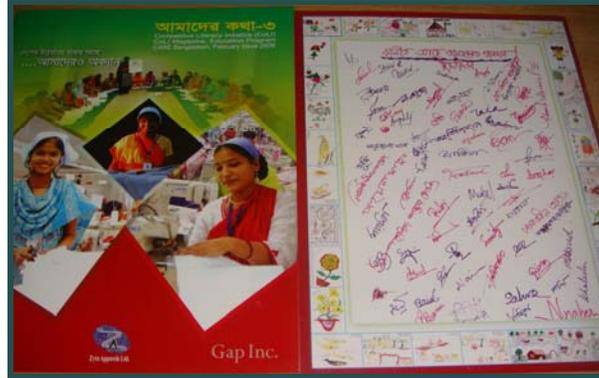


Competitive Literacy Initiative (CoLI) Pilot Project

Education Program



Project Evaluation and Closing Report

March 2007-2010

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**Competitive Literacy Initiative (CoLI)
Pilot Project
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Abbreviation

CoLI: Competitive Literacy initiatives

BGMEA: Bangladesh Garment Manufacturer and Exporters Association

ABC: Area Based Committee

ADC: Area Development Committee

Zyta: The main implementer factory

Primer: Workbooks for the learners

Executive Summary

In Bangladesh garment industries contribute largely in the social development of the country by employing almost 3 million workers. Majority of these women workers are mostly illiterate migrant rural women coming to the large cities like Dhaka, without any prior experience as a factory worker. They are unaware of their rights in the workplace, at home and in the society. They do not have any knowledge on safe water, hygiene, food and nutrition which will keep them strong to continue as a worker for a longer time.

The “Competitive Literacy Initiative (CoLI)” is a pilot project of CARE Bangladesh Education Program, funded by Gap Foundation, specially designed to address the need of necessary skills required to improve the efficiency of the workers as a skilled labor and also improve the quality of their personal life. CoLI project initially started in May 2007, later on the pilot phase achieved extension yearly, and finally ended in March 2010. The pilot phase was able to address approximately 930 employees, primarily women, of Zyta Apparels, a Gap Foundation supplier and few other factories located in the Mirpur area of Dhaka city.

CoLI project is very popular among the Zyta and non Zyta factory workers. It has given them an opportunity to learn basic education in an interesting way. CoLI have also involved community members and factory management in all its activities. However the timing and frequent drop out due to migration from the slums are few key constraints for this program as perceived by the facilitators. Zyta and non Zyta factories have separate office timing, which disrupts the learning sessions and its attendance. The learning centers are located at the interior of the slums, which are a security concern at night for anybody monitoring the project especially for the female staffs as well as the learners and facilitators.

Apart from all the constraints still CoLI activities have completed all their objectives. 6 Self sustain groups have been formed both at Zyta factory and at the community level, these groups will carry forward the remaining work and all project activities in future. Peer facilitators, learners, ABC and ADC members will jointly contribute to continue the initiatives of self sustain groups. New 10 learning centers will work now to continue CoLI activities in the next phase. CoLI learning centers provides a place where the workers can learn education, relax and interact among peer workers after work. They also have an opportunity through CoLI project to express their talents through creative works like singing, dancing and also writing in their magazines. Their relation with the management has also improved, factory data shows a reduction in sick leaves and incidence of small injuries as well, the reason may be contributed by the education intervention. The garment workers under this program are not shy girls any more, they have

regained their self confidence, now they are able to negotiate and establish their rights in their workplace. They can also plan their movement independently by local transports and other means, without any help from others, now each can write their own leave application by themselves too.

They are practicing their knowledge to some extent in their personal life, but it needs more in depth research to establish the impact of education on their lives. This initiative has missed the opportunity to involve the male workers, there is a huge unmet need among the male workers as well. Advocacy with BGMEA should be considered to replicate this process of education formally in other factories also. Because education is not only a basic right also it is essential for the factory workers to be a skilled worker. Education can also be a solution to the present unrest situation in the garment sector of Bangladesh. Care Bangladesh has great potential and evidence of success to support BGMEA in dealing with the situation through education program and can create a major impact overall.

Competitive Literacy Initiative (CoLI), Pilot Project

Evaluation and Closing Report

Introduction

In Bangladesh garment industries contributes largely in the social development of the country by employing almost 3 million workers. According to Bangladesh Garment manufacturers Association website, 80-90% of them are women, and at present garment sector is the 2nd largest employers in Bangladesh after agriculture.

Majority of these women workers are mostly illiterate migrant rural women coming to the large cities like Dhaka, without any prior experience as a factory worker. Although some of them have few years of primary education, yet the levels are in equal among them and insufficient to support them as a skilled labor. Financial deprivation and social insecurity as a girl child both makes them vulnerable and deprives their rights to education, social mobility, and access to resources and services in their home. They are unaware of their rights in the workplace, at home and in the society. They do not have any knowledge on safe water, hygiene, food and nutrition which will keep them strong to continue as a worker for a longer time. So they migrate to the cities with the hope of improving the financial status of her own and her whole family to join the garment factories. This garments job enables them to get out of their homes and a job opportunity in a garment factory is the first step of their empowerment. But the job of helper or operator requires certain skills and minimum level of education that they do not have.

The “Competitive Literacy Initiative (CoLI)” is a pilot project of CARE Bangladesh Education Program, funded by Gap Foundation, specially designed to address the need of necessary skills required to improve the efficiency of the workers as a skilled labor and their personal life. During this phase, CARE focused on functional literacy programs to raise workers’ productivity and self-esteem. In this sense, the literacy program helped to improve not only workers’ capacity to read and write, but their understanding of their rights and responsibility both as employees and women. With these skills in hand, women are expanding their employment opportunities and improving their overall chances of economic security.

CoLI project initially started in May 2007, later on the pilot phase achieved extension yearly,

and finally ended in March 2010. The pilot phase was able to address approximately 930 employees, primarily women, of few selected factories in Dhaka. The main participants of this program are the 930 women workers from Zyta Apparels Ltd, a Gap Foundation supplier, and also workers from other factories living in the same surrounding communities in Mirpur Area where the Zyta workers live.

Goal of CoLI project:

The goal of the project is to directly address the pressing need for garment factory workers to broaden their skill sets so they are more competitive in the job market and play a more active and visible role in society. Acquiring functional literacy expands workers' productivity through knowledge and skills that have immediate application in their daily work lives, raises their self-esteem, and empowers them to take advantage of opportunities in a larger number of industries.

In addition to life skills education and literacy training, workers will receive training on technical skills to improve productivity in their current job increase opportunities they have to transition to more senior positions with increased responsibility. This integrated approach ensures that female workers can be more competitive in a tightening job market and contribute more fully to the larger social development sphere in Bangladesh.

Objectives of CoLI project:

Objective I: Functional Literacy: CARE will concentrate on functional literacy and numeracy skills for garment workers, most of who are from rural areas and had dropped out of the formal education system. The proposed project will not only improve workers' capacity to read and write, but to better understand their rights and responsibilities as employees. With these skills in hand, workers will expand their employment opportunities in other lines of work, and improve their overall chances of economic security.

Objective II: Career-strengthening literacy: Lessons will concentrate on basic skills that will help women to improve their careers and livelihoods, such as: the ability to read and understand job descriptions; writing a CV; reading and understanding job descriptions, salary sheets and attendance records; factory rules and regulations; measurements; functional English; financial transactions; personal budgets; and the ability to read newspapers and magazines.

Objective III: Social awareness: Lessons will concentrate on basic skills that will help women improve their self esteem and participation in society, such as: Public speaking; decision making;

negotiation; leadership; using local available resources provided by government and NGOs; civil law; gender and diversity; reproductive health issues; HIV/AIDS, etc.

Objective IV: Reproductive health: To improve workers health and general wellbeing, CARE will provide education on general health, hygiene, nutrition, reproductive health issues, HIV and AIDS, Immunization, etc. CARE will also work to ensure maternal and early childhood health services and empower women with information and skills to support healthy practices. In addition, CARE will work with women to advocate for an improved social and policy environment that supports the sexual and reproductive rights of women.

Objective V: Self-help groups: To empower women with greater financial independence, CARE will establish factory- and community-based self-help groups where workers and their families can implement collective initiatives for economic development using their own savings and resources. Members of these groups will also be able to increase their individual earnings through savings and investment. CARE will support these groups with technical training on leadership, enterprise development and business management.

Purpose of this consultancy:

The main purpose of this consultancy is to assess the Progress of CoLI project and develop the final report of the CoLI Pilot Project in Dhaka, by exploring the present status of the existing activities of the pilot project. The prospect of sustainability of the different components of the project and its various components will also be made. Consultant will also document the learner's progress, challenges and success of this project in consultation with the beneficiaries, Area Based and Area Development committee and also the management and garments workers of Zyta factory.

Specific Objectives:

- a) Assess the learning centers in terms of indicators addressing literacy program (e.g. Learning achievement, learning process, teaching methodology, learning environment, dropout, etc).
- b) Assess wider community's engagement and capacity in managing the learning centers.
- c) To documents + 3 years component wise outcome in relation to project inputs, taking social indicators into consideration.
- d) To review & modify monitoring & evaluation system of the project.
- e) To make appropriate recommendations based on programmatic challenges, barriers, and

further opportunities for planning and effective implementations.

- f) To set an effective guidelines & exit plan with recommendations future sustainability of the project.

Document the impact of the programme components e.g. functional literacy, social awareness on 'Fire Prevention, Clean water/sanitation, Nutritious Food, Importance of Girls' Education, Marriage laws, Health problems, Marriage Registration, Safety and Security in the workplace - First Aid, Personal Safety, HIV/AIDs, Labor laws, Conservation of utilities (gas, electricity, etc) Caring for children, Personal savings, Women's Empowerment, Indigenous people in Bangladesh, Drugs, Emergency Relief (what to do during emergencies) etc and document the success and challenges of this project.

Scope of the report

The team of CoLI project and Team leader Education of Care Bangladesh supported the consultant in understanding the activities and achievements made by the project since 2007 among the women workers. However in depth data analysis could not be made due to the unavailability of the workers in the day time. But inspite of the time constraint an effort was made through this report to capture the impact, success, challenges of this pilot project. Observation and group discussion methods were used to address the workers for their learning sessions and to capture their experience, feelings and other activities in the project. At the end of this report recommendation given to improve and strengthen the existing activities along with combining new components that has already shown evidence of success in other Care Bangladesh projects with garment workers.

Methodology

The garment workers are only available after evening, and they are scheduled to attend their learning centers mostly after 9pm. So in discussion with the Care team, 3 planned visits were made to the project site to meet all the stakeholders of this project in a convenient time for the workers. On April 21, a night session was attended by the consultant where the project participants described their roles, responsibilities and existing activities in groups in an organized way, followed by the workers singing and dancing performances. After that a learning center was visited in a slum in Mirpur, Block-Ta, where night classes were going on. Another visit was made on April 22, where focus group discussion with the learners and individual interviews of

peer facilitators was obtained. A discussion meeting was also done with the Area Based committee (ABC) and Area Development committee (ADC) members on the same occasion. On April 26 a meeting with Zyta management was also held at the factory and another visit to the Cosmos learning center was also made on the same day to discuss the prospects of their handicrafts items and its future.

The CoLI team in Care Bangladesh provided all types of documents and reports, based on those information and observed experiences from the site visits, this report was made. Information and experiences from the learners, facilitators, ABC & ADC members, management of Zyta factories were all considered in preparation of this report.

Documents reviewed:

1. Competitive Literacy Initiative -Phase III initiative-Proposal
2. CoLI year completion report-2009
3. Categorization of learners I,II & III- questionnaire
4. CoLI six monthly report
5. Progress Assessment of CoLI- 2009
6. Primers
7. Performance report
8. Assessment tools of Gap Inc and Care Bangladesh

Person interviewed:

1. Care Education Program: Team Leader, Project Manager and other staffs of CoLI
2. ABC & ADC members: 5
3. Learners: 20
4. Peer Facilitators: 19
5. Volunteers: 2
6. Management of Zyta: Production Director and Assistant General Manager, IT manager

Present activities after March 2010

CoLI project provides functional literacy to these workers not only to enable them to be more effective in their current employment, but also to prepare them to be more competitive in the job market along with necessary education on life skills to enable them having more control over their lives. Therefore, the proposed literacy training improving not only workers' capacity to read and write, but to learn what is required for and has immediate application in their daily work lives. With these skills in hand, workers will expand their employment opportunities in other lines of work, improving their overall chances of economic security. CARE use the results and lessons learnt from the pilot to rapidly scale up, operations at all factories in which Gap remains committed as a Business partner.

CARE aimed to establish as many 40 factory/community-based learning centers to serve 25 learners each. But up to March 30, 2010, only 31 centers were established, among them 12 were inside the Zyta factory and other 19 were in the communities. CoLI centers run for one and half hours a day thrice a week. 31 facilitators were trained, 10 of them with better performance was selected by Care CoLI project to continue in their new phase, and the remaining 21 facilitators are engaged in the community to develop self sustain groups, to continue the CoLI activities and other new initiatives.

Project profile:

Starting Date	: 1st March 2007
Location	: 5 Urban Slums in Mirpur, Dhaka
Factory	: Zyta Apparels
Funded by	: Gap Foundation Inc.
930 Women Garment workers, Zyta Garments: 360, Community: 570	
5 Area Based Committee (ABC) in 4 Urban Slum and one Zyta Garments in Mirpur	
Total ABC members	: 27 (Female16, Male11)
<i>1 Area Development Committee (ADC)</i>	
Total ADC Members	: 13 (Female 7, Male 6)
Garment Management	: 5(Female 1, Male 4)
Network members	: 10 (Female 3, Male 7)

In March 2008 the project started its activities with a budget of \$58,059. With its promising performance, in the last year CoLI received a fund of \$100,000 for completing its final activities.

<u>Major activities:</u>	<u>Communities under intervention:</u>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional Literacy • Career-Strengthening Literacy • Social Awareness • Technical and Alternative Skill Building • Self Sustain Group 	<p>Locations of the learning centers are within the following communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RupNagar Abashik Area • Bholar Basti • Mirpur-Ta Black • Duary Para.
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Only Zyta Apparels Ltd, a Gap Foundation supplier is the direct partner in this project. 360 female workers from Zyta were enrolled in this project, while 570 other learners were drawn from the above communities, who are workers from other garment factories located in Mirpur area.

Peer Facilitator (PFs): They are also workers from the same factories or communities, they have 8-10 years education or more, and were trained from Care CoLI project. They have joined the program voluntarily to work as a peer facilitator, their monthly remuneration used to be Tk.1500 monthly. 12 of them are from Zyta and rest 19 are from the same communities of the workers.

Primers:

CoLI project has developed a set of primers based on the process outcome of Social interaction, Carrier Strengthening Literacy process of 2nd phase. The primer was prepared based on the learner needs and is a combination of 4 (Four) books:

a) Bangla Book (Shelai Kori Likhi pori): A pictorial workbook in Bengali, easy for the workers to read, write, recognize the alphabets and connecting signs. Words used here are taken from their words bank, words they use in their everyday life at home or at their workplace. Example of words: Taka(currency), cutter, scissor, button ,hole, ma(mother), baba(father) etc.

b) Math Book (Shelai Kori Hishab Shikhi): A pictorial workbook for mathematics. It has 40 lessons, comprises of basic numbers 1-50, simple addition, subtraction. Simple math problems are created with examples of numerical problems that they face at the factory, grocery shopping etc. E.g. Price of 1 kg rice, counting of money etc

c) English Work Book: Pictorial English workbook. Using common words for the workers,



to help them read, write, and recognize the English alphabets. English word used e.g. COLI Center, gender, bonus, fabrics, overtime, cutter, hole etc.

d) Jibon Kotha: It is written on 40 topics from the regular life, which will enhance her life in quality, improve her knowledge and perception of life. She will understand her rights, health problems, family, parents, labor laws etc. E.g Our family, cleanliness, our work, safe water and sanitation, safety, fire, gender, factory rules etc.

Process of teaching:

Initially the learners are divided into groups, through a selection process. Based on their basic education level and other skills they are divided into 3 categories. Then first 3 month they learn to identify their expectations, goals and develop an expectation tree, with the help of their facilitator.

Classification of learners:

Initially the workers are selected on the basis of the following criteria's into 3 groups.

Group 1: Read and write simple sentences and easy numerical problems without any difficulties. They will start from lesson 21 of Bengali primer and lesson 16 of math's primer in the 1st year.

Group 2: Recognize, read words and write words. Only able to calculate easy sums of addition. They will start from lesson 8 in Bengali primer and lesson 8 in math's primer in the first year.

Group 3: Those who can read a few alphabets or numbers and those who recognize nothing. They will start from lesson 1 in Bengali primer and lesson 1 in math's primer in the first year.

Expectation tree: This is an exercise, the learners develops in a group, under their respective facilitator. They ask themselves, they enquire, they identify, they explore and then they develop this expectation tree for their group. There are 4 parts in the tree:



Fig1: Learners are creating their expectation tree, a completed expectation tree

- a) Initially they identify their expectations in their life
- b) Then they identify what are their existing resources
- c) They also identify their barriers that they have to overcome to achieve their expectations
- d) What are the activities they need to do, to reach their expectation

Learning process:

Initial 3 months, the learner's works with the facilitator, and identifies as many words as they know, from those they use frequently in their workplace or at home. In this way they create a word bank. Then they divide the words into alphabets and try to make alternate words with those alphabets and connecting signs. From this bank, they start learning the words and how to read and write and also try to learn the right pronunciation. Then they are given exercise books, which contains the same words from their word banks. Slowly they learn to identify and find words from the exercise books, the ones they know. Then they try to write the alphabets from those words by copying. After repeated practice in the workbook they learn writing each alphabet from the words and also to read. The alphabet orientation starts from any alphabets, not following any particular order, it is different than the traditional process taught in the regular schools.

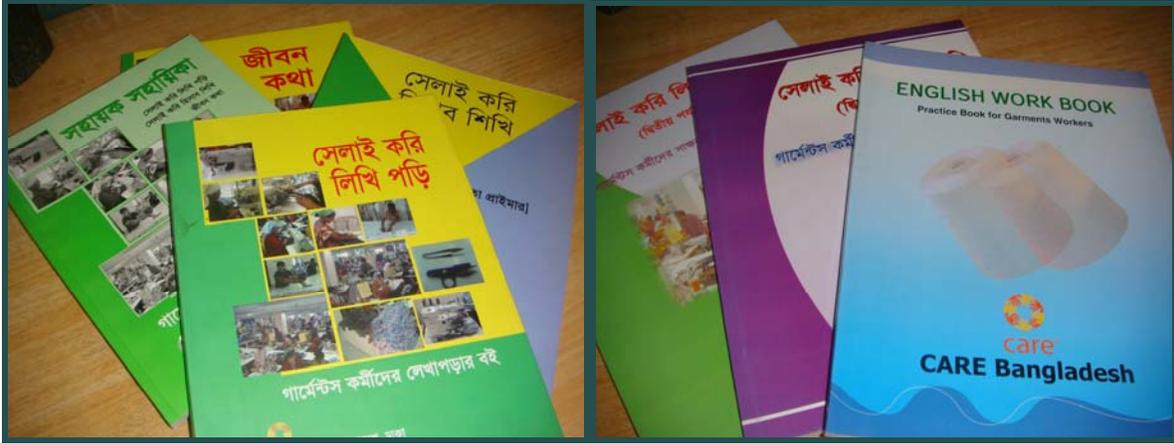


Fig2: CoLI project primers of 1st and 2nd stage

CoLI Model

1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year	5th Year
Preparatory Work: 3 Month a. Functional Literacy Numeracy c. Social Awareness: 8 Month Learner Assessment: 1 Month Total 12 Month	Preparatory Work: 1 Month a. Career Strengthening b. Numeracy c. Social Awareness: 9 Month Technical Skills/Alternative Skills: 1 Month Learner Assessment: 1 Month Total 12 Month	Preparatory Work: 1 Month a. Advance level career strengthening literacy b. English c. Social awareness d. preparatory work for self sustaining group: 9 Month Technical Skills/Alternative Skills: 1 Month Learner Assessment: 1 Month Total 12 Month	Continuing Education, CoLI resource center run by the self sustain group	

1st Year:

- Functional Literacy: Total lesson 40, Numeracy: Total lesson: 40, Social Awareness: Total lesson: 15 (Our Family, My Hygiene, Honesty, Fire etc)

2nd Year:

- Career Strengthening: Total lesson: 31 (CV writing, interview process, Appointment letter etc), Numeracy: Total lesson: 40, Social Awareness: Total lesson: 13 (Social environment, Earthquake, Disability, Corruption etc)

- Technical Skills for CoLI participants (Factory workers): Machine operation, cutting, measurement for 50 workers
- Alternative Skills for CoLI participants (Community level): Block printing, tailoring etc for 50 participants

3rd Year:

- Advance level career strengthening literacy (reading and sharing): 10 books, English: Total lesson: 74
- Social Awareness: Total lesson: 12 (Women empowerment, drag, security & safety at workplace)
- Preparatory work for self sustaining group: 5 groups will form
- Technical Skills for CoLI participants (Factory workers): Machine operation, cutting, measurement for 50 workers

Alternative Skills for CoLI participants (Community level): Block printing, tailoring etc for 50 Participants.

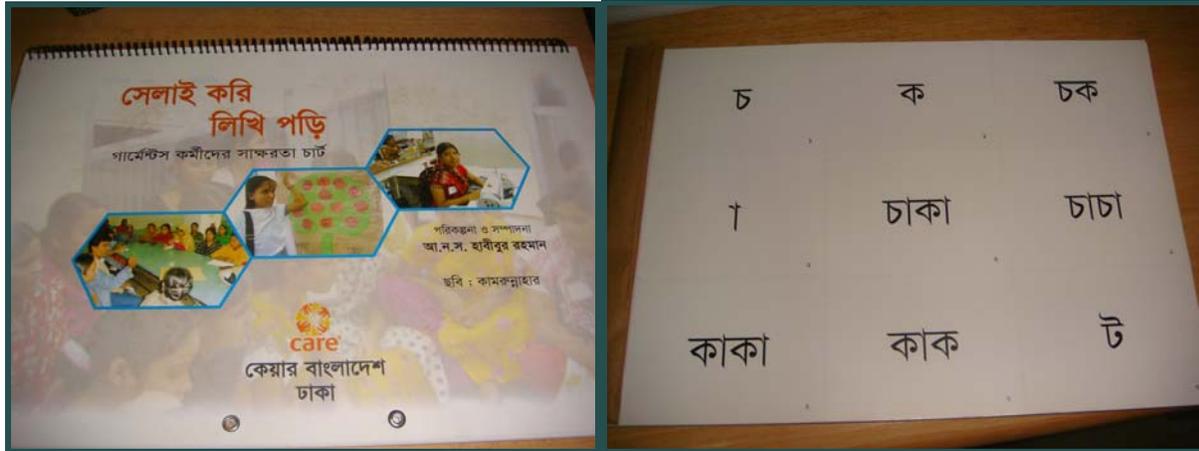


Fig3: CoLI project flip chart(left) and practicing work book(right)

Expected output:

After completing 1st year:

Group 1: Learners will complete Bengali and math primer and will be able to express own words in a meaningful way.

Group 2: Learners will be able to read and write all the words, complete easy numerical problems of addition and subtraction. Learners have achieved all requirements of 1st year. They will practice Bengali primer up to lesson 20, and lesson 15 in math primer.

Group 3: Learners can read, write few alphabets and numbers but attends classes irregularly.



Fig4: CoLI learning center, a session in progress

After completing 2nd year:

Advance group: in the 3rd year they will read 10 other supporting books along with English primer.

Group 1: Completed 2nd year of CoLI, able to write own words in a meaningful way, they starts learning to write their CV, overtime balance, attendance sheet, leave application etc. They study 2nd stage primers with English book.

Group 2: Fluently read and write different chapters in the 1st year primer lessons, also able to complete easy mathematical problems and obtained half of the literacy milestones of CoLI first year. Reading, writing all the alphabets, manages simple mathematics. Reads the signboards, calculate their overtime etc.

Group 3: Some alphabetical and numerical literacy with reading and writing skills. Also studying chapter 1—20 of the primers Bengali and Mathematics. Read and write alphabets and can make small sentences. Able to perform basic addition, subtraction etc in mathematical problems.

Centre wise learners and their categories are shown in the table below:

Sl no	Name of the workplace	Name of peer facilitator	No of learners			
			A(1)	B(2)	C(3)	Total
01	Zyta	Anguli	8	10	12	30
02	Zyta	Lipi	4	18	8	30
03	Zyta	Poli	5	13	12	30
04	Zyta	Tasbiri	6	8	16	30
05	Zyta	Rimi	9	8	13	30
06	Zyta	Lucky	6	4	20	30
07	Zyta	Bristy	10	14	6	30
08	Zyta	Tahmina	10	12	8	30
09	Zyta	Merina	8	10	12	30
10	Zyta	Sabina	5	12	13	30
11	Zyta	Chompa	6	10	14	30
12	Zyta	Salma	7	10	13	30
Sub Total (1+2+3)			84	129	147	360

Table 1: Workplace Centres : Zyta Apparels Ltd

Sl no	Name of the Community	Name of peer facilitator	No of learners			
			A (1)	B (2)	C (3)	Total



01	Ta Block	Rima	5	10	15	30
02	Ta Block	Amena	4	10	16	30
03	Ta Block	Sharmi	6	13	11	30
04	Ta Block	Khaleda	14	8	8	30
05	Ta Block	Sumi	5	10	15	30
06	Ta Block	Bithi	5	9	16	30
07	Ta Block	Rozina	3	5	22	30
08	Bholar Bosty	Samsun Nahar	10	9	11	30
09	Bholar Bosty	Mukul	8	14	8	30
10	Bholar Bosty	Puspa	8	10	12	30
11	Duary Para	Asma	4	8	18	30
12	Duary Para	Nurun Nahar	9	6	15	30
13	Duary Para	Hasina	10	10	10	30
14	Duary Para	Shahana	10	10	10	30
15	Duary Para	Firoza	10	9	11	30
16	Rupnagar	Parvin	4	5	21	30
17	Rupnagar	Ruby	10	7	13	30
18	Rupnagar	Baby	10	8	12	30
19	Rupnagar	Smrity	6	14	10	30
Sub Total (1+2+3)			141	175	254	570

Table 2: Community Based Learning Centers

The table shows almost (254+147) 401 learners are in C category at the end of 3 year pilot phase. (Source: Evaluation of learner's progress 2009).

Mini library for CoLI participants:

A mini library facility is available inside the Zyta factory and also in the community level for the learners. Mini Library operates 3 days per week at factory level and Community level. The facility is open for both the male and female workers working inside the factory. So far the 1659 times learners were listed to participate as a reader(March 2010).

Musical session:

A music teacher has also been appointed to teach music to the facilitators as well as the learners. The music session held two days in a week. Through this session the women garment workers actively participate in different social events along with special day observance in large public gathering.

Video show

A Video show is an activity that is open to all the workers, usually 3 days in a week at Zyta

Apparel premise and the shows are organized once a month at the community level. Total participants were 1342 in this reporting period listed (March 2010). The main purpose of this



video show is awareness rising and improving life skills. During lunch time at the dining hall of Zyta factory workers enjoys this video show.

Support from the community:

The community people actively participates in all kinds of project activities, meetings and discussion sessions with the CoLI project participants and helps in organizing visits of the external visitors. Once a month members from Area based Committee and Area Development committee meets with the facilitators, learners and the project staffs. In these meetings they jointly solve all problems that arise in the community, or in the centers. eg low attendance of the learners, motivating the guardians, increasing attendance rate etc. These members are also an important part of the self sustain groups.

Self sustain groups:

After March 2010, to continue the above existing activities, learners in the community, ABC and ADC members and peer facilitator together formed 6 self sustain groups. They will contribute Tk. 50-100, according to their capacity as a monthly membership fee to form a joint savings to continue these groups. These groups will carry forward all the previous activities of CoLI project, specially completing the education of C category learners. They are also planning to continue their handicrafts making activities, and dreaming to make bigger efforts with this self sustain groups in future.

Success

- CoLI learners are no more shy village girls, they can protest, negotiate and establish their rights at the workplace and also at home.
- Knowledge has increased on health and personal hygiene, HIV/ AIDS , Gender and women rights, Labor law, etc
- CoLI project prepared 31 expert peer facilitators from the workers and from the community girls. They have lead the critical process of learning life skills, analytical, negotiation and facilitation skills of 930 girls underprivileged garment workers
- Area Development Committee members are participating actively in the project activities. They are supporting the project as a local guardian. They are sorting out all the problems arising within the community, ensuring security to the learners, motivating the guardians to send their daughters in the centers and also proactively participating in

different events like, community gathering, meeting with factory management etc.

- The Garments factories have skilled workers, promoting 80% helpers to operators among CoLI learners. Now they can ensure production on time.
- CoLI participant can negotiate with their family members, Garments management and express their problems to their supervisors.
- Young village women are now confident garment workers. They are now able to adjust with city life, able to travel independently in the bus by finding the routes without any help by reading on her own the bus number.
- CoLI participants are producing monthly CoLI magazines, with their own writing on varieties of topics, e.g poetry, experience stories, cooking tips, beauty tips, songs etc.



Fig5: Success stories of CoLI project published in the popular daily newspaper of Bangladesh

- Sick leave has been reduced 6 workers/day to 3.5 workers/day in Zyta apparels.



Improved knowledge on safe water and hygiene could be an important factor for this reduction in sickness of the workers. Incidence of injuries have also been reduced from 20/month to 3 incidents in 3 months.

- Workers at Zyta are able to calculate their maternity leaves and benefits properly, which has reduced many misunderstandings between management and the workers.
- Zyta management also informed that in the past three years they did not face any workers unrest at their factories because of improve accountability and transparency of the management towards their workforce.

Case studies 1:

On April 21, 2010 we went inside a learning center at Ta Block, Mirpur and joined the session with the learners. We were asking varieties of questions to the learners and discussing their feelings about the project. During this discussion one of us mistakenly made a comment that “the helpers doesn’t have much work to do, as this is the most junior position among the workers” and so on, but before he finished out of 20 girls, 15 of them jointly protested the comment and gave the list of works the helper has to do, which was quite a long list of works! My colleague had to withdraw his comment and apologetically expressed our ignorance of helper’s job list at the factory. This joint protest by all the girls, in front of so many visitors made us stop and think probably the positive changes are slowly taking place among these girls after CoLI intervention. They are not shy anymore now they can protest, they can explain what they are and what work they do and also establish their position among any unknown people.

Case studies 2:

Learner Sonia, group 3 learner from Rupnagar slum, told us previously she was not acquainted with the basic instruments of her factory nor even had any literacy level. But now after joining the center now she knows, the basic literacy required for her job. She also learnt how to drink safe water. She also informed us how she negotiated with her management and ensured safe water and clean toilet for all the workers. After she learnt about safe water she protested with the management for not supplying any clean water to drink, but now together with others they finally succeeded in ensuring safe water available at the workplace from the management for the workers. She and her friends were able to make the management understand, that without clean water they might contact diarrhoea, jaundice and other diseases, which will make them sick and factory will fail to production on time. Management agreed and CoLI learners made a change!

Case studies 3:

Hasina Akhter from Rupnagar slum, group 2 learner was answering all the questions, while we were exploring their knowledge level on health issues. I asked them how I can understand that this knowledge is also in practice level in everyone's daily life. Hasina said her experience at her village upzilla health complex. Where she went for her father in laws treatment, she found the acting nurse was using the used syringe to more than one patient. On the spot she protested and challenged the nurse in front of other patients and attendants. Because she knows the used syringe will transmit AIDs, Hepatitis and other communicable diseases that transmit through blood. The nurse accepted her fault and CoLI learner finally succeeded in stopping the nurse spreading disease using an used syringe. Present other patients and their attendants learnt from her the danger of using disposable syringe to more than once and on many patients.

Challenges

- Time: Factory closing time of Zyta and other factories are different. So organizing the session in a common time for all is the biggest challenge for this project. As a result only 3 days a week the sessions are organised, which starts after 9pm and continues up to 10.30pm.
- Security: Location of the 17 centers were in the interiors of Mirpur area slums, but literacy session inside the slums are risky for anyone at night, specially for the facilitators, visitors and the female learners. It is a crucial concern to ensure participation in learning sessions for the learners and facilitators both.
- Regular participation: Ensuring regular participation of all categories of learners are difficult, after discussion many reasons were identified from the learners, that is causing obstacles in regular participation of the workers.
- Night shift: Sometimes whole group of workers needs to do extra work at night shift time, during this time session could not be organised, which not only hampers session plan but also waste valuable resources and time of the project.
- Staff retention: Due to the difficult time, and security concern at night, retention of competent project staffs is difficult. Also due to the short-term nature of the project staffs are not attracted to join.
- Drop out: Education alone is not attractive enough to increase participant number. Female workers sometimes feel hesitant to travel alone at night especially in winter to

attend the session. Married students with little child are the major portion among the drop outs. Present dropout rate is approximately an average of 3 learners/ center per month.

- **Monitoring and supervision:** Due to the timing and odd location of the centers (distant corners of the slum), it is difficult to ensure timely and effective monitoring support to the centers. Although the community is supportive, but risk of any unexpected incident remains as a barrier in effective monitoring. The intervention timing is only 1 and half hours, where as centers were 19 in number. This short time is not enough for an effective monitoring.
- **Migration:** Frequent migration and shifting of houses at the slums at the community level, is a regular obstacle for completing full curriculum of the learners.
- **Closing time for Zyta and non-Zyta factories are different,** which is probably the most difficult barrier that the project faces in continuing the existing activities.

Findings

In spite of time constraint and difficult timing of the project, still the learners, peer facilitators, ABC and ADC members everyone is very supportive and devoted to this project. As discussed before these workers are a few of the deprived women in the society, who is vulnerable inside and outside of home. But the opportunity of learning in the city slum, available near their home is something beyond their expectation. They can also relax, interact, learn music, read books in these learning centers. Which is a added benefit to the main component of alphanumeric literacy to the workers.

But among hundreds and thousands of them only few workers are getting this golden opportunity. The project gives a feeling that in spite of the potential to enroll many more learners, only a few are getting benefitted, an opportunity also forgone for others, the effort, manpower and time everything was there, but not used efficiently. Care Bangladesh also has successful microcredit programs with garment workers, that experience was also not used in this program. Maybe this project is taking much time on experimenting with only one education intervention for 3 years, in today's perspective this single approach is not timely in a country like Bangladesh, where majority people still lives below the poverty line. Combination with microcredit could have attracted more workers and regular participation..

The male workers have same need of education, but this project has not considered any male workers in this pilot phase. Absence of male workers in the project activities also gives

incompleteness to this project. Not even the male workers of Zyta were enrolled for this project. This gender biased approach was not understood. Enrolling male workers could have been benefitted to accompany the female coworkers to the learning centers at night, when evidence is there that although the learning centers are inside the slum, still the late night timing is an obstacle to maintain regular attendance of the workers.

Slums close to these intervention areas, has long time old microcredit and health centers. During discussion it was not found, where these non Zyta factory workers takes health care services or whether they are members to any credit programs. Savings and microcredit program plays a visible change in the life of these poor workers in a short time. Whereas education intervention although has long term impact, but takes longer time to create an impression. So it is difficult to attract these poor women in education program alone. Which was proved once again by the small number of beneficiaries, after 3 years intervention?

In the context of Dhaka city, late night education program is difficult to implement, because of security reason. The slum environment takes different scenario gradually after evening to late night. It is risky for any women in any level to provide technical support or join the center as a learner to continue respective responsibilities at night on a regular basis.

The monitoring system is dependent only on the facilitators report, tools are insufficient to bring out the practice level information of the learners. It is therefore difficult to comment on impact in a short term evaluation work. But on the whole CoLI project staffs are trying hard to create a change, an enabling environment are needed to be ensured soon to continue this momentum by remove the existing barriers.

Social impact

In Bangladesh garments sector changed the scenario of the society by employing illiterate rural women, and converting them in to skilled factory workers. The buyer complaint garment factories also try to ensure a minimum standard of enabling environment inside the factory where the workers can work with ease. Zyta Apparel seems one of those factories, where in addition to the profit maximization, they also think about healthy workers and try to establish a transparent worker-management relationship.

Zyta management wanted to improve the literacy levels of their workers, so that the misunderstanding regarding salary, bonus and overtime, does not create unrest in their factory. During this time Care Bangladesh has intervened with their education program in this Gap Foundation supplier factory. Only the marginalized, under privileged women workers were

enrolled in this program. A process to empowering these women through training on literacy and labour skills was designed and implemented from March 2007- 2010.

During field visit April 21-22 and again on 26-27, interview and discussion done with different stakeholders of this program by this consultant. Workers/learners were asked to write their experiences and facilitators were asked to share experiences and perceptions of their learners. 46 learners submitted their experiences in writing with the help of their facilitators. 100% of these respondents wrote one common thing, that they are not facing any embarrassing situation in their workplace due to ignorance on working apparatus or understanding instructions. Now they feel comfortable talking with their supervisors, they can also confidently communicate with their management staffs without any hesitation. CoLI program intervention increased their self confidence, by training them to read, write and speak in a more organised manner than before. The learners also mentioned that they can confidently take the right bus, by reading the bus route numbers for their destination. They can move independently in a crowded city like Dhaka.

According to the information provided by Zyta management, small injury rate has declined from 20/month in 2007, to only average 2 in every 3 month in 2010. Management perceives this reduction in workplace injuries may be due to the CoLI program intervention among women workers, the career strengthening skills played the important role. The Bengali primer has also lessons on their workplace related issues, to orient the learners on different instruments, to develop their orientation on using different machineries in a safe way. Presumably learners are more aware and conscious now and are able to use the factory machines properly, which is probably a strong reason for reducing the needle /other types of injury incidents.

Zyta management also noticed that few of their workers left their factory recently with better salary to other garments, but within a month they came back and joined Zyta Apparels again. The reason being after calculating all the benefits from salary, bonus and overtime they realized Zyta has better economical facilities than the new one, so they decided to leave and join Zyta again. It is encouraging that these workers are utilizing their knowledge in practice. They can calculate cost effectiveness and benefits between two factories. Educational support apparently contributing in these decision making skills in financial matters also. Workers have also formed self sustain groups investing their own money to continue their CoLI program activities, so that more workers at the community can avail this opportunity like them. They also have a plan on sustainability of these self sustain group by using different technical skills learnt from CoLI program. These important decision making capacity, is an important factor in empowerment.

However few cases are also found where young unmarried workers are not in control of her earnings, still she is suppose to submit her salary to her parents. Sometimes that deteriorates her

family happiness and affecting her attendance to the learning session. Although learners are using their newly learned knowledge and education in practice, but it is difficult to explore the extent to which 930 workers are participating in decision making process at home. The social structure in Bangladesh is still very family oriented for unmarried girls and male dominated for married women, so more interventions on changing social structure involving the family members are also needed to have a holistic impact on empowerment of women.

Attitude and knowledge on health, hygiene issue has improved, learners are now negotiating for safe water and clean toilet. Previously safe water for workers and clean toilet facilities was never considered for the workers, which in turn created urinary tract infections and other health problems. At the moment Bangladesh has 3 million workers working at these factories, only 930 workers are CoLI participants. Whereas the unmet need of education, and exploitation at the workplace specially the garment workers are still persisting in many factories. It is a timely need that the impact in any percentage that CoLI project is contributing, should be widely replicated.

Without a literate population of factory workers, empowerment, accountability and transparency is difficult to ensure which ultimately creates an impact among the lives of these marginalized women's in Bangladesh. Care Bangladesh needs to take more visible initiative to continue advocacy with more donors (Garment buyers) to fund the education program for these garment workers. Because garment factories are powerful and they only implement buyer compliances. Lessons learnt from other projects on garment workers should be considered in formulating more timely and efficient programs, combining education, health and microcredit. Any single component is insufficient to create a change. A holistic approach of Care Bangladesh using past experiences is needed very much. At the same time wider advocacy with BGMEA and International buyers of Bangladeshi garments should be involved to empower the 3 million garment workers of Bangladesh. Care Bangladesh can take the lead as usual.

Monitoring Process

The existing monitoring tools are enough to capture the skill level of the learners incase of alphanumeric literacy. Questions on social issues are critical and are not incorporated in the existing tools. Learning's from Jibon kotha, and its practice level observation at the household and factory level, is needed regularly, otherwise it is difficult to make conclusive comments on impact level changes. It should have questions that are able to bring out the exact concept and practice level of these issues in their life. A tool is attached with this report for internal monitoring by any levels of officers. However the existing tools is sufficient to differentiate and gradation of learners into 3 groups.

Exit plan

The 31 centers will condense into 12 centers after March 2010. At the moment 2 centers in the Zyta factory will continue its activities through self sustain groups. And 10 centers in the communities will cover more new areas in the slums of the existing catchment area in Mirpur.

Along with female facilitators, more male facilitators should be selected from the new areas and include in the project activities.

Male workers should be included in the education activities as learners, there are huge unmet need among the young adults workers, the project can handover the total responsibility to the respective ABC and ADC members to manage the male and female workers in the new centers. Care CoLI project can provide all sorts of technical expertise in managing this intervention to the community leaders. Engaging these young workers into after education program will reduce social crime and initiate opportunities of social change.

Self sustain groups should be linked with garment and handicrafts market to market and sell their products which will increase their group savings. Care Bangladesh economic development department can support in this regard.

As soon as possible microcredit intervention should be started inside and outside for all the workers in this catchment area of CoLI project. Lessons learnt from Chittagong Corporate Pilot project in EPZ(CCPP) will be useful in designing the intervention to give a comprehensive status.

Zyta has medical facilities for their workers, but the non Zyta workers should be tagged into a network of Smiling Sun/Urban Primary Health Care project or BGMEA clinic whichever is available in close vicinity of these slums. A formal MOU can be developed with any of these primary health care centers and Care Bangladesh to ensure health services of these workers of non Zyta factories.

Limitation of this report

This consultancy was designed to prepare a comprehensive report at the closing periods of this project and to have a third eye opinion to identify the existing opportunities foregone, areas of improvement and future planning. These were the areas mostly given attention in preparing this report. A survey already took place in 2009 to capture the level of literacy status of the 3 category of learners. So another survey was not conducted during this assignment. But individual one to one and group discussion was done with the selected members from all the stakeholders

and learners of the project. Effort was made to prepare an unbiased report. Recommendation and exit plan is prepared based on prior experience of working with the garments workers and successful other projects experience of Care Bangladesh and other donor funded projects with these workers.

Recommendations

- Care Bangladesh should use the lessons learnt from CoLI project, formulate advocacy policy with BGMEA, and convince USA buyers of Bangladeshi garments, so that the CoLI education program can be replicated in a bigger scale in majority garment factories.
- An hour session of three days a week and for continuous two years can make the illiterate garments workers functionally literate. However timing change is the most important aspect at the moment to reduce the dropout rate to a great extent.
- Microcredit component for the Zyta and non Zyta workers are a need of time to add in the existing program. Zyta management has also expressed their support in this regard.
- For the non Zyta workers health care service is needed to be organised by the project.
- Self sustain groups should be supported to channelize their products with the market. Care Bangladesh economic development program can support.
- Male workers should be enrolled in this program. Male facilitators should also be hired and trained, who can be an additional support to the existing facilitators. They can also replace female facilitators when they leave their job for marriage and other reasons.
- Lessons learnt from previous Care projects should be considered before designing any new programs with garment workers.
- An integrated approach is expected from Care future projects where a holistic approach will address the education, health and microcredit opportunities for garment workers that is needed to women empowerment in Bangladesh.
- Husband and parents should also be addressed in the program so that they can support the practice of knowledge at home by the learners.
- Learners who are married or has kids, but interested to join the centers, flexible approach should be designed for them, so that they can learn at home without regular attendance at the centers.

Conclusion

CoLI project is very popular among the Zyta and non Zyta factory workers. It has given them an opportunity to learn basic education in an interesting way. Their self confidence has increased. CoLI learning centers provides a place where they can learn education, relax and interact among peer workers after work. But more in depth research is needed to document how much they can practice their knowledge at the household and their personal level, what changes are taking place in their lives through this education. This initiative should also address male illiterate workers. Also involve parents and husbands so that they support these workers to change their lives. More comprehensive program needs to be designed to address the empowerment issue in these women workers. Advocacy with BGMEA should be considered to replicate this process of education formally in all other factories. Education is one of the basic rights and essential for the factory workers to be a skilled worker. Education can also be a solution to the unrest in the garment sector of Bangladesh, Care Bangladesh can support BGMEA to a great extent in this process.



Fig 6: Discussion with the learners, ABC and ADC members, facilitators and consultant