

JOBS
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

Final
Report *of*
Adolescent Empowerment Project



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Final Report
of
Creating Livelihoods to Contribute to
Empowerment of Adolescents in Bangladesh

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Acronyms

BBM	<i>Basic Business Management</i>
BRAC	<i>Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee</i>
CMES	<i>Center for Mass Education in Science</i>
EDBM	<i>Entrepreneurial Development and Business Management Training</i>
EPZ	<i>Export Processing Zone</i>
JOBS	<i>Job Opportunities and Business Support Project</i>
KK	<i>Kishori Kendra (Adolescent Center)</i>
NGO	<i>Non-Governmental Organization</i>
RMG	<i>Ready-Made Garment</i>
ToT	<i>Training of Trainers</i>
UNICEF	<i>United Nations Children's Fund</i>
USAID	<i>United States Agency for International Development</i>
WDCE	<i>Workplace Discipline and Congenial Working Environment</i>

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1.0 Executive Summary

During the struggle to survive the poverty faced by many families in Bangladesh, children often become victims of exploitation through child labor, early marriage and, in many cases, child prostitution. There are 27.7 million adolescents aged 10-19 years in Bangladesh – 13.7 million girls and 14 million boys – making up about one fifth of the total population. Most adolescents have limited scope for acquiring knowledge and skills for their self-development and protection. Secondary level school enrolment is very low at only seven million (38 percent) and the dropout rate in secondary schools is much higher than in primary schools; about 48 percent among girls and 38 percent among boys¹.

An estimated 6.9 million children aged 5-14 years (12.9 percent of the total labor force) are working and are exposed to hazardous and risky conditions, especially in metropolitan cities. Many adolescents migrate from rural to urban areas and work in precarious situations as day laborers, rickshaw-pullers, domestic servants, hotel boys, and garment factory workers. Due to their displacement many are compelled to accept high risk and hazardous jobs².

Gender discrimination and related violence, including abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and acid-throwing create a socio-economic context that is challenging the promotion and the protection of the rights of children, especially females. Young girls are always in danger of abuse and exploitation. Inter and intra-border trafficking of children and women constitutes a serious problem for the country. Over 67 percent of adolescent girls are married. This includes 5 percent of girls aged 10-14 years and 48 percent of girls aged 15-19 years of age. About 50 percent of pregnancies occur by the age of 18 years. Early marriage is a critical issue for adolescent girls³.

The pilot phase of the “Creating Livelihood Opportunities to Contribute to Empowerment of Adolescents in Bangladesh” project has taken a unique approach to facilitate the empowerment of rural adolescent girls. Believing that the path to female empowerment begins with economic opportunity, JOBS worked through partnering arrangements with private sector lead enterprises to ultimately create employment and income generating opportunities for the adolescents. The objective of this project was to identify wage-based employment opportunities for adolescents and conduct training of trainers for partner NGOs which would allow them to conduct trainings for large numbers of adolescents.⁴ In the course of implementing the pilot project, JOBS worked with two NGO partners, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and Center for Mass Education in Science (CMES), which are currently conducting trainings of adolescents to facilitate empowerment as part of their adolescent centers female youth centers or “Kishori Kendra” (KK) programs in partnership with UNICEF. All of the partners are working to empower adolescents, especially girls, to participate meaningfully in decisions that affect their lives (including education, livelihood strategies, and increasing age at marriage), and to become active agents of social change.

Much of the technical training supplied by the partner NGOs is supply-driven, and prior to this pilot project the links between the NGOs and the private-sector necessary to ensure sustainable wage-based employment were weak. With the view that while trainings are an important necessary component of empowerment but that ultimately the path to adolescent empowerment includes economic empowerment, JOBS also worked with 5 private sector partners willing to provide an enabling work environment for adolescents in 3 different districts to identify demand-

¹ www.unicef.org/bangladesh

² www.unicef.org/bangladesh

³ www.unicef.org/bangladesh

⁴ The targets included 1000 adolescents in wage-based employment and 50 partner NGO staff receiving ToT

driven wage-based employment opportunities for adolescents. Despite constraints faced during the pilot project, including delays caused by an unprecedented 2 major floods and Cyclone Sidr, JOBS, in conjunction with its private sector partners, successfully identified wage-based employment opportunities for a total of 660 adolescents.

There have been important tangible achievements in both key aspects of the project, namely the trainings and the wage-based employment. Achievements in the training aspect of the pilot project include:

- a) 3 publishable training modules – WDCE, EDBM, BBM – were developed for this project and which have successfully been used in other projects to prepare clients to work in a factory environment or to start and manage their own businesses;
- b) Training of Trainers (ToT) and refresher courses were completed for a total of 39 trainers working for BRAC and CMES. These courses increased the capacity of the trainers which can easily train upwards of 4,000 adolescents in one year;
- c) JOBS proved the relevance and efficacy of Basic Business Management trainings through direct delivery of trainings to 40 adolescents on a pilot basis to prove the efficacy of the training module;
- d) An altered version of the BBM module has been taught to 90 adolescents in Chittagong over the course of 6 weeks (1 day of training per week);
- e) CMES has developed plans to expand its use of the altered BBM module to its KKs Chapai Nawabganj, which is outside of JOBS' working area; and
- f) Customized technical training was delivered to 660 adolescents in a variety of skill sets including sewing, basket weaving, manufacturing of garment accessories, and weaving equipping the girls to gain practical skills and improve their marketability in the labor market.

In addition to the achievements made in the training component of the pilot, accomplishments have been made in the wage-based employment component of the pilot including the following:

- a) A model was developed and tested to identify sustainable employment utilizing a demand-driven approach including practical technical skills training and private sector partnerships;
- b) Relationships have been established with 5 export-oriented private sector partners in 3 different districts. All of which have good labor standards demanded and enforced by their international buyers and are interested in facilitating the economic empowerment of adolescents;
- c) An estimated total of nearly 25,00,000 taka or more than \$36,000⁵ has been earned to-date by 660 adolescents during their technical training and subsequent employment; and
- d) Increased self-confidence of the adolescents as reported by private sector partners has been achieved through their ability to generate income for their families;

⁵ Adolescents earned 600-800 taka per month during training and an estimated average of between 1000-1200 per month once they become 'regular' employees

Throughout the implementation of the pilot phase of the project important lessons have been learned and continue to be learned by all partners. Perhaps the most important lesson learned is that according to the private sector partners the adolescents perform better than “regular” employees in terms of attendance and timeliness as a result of the life skills trainings provided by BRAC and CMES. This good performance improves even more after receiving WDCE training. Following the Trainings of Trainers (ToT) provided to BRAC and CMES training staff, and the resulting enthusiasm of the training staff, trainings by the partner NGOs did not immediately materialize due to a number of constraints faced by the NGOs. Many discussions between the management of JOBS, UNICEF, BRAC, and CMES were held to identify solutions to the constraints preventing the partner NGOs from delivering trainings. A solution was agreed upon in late October 2007 with CMES to deliver the training module over the course of 6 weeks by providing one full day of training per week. To date 90 adolescents have received BBM trainings from CMES, and CMES plans to build on this success by expanding the use of BBM training to districts outside the scope of the pilot project including Chapai Nawabganj. For various reasons BRAC has been unable to deliver a single BBM or EDBM training.

The key to the success of the wage-based employment component of the pilot project was in choosing the right private sector partner – the model of which is Karrapunya in Rangpur. When possible, it is preferable to work with export-oriented private sector partners, because the international buyers will conduct much of the necessary monitoring to ensure that the factories are compliant with and meet international labor standards. Another key to success has been the construction of production units in the villages where adolescents live, or in nearby villages. This will ensure that the employment opportunities are sustainable for the adolescents, and will preempt problems encountered when working with adolescents from conservative families, as were faced in Chittagong, which will be discussed later in the report. It is also important to note that this model may not be sustainable in every district due to various constraints, such as the lack of raw materials or the lack of interested private sector partners, and so it will be necessary to identify self-employment opportunities for adolescents living in some areas. Self-employment opportunities are dependent on locally available raw materials, the needs of the local market and the interests of the adolescents. For these reasons generating sustainable self-employment opportunities is more difficult and requires a longer time and more resources frame than was available during the pilot project. Another important finding is that it is important to have the widest possible population of adolescents to work with. Therefore adolescents who have already graduated the KK program should be considered as possible beneficiaries as well, rather than limiting the scope to participants currently active in the KK program.

Building on the lessons learned is important in developing the design for a new project going forward, which should including the following:

- a) It is imperative that more concrete incentives be provided to partner NGOs to ensure that they have a stake in achieving the goals of the project. For instance, carrying out these trainings should be explicitly required in contracts and appropriate resources should be made available to ensure the viability of these trainings. Assurances and incentives should be agreed upon the senior management teams of all concerned organizations, UNICEF, JOBS, and the partner NGOs, prior to any follow-on project, and should be given in writing prior to the beginning of the project. This will ensure that problems faced during the pilot project regarding the BBM and EDBM trainings are not repeated.
- b) Geographical constraints should be lifted allowing JOBS, in consultation with UNICEF, to choose one or two districts with the necessary raw materials, conditions, and potential

private sector partners producing for goods for export willing and able to make long-term investments; and

- c) JOBS itself be responsible for developing and running, in partnership with UNICEF, a complete KK program in a single selected district. In this model JOBS would be responsible for implementing all activities of the project from the initial empowerment trainings to the WDCE, EDBM, and BBM trainings to the wage-based employment. JOBS would also include parents as partners in the empowerment of their adolescents. This will allow JOBS to incorporate all of the lessons learned during the pilot project to develop a model and case study which fully integrates the training with the identification of wage-based employment opportunities.
- d) The partner NGOs are vital for the success of the project and bring economies of scale which will allow the project to reach the maximum number of adolescents especially in the delivery of trainings. However, in districts for which JOBS is not responsible for conducting training, it is imperative that more concrete assurances are given by the partner NGOs to ensure that they fulfill their obligations. These assurances should be agreed upon the senior management teams of all concerned organizations, UNICEF, JOBS, and the partner NGOs, prior to any follow-on project, and should be given in writing prior to the beginning of the project. This will ensure that the problems faced during the pilot project regarding the BBM and EDBM trainings are not repeated.

JOBS will continue to work with and support the adolescents currently employed by our private sector partners through consistent and long-term engagement with the private sector partners. In fact JOBS has spoken with a number of the private sector partners about opportunities to collaborate going forward. In addition to building upon these important established relationships, JOBS continues to look for new opportunities for the adolescents building on the lessons learned during the pilot phase of the project, including establishing small and cottage-based industries and 'mini-clusters'. *These types of arrangements would allow the adolescents to work from home, and avoid the problems faced during the pilot project from conservatism among the parents. The opportunities JOBS is pursuing include the following:*

- a) Discussions have begun with our current private sector Erect to launch a new initiative which can be undertaken under a follow-on project. Under this project the best adolescents trained during the pilot project will be selected to receive a specialized EDBM course. This course will prepare the adolescents to form 'min-clusters' with support from JOBS in their own villages, training and employing other adolescents to produce garment accessories as per the market demand identified by Erect;
- b) Production of artificial flowers. Potentially hundreds of adolescents could be employed at multiple points along the value-chain, both in a factory-based environment and in their own homes; and
- c) Similarly the production of handmade prayer caps for export is a potential source of employment for hundreds of adolescents. Currently entrepreneurs are exporting prayer caps to the Middle East and have expressed interest in potentially linking their activities to a follow-on project. These adolescents too can be employed at various points along the value-chain and can be either factory or home-based.

In effect, these initiatives have the potential to create a 'snowball effect' in the number of adolescents employed. The initial investment in technical training of certain adolescents will

create wage-based employment opportunities for many other adolescents in their villages. For every one adolescent directly trained, there could be as many as 5-10 adolescents employed as members of ‘mini-clusters’.

The model developed under the pilot project is gender neutral, and can include adolescent boys as well as adolescent girls. Furthermore, the model could be extended to the parents of school-going adolescents. This would result in an increase in household economic security while at the same time allowing the adolescents to remain in school. The specific targets in any follow-on activity will be dependent on a number of factors including the budget, the flexibility of the partners, the specific commitments of the partner NGOs and the timeline. However, a follow-on project focused on adolescent livelihoods would:

- Engage the adolescents in identifying and addressing their livelihood priorities;
- Recognize the importance of adolescent work as part of household economic security;
- Be sympathetic to special needs population;
- Place needs and responses in a holistic framework that recognizes the opportunities and constraints of their households, communities, and the wider economy;
- Recognize the opportunities that adolescent work presents and not just the needs;
- Advocate the building of their asset or capital base, predicated on their strengths;
- Promote livelihood resources *and* outcomes; and
- Create linkages between the micro-level realities and situation of adolescents and policies at the macro-level, as well as between micro- and macro-level actions.

In summary, building on the strengths and lessons learned during the implementation of the pilot project, JOBS looks forward to continue working with UNICEF to facilitate the economic empowerment of adolescent girls.

2.0 Background

During the struggle to survive the poverty faced by many families in Bangladesh, children often become victims of exploitation through child labor, early marriage and, in many cases, child prostitution. There are 27.7 million adolescents aged 10-19 years in Bangladesh – 13.7 million girls and 14 million boys – making up about one fifth of the total population. Most adolescents have limited scope for acquiring knowledge and skills for their self-development and protection. Secondary level school enrolment is very low at only seven million (38 percent) and the dropout rate in secondary schools is much higher than in primary schools; about 48 percent among girls and 38 percent among boys⁶.

An estimated 6.9 million children aged 5-14 years (12.9 percent of the total labor force) are working and are exposed to hazardous and risky conditions, especially in metropolitan cities. Many adolescents migrate from rural to urban areas and work in precarious situations as day laborers, rickshaw-pullers, domestic servants, hotel boys, and garment factory workers. Due to their displacement many are compelled to accept high risk and hazardous jobs⁷.

Gender discrimination and related violence, including abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and acid-throwing create a socio-economic context that is challenging the promotion and the protection of the rights of children, especially females. Young girls are always in danger of abuse and exploitation. Inter and intra-border trafficking of children and women constitutes a serious problem for the country. Over 67 percent of adolescent girls are married. This includes 5 percent of girls aged 10-14 years and 48 percent of girls aged 15-19 years of age. About 50 percent of pregnancies occur by the age of 18 years. Early marriage is a critical issue for adolescent girls⁸.

Job Opportunities and Business Support Project (JOBS), was launched in 1997 and funded by USAID to support business development and generate sustainable employment in Bangladesh. Small, medium and micro enterprise support and development are the key result requirements of the project. JOBS has worked to identify potential growth sectors in Bangladesh and facilitate their development process. For the past seven years JOBS has played a major role in sector development in collaboration with numerous development partners such as NGOs, private sector businesses and business associations as well as other donor funded projects.

JOBS strives to develop enterprises in selected geographical locations and/or with targeted populations through a market-led, sector development approach. The prime goal of the intervention is to assist in the growth of these enterprises through partnering arrangements with key stakeholders and creating the vital linkages in the production chain between producers/working groups (“clusters”), lead buyers and markets. Since 1998, JOBS has generated over \$57 million in local sales and \$65 million in export sales, trained more than 70,000 individuals, created over 40,000 jobs, and implemented over 1000 projects and activities covering over 70 percent of the geographical area of Bangladesh.

Discussions between JOBS and UNICEF began in 2004 and 2005, joined by BRAC in 2005, and revealed an opportunity to explore the potential for employment creation for these adolescents through both skills-based and Entrepreneurship Development and Business Management

⁶ www.unicef.org/bangladesh

⁷ www.unicef.org/bangladesh

⁸ www.unicef.org/bangladesh

(EDBM) training. During the second week of September 2005, a three-day site visit was undertaken by JOBS-IRIS Bangladesh popularly known as JOBS, UNICEF and BRAC officials in order to better define the probable alliance between BRAC Kishori Kendra (KK) under their Adolescent Development Program and the successful private sector and entrepreneurship development initiatives of JOBS. This visit focused on partnership with the JOBS Satranji cluster with Karupannya at Nishbetganj in Rangpur sadar and Ulipur in Kurigram district where BRAC also has a number of KKs established. During the visit it was found that JOBS experience provided valuable input for UNICEF's broader objective of increasing employment opportunities for adolescents as a means to decrease the rate of childhood marriage. It was determined that the potential partnership warranted a closer look, incorporating the participation of Center for Mass Education in Science (CMES), currently acting as another UNICEF partner in the Adolescent Empowerment Project.



A BRAC run Kishori Kendra center

During the implementation of the pilot project with UNICEF, which began in November 2006, JOBS worked closely with UNICEF, BRAC, CMES to successfully identify employment opportunities for many of the adolescents. Despite a number of constraints faced 660 adolescents have been employed by 5 different private sector partners in 3 and the majority of these adolescents are still receiving training in specialized skills and “Workplace Discipline and Congenial Working Environment” (WDCE). Additionally many members of both BRAC's and CMES' training staff received a ToT from JOBS to develop their capacity to instruct many more adolescents in WDCE, “Basic Business Management” (BBM), and “Entrepreneurial Development and Business Management” (EDBM) trainings. Unfortunately the increased capacity and enthusiasm of the training staff did not lead to the adolescents actually receiving BBM or EDBM training due to constraints faced by the senior management teams of the partner organizations. These concerns included the fact that the partner NGOs had similar courses, that due to the intense trainings schedule there was not time to add additional trainings, and that training should be provided only for those adolescents with pre-identified employment opportunities. JOBS views these trainings as providing important life skills, and not necessarily just as a complement for employment opportunities. However, following discussions with JOBS in late October 2007, CMES implemented an altered BBM training to 90 unemployed adolescent girls, conducting the three day curriculum over the course of six weeks. CMES now plans to expand the use of this training module to other districts it is working in, including Chapai Nawabganj which lies outside JOBS' area of responsibility.

In summary, JOBS successfully identified employment opportunities in the private sector for 660 girls. These adolescents received specialized skills and WDCE training, which is the shortest of the three training modules, and which has an immediate impact on the work performance of the adolescents as reported by employers. A further 130 adolescents have received BBM training (40 from JOBS directly and 90 from CMES' altered module). The successful placements of such a high number of adolescents in paid employment proves that the approach piloted in this project of linking directly with the private sector is a viable approach to adolescent empowerment. Unfortunately the training of adolescents in EDBM and BBM modules through the partner organizations was ultimately less successful. To date, BRAC has yet to complete a single BBM or EDBM training course, and CMES has only implemented an altered form of the module –

teaching the three day module of the course of 6 weeks. However discussions are ongoing with BRAC to begin a similar initiative. Despite the enthusiasm of the training staff of the two organizations following the ToT, institutional constraints on the part of the senior management teams have been responsible for the lack of EDBM and BBM trainings. These trainings impart important life skills to adolescents beyond the technical skills trainings.

Anecdotal evidence from the private sector partners show that graduates of the KK program are better workers than the average employee. However, the EDBM and BBM trainings impart important life skills to adolescents beyond those already being taught by the partner NGOs. As part of a holistic approach it is important to impart skills above and beyond the general life skills and necessary technical skills training. In order to ensure the partners are able to deliver WDCE, BBM, and EDBM trainings there should be a review of the training schedules and materials available to the partner NGOs in order to determine how to ensure these trainings are implemented by the partner NGOs.

3.0 Activities and Outcomes

In 2006 JOBS began a pilot project under UNICEF’s Adolescent Empowerment Project. Under this project, it was envisioned that JOBS would work with UNICEF’s current partners, BRAC and CMES, in a relationships similar to that of secondary level education to primary level – JOBS would take up where the activities of BRAC and CMES leave off (Figure 1 below).

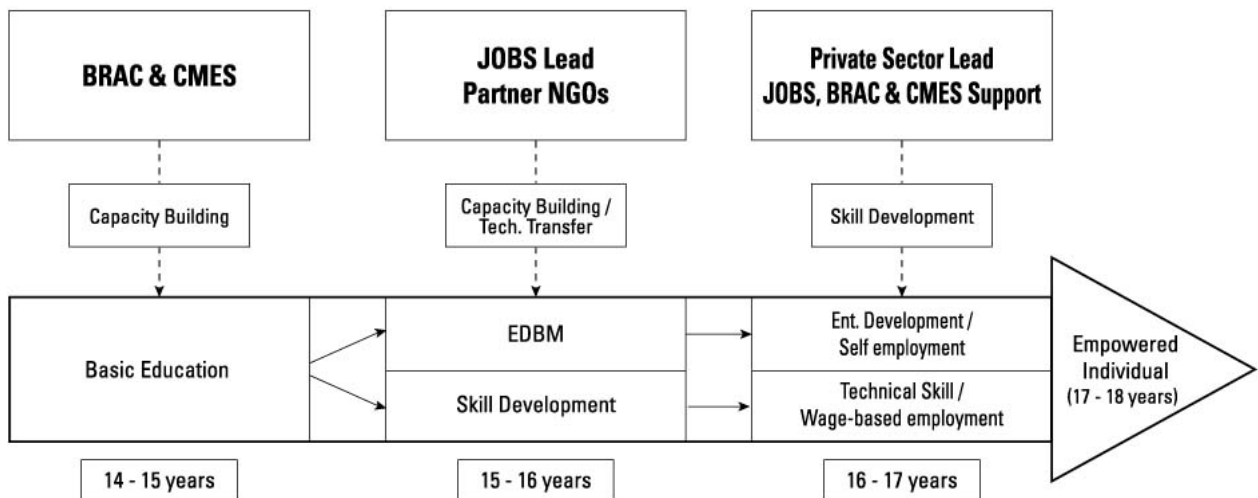


Figure 1: The Empowerment Model

Under this model, two separate goals were identified for JOBS under the project. The first goal involved providing adolescent girls the skills necessary to be successful entrepreneurs indirectly through conducting ToTs for BRAC and CMES training staff in JOBS designed EDBM and BBM modules. To fulfill the second goal, that of identifying private sector employment opportunities for non-school going adolescents JOBS identified private sector partners willing to provide wage-based employment for adolescents.

3.1 WDCE, EDBM and BBM Training

The design of the pilot project and subsequent contracts called for JOBS to provide a ToT in the JOBS designed EDBM training, after which the partner NGOs would provide training directly to adolescents allowing the trainings to benefit from economies of scale. In addition to the EDBM training module JOBS developed and completed ToTs for two new publishable training modules, namely BBM and WDCE. All three modules have long-term utility and complement the existing trainings provided by BRAC and CMES. A total of 39 trainers from BRAC and CMES participated in ToT courses for the EDBM, BBM, and WDCE training modules.



Adolescents complete JOBS WDCE training

The WDCE training was designed to prepare the adolescents to work in a factory environment, and has proven to be very successful in developing the necessary basic professionalism required to work in this type of environment. WDCE training was widely recognized by the partner NGO training staff as unique. Furthermore, the private sector partners have recognized that those adolescents who received the WDCE training performed better than those who had not received this training, including their current employees.

The EDBM and BBM, on the other hand, training modules were designed to teach basic business and entrepreneurial skills. The EDBM module is the more advanced module of the two. Despite having received both an initial ToT and a refresher course in both EDBM and BBM, neither BRAC nor CMES were able to immediately conduct trainings. Both BRAC and CMES cited a number of reasons for the lack of trainings, including similarity between the EDBM and BBM curricula and their current curriculum and organizational constraints including a lack of funds. JOBS attempted to work with both organizations to identify innovative solutions to get around the constraints. Ultimately, these efforts were successful with CMES, which began training adolescents using an altered version of the BBM module, conducting the trainings over a six week period. To date CMES has trained 90 adolescents using this altered module and has plans to expand its use of the module into other districts.

Table 1: BRAC and CMES Test Scores

	BRAC	CMES
Pre-Test Average (Max / Min)	16.26% (25% / 2%)	7.19% (16% / 0%)
Post-Test Average (Max / Min)	85.67% (96% / 76%)	91.93% (98% / 80%)

One of the main reasons given by both BRAC and CMES for not starting the BBM and EDBM trainings was a 'similarity' in the curricula with their existing training program. However, following a detailed comparative analysis of all of the training

modules, including the BRAC and CMES training programs, it became clear that the BBM and EDBM modules were more practical and concise than the modules currently used by the partner NGOs. In fact the partners' modules were very trade specific, while the BBM and EDBM modules focused more on essential lifeskills and were more generalizable, meaning that the lessons learned could be applied to any business or trade. As a confirmation of the differences between the training programs, one needs look only at the extremely low pre-test scores (see Table 1 above) for the ToTs for both organizations in fact illustrate a lack of familiarity with the

subject materials. In fact, CMES training staff only scored an average of 7.27% on the pre-test, with BRAC doing only slightly better scoring an average of 16.67%. The ToTs were in fact very successful with CMES improving their scores to an average of 91.93% and BRAC's scores improving to 85.67%. In fact following the ToT and refresher courses the trainers were very excited to begin training, and they would like to utilize this training module in lieu of the existing partner NGO business training modules.

In order to solve the institutional constraints, JOBS in consultation with the partner organizations identified a number of alternative arrangements. After several meetings between the partner organizations it was proposed that JOBS directly deliver some trainings to the adolescent clients with the full cooperation of BRAC and CMES. However, when it became to actually organizing these trainings, JOBS faced difficulty in finalizing the arrangements. In the end arrangements could be made for direct training of 40 adolescents in the BBM module by JOBS as a pilot to convince the trainers of the effectiveness of the training and to gauge the relevance of the training for the adolescents.



CMES staff participate in a ToT

Following the failure of this arrangement JOBS worked with CMES to develop another alternative arrangement. It was agreed upon by both parties that CMES would train 300 adolescents in an altered version of the BBM module. The contents of the 6 day BBM training would take place over the course of 6 weeks, with non-school going adolescents receiving one day of BBM training each week. To date CMES has trained 90 adolescents using this altered module and has plans to expand its use of the module into other districts where they are operating the KK program including Chapai Nawabganj.

Despite these setbacks, JOBS believes that both the BBM and EDBM trainings are relevant and useful to the adolescent girls. Although members of the management of our partner NGOs may feel differently, our experience with the trainers of both BRAC and CMES in the ToTs as well as with the adolescents directly trained by JOBS demonstrate the importance of these modules. The main problem, as reported by the field staff of the partner NGOs, is that many of the adolescents expect the training to be accompanied by jobs or an entrepreneurial activity and start-up capital. When the job/activity is not immediately forthcoming, the adolescents get “demotivated” and may not attend subsequent trainings at the KK resulting in lower attendance for BRAC and CMES core programs. This may be the real reason for the lack of management support. However, the idea behind the BBM and EDBM trainings is to provide the skills necessary to start and manage a business as well as important life-skills such as budgeting and simple accounting, not as the first step to the provision of “ready-made” entrepreneurial activity. However, both BRAC and CMES are world renowned for their grassroots activities and so will be instrumental in helping the adolescents identify entrepreneurial activities and secure access to any necessary microfinance services.

3.2 Wage-Based Employment

The second goal, identifying wage-based employment opportunities for the adolescents, was a very successful part of this project. JOBS identified wage-based employment opportunities for 660 adolescent girls in three different districts, Chittagong, Rajshahi, and Rangpur as can be seen in Table 2. To date these adolescent girls have earned nearly 25,00,000 taka or more than \$36,000. The wage-based employment opportunities were with a number of different private sector partners producing a variety of products for both export and local sale. The key to the success of this project was in the selection of private

Table 2: # of Adolescents Employed by District

District	Partner	Area of Training	# of Adolescents
Chittagong	ERECT	Sewing, embroidery, block batik, karchupi, garment accessories	50
	Crafts & Creation	Craft items, paper flower, sewing, embroidery, block batik, karchupi & other home based work	35
	SEDA	Diversified jute products, craft items, paper flowers, sewing, embroidery, block batik, karchupi, & other home based work	45
Rajshahi	Swallows Development Society	Cutting, sewing & embroidery	30
		Coconut shell button manufacturing & embroidery	40
		Palm & date leaf basket manufacturing	60
Rangpur	Karupannya Ltd.	Rag rugs, table mats, & other types of floor coverings	400

sector partners. Sectors and partners were identified and selected based on the feasibility and market availability of raw materials and the end-products. JOBS also took into account the factory environment, the potential partners' understanding of international labor standards including regarding the use of child labor, and the support of key personnel within the private sector partners including the senior management, factory managers, and the supervisors the adolescents would be dealing with on a daily basis. The input of the adolescent girls and their families also played a critical role in the selection of both sectors and partners. One of the greatest challenges in identifying private sector partners was the geographical constraint of working in 3 preselected districts. In effect this forced JOBS to work backwards identifying private sector partners active in these districts willing and able to participate in the project. Because of the importance of finding organizations that are producing for export and so meet international labor, working conditions, and quality standards, it would make more sense to identify private sector partners which meet the selection criteria first and then find the adolescents interested in working for these partners.

3.21 Chittagong

Chittagong was the most challenging district to implement the pilot project. Most of the difficulties faced in identifying employment opportunities was the ultra-conservative nature of many of the families of the adolescents. Many of the families were completely unwilling to let their daughters travel even a short distance away from the village, or even to cross a highway.

Through several Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) several causes for this unwillingness were identified. Parents, village leaders, and the girls expressed the following concerns:

- 1) If the daughter is allowed outside the immediate proximity of the home, it will be difficult to find husbands for their daughter;
- 2) Society will reject the girls as they believe that women who work in factories are “not good”;
- 3) Girls will face “eve teasers” on their way to and from work;
- 4) Finally in some villages it was expressed that local moneylenders, who were prominent members of the village, discouraged poor fishermen from letting their daughters work because the additional income to these poor families could upset the control maintained by the elite over the fishermen through high levels of loans given under usurious conditions.



JOBS discusses the AEP with adolescents and their families

Due to these constraints, JOBS attempted to identify private sector partners willing to open operations in the villages themselves. Unfortunately, despite a number of promising leads, JOBS was unable to identify a private sector partner interested in opening operations in these rural communities during the pilot project period. The risks associated with opening production centers in these areas are deemed too great; the extra transportation costs involved in both the backward and forward market linkages reduce profitability, and furthermore power and other utility services are also often unavailable. Furthermore, the short time

frame of the project meant that potential private sector partners were unwilling to take the risk of establishing new production units in these areas. Time was also the constraining factor which prevented JOBS from undertaking a cluster approach in this area since this approach requires more resources to manage and maintain the quality and ensure the backward and forward links necessary for the long-term viability of the cluster. A longer time frame for the intervention would have been instrumental in convincing private sector partners to participate, and would have allowed the development of clusters. However, JOBS is continuing to look for appropriate solutions for adolescents living in these areas, including home-based production of products for the private sector.

Commonwealth Youth Award

In recognition of her contribution to youth development including participation in the Adolescent Empowerment Project, Nilima Akhter Chowdhury, the CEO of Erect was awarded the Commonwealth Youth Silver Award on National Youth Day, 1 November 2007

In the end, despite the challenges that were formally acknowledged by the partners, including UNICEF, three private sector partners in Chittagong were identified by JOBS to participate in the pilot project, outside of the conservative villages. These three partners, Erect, SEDA, and Craft

and Creation, created technical training and employment opportunities for 130 adolescents⁹. Over the course of five months Erect provided technical training and employment opportunities for 50 adolescent girls in on sewing, embroidery, block boutique, ambush, karchupi, and the production of garments accessories, such as knit flowers. A further 75 girls received similar types of technical training, as well as training on the production of craft items, including paper flowers and other home-based craft production, under SEDA (45 adolescents) and Crafts and Creation (30 adolescents). All of the adolescents were happy to receive training in a number of different skill sets, all of which were highly practical and met the high standards required to produce for the export market.¹⁰

3.23 Rajshahi

In Rajshahi, the biggest constraint faced by JOBS is a lack of local entrepreneurs in the area. JOBS identified one private sector partner, Swallows, which has been able to provide technical training and employment opportunities for 130 adolescents¹¹. Training and employment opportunities were created for 30 adolescents in cutting, sewing, and embroidery trainings and employment, for 20 adolescents in embroidery, for 20 adolescents in coconut shell button manufacturing, and for 60 adolescents in palm leaf and date leaf basket manufacturing over the course of six months.



Adolescents learn embroidery at Swallows

Swallows provides an ideal work environment for adolescents, allowing flexibility to its workers and even providing child care facilities, although none of the adolescents currently have children. Despite the good working environment available to the adolescents, concern has been raised by Swallows about some of the adolescents' commitment. A number of the adolescents were unwilling to continue working in the factory due to a number of factors including family pressure, the distance between the factory and their homes, and the fact that some of the adolescents decided to go back to school. Swallows proposed allowing these adolescents to produce items from home but only for the local market, because the export market requires strict quality control. The adolescents, however, were very disappointed with the lower resulting income generating potential of home-production, because articles produced for the local market are less valuable than articles produced for export. JOBS continues to work with Swallows to identify solutions to this problem which give the adolescents the flexibility to work from home. One possibility is to include the involvement of the adolescents' parents in the work, which would greatly increase the income earning potential of the households.

3.24 Rangpur

Rangpur is the sight of the most productive partnership with the private sector, and is a model of this type of intervention. A total of 400 adolescents¹² in the Rangpur region have received technical training and employment opportunities with Karupannya, producing rag rugs, table

⁹ The target for Chittagong was 300 adolescents

¹⁰ The status of all of the adolescents will be monitored by JOBS and will be tracked in a database developed for this project

¹¹ The target for Rajshahi was 300 adolescents

¹² The target was 400 adolescents in Rangpur

mats, top mats, place mats, and other floor coverings for export and sale by IKEA, mainly in Europe. Of these 400 adolescents, 100 were placed in a new building constructed at Karupannya's main factor in Ishwarpur; the remaining 300 were placed in 3 other locations at production centers built specifically for this project, namely Jolkor, Pirgacha Dudiabary, and Pirgacha Shukhanpukur. The investment required to construct these new units demonstrates the long-term commitment of Karupannya to the adolescents. These production centers are all located very near to where the adolescents live, and will contribute directly to improving the economic condition of these villages, because even after the Adolescent Empowerment Project has closed opportunities will remain available for adolescents currently participating as well as new adolescents living in these areas.



The major challenge we faced in Rangpur was the identification of suitable locations to construct the factories, which were feasible and profitable for Karupannya as well as easily accessible for the adolescents. Once sites were identified, further delays ensued in the construction of the production units due to land disputes and flooding. A further challenge faced was the identification and verification of the ages of the adolescents under the

Case Study: Mst Mahfuza Akhter

Mst. Mahfuza Akhter, aged 17, lives in Ishwarpur, Lahirirhat, Rangpur. After completing Class VII, Mahfuza had to drop out of school because her family could not afford to keep her in school. After joining the main production unit in Ishwarpur for Karupannya on 16 September 2007, Mahfuza spent five hours of training everyday for five months. She now is earning enough money to contribute to her family and is very excited about the potential she now has to "make [her] life better." She has gained the confidence necessary to work in the factory and is one of the best performing employees of Karupannya. She plans to marry in four years, when her age is 21 years.

BRAC KK program. All of the adolescents required a proof of age from the Civil Surgeon in Rangpur to verify that Karupannya is not employing child labor. Despite these constraints the partnership between Karupannya and JOBS has been very fruitful.

4.0 Lessons Learned

This pilot project was the first of its kind in Bangladesh, identifying wage-based employment opportunities for adolescent girls on a large scale basis. During the pilot phase of this unique project JOBS learned many useful lessons, which will inform and ensure the success of the implementation of a follow-on project.

4.1 Training

4.11 Lack of Partner NGO Management Support

The greatest difficulty faced during the pilot period of this project was the inability of the partner NGOs, BRAC and CMES, to begin the BBM and EDBM trainings. The lack of the partner NGO management support caused delays in the organization of the ToT, and despite the enthusiasm of the training staff only 90 adolescents have been trained by CMES. The reasons for this lack of management support remain unclear to JOBS, however, due to the relatively late entry of JOBS as a partner in the Adolescent Empowerment Project, the expected level of support by the partner

NGOs may not have been fully communicated to BRAC and CMES management staff prior to the start of the pilot project, and therefore never had the buy-in necessary to be successful. The additional resources needed to implement these new training modules may not have been available to the NGOs.



Many KK centers, such as the BRAC center (left) were unsuitable for technical training, so JOBS was forced to secure alternative venues for the technical training such as the one pictured on the right.

4.12 Training in the KK Centers

Initially, JOBS expected to be able to complete the technical training in the KK centers. However, the condition of many of the centers was not conducive to technical training due to low levels of light and primitive conditions. Rather than utilizing these spaces, JOBS instead had to find alternative venues for the training, most of which took place in the actual production centers. In the future, whenever possible the KK centers should be used for technical training as well, but this will require greater investment on the part of the partner NGOs to bring the KK centers up to the standards necessary to conduct technical trainings.

4.13 Managing Expectations

Where JOBS undertook direct trainings of adolescents in the BBM module, the trainings were well received among the adolescents. However, following the trainings many of the adolescents expected that immediately following the training they would receive a ‘ready-made’ entrepreneurial activity. This is not the intent of either the BBM or EDBM module, both of which are intended only to expose the adolescents to the ideas, tools, and life-skills necessary to become entrepreneurs. It is unrealistic to believe that everyone can be an entrepreneur; it takes a very special type of person willing to take the risks associated with starting their own business. However, while not every individual can or should be an entrepreneur, it may be necessary to spend more hands-on-time with the more capable entrepreneurial minded adolescents following the training to help them identify opportunities and form clusters so that they can employ other adolescents in their communities. JOBS continues to work to identify appropriate opportunities for a follow-on project.

4.14 Training Modules

As part of this project, JOBS successfully developed and tested 3 separate training modules proving their efficacy in empowering adolescents. All three modules provide essential life skills to the adolescents. The WDCE training module is aimed at adolescents preparing to enter a factory environment for wage-based employment. It imparts basic professional skills, and raises awareness among the adolescents about the expectations of the management, for instance



Materials designed for the EDBM & BBM modules

timeliness. The BBM module provides basic business skills including accounting, finance, business plan development in order to prepare adolescents to successfully run a business. The EDBM module also provides basic business skills, but also includes information designed to help the adolescents become entrepreneurs. This information includes information about how to identify sources of raw materials and locate potential market opportunities. These training modules are important and must complement and supplement any future livelihood activities. Further work must be

undertaken to strengthen the response to capabilities (including skills, good health, self-confidence and self-esteem), opportunities (activities that will generate income/assets for adolescents), and resources (physical assets) for adolescents, with a strengthened inclusion of parents. Furthermore the importance of business development (including business related life skills such as financial literacy) are important because money management and making better financial decisions are essential life skills and these trainings must be made available to all adolescents.

4.2 Wage-Based Employment

4.21 Conservatism and Lack of Opportunity in the Rural Areas

As has been discussed earlier the conservative nature of some families, especially in parts of Chittagong District, in conjunction with unwillingness on the part of the private sector in opening production units in remote rural areas, has meant that opportunities for adolescents in these conservative areas are limited. This constraint is not necessarily religious in nature, as it is found in both Hindu and Muslim areas. JOBS will continue to look for private sector partners and alternative models which may work in these areas.

4.22 Lack of Capacity among Potential Private Sector Partners

One of the biggest obstacles in identifying private sector partners, including those willing to relocate to rural areas, has been a lack of capacity among the entrepreneurs. This lack of capacity may lead to a lack of sustainability in the employment opportunities. Perhaps the biggest capacity gap is in the area of marketing capability. Most local entrepreneurs produce only once an order has been placed. Once an order is filled, and if a new order is not placed, the adolescents are vulnerable to being laid off. Unfortunately many organizations lack the capability to undertake the continuous marketing efforts necessary to receive continuous orders.



An adolescents at work for Erect

4.23 Geographical Limitations

Related to the lack of capacity among potential private sector partners, is the problems associated with the fact that JOBS was limited to working in only three districts

during the pilot project. These constraints forced JOBS in effect to work backwards identifying the private sector partner after the adolescents were in effect selected. Due to the importance of choosing the right private sector partner to ensure the success of the project, it would make more sense to identify private sector partners which meet the selection criteria first and then find the adolescents interested in working for these partners. The geographical limitations further reduced the number of potential private sector partners, especially because many private sector entities are located in the districts surrounding Dhaka.

4.24 Adolescent Selection

JOBS was limited to working with adolescents currently involved in the KK program. To expand the potential pool of qualified workers, it would be advisable to allow adolescents who have completed the KK program to participate as well. These girls, most of whom are older on average than the current participants, are more likely to be finished with their studies. This means that they would be more likely to be able to work in wage-based employment full-time.

4.25 Time Constraints

The limited time period of the pilot project, only one year, added further complications to the identification of private sector partners. Many potential partners were interested in longer-term partnerships, especially when opening new production units in rural areas. The lack of a long-term time horizon for the project exposed the potential private sector partners to business risks they felt were unacceptable.

4.26 Limited Interest in Non-Garment Related Sectors

Due to the high profile of the ready-made garment (RMG) sector in Bangladesh, many adolescents and their families are interested in this sector. However, opportunities in the RMG sector are not universally available as most are located in the Dhaka area and Export Processing Zones (EPZs). In fact, when opportunities in sectors other than RMG are available, many of the adolescents and their families are not interested in these opportunities. This reluctance to work in alternative sectors stems mainly from a lack of awareness about the potential profitability and sustainability of these alternative sectors among the rural poor, including adolescents and their families.



Adolescents' parents are very concerned about their daughters

4.27 Lack of Knowledge and Awareness among Parents

The program has been very successful in making the adolescents aware of their rights, but in order for the adolescents to fully realize their rights they need the support of their parents. As has been discussed earlier, conservatism among parents has been a major constraint in the realization of the economic rights of the adolescents. This is true even among some of the poorest families, for whom an additional income from a daughter would make a huge difference in the economic viability of the family. The project should continue to work directly with the parents as well as the adolescents, to raise awareness of these rights and the positive socio-economic effect of having a daughter generating additional income, we will continue facing a major obstacle in the path of adolescent empowerment, particularly in those ultra-poor households where it is arguably

needed most. In the future it would be good to identify livelihood opportunities for the entire family, including parents and male adolescents to increase household income.

4.28 Successful Model - Karapunnya

The key to the success of the project is choosing the right private-sector partner. The most successful part of the project occurred in Rangpur where JOBS worked with Karapunnya to employ 400 adolescents. Karapunnya produces products for export for IKEA, a home furnishing company. IKEA demands Karapunnya follow international labor standards, including not using child labor. In order to ensure that Karapunnya meets these standards, IKEA conducts random site visits to the factory. By working with a private sector company which is forced to meet these high labor standards by its buyer, JOBS is able to ensure that the adolescents are working in an environment where they will not be exploited.



Adolescents at work in Karapunnya

As part of its participation in this project, investments were made by Karapunnya to start 4 new production units. All of these production centers are near to the adolescents' homes, allowing the adolescents to work more regularly. Furthermore, by opening the production units in the villages, Karapunnya is making a long-term investment in the adolescents further ensuring the sustainability of the employment opportunities.

It is important to note that this model cannot be sustainably implemented in every district, because there may not be appropriate private sector partners. It is therefore important to note that other approaches will have to be developed for these districts. These other approaches will include the formation of clusters of cottage-based producers and self-employment, and some examples are given in the next section.

5.0 Going Forward

Following the pilot phase of the Adolescent Empowerment Project, and building on the lessons learned during the implementation of the project, JOBS has identified important opportunities to build upon for a future follow-on project.

- a) First and foremost JOBS will continue to work with and support the adolescents currently employed by our private sector partners through consistent and long-term engagement with the partners;
- b) Further study is necessary to understand the long-term impact of this program. For instance does the economic empowerment of adolescents lead to a delay in marriage? At this stage it is too early to tell. It would be useful to compare the girls with wage-based employment to those without, and to girls who already graduated from the KK project;
- c) The geographical constraints should be altered, allowing JOBS, in consultation with UNICEF, to choose one or two districts where existing private sector partners of JOBS would be willing and able to make long-term investments;

- d) In order to avoid the problems discussed above and faced by all partners with the EDBM and BBM trainings, discussed above, JOBS proposes that in any follow-on project, JOBS itself be responsible for developing and running, in partnership with UNICEF, a complete KK program in a single selected district. In this model JOBS would be responsible for implementing all activities of the project from the initial empowerment trainings to the EDBM and BBM trainings to the wage-based employment. JOBS would also continue to include parents in the empowerment of their adolescents and raise awareness about the potential benefit of working in non-RMG related sectors. This will allow JOBS to act as a laboratory experimenting with new approaches as well as incorporate all of the lessons learned during the pilot project to develop a model and case study which fully integrates the training with the identification of wage-based employment opportunities; and
- e) The partner NGOs are vital for the success of the project and bring economies of scale which will allow the project to reach the maximum number of adolescents. However, in districts for which JOBS is not responsible for conducting training, it is imperative that more concrete assurances are given by the partner NGOs to ensure that they fulfill their obligations. These assurances should be agreed upon the senior management teams of all concerned organizations, UNICEF, JOBS, and the partner NGOs, prior to any follow-on project, and should be given in writing prior to the beginning of the project. This will ensure that the problems faced during the pilot project regarding the BBM and EDBM trainings are not repeated.

JOBS will continue to work with our existing private sector partners and build on the success of the pilot project. In fact, JOBS has already talked to both Swallows and Erect about possible collaboration and expansion of our efforts in a potential future project. In addition to these important ways forward, JOBS continues to look for new opportunities for the adolescents, both based on the Karapunya model as well as new models for districts where the Karapunya model is inappropriate. These new opportunities will build on the lessons learned during the pilot phase of the project. Most of these opportunities involve small and cottage industries. This will solve the problems faced during the pilot phase of the project due to the conservatism of many of the families because the girls could work in their own homes. The new models that JOBS is pursuing include the following:

- a) Discussions have begun with our current private sector Erect to launch a new initiative which can be undertaken under a follow-on project. Under this project the best adolescents trained during the pilot project will be selected to receive an EDBM training course. This course will prepare the adolescents to form clusters in their own villages, training and employing other adolescents to produce garment accessories as per the market demand identified by Erect;
- b) Potentially hundreds of adolescents can be employed in the production of artificial flowers. A Korean artificial flower making factory in Chittagong recently closed after a decade in operation, due to the opening of a new factory in China. The previous owners are very interested in selling machinery, providing marketing assistance, and ensuring the continued employment of many of their skilled staff. JOBS recently spoke with the production manager who is willing to work with JOBS to re-open the plant and employ adolescents. This factory could conceivably employ hundreds of adolescents throughout the value-chain, the vast majority of whom would be working in their own homes all over the country; and

- c) Another potential opportunity is the production of handmade prayer caps which are exported to the Middle East. An entrepreneur in Feni has expressed interest in partnering with JOBS to expand their production base for these caps. Currently the production is done by local women in their households. JOBS can help to train and organize adolescents into clusters to produce these caps, as well as help the entrepreneur in identifying new international markets to ensure a sustainable income for the adolescents.

In effect, all of these initiatives will create a ‘snowball effect’ in the number of adolescents employed. The initial investment in technical training of certain adolescents will create wage-based employment opportunities for many other adolescents in their villages. For every one adolescent directly trained, there could be as many as 5-10 adolescents employed as members of ‘mini-clusters’.

The model developed under the pilot project is gender neutral, and can include adolescent boys as well as adolescent girls. Furthermore, the model could be extended to the parents of school-going adolescents. This would result in an increase in household economic security while at the same time allowing the adolescents to remain in school. The specific targets in any follow-on activity will be dependent on a number of factors including the budget, the flexibility of the partners, the specific commitments of the partner NGOs and the timeline. However, a follow-on project focused on adolescent livelihoods would:

- Engage the adolescents in identifying and addressing their livelihood priorities;
- Recognize the importance of adolescent work as part of household economic security;
- Be sympathetic to special needs population;
- Place needs and responses in a holistic framework that recognizes the opportunities and constraints of their households, communities, and the wider economy;
- Recognize the opportunities that adolescent work presents and not just the needs;
- Advocate the building of their asset or capital base, predicated on their strengths;
- Promote livelihood resources *and* outcomes; and
- Create linkages between the micro-level realities and situation of adolescents and policies at the macro-level, as well as between micro- and macro-level actions.

In summary, building on the on the strengths and lessons learned during the implementation of the pilot project, JOBS looks forward to continue working with UNICEF to facilitate the economic empowerment of adolescents.