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Investigating the impact of a skills development programme on livelihoods and resilience of youth with disabilities in Bangladesh

Submission date
28/03/2022

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
20/06/2022

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
22/07/2025

Condition category
Other

[_] Prospectively registered
[X] Protocol
[_] Statistical analysis plan
[_] Results
[_] Individual participant data
[_] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
There is little evidence on the impact of livelihood interventions amongst people with disabilities. Effective programmes are critical for reducing the heightened risk of poverty and unemployment facing persons with disabilities. STAR+ is a skills development and job placement programme targeted to out-of-school youth with disabilities living in poverty. It is a disability-targeted adaptation to an existing, effective intervention (STAR), which has been designed to address barriers to decent work for people with disabilities.

Who can participate?
Youths (aged 14 - 35 years) with disabilities, who are not in school or work.

What does the study involve?
This study will involve a cluster randomised control trial of the STAR+ programme, which is being delivered across 39 of the 64 districts of Bangladesh.
The project implementer, BRAC, has identified 1,500 youths with disabilities eligible for STAR+ across its 91 branch office (typically a geographical areas covering about 6-7 km radius from local BRAC office) catchment areas (clusters). BRAC has limited funding to deliver STAR+ and so 46 of the 91 branches have been randomly allocated to implement STAR+ (intervention arm). The remaining 45 branches will not deliver STAR+ at this time (control arm). Participants in the control-arm will receive usual care, meaning they are free to enrol in any other livelihood programmes run by BRAC or other organisations including standard STAR.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
There are no specific benefits/risks of participating. Participating in the study will involve answering survey/in-depth interview questions and will take about an hour of the participants' time. The questions asked are not of a highly sensitive nature (e.g. employment, wages, well-being). Nonetheless, during the consent process it will be made explicitly clear to participants that they are free to stop the interview at any time or refuse to answer any questions, if they are uncomfortable or for any other reason. We consider that there is almost no risk to participants of physical or biological and psychological hazards. Participants will not be paid for participating

in the trial (people selected for the intervention will be paid a stipend by the programme implementers as part of the intervention).

Where is the study run from?
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
July 2021 to March 2024

Who is funding the study?
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (UK)

Who is the main contact?
Lena Morgon Banks, morgon.banks@lshtm.ac.uk

Contact information

Type(s)
Principal investigator

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Additional identifiers

Study information

Scientific Title
Impact of a disability-targeted livelihoods programme in Bangladesh: a cluster randomised controlled trial

Study objectives
1. Participation in STAR+ will lead to increased employment and earnings amongst youth with disabilities.
2. Participation in STAR+ will lead to decreased household poverty and improved participation, quality of life amongst youth with disabilities.

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
1. Approved 10/01/2022, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (Keppel St, London, WC1E 7HT, UK; ethics@lshtm.ac.uk; +44 (0)20 7636 8636), ref: 26535
2. Approved 29/12/2021, BRAC University (28 Mohakhali Commerical Area, Bir Uttom A K Khandakar Road, Dhaka-1213, Bangladesh; +880 24881221318; no email provided), ref: IRB-7 November'21-034

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Interventional cluster randomised control trial

Study type(s)
Other

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Improving livelihood outcomes in people with disabilities

Interventions
The STAR+ programme was developed by BRAC and partners through consultations with key stakeholders (youth with disabilities, OPDs, government actors), a context analysis and needs assessment.

STAR+ will be delivered over 10 months. The core components of STAR+ include:

1. Sensitisation events with families, communities and employers: Community events will address stigma, discrimination and misconceptions about the ability of people with disabilities to work. These events will use behaviour change messaging that has been developed by BRAC through formative research.
2. Provision of assistive devices and rehabilitation support: Participants will undergo a medical assessment during enrolment, and those who are assessed as having unmet needs for assistive devices or rehabilitation support will be provided with them.
3. Accessible and inclusive technical and soft skills training: Over 6 months, participants will receive on-the-job training in their chosen trade five days a week, and classroom one day a week. Adaptations have been made to the training to ensure they are accessible and inclusive. Participants will receive a stipend from BRAC during their training.
4. Job matching: Near the end of the 6-month training, BRAC staff and partners will identify waged job placements for participants in their chosen trade. It is expected that these placements will primarily be with enrolees' current training workplaces, although other employers will be identified for individuals who are not retained. BRAC staff will monitor the transition to paid work for three months.

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the impact of STAR+ after 12 months on employment status and earnings (primary outcomes), as well as poverty, participation and quality of life (secondary outcomes).

Clusters were randomised for balance by district using R, with a seed set as the day's date. Randomisation was done by LSHTM.

Intervention Type
Other

Primary outcome(s)
Measured at baseline and endline (endline approximately 24 months from baseline):
1. Employment status: Engaging in any activity for pay or profit (including in kind) during the preceding month.
2. Earnings: Average hourly and total earnings in the preceding month. Market equivalent cash value will be used to estimate in-kind payment values.

Key secondary outcome(s)
Measured at baseline and endline (endline approximately 24 months from baseline):
1. Household poverty (monetary): Household consumption and income per capita is below national poverty line (based on annual definitions produced by the Bangladesh government)
2. Household poverty (multidimensional): Household defined as poor using an adapted version of the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (2020 revision)
3. Subjective well-being: Total score on an 8-item tool on self-reported well-being
4. Social attitudes: Total score on 9-item tool on social attitudes
5. Empowerment: Total score on 7-item tool on decision-making
6. Violence: Experienced violence (physical, verbal) or discrimination in the last 12 months

Completion date
01/03/2024

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Has a disability
2. Age 14-35 years
3. Dropped out of school for at least a year
4. Not currently in employment or training
5. Currently living in poverty (household income <BDT4000)

Participant type(s)
Other

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Mixed

Sex
All

Key exclusion criteria
Is working/in school at baseline

Date of first enrolment
14/01/2022

Date of final enrolment
05/03/2022

Locations

Countries of recruitment
Bangladesh

Study participating centre
BRAC Institute of Governance and Development
SK Center (3rd - 7th & 9th Floor), GP, JA-4, TB Gate
Bir Uttam AK Khandakar Road
Dhaka
Bangladesh
1212

Sponsor information

Organisation
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

ROR
https://ror.org/00a0jsq62

Funder(s)

Funder type
Government

Funder Name
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Alternative Name(s)
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, UK Government, FCDO

Funding Body Type
Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype
National government

Location
United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
Anonymised data will be available through LSHTM data compass. It will be available upon request for legitimate research purposes.
morgon.banks@lshtm.ac.uk

IPD sharing plan summary
Available on request

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Protocol article		17/12/2022	22/07/2025	Yes	No
Participant information sheet			09/06/2022	No	Yes
Participant information sheet	simplified PIS		09/06/2022	No	Yes