



# A Compendium of Social Protection Researches

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**General Economics Division (GED)**

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Ministry of Planning

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## Chapter 5. WORKFARE PROGRAMMES AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN BANGLADESH: EVIDENCE AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

Social Security Programmes (SSPs), also known as Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNPs) include government schemes targeting poor and vulnerable groups for employment generation, food and cash transfer, education and skill development, health and nutritional support, vulnerability and risk reduction, etc. (Kabir, 2011). They are mainly designed and implemented with two objectives: (i) to protect individuals or households from chronic incapacity to work and earn through engaging in various public works schemes, and a decline in this capacity from a marginalised situation through providing minimal means for survival; and (ii) to invest on developing human capital, mainstreaming, and improvement in the standard of life of backward, underprivileged and marginalised groups of society including people of various age, physical and mental conditions, religion and ethnicity, and living in geographically remote and vulnerable locations.<sup>2</sup>

Since independence, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has been implementing SSPs as one of the core strategies of socio-economic development and poverty reduction. Allocations are made in these programmes in the national budget every year. A considerable amount of public expenditure is directed towards SSPs and it is estimated that 14.2 per cent of the total budget in the fiscal year 2019-20 (9.79 on social protection and 4.42 per cent on social empowerment) and 2.54 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). A significant portion of the support through SSPs include 'workfare' (WF), such as Employment Generation Programme for the Poorest (EGPP), Vulnerable Group Development (VGD), Food for Work (FFW) and Work for Money (WFM).

The WF schemes provide access to temporary employment and skills development through the financing of public investment projects intensive in the use of unskilled labour. Ideally, WF aims to assist participants on a more permanent basis either through the provision of longer-lasting support than typical job creation or the delivery of "employability enhancing" components that can allow participants to find more permanent employment in the labour market when the WF scheme ends. In Bangladesh, most allocation on WF schemes provide temporary employment at low wages mainly to unskilled workers on labour-intensive projects, such as road construction and maintenance, soil conservation, waste disposal, etc. As per implementation guidelines, some of these programmes include training as a core component (e.g., VGD) in addition to the income transfer to encourage workers to acquire the needed skills to gain more permanent employment or become self-employed in the field where the beneficiaries receive the training. Skill development of a cross-section of beneficiaries is conducted through various trade courses and training components of selected SSPs.

Based on the review of the literature and international experiences, WF schemes can be classified into two categories: (i) that which provides job to unemployed individuals directly from the workforce; and (ii) that are intended to increase human capital by providing training, skill development and vocational education to current beneficiaries of social security or welfare schemes (Peck, 1998). One of the most economically desired impacts of well-designed WF programmes are raising participants' employability in the long-run so that they can find sustainable employment after the scheme culminates (Subbarao, 1997; Hujer et al. 2004; O'Keefe, 2005; Subbarao et al., 2010; Subbarao et al., 2013). In the longer term, however, individual effects of WF programmes depend on their ability to raise participants' employability so they can find sustainable employment after the programme culminates (Hujer et al. 2004).

Evidence shows that WF programmes seem to provide effective income support to beneficiaries during participation (del Ninno et al., 2009; Kabir, 2011; ILO, 2016; Mannan et al., 2018). Escudero (2016) examines the effect of WF programme *Construyendo Perú* on some labour market status labour market participation, e.g., whether jobs found were formal or informal and the type of occupation of participants; working poverty; and

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<sup>2</sup> There are two broad types of SSPs and projects in this country: social protection/security and empowerment.

incomes. It reveals that the scheme has had a positive effect on participation of the labour force and employment probabilities of women and lower-educated individuals. One possible motivation for a WF programme is to encourage the accumulation of new productive skills that might lead to a shift in the sector of occupation, which can provide sustainable benefits that will endure after termination of the programme. Ravallion et al. (2005) examine this aspect by testing income gains for former beneficiaries of *Trabajar*, a WF scheme in Argentina.

The relevance and impact of the WF schemes on the job market, i.e., matching the demand for workers trained by WF with the labour market or private sector has not been examined yet. Very little is known so far regarding the potential lasting benefit and comprehensive labour market effects of all WF schemes, particularly the impact after participation in the context of Bangladesh. The country has been experiencing manifold challenges in job creation for its gigantic workforce and addressing the frictional unemployment due to global business cycles over the last ten years as well as the ongoing mechanisation and automation in all sectors of the economy, which mostly originated from the country's transition towards the fourth industrial revolution.

Given this broad context, the present study aims to address the following<sup>3</sup>:

- i. Examine whether SSP workfare programmes contribute to increasing skills of the beneficiaries, i.e., from unskilled (low-skilled) to semi-skilled and from semi-skilled to skilled work (upward movement along the 'skill ladder');
- ii. Assess whether and to what extent the private sector is experiencing a shortage of semi-skilled labour; and
- iii. Suggest policy avenues for the government to improve SSP WF programmes supportive of skill development of workfare beneficiaries, which will help address the shortage of a skilled labour force.

Thus, the present study intends to assess the effect of the government's WF programmes on their integration with the job market in the private sector via 'skill ladder'. However, such skill up-gradation would be fruitless if they cannot cater the skills demanded by the private sector. Taking that into perspective, this study, therefore, attempts to examine the type of labour demanded by the private sector, and the extent of existing skill mismatch, i.e., the gap between the skills developed by the WF schemes and required by the labour market. Finally, the study proposes policy avenues and specific policy recommendations for the Government of Bangladesh to improve WF schemes of the SSPs supportive of skills development of the programme beneficiaries.

The rest of the paper has been organised as follows. Section 2 elaborates the methodology adopted in the study, i.e., the sampling design techniques, sample sizes, and distribution. Section 3 briefly discusses the challenges of the job market in the context of Bangladesh, and the potential role of the WF programmes. Section 4 analyses the effectiveness of the workfare programmes based on a literature review, a qualitative assessment of the programmes and a detailed quantitative analysis. Finally, Section 5 proposes specific recommendations for the improvement of the WF programmes.

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<sup>3</sup> According to the terms of reference (ToR).

## 2. Methodology

A comprehensive field survey has been conducted in order to address the three objectives of the present study. The survey has three distinct components. First, a quantitative survey using a structured questionnaire and an in-depth discussion with the beneficiaries of selected WF schemes to understand whether the programmes has active training components, or whether the standard is as per the satisfaction of the recipients, and indeed developing their skills via the skill ladder. Secondly, an in-depth discussion with the firm-owners who recruit manpower in the survey districts regarding the quality of labour supply and expected skills for their enterprises. Thirdly, an in-depth discussion with government officials who are in charge of implementing the programmes in the survey areas regarding training and skill development, and avenues of policy reforms. The tools, techniques and procedures adopted in the field investigations has been described below.

### 2.1. Selection of the WF Schemes

We selected all schemes from service-oriented SSPs listed in Category-1 of Table 5.1 that conduct direct recruitment for their intended beneficiaries. In these schemes, all beneficiaries were selected from local unemployed and/or vulnerable population for wage- (cash) or food-based work. These programmes can be classified as “large” schemes (more than Tk.5 billion has been allocated for these schemes in the fiscal year 2019-20). However, the implementation guidelines indicate that most of the activities in these WF schemes require unskilled workers. We also selected a National Service scheme because it has components of skill development and the scope for integration with the private sector jobs even without graduation through skill ladder.

We selected two miscellaneous WF schemes from Category-2 that create temporary jobs for local poor and marginalised population, viz. Haor Area Infrastructure and Livelihood (HAIL), and Coastal Climate Resilient Infrastructure Improvement. Haor and coastal areas are subject to climate change and the population living in these regions are more vulnerable in terms of jobs than other areas of the country. Therefore, job-related skills of these WF schemes and employability in the private sector were examined in the context of climate change.

The WF schemes in Category-3 are purely related to the skill development of beneficiaries. Among them, we selected VGD — the largest scheme — which provides food ration to the most vulnerable women along with skill development and employment generation training for two years. The other schemes selected for the study include: (i) Programme for Ensuring Employment for the Ultra Poor in Northern area; (ii) Skill and Employment Programme in Bangladesh; (iii) SWAPNO; (iv) Integrated Rural Employment Support Project for the Poor Women; and (v) Income Generating Activities (IGA) for Women at Upazila Level. These are aimed to integrate the beneficiaries with either the job market or help them become self-employed through small entrepreneurship. Among them, the budget has not been allocated for Integrated Rural Employment Support Project for the Poor Women. However, beneficiaries who were previously unskilled have received paid training and skill development support from these schemes. Therefore, we assessed the employability of the recipients in the job market in both rural and urban areas through skill ladder as an impact of the WF schemes.

**Table 5.1: WF programmes in Bangladesh**

Category	Criteria	Name of the Scheme	Rev. Budget 2018-19 (Tk. million)	Budget 2019-20 (Tk. million)
1	<i>Services through Direct Recruitment from the Intended Beneficiaries</i>	1) Employment Generation Programme for the Poorest (EGPP)	16,500	16,500
		2) Food for Work (FFW)	9,647	12,041
		3) Work for Money (WFM)	7,200	7,500
		4) National Service	6,696	6,819
		5) Test Relief (TR)-Cash	13,900	15,300
		6) Grameen Infrastructure Development	20,817	41,255
2	<i>Miscellaneous Schemes that Create Temporary Jobs during Implementation</i>	1) Haor Area Infrastructure and Livelihood (HAIL)	750	8,677
		2) Coastal Climate Resilient Infrastructure Improvement	1,900	1,555
		3) Rural Settlement Construction for Improvement of Rural Livelihood	-	-
3	<i>Skill Development and Training</i>	1) Vulnerable Group Development (VGD)	16,565	16,989
		2) Programme for Ensuring Employment for the Ultra Poor in Northern area	233	187
		3) Skill and Employment Investment Programme	3,940	4,332
		4) Skills for Employment and Productivity	150	-
		5) Income Generating Activities (IGA) for Women at Upazila Level	930	907
		6) Increase Productivity and Opportunity for Employment for Women (SWAPNO)	270	430
		7) Skill and Employment Programme in Bangladesh	392	3,715
		8) Skill and Training Enhancement	4,560	-
		9) Women's Skill Based Training for Livelihood	68	68
		10) Integrated Rural Employment Support Project for the Poor Women	-	-
		11) Rural Livelihood and Employment	-	-

Source: List of the schemes and allocations were collected from Finance Division (2019b), Social Safety Net Programmes: Budget 2017-18, Budget 2018-19 (Revised) & Budget 2019-20, Dhaka: Ministry of Finance.

The selected schemes for the present study cover the issues of gender, rural/urban and geographical diversity, seasonal issues and disasters, and skill levels developed from participating various WF schemes implemented throughout the country and in some specific locations, such as coastal, *haor*, river erosion and extreme poverty-stricken north-western areas of Bangladesh.

## 2.2. Field Survey

Five types of instruments were developed for the study including Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with three groups of respondents, viz. officials of GoB, private sector entrepreneurs, and selected beneficiaries of various WF schemes. In addition, in-depth case studies were conducted to understand which WF schemes work more to provide jobs in the private sector. The field activities undertaken are presented in Table 5.2:

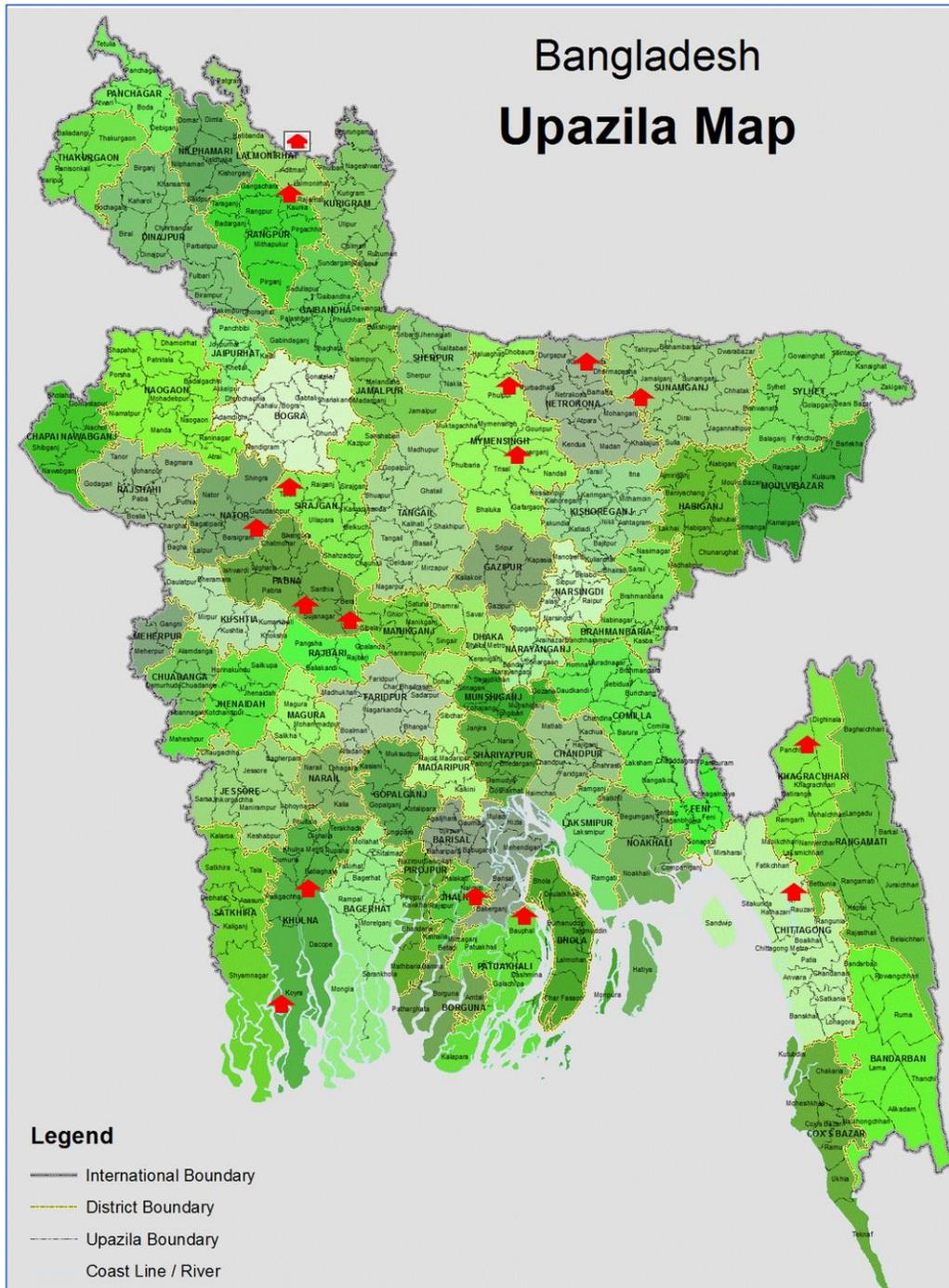
**Table 5.2: Study Instruments and Outputs**

Activity	Instrument/Approach	Target Group	Issues Covered
KII	Interview at Upazila level with a mixed checklist comprised of both open- and closed-ended questions	GoB Officials	Intended training/skill development in the respective scheme and the details of each training in practice from an operational perspective
KII	Interview with a semi-structured checklist comprised of both open- and closed-ended questions	Beneficiaries of selected schemes	Type of skills developed through direct work and purely training schemes, quality and compatibility of the skills with the market
KII	Interview with a semi-structured checklist comprised of both open- and closed-ended questions	Private entrepreneurs	Labour market characteristics, demand workers from WF schemes, skills required by the private sector.
Case Studies	Interview with a semi-structured checklist comprised of mostly open- and closed-ended questions	Beneficiaries of selected schemes who also work in private sector	Types of skill training received in WF schemes; whether and/or to what extent these were useful in getting private-sector jobs, and whether they needed further in-job training at private firms
Survey	A structured questionnaire with mostly closed- and few open-ended pre-coded questionnaires	Beneficiaries	A comprehensive list of skills developed through direct work and purely training schemes, quality of the skills and compatibility with the job market

## 2.3. Selection of Survey Areas

The beneficiaries of WF programmes were identified through a list of beneficiaries at the Upazila level because their names were kept recorded at UP offices. However, beneficiaries of the WF programmes were employed by the private sector beyond the lean period since they do mostly the unskilled jobs and their demand goes up at private sector at a normal period. So, the beneficiary interviewees were selected randomly at the three stages:

Map 5.1: Locations of Survey Upazilas



Stage 1: One district was identified at each administrative division randomly. Then two Upazilas were identified in each district keeping in mind some salient socio-economic and ecological factors, such as river erosion/char, depression, poverty, Haor, CHT, coastal island and climate change. One Upazila was the district headquarters and another was at a relatively remote location. During the field investigation, one Union from each Upazila was selected at the Upazila headquarters and another was remote. This step was followed to ensure geographical representation of the respondents/beneficiaries.

Stage 2: The lists of WF beneficiaries were collected from UP offices. From the lists, 331 respondents were randomly selected. The list comprised both males and females. All types of beneficiaries of all programmes were included in the sample survey.

Stage 3: The final list of respondents of WF beneficiaries were collected from the UP office. The respondents were selected based on their skill level, gender, religion and ethnicity.

**Table 5.3: Selected Districts and Upazilas for Field Survey**

Sl.	Division	District	Upazila	Salient features
1.	Rajshahi	Sirajganj	Sirajganj Sadar, Ullapara	River erosion/char
2.	Rangpur	Kurigram	Kurigram Sadar, Bhurungamari	River erosion/char
3.	Dhaka	Manikganj	Manikganj Sadar, Daulatpur	Middle/char
4.	Mymensingh	Netrokona	Netrokona Sadar, Kendua	Depression
5.	Sylhet	Sunamganj	Sunamganj Sadar, Tahirpur	Haor
6.	Chattogram	Rangamati	Rangamati Sadar, Bagaichhari	CHT
7.	Barisal	Bhola	Bhola Sadar, Daulatkhan	Coastal island
8.	Khulna	Bagerhat	Bagerhat Sadar, Mongla	Climate change

The field enumerators visited and observed training components of each of the WF schemes during the field visit at the physical location of direct job programmes and purely training and skill development schemes based on checklists.

#### **Field Survey and Data Management**

**(i) Training:** A group of qualified field supervisors and enumerators were mobilised, and a three-day rigorous training was provided for them. The elements of the training included making initial contact, how to explain the questionnaire and checklist, asking the questions, probing, recording the answers and terminating the interview after completing it satisfactorily.

**(ii) Pre-testing:** The draft field instruments were pre-tested to rectify the questionnaires, checklists and field observations. The field instruments were modified based on the observations raised by the enumerators after the pre-testing.

**(iii) Supervisory level quality control:** The quality of the study was controlled through confirming that interviewers were following the sampling plan, timeline and control to fill in fake answers. It was done primarily by field supervisors. However, the study team and other members of the RAPID study team randomly visited the field. Due to the rigorous quality assurance, all 331 survey respondents provided a full answer to the questionnaire and checklists.

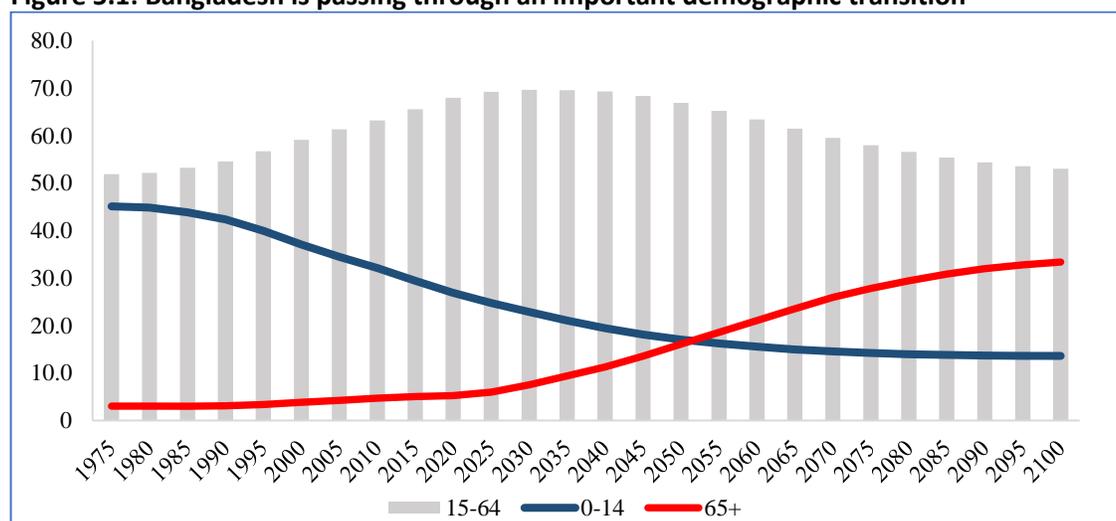
### 3. Job Market Challenges and the Role of WF Programmes

The primary focus of this study is to assess the workfare programmes if the skills provided through training are adequate to cater to the private sector demand; and mapping out appropriate policy recommendations. For the specified objective, this chapter focuses on major labour market trends in Bangladesh to identify potential job market challenges. Such an exercise is essential for three reasons. First, it helps to understand the background labour market scenario in the country and the rationale for why workfare programmes are necessary. Secondly, understanding of the job market scenario in the country helps pinpoint the specific roles that workfare programmes should play under an ideal scenario. Such information is also crucial to gauge whether existing workfare programmes are good enough to cater to the demands of the labour market. Lastly, such an exercise is essential for pinpointing the scope of the further improvement of running workfare programmes.

#### 3.1. Major labour market trends in Bangladesh: Issues and Challenges

There are a couple of distinct features in the current Bangladesh labour market. One of the starting points is noting down these features which can be the demographic transition phase that Bangladesh is currently passing through. Due to this transition, the number of the working-age population is now higher than the dependent population (Figure 5.1). However, by 2050, one in every six persons will be aged 65+ compared to one in 20 in 2020. Moreover, the life expectancy has been increasing steadily for the last three decades. At present, life expectancy at the age of 15 is more than 60 years.<sup>4</sup> This means that an individual aged 15 in 2020 will have 45 years ahead as active working-age followed by another 15 years in retirement. A higher life expectancy is a positive feature but comes with a cost: a person will have to save more in his active years so that he can dissave later in the old age. Moreover, such demographic changes have significant implications for the government budget as well. The Government of Bangladesh is already on its path in implementing the universal old-age allowance scheme as part of the NSSS. An ageing population will mean more government expenditures after social securities against a fewer and shrinking working-age population (in other words, a shrinking taxable population). One approach to tackle this challenge is equipping the youth with training and productive employment so that they can earn enough now to pay for their retirement age. If the current working-age population can be productively employed, the demographic transition that Bangladesh is passing through can be turned in to demographic dividend.

**Figure 5.1: Bangladesh is passing through an important demographic transition**

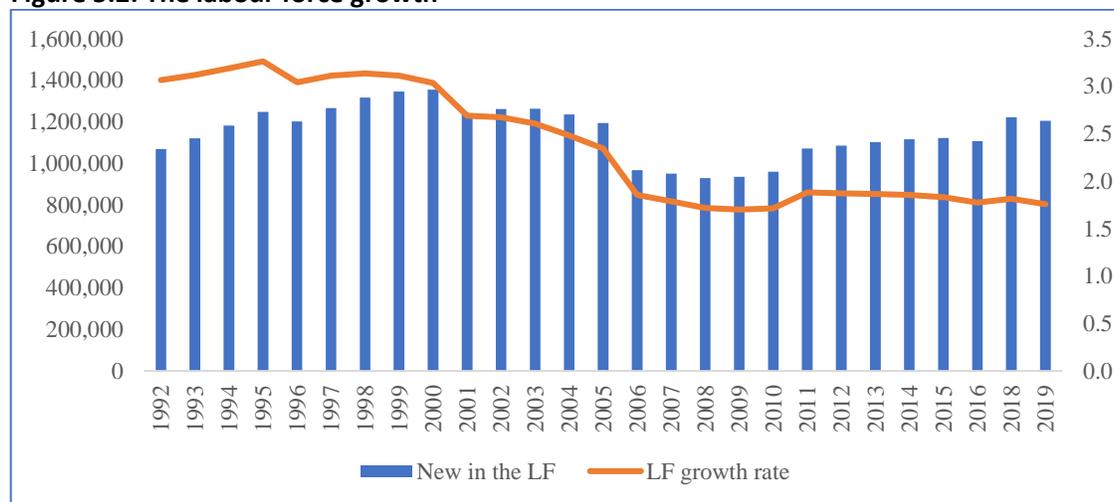


<sup>4</sup> This means the average number of subsequent years of life for someone aged 15 in the period 2015-20 would be 60 years.

Source: Authors' estimation using UNDESA population projections. The estimation has been carried out using the assumption of medium variant population growth.

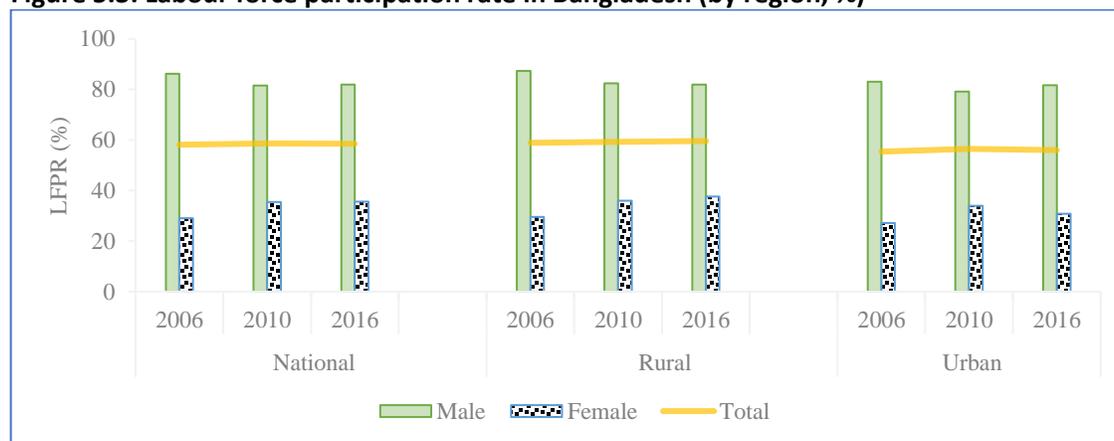
One of the major sources of challenges for Bangladesh is the size of the labour force. With 106 million working-age population, the country is the 6<sup>th</sup> largest in the world. Each year an additional 1.2 million workers enter the labour force (Figure 5.2). Absorbing such a large volume of new entrants would be difficult under any circumstances. Another major feature of the labour market is its heavy male dominance in labour force participation. While the male labour force participation in the country remained at a level of more than 80 per cent, the female labour force participation always remained stagnant at around 36 per cent (Figure 5.3).

**Figure 5.2: The labour force growth**



Source: Derived using data from the International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT database and World Bank population estimates. Labour data retrieved in September 2019.

**Figure 5.3: Labour force participation rate in Bangladesh (by region, %)**

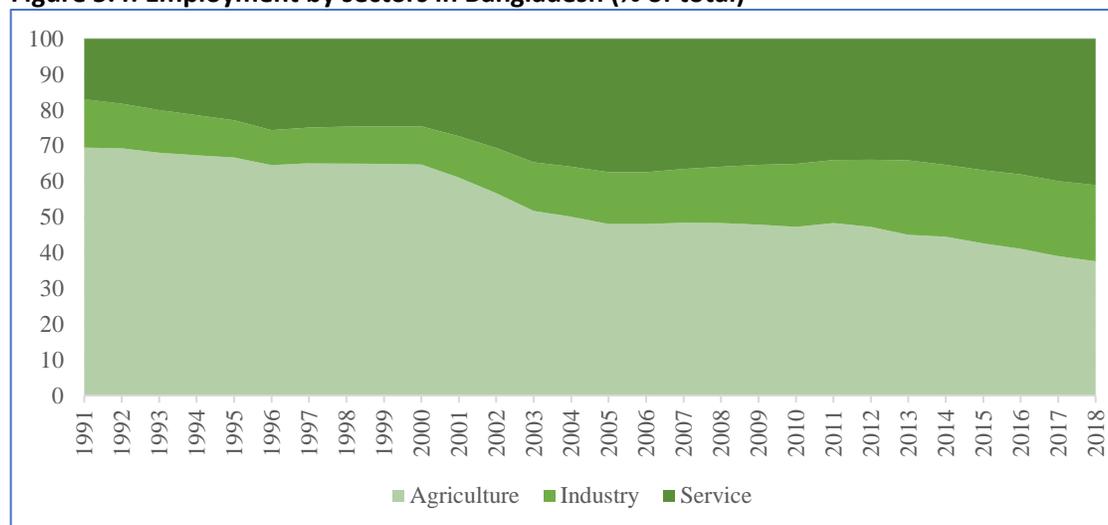


Source: LFS (2006, 2010, 2016)

A slow but consistent shift in the pattern of overall employment can be observed in Figure 5.4. Nonetheless, agriculture remains the dominant employment providing sector, followed by service and industry. Even though unskilled workers who overwhelmingly dominate the rural supply of labour are dependent on crop and non-crop agriculture, employment in agriculture has been declining. It is obvious given the increased pace of mechanisation of agriculture, declining arable land and declining share of this sector in GDP. The number of employed persons in services has been growing fast despite the nearly constant share of this sector in GDP over

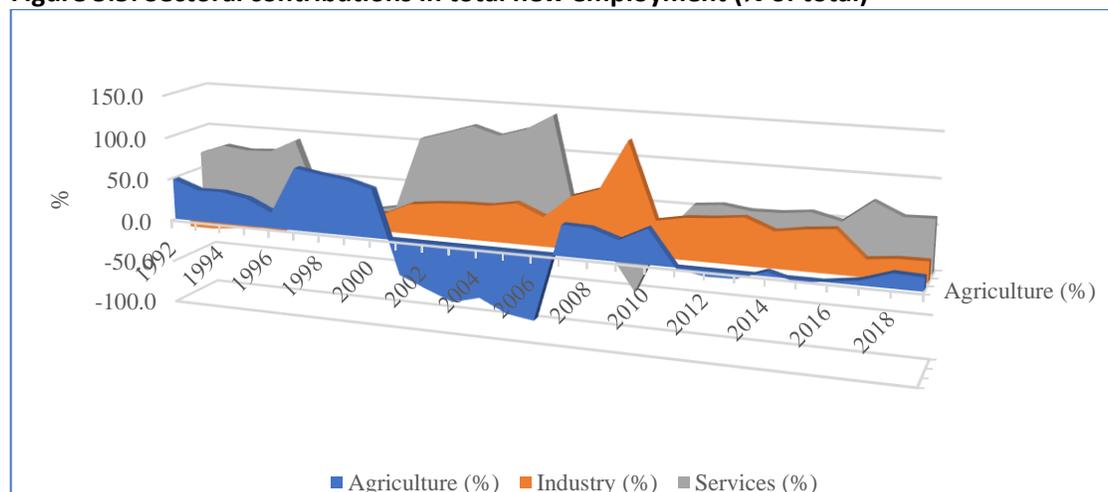
a quite long period of time. Thus, service has been emerging as an employment-friendly sector. Conversely, even though the share of industry is about one-third in GDP and it is increasing, its contribution is only about one-fifth to the total employment. Released jobs from agriculture could not be absorbed fully by the growing industry sector. This is clearer when we look into the sectoral share of total new employment. Since 2011, more than half of the newly employed found their job in the service sector (Figure 5.5).

**Figure 5.4: Employment by sectors in Bangladesh (% of total)**



Source: ILOSTAT

**Figure 5.5: Sectoral contributions in total new employment (% of total)**



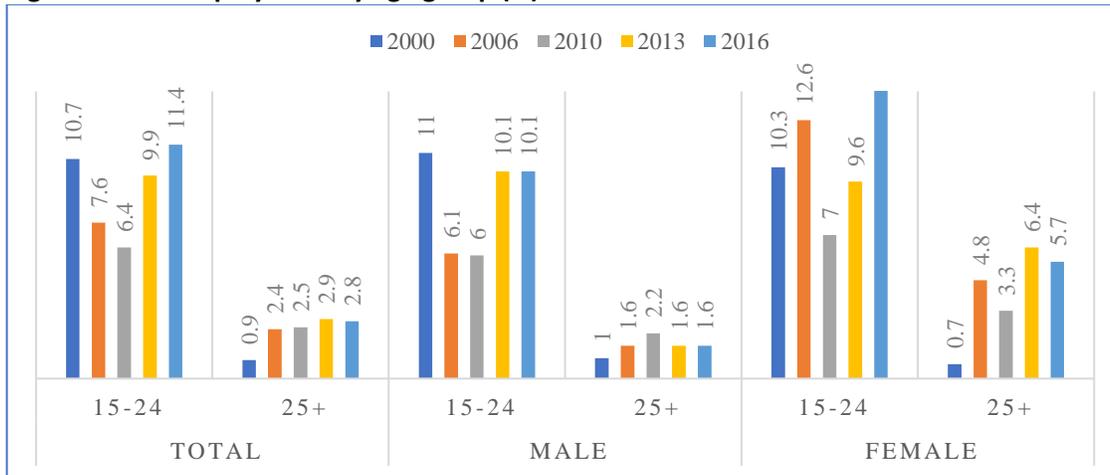
Source: Authors' estimation based on International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT database and World Bank population estimates. Labour data retrieved in September 2019.

Another interesting feature of the national job market is that, despite robust economic growth, the unemployment rate in the country remains almost stagnant over the years (Figure 5.6). However, there is a significant age and gender-wise unemployment pattern. The male unemployment rate in the country has always been almost half the female unemployment rate. The unemployment rate for the youth (aged 15-24) is almost seven-folds higher than the adults (25+). The adult unemployment rate in the country has almost always remained less than two per cent. It can be argued based on the global experiences that the unemployment rate in the country for the adult males has always been around the natural rate of unemployment or at the Non-Accelerating Inflation Rate of Unemployment (NAIRU) level. However, the female adult unemployment rate

remained almost four times higher than the male unemployment rate for the past few years. The scenario is most precarious for youth aged 15-24. The male youth unemployment rate remained above 10 per cent since 2013. The female youth unemployment rate always remained higher compared to male youth.

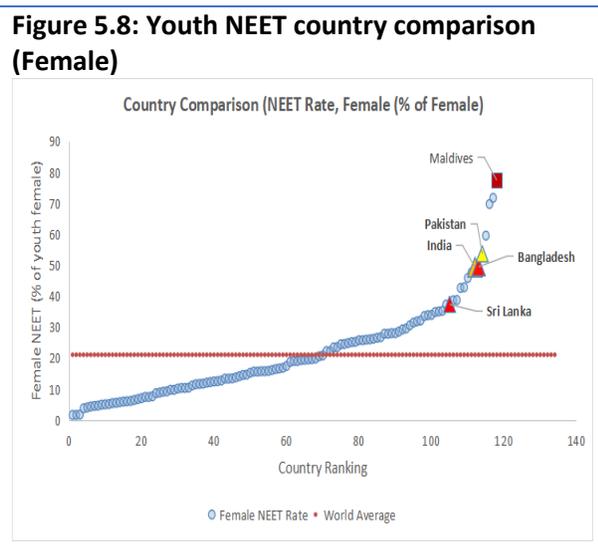
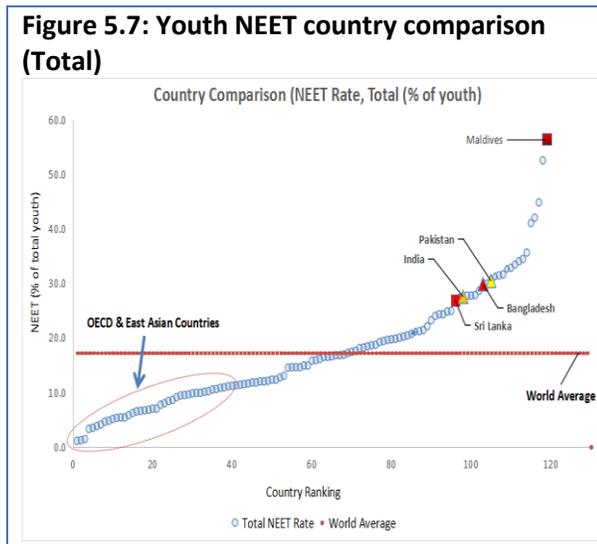
In addition to unemployment, there is also a high rate of underemployment in the country, particularly for females. The LFS (2017) reports that nearly a quarter of the total female employed can be categorised as underemployed while the male underemployment rate remained at 5.3 per cent.

**Figure 5.6: Unemployment by age group (%)**



Source: BBS Labour Force Survey (various years)

Another staggering feat of the Bangladesh labour market is the high rate of youth who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET). Bangladesh has one of the highest female Youth NEET rate in the world (Figure 5.7). A high youth NEET rate is alarming since it means a higher percentage of youth are not engaged in productivity-enhancing activities. It has implications on life-long earnings, participation in the labour market, future employability, etc. Studies show that being NEET is often a sign of disadvantage (Furlong, 2006). It suggests that the NEET status of the young population is not a mere consequence of personal deficits, rather it is an indication that the economy is not being able to create opportunities for the long-term security of young people in many prospective areas (Spielhofer et. al, 2009).



Source: Uddin & Hasan (2019)

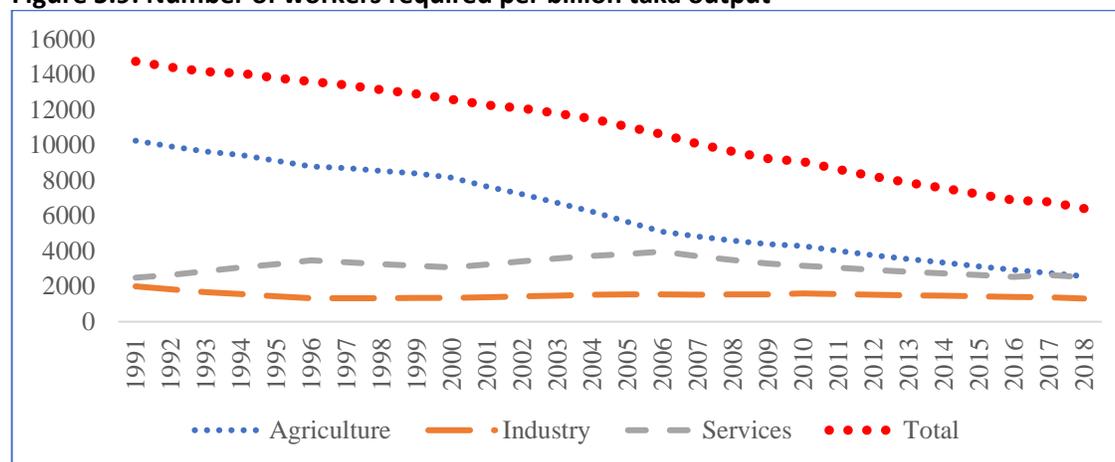
Another challenge is related to relatively less requirement of labour in economic activities, which indicates increased mechanisation and automation of all sectors since Bangladesh has experienced very low total factor productivity in the recent periods. Our calculations reveal that the requirement of the number of workers to produce per unit of real GDP of all sectors has been declining rapidly (Table 5.4 and Figure 5.9). Since the 1990s, the output in the manufacturing sector in real terms rose by more than six times increasing its share in GDP from 13 per cent to over 21 per cent in recent years. The manufacturing sector grew at 10.4 percent between 2013-16. Despite such robust growth, the employment in the sector shrank by 1 million between 2013-16. The fall in employment in the manufacturing sector can be linked to the stalled employment generation in the RMG sector. Between 2010-16, the total RMG exports increased from US\$12.5 billion to US\$28 billion. However, employment in the sector remained around 4 million. In the early 1990s, it took 545 workers to produce a one-million-dollar equivalent of apparel exports. The corresponding figure for 2016 came down to only 142. Evidently, still, Bangladesh's RMG sector is more labour-intensive than its comparators which suggests that there are still rooms for further automation in the sector. However, this must be noted that automation and capital deepening production processes are also spreading in other domestic import-competing sectors.

**Table 5.4: Number of workers required to produce Tk.1 billion of GDP at constant price (2005-06)**

	2010	2013	2015-16	2016-17
Agriculture	21,992	20,512	18,728	17,678
Industry	5,368	5,289	4,378	4,035
Service	5,383	4,741	4,688	4,732
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,370</b>	<b>7,505</b>	<b>6,734</b>	<b>6,414</b>

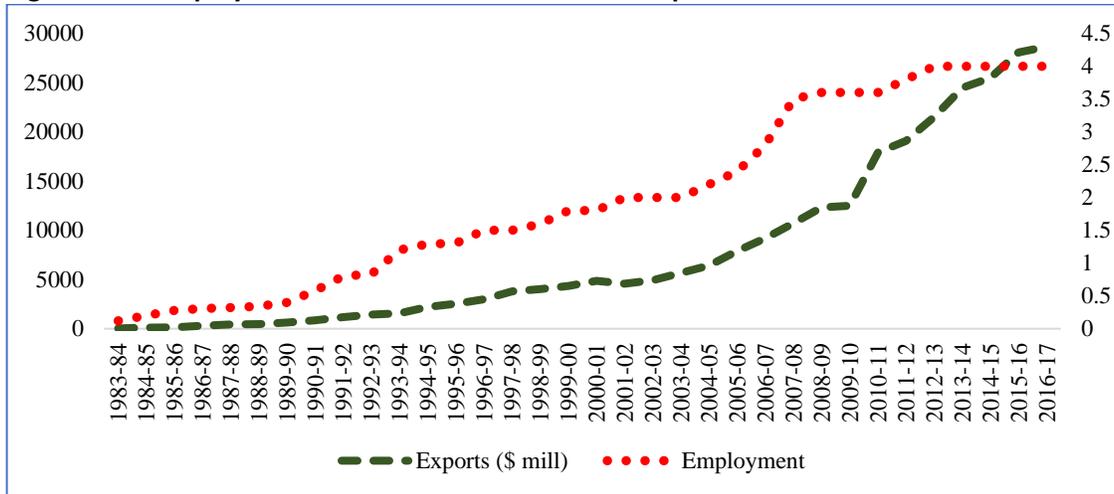
Source: Authors' calculation from data of LFS 2016-17 and Bangladesh Economic Review 2019.

**Figure 5.9: Number of workers required per billion taka output**



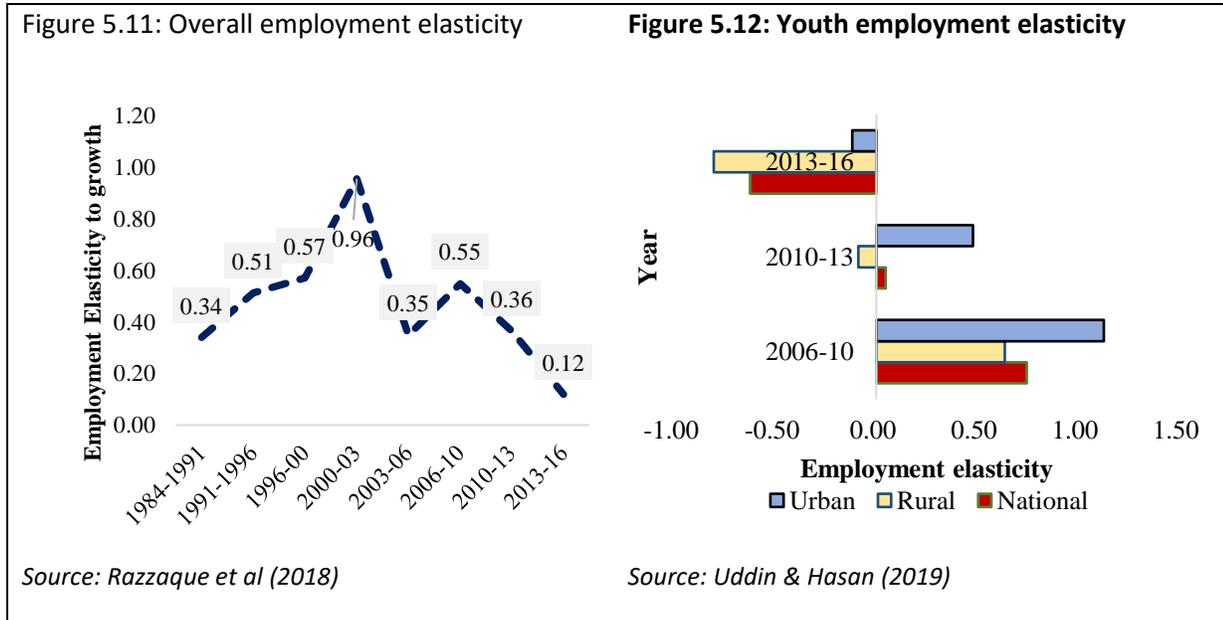
Source: Authors' estimation based on WDI data.

**Figure 5.10: Employment in the RMG and total RMG exports**



Source: Authors estimation based BGMEA data

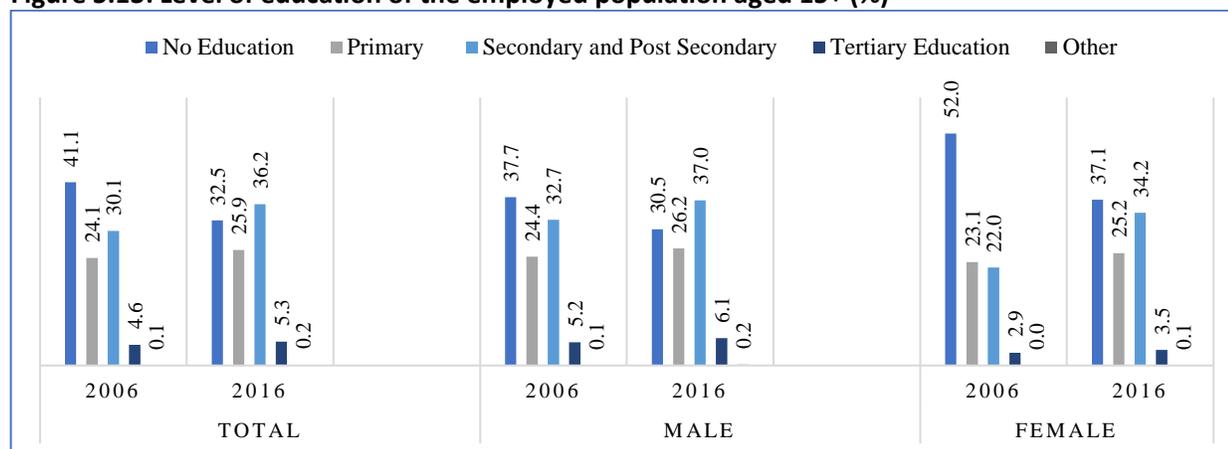
While the capital-employment ratio continued to fall, the generation of new employment did not grow much over the years. This is apparently evident from the falling employment elasticity to economic growth (Figure 5.11). The employment elasticity to GDP/output shows the change in employment in ratio to the change in the economic GDP over a period. Compared to 2006-10 the employment elasticity to growth fell from 0.55 to 0.12 in the 2013-16 period. Nonetheless, the youth employment elasticity to economic growth became negative between 2013-16. This means that, although the output has increased over the years, the overall employment in the economy did not grow much while the employment of the youth (aged 15-24) has shrunk significantly.



Several studies have pointed out some of the major reasons behind the increased unemployment/underemployment rates, high rates of NEET, as well as falling employment elasticities in Bangladesh (Uddin and Hasan, 2019; Razzaque et al, 2018; Raihan, 2018). In all measures, the condition of youth employment in the country is highly precarious. One of the compelling reasons for high youth unemployment and underemployment originates from the fact that the youth are neither adequately educated nor properly

trained. According to the LFS 2017, only 37 per cent of the employed females and 43 per cent of the employed males have education level higher than Secondary. The LFS also shows that only 1.7 per cent of the total labour force has participated in at least one training programme. Most of these training programmes are also shorter in duration. Such as more than 55 per cent of the total training recipients have a training length of fewer than 2 weeks. It is also noteworthy, that most of the training recipients are between 15-34 years of age. However, the rate of young males in training in Bangladesh is substantially lower than most of the developed countries. For instance, in 2016 there were 10.8 million upper secondary students (aged 17-18) across the EU-28 countries participating in vocation education programmes., equivalent to almost half (49.3%) of the total number of upper secondary students.<sup>5</sup> These training programmes are specifically designed to prepare students for tertiary education and/or equip them with skills relevant for employment. In comparison, less than 5 per cent of the total youth population (aged 15-24) were in the vocational training programmes in 2016 in Bangladesh. It can be argued that the demand for vocational education and training in Bangladesh is substantially lower. One reason behind such low rates is the lack of employability even after graduating from the vocational education (ADB, 2015).

**Figure 5.13: Level of education of the employed population aged 15+ (%)**

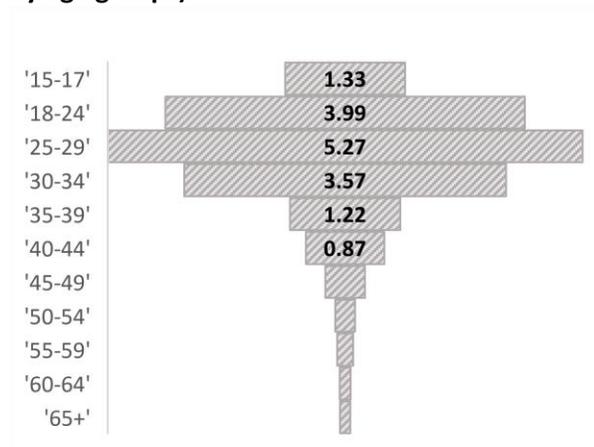


Source: Authors' estimation based on LFS (2017)

**Figure 5.14: Percentage of training recipient**



**Figure 5.15: Distribution of training recipient (% by age groups)**



<sup>5</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Education\\_and\\_training\\_statistics\\_at\\_regional\\_level&oldid=461488#Vocational\\_education](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Education_and_training_statistics_at_regional_level&oldid=461488#Vocational_education); accessed on 26 December 2019

Source: Authors' estimation based on LFS (2017)

Source: Uddin and Nishat (2019)

The above analysis implies that there is a dire need for the temporary absorption of the unemployed labour force through the wider coverage of the existing WF schemes and/or the introduction of new training schemes to address frictional unemployment due to increased capital-intensity and automation of all sectors. Table 5.5 provides a brief summary of the key takeaways of the chapter and relates these to the ways; workfare programmes can mitigate the potential challenges.

**Table 5.5: Key labour market challenges and importance of workfare programmes in the context of Bangladesh**

Labour market challenges/issues	Description	How does the workfare programme can address the challenge
Demographic transition	Bangladesh is passing through a demographic transition phase. If the current working-age population are not adequately trained and productively employed, it will have a serious implication on the overall macroeconomic performance of Bangladesh in the post-2050s.	Ideally, workfare programmes are targeted for the poor, marginalised population, and/or females. These groups lag behind when it comes to employment or labour force participation. If adequate workfare programmes are implemented properly the participation of these groups in the productive employment and labour force will increase.
High youth unemployment rate/ underemployment rate/NEET rates	Female unemployment rate/underemployment rates are higher than males  Youth unemployment rate is higher than adult	There are already government programmes on youth employment or training. However, in contrast to those generalised programmes, it would be more effective to concentrate on more specified workfare programmes. As such, workfare programmes for females, marginalised groups, etc. or region-specific workfare programmes would be more effective under such circumstances.
Longer time in school to work transition	Elder (2013) showed that the school to work transition in the context of Bangladesh is as high as 60 months.	In the ideal scenario, workfare programmes should be able to ensure a smooth and quick transition from school to work or from unemployment to employment.
Capital deepening in the manufacturing sector	The capital deepening in the manufacturing sector will be more enhanced in the coming years. The unskilled workers are at the risk of being laid-off during the first wave of automation.	Since most of the unskilled workers come from the poor or marginalised communities, they are also the focus of the workfare programmes. If the workfare programmes are adequately modified and redesigned so that such workers are upskilled, mitigating this challenge will be comparatively easier.
The low education level of the existing workforce	Being lowly educated, the unskilled workers face two folds problem. First, in a more capital-intensive production process, they are the least likely group to be employed. And	Unlike private training programmes or other government vocational and training education, workfare programmes have the capacity and scopes to widen its horizon for different categories of potential beneficiaries. For instance, while the national vocational

	second, they do not have access to modern training to upskill themselves. This is because either it is not available in their region, or they do not have necessary pre-qualification to enter a programme.	training curriculum followed in the TVET cannot be different from region to region. However, a workfare programme can always be modified and crafted specifically for a region.
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**Table 5.6: Coverage of the WF Schemes**

WF Scheme	Rev. Budget 2018-19	Budget 2019-20	Coverage
EGPP	8.27	8.27	*
FFW	10.75	17.14	*
WFM	15.18	15.81	*
National Service	1.49	1.52	**
TR-Cash	19.06	20.98	*
Infrastructure and Livelihood Development in Haor Area	0.16	1.85	**
Coastal Climate Resilient Infrastructure Improvement	0.34	0.27	**
VGD	139.81	142.47	*
Programme for Ensuring Employment for the Ultra Poor in Northern area	0.07	0.06	**
Skill for Employment Investment Programme	2.13	2.34	**
IGA for Women at Upazila Level	0.3	0.3	**

\* lac person-month, \*\* lac persons

Source: Finance Division (2019).

The workfare programmes seem to remain traditional in nature and their aggregate coverage has been increasing marginally (Table 5.6). The schemes mainly target rural populations who are mostly unemployed in the slack period and/or interested to receive vocational training for self- and wage-employment. However, the programmes do not necessarily consider the dynamics and evolving challenges in the labour market emanating from ever-increasing technology-orientation and couple global economic recessions over the last ten years that lead to lower labour demand and joblessness.

## 4. Analysis of the Existing Workfare Programmes

Having noted the role that the workfare programmes can play in the context of Bangladesh in the earlier section, this chapter focuses on their effectiveness and efficiencies. The exercise is carried out using threefold analyses: first, a brief review of the literature is done to find out the role of the workfare programmes on skill development. Afterwards, based on the observed programme characteristics – a qualitative assessment of the effectiveness of the workfare programmes is conducted. Lastly, this chapter provides descriptive statistical analyses of the workfare programmes based on the data gathered from a primary survey undertaken as part of this study.

### 4.1. WF and Skill Development: A Review of Literature

Some recent studies examined the impact of WF programmes but did not necessarily highlight the training and skill development components of these schemes. Rahman et al. (2011) argued that the 1974 famine gave birth to the FFW programme, which redressed seasonal poverty, while consecutive floods in 1987-88 had further laid focus on the need for a broader FFW scheme. The study revisited the idea of how SSPs respond to the specific needs of the poor while simultaneously addressing the broad development objectives of developing countries. SSPs consist of various programmes which can be categorized into three clusters: Transfer Programmes in cash and kind which provide resources to the poor to maintain a minimum standard of living, WF Programmes which provide low-skill work to the poor in public sector projects for low wage cash payments and lastly, Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT) which require households to invest in children's health and education in exchange for support.

To assess the Rural Maintenance Programme (RMP) in maintaining the rural landscape and ameliorating the livelihood security of destitute women who live in those areas, Nadiruzzaman and Atkins (2008) utilised a variety of empirical approaches such as sampling, case studies and FGDs with different stakeholders of the concerned programme. Their findings suggest that women's life skills training have been provided with a strong focus on developing self-reliant business skills. The results showed that the programme has achieved significant successes in developing a sustainable rural earthen road network, which is crucial for the transfer of goods and services and linking numerous service networks.

Finance Division (2017a) analysed the operation and performance of the VGD schemes. They utilised a qualitative methodology approach including collecting and analysing primary research as part of the primary survey. The study includes an existing situation analysis, problem definition and development of solutions. It also utilizes institutional interviews at the Government level with meetings and follow-up meetings, focused group discussion (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) with VGD committees at five districts, 10 Upazilas and 10 unions and 8 NGOs. FGDs were also conducted with VGD cardholders, several consultations with relevant Government officials and interviews with key stakeholders. The trend of allocation/expenditure shows that food constitutes the major portion, 95.82 per cent in FY2016-17 while training, freight/transport and miscellanies comprised of about 4 per cent of spending. The findings also suggest that per capita training expenditure decreased from Tk.403 in 2013-14 to only Tk.366 in FY2016-17.

Another study published by the Finance Division (2017b) on VGF adopted a mixed-methods approach incorporating literature review, quantitative analysis, fiscal analysis, qualitative research and a process review. This study employs the KIIs and combines the qualitative and quantitative techniques that analyse the Household Income Expenditure Survey (HIES). However, the scheme does not have any explicit training component for the beneficiaries.

Mannan et al. (2018) performed an impact analysis to determine the extent to which EGPP was able to achieve its mentioned targets and its impacts on the beneficiaries. The analysis covered 20 Upazilas and 40 unions from 20 sample districts. Respondents from the non-beneficiary group were also included to net out the true effect on the beneficiaries. Both qualitative and quantitative data were utilized in the study. The findings showed that EGPP households worked 45 days more than the non-EGPP households on average and their wages were also significantly higher. The beneficiaries earned Tk.5,692 more than the non-beneficiaries. They were also comparatively less vulnerable to food insecurity. The data also suggested that the beneficiaries are more susceptible to natural disasters and accidents. But they were 9 per cent less likely to be perturbed by calamities and shocks compared to the non-beneficiaries during the period of October to November which overlapped the EGPP phase 1.

Ahmed et al. (2007) examined the effectiveness of the food and cash transfers in increasing the food security of the ultra-poor in the rural areas of Bangladesh. The study focused on four programmes namely IGVGD, FSVGD, Food for Asset-creation component of the Integrated Food Security (IFS) programme and RMP. The first two are components of the VGD programme. During the period of the study, the programmes covered 830,840 beneficiaries with 3.72 million family members. Both qualitative and quantitative data were utilised in the research where propensity score matching (PSM) method of impact evaluation was used for empirical analysis. Besides food and cash transfers, the programmes provided development support consisting of training for income generation to the participants. Based on the response of the participants, the study found that IGA training was effective to generate self-employment of the beneficiaries. However, the literacy training provided by programmes like IGVGD and FSVGD were ineffective.

The above studies utilised mixed methods with qualitative technical (viz. FGDs and KIIs) and a quantitative survey on the beneficiaries. The findings reveal that many of the important WF programmes in terms of coverage and budgetary allocation do not have explicit training components. The resource allocated for training has also been quite insignificant in VGD, which is a mega programme with explicit training component on various occupations. Training components of some WF schemes have also been found to be ineffective to generate employment.

## 4.2. Workfare Schemes: Resource Allocation and Coverage

Bangladesh's major WF schemes are implemented to alleviate rural poverty among day labourers by providing temporary work during slack periods when little agricultural work is available or right after natural disasters. The public works are required to construct, reconstruct or repair rural infrastructure, public places, the marketplace, roads, earthwork at school grounds and mosques, excavation of ponds, etc. in these periods.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, there are some purely training and skill development schemes in SSPs that aim to cater to market needs. In other words, beneficiaries get jobs and/or participate in job training in WF schemes of the government. Thus, both paid work (wage/food) programmes, as well as paid training and skill development schemes for employment generation/livelihoods programmes, can be regarded as WF schemes. Therefore, the following SSPs in Bangladesh have been identified that can be regarded as WF programmes (Table 5.7).

### 4.2.1. *Employment Generation Programme for the Poorest (EGPP)*<sup>7</sup>

The EGPP is an ongoing WF programme that provides short-term employment support to the extreme poor and vulnerable population in Bangladesh during the lean period. Typically, twice a year before the harvests, there are fewer demands for agricultural workers which leads to considerable seasonal unemployment in rural areas.

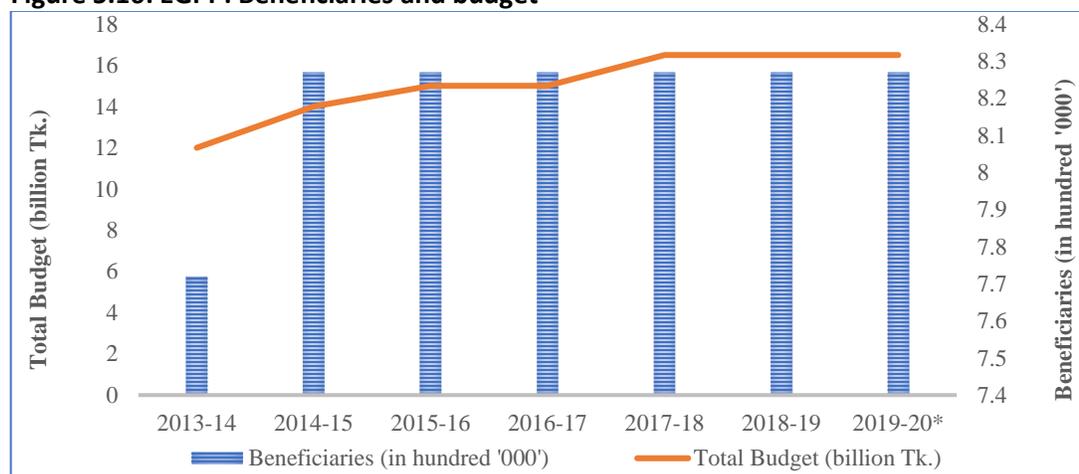
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<sup>6</sup> For example, a list of works under EGPP has been provided in Kabir (2011). The other public works under various workfare schemes are listed in their respective implementation guidelines.

<sup>7</sup> A brief on the programme can be obtained at: <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P118701?lang=en>

The programme was first introduced after the global food price shocks in 2008 to address the slack period's unemployment, which becomes the recurrent problem of ultra-poor day labourers. The key focus of EGPP is to support various earthworks to construct and reconstruct the rural roads, pond excavation, earthwork at the marketplace, schools, worship places and graveyards, etc. These activities help agricultural production, better rural communication, protection during a natural disaster, etc. while creating jobs for unskilled poor and vulnerable population. The programme is being implemented by the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR). In 2019-20, the programme intends covered approximately 827 thousand beneficiaries with a total budget of Tk.1.6 billion (Figure 5.16).

**Figure 5.16: EGPP: Beneficiaries and budget**



Source: SSPS project office

#### 4.2.2. Food for Work (FFW)<sup>8</sup> and Work for Money (WFM)<sup>9</sup>

Through the FFW programme, the GoB maintains and develops rural infrastructure, including renovation programmes during post-disaster periods and the normal yearly cycle, usually involving manual labour. The objectives of the scheme include generating employment for the rural poor; help construct, repair or strengthen rural infrastructure to improve the performance of agriculture; reduce the physical damage and loss of human life due to natural disasters; maintain balance in the food supply, and overall, alleviate rural poverty and vulnerability. The beneficiaries receive 8 kg of rice or wheat for working 7 hours a day for specific project activities and standardised volumes of work. Conversely, the WFM is like the FFW but its beneficiaries receive cash equivalent to the volume of food transfer. The beneficiaries of this scheme get to work in cycles in a year. People who own at most 0.5 acres of land and those affected by river erosion or natural disasters are eligible to participate in this scheme.

#### 4.2.3. TR-Cash

This scheme is being implemented every year during the slack periods and after natural disasters, e.g., floods and cyclones in rural areas. The focus of this scheme is to create employment opportunities for the rural poor, wage-labourers and unemployed people through the implementation of small rehabilitation projects, including the development of educational and public welfare institutions. TR provides the same amount of food under FFW for specific project activities and within standardised volumes of work. This scheme helps ensure food security of the economically vulnerable and distressed population.

<sup>8</sup> A brief on FFW, WFM and Test Relief can be found at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/859991552566112765/pdf/135297BRI-13-3-2019-9-17-16-ProgrambriefonFFWWFMTRE.pdf>; accessed on 26 August 2019

<sup>9</sup> Based on Finance Division (2019a).

#### 4.2.4. National Service Programme (NSP)<sup>10</sup>

The NSP was initiated in 2009-10 to provide training and job opportunities to minimum HSC passed educated unemployed youths aged 24-35 years.<sup>11</sup> The beneficiaries are provided with a training for three months on 10 modules (Table 5.8) and afterwards, they are provided with temporary jobs for two years at various government departments and institutions, e.g., Upazila administration, law and order protection activities, educational institutions, local government institutions (LGIs), Upazila health complex and clinics, etc. The beneficiaries receive Tk.100 as a daily training allowance and Tk.200 as daily service allowance during their tenure of enrolment and service. The programme has covered 128 Upazilas in 37 districts between 2009-10 and 2017-18 and has provided employment to 1.91 million youths in seven phases. The programme is being implemented by the Department of Youth Development of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

**Table 5.7: Training modules for the NS programme**

Training Module	Training Modules
Module 1-4 (1 month 15 days, for all)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nation-building and character-building training module</li> <li>• Disaster management and social service training module</li> <li>• A fundamental computer training module</li> <li>• Self-employment training module</li> </ul>
Module 5-10 (1 month 15 days, for all)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orientation to the different Government services</li> <li>• Health and family planning training module</li> <li>• Education and physical exercise-related training module</li> <li>• Agriculture, livestock, and environment-related training module</li> <li>• Public safety and law and order related training module</li> <li>• Union Parishad and Upazila Parishad services related training module.</li> </ul>

Source: TIB (2014)<sup>12</sup>

#### 4.2.5. Haor Area Infrastructure and Livelihood (HAIL)

HAIL project<sup>13</sup> is being implemented for the development of poor people living in *haor* (wetland) areas who are often exposed to extensive annual flush and regular flooding. The goal of this project is to develop infrastructure at *haor* areas by providing different pieces of training to its beneficiaries. The objective of the project is to improve the living standards and reduce the vulnerability of the rural poor by promoting enhanced access to markets, livelihood opportunities and social services; mobility across villages, reduction in production losses and protection against extreme weather events; improve access to fishery resources and conservation of biodiversity, and increase production and diversification, and improve marketing of crop and livestock products. The project includes various civil works that generate direct employment. In addition, the training component of the project includes livestock rearing, vegetable production, plant nurseries, mono-sex tilapia culture and other fish farming, off-farm activities (such as bamboo, jute, etc.), tailoring, house wiring, and vocational training among others.

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.ti-bangladesh.org/beta3/images/max\\_file/rnp\\_fr\\_nsp\\_bn.pdf](https://www.ti-bangladesh.org/beta3/images/max_file/rnp_fr_nsp_bn.pdf) and [https://dyd.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dyd.portal.gov.bd/go\\_ultimate/d1c2a6e9\\_eb67\\_4bbd\\_87d0\\_60715cac26bc/3c78277f749fb70be8d2932e974acc1b.pdf](https://dyd.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dyd.portal.gov.bd/go_ultimate/d1c2a6e9_eb67_4bbd_87d0_60715cac26bc/3c78277f749fb70be8d2932e974acc1b.pdf) A COMPENDIUM OF SOCIAL PROTECTION RESEARCHES

<sup>11</sup> The education qualification for the hill districts is SSC or above. [https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/page/3ef1111d\\_f0d6\\_41ea\\_aca9\\_6afb61228825/G-2\\_03\\_36\\_Youth\\_English.pdf](https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/page/3ef1111d_f0d6_41ea_aca9_6afb61228825/G-2_03_36_Youth_English.pdf) accessed on 26 Nov 2019

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.ti-bangladesh.org/beta3/images/max\\_file/rnp\\_fr\\_nsp\\_bn.pdf](https://www.ti-bangladesh.org/beta3/images/max_file/rnp_fr_nsp_bn.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Former Haor Infrastructure and Livelihood Improvement Project (HILIP).

#### 4.2.6. *Coastal Climate Resilient Infrastructure Improvement Project (CCRIP)*

CCRIP is being implemented by the Local Government Division (LGD). The objectives of the scheme include improving livelihoods, viz. higher incomes and food security for poor households; and achieving enhanced climate resilience of coastal road and market infrastructure and of people living in the project areas. CCRIP aims to construct climate-resilient road infrastructure and cyclone shelters, and improve access to markets to address acute poverty and climatic vulnerability in Southwest part of Bangladesh.<sup>14</sup> The project is being implemented in 32 Upazilas of 12 Southwest districts from three administrative divisions, viz. Barguna, Barishal, Bhola, Jhalakathi, Patuakhali, and Pirojpur districts in Barishal division; Gopalganj, Madaripur and Shariatpur districts in Dhaka division; and Bagerhat, Khulna, and Satkhira districts in Khulna division. These districts are vulnerable to major natural disasters and adverse effects of climate change, such as cyclones, tidal surges, and floods. The target group comprises the population in the catchment areas of project marketplaces and roads, specifically small and marginal farmers, petty traders and microentrepreneurs, landless people, and poor women. The number of direct beneficiaries on average per year has been around 48 thousand during 2014-2019. The allocated budget for this programme is Tk.1.56 billion in FY2019-20. This scheme does not have any explicit skill enhancing training programmes. The project aims to improve the lives of 3.5 million poor men and women in 12 districts where it is implemented.<sup>15</sup>

#### 4.2.7. *Vulnerable Group Development (VGD)*

VGD is the largest SSP currently in operation in Bangladesh, which is also the largest women focused SSP in the world. It focuses mainly on poor and vulnerable women from rural areas towards sustainable improvement of the lives of ultra-poor households. There are two different of VGD: Income Generating Vulnerable Group Development (IGVGD) and Food Security Vulnerable Group Development (FSVGD). IGVGD participants are provided with a monthly food ration of 30 kg of wheat/rice or 25 kg of fortified flour (atta), while FSVGD participants are provided with monthly cash support of Tk.100 along with 15 kg flour. In addition to food transfer, participants are provided with training on life-skills, various trade courses and savings opportunities according to the implementation guidelines of the programme. The development package also includes access to microcredit through NGO membership. VGD activities are run on a 24-month cycle, and a beneficiary can only participate in one cycle in her life.

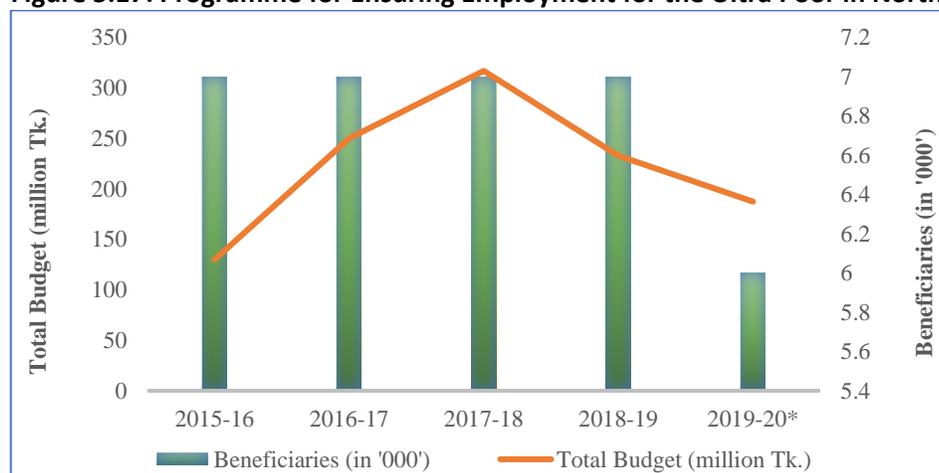
#### 4.2.8. *Programme for Ensuring Employment for the Ultra Poor in Northern Areas*

This programme is being implemented by the Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB). The second phase of the project ran during April 2014-March 2019 which has been extended later till June 2020. The project area covers Rangpur, Gaibandha, Nilphamari and Lalmonirhat. The objectives of the programme include: (i) providing training on income-generating activities to the poor men and women from project 35 Upazilas; (ii) strengthening social as well as food security through self-employment; (iii) creating supply linkages for the beneficiaries of this project so that their product is well supplied to the market through value chains development; (iv) enhancing market linkages and easing the access to raw materials for the programme beneficiaries; and (v) providing microcredits to the beneficiaries (at a soft 6 per cent annual interest rate). On average, the programme has served 7,000 poor and marginalised people each year (Figure 5.17).

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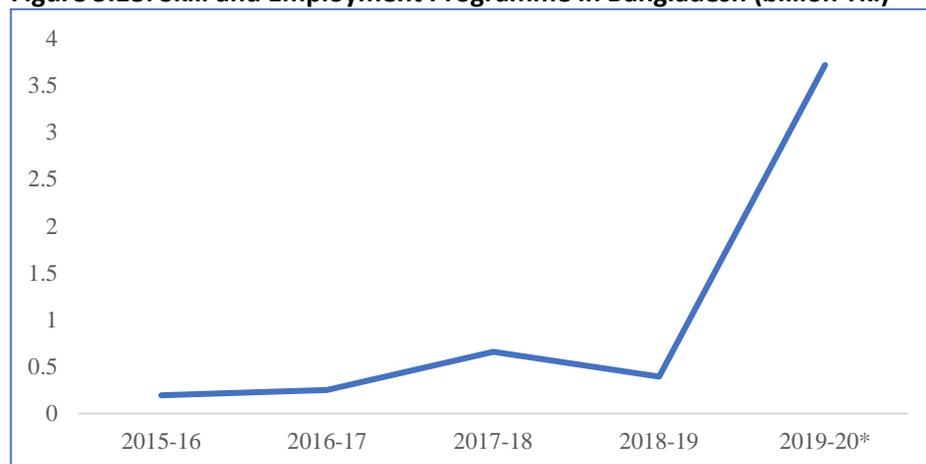
<sup>14</sup> Source: <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/operations/project/id/1100001647/country/bangladesh>

<sup>15</sup> <https://csa.guide/csa/coastal-climate-resilient-infrastructure-project-ccrip>

**Figure 5.17: Programme for Ensuring Employment for the Ultra Poor in Northern Areas**

#### 4.2.9. Skill and Employment Investment Programme in Bangladesh

Also known as 'Sudokkho', this scheme is a five-year skills training and employment programme being implemented by the Directorate of Technical Education of GoB with funding support from the DFID and SDC.<sup>16</sup> It aims to reduce poverty through better training and job opportunities for the poor. It provides employment to 65,000 poor people, including women and disadvantaged population, upon completion of training through its partnerships with private Training Service Providers (PTPs), and industry-based vocational training. Although the MoF data does not provide the number of beneficiaries, since the beginning of the programme in 2015, as per the project website, 1,735 men and 15,324 women graduated from Sudokkho supported industry-led training system. The training is provided in the Readymade Garments (RMGs) and construction sectors.

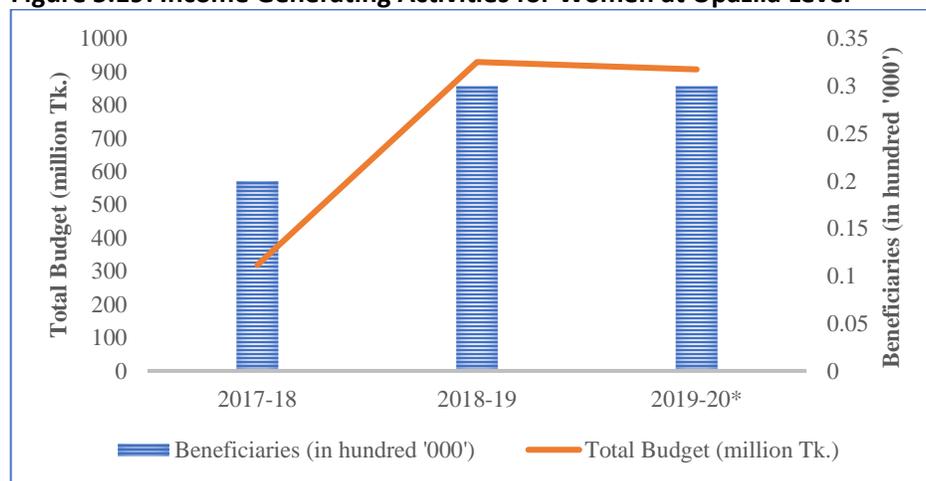
**Figure 5.18: Skill and Employment Programme in Bangladesh (billion Tk.)**

<sup>16</sup> Source: <https://sudokkho.org/about-us/> and <https://www.swisscontact.org/nc/en/projects-and-countries/search-projects/project-finder/project/-/show/skills-and-employment-programme-bangladesh-sep-b-known-as-sudokkho.html>; both accessed on 18 September 2019

#### 4.2.10. Income Generating Activities for Women at Upazila Level<sup>17</sup>

This scheme is currently being implemented by the Department of Women Affairs (DWA) with the overarching objective to provide training on income-generating activities to the poor, disadvantaged, and destitute women to become self-reliant. The programme is being implemented in 426 Upazilas across the country. Beneficiaries are provided training on several trades, including embroidery and block-boutique/tailoring, beautification, computer training, fashion design, mobile phone servicing and repairing, motor driving, etc. under Income Generating Activities (IGA). With a budget of Tk.907 million in 2019-20, the programme aims to train 217,440 women within the programme period (from January 2017 December 2020).

**Figure 5.19: Income Generating Activities for Women at Upazila Level**



Source: SSPS project office

#### 4.2.11. Strengthening Women's Ability for Productive New Opportunities (SWAPNO)<sup>18</sup>

SWAPNO is a social transfer project devised for ultra-poor women implemented by the LGD with assistance from SDG-F, UNDP and ILO, among others. Its objective is to promote employment, especially self-employment, and enhance the future employability of the participant — the extreme poor rural women after the tenure of participation. It starts with 'cash-for-work' and developing the human capital of women engaged in public works under the scheme. The beneficiaries receive vocational skills training as well as job placement facilities through starting and operating self-employment and micro-enterprises as 'graduation strategy' so that they remain no longer recurrently dependent on SSPs. In addition, the programme also focuses on facilitating linkages with Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). Currently, the programme is being implemented at 1,030 unions of 106 Upazilas in 22 districts with 65,000 primary beneficiaries. The NSSS particularly emphasised on expanding the coverage of SWAPNO because of its innovative components of transforming rural poor beneficiaries as self-reliant women.

<sup>17</sup> Source: <https://mowca.portal.gov.bd/site/project/7759b152-129a-4e61-bfb5-5755c0e8562e>; accessed on 20 August 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Source: <http://swapno-bd.org>; accessed on 9 August 2019.

**Table 5.8: A summary of the selected workfare programmes and their salient features**

Name of the Scheme	Programme Objective	Programme duration	Transfer Amount	Training and Training Type	Provision of credit after training	Gender Dimension	Implementing Ministry
Employment Generation Programme for the Poorest (EGPP)	Short term employment programme for Seasonally unemployed people  Development of community assets and rural infrastructure	80 days in 2 cycles per year	Tk. 200 Per day	No training available (N/A)	Not Available (N/A)	Nonspecific	Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief
Food for Work (FFW)	Improvement of Agriculture sector performance through construction and maintenance of infrastructure for production and marketing.  Reducing Physical damage and loss of human life due to flood or natural disaster through appropriate protective structures.  Generating productive seasonal employment for rural people.	120 days (or more depending on need)	8 kg of rice/wheat or money equivalent to 7 hours of work	N/A	N/A	Nonspecific	Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief
Work for Money (WFM)	To renovate rural infrastructure	120 days (4 months)	8 kg of rice/wheat or money equivalent to 7 hours of work	N/A	N/A	Nonspecific	Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief
National Service	<u>Providing training and employment opportunities to minimum HSC passed</u>	3 months of training followed by	Tk 100 as daily training allowance;	Training provided on 10 modules.	During the employment, Tk 2000 is	Nonspecific	Ministry of Disaster

Name of the Scheme	Programme Objective	Programme duration	Transfer Amount	Training and Training Type	Provision of credit after training	Gender Dimension	Implementing Ministry
	<u>educated unemployed youths aged 24-35 in nation-building activities.</u> <sup>19</sup>	2 years temporary employment	Tk 200 as daily service allowance during the employment	Training are mostly related to ethics than skill-enhancing technical supports	saved mandatorily each month. The amount can be drawn after employment.		Management and Relief
Test Relief (TR)-Cash	<p>Develop and maintain rural infrastructure to reduce disaster risk and meet the demand for electricity and renewable energy;</p> <p>Reduce the disaster and climate change-related risk and food insecurity of the rural poor by: -</p> <p>a. Generating seasonal employment for the rural poor;</p> <p>b. Ensuring food supply and food security in rural areas;</p> <p>c. Helping to reduce poverty;</p> <p>d. Meeting the demand for electricity and renewable energy to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, create</p>	N/A	8 kg of rice/wheat or money equivalent to 7 hours of work	N/A	N/A	Nonspecific	Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief

<sup>19</sup> [https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/page/3ef1111d-f006-41ea-aca9-6a7b61228825/G-2\\_03\\_36\\_Youth\\_English.pdf](https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/page/3ef1111d-f006-41ea-aca9-6a7b61228825/G-2_03_36_Youth_English.pdf) accessed on 26 Nov 2019

Name of the Scheme	Programme Objective	Programme duration	Transfer Amount	Training and Training Type	Provision of credit after training	Gender Dimension	Implementing Ministry
	employment and improve the quality of life.						
Infrastructure and Livelihood Development in Haor Area	Development of Infrastructure in Haor areas (e.g. Building roads, landing stations and markets)	N/A	N/A	Available. 1. Cage fish farming (1-day training) 2. Fisheries Production management (1-day Training) 3. Mono-sex Tilapia Fish farming (1-day training) 4. Pene Culture (1-day training)	N/A	Nonspecific	Ministry of Local Govt Rural Development and Co-operatives
Coastal Climate Resilient Infrastructure Improvement	(i) Improving livelihoods (higher incomes and food security) for poor households (women and men), and (ii) achieving enhanced climate resilience of coastal road and market infrastructure and people.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Non-specific	Ministry of Local Govt Rural Development and Co-operatives
Vulnerable Group Development (VGD)	A Positive and Sustainable change in livelihoods of ultra-poor women with attention to protecting further	24 months	30 kg of rice/ wheat per month	Available 1. IGA training.	Tk. 15000	Only female	Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs

Name of the Scheme	Programme Objective	Programme duration	Transfer Amount	Training and Training Type	Provision of credit after training	Gender Dimension	Implementing Ministry
	deterioration of the living condition			-building Entrepreneurship skills, (63 hours Training).  2. Life skill training. (63.5 hours training)			
Program for Ensuring Employment for the Ultra Poor in Northern area	To reduce poverty of ultra-poor during the jobless period.  To increase the ability of the people to mitigate disaster after the occurrence of any natural calamity.	40 days Per cycle, twice a year	N/A	N/A	N/A	Non-specific	
Skill and Employment Programme in Bangladesh	Reduce poverty through better training and job opportunities for the poor. It aims to ensure employment to 65,000 poor people, including women and disadvantaged population, upon completion of training through its partnerships with private training service providers (PTPs), and industry-based training initiatives.	Varies on the type of training programme.	N/A	Training is provided on Readymade Garments and Construction Sectors.	N/A	Non-specific	

Name of the Scheme	Programme Objective	Programme duration	Transfer Amount	Training and Training Type	Provision of credit after training	Gender Dimension	Implementing Ministry
Increase Productivity and Opportunity for Employment for Women (SWAPNO)	Promoting employment and future employability for extremely poor rural women.  2. Creating productive employment opportunities.  3. Developing Infrastructure in Rural Areas	18 months	N/A	Available.  Need-Based Life skill and Livelihoods Training.	N/A	Only female	Ministry of Local Government
Income Generating Activities (IGA) for Women at Upazila level	Development of vulnerable group.  Providing skill-based training programme for Women.	12 months	N/A	Available.  1. Beautification Training (3 months)  2. Block and Batik Training (3 months)  3. Sewing and Embroidery Training  4. Income-generating Training for poor to educate unemployed women.	N/A	Only female	Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs

Source: RAPID assessment based on the programme manuals of the selected workfare programmes.

### 4.3. Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Existing Workfare Programmes in Skill Development

The Government of Bangladesh has already adopted a national policy for skill development. The National Skills Development Policy 2011 aims to improve coordination and delivery of skills in Bangladesh.<sup>20</sup> The policy provides a clear vision and direction for skills development setting out reforms that the government would implement in partnership with industry, workers, and civil society. The NSDP categorises workers in seven tiers based on skill levels (Table 5.9). Since one of the objectives of the present study is to observe whether the existing workfare programmes are effective in terms of generating semi-skilled workers, we adhere to the definition of semi-skilled worker used in the NSDP (2011). A worker is defined as semi-skilled if he can work under supervision with some degree of autonomy. On the other hand, a worker is considered a basic skilled worker if he works under indirect supervision in a structured context.

**Table 5.9: Skill ladder defined in the NSDP 2011**

Level	Description	Job classification
Pre-Voc Level 1	Simple work under direct supervision in a well-defined, structured context	Pre-vocation trainee
Pre-Voc Level 2	Simple work under direct supervision in a well-defined, structured context	Pre-vocation Trainee
Level 1	Work under direct supervision in a structured context	Basic worker
Level 2	Work under indirect supervision in a structured context	Basic skilled worker
Level 3	Work under supervision with some autonomy	Semi-skilled worker
Level 4	Take responsibility, within a reason, for completion of tasks in work or study	Skilled worker
Level 5	Take overall responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study	Highly skilled worker/Supervisor
Level 6	Manage a team or teams in a workplace where unpredictable change exists.	Middle Level Manager/Sub assistant engineer

Source: NSDP (2011)

One reason of defining the ‘semi-skilled’ worker in accordance to the National Skills Development Policy is that, according to the policy document, all skill development vocational training programmes should follow a uniform and standard certification. As such, a semi-skilled worker should have a National Skill Certificate – 3 (NSC3) while a Basic Skilled Worker should have National Skill Certificate 2. It is also emphasised in the NSDP that all skill development programmes should be brought under a common, comparable and non-overlapping platform.

Undeniably, in terms of programme objectives, social security workfare programmes are different than the other mainstream vocational and technical training programmes. However, since the NSSS proposes the workfare programmes to be more effective in terms of technical capacity building, under the ideal scenario, such technical capacity building components should be aligned to the National Skill Development Policy. Therefore, the workfare programmes under the NSSS should have definitional and functional conformity with the NSDP.

Nevertheless, having the definitional clarity on what this study means by ‘semi-skilled’ labour is not enough to analyse the effectiveness and efficiency of workfare programmes. The present section follows a qualitative assessment of the workfare programmes based upon a number criterion selected as a yardstick for assessing

<sup>20</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-dhaka/documents/publication/wcms\\_113958.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-dhaka/documents/publication/wcms_113958.pdf), accessed on 20 December 2019.

the overall effectiveness of the programmes on skill development. Based on the observed programme characteristics four criteria have been selected as yardsticks:

*First criterion: Sustenance:* Being a social security programme, a workfare programme must provide sustenance to its beneficiaries. As such, whether a workfare scheme under the social security programme offers training or not, it must always provide income support to the beneficiary group. Programmes which provide only training but do not provide any income support should not be considered under the workfare programme. The reason behind the inclusion of this criterion is to differentiate programmes which provide only sustenance (such as EGPP, TR, etc.) with the programmes which provides training and sustenance (such as the VGD).

*Second criterion: Coherence:* The programme needs to be coherent with the major policy frameworks such as the National Skill Development Policy, and the National Social Security Strategy, etc. The programmes also need to be coherent with the local context. For instance, the programmes specified for Bandarban or Chittagong hill tracts should be coherent with the local demands as it should be in the case of Khulna or Rangpur. The more coherent a programme with the national policies, and/or with the local context, the higher the chances that the programme outcome will have better effectiveness.

*Third criterion: Individualistic value addition of the programme:* A more effective programme would be a programme that provides some additional skills to its participants or beneficiaries. For instance, both the National Service and VGD has training components. However, while the National Service provides training on moral ethics, the VGD provides training on income-generating activities. In terms of value addition, both programmes can be considered equal since they added additional knowledge to the programme participants.

*Fourth criterion: Sustainability:* The skills acquired by participating in the workfare programme should have a sustainable impact on the earnings and employability of the beneficiaries. A skill can be considered to have sustainable impacts on the earnings and employability of the programme participant if it widens the 'functioning' and 'capability' of the programme participants. The concepts of 'functioning' and 'capabilities' are coined by Sen (Sen, 1999). 'Functioning' are states of 'being and doing' such as being employed, being trained, etc. Capabilities refer to the set of valuable functioning that a person has effective access to. In the present context, participation in the workfare programmes which provide only sustenance can give a limited period functioning to its beneficiaries (i.e., being employed only for a specific season). Such programmes will not increase the capabilities of the participants for any future events. In contrast, a workfare programme such as VGD or SWAPNO will increase the functioning of the participants for a longer period. The participants are being trained in specific trades. Therefore, being trained in 'embroidery' or 'computer' increases their set of capabilities for future periods as well. The impact of such programmes on earnings and employability thus can be considered as sustainable. It is noteworthy that not all the programmes with 'individualistic value addition' will have a similar sustainable impact on earnings and employability. For instance, programmes such as 'National Services' provided training on 'ethics might increase the functioning of an individual being 'more honest'. However, honesty is non-measurable, and therefore – training on moral ethics might not have adequate impacts on employability. If being a participant of a programme does not attest an improvement in 'observed' technical skills – it might not increase the earning capabilities of the programme participant. Therefore, the programme might not have a sustainable impact on earnings and employability.

Based on the four criteria stated above a qualitative evaluation of the workfare programmes on their effectiveness and efficiency has been carried out in the following table:

**Table 5.10: The overall effectiveness and efficiency of the workfare programmes**

Programme(s)	Sustenance	Coherence	Individualistic Value addition	Sustainability	Overall effectiveness and efficiency
Employment Generation Programme for the Poorest (EGPP)  Food for Work (FFW)  Work for Money (WFM)  Test Relief	The programme is particularly designed for the lean season.  Therefore, it properly meets the criterion of sustenance.	The present module of the programme is not coherent with the National Skill Development Policy (NSDP). However, being a covariate risks programme it is coherent with the NSSS objectives.	The programme does not meet this criterion.  The programme participants do manual labour works (primarily earthworks such as road constructions, etc.). There is no additional skill that they learn from the programme.	The programme does not meet this criterion.  Although the programme participants remain almost the same, it cannot be argued to pass this criterion. This is because participation in the programme does not ensure that the participant will be able to earn his living on his own from the knowledge he has learnt from the programme.	All these programmes are covariate risks programmes and, in many contexts, (such as during floods or natural disasters) these programmes become very useful tools. However, since there is no value addition in terms of skills and the participation in the programmes do not ensure a sustainable living once the participation is terminated, some modifications in the programme design are desirable.
National Service	The programme provides employment opportunities and on-job training. It meets the sustenance criterion.	The programme is partially coherent with the National Skill Development Policy. However, the training provided in the programme is more on ethics than technical know-how.	The programme adds some values to the training participants in terms of strengthening their ethical morals. However, it does not provide any skill-enhancing training. In terms of individualistic value addition, it passes the criterion.	Since the programme does not provide any skill-enhancing training, its marketability after programme participation is very low. However, the programme provides a lump-sum amount of money to the participants at the end of the programme to help them start their own entrepreneurial activities.	The overall effect on the productivity of this programme is low in terms of sustainability of the programme impacts on earnings and employability.  The programme should incorporate technical training as an integral component along with ethics.
Infrastructure and Livelihood Development in Haor Area	The programme meets this criterion since the major areas for this	The objective of the programme is in line with the National Skill Development	The programme component incorporates training on modern fishing – which can provide	The programme participants are expected to have sustainable income supports from the training they receive.	Compared to most other workfare programmes, this programme has considerably better desirable components.

Programme(s)	Sustenance	Coherence	Individualistic Value addition	Sustainability	Overall effectiveness and efficiency
	programme are the Haor regions, an area which is heavily susceptible to natural disasters.	Policy and NSSS. The programme is also coherent in the sense that the training it encapsulates is specifically modified keeping the regional context in mind.	additional knowledge to the participants. However, the duration of the training programmes is very brief (in most cases only 1 day).	However, access to seed money and other production materials (such as 'fishing equipment') can be vital components for sustainability.	The programme will have considerable sustainable impacts on the livelihoods of the beneficiaries.
Coastal Climate Resilient Infrastructure Improvement	It does not provide any income or other cash supports, rather it emphasises on local infrastructure improvement.	Being a covariate risks programme, it is coherent with the NSSS.  The programme does not comply with the NSDP.	The programme does not meet this criterion. However, it must be noted that, although there is no value addition at the individual level, the society at large benefits from the programme in terms of more climate-resilient infrastructure.	The programme might not have a direct impact on the individuals; however, there will be sustainable indirect impacts on livelihoods. For instance, a more climate-resilient locality might have more sustainable income-generating activities than otherwise.	The programme is different than all other workfare programmes. This is indirectly linked to livelihoods and does not have any components to increase participant skills.  In terms of 'individualistic value addition' and 'sustainability' criterion, the programme is less effective.
Vulnerable Group Development (VGD)	The programme is targeted at women from poor households. It meets the sustenance criterion.	The programme is coherent with the NSDP as well as the NSSS.  The NSSS suggests a more modified version of this programme named	The participants in the programme are trained on entrepreneurial skills and life-skills.	It meets the sustainability criterion. However, not all the programme participants get engaged in the labour market upon the programme completion.  Reasons behind it include – lack of seed capital to start self-employment, skill mismatches (such as lack of	The programme is more effective than most other workfare programmes in terms of having a sustainable impact on programme participants. However, for a better outcome, it should be mainstreamed with other skill-based training programmes. The programme certification and 'internship' or 'market link'

Programme(s)	Sustenance	Coherence	Individualistic Value addition	Sustainability	Overall effectiveness and efficiency
		Vulnerable Women Benefit programme (VWB).		employment on the trade she is trained into), etc.	components should be established and strengthened.
Program for Ensuring Employment for the Ultra Poor in Northern area	The programme is specifically designed for the poor from three northern districts.	The programme is coherent with the NSSS objectives. However, it does not have a strong training component for skill development.	The programme does not have a strong training component. The participants in the programme are mostly engaged in earthworks. However, there is a provision of microcredit that the participants can avail for their own production purposes.	The programme does not provide any sustainable skill to its participants that they can rely on for their future earnings. However, some of the programme objectives might indirectly benefit the programme participant. As such, a strengthened market chain or enhanced food security can have indirect impacts on the individuals for a longer period.	The programme does not meet the 'individualistic value addition' and 'sustainability' criterion.  The programme components can be reassessed to incorporate necessary skill-enhancing tools.
Skill and Employment Programme in Bangladesh	The programme is designed for anyone willing to participate and does not specifically dedicate to the marginalised poor or ultra-poor.	The programme is coherent with the NSDP.	The programme provides hands-on training to its participants on RMG and construction services.	The programme participants are expected to have easier access to the RMG and construction-related services.	This is purely a skill development programme and may not be an ideal candidate to be considered as a social security programme.
Increase Productivity and Opportunity for Employment for Women (SWAPNO)	The programme is designed for women from lagging regions. The programme	The programme's objective is in line with the NSDP. In addition, the	The programme provides training to the participant women on different trades. It encourages the participants to be	The programme is still on-going. However, as reported by some key informants, the programme participants do engage in income-generating activities	The programme has better effectiveness compared to other workfare programmes in terms of 'individualistic value addition' and 'sustainability'.

Programme(s)	Sustenance	Coherence	Individualistic Value addition	Sustainability	Overall effectiveness and efficiency
	promotes sustenance.	NSSS suggested an expansion of this project.	engaged in the labour market as a self-employed after the programme participation.	successfully after the programme participation.	The programme can be considered as a benchmark success story and can be replicated at a larger scale.
Income Generating Activities (IGA) for Women at Upazila level	The programme is dedicated to women. However, the programme inclusion criterion does not require the participant to be poor.	The programme is coherent with the NSSS and the NSDP.	The programme provides training to the participants on several trades including embroidery, computer literacy, etc.	Whether the beneficiaries can have a sustainable income-generating activity will depend on several factors, such as: whether there is enough market demand for the skills that she has acquired, the amount of seed money required for starting up her own business, the quality of the training programme, etc.	The programme components should be strengthened further. During the KIIs, some of the programme participants reported that the quality of the trainers was not as good as expected.  The effectiveness of the programme is conditional on the quality of training provided as well as after-training job opportunities.

Source: RAPID assessment

#### 4.4.A quantitative Assessment of the Workfare Programmes: Findings from the Empirical Study

This section presents the results of the survey to ascertain whether the SSP WF schemes contribute to increasing the skills of beneficiaries through the skill ladder and whether and to what extent the private sector has been experiencing a shortage of the semi-skilled labour. We also present the perspectives of the beneficiaries, entrepreneurs and government officials on the avenues of reforms in the programme designs and implementation to improve the skill of the WF beneficiaries with the aim to satisfy the market needs.

The WF programmes primarily aim to mainly provide jobs to the poor, marginalised and vulnerable population in the slack period and after disasters when it is generally difficult to find jobs in rural areas. The schemes are designed and implemented both with and without active training components. Collectively these programmes intend to include the maximum number of beneficiaries from different socio-economic groups that are usually exposed to manifold natural disasters, recurrent seasonal unemployment, chronic poverty, social backwardness, gender-related inequalities and barriers in the job market, and multiple deprivations. While the principal objective of most of the important programmes in terms of allocation and coverage is to transfer cash and/or food during difficult times of the intended beneficiaries, it is important to consider the optimal use of money spent from the national budget. On the one hand, the government's resources need to be spent in a manner such that the maximum number of new beneficiaries can be covered through the schemes for the population that need work and training, the programmes, on the other hand, should aim at sustainable improvement of life of the beneficiaries through skill development and employability through supplying skilled workers to cater the requirement of the labour market, i.e., matching with the needs of the private sector entrepreneurs.

The labour market is, however, full of friction that always creates unemployment (for example, due to increasing capital and technology-intensity as discussed in Chapter 3) and there are structural factors of unemployment because of immobility of workforce from the regions of excess supply to job hubs during slack periods (i.e., lack of interest in finding job in other areas through migration). Therefore, it is imperative to understand the policy avenues on how to turn the recurrent nature of spending on mega WF programmes (such as EGPP, FFW/WFM and TR) into human-capital centric schemes instead of only developing and maintaining physical infrastructure through creating incentive for the participants to leave rather than continue to remain with the programmes for years. Second, in order to make the WF schemes as viable means of employability, it is necessary to find the policy avenues of skill development and up gradation in the existing and possible new scheme through introducing and modifying the training components. Third, the scope of creating and strengthening linkage with the private sector and technical institutions for skill development under the existing WF schemes need to be revisited.

In order to understand the issues of the above and research questions for this study, the survey was conducted using a mixed-method approach (utilizing a primary survey, focus group discussions, KIIs and case studies) on beneficiaries, entrepreneurs and government officials. The results provide some insights into the relevant issues including, whether the SSP-WF schemes contribute to increasing the skills of beneficiaries and whether and to what extent the private sector has been experiencing a shortage of the semi-skilled labour. Reflections of beneficiaries, entrepreneurs and government officials on the avenues of reforms in the programme designs and implementation to improve the skill of the WF beneficiaries with the aim to satisfy the market needs are also captured.

##### 4.4.1. *Socio-economic Profile of the Respondents*

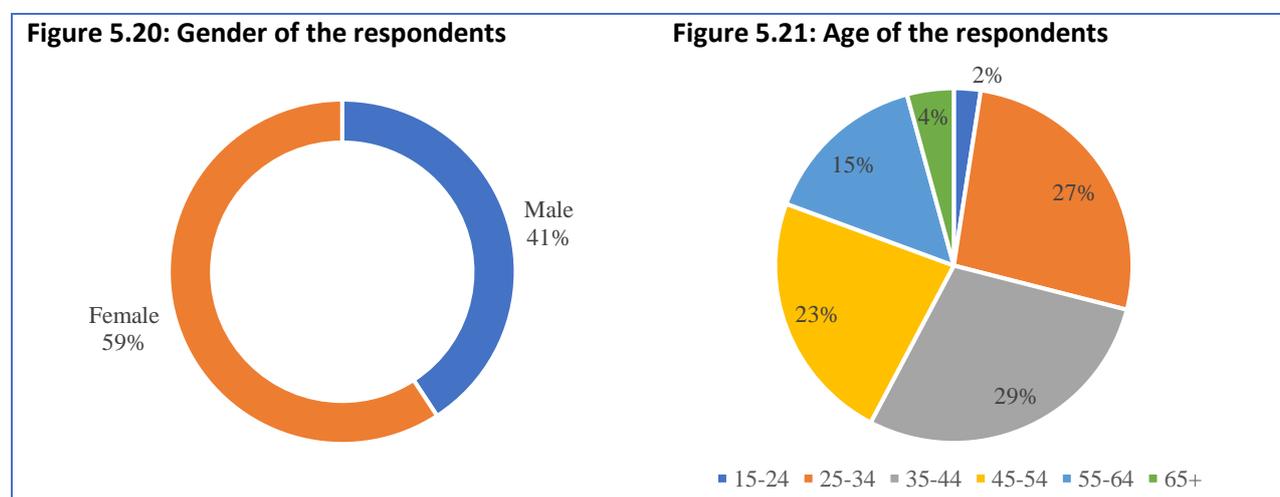
A total of 331 respondents from eight districts were covered in the field survey. District-wise survey respondents ranged from 40 to 44. All the respondents we approached provided full information as per the survey questionnaire and complemented the quantitative response with qualitative descriptions.

**Table 5.11: Respondents by district**

District	Respondents	Percent
Bagerhat	44	13.29
Bhola	41	12.39
Kurigram	43	12.99
Manikganj	40	12.08
Netrokona	40	12.08
Rangamati	40	12.08
Sirajganj	41	12.39
Sunamganj	42	12.69
Total	331	100.00

Source: Field survey (2019)

The WF programmes have been mostly covering women in the surveyed districts. Therefore, majority of the respondents of the survey were women (59 per cent). In that sense, the WF schemes can be regarded as women-friendly ones aimed at providing them jobs in the lean period as well as help generate self-employment through training.



Source: Field survey (2019)

The beneficiaries of the WF programmes are inclusive of all ages and try to provide jobs to vulnerable people in the lean periods. Most of the respondents (58 per cent) was relatively young people, who are from the age group of 15 to 44 years. Among all respondents, 29 per cent belong to the age group of 15 to 34 years, while the respondents from the 35-44 years age group were 29 per cent. There are some elderly respondents as well in the sample, who belong to the age group of 55 per cent and above (19 per cent).

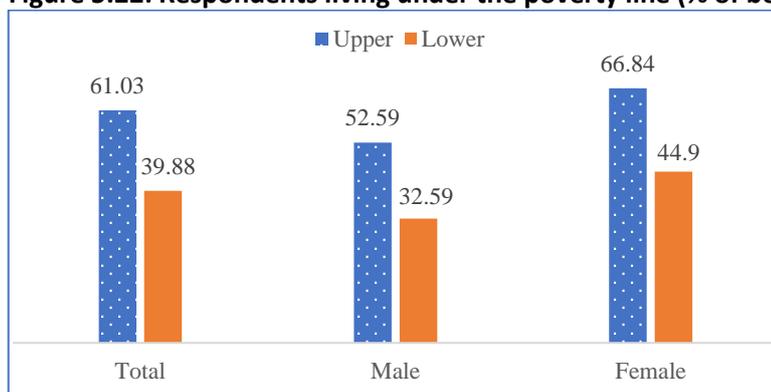
An overwhelming majority of participants of the WF programmes do not require education and skill. More than half (51 per cent) of the respondents were found to be illiterate and illiteracy was higher among women (56 per cent) compared to their male counterparts. On the other hand, about one-third (29 per cent) of respondents were enrolled at primary schools and 14 per cent at secondary schools, while a very few people completed the secondary level or higher (6 per cent). Thus, they are either recipients of food/cash and in-kind transfers or engaged as regular unskilled workers who perform earthwork, pond excavation, repairing and maintenance of rural roads, etc. in programmes like EGPP, VGD, TR, FFW/WFM and EGPP. Most of them did not receive technical and vocational training for employment in the job market or self-employment training that would help them earn a higher income.

**Table 5.12: Education of the respondents (per cent)**

	Male	Female	Total
No education	44	56	51
Primary education	30	28	29
Secondary education	13	14	14
HSC/SSC	7	2	4
University	4	1	2
Technical	1	0	1
Others	1	0	0
Total	100	100	100

Source: Field survey (2019)

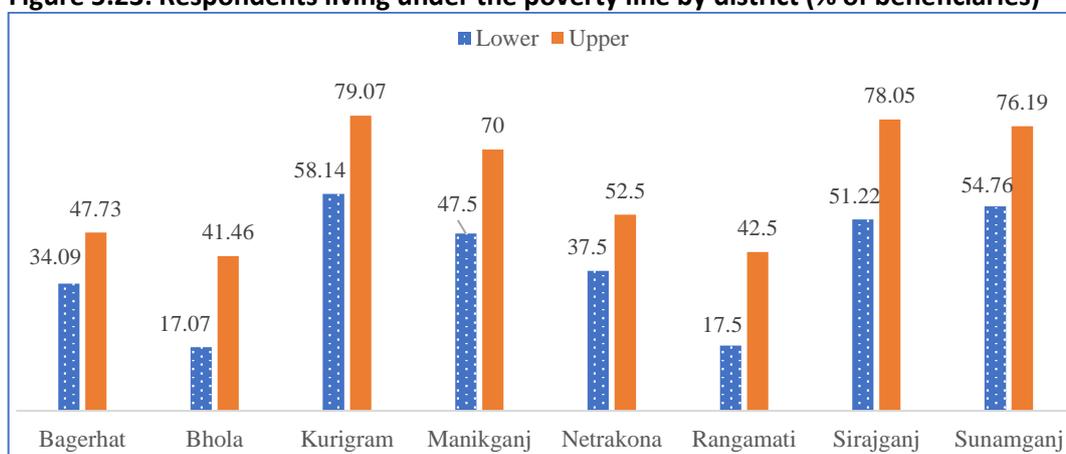
During the survey period, overall 61 per cent of participants of WF programmes were living below the upper poverty line and about 40 per cent of participants were below the lower poverty line. These figures were much higher than the national aggregate poverty estimates. Most importantly, poverty estimates were remarkably skewed to the female participants of the WF programmes. Two-thirds of female participants were living below the upper poverty line and 45 per cent below the lower poverty line.

**Figure 5.22: Respondents living under the poverty line (% of beneficiaries)**

Note: Poverty headcount ratio has been calculated based on the poverty line income of HIES 2016.

Source: Field survey (2019)

District-wise disaggregated poverty estimates reveal that respondents of Kurigram, Sirajganj and Sunamganj were poorer than the respondents of other districts. More than half of the respondents were living below the lower poverty line while more than three-quarters were below the upper poverty line during the survey.

**Figure 5.23: Respondents living under the poverty line by district (% of beneficiaries)**

Note: Poverty headcount ratio has been calculated based on the poverty line income of HIES 2016.

Source: Field survey (2019)

Among the respondents, most women (52 per cent) and total respondents (37 per cent) were not employed during the survey period. However, about 28 per cent of total respondents were self-employed and about 23 per cent were engaged in wage employment. However, about 13 per cent had their own business and at the same time, they were involved in wage employment at their own time.

**Table 5.13: Category of employment of the respondents (per cent)**

	Male	Female	Total
Not in employment	16	52	37
Wage employed	24	21	23
Self-employed	37	21	27
Both wage and self-employed	23	6	13
Total (331 respondents)	100	100	100

Source: Field survey (2019)

#### 4.4.2. Slack Period and Job Opportunity in the Survey Areas

The lean period varies significantly across surveyed districts and months. Overall, June to October, there has been found to be the most significant period when people find it very hard to get a job in their localities mainly because of natural disasters (such as annual floods), while March and May are the months of moderate joblessness according to the beneficiaries of the WF programmes. Among the districts, Bagerhat, Manikganj, Netrokona and Sirajganj have been found to have a long lean period, from June to October. Conversely, in Bhola and Netrokona, the lean period is very long, from eight to nine months. In Bhola, the lean period is from January to May and then again from August to October. Therefore, EGPP, the biggest WF programme, is unable to address the unemployment problem of all localities in the uniform timelines in all districts of the country.

**Table 5.14: Lean months by a district**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bagerhat	0	1	0	0	0	20	21	42	24	22	0	0
Bhola	14	14	20	21	18	3	4	17	21	22	2	11
Kurigram	0	0	9	2	0	26	12	22	24	29	0	0
Manikganj	0	0	0	3	10	40	40	38	33	7	2	0
Netrokona	1	13	22	3	6	21	21	14	16	11	1	0
Rangamati	6	1	3	1	2	35	34	10	2	2	4	14
Sirajganj	0	1	8	0	1	16	18	31	36	24	0	0
Sunamganj	2	6	10	1	14	28	30	22	9	8	4	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>% of respondents</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>

Note: The numbers presented in district rows indicate the number of respondents who identified the corresponding months as lean period.

Source: Field survey (2019)

According to the respondents, most of the jobs available during a normal period in the surveyed areas are of manual labour and in agricultural activities. The service sector is also an important job-provider according to about one-third respondents (63 per cent). However, other sectors, such as fisheries and construction,

also provide jobs in some districts according to the respondents even though the importance of these sectors varies across districts.

**Table 5.15: Job opportunities by district (normal period)**

District	Agriculture	Industry	Service	Construction	Crop	Fish	Labour
Bagerhat	40	12	24	12	40	1	43
Bhola	38	16	24	16	26	24	41
Kurigram	39	23	32	6	37	5	43
Manikganj	40	25	31	25	40	13	24
Netrokona	37	14	22	11	37	11	38
Rangamati	38	12	28	12	38	24	39
Sirajganj	40	18	33	14	40	13	39
Sunamganj	41	12	13	9	37	37	40
<b>Total (331 respondents)</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>307</b>
<b>% of total</b>	<b>94.56</b>	<b>39.88</b>	<b>62.54</b>	<b>31.72</b>	<b>89.12</b>	<b>38.67</b>	<b>92.75</b>

Note: The numbers presented in district rows indicate the number of respondents who identified the corresponding sector as job providers.

Source: Field survey (2019)

During the lean period, only jobs of daily labour remain available for the beneficiaries of the WF programmes in all districts, which is followed by service and transport in most of the districts. Industry and construction that require technical skills do not offer many jobs during the lean period except in a few districts.

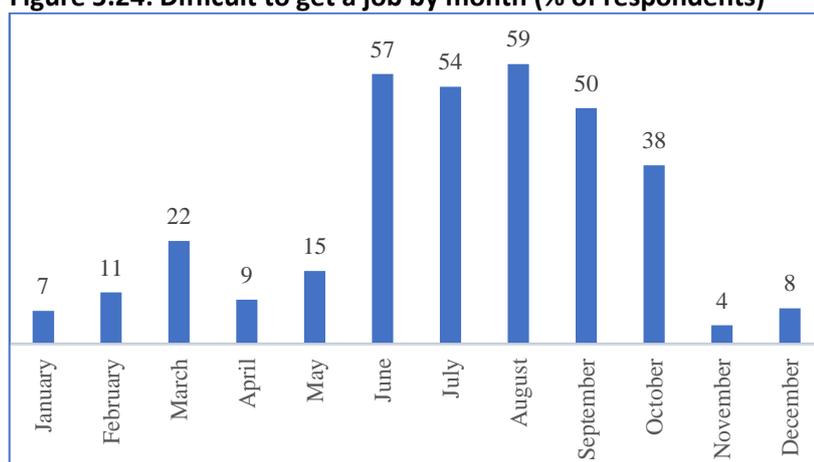
**Table 5.16: Job opportunities by district (lean period)**

District	Agriculture	Industry	Service	Construction	Crop	Fish	Trade	Transport	Labour
Bagerhat	1	9	21	9	1	0	11	18	44
Bhola	7	11	24	11	5	2	14	13	39
Kurigram	7	18	31	11	7	0	14	21	36
Manikganj	14	24	1	8	0	14	22	25	40
Netrokona	15	17	29	15	7	11	13	9	32
Rangamati	22	6	14	6	3	20	20	16	36
Sirajganj	16	11	36	10	16	0	2	33	38
Sunamganj	28	7	10	6	4	27	4	4	41
<b>Total (331 respondents)</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>306</b>
<b>% of total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>92</b>

Note: The numbers presented in district rows indicate the number of respondents who identified the corresponding sector as job providers.

Source: Field survey (2019)

The largest portion of the respondents (38-59 per cent) of all surveyed districts experience difficulties to find any job from June to October. The paucity of jobs of the remaining months (November-May) was reported as a minimum (4-22 per cent). These months have been persisting as lean period even though many WF schemes that provide temporary jobs and training in the survey areas.

**Figure 5.24: Difficult to get a job by month (% of respondents)**

Source: Field survey (2019)

Majority of the respondents reported that they continue searching for jobs in the same areas even though jobs remain largely unavailable in their respective areas. Even though the natural response to local unemployment is migration and seeking jobs elsewhere, a very small proportion of the respondents migrates to other cities for searching jobs. It raises a question about the effectiveness of the training of the WF schemes in matching the local demand for jobs.

**Table 5.17: What do respondents do during the lean period (% of respondents)**

District	This area is not affected by adverse weather; normal activities	Look for jobs in the same area	Migrate to another city in search of job	Be dependent on government assistance programmes	Do not do any work	Total	% of Total
Bagerhat	4	19	4	0	16	43	13.52
Bhola	5	18	5	0	13	41	12.89
Kurigram	1	33	4	0	5	43	13.52
Manikganj	0	28	6	0	2	36	11.32
Netrokona	2	18	4	4	7	35	11.01
Rangamati	0	28	1	1	10	40	12.58
Sirajganj	3	26	3	1	7	40	12.58
Sunamganj	3	15	6	2	14	40	12.58
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Note: The numbers presented in district rows indicate the number of respondents who identified the response strategy of the WF beneficiaries in the lean period.

Source: Field survey (2019)

Most of the respondents participated in the EGPP and VGD programme. The participation rate of these two schemes was the highest compared to other WF schemes. The beneficiaries participated in EGPP up to ten times in the past five years, which is much higher than other SSN programmes. It implies that the respondents are somewhat recurrently dependent on EGPP scheme for their livelihoods during the lean period. TR is another scheme that has created dependence among poor unemployed people of the surveyed areas. It is, perhaps, mainly due to overwhelming immobility among jobless rural people and unwillingness to look for jobs in other cities and job hubs. Another likely reason is the lack of sufficient and appropriate skill development through WF schemes that would drive them to migrate for jobs in urban areas.

**Table 5.18: Number of times participated in the programme over the last five years**

Name of the WF Programme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
EGPP	15	22	14	6	5	10	2	4	4	8	90
FFW	4	3	2	2	2	1	0	0	0	2	16
WFM	13	6	3	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	27

National Service	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
TR	15	6	5	2	0	0	2	0	2	4	36
Haor Area Infrastructure and Livelihood	15	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19
Coastal Climate RII	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5
RID	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
Rural Settlement Construction	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
VGD	76	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	90
SEPB	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
SWAPNO	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20
Integrated Rural Employment Support	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>325</b>
<b>% of respondents</b>	<b>53.54</b>	<b>17.54</b>	<b>8.62</b>	<b>4.31</b>	<b>3.38</b>	<b>3.38</b>	<b>1.23</b>	<b>1.23</b>	<b>1.85</b>	<b>4.92</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field survey (2019)

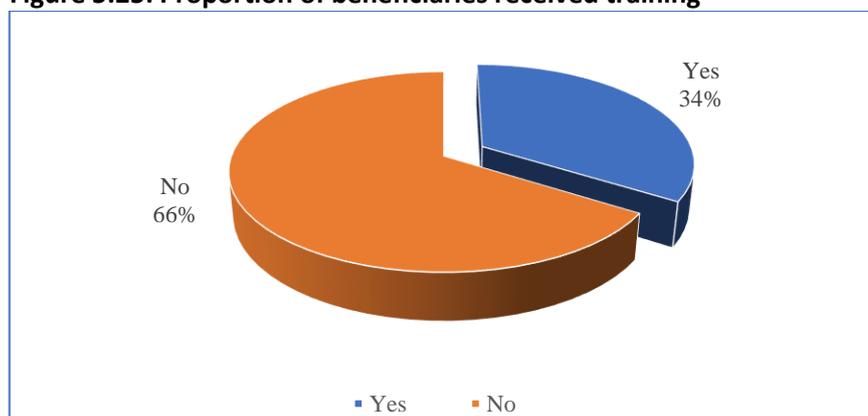
### Case Study 1

Sheli Rani Das (49) is a housewife at Janigaon village at Lakshmansree union in Sunamganj Sadar Upazila. The only yearly income of Tk.10,000-15,000 she earns is from her 6 decimal arable land. With the aid of 30kg rice from the VGD programme per month, they live a very humble life. However, Sheli did not receive any training from the VGD programme in the first six months of her participation since February 2019. She also never met anyone from the programme who could give them access to the job market. "I am interested in poultry farming. I would like the government to train us. There is no such trade course in the programme. It did not provide training to develop skills." Sheli said that her economic condition is dire, so nobody is interested to lend them money. She called for poultry training for females and forestry training for males at her locality. She also mentioned that the provision of loan, equipment, and access to the job market are required for the programme to enable the participating women to come out of the vicious circle of poverty and vulnerability.

#### 4.4.3. Skill Development through WF Programmes

It is expected that WF programmes would comprise either pure skill development component or on-the-job training components that would develop their skills and upgrade them along the skill ladder. However, only one-third of the surveyed beneficiaries of the WF schemes received any kind of training. It implies that an overwhelming majority of the programmes lacks training components. All the schemes, however, do not necessarily cater to the needs of the job market.

**Figure 5.25: Proportion of beneficiaries received training**



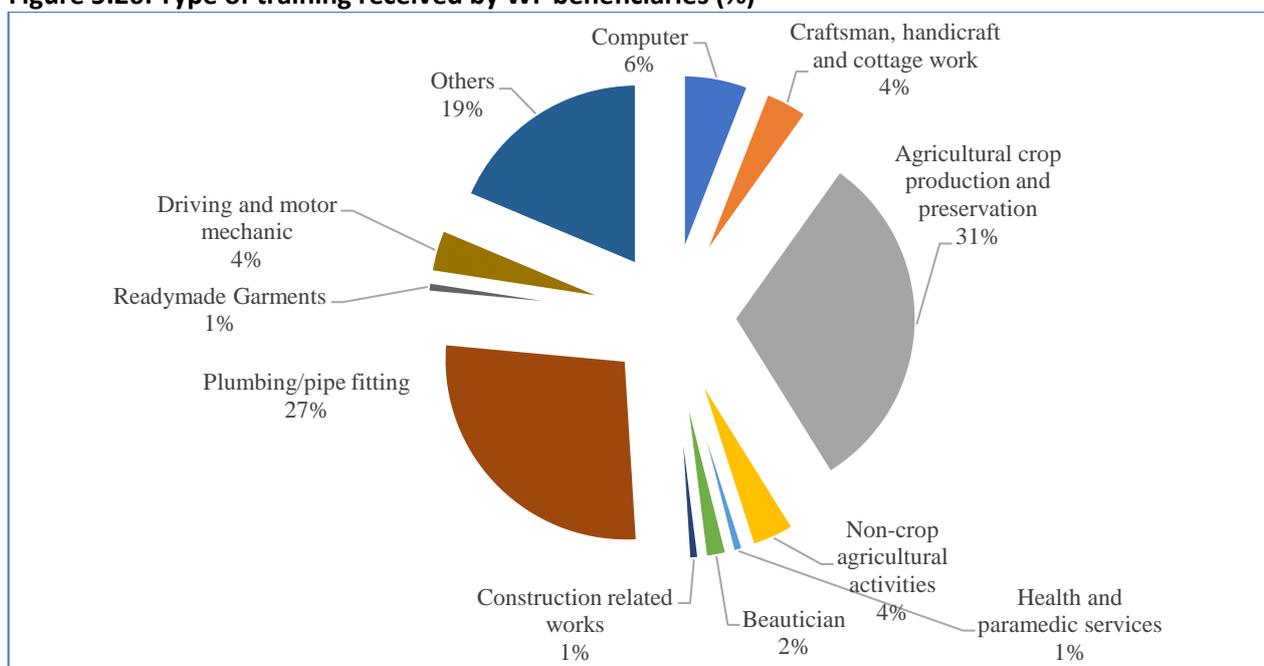
Source: Field survey (2019)

**Case Study 2**

Akbar Ali (58) is a Baul (folk singer) and an ayurvedic practitioner (Kabiraj) living at Telkupi village in Ullapara Upazila, Sirajganj district. His monthly income is Tk. 5,000. He has been participating in EGPP, WFM, TR, etc. for the last seven years. However, he never received any training from the programmes he participated in. He opined that the best aspects of the programmes are that unemployed people get jobs to feed themselves during the lean period. Many people like him no longer want to remain dependent on WF programmes every year. However, they do not receive any technical and vocational training from the programme which could help get other jobs in the locality and nearby district headquarters.

Most of the WF beneficiaries who received training reported that these were related to crop production and preservation (31 per cent), followed by the plumbing/pipe fitting (27 per cent). Other types of skill development training were quite low. Among them, the training to develop skilled manpower was computer (6 per cent), handicraft and cottage (4 per cent), driving and motor mechanic (4 per cent), personal beautification (2 per cent), Readymade Garments (RMGs) (1 per cent), health and paramedic services (1 per cent), and construction-related works (1 per cent). Some beneficiaries also received training on non-crop agricultural activities, such as dairy and poultry rearing, which are helpful for self-employment.

**Figure 5.26: Type of training received by WF beneficiaries (%)**



Source: Field survey (2019)

About the training materials and facilities provided in the training, respondents opined that training equipment was so far best among the others. Scope of practical exercises during the training session and -post-training supports were reported as the best by some of the respondents, while a very few participants reported about the post-training loan facility and supports were the best components.

**Table 5.19: Best training component of the WF programme**

Features	Percent
Training equipment used in the programme	51.32
Scopes for practical exercises	23.68
Post-training loan facility	3.95
Post-training supports	19.74
Others	1.32

Total (76 respondents)	100.00
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Source: Field survey (2019)

According to the WF beneficiaries, the SWAPNO is the best scheme in terms of quality of training because it used training equipment and provided practical exercise as well as demonstrations. The participants of HAIL programme also praised its training component because, in addition to equipment use and demonstrations, it provides post-training supports (credit facility), which was followed by the VGD programme.

**Table 5.20: The best training component of the WF programme**

Features	National Service	HAIL	Coastal Climate RII	Rural Settlement	VGD	SEPB	SWAPNO	Total	% of Total
Training equipment used	0	8	5	1	8	3	10	35	49
Scope for practical exercises	2	3	0	0	3	0	10	18	25
Post-training loan facility	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	4
Post-training supports	3	8	0	0	2	1	0	14	20
Others	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey (2019)

The majority of the participants (around two-thirds) who received training mentioned that the quality of training of the WF schemes is either good or the best among the training packages available in their localities, which include training provided by the private institutions and NGOs. However, around one-third beneficiaries were not happy with the training because they want more sophisticated and high-quality training (which are related to advanced information and commination technology, industrial jobs, how to operate machines, etc.) to get better jobs in the competitive market in the cities and industrial zones to earn more.

**Figure 5.27: Quality of the training (self-reported), %**



Source: Field survey (2019)

Among the shortcomings of the existing training programme, 44 per cent reported about the inadequate practical exercise, followed by inadequate practice instruments (33 per cent) and the quality of the training (22 per cent). It implies that there are valid grounds of the respondents to identify the standard of the training as unsatisfactory.

**Table 5.21: Major shortcomings of the WF training**

Type	Percent
Very short duration of training	22.22
Inadequate instruments	33.33
Inadequate practical exercise	44.44
Total (27 respondents)	100.00

Source: Field survey (2019)

The above results reveal the three major aspects of the WF schemes implemented in the surveyed Upazilas.

**First**, the majority of the WF participants did not receive any training. Some participants who received training have become financially solvent and very few of them could invest from their savings in an economically viable business through which they achieved successes.

#### Case Study 3

Rehena Begum (30), a seasonal agricultural day labourer and housekeeper, lives with her husband and four children in a Guccho Gram (villages provided under the Cluster Village programme of the government) in Chargacha, Ullapara, Sirajganj. She is currently unemployed. She took part in a 20-day work programme provided by WFM. She earned a mere sum of Tk.2,000 but she saved Tk.1,000 and bought a goat. She did not receive any training from the programme. Rehena is interested in livestock rearing but she requires training. She opined that WF programmes should provide cattle or sewing machines to utilize the training. Although she was able to develop very good relationships with her colleagues, none of them helped her get a job.

**Second**, most of the participants did not get any training which could help them get off-farm jobs and dominate in the private job market through notable quality and skills even though they are mostly young.

#### Case Study 4

Mosammat Iyanur Begum (31) works as a peon at a kindergarten school in Bapta village in Bhola Sadar Upazila. She is doing this job because it is very difficult for her family to survive on her husband's meagre income. She has been participating in the VGD for the past 6 months. As per her knowledge, nobody receives any training or loan from the VGD programme. She suggested that the programme should provide IGA training and loans. Self-employment will be created by providing training on dairy and poultry farming, fishing, etc. She wants IGA training under the VGD scheme.

**Third**, training converts unskilled workers into semi-skilled ones. But most of them do not become skilled workers for the manufacturing and service sectors in city centres and employment hubs.

#### 4.4.4. Matching with the Demand for Skilled and Semi-Skilled Workers

The survey results reveal that there is a general mismatch between the required skills in the labour market and the skills training provided by the WF schemes through earthwork, short vocational training and long trade courses. A qualitative in-depth discussion with the beneficiaries reveals that even though some beneficiaries could get a job in the market and could increase income through self-employment due to the training, there is a clear skill mismatch in the WF schemes, i.e., the gap between skill developed and required by the market.

#### Case study 5

*Billal Hossain (36), lives at Radhaballav Katoya in Bagerhat Sadar Upazila, is a day labourer at Rural Infrastructure Development, TR, FFW and WFM schemes. The work involves earthwork and helping in road construction with bricks. He works as a rickshaw-puller or van driver when construction projects are unavailable. He said, "I've gotten nothing but wages from the Rural Infrastructure Development programme. I did not get any training or loan from the programme," Billal also mentioned that he does not have other skill that the market demands. Due to salinity, a lot of breadth of the agricultural and fishing have been reduced to shrimp cultivation. Because of the increase in micro transportation services, Billal thinks that if he gets training to run auto-rickshaws and get a loan to buy one, his income will increase.*

Majority of the participants who received training under the WF schemes (58 per cent) believe that the training would help them get a decent job. However, the rest 42 per cent do not believe that the WF schemes are viable means of a decent job in the labour market.

**Table 5.22: Whether the WF programme is good enough to provide a decent job**

Response	Percent
Strongly agree	15
Agree	43
Neither agree nor disagree	13
Disagree	21
Strongly disagree	8
Total (77 respondents)	100

Source: Field survey (2019)

#### Case Study 6

Miru Sheikh (60), a poor farmer, lives in Kalia Haripur village at Sirajganj Sadar Upazila. He works as a labour leader when he works in TR/WFM programmes. The programmes usually take place 1-2 times a year and for 15-20 days in which he earns Tk. 320 per day. He additionally receives a lump-sum of Tk.2,000-3,000 after the end of each programme as a labour supplier. The programmes did not provide any training to the workers that they can utilize to get any other job at their choice. He said that the jobs in the weaving and construction industry have been increasing in the locality. He called for the provision of training on construction works, livestock breeding, weaving, etc. and a one-off loan by any WF programme vis-à-vis regular activities.

Most of the respondents (86 per cent) admitted that the WF programmes training were beneficial for increasing their income in turn. It is mainly because most of the participants were jobless when they received training and they could utilize the training for self-employment and getting better jobs from the market. Very few reported that their level of skill has improved due to training. Thus, it can be deduced that training has hardly helped in skill development and pushed the participants up along the skill ladder.

**Table 5.23: How the WF training was beneficial for the participants**

Benefit	Percent
Level of skill has improved	6.9
Income has increased	86.2
Helped get a job	6.9
Total (29 respondents)	100.0

Source: Field survey (2019)

#### Case Study 7

Shilpi Rani Datta (24) is now working in the ICT section of the Union Parishad under the National Service scheme at Bapta Union of Bhola Sadar Upazila. "Even though it is a temporary job, it is a great achievement for me because I was fully jobless before", she said. Before the job, she was a full-time housewife with higher secondary education. She has been involved in creating National Identification Cards (NIDs), correcting of NIDs, inheritance-related works, registering the birth and death dates, making certificates, and preparing drafts for the village court. She receives Tk. 4,000 cash in hand and the programme cuts Tk.2,000 for savings. The duration of the programme is two years and Shilpi only has 4 months left, after which she would be jobless again. This programme trained her on how to operate a computer. She received basic training on MS Word and Excel, internet browsing, and email for the National Service. She said, "I received Tk.7,000 after three months of training and also got the chance to work at Union Digital Centre." She remarked that the

training allowance was very poor, but it has connected her to the job market. “I want to work as a computer operator or at related jobs”, she said. She called for increasing the duration of the jobs of the programme, for the provision of IGA training, such as livestock rearing, and the provision of the loan after the training so that they can have sufficient savings to invest and become self-reliant.

As noted in Chapter 1, networking is vital for the sustainability and long-term prosperity of any economic activity, especially getting jobs. During participating in the programme, about 90 per cent developed the peer network among themselves, which was a positive aspect of the training programme.

**Table 5.24: Whether any contacts/networks developed while participating in the programme**

Response	Percent
Yes	91
No	9
Total (329 respondents)	100

Source: Field survey (2019)

Although they have developed a peer network among themselves, a moderate portion (38 per cent) of the participants was successful to secure a job through their peer networking. The possible justification can be given as the network was not well attached with the job market. The possible factors associated with the lower potentiality of peer network demands further explorative research.

**Table 5.25: Whether the network helped get job**

Response	Percent
Yes	38
No	62
Total (301 respondents)	100

Source: Field survey (2019)

### Case Study 8

*Nurul Amin Sheikh (47), a shrimp farmer from Dhalir Khando village at Mongla Upazila of Bagerhat district, has been struggling to support his family with his limited monthly income of Tk.15,000 from his hatchery. He incurred big losses when his shrimps suffered from viral diseases and consequently had to take loans to support his family. For the last four years, he has been receiving training on Coastal Climate Resilient Infrastructure Improvement (CCRIP). It has been helping his family and other villagers to survive amid the loss of property after deleterious weather. He and most of the villagers are involved with coastal climate programmes of CCRIP. The most important training of CCRIP was on getting shelter for them and animals for different storm signals. Other than training, the programme also provides lifejackets, torches, raincoats, etc. It provides training and advice on how to take safe shelter during storms. It also provides fertilizer, seeds, livestock, money, and plastic jar to contain pure drinking water to extremely poor people of his village.*

*“We got awareness training from the CCRIP. However, we did not get any credit from them so far”. He wished that CCRIP allocated funds to repair the road as some poor people would earn from this work and the suffering of the local people would also reduce. Damaged roads cost the villagers a lot as it floods the hatcheries during storms.*

*Nurul Amin is also a bit unhappy with the WF programme as it does not include any IGA training. He said, “Those who receive IGA training would not participate in the WF programme.” He also remarked that most of the WF participants are very poor and IGA training would benefit them. He called for a collaboration between the WF and IGA training programmes. “It will increase the poor*

*people's income", he said. He also thinks that the government should provide the loan after the training and then monitor the progress.*

*He asked for the provision of IGA training to the participants. He also believes that training on livestock breeding and the provision of financial support/soft loan for poor women would help increase their income.*

The WF participants were concentrated around the two major problems in the job market. First, about half of the respondents (49 per cent) mentioned about the insufficient market demand of their acquired skill and second, another half (47 per cent) reported about the gender discrimination. Both problems are mutually inclusive in nature. Only skill development through training is not enough for a viable employment generation. The scope of using the skill towards the income generation process is also equally important.

**Table 5.26: Problems in the job market**

Problems	Percent
Insufficient work opportunities	1
Insufficient demand for the kind of skills developed through WF schemes	49
Gender discrimination	47
Racial discrimination	1
Other	2
Total (88 respondents)	100

Source: Field survey (2019)

About two-thirds of respondents (64 per cent) reported that the skill they have acquired by the participation in the WF programmes did not match with the market demand. The firms require workers who have the training to operate machines, computer and internet, agro-processing, RMG, dyeing and boutique, construction works, tailoring, business communication language (especially English), web design, etc., which are not predominantly available in the trade courses and training components of the WF schemes. Overseas employment requires more advanced technical and vocational skills, professional training, and country-specific language requirements. Therefore, it raises a question regarding the effectiveness of the training of the WF schemes.

**Table 5.27: Whether skills acquired through WF programmes meet market requirement**

	Percent
Yes	32
No	64
Do not know	4
Total (331 respondents)	100

Source: Field survey (2019)

Most of the respondents (85 per cent) want to work in the local labour market. It is reasonable for women because they can look after their households and take care of their children. However, during the lean season, they are compelled to migrate in the city for searching for work, which creates immense pressure on city life. Therefore, expansion of the local job market should be the priority by the employment policy of the government through viable and low resource-intensive ways to sustainably expand the local job market for the WF programme's participants.

**Table 5.28: Where the WF participants want to work (% of respondents)**

	Male	Female	Total
In the local labour market	85	84	85
In a commercial centre	9	7	8
Elsewhere	4	0	2
Do not want to do any work	2	9	6
Total	100	100	100
Respondents	135	196	331

Source: Field survey (2019)

Most of the respondents (84 per cent) claimed that they were unskilled, although 66 per cent of the respondents received some training under the WF scheme, which was quite surprising to some extent. Because the training provided under the WF scheme may not suffice to change the participants' perception regarding their own skill.

**Table 5.29: Respondents' skill level**

	Male	Female	Total
Unskilled	87	82	84
Semi-skilled	13	18	16
Total	100	100	100
Respondents	131	195	326

Note: Skill category is based on the classification of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) and LFS 2016-17.

Source: Field survey (2019)

### Case Study 9

*Morzina Begum (30), lives in Bhurungamari Upazila in Kurigram district, has been participating in the EGPP programme for 150 days in the last two years. She usually works in the rice harvesting season. Her average monthly income is Tk.2,000. She recommended that soft loan, training on sewing, and a sewing machine can be provided to women at the end of the programme. She is interested in working as a caretaker in a school or college but reckons that the training provided by the WF programme will not help her to help get this kind of job.*

Before participating in the WF programme, only 3 per cent respondents were semi-skilled and almost all were unskilled, overwhelmingly dependent on the lowest category of work (e.g., EGPP, FFW/WFM) and food support programmes (e.g., VGD).

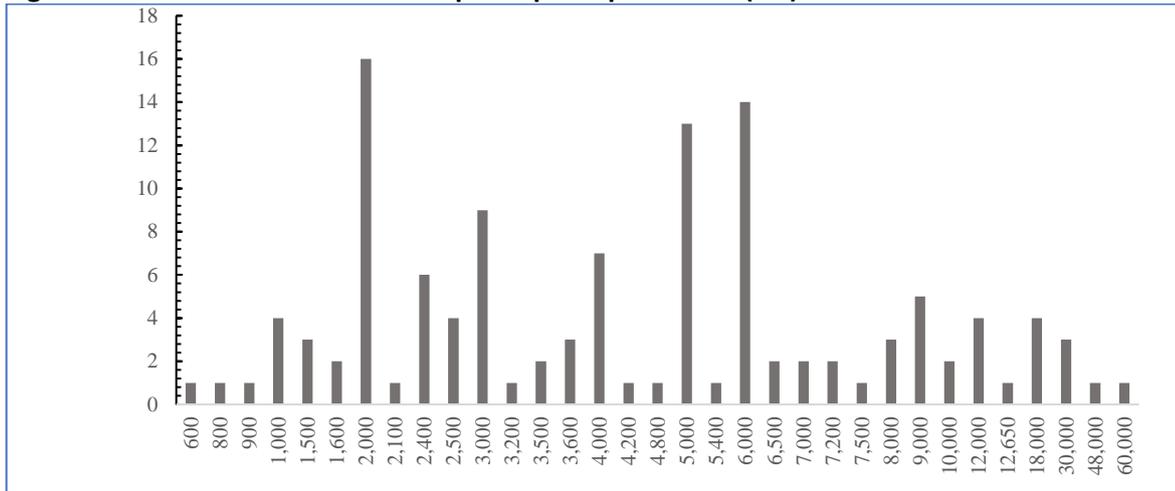
**Table 5.30: Respondents' skill level before participating in the WF scheme**

	Percent
Unskilled	97
Semi-skilled	3
Total (328 respondents)	100

Note: Skill category is based on the classification of BMET and LFS 2016-17.

Source: Field survey (2019)

Most of the survey respondents reported that their gross monthly income is Tk.6,000 or lower. However, some of them could earn higher income by using skills developed through training of the WF programmes. They saved some money first and later invested in either their own business or in new business in their respective localities (see the case studies). Thus, training of the WF schemes helped few of the participants in substantially increasing their economic well-being.

**Figure 5.28: Gross income of the WF participants per month (Tk.)**

Note: Total respondents = 122

Source: Field survey (2018)

### Case Study 10

*Jaheda Begum (41) is a tailor and a social worker in Sunamganj Sadar Upazila who also looks after her husband's business. Her life was quite difficult when she participated in the HAIL programme — her family's income was Tk.7,500 while spending was Tk.8,000 per month. Now her family's monthly income is Tk.30,000 with a savings of Tk.8,000 per month and she has an employee to run her small business. Back in 2004, her home was flooded, and she was forced to stay at a flood shelter. There she met a worker. Listening to the suggestion of this worker and consulting with her husband afterwards, she created an organisation with a few village women, with her being the manager, and contacted the Community Based Resource Management Project (CBRMP) to arrange training and loans. She used to get Tk.4,000-5,000 per annum to help as a loan management manager from the programme.*

*Under the programme, she participated in a few 14-day veterinary training sessions at Mymensingh that was followed by a refresher training at the project office at Sunamganj. The trainers were experts, but the place lacked in space and furnishings. "Soon after, I became to be known as a veterinarian and earned Tk. 3,000 a month", she said.*

*She took the next step in her success story by borrowing Tk.5,000 from the project to buy a sewing machine for her husband and he started to earn Tk.3,000-4,000 a month. Jaheda herself started to sew after learning sewing from her husband, and soon they started to earn Tk.5,000-6,000 a month. She learned fish farming from the programme. Shortly after that, she became the first fish fingerling farmer in the village. The programme helped her take a loan of Tk.12,000 again after the repayment of the first loan. People can use a boat as transport for 5 months a year in her village and so she bought a boat and earned around Tk.7,500 per year. After repaying the second loan, she further received a loan amount of Tk.15,000 which she invested in water marshes (Jal mahal) project. "I got a massive Tk.120,000 return from the investment which turned her around for good", she said.*

*Taking the advice of the programme, her husband started a poultry farm at the expense of Tk.70,000-80,000. The average monthly income from the poultry farm was Tk.12,000 per month. After saving Tk.100,000 her husband started the timber business and recruited an employee to help in the management of the business and the poultry farm. Afterwards, she left her veterinary job because of her increasing work pressure to run the poultry business on her own. "Getting loan and advice from the training, my husband and I have become established in the area. I have donated 3 decimal lands for the organization office. Girls in the area come to my organisation for sewing." Jaheda said,*

*She believes that if the women of her area get the opportunity to be involved in handicraft, bamboo cane work, boutique, sewing and poultry, they will become self-reliant. She said, "I think the HAIL project will be able to provide these much-needed opportunities if they are sincere." However, she delineated a few problems of the current HAIL project. She said the government does not provide any loan which is why many people are unable to utilize their skill earned from training. There are no funds allocated for the development of the handicraft business. There is a lack of cultivation training using modern machinery.*

According to the self-reporting respondents, 15 per cent beneficiaries of the WF schemes claimed that the existing training mechanism could improve their skill. However, most of them (about 89 per cent of males and 82 per cent of females) still perceive that training of the WF programmes was unable to upgrade their skills.

**Table 5.31: Whether the skill is upgraded after WFP participation (percent)**

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	11.11	17.86	15.11
No	88.89	82.14	84.89
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
Respondents	135	196	331

Source: Field survey (2019)

Even though the WF participants received several trainings and obtained job experience, most of the jobs and training helped very few of them get a new job. Almost all of them remained either unemployed or remained in their previous job.

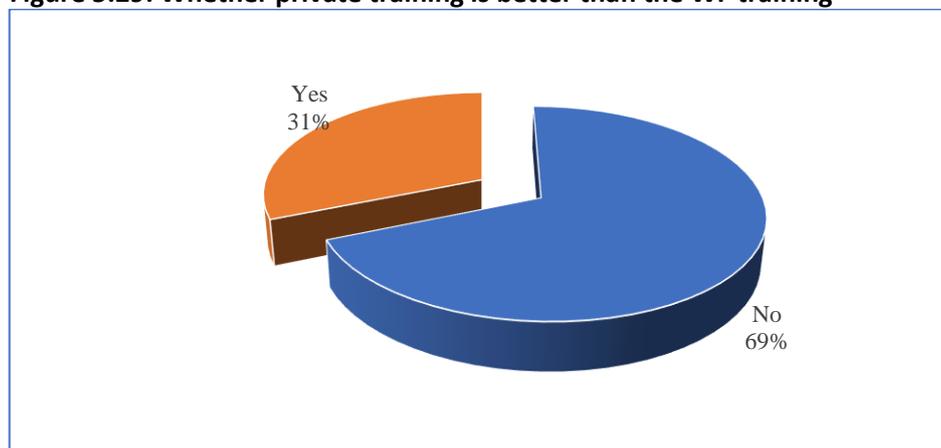
**Table 5.32: Whether the WF programme helped get the present job or change the previous job**

	Percent
Yes	7
No	93
Total (122 respondents)	100

Source: Field survey (2019)

Around one-third of the WF participants who received training believes that private organisations provide better training. However, most of the respondents voted for WF training (69 per cent), which are free, and trainees are provided allowances in the pure skill development schemes. It implies that there is a scope to improve the quality of training up to the satisfaction of all recipients of the training.

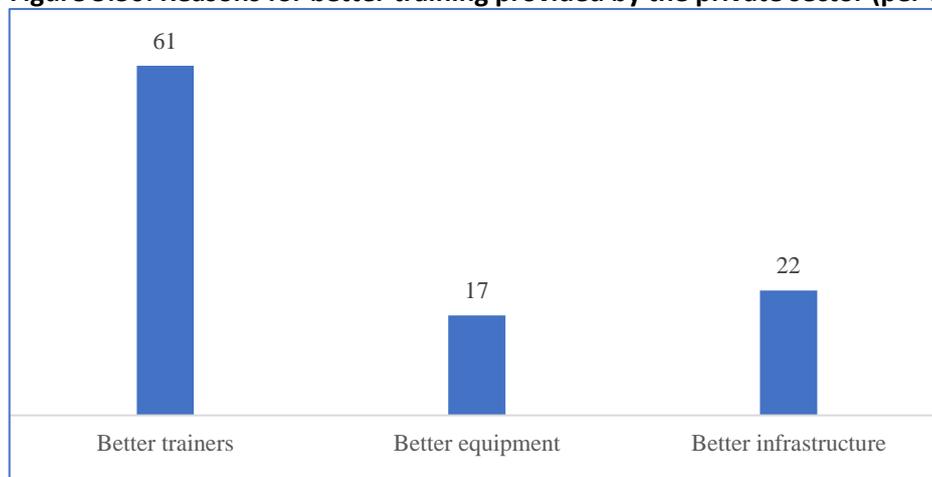
**Figure 5.29: Whether private training is better than the WF training**



Source: Field survey (2019)

Respondents who reported that private training was better to have identified three factors that led to a better quality of the training compared to that of their government counterpart. About three-fifths of the respondents opined that private sector actors employ better trainers, while other facilities private providers possess are better training equipment and infrastructure to provide technical training compared to that of the WF schemes.

**Figure 5.30: Reasons for better training provided by the private sector (per cent)**



Source: Field survey (2019)

According to the interviewed entrepreneurs, there is an exodus of skilled labour from the locality of these small enterprises to other regions/cities like Dhaka city. The firms have some permanent employees and they hire temporary workers during the peak seasons. There is a scarcity of skilled and semi-skilled labour, and they usually do not get the required skills from the job applicants who received training from the WF programmes. Therefore, small enterprise owners provide on-the-job training to the employees.

The interviewed employers think that this training is required for illiterate and poor people and it is vital for self-employment as well as getting jobs in their firms. Employers expect that the government and NGOs need to train unskilled labourers to shift them to higher skill levels. Employers of small enterprises think that training should be provided on jobs that are relevant to the demand of the locality, and there should be continuous skill up-gradation, from unskilled to semi-skilled and from semi-skilled to skilled, so that the trained workforce can be recruited as per the changing nature of skill requirement. In addition, there is a need for providing more training on computer and web-design, technical works in manufacturing enterprises, producing machine parts, works in RMG factories, and diversified jobs in agriculture, agro-processing and relevant sectors. Otherwise, the workforce would remain unemployed despite receiving training through WF schemes.

#### 4.4.5. Issues of Policy and Implementation

The survey result demonstrates that many respondents want to receive additional training. It implies that WF schemes have raised appetite for extra training to get a job, switch the present job, and/or increase income from self-employment. This training can be added with the existing training components or from the private training agencies working in the respective localities.

The respondents want a wide range of additional training that include sewing/handicrafts (14 per cent), modern fishing techniques (12 per cent) and driving (8 per cent) among others. They believe that training in these areas would help them get a better job in the market and increase their income significantly. They want to get these training either from the WF programmes or from private agencies.

**Table 5.33: What additional skills the WF participants want to obtain**

	Percent
No training required	47.75
Want to receive additional training	52.25
<i>Areas of additional training required</i>	
Driving	8.11
Beautification	0.90
Sewing/handicrafts	13.51
Foreign language	0.90
Computer literacy	1.80
Modern fishing	11.71
Others	15.32
Total (111 respondents)	100.00

Source: Field survey (2019)

#### Case Study 11

Biva Rani Molongi (38) is a housewife at Digh Raj village at Mongla Upazila of Bagerhat district, works as a volunteer in various climate programmes in Sundarbans. She received only awareness training from Coastal Climate Resilient Infrastructure Improvement Programme (CCRIP). “No IGA training or financial assistance was provided by the programme”, she said. However, she learned to take actions during different storm signals. There are opportunities for work because of the new roads that were built recently. “But I am a housewife. I am not in a position to do a job. I need IGA training for poultry and cattle farming”, she said. She further added that the CCRIP only held discussion sessions for raising awareness. According to her, the IGA training is required and a loan should be provided after the training to promote self-employment.

A majority of the respondents (67 per cent) suggested that more trade courses are needed in the training programme. However, 18 per cent demanded the loan facilities after the training and 13 per cent demanded the internship or apprenticeship followed by the training session.

**Table 5.34: Suggestions for improving the skill development component**

Suggestions	Percent
More trades of training need to be introduced	67.10
Training should incorporate internship/apprenticeship	13.16
Training should be supported with a loan facility	18.42
Others	1.32
Total (76 respondents)	100.00

Source: Field survey (2019)

Lack of training, saving schemes, loans and equipment in most of the schemes restrain the beneficiaries to access the job market. Properly designed training would help people get a job at both domestic and international markets, and participation of the private sector with better trainers, equipment and facilities would develop better skills among the participants. There is a dearth of manpower at PIO office to oversee the training.

#### Case study 12

Nasir Chowdhury (32), a resident of Kendua Upazila, Netrokona, is a transgender student without any income. He is being disliked by his parents for girlish attitude. He once went to Narsingdi with a ‘hijra’ but could not survive more than a week and escaped. Now, he wants to study attentively and become successful and hopes he will not identify himself as a ‘hijra’ anymore. He is involved with a programme associated with the Upazila Social Welfare office. He received 50-day training from the

*programme. He had to travel to Netrokona for the computer training daily but received transportation allowance. The trainees were told that the one comes first would be given a computer, but the promise was not kept. Though the first 10 trainees in the merit list were given Tk.10,000 each. Nasir received a certificate but did not want to apply for jobs with it as the certificate refers to him as a 'hijra'. Billal remarked that there is a huge demand for people who can operate computers, but none wants to hire a 'hijra'. He mentioned that provision of financial support, job market access, support to people willing to study, and training in cooking and beauty treatment will improve the programme.*

Most of the respondents voted in favour of a public-private partnership to strengthen the training activities of WF schemes. About 36 per cent strongly agreed and 52 per cent agreed about the increased public-private collaboration for improving the quality of training of WF programmes.

**Table 5.35: Whether public-private collaboration will improve the quality of training**

Response	Percent
Strongly agree	36.36
Agree	51.95
Neither agree nor disagree	6.49
Disagree	5.19
Total (77 respondents)	100.00

Source: Field survey (2019)

Even though many respondents believe that the training under WF schemes was good and can provide decent jobs, nearly all of them (95 per cent) expressed their interest to receive training from the market, i.e., from the private training agencies. It is mainly because private training agencies provide better training with qualified trainers, modern equipment. Moreover, they provide the training that are more closely related to the private job market. Thus, WF training has created a demand for additional and quality training from the market.

**Table 5.36: Whether the participants want to get further training from private agencies**

Response	Percent
Yes, to some extent	94.81
No	5.19
Total (77 respondents)	100.00

Source: Field survey (2019)

In addition, the training tends to be unproductive because they are provided intermittently, and no financial assistance is provided afterwards in most of the cases. Therefore, a few of those who received training can indeed apply their skills for self-employment and get jobs from the market. In many cases, it is not possible for the participants to buy livestock without any financial assistance.

The interviewed government officials opined that in general there is a lack of training and loan provisions in big WF programmes, such as EGPP, FFW, WFM, TR, VGF, and GR on which majority of the budgetary resources are allocated. The projects are usually provided when there is no work available for poor people, especially during and after disasters as well as other lean periods. The schemes mainly aim to support poor and vulnerable populations for survival. A key objective of these programmes is to construct or repair infrastructure by generating temporary employment. Since these major WF programmes do not have any training component, the participants do not get any advantage at the job market.

## 5. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Findings and insights obtained from the field work reveal that there is ample space for improving skill development and in-service training towards better liking with the job market. Three distinct policy messages can be derived from the present study. First, skill development components of direct work programmes need mostly unskilled workers, such as construction, earthwork, excavation or re-excavation of ponds, etc. There is a potential of linking these skills with the private construction sector, especially in urban and semi-urban areas through improving and bringing new dimensions of public works beyond traditional services. Second, purely skills training and trade courses in paid workfare schemes on fashion design, tailoring/embroidery, beauticians' jobs, mobile phone servicing, mushroom cultivation, preliminary computer applications, food processing and bakery, home textiles, front desk management, cottage industry, etc. Most of them are leading to self-employment. However, some of the skills can be upgraded for linking the workforce with textiles and apparel sector, furniture, agro-food processing, and lower management. Third, the training programmes can also bring innovations and introduce new schemes that would provide viable sources of semi-skilled manpower for the private sector. Training and skill development components would include creating manpower for various segments of RMG, leather products, variety of ICT (e.g., webpage and app development, contents for press and publications, etc.), shipbuilding, light engineering, healthcare, and communicative English for tourism and businesses.

Based on these three policy messages, the specific avenues of policy reforms for the existing WF schemes can be suggested below.

### 5.1. Introducing Training Components in Mega WF Programmes

There is a need for making the training or skill development components mandatory in WF schemes. A good number of mega WF programmes, such as EGPP, FFW, WFM, etc. have wide and national coverage which recruit unskilled workers and involve them in various works related to physical construction and reconstruction in the rural areas. While these programmes recurrently employ the same individuals from the locality and many beneficiaries of the present survey reported that they participated in these WF schemes regularly in the last five years, they do not receive any separate training for performing the activities under the schemes. It is mainly since the activities under the programmes require low-skilled workers and the mass beneficiaries undergo a process called "learning-by-doing". Therefore, they remain mostly unskilled workers even after participating in the big WF schemes for multiple times. Explicit skill development components should be included in these programmes, which would upgrade their skills and help them emerge as a viable candidate in the labour market at their respective localities and in the city centres/job hubs.

### 5.2. The Workfare Programmes should be Aligned with the National Skill Development Policy

One of the major recommendations of this study is to incorporate skill development component in the workfare programmes. A corollary of this recommendation is that all such training components should be aligned with the National Skill Development Policy 2011. As such, the certification of the workfare programmes should follow the format suggested in the National Technical and Vocational Qualification Framework (NTVQF). The Ministry of Education has already established a list of competency standard for almost all major sectors under the Competency-Based Training and Assessment (CBT&A) as part of the NTVQF. It provides occupation-specific competency, elements of competency, performance criteria, and a specific detailed guideline for sectors like baking, welding, embroidery, beauty care, tailoring, etc.<sup>21</sup> A common classification will extend the scopes for comparing, evaluating and monitoring the training programmes provided by the different agencies (such as public, private and NGOs). It will also be possible to compare the outcomes of a training programme provided at different districts. Pinpointing weaker outcomes

<sup>21</sup> The list can be found here: [http://btebcvt.gov.bd/utility/list\\_user](http://btebcvt.gov.bd/utility/list_user); accessed on 23 December 2019.

on a regular basis can provide substantial information to the policymakers regarding what and where to revise in the programme manual. Moreover, following the same certification as the NTVQF will also make it easier for employers to understand the level of skill of the programme beneficiary.

### 5.3. Consolidating the Similar Training Programmes Provided by Different Ministries

There are a couple of training programmes run by different government agencies with almost similar objectives. For instance, programmes such as Income Generating Activities for Women at Upazila Level has a similar objective like the projects on Urban Based Marginal Women Development Programme, Women's Skill-Based Training for Livelihood, etc. Some of the training components also overlap with the VGD training components. Even though some of the objectives of these programmes are unique in nature, the training components are almost similar. In addition, there could be some merit of delivering similar training programmes by different agencies. It may provide a wider array of opportunities to the potential programme beneficiaries. Nonetheless, duplication of similar programmes by different agencies can also have some unwarranted consequences. For instance, if the same training component is repeated by different agencies – it will require similar trainers as well as training equipment (such as computers). Even if it is possible to arrange adequate training equipment everywhere, managing multiple skilled trainers at the distant Upazilas can always be challenging. If the workfare programmes with similar objectives are merged, it will be possible to provide a more consistent and consolidated training programme.

### 5.4. Skilling up the Trainers

As has been noted in the study findings, the quality of the trainers is not always up to the mark. For a better outcome from workfare programmes, it would be essential to skill up the trainers. The government of Bangladesh has already initiated programmes called Training of the Trainers (ToT). A major role of this initiative is being played by the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET). In the present context, the GED can collaborate with the BMET in ensuring the training of the trainers engaged in the workfare programmes. In addition, it must be ensured that the quality of the trainers is also retained. Since skills wear off over time, a pragmatic approach would be to ensure up-gradation of the training modalities regularly as well as repetition of the training of the trainers at a regular interval.

### 5.5. Improving the Quality of the Training of the WF Schemes

VGD, a big WF programme, along with other medium and small schemes, provide technical and vocational training to their respective participants. The survey results, interviews and case studies reveal that most of the big and medium WF schemes, which have explicit training components, do not provide training up to the satisfaction and requirement of the recipients. All the training modules are top-down in nature and decided by the implementation of guideline and project administration, not by the recipients. Most of the WF training except HAIL and SWAPNO do not use proper equipment and practical demonstrations, and post-training loan facilities. Many VGD participants also reported that they did not receive quality training of the level that would match the dynamics and requirements of the labour market. Thus, the quality of the training of the WF schemes should be improved substantially. Trade courses should be designed through detailed modules, vetted by national experts, and accompanied by modern and appropriate instruments as well as the adequate length of training.

### 5.6. Learning and Implanting from Successful Programmes

All big WF programmes do not produce good results in terms of effects on getting jobs at home and abroad, increasing income, developing their existing enterprises, and investing in new business. There are exceptions, such as HAIL and SWAPNO, which were medium to small in terms of budgetary allocation. These are termed as successful ones by the training recipients in changing the outlook of their lives and livelihoods. However, these two programmes are implemented in a few districts and cannot be taken to all over the country because of the design and context of, and budgetary allocation to the schemes. Small programmes

can also create good impacts, which can be learned by other WF schemes and these are reformed/redesigned accordingly so that the improved training components of bigger programmes can be reached to a wider community of beneficiaries all over the country.

### 5.7. Diversifying the Training and Skill Development Components

Most of the training components under WF schemes are traditional in nature, which includes agriculture and crop, livestock, plumbing/pipefitting, and tailoring and sewing. However, there are diverse areas in which case, if the trainings are provided then the WF participants can get jobs and/or increase income from their existing business. The survey results reveal that a very small proportion of respondents got a new job directly because of the training or because of the network developed through participation in the WF schemes. In addition, many beneficiaries want additional training from the existing WF schemes on computer and ICT, technical trade courses, motor vehicles and driving, handicrafts, and foreign language (especially English for home-based freelancing and other languages for those who aspire overseas employment). They want training on diversified trade courses from private organisations too. Therefore, technical, ICT and web-related training can be introduced in the WF programmes that provide training only, and through VGD if participants express interest to get these training. In addition, training can also be dedicated to millions of young and educated population from low and lower-middle-income households who are currently looking for jobs in technical areas and ICT. Bangladesh is currently in the second position in the world in web-based freelancing jobs. If trained in computer, web design and freelancing, a large number of the young labour force can find online-based decent jobs in digital freelance companies (such as Upwork) through which they would be able to contribute to their families and to the economy. On the other hand, WF schemes can provide mostly free technical and professional training, which would help the recipients get jobs in both domestic and international markets.

### 5.8. Utilising the Potential of National Service Programme

Being implemented by the Department of Youth Development in selected districts, the National Service Programme has great potential because it engages young males and females with the education of HSC and above, each from one family, in a routine job at government offices at their respective localities in the form of apprenticeship. At the same time, they get hands-on training on how to perform office related activities, desk work and filing, and receive training on computer applications among others. However, these tasks are traditional in nature, which adds hardly any value to the skills of the employee under the service even though there is notable allocation under the training component and procurement of computers and machinery for skill development. Since the training is conducted at Upazila level simultaneously at selected districts, the quality of ICT and other technical training does not match with the requirement of the private sector after finishing the service period. Therefore, if the schemes introduce a variety of rigorous online and offline technical, ICT, freelancing and outsourcing related training for educated youth manpower, the scheme will be one of the most powerful ones and it will contribute greatly to significantly reduce youth unemployment in Bangladesh.

### 5.9. Develop Skill Ladder through WF

Although there exist several training programmes under different WF schemes, efforts to build a skill ladder, in which transitions can take place from unskilled to semi-skilled and semi-skilled to skilled — are currently absent. All the programmes get their beneficiaries are at the low-skill level. The survey results reveal that almost all WF beneficiaries are unskilled and few of them are semi-skilled, while nobody from the respondents was turned into skilled workers after the training. However, since the schemes are many and considerable amount of money is being spent from the national budget, it would be an excellent opportunity to develop a ladder through which regular skill up-gradation through different phases of training can be provided. Many respondents did ask for further training after participating in the existing programmes. This implies that WF schemes have created the demand for additional training because the participants consider

that skill up-gradation through this process is important to get better jobs in the market and perform better in self-employment. However, additional higher-level technical and professional training can be provided based on their capacity and interest. Technical Training Centres (TTCs) of the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), located at district level, conduct many other irregular short-term skill up-gradation courses, on request of employers in its evening programmes beside two years' regular course on different basic engineering trades and four years' Diploma in Marine Engineering and Shipbuilding Engineering. Highly interested and motivated young WF participants can be linked up with the TTCs for courses chosen by the WF participants themselves.

#### 5.10. Facilitate Collaboration between Public and Private Agencies

The survey respondents opined that greater collaboration between public training facilities under the WF schemes and private training agencies would produce better results in developing skilled workforce as per the requirement of the job market. Government agencies can be familiar with modern equipment, adopt technical know-how and learn simulations and get experience from the qualified trainers from the private sector through this kind of collaboration, while the private sector can use the space and physical facilities as well as administrative capacity of the government. In that case, facilitating greater collaboration between public and private organisations (business chambers and private training institutions along with NGOs that provide training) for better skills training programmes would be a win-win outcome for both the agencies. Such collaboration would be ultimately beneficial for society through strengthening the supply side of the skilled workforce for the market. One problem with the government agency like TTCs and good private training centres is that they are in district headquarters and divisional cities. However, a special arrangement should be undertaken within the purview of the WF schemes to bring the trainers and equipment at Upazila level for providing hands-on training. In addition, online and video-based training should also be facilitated to develop skilled manpower at international standard under the WF schemes.

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