

Running head: IMPACTS OF BRAC SOCIAL TRAINING ON RURAL VILLAGES

Community Change in Rural Bangladesh: Impacts of TUP Social Training on
Target Communities



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Personal Introduction

When I was eleven years old, I decided I was going to be a photojournalist. It was a Friday night, and my mom was folding laundry while I read *National Geographic* at the kitchen counter. The article was about child brides in the Middle East and the horrible effects child marriage can have – physically, psychologically, and economically. I was outraged and determined that I wanted to pursue a career that allowed me to combat such abuses of human rights. To me, a strong writer with an avid interest in photography, photojournalism seemed the perfect path.

This conviction has shaped much of my life since then. In high school, I directed two different service clubs, helped raise funds to improve a girls' home in Peru, and wrote my Global Youth Institute essay on child brides in Yemen. I came to Iowa State University as a Global Resource Systems and Journalism double major because I believed that these two majors would help round each other out and allow me to be more effective in combating injustices around the world.

While that conviction remains true to this day, it has been shaped and molded by several other experiences. One of the most important was that of the Global Youth Institute.

When my teacher first suggested I enter the Iowa Youth Institute, I knew I wanted to focus on women's rights. Ideally, I wanted to focus on the Middle East. My next step, then, was to try to find the country in the region with the worst women's rights situation. At the time, I thought it would make for a fun challenge.

A month later, I was at a loss. Even after picking a single aspect of women's rights to improve, I could find no easy solution. According to my research, child marriages were often caused by economic insecurity, which compounded food insecurity in a less-than fertile country. This economic insecurity was caused by a seemingly immutable lack of market opportunities in Yemen. To fix one thing, it seemed, we needed to fix a dozen.

This epiphany of the interconnectedness of all aspects of food and social insecurity has shaped my academic career since then. My interest has always been towards conflict, crises, and human rights, but as Norman Borlaug once said, "You can't build a peaceful world on empty stomachs" (Corey, 2010). No progress can be made on these fronts without first meeting the most basic needs and rights of the people you are working with.

This idea is seen nowhere as strongly as at the Borlaug Dialogues and Global Youth Institute. Leaders from around the world come together with students to discuss all the issues that perpetuate global food insecurity and how we can affect those – as Laureates or as high school students. That first year I attended, I walked away invigorated and ready to tackle the challenge head-on.

Two years later, I got my chance. In the spring of my freshman year at Iowa State University, I was selected to be a Borlaug-Ruan International Intern with BRAC in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

I. Background

Bangladesh is a small country nestled between India and the Bay of Bengal. A small portion of its eastern border edges Myanmar. The country's geography is dominated by the fertile delta formed by the confluence of the Ganges, Meghna, and Brahmaputra rivers. While the northeastern portion of the nation is known for its rolling hills and tea estates, the country is predominantly composed of flat, fertile land.

Previously a part of India, Bangladesh split off as East Pakistan in 1947. After over twenty years of political turmoil and regional instability, East Pakistan fought a liberation war and became the People's Republic of Bangladesh in 1971.



Fig. 1 & 2: TUP and STUP participants in Mirpur slum, Dhaka.

Shortly after, Sir. Fazlé Hasan Abed established the Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee to help rebuild communities destroyed in the liberation war. Not long into his work with this committee, Sir Fazlé realized that his organization was only scratching the surface of the problems in Bangladesh. The poverty he saw, he realized, was not caused just by the war but by deep, systemic issues. He refocused the organization and his small start-up rapidly grew into a targeted development organization that worked to reach the poorest of the poor and develop villages through a variety of initiatives. This became BRAC, which is now the world's largest NGO and reaches over 130 million beneficiaries.

One of BRAC's most well-known programs is the Challenging Frontiers of Poverty Reduction – Targeting the Ultra-Poor (CFPR-TUP) program. Established in 2002, the program is specifically designed to reach households that are “too poor to access the benefit from traditional development interventions such as microfinance” (BRAC, 2016). This program provides asset

grants such as livestock or small trading, healthcare service, community mobilization, and social training.

This social training is designed to be a holistic education to meet the special needs of the ultra-poor. Given their specific social vulnerability, the training focuses on practical information that can be used in everyday activities. These topics currently include: marriage registration, early marriage, dowry, divorce, separation, arbitration, family planning, vitamin deficiency, diarrhea, and de-worming.

The CFPR/TUP program has been the topic of frequent research and evaluation (Table 1). From social capital to food consumption to income, many dimensions of the program have been heavily vetted.

Internal monitoring and evaluation has shown that the CFPR-TUP program is successful in identifying target groups and differentiating between levels of poverty. This is key to providing successful social training, as the training topics are chosen specifically to meet the practical needs of participants. These needs can and do differ between different levels of poverty, and acknowledging these differences can serve to better prepare and educate participants (BRAC Research and Evaluation Division and Aga Khan Foundation Canada, 2004a).

As Sulaiman and Matin noted in 2006, the need for these efforts is increasing as the “welfare gap” does the same. They urge for “appropriate programmatic approaches targeting the poorest” and an understanding that change in these poorest of households is often small and overlooked (BRAC Research and Evaluation Division and Aga Khan Foundation, 2006c).

It is also important to acknowledge the influence that social training can have on potential participants’ desire to work with BRAC. According to a 2007 survey on the ultra-poor, “more than 50% joined BRAC due to get future benefits of some sorts and training” (BRAC Research and Evaluation Division and Aga Khan Foundation, 2007b, p. 18). This suggests that participants are spreading awareness of the benefits of BRAC programs among their communities and acquaintances, which reflects Ameen and Sulaiman’s findings that social capital in communities can positively influence individual’s resources and life chances (BRAC Research and Evaluation Division and Aga Khan Foundation, 2006b).

By engaging in BRAC programs, participants are known to experience improved economic capital which may be caused by increased land ownership or increased income (BRAC Research and Evaluation Division, 2010). This then allows them to graduate to microfinance programs later on in BRAC’s CFPR portfolio and further advance their economic status, especially if there is a male member of the household (BRAC Research and Evaluation Division and Aga Khan Foundation, 2006a).

CFPR/TUP participation has also shown increased food, energy, and nutrient consumption. According to Haseen and Sulaiman’s work, the participants are able to not only improve their consumption but also ensure its sustainability (BRAC Research and Evaluation Division and Aga Khan Foundation, 2007a).

Moreover, program participants have been shown to view positive change from these programs as increased resilience or “the increased ability to handle...shocks” (BRAC Research and Evaluation Division and Aga Khan Foundation, 2004b, p. 13). Often, this perceived change is not necessarily due to quantifiable changes in their household’s circumstances but to an increase in “hope and independence” instead (BRAC Research and Evaluation Division and Aga Khan Foundation, 2004b, p. 13).

Altogether, the data suggests a significant improvement in many aspects of life for participants, from social capital to nutritional needs. However, aside from one study on nutrition, there is a lack of clear data on the sustainability of the program or the social training aspect of this program. Because of this, I chose to pursue an impact assessment of the training program and how its information is dispersed throughout target communities.

The communities surveyed for this project were Baagbari and Atikanda, with in-depth interviews taking place in Paharpur, Atikanda, and Morakanda.

Atikanda is a village in the sub-district of Aatpara, Netrokona, in which the STUP program has been working since 2006. Participants in this program primarily received livestock as assets – specifically, cows, goats, sheep, and some poultry. The participants then receive ‘home visits’ from TUP workers to provide social training in 10 topics. Prior to BRAC intervention, Atikanda was described as “very destitute”; its only road was often impassable due to the amount of defecation that occurred around it. Community remembers reported high rates of sickness and other issues.

Baagbari is another agriculture-based town in the sub-district of Aatpara. This village is considered a slum settlement because it is situated in the midst of an extensive water body called a hawor and has limited communication and access to the main bazaar (commercial and social center). The STUP program has worked here since 2013, providing assets and teaching 12 training topics to participants.

These communities were selected based on the existence of an established STUP or TUP program and the availability of survey participants.

II. Methodology

This assessment was born out of the lack of data available on the sustainability of the TUP training program or the flow of knowledge in participant communities. The initial research question asked, “In what ways does the BRAC TUP program create lasting change in knowledge and perceptions of women’s rights in target areas?” with the hypothesis that the program contributed to “increased knowledge and positive perceptions.”

The assessment underwent three distinct phases: initial planning, implementation, and analysis.

The initial planning phase of this project took place in Dhaka, Bangladesh, at BRAC headquarters. In this phase, I reviewed existing literature on BRAC’s STUP and TUP programs and spoke with the different departments of BRAC engaged in these programs – namely

Research and Development and the Gender Justice and Diversity department. From there, I compiled a list of survey questions based on the training topics supplied through the Gender Justice and Diversity department. These questions were designed as open-response prompts to generate focused discussion regarding the women's experiences with the STUP/TUP social training and its impacts in their villages.

Implementation of this project occurred in four rural communities in Bangladesh. The first two were for focus group discussions (FGD). These were Atikanda, a village in the Netrokona District and Baagbari, a village in the Sylhet District.

Implementation was conducted by a three-person team: a Lead Research Assistant with a background in anthropology and some experience in a related field, a second Research Assistant also with an anthropology, and a third Research Assistant with an English background to interpret the discussion responses. This team conducted two focus group discussions (FGD) in each village with different participants for each.

They then went on to conduct four in-depth interviews; one took place in Atikanda with a woman who had not participated in either FGD, two took place in Paharpur, and one took place in Morakanda. Once the FGD and interviews had been completed, Ms. Juneyna Kabir, Research Assistant 3, translated their findings and submitted them to me for analysis.

Once I received the translated findings, they were subject to a two-part coding analysis. Level 1 used four codes to signify whether a response was related to (1) lessons learned from the BRAC training, (2) lessons shared with the community or family, (3) actions taken by the participants according to the training, or (4) changes participants have seen in their own lives or in their communities. Level 2 used 5 codes to further qualify whether these responses had to do with (A) their relationship with BRAC, (B) changes in women's condition or status, (C) their relationship with community or family members, (D) changes in their or the community's lifestyle, or (E) the acquisition of new knowledge. The results of this coding were then compiled in a database and used to draw interpretations regarding the impact of the STUP/TUP social training on target communities.

III. Results

In-depth Interviews

Below are the results of the four in-depth interviews conducted through the assessment process. These women came from Paharpur (2), Atikanda (1), and Morakanda (1) and were interviewed individually by the research team in their villages.

Tarika Begum lives with her husband and two daughters in Paharpur. Her elder daughter works at Pran-RFL while her younger daughter is in ninth grade. She also has three sons, all of whom are married and live separately. Tarika can sign her name but does not have any formal education.

Tarika has been a member of STUP since 2013. She reports 12 training issues that she has memorized: child marriage, dowry, marriage registration, human trafficking, disaster management, domestic violence, education of children, family planning, water-borne diseases, de-worming, food nutrition and anemia, non-communicable diseases, and vaccinations. Of these, she ranks education, dowry, child marriage, water-borne diseases, and marriage registration as the most important.

These training topics have caused her to educate her daughters, plant trees around her house, and use hygienic practices to prevent disease.

She reports sharing this information with many people in her community. While there was some resistance initially, she says that now most of the community listen to her. She also says that now, there is little need to share the knowledge because so much of the community already knows it.

She says that the training has “turned [her] life around.”

Sahera Begum lives with her two sons, daughter, and husband in Atikanda. Her husband and sons are the only family members who bring in an income. Neither son is educated, but Sahera hopes to educate her daughter. Sahera can sign her name but does not have formal education.

Sahera has been a member of STUP since 2006. She recalls 10 training issues: child marriage, dowry, marriage registration, divorce, water-borne diseases, vitamin enriched foods, family planning, child education, de-worming, and vaccinations. Of these, she ranks child marriage, dowry, de-worming, water-borne diseases, and child education as the most important.

Because of the training she received, Sahera now uses hygienic practices, grows vegetables, and ensures her family receives vaccinations.

She says that she shares these issues with everyone in the community and that they listen to her for the most part. When they do not listen or do not understand, Saheera speaks to their husbands.

She says that she “leads a life of deprivation” but that it is gradually improving thanks to her participation with BRAC.

Jamila Akhter lives with her son, two daughters, and husband in Paharpur. Her son is in class nine, the elder daughter in class 5, and the younger daughter attends the BRAC school in their community. Jamila is illiterate.

Jamila has been a member of STUP since 2013. She names twelve issues she remembers: child marriage, dowry, marriage registration, human trafficking, disaster management, domestic violence, child education, family planning, water-borne diseases, de-worming, vitamin enriched food, non-communicable diseases, and vaccinations. Of these, she lists five as the most important: child education, child marriage, dowry, diarrhea and water-borne diseases, and de-worming and cleanliness.

Because of this training, Jamila has intervened in cases where community members were planning to give or ask for dowry, sends her children to school, and ensures she and her family receives vaccinations.

She says she has shared this knowledge with her father-in-law, mother-in-law, other members of her extended family, and other community members. She says that, while everyone listens to her, she has become distanced from one local family due to their desire for dowry in their son's wedding.

She says that this training has “changed every stage of [her] existence.”

Nargis Akhter lives with her two children and husband in Morakanda. Her son is in Class 6. Nargis can sign her name but does not have any formal education.

Nargis has been a member of STUP since 2013. She remembers nine training topics: water-borne diseases, de-worming, marriage registration, village decision making, child marriage, family planning, diarrhea, vaccination, and dowry. The five most important to her are family planning, child marriage, water-borne diseases, de-worming, and village council.

She says that she tells the women in her family and village about these trainings and they usually listen to her because it is for their own good. She also says that they listen to her because they have seen how it has helped her. She does not share this information outside of her village.

This training has led her to use hygienic practices, attend the shalish [village council], and help community members make saline to treat diarrhea.

She says that being a member of STUP has helped her to improve both her personal and familial life.

In summary, all of the women interviewed reported significantly improved lives and affirmed that they shared the information learned through BRAC social training with others. Most often, the women shared this knowledge with female family members, then female neighbors or male family members, and then other community members. Although one woman reported engaging

with outside communities in order to spread the knowledge and awareness she had gained, the other three remained within their villages to spread this information.

Focus Group Discussions

These FGD took place in Atikanda and Baagbari with between 6-8 participants and the three research assistants.

FGD 1 took place in Atikanda with eight local women. These women averaged approximately 37 years of age and the majority of them had received no formal education but could sign their names. Of the two who had received formal education, one stopped after Class 3 and the other after Class 5.

These women recalled ten issues they had learned through the social training: child marriage, water-borne diseases, excretion, child education, dowry, marriage registration, de-worming, family planning, vitamin-enriched foods, and separation/divorce. Of these, they ranked three as most important: water-borne diseases, marriage registration, and dowry.

All of the women in this group affirmed that they share this information with their relatives and neighbors. They primarily share this information with other women “in between our chats.”

They also reported seeing significant changes in the behavior within their community. Some of these include increased hygiene and sanitation, improved attendance at the local school, and increased use of family planning.

FGD 2 took place in Baagbari with seven women, averaging 44 years of age. None of the women in this group had received any formal education but all could sign their names.

These women divided the 13 topics they had learned through the social training into two categories. The first, social issues, included child marriage, dowry, marriage registration, human trafficking, disaster management, domestic violence, and child education. The second, health issues, included family planning, water-borne diseases, de-worming, food, nutrition and anemia, incommunicable diseases, and vaccines. Of these, the most important to them were child marriage and dowry, water-borne diseases, child education and family planning.

They say they feel no hesitation in sharing their new knowledge with others as “we have not educated ourselves only for our own benefit; we want others to improve their lives as well.” They have not faced many issues in sharing their knowledge with others.

The women described improvements in their community such as better sanitation, improved regulation on child marriages, and the use of de-worming medicine.

FGD 3 took place in Atikanda with seven women who averaged 46 years of age. None of these women had any formal education but all could sign their names.

They recalled ten issues they had learned from BRAC as including child marriage, vitamin-enriched foods, water-borne diseases, de-worming, family planning, village council, divorce/separation, and the importance of education. They ranked four of these as most important to them: child marriage and dowry, marriage registration, water-borne diseases, and family planning.

They say they primarily share this information with those live around them, such as their neighbors and relatives. However, they also work within their community to spread this knowledge, especially as regards child marriage and dowry. They have also taken collective action to prevent such issues as child marriage in their community.

After receiving social training, the women report smaller family sizes, women's engagement in community decision making, the elimination of night blindness, and increased children's education. Overall, they say their community has improved a lot.

FGD 4 surveyed six women in Baagbari. These women averaged approximately 43 years of age, the majority of whom had no formal education but could sign their names. The two participants who had received formal education had stopped after Class 5 and Class 8.

These women recalled 12 issues they learned through TUP training: vitamin enriched foods, child marriage and dowry, water-borne diseases, family planning, vaccinations, de-worming, child education, marriage registration, violence against women, village council [shalish], and human trafficking. Of these, the three most important were child marriage, hygiene, and family planning.

These women have shared their knowledge primarily with female family members but expressed difficulty sharing with others due to lack of time, inability to remember all of them, and communication issues with elder family members. When they do share this information, they receive little opposition.

Despite these difficulties, they report some change in their community such as smaller family sizes, drinking from the tube well, and taking de-worming medicine.

Cumulative Results

Overall, the results of this assessment were incredibly positive. The majority of women surveyed were eager to share their knowledge with others, both in their families and in their communities. One even went so far as to begin work in a neighboring village. As she said, "It can be said that I am in charge of the neighboring BRAC school – I brought some of the teachers and I tell them to teach well" (CITE).

The majority of these women share primarily with their female family members and neighbors. In the first FGD at Atikanda, the women explained that they shared their new knowledge "when the women meet...in between our chats." The sentiment was echoed in Baagbari. When asked

with whom they have shared this information, they answered with predominantly female relatives: mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, daughters.

Many women also share with male family members and other community members. One woman interviewed, Sahera Begum, relayed the story of speaking with her husband after the social training. “Now I can tell him that it is wrong to take or give dowry. He listens to me and accepts his mistake,” she says. This is a marked change from their previous relationship, which follows trends shown throughout the women surveyed: they all report significant changes in their families and communities following their participation in BRAC’s social training program.

How this change occurs is a more unique trend. The women who participate in this program in each community form a cohort that works together to spread these issues and affect community change. Throughout the FGD responses, the women use the collective “we” to answer, especially when asked about how they spread information throughout their communities. This is further seen in FGD 1 in Atikanda, where Majeda Begum told the research team, “I brought the other members of STUP to his house. That is when he listened to us and did not get his daughter married.”

Along with the collective influence this cohort provides, the women often leverage the authority of BRAC in order to persuade other community members. FGD 4 explained that they tell their community “that if one commits violence against a woman they can be punished by law or be cautioned by BRAC” and that that has contributed to a decrease in domestic violence. This reflects a level of respect seen throughout the surveys. The women repeatedly told researchers that they “pray for the BRAC bhai [brothers]” and credited the improvements in their lives to BRAC.

However, even with these groups as sources of authority, the changes the women have instigated could not be felt without a change both in their self-perceptions and their communities’ perceptions of them.

The primary shift in the women’s self-perception came from an increased confidence and independence. The most cited cause of this is their improved knowledge and awareness. The women explained that, “Before, we didn’t used to understand much about anything, but now we try to things for ourselves.”

Another important cause of this is the increased opportunity to engage in decisions. Several of the women told researchers that marriage registration “is a very important issue” because it gives women the ability to take action in case their husbands file for divorce. As Jamila Akhter said, “Registration gives the marriage value.” Because of this registration, husbands are less likely to divorce their wives on a whim, thereby giving the women greater leverage in their relationships.

Previously, many of the women report asking for loans or aid and being rejected because of the community “thinking that [the women] wouldn’t be able to return it.” The women’s lack of economic capital or a social network left them unable to access common channels of improvement. The women recognize this and, in fact, often use it as a means of encouraging others to follow BRAC’s trainings: Sahera Begum reported warning parents away from child

marriage by telling them, “If they do [marry their child], they will turn out like me. They won’t get on with their husbands. If they aren’t healthy, their husbands won’t want to be with them. If they are weak, they won’t be able to do work in the house. Many problems will befall them.” This tactic was repeated in FGD 1, where the women said that a child bride “becomes like a skeleton and then no one loves her.” This method seems to be effective. Sahera Begum continued by saying that, “People see me and believe what I tell them.”

However, by participating in BRAC’s social training program, the women have adjusted both their personal views and the views of their communities. The program and grants provided through it has led to both economic advancement and improvement of their social standing within their community. As said in FGD 2, “Everyone in our community loves us now and even our husbands ask for our advice when we do something.”

This change in attitudes was further shown through the changes in community behavior that the women reported. After BRAC’s involvement in their village, Jamila Akhter said “everyone is called for [shalish], including women” when, previously, only select few were requested to attend the village council. Nargis Akhter reported a similar occurrence in Morakanda. Moreover, all the women surveyed reported improved hygiene and sanitation in their villages. As Golena Begum described in FGD 3, this change only came about because of the women who received TUP training.

IV. Discussion and Future Directions

It is important to note that this assessment surveyed only a small population of participants in BRAC’s social training. An estimated 580,000 women have participated in this program, and only 32 women were a part of this assessment (BRAC, 2016). While the results found through this were overwhelmingly positive and in consensus, this may not reflect the overall state of program participants throughout Bangladesh.

With this limited purview in mind, some key implications can still be drawn from this data. The four most prominent are: the impact of practical knowledge, the influence of cohort groups, BRAC as an authority in rural areas, and the flow of knowledge in target communities.

Using practical knowledge as the source for training topics provides several important benefits. It helps participants remember the information, increases their independence, and incentivizes changes in other community members’ behaviors. As seen in FGD 3, if the participants do not use their new knowledge on a frequent basis, they may be susceptible to losing it. This is incredibly important for ensuring the sustainability of the program and preventing the risk of TUP workers having to frequently retrain the same groups. The importance of practical knowledge as an incentive is also shown through the interviews, as the women frequently reported some friction among community members until the community saw the benefit that the change in behavior brought.

By establishing cohort groups among the women who participate in BRAC’s social training, these women are able to exert increased authority among their communities. This is most prominently seen in FGD 3, which reported working together to shut down a wedding of a child bride. However, it is also shown in the interview with Jamila Akhter, when she reported being

able to stop a child marriage by threatening to bring the rest of the program participants to the offender's house. This cohort group provides an important source of authority for individual TUP members by allowing them to have

BRAC's authority in rural areas acts as an extension of the cohort's authority. Because it has such significant weight in target communities, it can provide leverage for participants to persuade community members to engage in or stop engaging in specific behaviors. It also provides resources that make such behavior feasible, such as legal aid and healthcare. These allow community members to see a realistic path for following the behavior suggested by TUP members.

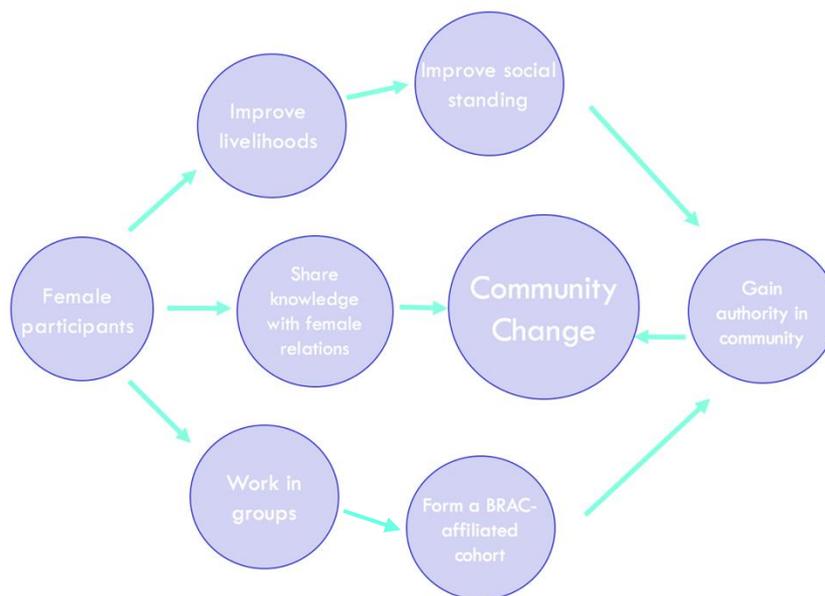


Fig. 3: Flow of knowledge in participant communities.

The flow of knowledge in participant communities provides an interesting look into the influences various actors have in sustaining this program. Within each community, there appears to be three paths towards community change from this social training. The first deals with the participants themselves. While most participants reported some initial friction, it dispersed as the participants were seen to benefit from their behavior changes. This improvement not only helped them specifically but also improved their social standing, which provided greater influence to affect social change.

The second path follows the influence of bonded social capital. All women surveyed said that they shared information primarily with female relatives. Because these women have closer relationships, they have more influence over one another and can therefore more easily convince their relatives to change their behavior. This then, naturally, leads to a certain amount of community change.

The third path refers to the influence of the cohort group in affecting community change. As previously discussed, this cohort provides a vital source of leverage for members. By working

and learning together, these women create a team that can more effectively work in the community than an individual.

Moving forward, it is vital to collect further information on the impact and sustainability of this program by following several different research topics. Among these, the first and most obvious is an expanded assessment similar in nature to the one conducted for this report. While this assessment has provided a stepping stone for understanding the lasting impact of BRAC's social training program, it only provides a snapshot. A much more comprehensive examination is necessary to determine whether the results found here are accurate and to build better conclusions from.

Once this initial assessment is completed, further research could investigate other factors in the program's sustainability such as the role of male community members in the dispersal of training information, the long-term effects of the training program on community behavior, and the impacts of the cohort group on individuals and communities.

V. Personal Impact

My internship was not a "good" internship. It is not a story that will be used to encourage high school students to apply for the Borlaug-Ruan International Internship in the future. I spent most of my time in Bangladesh isolated and without much to do; I left because of terrorism. As far as selling points go, there aren't many to find in my story.

That said, if I were sent back in time, knowing that this internship would turn out the way it did, I would still do it. My internship wasn't picture-perfect, but it was incredibly valuable.

I've known what I wanted to do since I was eleven – but a lot has changed since I was in sixth grade. Working in Bangladesh really helped me to realize that. I still want to work with communications and especially bridging the gap between the development community and the general public. However, I also want to be involved in a more hands-on way. Working with BRAC helped me to realize that I am deeply interested in pursuing research, especially in terms of policy and program evaluation.

With this in mind, this internship helped prepare me for future work by providing me with valuable technical skills. I learned how to create and implement a survey, how to work remotely with a research team, and how to conduct qualitative data analysis. All of these are skills that will be incredibly useful in the workplace.

More than simply preparing me for a future career, however, this internship helped me better realize who I am and what impact I can have on the world.

I am fortunate to have grown up with a family of wanderers. Every year, we go on family vacations – from Washington, D.C. to Belize to California to Scotland. We love to travel, and my experiences around both the US and the world have helped to shape my beliefs and values. However, our travels have been of a rather narrow variety. Until recently, the only language spoken in my house was English, so all of the places we've visited have had that as a primary

language. My family is firmly middle class, and so the places we stay are always comfortable, clean, and attractive.

Bangladesh wasn't really any of those. While my homestay was plenty nice and my host family spoke English, I passed dozens of beggars on my way to and from work each day and there was a constant buzz of Bangla around me rather than either of the languages I know. It was disorienting and, at times, disconcerting. We visited the Mirpur slum in Dhaka, and I didn't know where to look; I felt as if I wore a neon sign saying 'I'm not from here.'

I have read a lot about poverty and food insecurity. It's been a staple interest since I was in middle school. But reading about famine or crises or poverty is a very pale picture next to the real experience. Even with all that reading, I was in no way prepared for what I saw, felt, and smelled in Mirpur: it reeked from the raw sewage that ran in open channels down the lane, the homes were metal shacks barely shoulders' width apart, and the heat inside them had me dripping sweat in moments.

In the end, I think this discomfort was vitally important. It is impossible to create real, sustainable change if you don't truly understand the circumstances you're trying to change. While you can gain a lot of understanding from others' research or experiences, it doesn't hit home until you have actually experienced it yourself.

For me, this internship was that hitting home. I realized simultaneously how inexperienced I am and how much I still have to give. I don't have a PhD or an inspiring story, but I still have so much. If I can give even a fraction of my life to helping people with less, it will be worth it.

VI. Conclusion

Bangladesh has a long path ahead of them when it comes to women's empowerment and sustainable development. The widespread and deeply entrenched gender and class divisions throughout the nation are significant barriers to achieving these and need to be met with creative, targeted approaches that directly combat the roots of poverty and food insecurity.

The CFPR/TUP program is one such approach. By providing participants both with the economic means to improve their livelihoods and independence and with the education to improve their health and social standing, this program helps participants take agency in their own lives and move out of lives of deprivation.

This social training in particular serves as a multi-dimensional approach to rural food insecurity and poverty. The use of training topics that meet practical needs of target communities allows participants both to directly improve their own lives and to serve as examples for the rest of the community.

However, acting as an example is a relatively minor part of the participants' influence on their communities. The most important aspect of this is the participants' direct outreach to other community members. The most prominent change is seen when TUP members actively share the knowledge they have learned – by discussing it with their family members, teaching neighbors,

or going to community members' homes. This direct transfer of information acts as a vital method of spreading the members' knowledge and enacting community change.

The members who engage in this kind of transfer rely heavily on both their cohort group and BRAC. Both of these provide authority and leverage that the member can use to affect change.

While there is an abundance of research still to be done on this topic, the available data provides an encouraging outlook on both the impact of the training on community livelihoods and the sustainability of the program through shared knowledge.

From a personal standpoint, this research has provided me with a great deal of motivation to continue in my pursuit of a career focused on communications, policy, and gender equality in the developing world. BRAC's work and the incredible people I met while in Bangladesh are a bright light of hope in an often frustrating world.



Fig. 4: TUP participants in Mirpur, Dhaka.

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Tables

Table 1
Literature on CFPR/TUP Programmes

Study	Study Purpose	Relevant Findings
BRAC Research and Evaluation Division. (2010). Addressing Extreme Poverty in a Sustainable Manner: Evidence from CFPR Programme. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Das, Misha.	To determine sustainability of livelihood impacts from CFPR/TUP programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme participation influenced significantly the per capita income of households as well as asset bases - Long-run land holding increased through programme participation
BRAC Research and Evaluation Division. (2016). At both ends of the gun: Street-connect children in Dhaka and Politics of Violence. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Rahman, Samadder, and Mishu.	To examine the effect of political violence on street-connected children in Dhaka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong patron-client relationships exist between street-connected children and adults - Street-connected children are manipulated into political violence - Political violence increases the vulnerability of street-connected children
BRAC Research and Evaluation Division and Aga Khan Foundation Canada. (2004). Combining Methodologies for Better Targeting of the Extreme Poor: Lessons from BRAC's CFPR/TUP Programme. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Matin, Halder.	To determine efficacy of CFPR/TUP programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CFPR/TUP targeting is successful in identifying target groups - CFPR/TUP targeting method successfully identifies between levels of poverty
BRAC Research and Evaluation Division and Aga Khan Foundation Canada. (2004). Exploring Changes in the Lives of the Ultra poor: An Exploratory Study on CFPR/TUP Members. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Matin, Walker.	To examine the perception of changes within beneficiary communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Program participants mostly view change as “the increased ability to handle...shocks” - Many participants experienced an increase in “hope and independence”
BRAC Research and Evaluation Division and Aga Khan Foundation Canada. (2006). Microfinance Engagements of the ‘Graduated’ TUP Members. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Sulaiman, Matin, Siddiquee, Barua, Alarakhia, and Iyer.	To explain dimensions of beneficiaries’ engagement with microfinance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having male members in a household increases ability to engage in microfinance - Informal transactions increased among participants
BRAC Research and Evaluation Division and Aga Khan Foundation Canada. (2006). Social Capital and Economic Well-being. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Ameen, Sulaiman.	To determine whether social capital can create positive change in economic well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social capital positively influences per capita expenditure - Social safety nets provide informal but important support to households

BRAC Research and Evaluation Division and Aga Khan Foundation Canada. (2006). Using Change Rankings to Understand Poverty Dynamics: Examining the Impact of CFPR/TUP from Community Perspective. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Sulaiman, Matin.	To evaluate the poverty dynamics in Bangladesh's extreme poor	- The majority of changes among the poorest are small and often overlooked
BRAC Research and Evaluation Division and Aga Khan Foundation Canada. (2007). How Sustainable is the Gain in Food Consumption of the CFPR/TUP Beneficiaries? Dhaka, Bangladesh: Haseen, Sulaiman.	To determine whether the CFPR/TUP programme can create lasting impact on food consumption of beneficiaries	- CFPR/TUP programme increase food, energy, and nutrient consumption - Participants are able to make this sustainable
BRAC Research and Evaluation Division and Aga Khan Foundation Canada. (2007). Is the BDP Ultra Poor Approach Working? Survey of Some Key Issues. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Barua, Sulaiman.	To evaluate knowledge retention from IGA training; to examine quality of participation	- Entrance into programmes should be made easier for ultra poor

Note: All reports retrieved electronically from <research.brac.net/new/cfpr-tup>.

Appendix I: Survey Questions

Instructions for interviewer: Please record the interviewees' responses as accurately as possible and provide a tally (in the table provided) of their answers to Question #2.

1. In what ways has the BRAC social awareness training directly impacted you?
2. Of the ten training topics, which has been the most influential to you?

Topic	Survey Results
Marriage registration	
Early marriage	
Dowry	
Divorce	
Separation	
Arbitration	
Family planning	
Vitamin deficiency	
Diarrhea	
De-worming	

3. Have these lessons changed your behavior? In what ways?
4. Have you shared the knowledge you gained through this training with other members of your community? Why or why not?
5. If so, with whom did you share it? How was it received?
6. With whom are you most likely to share this knowledge?
7. Under what circumstances would you share this knowledge?
8. Do you feel comfortable sharing this knowledge with others?
9. Have you seen this knowledge affect your community? How so?