least another year), the scaling up process may progress with caution. This period may be utilised to put in place the design of the scaled-up apprentice programme. It can slowly be expanded to other districts, endeavouring to include more trades, attempting to increase participation of women, and reaching out to marginalized sections of society. Thereafter, post COVID-19, a bigger expansion of the programme can be taken up within a collaborative framework of other institutions pursing similar objectives.

Differentiated approach between micro, small and medium enterprises: As the non-formal apprenticeship training programme scales up, there is a need to take a differentiated approach between micro, small and medium enterprises. The MSMEs form a heterogeneous basket and the challenges of partly formal small and medium sized units (but they may still operate informally on some aspects, especially their ability to access credit which influences their ability to procure tools and equipment at their workplaces, and on matters of workforce engagement and providing a decent work environment) are different from fully informal small and micro enterprises. Thus, a one-size-fits-all scaling up approach may not be suitable for adoption by all MSMEs (such as two versions of logbooks, and grouping of MCPs from similar sized enterprises for ToT sessions).

Inclusion of a formal apprenticeship component in the programme: It is recommended that future programmes also have a component of apprenticeship training in formal sector enterprises, while keeping the promotion of non-formal apprenticeships in informal MSMEs as its main goal. This helps creating a transition link between the two strata of enterprises helping: (a) apprentices transition from informal to formal enterprises after some years, thereby making the programme more aspirational for them, and (b) permeation of good practices from larger formal enterprises to informal MSMEs through programme supported networks. At the same time, as the Bangladesh economy moves towards more formalization, it is expected that more informal enterprises would become formalized leading to creation of more formal apprenticeship opportunities for new entrants into the labour market.
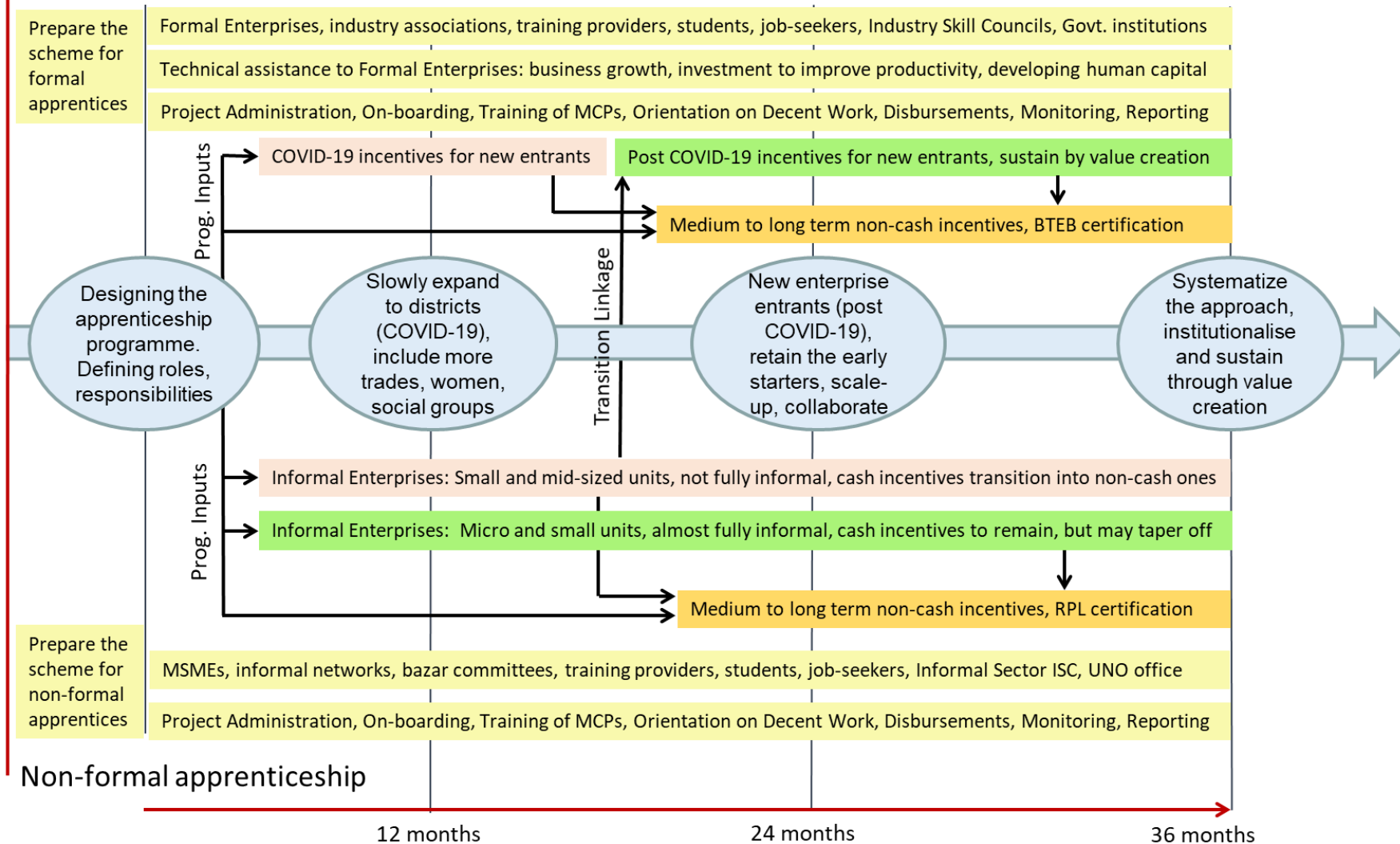
Formal apprenticeship

- Prepare the scheme for formal apprentices
  - Formal Enterprises, industry associations, training providers, students, job-seekers, Industry Skill Councils, Govt. institutions
  - Technical assistance to Formal Enterprises: business growth, investment to improve productivity, developing human capital
  - Project Administration, On-boarding, Training of MCPs, Orientation on Decent Work, Disbursements, Monitoring, Reporting

Prog. Inputs

- COVID-19 incentives for new entrants
- Post COVID-19 incentives for new entrants, sustain by value creation
- Medium to long term non-cash incentives, BTEB certification

Transition Linkage

- Designing the apprenticeship programme. Defining roles, responsibilities
- Slowly expand to districts (COVID-19), include more trades, women, social groups
- New enterprise entrants (post COVID-19), retain the early starters, scale-up, collaborate
- Systematize the approach, institutionalise and sustain through value creation

Prog. Inputs

- Informal Enterprises: Small and mid-sized units, not fully informal, cash incentives transition into non-cash ones
- Informal Enterprises: Micro and small units, almost fully informal, cash incentives to remain, but may taper off
- Medium to long term non-cash incentives, RPL certification

- Prepare the scheme for non-formal apprentices
  - MSMEs, informal networks, bazar committees, training providers, students, job-seekers, Informal Sector ISC, UNO office
  - Project Administration, On-boarding, Training of MCPs, Orientation on Decent Work, Disbursements, Monitoring, Reporting

Non-formal apprenticeship

12 months   24 months   36 months

Figure 2: Key considerations of the scaling up plan

Short term cash and non-cash assistance: Enterprises which show interest to take on apprentices for the first time should be given cash assistance for paying apprentice allowance, especially during COVID-19 times. Such assistance could be made available for apprentice batches which enrol over the next one year. This is especially recommended in view of the current pandemic where small businesses have been hit hard, and are particularly vulnerable. This will incentivize enterprises to consider apprenticeship as a viable model help expand the coverage of apprenticeship system in the informal economy.

Such assistance could be made available for apprentice batches which enrol over the next one year. A good first experience by the enterprises is likely to encourage them to see a business case and continue with their apprenticeship programme without expecting subsequent batches to be subsidized.

Three types of short-term assistance are recommended for continuation of the program
- Cash allowance to enterprises for training apprentices for a period of one year (i.e. limited to two apprentice batches in the enterprise): this would continue incentivizing new enterprises joining the apprenticeship system thereby expanding the coverage of the program
- Cash assistance for purchasing consumables for a period of two years to all new enterprises joining the apprenticeship system (i.e. limited to four batches in the enterprise)
- Non-cash assistance to apprentices in terms of branded toolkit, PPE at the end of apprenticeship period for a period of two years to all new enterprises joining the apprenticeship system (i.e. limited to four batches in the enterprise)

Medium- and long-term support: In alignment with the longer-term policy direction of establishing a self-sustaining apprenticeship mechanism for the informal economy, we recommend that cash assistance to enterprises for paying apprenticeship allowance be withdrawn after the first year of the enterprise' enrolment in the apprenticeship system. However, if enterprises continue to recruit apprentices, they may be provided with a bouquet of financial and non-financial support. Medium- and longer-term support may be of the following nature

- Financial support for workplace uplift and minor refurbishment
- Technical assistance for training of trainers and customized training material
- Sponsoring toolkits and PPE for apprentices
- Support to trainees for qualifying in RPL Assessment

Expansion of women owned business and establishing market linkages: Typically, women owned informal businesses are limited to a few trades and often stay small. They are constrained by lack of capital, do not access markets beyond their localities, and the entrepreneurs often lack business expertise to break into new and competitive markets. There needs to be a planned and sustained effort to engage with women entrepreneurs, assess their potential, and build capacities for fostering growth. Demonstrable business success will attract and sustain apprenticeships in women owned enterprises.

Institutionalizing non-formal apprenticeships: In the medium to longer term the scaling-up programme needs to make the approach to non-formal apprenticeships a part of the skill development ecosystem. In the present institutional structure led by the National Skill Development Authority, this institutionalization process can be best anchored in the Informal Sector Skill Council and made operational at the ground level by involving the administration under the aegis of the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO). Both these institutions of Informal Sector Skill Council and the UNO's establishment need to be strengthened by deputing additional staff and other office resources to support and monitor a scaled up non-formal apprenticeship programme. These strengthened institutions could then be better aligned to work with other stakeholders to achieve a common objective ensuring better skills-to-job matches.

B. Design considerations

Initial induction training: An initial induction training of 1-2 months in a centre to deliver basics of an occupation might be envisaged which may be followed by apprenticeship training in the workplace

Duration of apprenticeship training in the workplace: The six-month duration of apprenticeships as implemented in the pilot project may be retained or even extended for some occupations. The study indicates that at least six months is needed for inexperienced apprentices to pick up the basic skills and start becoming productive at their workplace

Inclusion of a classroom-based training component: We recommend that a classroom-based training component be incorporated along with the workplace-based component in the design of the non-formal apprenticeship programme. This could start with a one-month classroom-based training to provide basic knowledge about the trade and the training course, followed by a one-day class per week, during the remaining time when the apprentice is working at the enterprise.

Soft-skill training: The programme design currently provides for 50 hours of soft skills through common modules that include Life Skills (13.5 hrs); Social Skills (7hrs), LRDW (14 hrs) and Entrepreneurship Development (15.5 hrs). While this design may be retained, some changes in the training modules may be brought in. The apprentices in the target group, who are mostly new entrants into the labour market, are likely to benefit more by acquiring digital skills and financial literacy than undergoing an entrepreneurship training which can be given after they have worked for at least a year in their respective trades.

Improving effectiveness of training material: Considering the levels of literacy and cognitive abilities of the target users, as well as the programme direction towards systematizing the non-formal apprenticeship training, it is recommended that the training material (including logbooks) be further restructured: one basic version that could be even more aligned to the limited resources available in the working environment of micro enterprises, while the regular version could be more aligned to the small and medium enterprises. Such an exercise may be undertaken in consultation with a wider group of stakeholders. Regulators such as Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) and Industry Skill Councils may also be consulted, as deemed appropriate.

C. Operational considerations

Improving quality of ToT imparted to the MCPs: It is recommended that trade-based ToTs be organized at periodic intervals to up-skill the MCPs. The Industry Skill Councils needs to be brought on board and, through them, the possibility of mobilizing experienced industry trainers may be explored. These experienced (master) trainers, supported by the TSPs, could hold several workshops for the MCPs at the project locations at an appropriate time before the beginning of the apprenticeship batches. The ultimate aim of this intervention would be to institutionalize these sessions between the industry (master) trainers and MCPs under the aegis of the Industry Skill Councils.

Encouraging enterprises to collaborate: As the apprenticeship programme begins to scale-up, it is desirable that participating enterprises begin to collaborate to exchange learning from their respective experiences to further improve the skills delivery processes – both at the classrooms and at the workplaces. However, this is especially important for informal micro and small enterprises who usually need more hand-holding and adapt themselves faster from shared experiential learning of similarly-sized enterprises in the same trade. Forum of such enterprises can be created at the project locations by activating local associations and meetings of this forum could be convened at the request of the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO). Such meetings could also discuss issues related to local infrastructure, and providing necessary services in the market premises. Creation of this forum, facilitated by the programme, would be

an important step towards nurturing a consultative as well as a collaborative mechanism which would be essential to scale-up non-formal apprenticeships.

Financial disbursement: The project team used mobile money transfer to pay allowance to the apprentices and allowances to the MCPs, and maintained necessary records. However, when the programme scales up there is a need to streamline the disbursement process through institutional intermediaries or enlisted third-party aggregators who would have requisite capacity to undertake this work at scale, and at the same time be accountable to the programme authorities.

Monitoring and documentation: The TSPs did a commendable monitoring job within a short period of time and other logistic constraints. However, the assessment findings show there is a scope for improving the monitoring and documentation of the programme. There is need to find more ways of remaining in touch with learners through a process which is suitable to both enterprises and the TSPs. Some of the ways in which this could be achieved are during the (now recommended) pre-vocational initial training during the preparatory phase, during site visits by the monitors when the apprentices are at their workplace, and when they come for their (now recommended) weekly classes.

Another possibility is inducting more a robust digital monitoring process to supplement the present system of on-site monitoring. It is important to begin tracking working hours and learning outcomes in classrooms and workplaces for each learner through digital systems. Initially there may be adoption challenges, as is the case with any technology introduction process, but over a period of 2-3 years this is likely to become more prevalent. Experience of BRAC in their informal apprenticeship programme (termed STAR, see section 1.3.2), shows when their district managers were told to sign off on each pupil with their signature in the app, the edit time shot up from barely five minutes to almost 45 minutes.

As of now, the pilot did not get into collecting data to monitor productivity gains and employability outcomes of the apprenticeship training but may need to do so when the programme begins to scale-up. Once such data begins to get collected, along with placements and income levels, it would help enterprises track the returns they are getting on the investments being made in the apprenticeship programme. Aggregate estimates from such data can also show case the benefits of apprenticeship programme to the wider industrial base of the country thereby giving further impetus adopting the apprenticeship training system. The government can also use these analyses to allocate resources based on benefits that are likely to accrue to the country. Estimates based on such data in the United Kingdom showed that apprenticeships contributed GBP 34 billion to its economy in 2014. At a unit cost level, it revealed that for every pound of public money spent on apprenticeships, GBP 21 worth of benefits accrued to the national economy.[14]

From a gender inclusion perspective, and for reasons discussed earlier (see section 6.3.4 for more details), it is recommended that women monitors be inducted in the monitoring team.

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[14] Centre for Economics and Business Research (Nov. 2014) study titled *"Economic Impact of Apprenticeships"* accessed at https://cebr.com/reports/economic-impact-of-apprenticeships/

8 Annex1: List of Key Informants interviewed

Sl. No	Date	Organization	Medium of Communication
1	27 June 2020	TSP: BGS Focal	Online interview
2	27 June 2020	Welding Association Member	Tele-interview
3	28 June 2020	RSP: RITV Focal	Online interview
4	28 June 2020	A2i Program	Online interview
5	28 June 2020	IS-ISC Focal	Online interview
6	29 June 2020	BWCCI Focal	Tele-interview
7	29 June 2020	Electrical Association Member	Tele-interview
8	30 June 2020	BRAC	Online interview