CAPITALISATION OF EXPERIENCE OF THE SHAMERTO - SUSTAINABLE SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT IN SMALL SCALE AGRO FOOD PROCESSING PROJECT

Picture 1: Bakery students learning to dough making

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The authors are grateful to the field level staff of Shamerto project for the efficient support during the preparation of the CAPEX and the interviews. We are also grateful to the interview partners for their efforts to collaborate with us for collecting information during the Covid-19 pandemic situation.

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Preface

In Bangladesh, there is still an unaddressed need for market-oriented and work-based skills development and training. 41% of Bangladesh's youth are neither in employment, education or training. According to the Labour Force Survey (2016-17) 28 % of youth who completed secondary level education are unemployed, while for tertiary level education this is lower (but still quite high) at 13.4 %. There appears to be a mismatch between young people's expectations and actual labour market demand. The lack of regular salaried jobs and the reluctance of graduates to taken on low paid informal jobs may be one reason for young people with higher education to face greater challenges in securing a job. In fact, 80 % of jobs are in the informal and unorganized sectors, which are low paid. At the same time, the current education system is not empowering the youth with the right skills-set to be employable in the job market. Recently the Government of Bangladesh announced that greater emphasis will be placed on vocational education. This is a welcome initiative and shows that there is increasing awareness among policy makers about the need to address this gap.

The experiences from Shamerto shows that the private sector must be consulted in the kind of occupational skills that are offered. It is important that the focus is on practical training, including training on the job, in the companies, to prepare trainees with the right skills to gain employment. Shamerto has therefore collaborated closely with companies, including capacity building of SMCEs, to simultaneously support them to increase their production and gain access to new markets. Thus Shamerto worked on both the supply side (the workforce) and the demand side (the private sector), which was key to its success.

Shamerto specifically focused on the agro-food processing industry. There appears to be opportunities for growth in this sector, which makes use of the vast agricultural sector of Bangladesh and adds value to agricultural products. Whereas the full potential of the agro-food processing industry has not been fully explored. The experiences and lessons learned from Shamerto will surely be able to contribute to further development of this sector.

I wish our partners, TESPs, and SMCEs, and all those involved in Shamerto all the best and success for the future.

Celestine Kroesschell
Country Director
HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Bangladesh

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List of Abbreviations

A2i	Access to Information (programme)
BAPA	Bangladesh Agro Processors' Association
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BDS	Business Development Service
BIO	Business Intermediary Organisation
BMET	Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training
BMO	Business Membership Organisation
BOESL	Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services
BTEB	Bangladesh Technical Education Board
CAPEX	Capitalisation of Experience
CBT	Competency Based Training
CPD	Centre for Policy Dialogue
EPZ	Export Promotion Zone
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
ISC	Industrial Skills Council
NTVQF	National Technical and Vocational Qualification Framework
NSDA	National Skills Development Authority
NSDC	National Skills Development Council
OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
PGA	Participatory Gender Analysis
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PPI	Progress Out of Poverty Index
RBF	Results Based Financing
RTO	Recognised Training Organisation
SMCE	Small Micro and Cottage Enterprise
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SWAPNO	Strengthening Women's Ability for Productive New Opportunities
TESP	Training and Employment Service Providers
ToT	Training of Trainers
UDC	Union Digital Centres
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
UP	Union Parishad

Executive Summary

Shamerto means “ability” in Bangla and in this sense the Shamerto project tries to improve capacities of women and men, but also of training providers and other actors in the agro-food processing sector in seven districts in North West (Kurigram, Gaibandha), North East (Jamalpur, Sherpur, Mymensingh) and South-West (Barisal, Shariatpur).

Shamerto is implemented by a consortium consisting of Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation (Helvetas), Traidcraft Exchange, Bangladesh Agro Processors’ Association (BAPA), Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) and 7 District Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) and is co-funded by the European Union (EU).

This Capitalisation of experience (CAPEX) is analysing the results and approaches of Shamerto and documenting key lessons learnt and good practices. The document is structured along the five main results:

- Skills Development
- Value Chain Development
- Inclusion
- Advocacy and decent work
- Institutionalisation

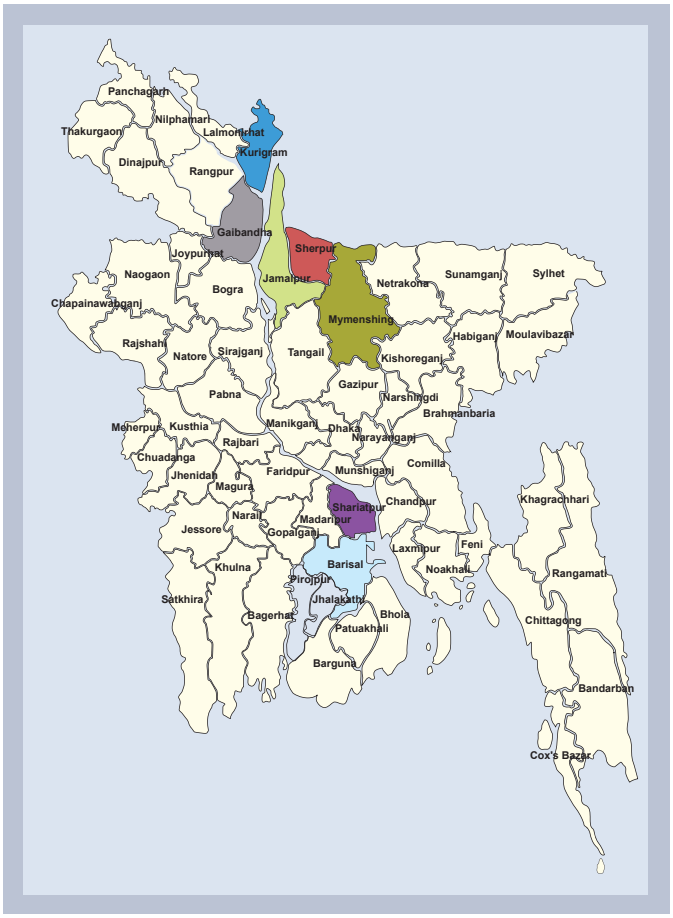


Figure 1: Targeted Districts by Shamerto

Shamerto achieved good results in all five areas and due to different success factors aimed at not only training a large number of women and men (21’440), but also place them (73%) in the labour market afterwards. This achievement was possible thanks to an integrated approach, which was covering supply side (skills trainings for skilled workers) and demand side (job creation through increased productivity of SMCEs). A strong focus on inclusion of women and disadvantaged groups also enabled impact on a social level, enabling these beneficiaries, who face normally difficulties to find decent employment opportunities, to generate an income. The application of a results based payment mechanism gave additional incentives to training providers to place these target groups in the labour market. Key for a successful project implementation of Shamerto was also the institutionalisation of the skills trainings within the national regulatory system, which increases overall sustainability of the project.

1. Introduction

1.1. Reason for CAPEX

Knowledge is being generated all the time and at many levels. However, a large proportion of the knowledge generated in the field is rarely captured, is not published or shared, and therefore remains largely unknown. Furthermore, documentation of good practice in development projects is often cursory and focused on getting visibility, rather than on understanding why an initiative was successful (or not). As a result, lessons are not adequately shared and therefore not used. Even when impact is measured and quantified, individual experiences – properly analysed - can help in understanding the factors that contributed to success or failure, enabling the story behind the impact to be told. Experience capitalisation is a method which helps development practitioners learn from their own experience and contribute to the development of practice-based knowledge. It is a process through which an experience is identified, validated and documented, leading to learning and identification of good practices. Such practices can then be adapted, improved, adopted by others and upscaled, leading to a greater impact.

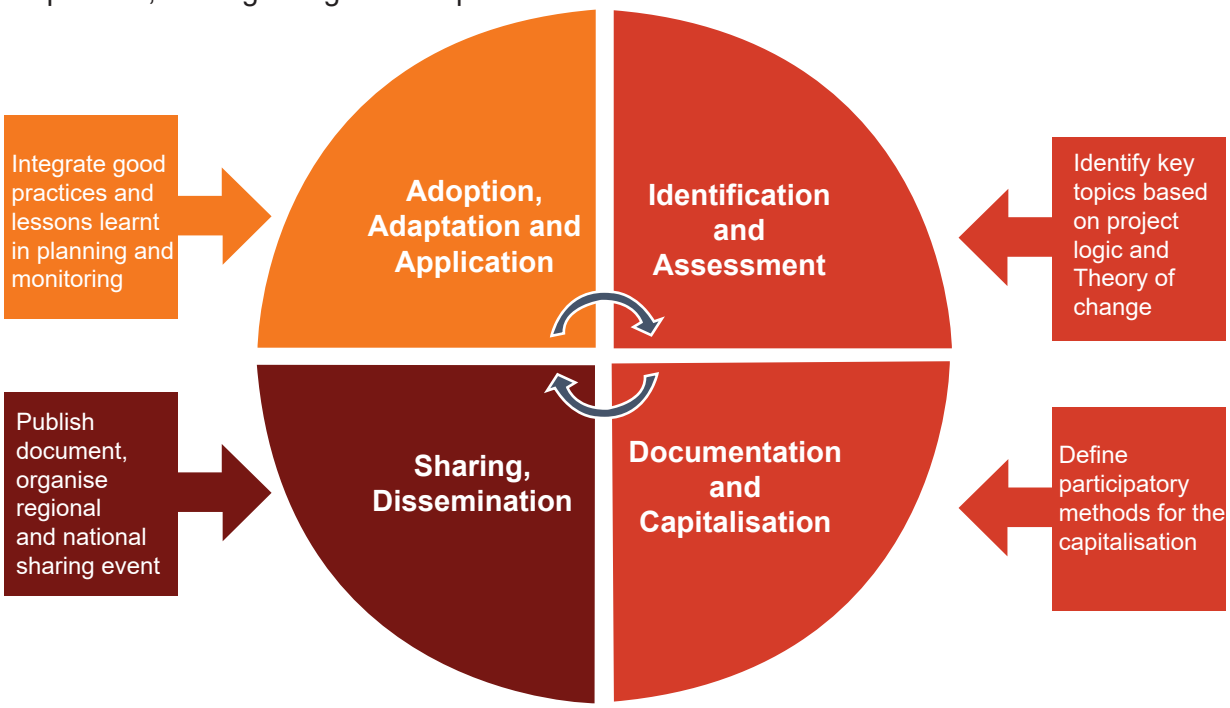


Figure 2: CAPEX model adapted from Horizon 3000

Considering the above consideration Helvetas intended to initiate a capitalisation of experience (CAPEX) of one of its complex projects titled: **Shamerto** - Sustainable skills and employment in small scale agro food processing project. The main aim of the exercise is to capture the major lessons learned from the project. More particularly, through this process, Helvetas and the consortium partners planned to document the following aspects:

- The types of skills development products developed by Shamerto in the agro-food processing sector and document how they were developed, how they are implemented by the different actors and what challenges they face;
- Document the experience of SMCEs, which invested in skills development and increased their productivity through skilled workers and BDS support;
- How women and disadvantaged people could be integrated in the labour market in the agro-food processing sector, document how constraints were addressed and what challenges exist and the way forward;
- Analyse how decent work standards and environmental standards were improved in SMCEs and how different measures (e.g. advocacy) promoted the application of these standards;
- The experiences of the project in ensuring institutionalisation of the processes

1.2. Methodology

Due to the Covid-19 crisis, this CAPEX was conducted remotely by two consultants (one international consultant and one national consultant based in Dhaka). Interviews were conducted with beneficiaries, training providers, SMCEs, trainers, government representatives and project staff with an emphasis on participatory and inclusive processes. Most interviews were done online or by phone and those target groups without access to mobile phones or computers were supported by the two district managers through ensuring the access to internet and computers for the interview. All interviews took place with respective precautionary measures to ensure social distance and the use of face masks. The process of conducting the CAPEX is summarised in figure 3.

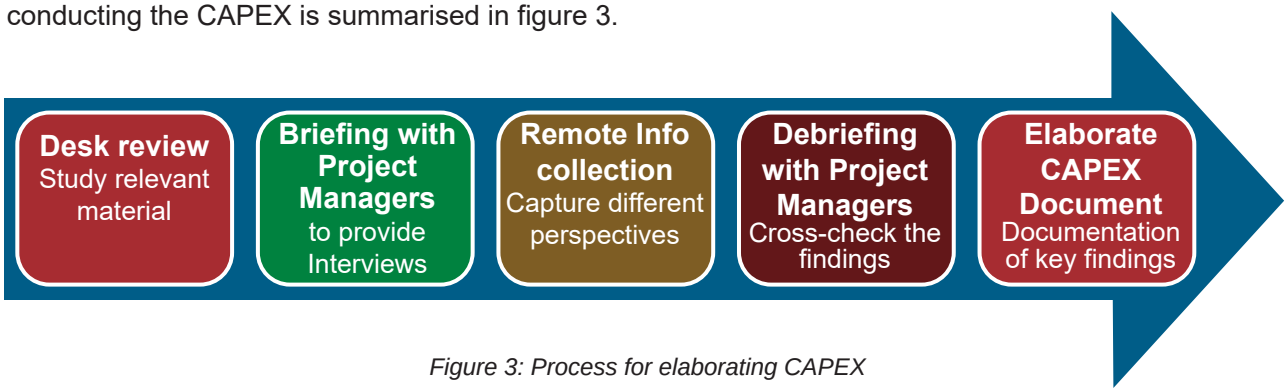


Figure 3: Process for elaborating CAPEX

Despite logistical challenges imposed by Covid-19 the results of the interviews are satisfactory since almost all interview respondents were reached, which also demonstrates the high interest in this topic and Shamerto. Nevertheless, there are a few methodological limitations of this purely digital approach. First of all, the two consultants were not able to physically visit the different actors (TESPs, SMCEs) in the two districts due to Covid-19 induced movement restrictions and respective regulations by the GoB. Hence, the two consultants had to rely on information provided during the virtual interviews and the data collected is not based on an independent observation on site. Second, there is always a part of the data lost during virtual interviews (e.g. contextual information or non-verbal data) and there is a risk of lack of trust of interviewees due to missing personal contact.

1.3. Impact of Covid-19 situation

Bangladesh's economy is severely affected by the consequences of the Covid-19 crisis through a drop of domestic economy, significant decline in export and import in raw materials, and decrease of remittances, which are an important source of household income. Women are particularly affected by the risk of losing their job and for them it is difficult to be reintegrated in the labor market due to conservative gender norms. Further, they suffer from increased levels of gender based violence (GBV) and harassment also at the workplace. ILO expects that inequalities are further exacerbated. In Bangladesh youth unemployment rates are already high, especially among young women. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) 29,8% of youth are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) with a considerably higher representation of women. This situation is aggravated by the fact that the large majority of training providers stopped their technical and vocational trainings (TVET) leading to the interruption of education of over one million of youth. Some sectors are hit harder by the Covid-19 crisis than others, such as the food processing sector. Helvetas consultations with the private sector in the food processing sector showed that 40% of workforce is unable to continue to work due to restricted mobility induced by the lock-down and new hygiene regulations, such as physical distancing. This limited staff capacity led to a decline of production by 30-35%. The food processing sector was already struggling before the Covid-19 crisis to find skilled workforce and now filling this gap is all the more important to increase productivity. At the same time production costs increase because of higher prices of raw material and packaging material, higher overhead costs, increased distribution and transportation costs or other additional costs linked to sales and storage. On the demand side the companies also experienced a drastic decline. Purchase power of consumers diminishes and the demand for supplementary processed food decreased. An additional challenge poses an interruption of cash flow due to reduced financial services. All these challenges caused by the Covid-19 crisis severely

hinder economic development and employment promotion in Bangladesh and also have negative impacts on the project implementation of Shamerto. The CAPEX therefore integrated this aspect by reflecting how beneficiaries, training providers and SMCEs were affected by the consequences of this global pandemic.

2. Context

2.1. Economic situation

Bangladesh was characterised by high growth rates for years and according to the BBS, GDP growth for FY2018-19 reached 8.13%. This growth trend is now broken by the Covid-19 crisis, which has devastating effects on Bangladesh's economy. Predictions from IMF show that Bangladesh's GDP is expected to reduce to 2%. In order to make Bangladesh self-sufficient and food secure, agriculture has been given the highest priority by the GoB aligned with the 7th five-year plan, National Agriculture Policy and SDG. According to preliminary estimate of BBS, it has been projected to produce food grain around 415.74 lakh metric tonnes in FY2018-19.

Apart from creating jobs in the country, the GoB has considered industrialization as crucial to accelerate sustainable economic development. According to initial estimation of BBS, in FY2018-19 the contribution of industry sector to GDP is 35.14 percent. In order to accelerate the pace of industrialization of the country the GoB announced the 'National Industrial Policy-2016'. This policy will create women's productive employment opportunities and bring women to the mainstream of the industrialisation process. It also plays a vital role in poverty alleviation. It has been expressed in the industrial policy that special steps will be taken for the development of women entrepreneurs and the promotion of cottage industries, small and medium industries. The EPZs play a special role in the development of the industrial sector by attracting domestic and foreign investment. Investment and exports of the EPZs are gradually increasing.

Bangladesh has achieved an outstanding development in poverty alleviation during last decade. The rate, incidence as well as depth of poverty have been dropping gradually. Poverty rate declined by 18.2% within an era. It was 40% in 2005 and has reduced to 21.8% in 2018 as a result of efficient implementation of different government and non-government development programs. According to the 7th Five Year Plan, it has been targeted to reduce poverty rate to 18.6% by 2020.

2.2. TVET system

One of the major achievements of the GoB in the field of TVET is the creation of a new National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework (NTVQF) within the frame of the TVET reform project implemented by the ILO and funded by the EU. The NTVQF is a comprehensive and nationally consistent framework for all occupations. It consists of six competence levels and two pre-vocational levels. In addition to the Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB), another institution was created during the TVET reform: the National Skill Development Council (NSDC). Both institutions aim at coordinating and harmonising the TVET sector in Bangladesh because this sector is not sufficiently regulated, linkages with private sector are weak and hence training delivery does often not correspond to labour market needs and capacity of many agencies active in this sector is weak. The two institutions not only increase quality of service delivery, but also foster inclusion. NSDC endorsed a strategy for the promotion of gender equality in TVET and a strategy for the inclusion of persons with special needs in TVET. In total, the capacity of more than 13'160 TVET service providers has been built in Bangladesh. For a better coordination among all stakeholders in the TVET sector, the secretariat of the NSDC was transformed into a National Skills Development Authority (NSDA).

2.3. Agro-food processing sector

The agro-food processing industry constitutes an important industry in the manufacturing sector in most countries. This industry is an important part of the manufacturing sector in Bangladesh which

(i.e. the manufacturing sector) now accounts for about 20% of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the country. The agro-food processing industry now contributes about 8.0% to manufacturing output (1.7% of GDP). Despite maintaining sustained growth in output over the last decade, its share of GDP remains quite static below 2.0 per cent. This is indicative of the industry's failure to achieve a higher growth rate relative to other industries, in particular the RMG (ready-made garment) industry which seems to overwhelmingly dominate the manufacturing activity in Bangladesh. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), agro-processing involves the transformation of products originating from agriculture, forestry and fisheries. Agro-food processing involves primary and secondary processing. The former is associated with processing of agricultural products in their basic form and the latter requires conversion into final products like jams, biscuits etc. The primary inputs for the industry include crops, poultry and livestock, fishery and some forestry products. This industry now employs about 2.2% of the total workforce in the country of which close to 70% are unskilled labour. Its share of total exports now stands at around 1.5%. Some researchers indicate that the country has much higher potential to explore enhancement of exports from this industry as reflected in their estimated revealed comparative advantage (RCA). Bangladesh now exports about US$400 million processed agro-food products and has the potential to rise further in the near future given the RCA.

As the Bangladesh economy continues to grow, the size of the middle-income population will continue to rise. The estimated size of the middle-income population is around 35 million. Also sustained economic growth is causing rapid urbanisation. Both sustained economic growth and urbanisation have already caused changes in dietary intake where processed food has become an important element in their consumption basket. Furthermore, with the rise of two-income families the demand for processed packaged food is also on the rise. All these factors are now contributing to a rapidly growing domestic market for a whole range of processed food including ready-to-eat meals. But there is also now a market that exists to cater to the needs of rural population where 40% of the country's people live. However, that market growth is constrained by rural poverty as most poor people are largely but not exclusively live in rural areas. For these poor people hunger remains a daily reality. The 2019 Global Hunger Index puts Bangladesh in the 88th position out of 117 countries with a score of 25.8, indicating the country suffers from a level of hunger that is considered as serious.

The industry is rather fragmented in terms of the products it produces and geographical space. Each of the sub-industry (e.g. cereals, dairy products, edible oil, snack food etc) has its own distinct characteristics in terms of input, technological and management requirements. However, the industry is mostly composed of SME’s with a limited number of large industries.

Picture 2: Women working in the agro-food processing sector

These fragmentations stand in the way to achieving economies of scale by firms within the industry which in turn has implications for achieving price competitiveness in the domestic and the international market. While the industry helps to reduce post-harvest crop losses (estimated at

30-40%) it does not help to smoothing extreme price fluctuations in the immediate post-harvest period. However, the agro-food processing industry has the capacity to transform perishable agricultural products into storable and transportable goods which benefit farmers. But most pressing issue facing the industry remains the food safety (non-toxic food) issue. This problem starts right at the farm level where the use of pesticides, insecticides and fertiliser is very common, then flows on to the production and packaging levels as reflected in the presence of harmful chemicals in many processed food items in Bangladesh. They all together negatively impact on the domestic demand for processed food. The industry has a vital role to play to ensure consumer food safety. Also, for export of agro-processed food products food safety laws and standards are crucial. In this respect the role of relevant domestic institutions to ensure food safety is of paramount importance.

3. Shamerto Project description

3.1. Interrelation between the results, and Theory of Change

Shamerto aims at strengthening skills, employability and additional income of workers and SMCEs in the agro-food processing sector. It contributes to increase gainful employment of workers and job seekers and simultaneously strengthen the competitiveness and capacity of employment generation of SMCEs through better integration in the selected value chains and improvement of business environment. The objective is achieved through five interrelated and mutually reinforcing results. The two main results are 1) an improved skills development and training offer and 2) business growth and employment creation of SMCEs. These two results are interrelated since access to skilled workforce is a precondition of SMCE competitiveness, and the competitiveness of the SMCEs is a precondition for job creation and investment in a better trained workforce. These two immediate results will be leveraged in terms of impact, scale and sustainability through three other result areas: 3) inclusion of marginalised men and women, 4) compliance of decent work and environmental standards at enterprises through the advocacy measures which reinforce result-2 i.e. SMCE business growth under value chain development, 5) the institutionalisation of the products and approaches developed within the national TVET system through the advocacy measures, which reinforce result-1 that pave the way for certification of skilled trainees under National Technical and Vocational Educational Framework. Figure 4 shows the interrelation between the 5 results and the inter linked results contribute to improved skills and employability under national framework and higher income in vibrant and more standard compliant agro food processing sector. Chapter 4 of this document describes the achievements, challenges and processes of expected results capturing the main lessons learnt of each aspect.

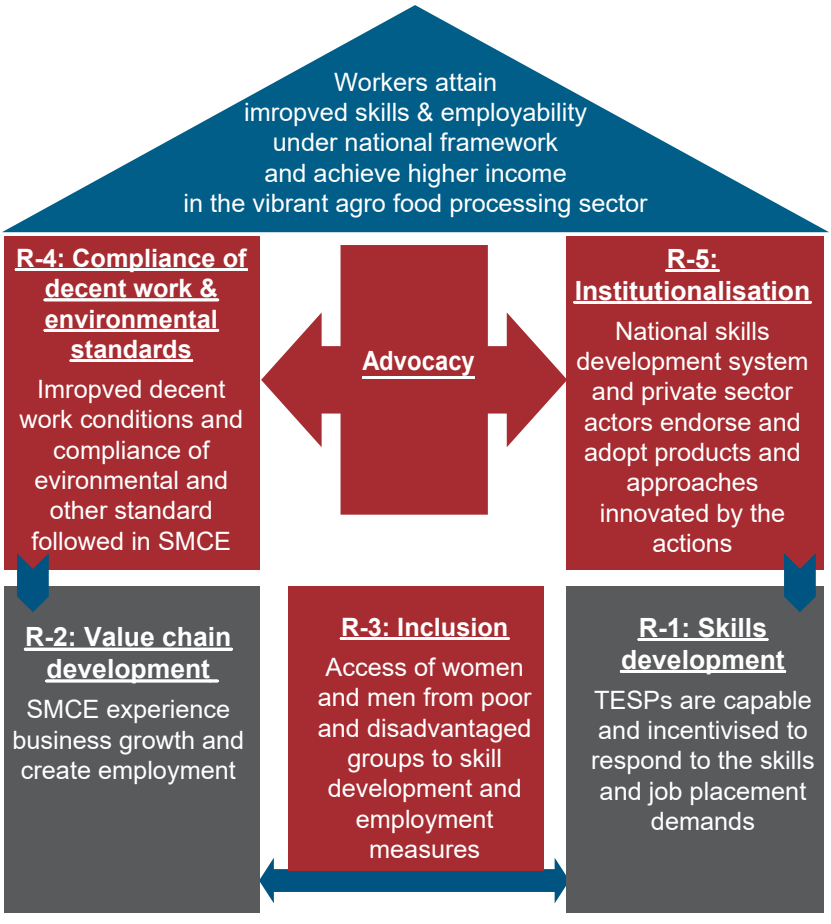


Figure 4: Interrelation of results

The **theory of change (ToC)** builds on the following assumptions:

1) The TESP will become more efficient in providing quality skills/vocational training and job placement services to job seekers if they are aware and better informed in regard to the demand of the SMCE, if they are motivated and capacitated, if they are connected and accredited with National Technical and Vocational Qualification Framework certification system and if they are linked with the SMCE and the communities.
2) Agro-food processing SMCE will be able to grow and become more competitive, if they employ skilled workers, if they have access to business and finance services, if they strengthen their forward and backward linkages to related product sub-sector value chain actors, if they are able to strengthen their decent work & environmental standards at enterprise level and if they are able to address their business environment related concerns at policy level.
3) Poor and disadvantaged job seekers will find employment and improve their economic and social conditions, if they have information on the job markets, if they develop the required skills and competences, and if they work in an environment where labour rights, workplace safety and health are observed.

3.2. Achieved results

Shamerto targeted seven Districts in Northern and Southern Bangladesh and achieved promising results in terms of skills development, employment creation and income of workers in the agro-food processing sector. Skilled workers receive a higher salary, SMCEs increased their yearly sales revenue and became more competitive (e.g. through increased product diversity or increased firm size) and training providers (TESPs) provided training on seven occupations and assessments under the NTVQF level 1 through Assessment Centers (RTOs). These main results achieved during three years project implementation are summarised in the boxes below compared to the Baseline and Target values. The specific achievements under the five results will be summarized in the next section.

37,6% of skilled workers receive a salary of at least 8'250 BTD per month	SMCEs increased their yearly sales revenue by 28,4% to 3'073'178 BTD	67,7% of SMCEs increased their competitiveness at least in 2 aspects	103 TESP provided skill training assessment in 18 RTOs
Baseline: 17.3% Target: 40%	Baseline: 2'394'000 BTD Target: 30% increase	Baseline: 48% Target: 80%	Baseline: 0 Target: system in place

4. CAPEX

4.1. Skills development

Result 1: An increased number of Training and Employment Service Providers (TESP) which are capable and incentivised to respond to the skills and job placement demands of job seekers and the targeted SMCE.

Achieved results

In total **21'440 women and men** were trained by **103 training providers** under Shamerto and **73%** of them found employment or are self-employed. The project hence exceeded the target number of 35 TESPs by far and invested a lot in capacity development and mobilisation of training providers. The project was also successful in reaching a large number of women and men and training them, although the ambitious target value of 25'000 was narrowly not achieved. In the first and second year the numbers of trained beneficiaries were on low levels, which is typical for skills development

projects since in the beginning the training system needs to be put in place and the curricula developed. In the third year, the figures increased and Shamerto managed to train almost 15'000 beneficiaries in one year. In terms of employment promotion, the project achieved excellent results with 73% of trainees being in employment or self-employment. The satisfaction levels of both beneficiaries and SMCE's with the skills delivery services are high.

Selected Occupations

103 TESPs provided training and employment support	**21'440** women and men completed skills trainings and 5'335 were assessed	15'627 of trainees or **73%** are in employment	**86%** of trainees are satisfied with training and 72% are satisfied with job placement services	**83%** of SMCEs are satisfied with the performance of skilled trainees
Target: 35 TESPs	Target: 25'000 women and men	Target: 80% in employment	Target: 90% satisfied	Target: 80% satisfied

In the agro-food processing sector there were very few training offers available. In rural areas, experience revealed that the TESP often didn't have the capacities to offer competency-based and employment oriented skills trainings. Shamerto therefore developed seven occupations based on the requirements of the National Technical and Vocational Qualification Framework (NTVQF) as described in table 1. These professions were developed based on local labour market assessments and in consultation with private sector to ensure labour market relevance of respective occupations. In the beginning five occupations were developed, at a later stage two new occupations (e.g. packaging and food preparation) were added due to the high potential of employment of women in these occupations. Shamerto developed competency based training delivery models, organised ToT for instructors (certified trainers) and promoted assessment centers. All these elements are part of the TVET system since for example the certified trainers facilitate skills trainings on behalf of the different TESPs.

Occupations	Level	Short description
Food grain machine operation	1	This **360 hour** training includes Generic skills (basic mathematical concepts and application of OHS practices at the workplace), Sector specific skills (quality and food safety, OHS policies of food industry) and occupation specific skills compulsory (Operate Rice Mill Machinery and Equipment, Operate Wheat Mill Machinery and Equipment) and elective (Operate Pulses Mill Machinery and Equipment, Operate Spices Mill Machinery and Equipment, Operate Mustard Oil Mill Machinery and Equipment).
Baking	1	This **360 hour** training includes Generic skills (basic mathematical concepts and application of OHS practices at the workplace), Sector specific skills (quality and food safety, OHS policies of food industry) and occupation specific skills (Interpretation of mixing specification for products, production of bread dough, conduct mould and proof, baking bread).
Food packaging	1	This **360 hour** training includes Generic skills (basic mathematical concepts and application of OHS practices at the workplace), Sector specific skills (quality and food safety, OHS policies of food industry, working in the food industry) and occupation specific skills (Interpretation the Feature of Packaging Materials, Tools and Equipment, Perform Packaging and Sealing Process, Perform Labelling of the Packet).
Food preparation (cooking)	2	This **300 hour** training includes Generic skills (basic mathematical concepts and application of OHS practices at the workplace), Sector specific skills (Follow quality and food safety programs) and occupation specific skills (Organize for food preparation, Prepare roti and parata, Prepare rice dish, Prepare vegetables and dal dish, Prepare fish and egg dish, Prepare meat and poultry dish.

Occupations	Level	Short description
Puffed and flattened rice processing	1	This **360 hour** training includes Generic skills (basic mathematical concepts and application of OHS practices at the workplace), Sector specific skills (quality and food safety, OHS policies of food industry) and occupation specific skills (Perform rice processing for puffed rice, Prepare puffed rice, Perform paddy processing for flattened rice, Prepare flattened rice).
Chanachure & *jhuri* processing	1	This **360 hour** training includes Generic skills (basic mathematical concepts and application of OHS practices at the workplace), Sector specific skills (quality and food safety, OHS policies of food industry) and occupation specific skills (Produce *Jhuri* and *Papad*, Produce *Ghatia*, Produce *Bundia*, Prepare Ground nut, Lentil, Peas and Flattened rice. Prepare *chanachur*).
Rice processing	1	This **360 hour** training includes Generic skills (basic mathematical concepts and application of OHS practices at the workplace), Sector specific skills (quality and food safety, OHS policies of food industry) and occupation specific skills (Operate Boiler and Equipment, Operate Drier and Equipment, Operate colour sorter and Equipment, Operate Rice Polisher and Equipment.

Table 1: Description of 7 Occupation standards

Note: ***Jhuri and Chanachur***: a snack mix which consists of a variable mixture of spicy dried ingredients such as fried lentils, peanuts, corn, vegetable oil. ***Papad* is a** thin, crisp, round flatbread from India. ***Boondia*** is an Indian dessert made from sweetened, fried chickpea flour.

Training delivery models

Shamerto worked with two types of training providers: institutional TESP and industry based training providers and was able to build networks with in total 103 training providers (86 industry based and 17 institute based). Together they offered four different training delivery models: 2 types of long courses consisting of 26 days training and one apprenticeship model lasting 50 days for new job seekers and potential entrepreneurs and 2 types of short courses consisting of 8 days for each course for training mainly aiming at up-skilling of existing workers. All training packages include a theory part, a practical part and a part about OHS. Both short term and long term courses undergo the assessment process of BTEB as illustrated in figure 5.

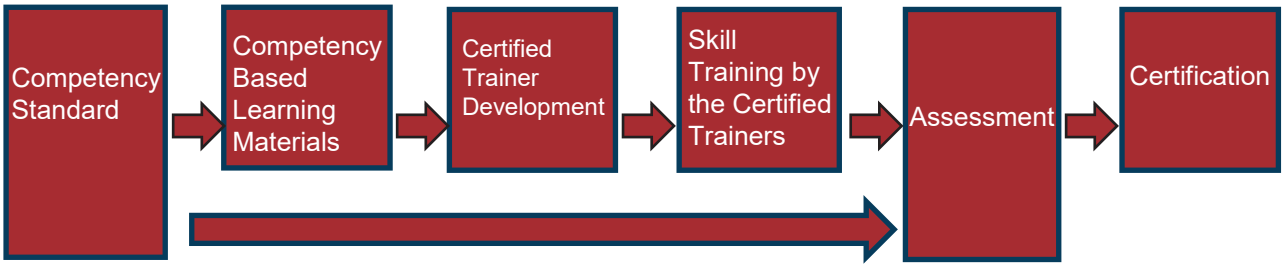


Figure 5: Training and certification process according to NTVQF Implementation Manual

In fact, offering industry based training was not foreseen at the beginning of the project, but seen as necessary to meet the expectations of not only companies to have access to skilled workforce with practical skills but also exploit the facility of equipment/ machineries of the enterprise/ industries for the skill training of the potential job seekers. For any technical skill training, training infrastructure particularly equipment and machinery are a must. Heavy and sophisticated machines are required for the skill training in some of the occupations like food grain machine operator and rice processing. Investing for the equipment and machineries only for providing skill training is not a viable business for the institute based TESP. Therefore industry based training was a win win situation for both the industry and project. This diversification of skills delivery models also supported Shamerto to reach the ambitious target of training in total 25'000 beneficiaries. The two different training delivery actors (institutional and industry based TESP) have different certification systems. For the courses provided by the institutional TESPs the official BTEB approach is followed through assessment and certification by BTEB. For the industry based training the Bangladesh Agro Processors' Association (BAPA) is issuing the certificate. This informal approach was adopted in parallel with the official

approach as a result of the recommendations of the Shamerto Mid Term Review (MTR) to scale up and reach a large number of trainees within the project duration.

Performance of training providers

At the beginning of the project, Helvetas conducted a workshop with potential TESP and explained the project intervention and different training modalities, as well as the results based financing (RBF) approach. Afterwards interested TESP were selected on the basis of a thorough evaluation of their capacity statement in the submitted Expression of Interest as well as physical verification. Some key selection criteria of the TESP were the experience in the agro-food processing sector, training infrastructure, pool of trainers with relevant qualification and capacities for the application of the RBF approach. Afterwards Shamerto conducted outreach campaigns to mobilise participants in the seven Districts. An FGD with selected institutional TESP showed that they are satisfied with the training quality and the approach of Shamerto since they were also involved by Helvetas in many decision making processes regarding training content development and delivery approaches. They appreciated the new beneficiary selection tool and having access to national advocacy processes. They also mentioned that thanks to this project they have increased their organisational capacity for example in terms of job matching due to the application of a RBF mechanism. In terms of improvements the interviewed TESPs recommended to include more level 2 trainings for an added value of the certificates and better chances of job seekers on the job market. Most occupations were on level 1 for conducting simple tasks. In terms of satisfaction of employers regarding training, Shamerto achieved good results since over 80% of SMCEs are satisfied with the skills level of the graduates and experienced a better performance compared to existing workers. One weakness of the TESP was the matching component or job placement services. A stronger linkage with the private sector was identified as a key requirement to improve the transition to employment. As one of the consequences, an additional training delivery model was added, which is offered by industry based TESP. The following example of Bengal Biscuits shows how SMEs design and implement skills trainings.

Bengal Biscuits Company: Example of industry based training

Bengal Biscuits was contacted by Global Solution BD, a TESP conducting trainings for Shamerto. Global Solution selected training beneficiaries according to the Poverty Index (PPI) and then after a 3 days induction course deployed them to Bengal Biscuits for a 23 days training. Shamerto trained trainers in the factory. After completion of the training BAPA organised an assessment using the BTEB assessors and issued certificates to the qualified training participants. Bengal Biscuits appointed all graduates, who passed the examination undertaken during the assessment process. Most of them mentioned that as they received the training in the same place, they can fully utilize their skills of baking such as selection of ingredients, mixing and deciding on quality as well as managing the oven for baking. They are hence familiar with their working environment and more efficient in conducting their tasks.

Certified trainers and assessors

One of the effective and timely decisions of Shamerto was to involve BTEB for organising training of certified trainers, which contributed a lot in terms of increasing the quality of training delivery. Before the TVET reform, trainings were conducted by any knowledgeable person without having adequate pedagogical or technical training skills. Now BTEB is ensuring that they are qualified and equipped with necessary skills. Shamerto trained 180 certified trainers in the seven occupations. According to the Implementation Manual of the NTVQF a TVET trainer is *"a professional who enables a learner or a group of learners to develop competencies to perform a particular trade or technical work. TVET Trainers may assume roles such as training facilitator, competency assessor (however they cannot conduct final assessments on their own students), training designer and developer and training supervisor."*

An FGD was conducted with five certified trainers in the field of Chanachur and Jhuri processing, Food grain machine operation and cooking professions. Most of them were involved in agro-food

processing in Kurigram. Their motivation to become a certified trainer ranges from financial and social benefits to contributing to improved employment opportunities and agro-food processing environment for example health protection. To become a certified trainer they had to complete additional training. For Chanachur Production, Baking and cooking a 7 day long training program (ToT) was arranged and for food grain processing a 5 day program was designed. The training program contained the following aspects: Marketing, Packaging and Customer dealing; Hygiene regulations; Market Information; Increase attractiveness for retailers. 50% was theory while 50% practical parts mostly how to produce the finished products in order that trainers were acquainted with updated knowledge in the respective fields. Another important aspect covered is strengthening teaching and facilitation skills of trainers. Shamerto conducted regular district wise refresher courses for trainers. The certified trainers are also important resource persons for curricula development and were asked to give feedback for the improvement of the content and training delivery approaches. In general, the interviewed trainers are satisfied with the training program. As a main challenge they mentioned that some trainers work part time and they don't have the full background of the participants. Further, they suggested to increase the duration of the training from 7 to 15 days to improve the quality further. The certified trainers do not only play an important role in training the participants, but also in supporting them finding employment after completion of the training. The trainers are usually well connected with TESPs, local agro-food processing entities and other potential employers. They linked the trainees not only with local employers, but also with SME's in big cities such as Dhaka or Chattogram. The table 2 shows that on average 75% of graduates trained by the five interviewed certified trainers found employment or are self-employed.

Certified Trainers	People trained	Employed	Self employed	% if employed and self-employed
Md. Masud Parvez	175	140	-	80
Noor-E Alam	425	350	25	88
Saju Mia	125	79	4	66
Saidul Islam	25	18	-	72
Arman Hossain	175	128	-	73

Table 2: No of students trained by certified trainers

As described, certified trainers can also play the role of assessors. Shamerto facilitated the establishment of 18 public Assessment and Certification Centers so called Recognised Training Organisations (RTOs). 18 training providers saw a business case in this and invested in becoming accredited as RTO. Once the TESPs completed skills trainings, they approach the RTO to request assessment of their students. The assessment process is done by two independent BTEB accredited assessors and a BTEB representative. The BTEB representative monitors the assessment process and reports back to BTEB. Assessors are mainly representatives of the industries appointed by the BTEB. The trainees are assessed based on their written test and practical skills (demonstration of a task). Based on the results of the assessment the trainees receive a certificate if they pass the exam. These BTEB certificates are much appreciated by employers and therefore trainees have high preferences for obtaining BTEB certificates. They will have better chances to find employment, have higher salaries and the certificates also strengthen their self-confidence. These RTOs were not existing in the agro-food processing sector before project start and hence quality assurance lacking in this sector.

Case Study: BTEB assessor

Sonia Ruma is a 42 year old woman and BTEB assessor. She lives in Sadar Upazila in Barisal district. She has completed her Bachelor of Social Science degree, is married and has one son. She earns BDT 20,000 per month and her husband earns BDT 30,000 per month. On an average their monthly expenditure is BDT 33,500. Besides her work as a BTEB assessor she works as a Master Trainer at "Prantajan" (a TESP), Cooking Trainer and Secretary of Barishal Section of National Technical Committee for Women. She received a training on baking (level 2) and then became a master trainer at the Prantojon a TESP of Barisal. She continued her training by her own initiative and reached level 4 training, when she was approached by BTEB to act as an assessor for bakery trainees at the CEAFS assessment center.

Her experience as a BTEB assessor shows that the quality of training is appropriate especially for the 26 days long training course. Here the average pass rate is 95%. The short 8 days courses in contrast have only a 65% average pass rate. This upscaling training mainly targets unskilled workers, who are often illiterate and therefore do not pass the written test, although they show good results in the practical part.

Sonia´s work was affected by the Covid-19 crisis both as a trainer and assessor. The assessments are currently not taking place and there is no solution in sight of how doing exams especially for the practical parts during Covid-19. For her activity as a trainer she started now online training courses in cooking, but observed that the number of participants is very low due to the lack of access to internet by interested trainees.

Results based financing mechanism

Helvetas applies in many skills development projects in different contexts a results based financing (RBF) mechanism. RBF is an effective approach for providing quality training for large numbers of people and promoting the inclusion of socially and economically disadvantaged people. It focuses not only on training, but also on post-training services, such as matching with the labour market or job placement. All interview partners interviewed during this CAPEX agreed that this is a new and unique approach in Bangladesh. They see concrete incentives to do more than just train and try to find employment opportunities for graduates. There are two main ideas behind the application of an RBF approach by Shamerto: The first aspect covers the financing modality. Normally, TESPs are provided by the funds before training provision starts. In contrast to this advance payment, the RBF approach foresees a gradual payment mechanism based on results, which means that there is no or only a small advanced payment in order that TESPs for example can buy equipment for the training. Another part of the funds is paid once the graduates finalise the training and a third instalment is made once the graduates are employed or self-employed. This mechanism increases the motivation of training providers to also play a crucial role in job matching. Figure 7 shows how the RBF approach is usually implemented in HELVETAS skills projects.

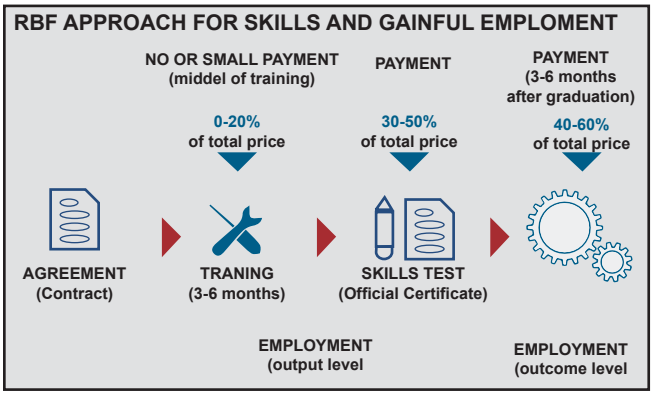
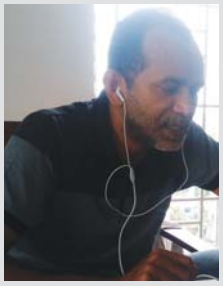


Figure 6: Payment mechanism RBF approach



Md. Tauhedul Islam Shahazada, TESP:
"This is the only project I know in Bangladesh, where we can see immediate results after the conclusion of the training. This inspired us to do more trainings and due to the RBF we are encouraged to provide job opportunities for trained graduates."

In Bangladesh, the RBF approach was adapted to the local context and 70% of the funds were issued once the trainees were registered in the data base, 5% after training completion, 15% after successful placement of the graduates (after 3 months of training completion) and the last 10% six months after training end based on a final verification to see if graduates are still in employment (see overview instalments of payment in figure 7).

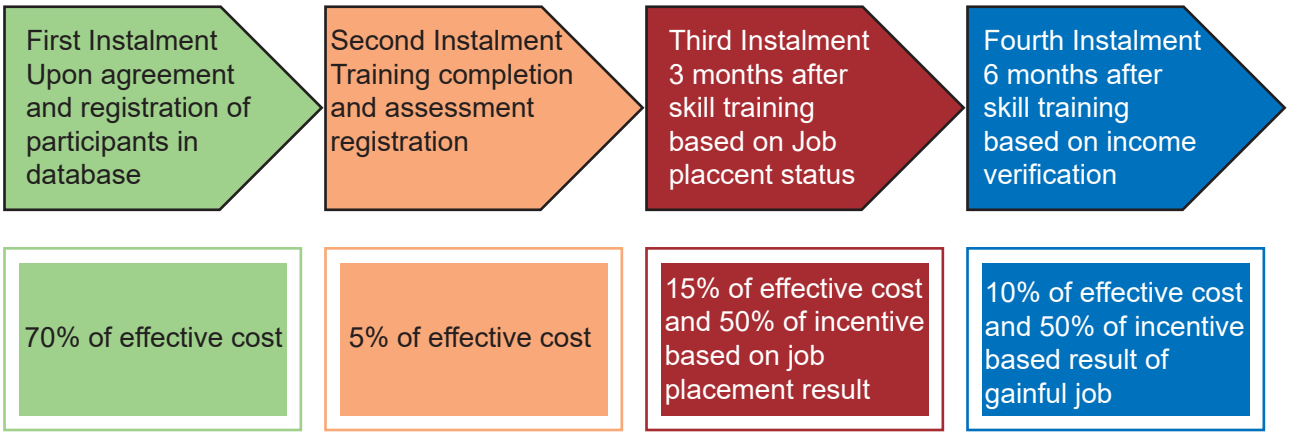


Figure 7: Overview instalments rates applied by Shamerto

The second element of the RBF approach are incentives for placing marginalised groups or women in the labour market. Shamerto defined three categories according to the table 3.

Group	Additional payment	Example based on 10'000 Taka for effective training cost
Disadvantaged men and women	60%	Additional 6000 Taka (50% after 3 months of training completion based on job placement monitoring result and remaining 50% after 6 months of training completion based on job continuation monitoring result)
Non disadvantaged, but poor women	50%	Additional 5000 Taka (50% after 3 months of training completion based on job placement monitoring result and remaining 50% after 6 months of training completion based on job continuation monitoring result)
Non-disadvantaged, but poor men	30%	Additional 3000 Taka (50% after 3 months of training completion based on job placement monitoring result and remaining 50% after 6 months of training completion based on job continuation monitoring result)

Table 3: Financial incentives for training provider

These financial incentives encourage the inclusion of women and disadvantaged people and even constitute a source of additional revenue for TESPs. As an example, if a TESP trains one poor and disadvantaged woman for 10'000 Taka effective training costs and then places her in the labour market, the TESP will receive additionally to the 50% incentive after job placement half of the 60% of effective training costs as an incentive, which is 3000 Taka. The other half (3000 Taka) will be provided if the trainee is still employed after 6 months. The selection of these categories was made with support of the Progress Out of Poverty Index (PPI) as explained in chapter 4.3. It has to be noted that the effective training costs varies for different training delivery models, professions and participants and therefore needs to be applied in each case differently.

The RBF mechanism is a new concept for TESPs in Bangladesh and despite financial incentives, there was a lot of capacity development necessary to address to explain the concept and increase TESPs organisational capacities. In addition, Helvetas had to work with them to change their mindsets since the TESPs were used to traditional payment mechanisms. In addition, to apply a RBF approach requires a robust monitoring system since payment is linked to results. Shamerto introduced a web based M&E system, but many TESPs were not able to use them and fill in the data correctly. Shamerto invested a lot of resources and time in the beginning of the project to build relations with the TESPs and increase their capacity. Another challenge was the job placement

component and the fact that many TESPs were afraid that they will not reach the targets or receive incentive-based payments for placing women, especially in conservative areas. On a project management level the application of the RBF mechanism led among other reasons to the request of a time extension, because TESPs receive the final payment only after tracing the employment situation of graduates. This tracing is done 6 months after completion of the training and therefore the verification process could not be completed for the last batch of trainees within the project duration.

Impact of Covid-19

Another aspect, which had an impact on the performance and sustainability of TESPs is the Covid-19 situation. In Bangladesh, education and TVET was interrupted since mid-March. Many TESPs tried to explore opportunities for offering digital trainings, but they experienced that the majority of their target groups have insufficient access to mobile devices, limited connectivity and a lack of digital literacy. Even once the TESPs are allowed to continue training the application of social distance and other protection measures means that they have to reduce the number of participants to 10-12 people and therefore run double shifts to catch up losses. Industry based training providers, such as Bengal Biscuit were also affected by closures due to Covid-19. The factories were opened again end of May 2020, but they are confronted with increased costs for PPE and hygiene measures.

4.2. Value chain development

Result 2: An increased number of SMCE experience business growth and create employment and income through improved efficiency and integration in the targeted product sub-sector value chains.

Achieved results

Although the agro-food processing sector is growing, the majority of food processing SMCEs in Bangladesh remain small scale and rural based, and face difficulties to increase productivity. The limited growth in productivity is due to systemic constraints in the value chain. Shamerto analysed these constraints in a Value Chain and Skills Gap Analysis, which then also served as basis for designing business development services to be required for the SMCEs. Among the main constraints that hamper production across all value chains are the lack of skilled workers, dependence on wholesalers, lack of access to financial products and poor hygienic conditions leading to fines in case of non-compliance. Shamerto developed Business development services (BDS) to the different SMCEs for example on advocacy, food safety and quality control, good manufacturing practices or occupational safety and facilitated linkages with financial sector. Through a better integration of SMCEs in the different value chains, access to skilled workforce and addressing business constraints, SMCEs were able to increase their productivity to a contribution margin of **27%** on average. This exceeded the aspired target value of 25% and demonstrates that the chosen methodology of Shamerto was effective.

SMCEs were linked with **8565** additional market actors	**61%** of workers in targeted SMCEs have relevant skills	SMCE's raised their productivity to a contribution margin of **27%**
Baseline: 8813 market actors Target: 10'000 additional market actors	Baseline: 38% Target: 60%	Baseline: 18% Target: 25%

Addressing business constraints and increasing productivity

A good example of how to overcome business constraints are the rice mills in Kurigram. Rice mills have higher processing costs than automated rice mills. Further, non-mechanised production processes are still widespread and produce poorer quality than mechanised processes. Many rice

mill owners are not connected with financial institutes for receiving working capital and linkages with regional and national market actors is also missing. The most challenging factor however is the lack of access to skilled workforce, who can properly operate the rice mill equipment. Shamerto supported them to address these constraints through business development services such as in creating a business plan or establishing linkages with market actors, financial institutes and enhancing collaboration between rice mill owners. Further, Shamerto organised study tours which generated the interest of the rice millers for gradual mechanisation of their mills. All these measures contributed to increase productivity of the SMCEs. One of the main factors for increased productivity was the investment in skilled workforce. The rice mill owners encouraged existing unskilled workers to participate in training courses for upskilling. The SMCEs also provided information to potential job seekers to enrol for such training. These increased skills resulted on the one hand in higher production levels and on the other hand in enhanced durability of equipment and better quality. The introduction of OHS standards and addressing gender related needs also supported increased productivity.

SMCE Cluster Network

Another good practice to support SMCEs addressing business constraints and increasing productivity was the formation of production cluster networks. There were some existing business membership organisations, such as the Bakery association, which forward the interest of the members and inform them about regulations. However, these associations were usually not very active and effective. For this reason, Shamerto facilitated the promotion of SMCE clusters. The Upazila SMCE Cluster at Nageseari Upazila in Kurigram is a good example. This cluster platform consisting of 95 members from different sub sectors in agro-food processing, such as rice production, chanachur and bakery. They have an executive committee consisting of seven members. They hold regular monthly meetings and discuss different business related problems and try to find solutions. Shamerto facilitated the promotion of these SMCE cluster groups in order that they can address certain challenges by themselves. They for example jointly negotiated with banks because they didn't accept coins, which was especially for bakery a problem or they negotiated with electricity providers to address the problem of frequent electricity cuts, which affects production. These production cluster as a platform will remain beyond project end and the promotion of these groups make the achievements of this result is seems highly sustainable. Another task of the production cluster group is a sort of local skills gap analysis. During each meeting the different member SMCEs define how many skilled workers they need in which area and then they coordinate the training measures accordingly. This practice guarantees employment of trainees after graduation, because TESPs only train in fields where skilled workers are needed taking into consideration local labour market trends.

Business Development Services

More than 1900 SMCEs benefited from business development services in nine different fields: food safety and quality control, good manufacturing practices, advocacy and negotiation, OHS, business plan development, access to market, access to finance, financial management (e.g. cash flow, working capital management) and legal and compliance issues. In addition, Shamerto implemented 10 Start your own business training batches, which allows SMCE owners to expand their business.

Case Study: Labin Chanachur

Md. Shahadat Hossain, owner of Labin Chanachur Industry, in Kurigram made a total investment of BDT. 800,000 at the age of 60. He has studied up to class 5 and then joined the business in Chanachur production. He has a total of 150 decimals land of which 90 decimals is for agricultural purpose and the rest is homestead. He is the only earning member of his family consisting of six members. His monthly family expenditure is BDT. 35,000 out of his total income of BDT. 40,000. He first came to know about Shamerto in the upazila launching meeting. The main business constraints of

chanachur factories are in his opinion a lack of skilled workers, access to finance with reasonable rates of interest for loans, access to quality raw material, access to legal services such as licencing and branding and access to packaging and mixing machines. Before he was in touch with Shamerto project he employed 12 unskilled and semi-skilled workers. In order to increase production and growth of his business he hired another 9 skilled workers, who were successfully trained and certified under Shamerto competency based training program. He mentioned out of total 20 workers 14 are skilled women workers. The skilled female workers are engaged with the production activities while male workers mostly engage with market promotion activities. After engaging skilled workers and gaining the knowledge on business development activities he could double the production of his factory. He acquired good knowledge on marketing strategies, business planning and human resources management techniques from the SIYB training course organised by the project. After collaborating with the project interventions, he became aware about the importance of cleanliness and hygiene maintenance, different wash room facilities for men and women and the use of PPE. Due to the Covid-19 crisis, he had to stop production and close the factory from March – May 2020. This resulted in income losses and during this period he had to spend his working capital and savings. Now he restarted production through a reduced number of workers to maintain social distance regulations.

Job creation through increased growth

Most of the interviewed SMCEs mentioned that they could considerably increase their productivity thanks to business development support and access to skilled workforce. Many of the SMCEs could even double the production, which required new skilled workforce and hence resulted in the creation of jobs. The example of four rice mill SMCEs in table 4 shows the increase of employment opportunities for men and women. Nevertheless, the reality of many SMCEs shows limited employment generation opportunities since more than 98% of SMCEs are family run businesses and do hardly recruit workers from outside.

Owners	Present number of skilled workers			Previous number of workers		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Wahab rice mill	40	20	20	10	3	7
Sarket Auto rice mill	36	20	16	6	2	4
Islam Rice mill	20	14	6	10	8	2
Mondol & Brother rice mill	20	14	6	15	7	8

Table 4: Employment growth of rice mill SMCEs

Impact of Covid-19 on SMCEs

The Covid-19 crisis heavily affected the SMCE's since they had to stop their production for several months. In addition to decreased production and interruption of income, they were also confronted with logistical constraints regarding access to financial services. It is important to mention here that they experienced a reduction of demand for their products due to the declined purchasing power of clients and consumers.

Md. Moniruzzaman, owner of the Mojbur rice mill:

"The business was running well, suddenly the Covid-19 crisis put our livelihoods at risk. The negative impacts, such as interruption of production, cancelling of regular meetings of the associations, decline of the customers, reduced the production by at least 50%. This resulted in financial losses."

4.3. Inclusion of women and disadvantaged people

Result 3: An increased number of women and men from poor and disadvantaged groups obtain gainful (self-) employment in agro-food processing SMCE.

Achieved results

In total **15'074** trainees found employment after graduation. Out of these **25%** were women and **26%** from disadvantaged groups as per definition of the Progress Out of Poverty Index and marginalisation

criteria (see chapter 4.3.2.). While the project achieved the target values in terms of employment promotion of disadvantaged groups, the placement of women in jobs remained a challenge. The project developed different strategies to increase women employment described in chapter 4.3.1. In terms of entrepreneurship, Shamerto mainly faced the challenge to facilitate access to working capital. For this reason, the figures of beneficiaries opting for self-employment are comparatively low.

3,814 women (25%) and 3,919 (26%) disadvantaged persons are employed	366 women and 274 disadvantaged persons are self-employed
Target: 30% women 20% disadvantaged groups	Target: 2,000 (10% of 20,000)

4.3.1 Inclusion of women

The agro-food processing sector is labour intensive and therefore it plays a vital role for employment promotion in Bangladesh. Shamerto has commissioned a **Participatory Gender Assessment (PGA)** in 2018, which analysed four aspects regarding women's participation in the agro-food processing sector: employment situation, working environment, skills levels and family/community level. The effectiveness of the process will be quickly summarized and complemented with information from the interviews conducted during this CAPEX.

Employment situation

The PGA showed that female employment rate in this sector stands at 14%. Women active in the agro-food processing sector are mainly engaged in in rice processing (soaking, parboiling, drying), packaging, cooking or active as casual workers for example during pick season. The agro-food processing sector is characterised by a high informality, which means that many are home based cottage enterprises, where family members are involved in manual production and marketing of products. Female family members are often contributing as unpaid workers without a contract and salary. In general, the agro-food processing sector is not perceived as a women-friendly sector and social acceptance of women engaged in this field is low. Many professions in this sector entail heavy work such as heavy machine operations and it is common to work in night shifts, which is seen as a constraint for women due to security issues. The PGA found that some professions within this sector are more adequate than others and accepted from demand (SMCEs as employers) and supply (women as employees) side. Packaging for example requires a high precision of work and many women are interested in this job.

Skills level, Gender and Wages

The PGA has shown that women are largely unskilled and 97% of those women, who were formally employed stated that they earn less than their male counterparts. Nevertheless, 80% of interviewed beneficiaries and representatives of SMCE's are convinced that women are able to perform equally well than men if they are trained accordingly. In terms of soft skills, many SMCEs stated that women are more loyal, punctual and responsible than men. This impression was confirmed during the interviews of the CAPEX, where many SMCEs stated their satisfaction with work ethics of women, which even increased productivity. These observations lead to the contradictory situation that SMCEs are very satisfied with the performance of women, but there are still differences in salary systems, where women earn less than men for similar workload.

Working environment

According to the PGA the majority of SMCEs (85%) do not adapt infrastructure to women's needs (e.g. separate sanitation facilities). Another constraint were security issues, such as fear of harassment during night shifts or working in isolated places for example in remote rice mills. Some SMCEs try to address this issue by hiring husband and wife and allow them to work together in order

that women feel safer. Other SMCE's for example of the rice mill cluster in Kurigram in general improved working conditions and OHS standards including installing a first aid box in the factory, providing PPE to workers, creating separate and clean washroom for men and women and a separate breast-feeding room for women as well as providing security to female workers.

Case Study: Bengal Biscuit Bakery

Another good example of an employer promoting good working conditions is the Bengal Biscuit in Barisal. They arranged a separate dressing and washroom and they plan work shifts in consultation with individual workers, which allows to take into consideration their family situation. Tania Rashid and Maria Akhter Urmi, trained in baking and Khadija Akhter, trained in packaging, all 23 years old women work for Bengal Biscuit and expressed that they are highly satisfied with their employment situation. They added that they did not experience constraints in performing their tasks and they receive the support of their families, who pick them up from the factory when they must work late. They all earn 6,000 Taka and contribute to the income of their families (e.g. for treatment or education of family members or home rent).

Unlike young and unmarried women as portrayed above, the majority of working women are married and have children. The PGA shows that traditionally women are responsible for household work and child care in Bangladesh. If their families accept that they work outside their home, then only if they can guarantee that they do not neglect their household chores. This often implies a double burden for women because they need to do both paid and unpaid work, which has an impact on women's physical and mental health. Further, SMCEs need to be aware of this double role of women and show flexibility in terms of working hours.

Family and community level

One of the main barriers of women participating in the labour market is restricted mobility, which prevents them to participate in trainings or work. The PGA found that 9% of interviewed women have access to training, 11% has access to employment and 11% access to information about employment opportunities. The lack of access is less distinctive in terms of access to other services, such as Basic Education or Health since on average 70% of women have access to these services. Interviewees reported that the main constraints and causes for restricted mobility are that training institutions are too far away, they have inadequate information about training and employment opportunities and social barriers hindering them from working outside their home (e.g. fear of family of harassment and security issues, need to ask for permission to leave the house).

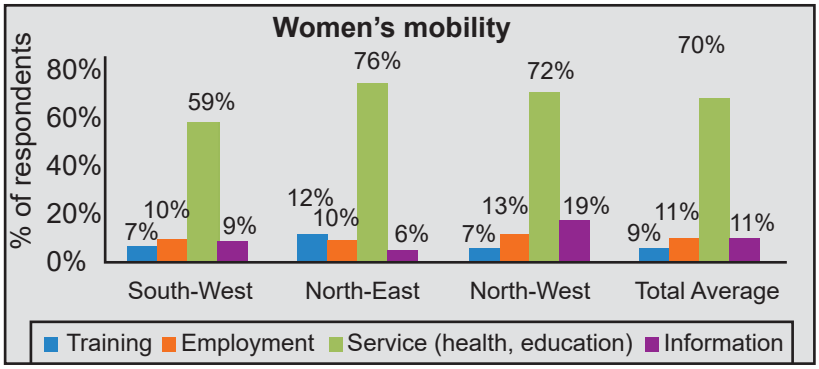


Figure 8: Women's mobility assessed through PGA 2018

Strategy of Shamerto to address challenges regarding women employment in the agro-food processing sector

The PGA analysis conducted early during project implementation allowed to identify key constraints of the participation of women in the agro-food processing sector. The project formulated based on this analysis concrete measures to address the different constraints and increase women participation in the trainings. Further, the PGA was a participatory process, which was also done at industry level and contributed to a change of mindset and addressing stereotypes of SMCEs towards women employment. This could also be observed in the results of a second PGA, which was conducted in 2019. SMCE representatives and female employees confirmed considerable improvements in the different areas as summarized in the graph below.

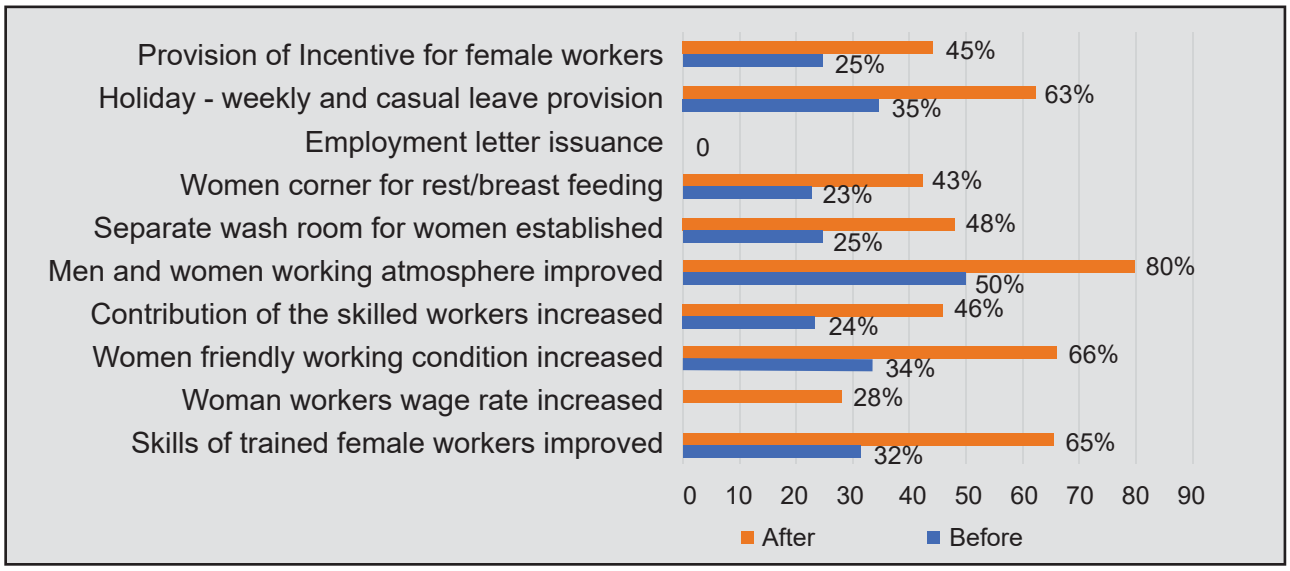


Figure 9: Change of working conditions for women in SMCEs, PGA 2019

Shamerto applied a gender-sensitive approach throughout the project cycle and took respective measures before, during and after training as follows:

Before Training: The project invested a lot in outreach campaigns, advocacy and marketing to on the one hand encourage women to participate in trainings and on the other hand increase awareness among SMCE's regarding gender specific issues.

Examples of awareness raising activities

- Distribution of promotional material (e.g. leaflets and instalment of festoons in public places)
- Awareness campaign: Rupantor, organisation promoting educational theatre developed a song and trained regional theatres to perform this song in project locations to increase awareness on gender equality and encourage women to participate in the trainings
- Production of low cost mass media (e.g. promotion of success stories through local TV or radio; sending out SMS to target group through Telecommunication company)

During Training: The project took different measures to offer an ideal training environment for women, such as engaging men and women from the same family, the promotion of separate sanitation facilities or women corner, rooms where only women work together. Another good practice was the training of female supervisors, which allows women to discuss their personal issues (work or family related) more easily. More than 30% of trainers trained by Shamerto were women. According to some TESPs it was easier to motivate women to participate in long term training than for short term courses. Many of these women were afterwards supported to become entrepreneurs, since this option was for many women easier than looking for employment.

After Training: Overall 63% of all women trained were employed or self-employed after training, which is a satisfactory result given the conservative societal norms and other challenges related to women employment in the agro-food processing sector. However, in the beginning of the project implementation the job placement of women was challenging. As a consequence, an additional occupation was introduced (packaging), because of the high interest of women to work in this field and find employment after training. Further,

Picture 3: Women involved in packaging

Shamerto also encouraged TESPs to negotiate with medium sized companies for the placement of women. Those SMEs usually have better working conditions for women than small cottage and micro enterprises.

The application of the RBF as explained in chapter 4.1. is also seen as a good approach to increase the participation of women in training and secure their employment after graduation. The RBF sets additional financial incentives for TESP to include women and place them in the labour market.

Another strategy of Shamerto to increase women's participation in the agro-food processing sector is the promotion of self-employment. The project worked with the Strengthening Women's Ability for Productive New Opportunities (SWAPNO) implemented by the GoB and UNDP is a social transfer project for ultra-poor women to be engaged in public works essential for the economic and social life for rural communities. It promotes employment, and most importantly future employability, of extreme poor rural women. Zamena Begum and Rashida Begum are two female entrepreneurs employing both 9 female workers. Thanks to the skills trainings of Shamerto for their staff they could increase their productivity by 67%, mainly because they better understood the market demand and customers preferences.

Although there are still massive gaps in terms of gender equality, the project contributed to induce improvements on all levels mentioned above. Many SMCEs reported that they increased the salary of women. Also, in terms of recruiting women there was a lot of progress since in many SMCEs women even outnumber men as the figures of the members of the Chanachur Cluster Group show in

Table 5.

SMCE/Cluster	Total No of workers	Male	Female
Bahazuddin	22	7	15
Shahadat/Vurungamari	21	7	14
Habibur/Vurungamari	17	5	12
Nuruzzaman/Vurungamari	18	4	14

Table 5: Overview of women employed in SMCEs of chanachur cluster members

Case Study: Trainer and self-employed woman *(adapted from Shamerto Stories of Smiling Faces)*

Afsana Khondokar Esha is 22 years old and works as a co-trainer in Barisal. She completed her secondary school, but then couldn't continue her education due to limited financial means of her family. Through an advertisement in the local TV she learnt about a bakery training of the Ship Kutir training provider. She successfully completed the training and was even asked to become a co-trainer. In addition to her job she started her own home-based business. She invested money in equipment and bought a microwave. She sells her products in the neighbourhood and local shops. She can now financially contribute to the household and to her brother's education expenses. Besides this financial benefit, her job also gives her confidence and self-esteem.

4.3.2 Inclusion of disadvantaged people

To select poor and marginalised beneficiaries and classify them, Shamerto introduced a digital monitoring system based on an existing tool, the Progress Out of Poverty Index (PPI) https://drive.google.com/open?id=1fop24eZeFFz-a8EqnuHTCVYXjqAFAXI4. It was developed by the Grameen Foundation for the Katalyst Project and was adapted to the context of Shamerto. The definition of poverty levels is often done by difficult income calculations. To come up with clear categories Shamerto adopted 10 PPI criteria (e.g. No of household members by age group, No of rooms in household, No of mobile phones in household) to define whether a person is extreme poor, poor or not poor. In a second step, Shamerto defined 7 marginalisation criteria to define whether a person is disadvantaged (e.g. ethnic minority, religious minority, disability, women headed households). Only if an extreme poor person is matched with at least one of the 7 criteria, this person is considered as disadvantaged (see criteria below in table 6).

No	PPI	Marginalisation criteria
1	No of household members ≤ 12Years	Ethnic minority
2	No of household members 6-12 years in school	Women headed household
3	Any member in household as day labourer	Trafficking victim household
4	No of rooms in household	Perceived lower category job household
5	Name of construction material use for main room	Religious minority
6	Any Television in household	Disabled person in household
7	No of Fan in household	Remoteness of household
8	No of mobile phones in household	
9	Household owns any bicycle, motorcycle or scooter	
10	Household landownership ≥51 decimal	

Table 6: Criteria of the PPI-Tool

The digital tool supported the TESP in the beneficiary selection process to identify whether they fit into the disadvantaged, poor or extreme poor categories. This information was then fed into the data base, which was linked to the payment system and therefore relevant for the RBF mechanism.

4.4. Advocacy and decent work

Result 4: *An improved enabling environment for skills development, employment, decent work conditions, and promotion of environmental standards in SMCE.*

Achieved results

As Shamerto worked with the SMCEs, in the agro-food processing sector often the most basic labour standards (e.g. fair salaries, contracts, working hours) were not met at a satisfactory level. Also, with regards to environmental friendly production mechanisms the agro-food processing sector still needs to improve. For this reason, Shamerto aims at improving both decent work and environmental standards in this sector by encouraging SMCEs to adopt measures, such as OHS standards, fair payment, holidays, eco-friendly energy use, efficient water use etc. The results in this area are satisfactory since they were largely achieved.

53% of SMCEs adopted at least 2 aspects of decent work standards	**57%** of SMCEs adopted at least two aspects of environmental standards	**46%** of SMCEs are satisfied with at least 2 services of government departments
Baseline: 42% Target: 50%	Baseline: 43% Target: 60%	Baseline: 38% Target: 50%

Decent work

The SMCEs interviewed are sensitized about decent work related questions and try to improve working conditions for their employees. They are convinced that through better working conditions they can improve productivity, retain existing workforce (reduce turnover rate) and attract new skilled workers. More than half of the targeted SMCEs by Shamerto took steps to address at least two decent work related topics, such as working hours and leave regulations, salary and monthly payment systems, improved workplace conditions (e.g. adequate light, ventilation) and improving OHS standards. Further, many SMCEs introduced women-friendly measures, such as separate washrooms or protection at the workplace (see chapter 4.3.). The FGD with SMCEs and rice mill owners showed that they see payment of regular salaries, vacation and leave regulations and OHS measures as integral part of improved quality of production. Nevertheless, only a minority of SMCEs

issues a formal employment contract for the workers. A work contract is an important means for both employers and workers to define scope of the work, remuneration, holidays and other benefits. It hence defines duties and rights of both parties.

Case Study: Mojbor Rice Mill on decent work

Md. Moniruzzaman, 28 years old owner of Mojbor Rice Mill invested BDT 2,500,000 in his rice and flour mill business in Uzirpur Upazila of Barisal district. According to him both employers and employees benefit from skills trainings and decent work standards. The workers are less vulnerable to accidents, machine safety is ensured and the productivity increases. In his mill he ensured PPEs such as masks, gloves and shoes. On an administrative level he is registering data covering different aspects (attendance, salary, working time). He even pays overtime for workers. He is active in the Uzirpur SMCE Cluster Network and convinced other members to ensure decent work standards in their factories.

Shamerto also contributed to an increase of salaries in the agro-food processing sectors. If workers are trained and certified they also receive higher salaries. Especially women benefit from this because earlier they were often working as unpaid casual workers in family SMCEs.

Environment-friendly production

Half of the targeted SMCEs took measures to improve environmental standards related to energy use, waste management and recycling, and disposal of waste water. Many SMCE's were able to save costs through energy savings or improved waste management techniques. Despite these positive steps there is much more untapped potential in the field of waste management for example. Solid waste and waste water cause pollution, dust from milling that can affect the respiratory system or black smoke caused by ovens from bakeries.

Advocacy to address business constraints

A key focus of Shamerto was the strengthening of the Business Intermediary Organisations (BIOs), which serve as a sort of business trade associations. They represent their members (SMCEs) interests through lobbying the relevant authorities and act as amplifier to transmit information about regulations, which affect their members. A study commissioned by Shamerto revealed that the SMCEs face similar business constraints they best address together through BIOs. Among the main constraints identified are the following: banks do not accept coins from SMCEs, distrust of law enforcement agency, problems regarding issuing licences, fines from mobile courts due to non-compliance, lack of access to financial services. One of the conclusions of the study was that many SMCE owners have limited knowledge about existing rules and regulations. Especially older business men often conduct their business in traditional means with limited knowledge about compliance with new regulations. Shamerto addressed this issue in its business development trainings, where entrepreneurs learnt about rules and regulations, compliance, ethical business practice, licences, book keeping etc. Another measure Shamerto introduced to support advocacy for SMCEs was the promotion of local SMCE cluster platforms/networks (see chapter 5.2.). These groups helped SMCEs to address constraints jointly and negotiate with service providers to solve their problems (e.g. negotiate with banks to accept coins, negotiate with electricity providers to deal with power cuts). Further, Shamerto facilitated different public-private multi-stakeholder dialogue meetings and public hearings, where these cluster groups exchanged with public regulatory authorities on regulation and compliance requirements. These round table discussions between regulatory bodies and SMCEs supported the exchange of information and elaborating action plans for increased cooperation. One measure regulatory authorities and SMCEs agreed on in the action plan, was to conduct awareness raising campaigns for example regarding compliance issues.

4.5. Institutionalisation

Result 5: National skills development system actors and professional associations endorse and adopt products, approaches and models generated and innovated by the Action.

Achieved results

Shamerto developed a TESP operated skills training, testing and certification and job placement system for the agro-food processing sector, which is aligned to the NTVQF. The NTVQF ensures qualitative, demand-driven skills development and offers a comprehensive framework for all qualifications in TVET. The NTVQF requires three major steps for nationally recognised standards: 1) competency standards developed together with the industries to ensure that defined knowledge and skills correspond to the needs of the private sector, 2) competency-based training with increased focus on worked based learning instead of theory based learning and 3) a competency assessment and certification system to assess students skills through certified assessors. The seven occupations developed by Shamerto as described in Chapter 4.1. were developed within the system of the NTVQF and fulfil all requirements (competency standards, competency based training, assessment and certification). The BTEB published the curricula and learning material developed by Shamerto on its website and further uses products, developed during this project. In these aspects Shamerto achieved the results aspired in the targets. There are already some actors, such as for example TESPs applying the model developed by Shamerto as their own business model for commercial purpose, which shows positive results regarding scaling up this model. Despite this promising trend, more investment needs to be done to attract additional actors in this regard.

Skills development (**103 TESPs**) and assessment (**18 RTOs**) system established.	**4** TESPs use approaches developed by project	**7** curricula developed
Target: TESP skills and assessment model in place	Target: 10 actors	Target: 14 curricula developed

Development of competency standards and involvement of private sector

The BTEB is since 2011 responsible for the development of competency standards. The process for the development of these standards is as follows: the BTEB creates a technical sub-committee for different occupations. These technical subcommittees consist of 5-6 members. The technical subcommittee develops draft standards and submits to the Standards and Curriculum Development Committee (SCDC). SCDC consists of representatives from industry, Directorate of Technical Education (DTE), Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), BTEB and academia. The industrial skills councils (ISC) approve the developed competency standards and the final standards will be formally approved by the governing board of BTEB and then published. Based on this learning material was developed and shared with the TESP for feedback. Hereby it is important to note that BTEB and the ISC are developing the curricula jointly to reflect the experience of the industries. In the beginning it was challenging because representatives of the industries were not very familiar with technical curricula development. They received some training first before starting the process of curricula development. All the developed standards for the seven professions are aligned to the NTVQF. It will be revised after three years to ensure regular updates in close cooperation with the industries.

Mr. S M Shahjahan, Deputy Director, BTEB:
"Without the industry we don't do anything. It is crucial to involve the experts from the different industries in every step of competency development. If the industry is satisfied with the skills of workers, it means that the quality of the competency standard is fine."

Covid-19 response

Education and training was interrupted due to Covid-19 and therefore the GoB tried to develop E-Learning initiatives to continue education in the TVET sector. Digitalisation was already a priority of the GOB before the outbreak of the Covid-19 crisis. The GoB launched the access to information

program (a2i) aiming at establishing digital centers at local government level and hereby improving connectivity of poor men and women also in remote areas. In Bangladesh mobile phone use is relatively high especially among the younger generation. According to Hootsuite of a total population of 163,9 million there are 163 mobile phone connections and 66 million active internet users, which corresponds to 41% of the total population. Nevertheless, access to digital learning remains a concern especially for poor and disadvantaged people. BTEB developed different online documents and E-Learning material for training purposes. It aims at maintaining some aspects of digitalisation beyond the Covid-19 crisis and move more towards a blended learning approach. However, the BTEB sees many challenges because digital learning requires a lot of infrastructure development because trainees need access to devices and good connectivity. The ISC sees an important role of Shamerto related to food and hygiene quality since this is a vital part of the training content. The Covid-19 crisis showed the importance of using PPE for the food production and respecting the hygiene and quality standards of food production and packaging.

Added value of Shamerto

Different organisations apply different approaches in their skills development programmes in Bangladesh. For the BTEB the priority is quality assurance and the respect of the Implementation Manual of the NTVQF, which is valid for all skills projects. The added value of Shamerto is certainly a strong job placement component, which is supported through the application of the RBF. This approach allowed Shamerto to not only train over 21´400 people and ensure to reach many women and disadvantaged people, but also place 73% of them in the labour market. Another added value of Shamerto is the institutionalisation of the seven occupations developed, which was achieved during a very short time period. The project covered all aspects of institutionalisation from the development of the competency standard, learning material, to the training of certified trainers and assessors, and establishment of assessment and certification centers. Hereby, the project considerably contributed to the quality assurance of skills development within the agro-food processing sector. Institutionalisation is one of the main lessons learnt from Shamerto. It takes time in the beginning to identify the right stakeholders, to develop the curricula and include the private sector in all steps, but the project intervention will be more sustainable in the long run if institutionally anchored.

Outlook – future plans for agro-food processing sector

Agro-food processing is one of the important sub-sectors in the country. The GoB is interested to develop more competency standards for this sector since BTEB sees a lot of potential in this sector for employment promotion. There are in total 13 sub-sectors in the agro-food processing. The seven occupations developed by Shamerto laid a good foundation to expand to other sub-sectors and replicate good experiences.

5. Lessons learnt

This section will summarise the main lessons learnt and measures to address certain challenges as described in chapter 4. The impact of Shamerto will be asessed along aspects linked to social, economic, environmental and policy levels. Sustainability of the project will be analysed along institutional and financial sustainability.

5.1. Impact

Shamerto achieved good results on all four impact levels: Shamerto trained over 21´400 trainees, many of them women and disadvantaged persons (social impact) and placed 73% of them in SMCEs, which in turn led to increased productivity of these small companies since they had access to skilled workforce (economic impact). Through the application of new technology and awareness raising on environmental friendly production methods the environmental impact was increased. Curricula development and establishment of a skills training, testing and certification and job

placement system for the agro-food processing sector strengthened the national TVET reform agenda and NTQVF (institutional impact). While the impact on the institutional level and economic level are undisputed due to a high results achievements levels, the impact on social level stands not at 100% because the project didn't achieve the target figures (25'000 trainees) and faced some difficulties in placing women in the labour market. Further, the figure of trainees, who participated in the assessment process, was also not as high as expected. Nevertheless, the project tried to find solutions to increase the employment rate of women as described in chapter 4.3. and more in general, reach the ambitious target figures of 25'000 trainees. In terms of environmental sustainability, the project exceeded the aspired targets, which shows that SMCEs are sensitized about environmental issues and see a benefit for example in saving energy and costs. However, the target values in this area are not very ambitious with adopting at least two environmental friendly standards. There is a lot of potential to do more in this field in the agro-food processing sector for example in waste management.

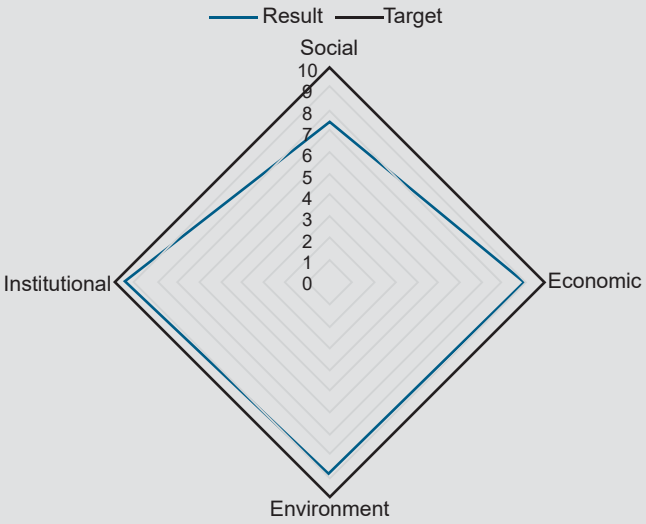


Figure 10: Impact in terms of achievement of target results

5.2. Sustainability

Institutional sustainability

The institutional sustainability of Shamerto is assessed as very high, since the skills development measures and related products were developed under the NTQVF and in close partnership with BTEB. Shamerto hence aligned activities to existing processes of the TVET reform agenda with involvement of respective government agencies. Further, Shamerto invested a lot in capacity development of different actors (e.g. TESPs, SMCEs, BIOs) and built on existing experience. The alignment with existing policies and regulatory frameworks allows that developed processes and skills delivery models will be used further in the agro-food processing sector. The curricula developed for the seven occupations were published on the BTEB website and BTEB will regularly update the curricula and learning material, also beyond project implementation.

Financial sustainability

One of the key objectives of any skills development project is to achieve sustainability. Financial sustainability is crucial to reach target groups beyond the intervention period and ensure efficient use of resources. Also the BTEB expects from the TESPs that they continue training through a self-financing model. BTEB puts all competency standards and learning material at disposal for training to continue after project end. While Shamerto made a lot of progress in institutionalising the curricula for seven occupations, skills delivery modules and building system relevant mechanisms (certified trainers, assessment centers), the sustainability of institutional TESPs is insufficient. Most of the interviewed TESPs stated that they will continue their training and apply the delivery model developed by Shamerto. However, since funding ended, they need to charge the trainees for the course and for many of them these charges are not affordable. Specifically, disadvantaged groups do not pay for these services, which shows that these TESPs need to either develop a business model or are dependent from external support. For the industry based training providers the picture looks a bit different. They need access to skilled workforce and therefore have an interest in training people for this sector. Hence, many SMCEs find solutions for example for refunding. The Thai Bakery for example trains people, employs them and asks them to pay back parts of the training costs from their salary. Another example is the Mojbor rice mill, which is member of a local agro-food processing association with 150 members. During each meeting the different SMCEs define how many skilled workers they need and where they need to train. This is a form of a local skills gap

analysis, which allows SMEs to train according to the needs. For increased financial sustainability of skills trainings the support of the private sector is therefore key. SMCEs need to be ready to pay for training and see the benefit of skilled workers. The application of the RBF mechanism was also interesting to shift from a heavily subsidised skills training model to a more business oriented and incentive driven delivery model.

5.3. Learning from Shamerto

Integrated approach for skills development

Shamerto worked from the beginning of the project with an integrated approach for skills development covering both the supply side (skilled workforce) and demand side (job creation). While Result 1 covered all aspects related to skills delivery (curricula development, capacity development of TESPs, ToT, assessment) Result 2 improved the productivity of SMCEs that led in many cases to the creation of additional jobs and hence an increased demand for skilled workforce. The project also worked on policy and advocacy level to address different business constraints and institutionalise processes within existing system.

Institutionalisation

Shamerto achieved good results in the field of institutionalisation in a very short time period. To develop skills trainings aligned to national skills standards usually takes time, but the project managed to institutionalise processes within only three years. The established cooperation with government regulatory agencies like the BTEB was key for increasing institutional sustainability of Shamerto. Another aspect, which supported institutionalisation was the cooperation with the private sector. BTEB worked closely with the ISC to ensure that the demands of the industries in the agro-food processing sector are reflected in the skills trainings. Besides the development of demand driven skills trainings this also supported the set-up of 18 RTOs for the assessment process.

Results based financing mechanism

The RBF approach is seen as a unique approach for skills delivery in Bangladesh, which offers incentives for training providers to not just train, but also place trainees in the labour market afterwards. The approach has also supported employment promotion of women and disadvantaged groups, since TESPs received financial incentives according to different beneficiary categories.

Employment promotion of women

Due to conservative societal norms mainly in rural areas, inadequate working conditions and stereotypes from private sector, it is challenging to bring women in employment. Shamerto however found different approaches to address these manifold challenges. The PGAs helped to identify the different constraints and to raise awareness among SMCEs regarding the benefits of women employment and required changes in terms of working conditions. Shamerto further trained women trainers and introduced new occupations that were found to be more suitable for women.

Diversification of skills delivery models

The Shamerto project is a good example for adaptive project management. Through constant context analysis of the different factors influencing the project, the Shamerto project staff managed to adapt fast to the evolving context and introduced new measures to achieve project results. It was for example not foreseen at project beginning to offer industry based skills trainings, but it was introduced due to the demand of SMCEs for practical training (see chapter 4.1.) Another example for project adaptations is the introduction of two new professions to increase the number of women employed (see chapter 4.3.)

Support of SMCE cluster networks

Shamerto facilitated the creation of different SMCE cluster networks, which aim at forwarding the interests of members and address business constraints jointly. These networks also conduct a sort of local skills gap analysis, where they define current and future needs of skilled workers in different sectors. These networks will continue meeting beyond project end for joint advocacy measures and mutual support.

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Annex – Interview schedule

Interviewee	Method	Location	Who	Schedule		Remarks
				Date	Time	
Beneficiaries (women and disabled people Bengal Biscuit Factory) Abdur Rahman- rahman.bsl@gmail.com	Interview at District Office	Barisal	District Manager, Huda	25/06/20	4 pm	3-4 trained graduates who are working at Bengal perspective, Mr. Rahman can be interviewed.
System level actors – BTEB S M Shahjahan, Deputy Director, BTEB, e mail bteb@yahoo.com Mr. Mabud, email mabud82@gmail.com	Zoom Call	Dhaka / remote	Huda, Sabrina	24/06/20	(Dhaka time)	Both BTEB and ISC will be together
SMCEs (SMCE Cluster Network) To be linked through email ID shamertokurigram@gmail.com	Interview at District Office or in SMCEs	Kurigram	District Manager, Huda	23/06/20	11 am	4 persons
Shawpna Chanachur (self-employed) To be linked through email ID shamertokurigram@gmail.com	Interview at District Office or in SMCEs	Kurigram	District Manager, Huda	23/06/20	2 pm	4 persons
Interaction with TESP Atique- epibarisal2011@gmail.com, Shahazada- prantojon.bd@gmail.com Kalpana- kalpanarahman1981@gmail.com Nazrul Islam: nazrul@djfbd.org	Zoom Call?	Barisal	District Manager, Huda, Sabrina	24/06/20	11 pm	4 TESP
Certified trainers To be linked through email ID shamertokurigram@gmail.com	Interview at District Office	Kurigram	District Manager, Huda	22/06/20	11 am	4 persons

Assessor BTEB	Interview with one assessor	Barisal	District Manager, Huda	25/06/20	2 pm	Sonia Ruma- soniaruma2016@gmail.com
Canachur production To be linked through email ID shamertokurigram@gmail.com	Interview with SMCE	Kurigram	District Manager, Huda	22/06/20	2 pm	4 persons
Mojbor Rice and Flour Moniruzzaman- moziborrice@gmail.com	Interview with SMCE	Barisal	District Manager, Huda	25/06/20	11 pm	
Industrial Skills Council Mr. S R Bhuiyan, Chairman, ISC; email chairman.ceafs@gmail.com	Online Interview	Dhaka / remote	Huda, Sabrina	24/06/20	3 pm	

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