



# MIDLINE REPORT BANGLADESH

First insights in the impact on the socio-economic situation of youth participating in the Empower Youth for Work programme

EMPOWER  
**YOUTH**  
FOR WORK



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**OXFAM**

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# SUMMARY

Empower Youth for Work (EYW) is a five-year programme, funded by the IKEA Foundation. The programme focuses on enabling young people (especially young women) in rural climate-affected areas of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Ethiopia to seek and obtain economic independence. To realize these goals, the programme applies a holistic approach to effectively drive young people's economic and overall empowerment through 1) working on agency, capacity & skills, 2) linking young people to existing and new economic opportunities including access to finance and 3) the creation of an enabling environment by influencing social norms and policies that facilitate young men and women's economic and overall empowerment.

In Bangladesh, EYW is implemented in the northern districts of Raishahi and Rangpur, and the southern districts of Barishal and Khulna. These districts are all rural areas, affected by climate change. Youth unemployment is a big challenge in both regions. To work on this, the EYW team support youth groups and provides training for youth related to soft skills, technical skills and entrepreneurial skills. Youth are supported in their first economic activities, either through internships or business development support. Furthermore, community discussions are facilitated to create an enabling environment for young men and women to work.

This report presents the results of the midline survey in Bangladesh, which is part of the impact evaluation approach. The midline survey in Bangladesh was carried out among 567 youth in the EYW target areas and 290 youth in comparison areas that are not exposed to EYW activities. Furthermore, 200 community members were surveyed in EYW target areas.

The survey explored trends and impact in relation to key performance indicators (KPIs) relevant to youth and community members and focused on the relationship between programme participation and increased skills, as well as any association between skill acquisition and gaining decent jobs and/or sustainable (self-) employment. Lastly, the report explores the association of external factors in communities with agency and socio-economic development. In a midline reflection workshop, the EYW team, including youth that participate in the programme, interpreted the results of the midline survey. They came up with concrete programme implications for the programme to consider.

The results of the midline are presented in relation to baseline findings where possible, describing the impact of the programme. A positive trend is already visible at the highest level of the theory of change – on socio-economic empowerment. For female youth this change can already be attributed to EYW activities, which is promising as the project has the ambition to focus on female youth according to a 70/30 ratio. The positive trend overall is nice, but the participants at the midline reflection workshop discussed how to translate this into an overall impact.

Most clear results are visible with respect to the impact of soft- skills training. Furthermore, on-the-job learning through internships is something new that EYW is introducing in the communities where they work. Youth indicate to find the skills they learn useful in their daily lives and for exploring job opportunities. This strengthens the Bangladeshi EYW team in their approach to training of youth. They

are planning to broaden and review their soft skills training to make it even more effective in terms of delivery, timing and content. The EYW Bangladesh team will explore if new topics should be included, such as family planning and drug addiction. Also they want to ensure more effective delivery of content through adding more group works and games, etc. The team wants to make sure that after the soft skill training the youth will continue to practice their skills in youth groups, for instance by putting the soft skill topics on the agenda of youth group meetings. Furthermore, the EYW team will put effort to influence trainings that are provided by the government departments at union or upazila level to include soft/life skills discussion, especially in relation to entrepreneurship courses as the link between level of soft skills and self-employment became clear. This collaboration may support the EYW project in Bangladesh to scale up the work to realize attributable change at impact level.

Increasing income and economic activities may need attention to ensure efforts translate in economic empowerment. Although soft skills and technical skills are increasing, this does not translate yet in impact on employment opportunities and accessing credit for youth start-ups. Youth are lagging behind in bringing their income to a sustainable level. Furthermore, female youth indicate to be interested in self-employment but at the same time they face difficulties to attend entrepreneurial trainings outside their village. Therefore, the EYW team is looking at opportunities to bring the training closer to the young women's homes. The project team emphasizes the importance of improving market linkages for youth in the upcoming years, especially to ensure the sustainability of youth start-ups. They are currently rolling out business development support and are keen to see the first results in the next measurement.

The results also show a positive trend regarding employment. Although, this positive trend cannot be directly attributed to the EYW activities this is an important sign for the team that they are moving in the right direction. It seems that enrolment in internships is an important aspect of the EYW programme to ensure newly learned skills are put into practice. The EYW team wants to strengthen the links between the mentorship programme and job placements. To further increase job placements, EYW Bangladesh will bridge the gap between the provided skills training and market demand. For instance, by bringing both employers and youths who are dropping out of job placements together to discuss the causes and solutions. Stimulating local mentorship is also an ongoing topic in the influencing agenda linked to influencing on decent work.

The results show that women are lagging behind because of social restriction and social norms that are still more negative towards female employment than male employment. Although the correlation between socio-economic empowerment and factors in the environment is difficult to prove, there are enough indications for the EYW team to continue their work in this area. Hence, they want to engage more adults and young men around discussing social restrictions and social norms around female employment and entrepreneurship, improving the intersectionality of their community meetings. As such, there is a need for guidelines or structured toolkit for the facilitation of family level discussions for different groups on social norms topics, such as social restrictions on labour market access and GBV. The EYW team will review its influencing plan and mass awareness raising activities by looking at them from the perspective of increasing EYW engagement with young and adult men of the communities.

Similarly, the results showed that there is room to improve knowledge of- and access to SRHR services. information about SRHR needs to be shared in more concentrated way. Linkages to incorporate community clinics and UPZ health care centres to disseminate SRHR information could be explored.

There is also a need to influence the community stakeholders and health service providers to improve the access to SRHR services.

The participants of the midline reflection workshop stated to have learned a lot from interpreting the results. There were some interesting discussions around regional differences in implementation, that may not be visible in the report so much. Especially in Barisal, special support is needed for the hard to reach extreme poor. EYW Bangladesh will explore how to best support the extreme marginalized groups in this region.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Empower Youth for Work (EYW) is a five-year programme (2016-2021), funded by the IKEA Foundation. The programme focuses on enabling young people (especially young women, 15-29 years old) in rural climate-affected areas of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Ethiopia to seek and obtain economic independence. To realize these goals, the programme applies a holistic approach to effectively drive young people's economic and overall empowerment through 1) working on agency, capacity & skills, 2) linking young people to existing and new economic opportunities including access to finance and 3) the creation of an enabling environment by influencing social norms and policies that facilitate young men and women's economic and overall empowerment.

To keep track of the progress to realize the goals of EYW, an impact evaluation strategy is set up comprising of a survey with target- and comparison group at baseline (2017), midline (2019) and endline (2021). The impact evaluation is part of the greater Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning framework of the EYW programme. The purpose of the impact evaluation is to understand the pathways of change for young women and men from rural areas in obtaining skills, finding decent employment and overall economic and social empowerment. Herein, we also focus on the enabling role the environment can have, in particular for young women.

The impact measurement evaluation aims to:

1. Measure the key performance indicators (KPIs) and selected concepts of importance among youth and community members, including analysis of *trends* over time in the target group and any early *impacts* that may be attributable to the EYW programme.
2. Determine the relationship between programme participation and increased technical, soft, and entrepreneurial skills, as well as any association between skill acquisition and gaining decent jobs and/or sustainable (self-) employment.
3. Explore any changes to internal and external factors (social norms, level of gender-based violence (GBV), sexual and reproductive health barriers, etc.) and assess any associations with agency or socio-economic empowerment, and the likelihood of youth obtaining decent jobs and/or sustainable (self-) employment.

## 2 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The EYW programme aims to improve economic and social empowerment for young women and men living in rural climate-change affected areas in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Indonesia, and Pakistan. The Theory of Change consists of three pillars. The project works on improving young people's agency and skills (pillar 1), improving their economic opportunities (pillar 2), and creating an enabling environment for youth (pillar 3) to ultimately increase their social and economic empowerment.

In Bangladesh, the EYW project is implemented in the northern districts of Raishahi and Rangpur, and the southern districts of Barishal and Khulna. The following partners are involved in the implementation; Agriculture Sustainable and Socio Economic Development Organization -ASSEDO [discontinued since Year 3], Community Development Centre-CODEC, Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Services (RDRS), Wave Foundation and Underprivileged Children Education Programme-UCEP. EYW activities so far have focused on organizing youth groups and rolling out soft skills, technical skills and entrepreneurial skills trainings for EYW participants. Soft skills training focus on developing interpersonal skills such as communication, leadership and teamwork, as well as knowledge on climate change, gender based violence, sexual and reproductive health rights, unpaid care work and economic opportunities. Technical skills training have been designed specifically to meet labour market demands and areas of interest for youth, e.g. on: refrigeration and air conditioning, industrial sewing, mobile phone servicing, welding, tailoring, beautification, electrical installation, and livestock-rearing. Other than that, strategic partnerships have been developed, such as a2i (Access to Information under Prime minister's office) to provide technical skills training to youth.

To increase youth's agency, ward-level youth groups, union apex bodies, district youth advisory boards, youth reporters' groups and a national youth advisory board have been formed. The project is collaborating closely with Department of Youth Development to establish the National Youth Council under the government's responsibility. In addition, EYW activities have supported youth to take the lead in addressing gender based violence and in leading campaigns around female security and mobility. Youth advisory board members of the project have taken the initiative to conduct activities at local schools around gender based violence, unpaid care work, sexual and reproductive health rights and climate change issues. In addition, youth have taken part in various influencing activities, union level campaigns, and providing policy recommendations from local to national level involving different stakeholders including local government administration. Besides, EYW activities have focused on linkages with financial institutions and creating opportunities for accessing to market.

We note that programme implementation of EYW in Bangladesh has faced delays for several reasons (described in the relevant annual reports). Some programme activities, such as rollout of entrepreneurship training have started from the second quarter of year three. Moreover, programmatic activities in Raishahi were suspended for almost 8 months and that too has had significant bearing on the findings. Interpretation of these results should bear in mind the limited implementation of these programme activities between the baseline and midline.



## 3 METHODOLOGY

This is a quasi-experimental impact assessment, meaning that it benefits from data collected from a target group of programme participants as well as a comparison group of respondents with a similar demographic profile as the target group but who are not eligible to participate in EYW programme activities. The selection of respondents and their assignment to the target and comparison groups is not random: this is what makes this study “quasi-experimental”, in contrast to a fully randomized control trial. Still, comparing data from these two groups allows us to look not only at *trends* in outcomes over time for the target group but also whether any changes over time revealed in our analysis may be attributable to programme activities (the *impact* of the EYW programme so far).

The sampling approach for this midline study was designed to be representative of the population participating in EYW and is stratified by district level, union council/subdistrict level, gender and youth group affiliation. Target group respondents are randomly selected from records of programme participants maintained by EYW programme staff, with quotas for these characteristics. Comparison communities were selected in consultation with EYW staff. Respondents were randomly selected within chosen communities with quotas set for respondent gender.

To see the full text of the survey questionnaires for youth and community respondents, please check the links.

### 3.1 THE SAMPLE

The EYW midline study comprised two separate surveys: a “youth survey” of young people in the age range eligible for participation in EYW at the time of programme launch (ages 15 - 32 in 2018) and a “community survey” of specific people of other ages in communities where the EYW programme is active. More than half of community survey respondents were parents or guardians of youth survey respondents. The remainder were influential stakeholders or other community members. The community survey was only fielded in communities where the EYW programme is active, therefore there is no comparison group in this survey.

The following tables describe the gender and geographical (by district) composition of the sample obtained in both surveys.

#### Youth Survey Sample, by Group and by District

	Target Group				Comparison Group			
	Raishahi	Rangpur	Khulna	Barisal	Raishahi	Rangpur	Khulna	Barisal
Women	85 (70%)	104 (68%)	113 (70%)	96 (73%)	36 (65%)	67 (71%)	49 (65%)	44 (68%)
Men	36 (30%)	49 (32%)	48 (30%)	36 (27%)	19 (35%)	28 (29%)	26 (35%)	21 (27%)

TOTAL	121	153	161	132	55	95	75	65
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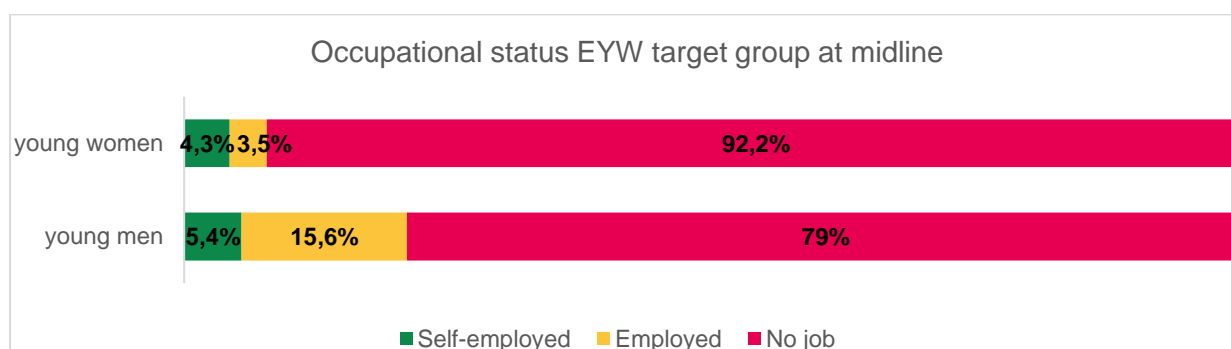
### Community Survey, by District

	Raishahi	Rangpur	Khulna	Barisal
Women	28 (48%)	23 (55%)	22 (44%)	32 (64%)
Men	30 (52%)	19 (45%)	28 (56%)	18 (35%)
TOTAL	58	42	50	50

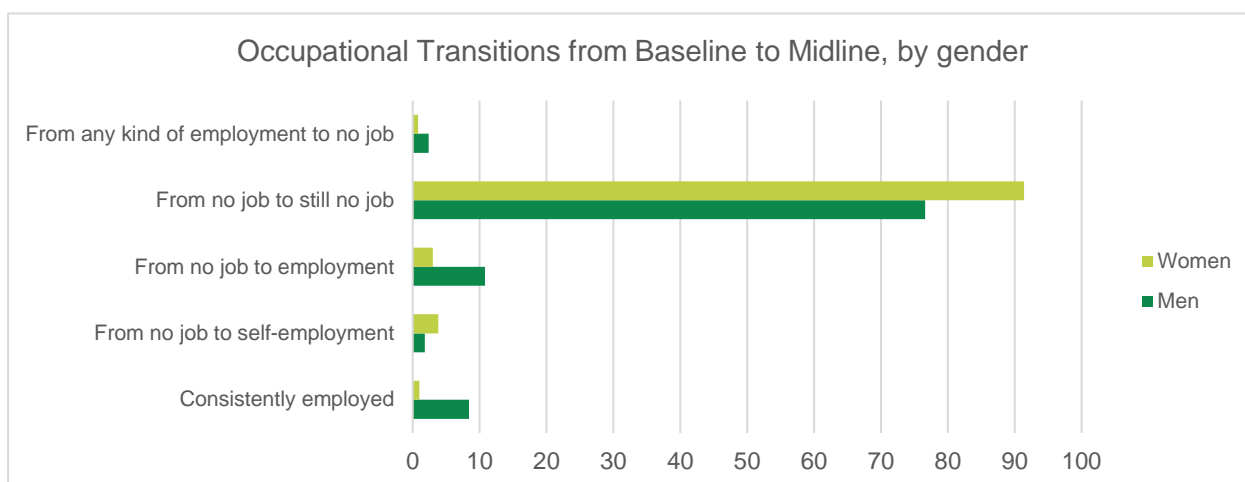
### 3.1.1 OCCUPATIONAL STATUS AND TRANSITIONS

Most young people in the EYW target group reported having no job in the midline survey. Among young men this accounted for 79% of the sample, for young women it was 92%. This may partly be due to the sampling, as employed youth were not always available for an interview, while unemployed youth were easy to reach (especially for partner organization UCEP). Although, the sampling approach tried to balance the sample in this respect, the replacement list that was used when someone was unavailable was less balanced. Furthermore, it is important to note that among these unemployed respondents a strong majority of young men with no job (88%) were students whereas among young women with no job roughly half were students (49%) and a similar share primarily involved in carework (46%).

A larger share of male respondents than female respondents were employed (meaning doing paid work for someone else) and young men are also more often self-employed, meaning either working for themselves or running a small business.



The midline survey also asked about occupational transitions between 2015, the baseline year for EYW, and late 2018 (time of EYW midline data collection). Herein we see that 6.8% women and 12.6% men of that EYW target group moved from no employment to either self-employment or a job. 8.5% of young men and 1% of young women have been consistently employed.

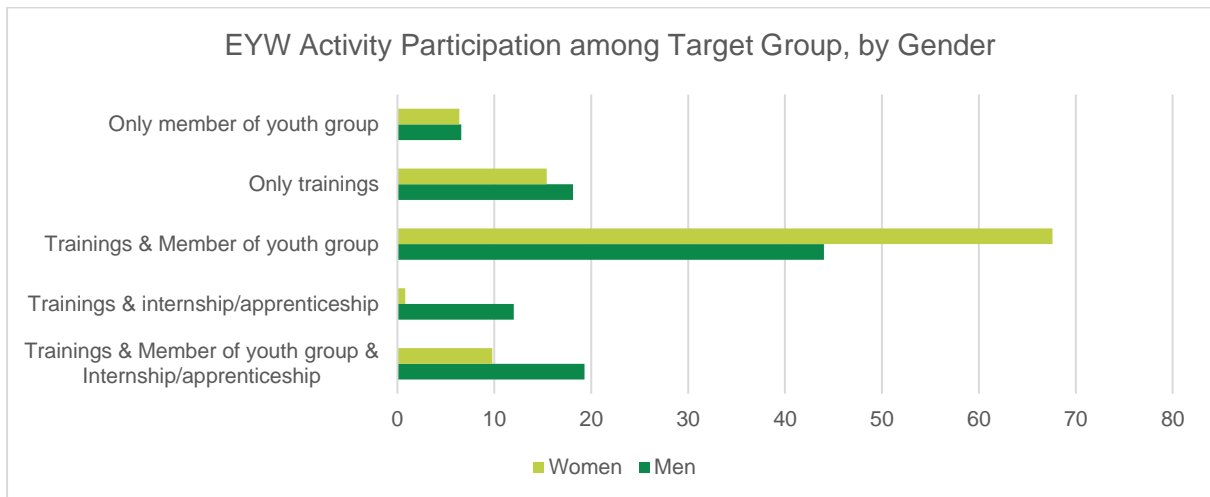


### 3.1.2 INVOLVEMENT IN THE EYW PROGRAMME

EYW targets young women and men between the ages of 15 and 29. Although some project activities also target members of communities young people live in who may be older adults, most programme activities are focused on young people themselves. Youth may participate by following trainings on soft, technical or entrepreneurial skills, by participating in an internship or apprenticeship (or on-the-job learning) or by joining a youth group. In the data we cannot show the exact type of training (certified versus uncertified), which would be important information for the programme. However, if we look at regional enrolment rates regarding training we see the following picture emerge: most participants (88.2%) are enrolled in soft skills training, while enrolment in technical skills training (6.9%) and entrepreneurial skills training (3%) is a lot lower.

Training participation	Overall enrolment	Raishahi enrolment	Rangpur enrolment	Khulna enrolment	Barisal enrolment
Soft skills	88.2%	93.4%	84.3%	95.7%	78.8%
Technical skills	6.9%	5.8%	7.8%	6.2%	7.6%
Entrepreneurial skills	3%	2.5%	4.6%	1.9%	3.0%

Many respondents combine one or more activities, as seen in the figure below. Almost all respondents have participated in soft skills training. More than 3 out of 4 are also member of a youth group, although there is quite some difference per region, with Raishahi having 93.4% of their participants enrolled in youth groups versus Khulna with 55.5% enrolment in youth groups. The other regions score in between (Rangpur 77.1% and Barisal 89.6%). Men are participating more often in internships than women (respectively 31.3% of men versus 10.6% of women), often in combination with training and membership of a youth group. In Barisal there are notable few internships opportunities, with only 1.5% of their youth involved in an internship, which contrasts enrolment in Raishahi (28.9%), Rangpur (21.1%), and Khulna (14.4%).



In general, we can see that the division between the different types of enrolment is similar per gender for the EYW activities. The participants of the midline reflection workshop stated that their trainings are easily accessible for women (trainings have an enrolment rate of 70% women and 30% men). Only the enrolment in internships has a gender difference with 30.8% of men participating in the EYW programme enrolled and only 10.1% women. Though still, this number is perceived as high, since the project does not offer internships to youth. It could be that respondents refer to mentorship opportunities offered by the programme or that they find their own internships through linkages with the private sector that the programme had. According to the partners, arranging female friendly mentorships are challenging to realize, as families are very protective towards their daughters and they do not want them to go outside for work. This is somewhat concerning for the EYW team, but they are working towards better opportunities for on-the-job learning for all EYW participants.

### 3.2 ANALYSIS

The analysis of the midline focuses on finding impact that is attributable to the EYW programme. Herein, we only present significant change and/or impact. When relevant we added asterisks in tables to show the level of significance. As gender is at the heart of our work, we present gender disaggregated information when there is a significant difference between men and women. Furthermore, in some aspects we show regional differences to inform programme management. The following hypothesis are analysed as follows:

#### **Hypothesis A: KPI trends and impact**

We hypothesize that young people participating in EYW activities should be better off at the midline as measured by project KPIs than their peers in the comparison group, relative to the baseline. To test these hypotheses we have calculated the KPIs at midline, and compare them with baseline scores to determine the trend over time. Additionally, we investigate any early *impact* of the EYW activities on these KPIs by comparing the KPI trend for the target group with that of the comparison group. With statistical controls for other factors that may influence the trend, for example the educational attainment, marital status and age of respondents, this analysis shows if trends in the data may be attributable to the EYW programme or if other factors may have influenced change. For more information about the measurement, please check [this document](#).

## Hypothesis B: from training to skills, and from skills to employment

We hypothesize that EYW programme participants will have gained and expanded their soft, technical and entrepreneurial skills through trainings and other EYW activities. Further, we hypothesize that youth with more and higher levels of skills should be more likely to be employed.

## Hypothesis C: the contribution of an enabling environment

We hypothesize that an improving enabling environment conducive to youth empowerment and economic participation (for example, evolving social norms and reductions in GBV and sexual and reproductive health barriers, etc.) should be associated with both greater agency and socio-economic empowerment among youth people and a greater likelihood of being employed. However, since the link of the enabling environment (mostly measured at the community-level) to socio-economic empowerment (entirely measured at the individual level among youth themselves) is difficult to establish at midline, we explore this hypothesis primarily by digging deeper in some aspects of the enabling environment that are key in the implementation of the EYW programme.

This midline impact evaluation is purely quantitative. The full evaluation approach of EYW adopts a mixed methods approach. Hence, the authors advise the EYW team to look at the findings of this midline evaluation in relation to other findings of research in the EYW project in Ethiopia.

### 3.2.1 MIDLINE REFLECTION WORKSHOP

A workshop was held on March 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019 in Dhaka to reflect on preliminary results of the midline study. Total 17 participants (6 female and 11 male) participated in a collaborative session to interpret the midline results; 3 from Oxfam in Bangladesh, 6 from implementing partners and technical partner and 8 youth involved in the EYW programme. Reflections and suggestions from participants are incorporated throughout this report, and are clearly labelled where they appear.



Midline reflection workshop participants interpreting survey results. Photo: Gwendolyn Parami, Dhaka 2019.

# 4 MIDLINE RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of the research, in accordance to the three hypothesis mentioned above. For more information, on how to interpret the graphs, please check [this document](#).

## 4.1 RESULTS ON THE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Key performance indicators (KPIs) are at the heart of the EYW monitoring and evaluation approach. The impact measurement evaluation includes KPIs that relate to outcomes of youth and/ or community members. In the appendix you can find the full KPI table with all values, which is used as an input in the annual report. Below a shorter version of the KPI trends and impact is presented and described as prioritized in the midline reflection workshop by the Bangladesh EYW team (box 1 gives some details about reading the table).

*Box 1, reading the KPI tables*

In the trend columns, presented separately for young men and women in the target group, we show if there is a significant difference between the baseline and midline value for that KPI. The green, upward-pointing arrows (↑) indicate statistically significant positive trends while red, trend; downward-pointing arrows (↓) indicate statistically significant negative trends. An equal sign (→) indicates no significant trend and NA means a comparison between baseline and midline was not possible. In the impact columns, symbols can be read in a similar same way, where an upward-facing arrow indicates a significant positive impact of programme participation on that KPI, and a downward-facing arrow indicates a significant negative impact. A blank cell indicates the absence of any significant impact.

### 4.1.1 KPI RESULTS AT THE IMPACT LEVEL

Impact in EYW is defined as **an increase in economic and social empowerment** reported by young women and men in targeted areas. For the sake of measurement, we split economic and social empowerment. KPI table below shows a positive trend for male and female on economic and social empowerment that is also attributable to the EYW activities for young women. The average household income only shows a positive trend for male.

KPI		Trend KPI Male	Trend KPI Female	Overall Impact	Male impact	Female impact	Rashahi impact	Rangpur impact	Khulna impact	Barisal impact
Impact 0	Average level of <b>economic and social empowerment</b> reported by young women and men in targeted areas	↑	↑			↑				
	Average level of <b>economic empowerment</b> reported by	→	↑			↑				
	Average level of <b>social empowerment</b> reported by young women and men in targeted areas	→	↑			↑				↑
	Average household income in targeted areas	↑	↑							

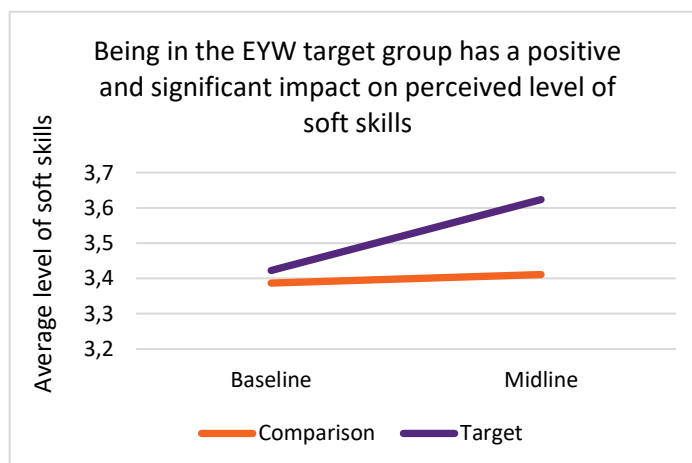
The impact for female youth is promising, as the project focuses on female youth according to a 70/30 ratio. The positive trend overall is nice, but the participants at the midline reflection workshop discussed how to translate this into impact. Especially their efforts on increasing income and economic activities may need attention to ensure efforts translate in economic empowerment. The project team emphasizes the importance of improving market linkages for youth in the upcoming years.

#### 4.1.2 KPI RESULTS ON AGENCY AND SKILLS REPORTED BY YOUTH

Agency and skills measurements are split in two KPIs, one about agency and soft skills and one about technical skills. The results show a positive trend on all aspects; youth show improved agency, soft skills, and technical skills.

KPI		Trend KPI Male	Trend KPI Female	Overall Impact	Male impact	Female impact	Rashahi impact	Rangpur impact	Khulna impact	Barisal impact
LT OM 1	Use of agency and soft skills reported by participants (first row are results on agency, second row are results on soft skills)	↑	↑							
		↑	↑	↑		↑		↑		↑
	Use of market-led technical skills gained reported by participants (first row is respondents who reported no technical skills, second row are respondents reporting 1 technical skill, third row are respondents reporting more than 1 technical skill)	↓	↓						↑	↓
		↑	→						↓	
		↑	↑							

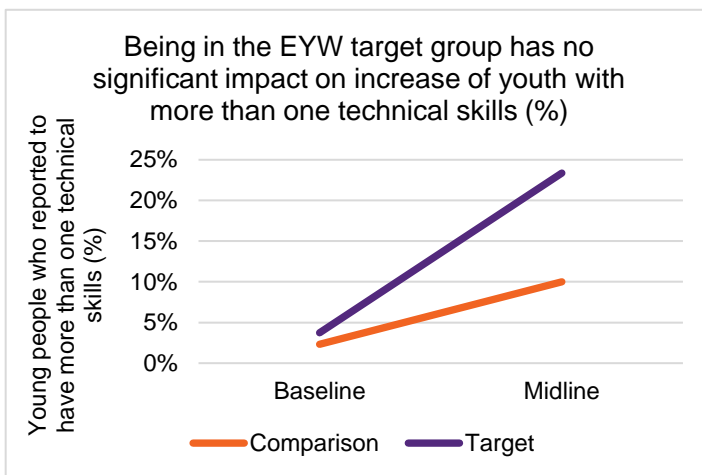
Overall impact is only found for soft skills, which means that increased soft skills can be attributed to EYW activities, as can be seen in the graph to the right. When disaggregating these results we see that the impact retains for young women and the regions of Rangpur and Barisal. If we look at the perceived usefulness of skills, we see that on average respondent feel the soft skills of the training are useful in their daily lives and they feel soft skills help them find a new job. As soft skills training is the key element of EYW activities in Bangladesh, the team had expected more results in this area; a



steeper upwards trend as well as impact across all regions. Hence they want to evaluate the soft skills training module to see how to increase the impact of the training on youths perceived skills. Furthermore, they want to specify the training for participants with different knowledge levels and different age groups to link the training better to the participants stage in life (e.g. married versus unmarried girls).

For technical skills we see a negative trend for youth reporting to have no technical skills and a positive trend for youth reporting to have one or more technical skills. Furthermore, the results showed that on average respondents feel the technical skills of the training are useful in their daily lives and they feel

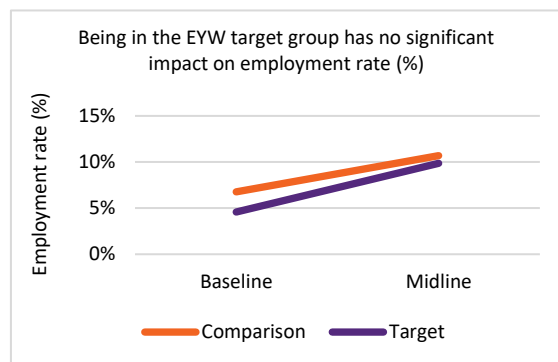
technical skills help them find a new job. The positive trend is not translated into overall impact. The graph on the right shows that the comparison group reported a clear increase in reporting to have one technical skill. If we look at the graph about the increase of youth with more than one technical skill we see a clear rise for the target group compared to the comparison group. However, it is not a significant impact. This could be



due to the small sample at the baseline of youth reporting more than one technical skill. The positive trend for having gained multiple technical skills can be explained by the fact that many participants are following multiple trainings. However, the EYW team hope to see this translated into impact given more time. They think that the short duration of the trainings may be one of the factors that make youth not fully comfortable about stating full proficiency in the trained technical skills. Hence, during the midline reflection workshop the EYW team discussed to lengthen the training and collaborate more with institutions to do so. Furthermore, the EYW team sees the need to make their training more accessible to women, especially addressing the family barriers that prevent young women to participate in technical training, to prevent that impact lags behind for young women.

#### 4.1.3 KPI RESULTS ON YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN BENEFITTING FROM EMPLOYMENT OR ENTREPRENEURSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

We see a positive trend for young women and men benefitting from new or improved employment or entrepreneurship opportunities which is translated in impact for women and in the region of Barisal, but not in overall impact. This is based on youth having found new employment. The graph to the right shows how youth in target and comparison group benefitted from new jobs, but the change is similar in both groups. This shows positively that the climate for youth employment in Bangladesh is improving. In the midline reflection workshop participants discussed the fact that increased skills do not result in increased employment yet. This may be due to lack of market linkages after the skills training. As young people do



not want to leave their areas or are not allowed by their family to search for employment outside of the community, the EYW team wants to invest more in local job opportunities. However, they find it challenging to link local opportunities to the ambitions of youth. While youth prefer home based jobs, the availability is more in small factories in the informal sector. The EYW team wants to explore further youth demands and employers needs to find opportunities in line with youth' interest at the labour market.

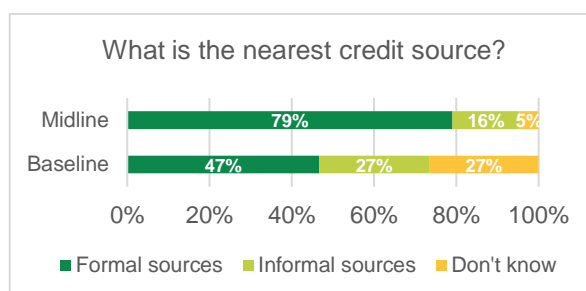


KPI			Trend KPI Male	Trend KPI Female	Overall Impact	Male impact	Female impact	Rashahi impact	Rangpur impact	Khulna impact	Barisal impact
LT OM	2	Young women and men benefit from new or improved employment or entrepreneurship opportunities	↑	↑			↑				↑
		Average income of youth participating in the programme	⇒	⇒							
ST OM	2,2	% of young women and men who succeed in getting initial credit to start up a business	↓	⇒							
		% of female and male business owners	⇒	↑							
ST OM	2,4	# of young women and men accessing information on job opportunities	↑	↑		↑					
		# female and male youth benefiting from apprenticeship or internship with private sector	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	

Improved employment was only measured at the midline with a series of question on decent work, that evolve from perceived eligibility to decent work standards to policy on decent work implemented by employers. The results show that 18 men and 13 women filled in the questions related to decent work and they scored on average 4.2 points on a scale to 10. Here, there is ample room for improvement through the EYW programme which is already included in the influencing plans of the EYW programme in Bangladesh.

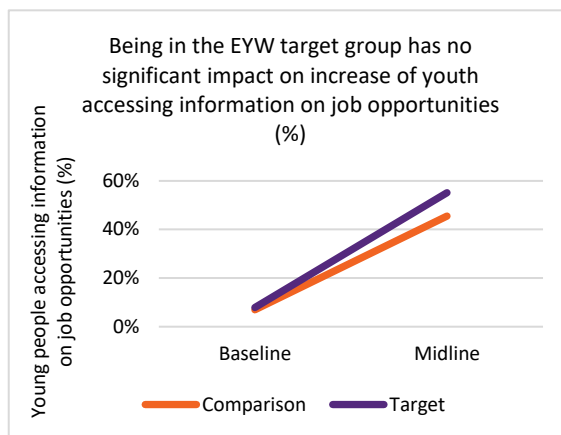
We do not see a clear trend in the average income of youth, also since due to inflation monetary data is difficult to interpret. However, we do see that more youth report an income at midline compared to the baseline. Respectively, 46 men and 58 women reported income at midline compared to 34 men and 29 women at baseline. This is an increase of 63%. Despite this positive increase, the EYW team is concerned that youth do not manage to rise their income to a sustainable level.

When looking at the short term outcome indicators we see a negative trend for men succeeding in getting initial credit and a positive trend for female business owners attracting investments and BDS support. However, the sample of youth that answered these questions is very small, hence the results are difficult to interpret. If we look into more detail at the target group (see graph to the right), we see that the knowledge of formal sources increased from baseline to midline. Also less youth did not know their nearest credit source, which indicates that youth are becoming more knowledgeable on how to access credit. The EYW team recognizes

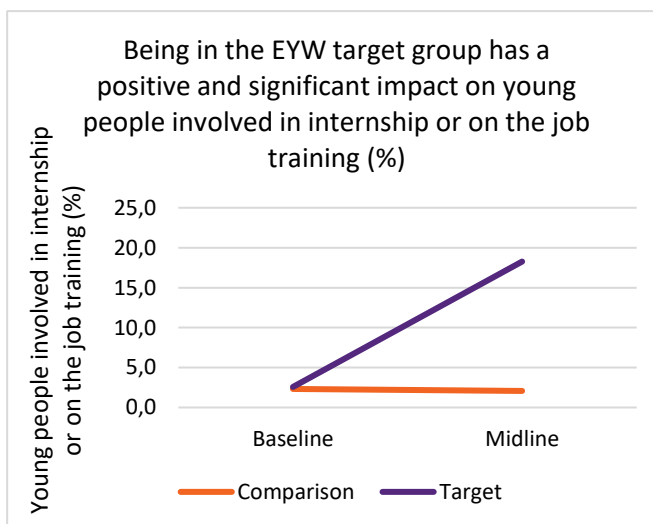


the fact that only few youth succeed in opening a business and getting credit. However, just before the midline a batch of young entrepreneurs started their businesses. This is also visible in the increase of female business owners. In the coming years they want to influence financial institutions in the regions to support the young entrepreneurs. Especially for young women it may be crucial to focus on home-based businesses.

There is a positive trend for young women and men accessing job opportunities, which can for men be attributed to the EYW activities as there is a positive impact. The graph to the right shows that both the target and comparison group increased their access to job opportunities. This is in line with the notion above that the labour market seems in general to become more susceptible for Bangladeshi youth. The EYW team may use this opportunity to increase their impact in the target areas. The participants in the reflection workshop explained that they could widen the reach of their weekly news about local job opportunities through social media.



A positive trend and impact for men and women is found for youth accessing internships in the private sector. If we look at the trend, we see that men in the target group made the biggest change (from 4% to 31% internship enrolment) compared to women (from 2% to 10% internship enrolment). The EYW team expressed at the midline reflection workshop that it is more challenging in the context of Bangladesh to place young women in an employment setting outside their homes. This will further be discussed when reflecting on the enabling environment. The graph to the right shows that, whilst the comparison group did not have access to internships, EYW youth does increasingly.



#### 4.1.4 KPI RESULTS ON AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUTH SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

As EYW acknowledges that the social/cultural environment has a major impact on the opportunities for especially young women to socially and economically develop. The project finds the enabling environment a crucial element. This is why we deepen our understanding of social restriction and social norms that may constrain youth socio-economic empowerment. Certain measurements in this part were changed at midline to ensure alignment with the EYW programme. Therefore, there are no results for some KPIs (shown in the table as NA).

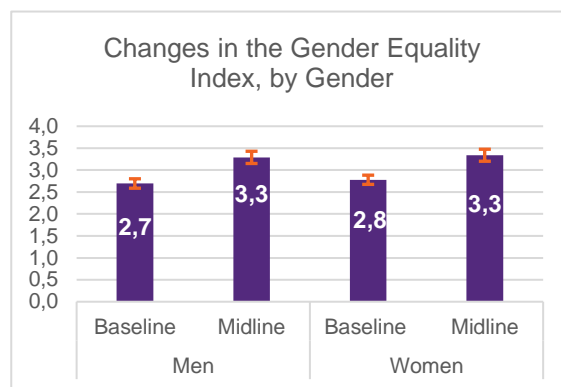
The results show a clear link between EYW activities and the enabling environment. Especially the average level of social restrictions to employment, as perceived by young women and men shows that EYW activities contribute to less social restrictions, especially for women. This is an important success, as the baseline values showed that social restrictions are much harsher on women than on men, as often in patriarchal societies. Also in Rangpur, Khulna and Barisal we see that social restriction towards youth employment are declining.

KPI			Trend KPI Male	Trend KPI Female	Overall Impact	Male impact	Female impact	Rashahi impact	Rangpur impact	Khulna impact	Barisal impact
LT OM	3	Average level of social restrictions to employment or entrepreneurship, as perceived by young women and men	↑	↓	↓		↓		↓	↓	↓
		Average score of key community stakeholders (parents, community leaders) on an index for social norms with regards to <b>female</b> youth economic empowerment (row 1) and <b>male</b> youth economic empowerment (row 2)	↑	↑							
			↑	↑							
ST OM	3,1	% of young women in the programme who feel their daily lives are limited by the threat of gender-based violence	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
		% of young women and men with improved skills to act as change agent to eliminate gender-based violence	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
ST OM	3,2	Average score of young men and women on index of gender equality in their home	↑	↑							
ST OM	3,3	# of young women and men with improved knowledge about SRH	→	↓	↑	↑			↑		
		# of young women and men with sufficient access to SRH services	→	→						↑	↑

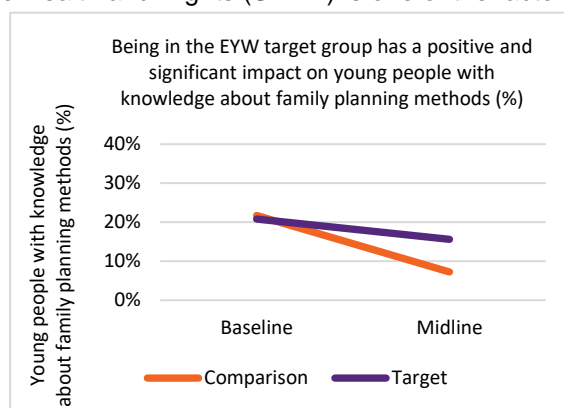
Social norms are shared expectation or informal rules that may enable youth to become socio-economic empowered. Here we see for women and men a positive trend for social norms related to youth employment for both men and women. However, if you look at the scores, we see that women are still more limited by social norms than men. As these results are difficult to interpret, we will further investigate the understanding of how social norms relate to socio-economic opportunities for youth in chapter 4.3.3.

The measurement on experience of gender based violence has been changed at midline, to better relate to the programmes context. The midline measurement shows that only 3% of young women feel threatened by gender based violence and 48% state they have improved skills to act as a change-agent to eliminate gender based violence. Especially the low perceived threat is remarkable, as 85% of the respondents has heard about gender based violence, of which domestic violence (26%), child marriage (23%), harassment in the public sphere (19%), and economic violence (17%) are most common. If we ask further about the action taken against gender based violence, we see that 28% has spoken about it / or took action with peers, 17% has spoken about it / or took action with family members, 12% to community members, and 3% towards duty bearers.

When we look at gender equality<sup>1</sup> in the home, based upon community findings, we see a positive trend for male and female, but no impact of the programme yet. Interestingly, the graph to the right shows that men and women have similar views about gender equality in their homes. At the midline we also asked youth about how they see score gender equality in their homes. Interestingly, youth think their households are more gender equal than that of their parents / older community members. In chapter 4.3.3 we will deepen this findings with elaborating on social norms related to the division of paid- and unpaid care work.



Knowledge about- and access to Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) is one of the factors in the environment that enable women to develop economic activities. The results show a positive overall impact, but if we look at the graph to the right we see that this actually means that the knowledge has decreased, but in the target group at a slower pace. The EYW team reflected on the knowledge of SRHR in the midline reflection workshop. They find it difficult to interpret the overall knowledge decline, as there is ample attention to the issue of family planning methods by local government actors. One explanation could be that people score their knowledge lower as their awareness of the issue increases. The EYW team stressed that they keep this issue on the agenda of soft skills training and other youth activities. The access to SRHR services is only positively impacted in Khulna and Barisal.



## 4.2 HOW SKILLS HELP TO CREATE EMPLOYMENT

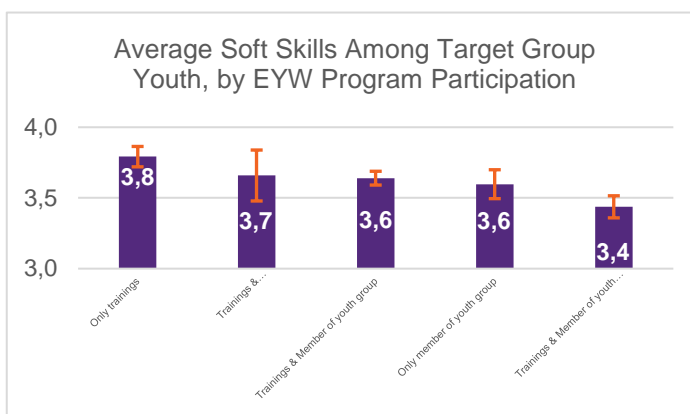
We hypothesize that 1.) programme participants will have increased agency, technical, soft, and entrepreneurial skills (through youth attending training from the EYW project) and 2.) will then be more likely to gain decent jobs and/or sustainable (self-) employment. Below we will show what we found in relation to soft skills, technical skills and entrepreneurial skills.

<sup>1</sup> The index on gender equality is calculated based on positive answers towards gender equality in relation to the following questions:

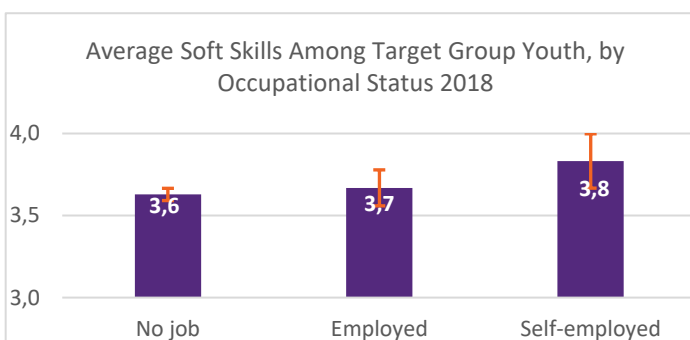
- It is much better for everyone concerned if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family
- There is some work that is men's and some that is women's, and they should not be doing each other's
- In our culture, a woman's place is in the home, not in the office or shop
- A wife who carries out her full family responsibilities doesn't have time for outside employment
- A wife should not expect her husband to help around the house after he comes home from a hard day's work
- If a wife works full-time outside their home, the husband should help with homework
- Men should share the work around the house with women, such as doing dishes, cleaning, and so forth

### 4.2.1 SOFT SKILLS

In the graph below we explored the association between the level of soft skills with type of exposure to the EYW programme. We see that trainings seem to have most impact on soft skills. Other aspects of the programme do not necessarily lead to higher scores on soft skills. These patterns are similar for men and women. This finding makes sense, as most trainings attended so far in the EYW programme are soft skills trainings.

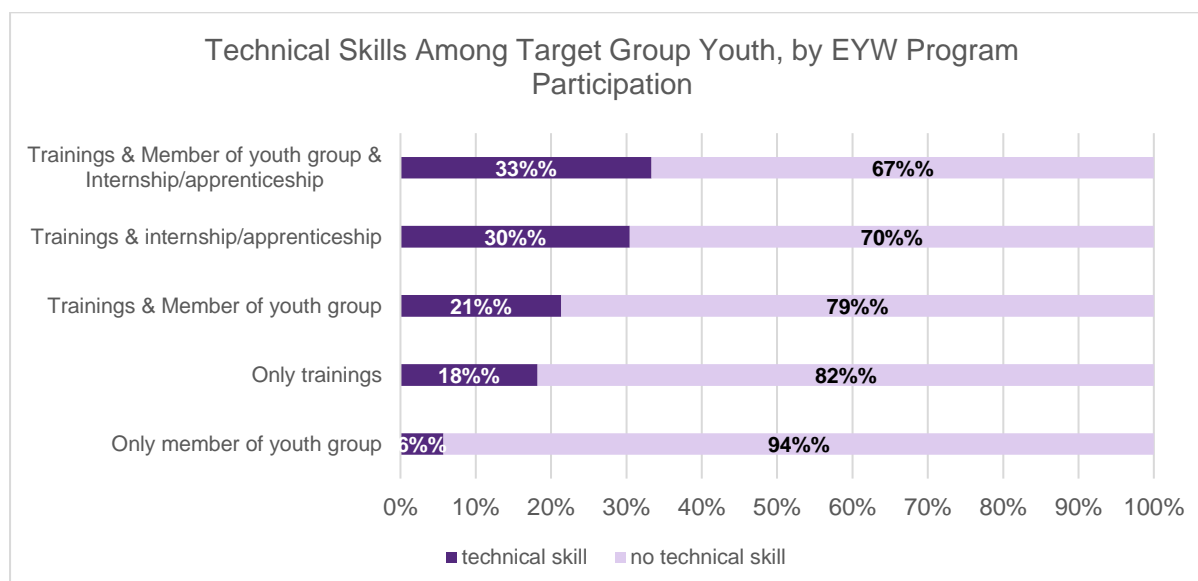


Similarly, we see that female and male youth who are self-employed report higher levels of soft skills than youth who are unemployed. So apparently, the application of soft skills as an entrepreneur helps youth to embed the skill by putting it into practice. This is an important finding for the EYW team in Bangladesh. In the midline reflection workshop they discussed to use this finding in their influencing activities towards the government pushing for including soft skills training in the general curriculum.

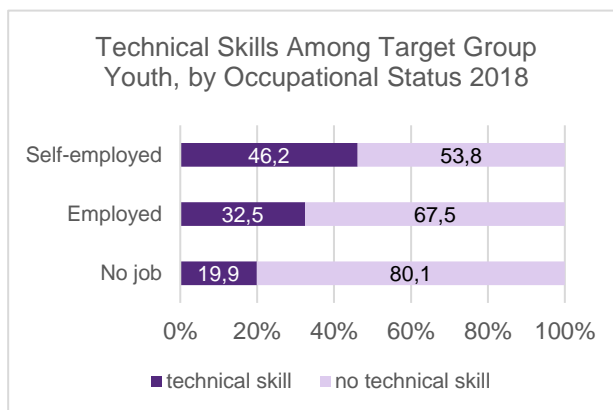


### 4.2.2 TECHNICAL SKILLS

Likewise, we looked at the relation of technical skills and exposure to the EYW programme. In the graph below, we see that technical skills are mainly built through combinations of internships with youth group memberships or training. We do not know if respondents here refer to technical training, probably a big part also refers to soft skills training as that is the most common training.



Furthermore, we see that youth who are self-employed report most technical skills, followed by employed youth. Among unemployed youth only 20% of the respondents indicate having a technical skill(s). This reinforces the EYW team to focus on building the technical skills of the unemployed youth to increase their chances at the labour market. In the reflection workshop, the EYW team discussed that following the results above, increasing the enrolment in technical skills training and internships could be a good way to support unemployed youth towards employment.



### 4.2.3 ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS

Entrepreneurial skills questions were only asked to youth that are self-employed or would like to become self-employed. Hence, looking at different aspects of exposure does not make much sense. However if we look at the employment status in relation to entrepreneurial skills we see that people who are self-employed, show higher levels of entrepreneurial skills compared to unemployed youth. If you look at the value of entrepreneurial skills also self-employed only score 2.3 out of 4. The EYW team discussed at the midline reflection workshop that there is still a lot to work on in this aspect. This is in line with the emphasize on entrepreneurship the coming years with more youth start-ups that will be supported through EYW. Furthermore, the EYW team would like to involve business incubators to give intensive support to youth who already have a business but need more expertise in entrepreneurship. This would help young entrepreneurs to access the market and financial opportunities. Although the data does not show a clear gender difference, the EYW team thinks female entrepreneurship needs extra attention.



## 4.3 THE INFLUENCE OF AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT ON EMPLOYMENT

We hypothesize that 1.) programme participants will have reduced external barriers (social norms, level of GBV, sexual and reproductive health barriers) to youth economic participation and 2.) will then be more likely to gain decent jobs and/or sustainable (self-) employment.

To test hypotheses in this group we analysed data from the youth survey target group and also from the community surveys, where many questions about barriers to youth economic participation were included.

### 4.3.1 YOUNG WOMEN AND MEN WITH SUFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE AND ACCESS TO SRHR AND GBV SERVICES

In the KPI chapter, we did not see a positive trend in results for the target group from baseline to midline regarding sufficient access to SRHR services. If we look in more detail into these results we see that this is due to positive trends in the union councils of Baliadanga and Koloskathi and negative trends in Jewpara and Gongarampur.

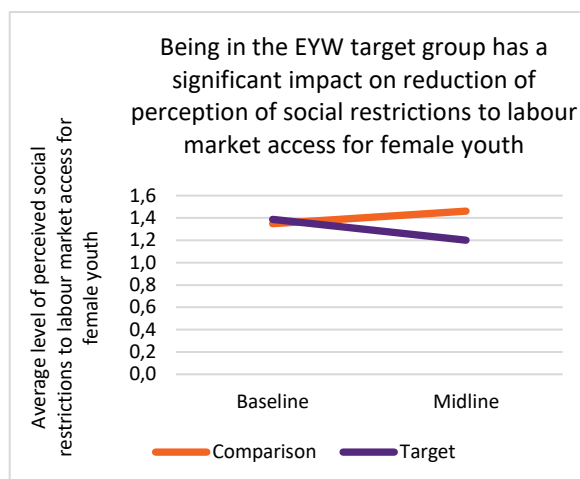
We do not see an association between improved or decreased access to SRHR and occupational outcomes. Although the relation of SRHR factors and employment opportunities remains unclear, the topic is still an important aspect for the EYW project to work on through mobilizing youth to advocate for their rights in this area.

As described above, the midline measurement shows that 3% of young women feel threatened by gender based violence. With this small number of responses we did not find an association between women's employment outcomes, women's socio-economic empowerment, women's agency and their perceived threat of gender based violence. In the midline reflection the EYW team stated that they do not believe these findings reflect the reality in Bangladesh. Also, from other sources they know that the threat of gender based violence is much higher than respondents report. This may be due to shame or stigma, as much more women report to know what gender based violence is.

In line with EYW's aim to support female youth according to a 70/30 ratio compared to their male counterpart, the results on SRHR and the threat of gender based violence for young women are taken very seriously. The EYW programme wants to continue their work on gender based violence and aims to integrate this aspect in influencing of employers of small enterprises and industries on decent work, as a major barrier for women to employment is harassment in the public sphere or at work.

### 4.3.2 SOCIAL RESTRICTIONS FOR YOUNG WOMEN AND MEN

In the KPI section we already saw that social restrictions for female youth is going down with the exposure to EYW activities. The graph to the right shows in more detail that as social restrictions for EYW young women go down, they go slightly up for the comparison female youth. Furthermore, we see significant positive associations between less perceived social restriction for women and their employment status and employment transitions in the EYW programme. This means that women who feel they face less restrictions are capable of finding a job. This was a very promising finding for the EYW team, as discussed in the midline reflection workshop. In the coming years they want to expand their focus on women to also involving men. In this way they want to emphasize gender equity, focussing on more equal sharing of unpaid care work amongst men and women. This is a focus for programme activities as well as for influencing.



### 4.3.3 SOCIAL NORMS ABOUT YOUNG WOMEN AND MEN

EYW acknowledges social norms in the community as a possible enabling factor for youth employment. A social norm is a shared expectation or informal rule to which individuals prefer to conform if they believe two things: that most people in their reference group conform to it (empirical expectation), and that most people in their reference group approve to conform to is (normative expectation)<sup>2</sup>. Social norms are kept in place by sanctions – counterfactual actions that follow confirmation or breaking a social norm. Social norms interact with personal attitudes to influence personal behaviour.

The EYW programme focuses on the measurement of two social norms; one around youth economic empowerment and one around division of paid and unpaid work in couples. In both norms we measure the personal attitudes and the two aspects of social norms: if people in a group approve of the norm (normative expectation) and if people in the group find it typical behaviour in their community (empirical expectation). Furthermore, we explored the sanctions that community members would inflict when breaking a social norm.

#### Social norms around youth employment

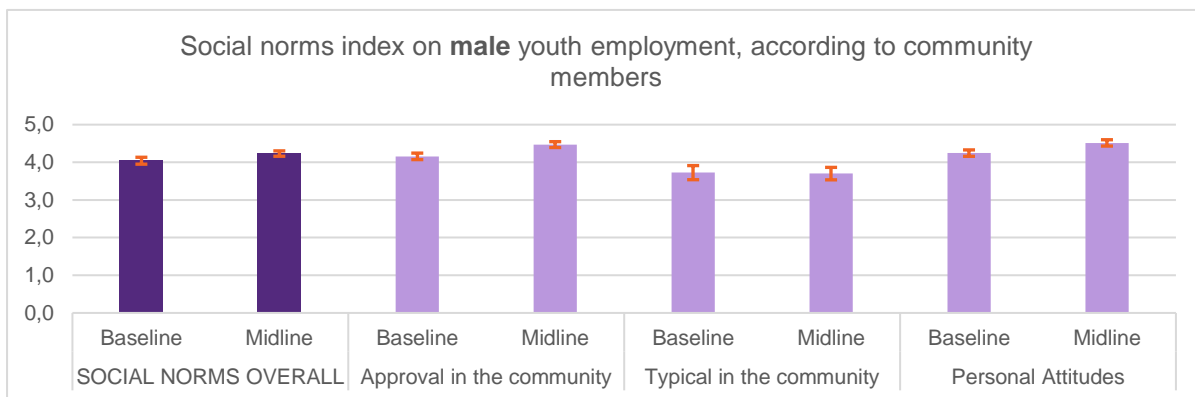
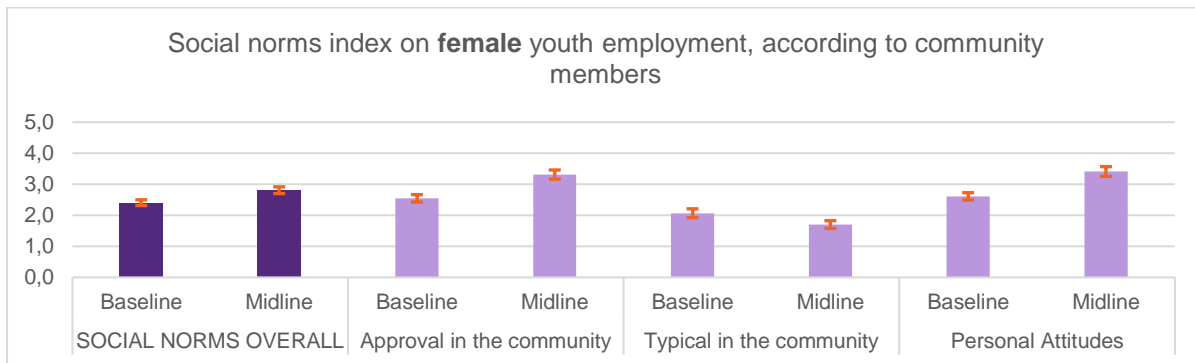
The EYW programme aims to empower youth to become involved in economic activities. But for this to be successful it is essential that society accepts youth employment as something beneficial to the personal development and of value in their community. Therefore we asked about social norms around youth employment for young men and women.

If we compare the results from the community survey, we see that for young male employment is more acceptable than for young women as in general the scores for male youth employment are higher than for female youth employment. As the scores for male youth employment were already high at baseline, we do not see a huge change, but it is still a change, in the social norms around male youth employment, according to community members. Only we see that there is no change in the typical behaviour, so community members think there is no change in how common it is for young men to work. For female youth employment we do see a significant change that is clearly bigger than for young men on the social norm, at all aspects, which shows that female youth employment is becoming more acceptable in communities of EYW. This change is driven by the fact that community members at midline have a more positive attitude towards young female to work and also think others in their community are more approving this behaviour.

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<sup>2</sup> Researchers use the term 'reference group' or 'reference persons' to refer to the people whose opinions matter (Alexander-Scott, Bell and Holden 2016: 8). A person's reference group can consist of individuals in their own lives and public figures.





As social norms are often also formed by peers, especially among youth, we also looked from the perspective of youth at the same questions. This question was only asked at midline and the attitudes questions were only asked to same gender. The results show that young people report more positive social norms towards male youth employment than towards female youth employment, similar to the results from the community survey. Also similar to the community-level results, personal attitudes towards female youth employment have increased slightly between the baseline and midline, whereas personal attitudes towards male youth employment declined slightly. Still, the personal attitudes of young people towards male youth employment remain more positive than their personal attitudes towards female youth employment.

We also asked youth and community respondents what consequences they would expect if they diverge from established social norms, specifically if they would consent to a daughter or a son opening a business or taking a wage-earning job outside the home (or, in the case of youth, what consequences might follow another young person doing either of these things). Examples of sanctions given included gossip (about the actions of the individual's action, about their character or about the capability of parents to control their children), consequences for marriage opportunities (both positive and negative) and whether respondents feel it can be justified to harass women "of bad character". Results from the youth and community surveys showed that respondents overwhelmingly felt that the most notable results of young men starting a business or earning a wage working for someone else would be positive consequences for their marriage opportunities, though "gossip about individual actions" was frequently mentioned as well. For young women however, respondents in the youth and community surveys reported much more negative results from starting a business or taking a job. Respondents said that women who do so risk many types of gossip about themselves and their families, harassment and mostly mainly negative consequences for their marriage opportunities.

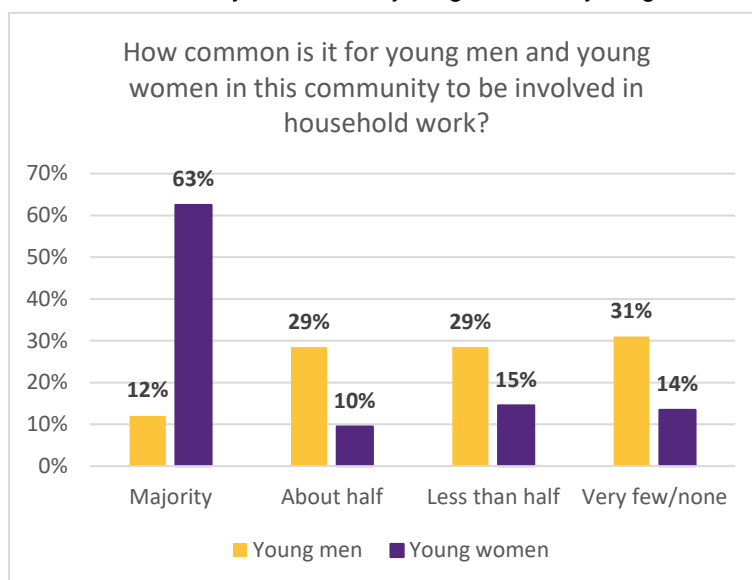
The results show that social norms around youth employment may be slowly changing to become more supportive of youth entrepreneurship and employment but significant challenges remain, especially towards the economic participation of young women.

### Social norms around division of care work

The burden of unpaid care work is important to consider when working on employment, specifically for women. For men and women to both develop economic activities, a shared burden of unpaid care work is important. Therefore, we dive into the social norms around division of paid- and unpaid care work.

First, we asked community respondents how common they feel it is for young men and young women to be involved in household work.

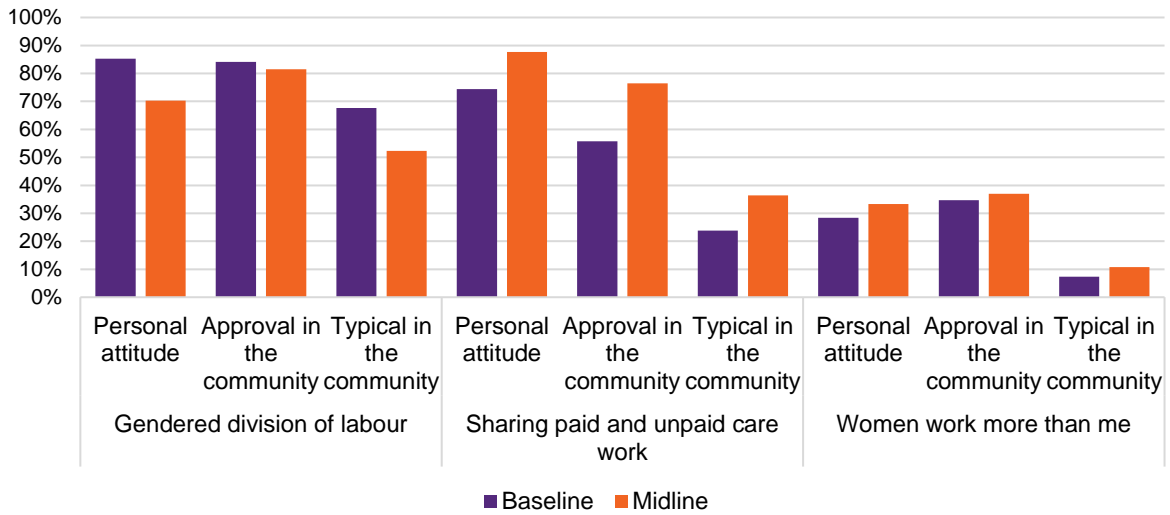
Nearly two out of three respondents (63%) feel that a majority of young women are involved in household work. However, few respondents feel that a majority of young men are involved in household work: in fact the most commonly chosen response regarding young men was 'very few/none.' These results suggest that community members feel that young women are more likely than young men to be involved in household work.



Then we presented both the community and youth respondents three stories that represented a certain division of paid- and unpaid care work. The first story described a traditional, gendered division of labour where men do more productive work and women do the unpaid care work. The second story described a situation where husband and wife equally share paid- and unpaid care work. The third story described a women that was exploited by her husband; she does all the work and he hangs out with friends. The respondents were asked to give their personal opinion about the stories and what they think others in their community would approve of (normative expectation). Last, they were asked to decide which story is most typical for their community.

The results from baseline- to midline comparison show that at baseline respondents had a personal and collective approval for gendered division of labour or sharing paid and unpaid care work. At midline respondents are becoming more in favour of sharing paid and unpaid care work. This shift is also visible in perceived behaviour, respondents see a shift from gendered- to shared division of work although the first is still dominant. The respondents who personally approve and collectively approve the extractive division of labour stays similar over time. This result is in line with the aim of the EYW project that wants to support equal division of household labour. For the coming year the EYW team wants to further emphasize this shift to create real impact on this social norms towards making sharing of paid and unpaid care work the norm in Bangladeshi communities. This is a focus for programme activities as well as for influencing.

Division of paid- and unpaid work, baseline vs midline



# 5. CONCLUSION AND PROGRAMME RESPONSE

With this research we aimed to show the initial impact of the EYW programme in Bangladesh from the start of implementation to the midpoint of the programme. A positive trend is already visible at the highest level of the theory of change – on socio-economic empowerment. For female youth this change can already be attributed to EYW activities, which is promising as the project has the ambition to focus on female youth according to a 70/30 ratio. The positive trend overall is nice, but the participants at the midline reflection workshop discussed how to translate this into an overall impact.

Most clear results are visible with respect to the impact of soft- skills training. Furthermore, on-the-job learning through internships is something new that EYW is introducing in the communities where they work. Youth indicate to find the skills they learn useful in their daily lives and for exploring job opportunities. This strengthens the Bangladeshi EYW team in their approach to training of youth. They are planning to broaden and review their soft skills training to make it even more effective in terms of delivery, timing and content. The EYW Bangladesh team will explore if new topics should be included, such as family planning and drug addiction. Also they want to ensure more effective delivery of content through adding more group works and games, etc. The team wants to make sure that after the soft skill training the youth will continue to practice their skills in youth groups, for instance by putting the soft skill topics on the agenda of youth group meetings. Furthermore, the EYW team will put effort to influence trainings that are provided by the government departments at union or upazila level to include soft/life skills discussion, especially in relation to entrepreneurship courses as the link between level of soft skills and self-employment became clear. This collaboration may support the EYW project in Bangladesh to scale up the work to realize attributable change at impact level.

Increasing income and economic activities may need attention to ensure efforts translate in economic empowerment. Although soft skills and technical skills are increasing, this does not translate yet in impact on employment opportunities and accessing credit for youth start-ups. Youth are lagging behind in bringing their income to a sustainable level. Furthermore, female youth indicate to be interested in self-employment but at the same time they face difficulties to attend entrepreneurial trainings outside their village. Therefore, the EYW team is looking at opportunities to bring the training closer to the young women's homes. The project team emphasizes the importance of improving market linkages for youth in the upcoming years, especially to ensure the sustainability of youth start-ups. They are currently rolling out business development support and are keen to see the first results in the next measurement.

The results also show a positive trend regarding employment. Although, this positive trend cannot be directly attributed to the EYW activities this is an important sign for the team that they are moving in the right direction. It seems that enrolment in internships is an important aspect of the EYW programme to ensure newly learned skills are put into practice. The EYW team wants to strengthen the links between the mentorship programme and job placements. To further increase job placements, EYW Bangladesh

will bridge the gap between the provided skills training and market demand. For instance, by bringing both employers and youths who are dropping out of job placements together to discuss the causes and solutions. Stimulating local mentorship is also an ongoing topic in the influencing agenda linked to influencing on decent work.

The results show that women are lagging behind because of social restriction and social norms that are still more negative towards female employment than male employment. Although the correlation between socio-economic empowerment and factors in the environment is difficult to prove, there are enough indications for the EYW team to continue their work in this area. Hence, they want to engage more adults and young men around discussing social restrictions and social norms around female employment and entrepreneurship, improving the intersectionality of their community meetings. As such, there is a need for guidelines or structured toolkit for the facilitation of family level discussions for different groups on social norms topics, such as social restrictions on labour market access and GBV. The EYW team will review its influencing plan and mass awareness raising activities by looking at them from the perspective of increasing EYW engagement with young and adult men of the communities.

Similarly, the results showed that there is room to improve knowledge of- and access to SRHR services. Information about SRHR needs to be shared in more concentrated way. Linkages to incorporate community clinics and UPZ health care centres to disseminate SRHR information could be explored. There is also a need to influence the community stakeholders and health service providers to improve the access to SRHR services.

The participants of the midline reflection workshop stated to have learned a lot from interpreting the results. There were some interesting discussions around regional differences in implementation, that may not be visible in the report so much. Especially in Barisal, special support is needed for the hard to reach extreme poor. EYW Bangladesh will explore how to best support the extreme marginalized groups in this region.

## 5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAMME IMPROVEMENT

Below we summarize the recommendations for improvements to the programme. These recommendations come from results of the reflection workshop on the midline results held in Bangladesh in March 2019.

- **Soft skills training:** The EYW Bangladesh team will review the soft skill module as planned to achieve a higher impact and it wants to influence governmental training institutes the technical partner a2i works with, to include soft skills training in their general curriculum.
- **Entrepreneurial training:** The EYW team is exploring how entrepreneurial trainings can be brought closer to the female youths to increase their access. This will have cost implications that will need a management decision.
- **Self-employment:** EYW Bangladesh will roll out and strengthen the business development support to improve self-employment activities, as this is a major area of economic engagement for youths.

- **Linkage to financial institutions:** For the entrepreneurship training, the project aims to improve the linkages to financial institutions and market access.
- **Job placement:** To increase job placements, EYW Bangladesh will increase focus on bridging the gap between EYW the programme provided skills training and market demand. Furthermore, local mentorship is an ongoing topic on the influencing agenda towards SMEs and the larger (informal) labour market and related to the influencing agenda on decent work.
- **Income:** There is a need to focus on supporting youth in increasing their income as the findings reveal the current level of income is not yet at the sustainable level.
- **Social norms:** The EYW team will adopt existing guidelines or structured toolkits (and train facilitators in accordance) for the facilitation of family level discussions for different groups on social restrictions and social norms related to labour market access, equality in the household and GBV. They will also review the existing influencing plan and mass awareness raising activities by looking at them from the perspective of increasing EYW engagement with young and adult men of the communities.
- **SRHR:** To improve knowledge of- and access to SRHR services, linkages to incorporate community clinics and UPZ health care centres will be explored. The EYW team will also influence the community stakeholders and health service providers to improve access to SRHR services.

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