

**Changes in lives of *Kisohri* Supervisors due to employment in BRAC
Education Programme**

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July 2003

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Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Prof. AM Muazzam Husain, Director Research for allowing us to undertake this study. Our profound gratitude is extended to Ms. Erum Marium, Programme Head and other colleagues at Head Office of BRAC Education Programme for providing necessary information. We owe a lot to the concerned BRAC staff at the field stations for their cooperation in collecting data for this study. Sincere thanks and gratitude are also extended to Dr. Imran Matin, Senior Economist and Mr. Samir R Nath, Senior Research Fellow for reviewing the paper. We are also thankful to our colleagues at Education Research Unit of the Research and Evaluation Division for their valuable suggestions in various stages of the study. Finally, we are grateful to Mr. Hasan Shareef Ahmed for editing the manuscript.

Abstract

This study aimed at exploring changes that occurred in the lives of *Kisohri* supervisors (KS) due to employment in the BRAC Education Programme (BEP). Twenty-six KSs, 24 non-KSs, 36 of their guardians, 67 community people and 5 regional sectors specialists of six Team Offices of BEP were interviewed. Findings reveal that due to employment, the KSs were benefited economically - they were no longer dependent on their households, especially for their schooling, rather they often provided economic supports to their households. Their social status, mobility and social network increased significantly. Their employment contributed to their schooling but it created problem in attending the classes held in the afternoon because they had to visit reading centers in the afternoon. As they had to work six days a week, it might cause poor attainment in schools. The study further reveals that adolescents' employment in the BRAC programme helped change economic and social culture of their families, lead taking greater participation in the household's economic decision making, access to financial and economic resources, facilitated greater social freedom of mobility and created new social networks. It also discouraged practice of early marriage. Finally, considering the economic and social benefits of the girls it can be concluded that more adolescent girls can be employed following existing selection criteria. At the same time, it is necessary to explore ways of retaining their level of educational attainment at the school level.

Introduction

Adolescence is demographically dense stage of life when an individual pass a series of highly consequential life course transitions. This has recently emerged as a distinct stage of life in the development discourse of Bangladesh. It is period of transition between childhood and adulthood that varies from culture to culture, and is a time when individuals learn to be socially responsible for themselves and for their actions (Bnacroft and Reinisch 1990). The timing and nature of these transitions from school to work to marriage and childbearing can have important implications during adolescence and later in life. Children, especially girls, were expected to assume adult roles soon after their puberty, and they spent relatively little time in the transitional stage of adolescence.

Adolescents today constitute more than a fifth of the population of Bangladesh. While data on this group is scattered and patchy, a recent review undertaken by UNICEF Bangladesh highlights some disturbing facts about the situation of adolescents, especially the girls (UNICEF, 2003).

The review shows that

- In spite of overall improvements in the literacy level, more than half of the adolescent girls are illiterate.
- Almost half of the girls are married by the age of 15, and 60% become mothers by age of 19.
- Sixty percent of the girls aged 15-19 years are employed predominantly in low-wage and insecure sectors of the economy.
- More than half of the adolescent girls are undernourished and suffer from anaemia.
- The majority of the adolescent girls are uninformed or insufficiently informed about reproductive health and contraception.

Considering the situation of the adolescents during the transitional period, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, in collaboration with UNICEF has introduced a project namely ‘Empowerment of Adolescent Girls’ or “*Kisohri Abhijan.*” The objective of the project is to promote a gender equitable environment where girls can widen their choices, participate in empowering social and economic processes and realise their potential as agent for social change. Through the provision of the skills and livelihood skills, the project seeks to explore how

adolescents can be empowered. The project focuses on adolescent girls and is based on expectation that effective education and livelihood experiences are essential to the well-being of adolescents. The project supports adolescent groups or networks in 14 rural districts in Bangladesh, which is implemented by two non-governmental organisations (NGO) - BRAC and Center for Mass Education and Science (CMES). BRAC supports the Adolescent Peer Organised Network (APON) programme while CMES supports the Adolescent Girls' Programme (AGP) (Department of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, 2002). The project aims to increase visibility of adolescent girls as a special interest group in the media and in national programmes and policies.

An overview of the BRAC's Adolescent Development Programme

The Adolescent Development Programme (ADP) arose out of BRAC's Basic Education for Older Children (BEOC) model (three-year course). The goals of the programme are to: (i) empower the adolescent girls and develop their confidence and leadership skills; (ii) give adolescent girls the life skills to become responsible members of their families, communities, and the country; (iii) change traditional rural perceptions of the capabilities and value of girls; (iv) provide adolescent girls with a network of peer support; and (v) encourage adolescent girls to continue their education. The programme opened Reading Centers (RC), as an effort to help the girls especially who did not continue schooling after finishing three-year basic education course of the BEOC model. These centers not only contained reading materials but also became a safe place for the girls where they could socialise, play indoor games, sing, dance, gossip-all activities that are frowned upon in their homes.

As rural adolescent girls, traditionally, are often confined to their homes and their mobility is restricted, as because their guardians always feel insecure of their daughters - they may be victimised of violence if they go alone outside of the homestead. Early marriage and pregnancy are common and are often the reasons for their discontinuation of education. In Bangladesh, the rate of early marriage for girls is much higher (63%) compared to the boys (3.7%) in the same age group (UNESCO, 1998-2001). A study results indicate that although education for

adolescent girls in BRAC's Kishore Kishori (KK)¹ schools had allowed the adolescents to improve their economic status, it had virtually no impact on changing social patterns such as early marriage and dowry practice (Hossain and Kalam, 1999). Results of a health study show that approximately half of the married adolescent girls aged 15-19 were undernourished, and the maternal mortality rate among adolescent girls under 18 was three to four times higher than older women (UNESCO, 1998-2001). Two-thirds of the reported sexual transmitted diseases (STD) occur among the persons aged under 25. The incidence tends to be higher among women aged 15-19 year than men of the same group (UNESCO 1998-2001).

Considering the above, BEP conceived the Adolescent Peer Organised Network (APON) programme. The programme targeted adolescent girls, boys as well as married adolescent girls. An extensive life skill course was developed that would teach the adolescents the facts about many issues that are taboo in traditional Bangladeshi society. The course duration is five months long. The contents of the course include; reproductive health, women's legal rights, dowry, oral divorce, inheritance law, sexually transmitted diseases, family planning, children's health, nutrition, physical harassment, acid attacks and common family problems, etc.,

In addition to the initiative in developing girl's leadership and life skills, some livelihood training for adolescents were added in APON programme such as journalism, photography, computer literacy, poultry rearing, sewing, peer educator (APON course operator), adolescent monitor (monitor of Reading Centers, *Kisohri* supervisor (supervisor of RCs and pre-primary schools), adolescent librarian (librarian of RCs) and pre-primary teacher.

However, with the introduction of the RCs and APON course, it was realised that a new field management was needed for regular supervision of the course. Thus, the post of '*Kisohri* Supervisor' (KS) was invented. It should be mentioned here that each RC remains open once a week for two hours, operated by a adolescent librarian. The KS is assigned to supervise six RCs in a week – thus, she has to visit RCs for six days a week. The positions of the KS were designed to be part-time, so that the girls could continue their studies. The girls who did not pass SSC receive Tk.500 per month and those passed SSC and above receive Tk. 600. Till September

¹ School for adolescents operated by BRAC

2002, there were 1,118 KSs in the BRAC Adolescent Development Programme. The basic criteria that BRAC follows to be employed as the KS are: a) BRAC graduate, b) adolescent girl c) ongoing student. This study deals with the KSs who are engaged in supervising the RCs and the APON course.

Objective of the study

The broad objective of this study was to explore changes on the lives of *Kisohri* supervisors due to employment in the BRAC Education Programme. The specific objectives were to:

- * examine effects of the employment on their personal, household, and social life;
- * know mode of expenditure of their income;
- * know whether they gained any additional knowledge and skills, and
- * know perception of the community towards the employment opportunity created by BEP for the adolescent girls.

Methodology

This study has been conducted following qualitative research technique. Primarily, three Team Offices (TO) of the BEP were selected to collect information for the study. Three more TOs were covered in collecting additional information and for selecting cases. From each of the primarily selected TOs, four KSs and one of their guardians were chosen purposively as programme group. An adolescent girl (BRAC graduates) against each of the selected KS of the same age group but were not working as KS and one of their guardians were chosen as control group. Another adolescent girl against each of the KS of same age group who did not study in BRAC schools and one of their guardians were chosen as another control group from the study area. A list of TOs of the BEP was collected from head office. The TOs were chosen based on availability of KSs employed in BEP. The non-KS (BRAC graduates) for control group were chosen randomly from the schools where the selected KSs studied. The adolescent girls who studied in BRAC schools were chosen from the households with similar socioeconomic status of the KSs, following chain system sampling procedure. The socioeconomic status of the girls was measured through wealth ranking. The community people were chosen from the same locality based on their availability at the households.

Besides, 14 additional KSs from three different TOs were selected to collect additional information and information for case studies. Thus, 26 KSs, 24 non-KSs (12 BRAC graduates and 12 Non-BRAC students), 36 guardians of the adolescent girls, and 67 additional community people (40 female 27 male) were interviewed for the study. Besides, 5 regional sector specialists (RSS) of the ADP were also interviewed.

Data collection techniques and instruments

Both individual interview and group discussion methods were applied in data collection. The adolescent girls (12 KSs and 24 adolescent girls) and their guardians were interviewed individually. The additional 14 KSs were interviewed both in groups and individually. The community people were interviewed in groups. Four group discussion meetings in each of the primarily selected three TOs (two with male and two with female) were held. All the respondents were interviewed using separate semi-structured questionnaire. Data for the case studies were collected through using more in-depth checklist. Information from the concerned BRAC staff were gathered through informal discussions.

Field activities and quality control of the data

Three well-trained and experienced female field investigators were recruited on a temporary basis to collect data. Two field investigators were assigned to collect data from three primarily selected TOs. The remaining one was involved in collecting data for case studies. The field investigators were given a four-day training on data collection techniques, which included a one-day field test. The concerned researchers directly supervised and guided the field investigators' activities. The concerned researchers themselves collected data for the case studies with the assistance of a female field investigator.

Data processing and analysis

The field investigators processed the data at field level and compiled at the head office under direct supervision of the researchers. The concerned researchers took overall responsibilities for the data analysis and report writing.

Findings

The findings reveal that the employment of adolescent girls in the BRAC Education Programme directly and indirectly contributed in changing the lives of the KSs in both tangible and intangible manners. The changes can be highlighted and explained under some broad areas such as material well-being, empowerment, health and education, and life skills and knowledge.

Material well-being

Income, consumption and savings: As BEP recruited the KSs from amongst the BRAC graduates, most of them were from economically vulnerable families (Table 1 in Appendix). Almost all the KSs informed that they joined BRAC mainly considering the economic benefit. They mentioned that their parents often would face difficulties in providing not only their educational expenditure but also essentials like clothing, food, medical treatment, etc. Some of the KSs told that due to lack of money they could not buy even their books and educational materials. It was reported that due to employment, per capita income of the KSs households

Table 1. Expenditure pattern of the salary earned by KSs

Head of account	% of income
1. Savings deposited in bank	4.1
2. Contribution to family (for food, medical treatment, and clothing of HH members, education for siblings, crop cultivation, etc.)	22.1
3. Contribution to sibling in cash	1.3
4. Payment of own educational expenditure (books, materials, exam fees, private coaching, etc.)	23.8
5. Self clothing, school uniform and other habitual things	19.7
6. Loan repayment (By cycle)	11.0
7. Loan repayment (borrowed by family)	5.8
8. Asset purchase (other than bicycle)	6.4
9. Personal expenditure (miscellaneous)	1.7
10. Loan given to third person	4.1
Total (gross income of three months)	100.0

increased that contributed in reducing their economic crisis in many respects. It was evident that the KSs were no longer dependent on their families for buying their educational materials, clothing and other necessities, rather they could provide some economic supports to their families. The Table 1 shows that their income not only was used to meet their educational expenditure but also used to meet household's daily requirements such as food, crop cultivation, medical treatment, and clothing for household members. The Table presents the mode of expenditure of income of the KSs that gives a clear understanding of economic benefit that they got due to their employment.

The mode of expenditure of the KSs shows that more than 45% of their income was used to meet their personal requirements - education (23.8%), clothing (19.7%) and personal expenditure (1.7%). The Table further shows that the KSs contributed a considerable proportion of their income (22.1%) to their families. Eleven percent of their income was used to repay monthly instalments of loan that they borrowed from BRAC for buying bicycle for their fieldwork. Their income was not only used to repay their personal loan but also for repaying their household loan (5.8%).

The Table further shows that the KSs saved 8.2% of their income of which 4.1% deposited into bank and the rest 4.1% gave as loan to others. They spent 6.4% of their income to buy household's assets other than bicycle. The Table shows that the KSs as well as their families were directly benefited from their employment.

Empowerment

It was expected that along with other benefits the adolescent girls would be empowered if they were employed. Empowerment is a complex term. Literature review indicates a focus on empowerment across several scholarly and practical disciplines. No clear definition of the concept across the many disciplines was available. Many use the term cope with its lack of clear, shared meaning by employing the concept very narrowly, using only their specific scholarly discipline or programme (Page and Czuba, 1999). It is perceived with a concept that definition of the term especially for the adolescents should not be used as it is used for the adults. A general definition for this study is used where empowerment is defined as a "*multi-dimensional social*

process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and their society, by acting on issues that they define as important" (Page and Czuba, 1999). Some aspects relating to empowerment of the KSs are discussed below.

Control over income: The in-depth interview with the KSs revealed that almost all of them had control over their earned money. The KSs paid a significant proportion of their total income to their families, although it was not a compulsion, rather they paid the amount considering the economic crisis of their families. It was reported that before employment in the BRAC programme, father or elder family members of the KSs would buy their essentials like, clothes, cosmetics, educational materials from the market, but this was no longer the case. The KSs themselves bought their essentials from market after they were employed. It was further revealed that some of the KSs had bank account. The findings indicate that the KSs had control over their own income and the income gave them an opportunity to get access to the economic resources.

Involvement in the decision making process at the household level: Majority of the KSs told that they were not directly involved in the decision making process at the household level on the important issues, but their guardians consulted with them when invested their (KSs) money for different purposes, such as buying rickshaw, mortgaging land, buying household assets, admitting younger siblings into school, etc. Some of the KSs further told that their guardians asked to know their opinion before setting their marriage. The findings indicate that although they did not have full involvement in the household decision making process on major issues, they were involved in decision making on some economic issues.

Mobility and social network: The physical mobility of women in Bangladesh is often restricted. Traditions and family-imposed restrictions may forbid women from leaving the family compound, or may regulate when, where, and with whom they travel. Besides, issues of safety often prevent women from travelling alone for even short distance. These restrictions were even more severe for adolescent girls. Most of the KSs told that before joining BRAC program, their mobility was strictly controlled by their guardians. They were only allowed to go to school and often were not allowed to visit neighbours' households alone. Similar findings came out from the

non-KSs. The investigation revealed that due to employment in the BRAC Education Programme the mobility of the KSs increased significantly. As they were responsible for supervising six reading centers per week located in different villages², they had to travel by bicycle. It should be noted here that 25 of the 26 KSs were found to visit the reading center using bicycle.

Besides, the KSs also travelled to the TOs once a week for reporting and once a month at the regional office for attending monthly refreshers. The meetings were held on different days of the weeks. However, from a rough estimate it was confirmed that they had to travel more than 12 kms per day in addition to attending school.

It was further revealed that the employment opportunity for the KSs not only increased their mobility but also helped in developing a social network within the wider society. As part of their job, the KSs had to deal with members of the reading centers and most often they had to contact with the irregular members. The KSs had to visit members' homes where they also contacted their guardians as well as community people.

Social status: Attempt was made to realise whether the employment opportunity for the adolescent girls contributed to change their social status. Most KSs mentioned that their status in the society increased dramatically. The KSs were asked to explain the factors responsible for increasing their social status to comprehend the process of the change. The KSs informed that attitude of the community people towards them had changed positively. The community people of all age group talked to them with respect and they often asked them about their job and activities they were involved in, as well as their well-being. The community people also behaved well with them and did not criticise further although they visited different villages riding bicycle, rather they encouraged them for performing such a job. Some of them asked for an opportunity to have a similar job for their daughters. Some of the KSs told that the members of the reading centers, their guardians, other girls and their guardians in the villages greeted them with *salam* and talked to them with smiling face. They often invited them to visit their homes.

² The reading centers under supervision of the KSs remain open in such a way in which the KSs can supervise one center each day.

Although at the initial stage of their job, they and their guardians faced difficulty with the community, the problem no longer continued that eased over time. In this regard, some of the KSs more specifically told that at the initial stage of their job, they used to be teased by local boys and girls. As they visited RCs located in different villages riding bicycle, the community people did not like it. They complained to their guardians for not allowing to perform such a job.

Health and education

Health: This section focuses on early marriage of girls as it is directly associated with their reproductive health. Besides, the objective of government's programme is to increase the median age at marriage of girls, this paper attempted to examine the effect of employment on their marriage (Department of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, 2002). There are many problems associated with early marriage. It usually means that the underaged girls drop out of school, thus effectively terminating their education, the negative impact of which is enormous on the lives of their children and the society as a whole. Furthermore, early marriage often leads to early childbearing, which can result in serious health problems for girls who have not reached physiological maturity (UNESCO, undated). A survey showed that Bangladesh stands out in international comparisons as having an extraordinarily early age of marriage for girls (Department of Women's Affairs and Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, 2002). A significantly high percentage (73%) of young adolescent girls were married off before reaching the age of 18 years (Roque and Gubhaju, 2001, p,3). However, almost all the selected KSs (25 of 26) of this study were unmarried. They were asked what they were thinking about their marriage. Most KSs responded that they still were not thinking about their marriage. Their guardians also expressed similar views. The KSs who still did not reach the legal age of marriage (Table 1 in Appendix) told that until they would reach the legal age of marriage and finish their study, they would not get married. The remaining KSs who had reached the legal age of marriage told that until they would finish their study, they would not think about their marriage. Some of them mentioned some bad effects of early marriage they had learnt from APON course. Most of the guardians expressed that as their daughters had employment, they were not much worried about their marriage. The findings indicate that the programme had a

positive effect on discouraging early marriage for the adolescent girls employed in BRAC programme.

Education: Although most of the BRAC graduates were transferred to formal system for higher education, research showed that a large proportion of them left schools before they completed SSC level. One of the most important reasons was that most of their guardians did not have the economic ability to meet educational expenditure (Khan, 2002, Khan, 2001). Although, girls were not charged monthly tuition fees in schools, they had to pay other expenses such as books, educational materials, session charge, exam fees, school uniform, etc., that were prohibitive especially for the students who came from extremely poor households. Considering the poor economic status of the BRAC graduates, BRAC employed its graduates especially the girls so that they could continue their study. The investigation revealed that 25 of 26 KSs were continuing their study in different classes (Table 1 in appendix). Majority of the girls who were continuing their study informed that if they were not employed, they would not be able to continue their study. It was found that 2 of the 25 KSs dropped out from school before they joined as the KS, later they restarted their schooling after they were employed as the KSs in BRAC programme. Table 1 shows that the KSs spent about 23% of their total income for meeting their educational requirements, which was higher than other sectors of their expenditure.

Although the income of the KSs had a positive effect especially for continuing their study, unfortunately, it also had a negative consequence for their education. As the reading centers run from 3 - 5 pm., the KSs had to visit the centers during this time, and had to stay there for the whole time. Consequently, the ongoing students (the KSs studying in school or college) could not attend the classes that were held after 1 pm. The KSs themselves identified this as a crucial problem especially for their education. Some of the KSs further reported that due to travelling a long distance riding bicycle, they did not have adequate energy for preparing homework that ultimately hampered their regular education. Some of the KSs were observed to be worried about their attainment in the school examinations. BRAC field officers in several team offices and some literate people in the community expressed similar views.

Acquiring knowledge and skills

The selected KSs of this study received a six-day in-service training. The content of the training course included origin of BRAC, its role in empowering women, objectives of the BRAC education programme, objectives of the ADP programme, etc. The course also included some job related issues such as, concept of reading center and its opening process, techniques of household survey, process of member admission, process of forming management committee and their functions, concept and rationale of savings along with its recording system, process of lending reading materials, maintaining registers, process of reporting, etc., (Source: ADP, BEP). In response of the question whether they had acquired any knowledge and skills, most of them responded in affirmative, and mentioned the above-mentioned contents of the training. They further mentioned that the nature of job and activities they were involved in were also the sources of acquiring new knowledge and developing professional skills.

Besides, most of the KSs told that they had further scope to acquire some life skills as they supervised and dealt with APON course. The APON course contained a variety of issues such as women's reproductive health, effect of early marriage on women, necessity of iodine in human body, dowry and bride money, legal issues, acid attack, HIV/AIDS, trafficking children and women, bad effect of polythene, women's rights, process of divorce, etc. They also mentioned some other issues such as family planning, child abuse, arsenic contamination in water, nutrition and some physical and social problems of adolescents. Relating to the question, they added that if they were not employed as KSs, they would not acquire the above-mentioned knowledge and skills. The findings indicate that due to employment in the BRAC programme, the adolescent girls not only got economic benefit but also acquired knowledge and skills.

Perception of community towards employment opportunity for adolescent girls

One of the objectives of this study was to know the perception of the community towards employment opportunity for adolescent girls. It was found that perception of majority people of all age group in the community towards employment opportunity for adolescent girls was positive. They pointed out that the employment opportunity for the adolescent girls reduced their

dependency on their households. They further argued that a lot of female workers were involved in different NGOs working at village level riding bicycle and motorcycle. Due to employment in the BRAC programme, the girls (KSs) could spend some money in buying essentials, as they needed. They were no longer dependent on their households for continuing their study. They could not only bear their educational expenditure but also help their families by sharing household expenditure. They finally argued that such employment was better than suffering from economic crisis.

The majority of the KSs and their guardians mentioned that although perception of the community people was found to be positive during data collection, it was not the same at the initial stage of their appointment in the BRAC programme. They faced tremendous problems while they started fieldwork using bicycle. The majority of the people in the community did not like such mobility especially of the adolescent girls riding bicycle. The reasons for changing their attitude may include the goodwill of the organisation they were involved with, nature of the job they performed, effect of income on their lives, etc. Besides, culture in the society always is changing.

The effect of the employment of adolescent girls in their lives can be better explained through the following case studies.

Case 1. Farzana Khatun

Farzana Khatun (19) graduated from BRAC's NFPE school in 1995. She comes from a very poor family having no arable land. Her father was a day labourer who died few years ago. She was the fourth among her three elder brothers and one younger sister. Her two elder brothers were married and separated. She lived with her mother along with a younger sister and an elder brother. She was dependent on her brother. Her brother was a daily labour who earned on average, Tk.1,200 per month. The amount was insufficient for maintaining their family. Her brother could not afford the cost of Farzana's study. Considering the economic crisis, Farzana joined BRAC as KS in June 2001. She was then studying in class IX. She was offered Tk. 600 per month as remuneration. She was studying in class XI (HSC 1st year) during data collection. Although, she was previously dependent on her brother for schooling, she was no longer dependent on her brother after she was employed in the BRAC Education Programme. If she did not have the job, her study might not be continued. She bore not only her educational expenditure but also bore educational expenditure of her younger sister who was studying in class III. She also helped her brother in maintaining the family and presented dresses to her family members in the last Eid festival. She herself bought her essentials from the market. She also bore expenditure for treatment of her mother. Although she earned money, could save nothing for future. As part of her job assignment, she had to visit the reading centers those run from 3 to 5 p.m. As such, she could not attend the classes held in the afternoon. Although she got adequate time to study at home, she could not do so as she lost her energy by travelling a long distance riding bicycle. She also did not have free time to visit friends and relatives. She did not face any resistance from her family while joined in BRAC. Due to employment in the BRAC programme, her position in the family seemed to be steady as was before she joined BRAC. Due to involvement in BRAC programme, she had acquired some professional skills such as supervision, reporting, maintaining office registers, dealing with the community, etc. As she dealt with APON courses, she got an opportunity in acquiring some life skills such as reproductive health, family law, first aid, and family planning, etc. She travelled, on average, 12 km per day for performing her job assignments. Although Farzana reached the legal age for marriage, she would marry after finishing her study.

Case 2. Mowshumi Rani

Mowshumi Rani (16) graduated from BRAC's NFPE school in 1999. She comes from an extremely poor family having 6 members. Her father was a day labourer. She had one elder brother, one elder sister and one younger sister. Her brother was the main income earner of their family. Her elder sister was married. The monthly family income was Tk. 2,100 before she joined BRAC. The amount was inadequate for maintaining their family and continuing her study. When she was studying in class VIII, she discontinued her schooling due to poverty. In the same year, Mowshumi joined BRAC as KS and restarted her schooling. Her monthly remuneration was Tk. 500. She was studying in class IX at the time of data collection. As she had a job, she was no longer dependent on her family for schooling and clothing, rather often contributed to her family. She also bought educational materials and dresses for her younger sister who was studying in class VI. She also presented dresses to her father and mother. Although it was a great opportunity for continuing her study, she could not attend the afternoon classes. As she had to go to visit reading centers at 2 p.m. she had to leave school after 1 p.m. She did not pay full amount of her income to her family. She used to visit a private tutor for preparing home assignments. As she was very busy with her job and study, she could not visit her friends and relatives. Due to involvement in the BRAC programme, her status in the family as well as in the community increased. She had acquired some professional skills such as supervision, reporting, maintaining office registers, dealing with community, etc. She also had acquired some life skills knowledge relating to reproductive health, family law, first aid, family planning, etc. She travelled, on average, 11 km per day for performing her job. She would not get married until she finishes her study.

Discussion and conclusion

The women's movement in Bangladesh has come a long way since the 1985 Nairobi conference achievements (Taylor 1995:135). In recent decades the issues of adolescents have emerged as increasing concern throughout the developing and developed world (Islam, 1999). The government of Bangladesh and some national and international NGOs have undertaken development interventions targeting the adolescents, especially the girls. BRAC as a leading NGO in Bangladesh, has also undertaken an intensive programme for their development, namely Adolescent Development Programme (ADP). However, focus of this study was not on the adolescent girls as a whole but specifically the girls who were employed in the BRAC programme for working with adolescents. The study aimed at exploring effects of the employment in their lives.

The employed adolescents, designated as KS and recruited as part-timer, belong to the lowest socioeconomic strata of rural Bangladesh. One of the major objectives of such employment was to benefit them as well as their family economically so that they can continue their study. It is widely recognised that due to lack of economic solvency and prevailing gender disparity, women always are the worst victims of economic and socio-cultural discriminations. A study (Brock and Cammish, 1991) noted *"together with the fundamental socio-cultural bias in favour of males, the economic factor, especially in terms of grinding poverty and hunger, is probably the most influential in adversely affecting female participation in education, especially in rural areas."* The study shows that such harsh economic circumstances, both direct and hidden costs to a family of sending daughters to school were perceived by parents to be prohibitive in terms of the provision of books, paper and school uniform/clothing. However, findings revealed that the adolescents who were employed in BRAC programme were no longer dependent on their households, especially for schooling and clothing. They not only bore their educational expenditure but also often provided some economic supports to their families for meeting basic requirements of their households.

It was further revealed that employment and thus income not only led to bringing economic change but also directly and indirectly brought about social and cultural changes. Another study ((Brock and Cammish, 1991) reported that the contribution of women and girls tends to be

unpaid and as such rural women might have little traditional role or experience in handling money. This directly and often severely constrained their status and influence.

This study reveals that due to employment of the adolescent girls, their mobility had increased significantly which was important for women's autonomy. It facilitates building a social network outside the girls' home boundary. In addition to this, their association with a leading non-governmental organization like BRAC gave an additional impetus in changing their lives especially in social context, i.e. increasing social status and promoting empowerment. Cleland and Phillips (1993) argued, the social context of rural women had been changing as economic life had become more complex and more volatile, having linked to the outside world by mass media and the proliferation of private voluntary organizations. On the basis of the above statement, it can be perceived that along with income, associated organization and social network can also be influential factors in increasing social status of a person. For example, an adolescent girl working as paid labour in a factory, may not have equal social status compared to an adolescent girl working as KS in BRAC programme, although the factory worker receives higher salary than a KS. It should be mentioned here that the level of income may be a influential factor in increasing one's status at the family level but not always at the social or community level if some additional factors such as education, knowledge and skills, association with prominent person or organization etc., are absent. *Although it is unbeatable that economic empowerment of women takes place through paid employment and integrating women in mainstreaming may be viewed as a formidable escape route for economic backwardness, but it is also true that simple economic development, possession of resources by a few do not automatically lead to empowerment of the unempowered* (Haq, 1995:61).

This study further reveals that although the employment for the KSs had contributed positively towards continuing their education, it had also perhaps led to pressures that negatively affect the time and seriousness that the KSs could give for their education. Besides, no evidence was found as positive regarding the educational attainment of the KSs. The BRAC staff and some literate community people assumed that it might be true not only for the KSs, but also for other students (non-KSs) who did not attend the classes regularly or could not prepare home assignments. In this regard a question may be raised, which one should be preferred - schooling of the KSs or

their attainment? As the government provides necessary support to the rural girl students, they might be able to continue their study. Thus, the girls, especially the former BRAC students who already have dropped out might be recruited as the KSSs. At the same time findings of another study (Khan, 2002) should be kept in mind in implementing this. The study reported that although the girl students were given stipend by the government (Tk. 300 in class VI, Tk. 360 in class VII and Tk. 420 in class VIII), the amount was far lower than what is needed for bearing their educational expenses. The study roughly estimated that a student required minimum Tk. 2,300 to complete class VI. The amount gradually increased in the higher classes, which was unbearable for the poor families. At the beginning of each session the students had to pay a major portion of cost that they required each year, but the yearly stipend was disbursed twice a year, i.e., 50% in the middle of each session and the remaining 50% at the end of the year. The expression of some KSSs in this study may be true that their study would not be continued if they were not employed. In this context, another argument can be placed that schooling is better than discontinuing, although their attainment at school or college level was not at satisfactory level.

The findings of this study indicate that adolescents' employment in the BRAC programme helps change economic behaviour of their families, leads to adolescents taking part in economic decision making, having access to financial and economic resources, having greater social freedom of mobility and having greater social network. It also tends to resist early marriage. All these variables are seen as the influential elements of empowerment. On the basis of the findings, however, it can be concluded that if ultimate objective of BEP is to support the adolescent girls especially the ongoing students, more adolescents may be recruited following the existing criteria. At the same time, ways should be identified or necessary measures may be taken so that they are able to improve their level of attainment at school or college level.

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Appendix

Table 1. Socioeconomic profile of the KSs

Name of the KSs	Age	Schooling status	Class	HH head's education	HH head's occupation	Arable Land (dec)	Economic status*	Marital status
Shameema	18	Ongoing	11	14 (Fazel)	Service (Mid)	750	Good	Unmarried
Shanta	18	"	10	5	Small farmer	Nil	Poor	"
Moniza	21	"	10	4	Small trader	Nil	Poor	"
Nurunnahar	17	"	9	Nil	Small trader	Nil	Poor	"
Sheema	18	"	10	Nil	Small farmer	99	Moderate	"
Tania	18	"	10	1	Midium farmer	1	Moderate	"
Shahinur	17	"	10	Nil	Small trade	Nil	Poor	"
Afruza	16	"	10	Nil	Agri Labour	24	Very poor	"
Joshna	17	"	10	Nil	Small farmer	Nil	Poor	"
Taslima	18	"	11	14	Teacher	480	Good	"
Shaheena	16	"	9	Nil	Daily labour	Nil	Very poor	"
Saheeda	15	"	10	5	Disabled	Nil	Very poor	"
Nargis	17	"	10**	NA	Small farmer	NA	Very poor	"
Aleya	18	"	10	NA	Small farmer	NA	Poor	"
Tahmina	18	"	11	NA	Day labour	NA	Moderate	"
Mrittica	16	"	9	NA	Small farmer	NA	Poor	"
Golapi	18	"	12**	NA	Small farmer	NA	Poor	"
Laki	17	"	9	NA	Middle farmer	NA	Moderate	"
Shilla	18	"	12	NA	Middle farmer	NA	Moderate	"
Nasrinnahar	18	"	10	NA	Small farmer	NA	Poor	"
Depali	17	"	11	NA	Fishing	NA	Very poor	"
Lolita	17	"	10	NA	Small farmer	NA	Very poor	"
Gulshana	17	"	9	NA	Day labour	NA	Good	"
Nargis	18	"	12**	NA	Retired	NA	Poor	"
Nasima	19	"	12	NA	Samll farmer	NA	Moderate	"
Rokeya	20	Dropout	-	NA	Small farmer	NA	Poor	Married

* Good = Surplus, Moderate = Balance, Poor = Sometimes deficit, Very poor = Always deficit .

** candidates of examinations, NA = not available

Table 2. Daily time use of a KS

Activities	Duration	Time (minute)
Getting up from bed	6 : 00 a.m.	-
Freshness	6.00 - 6.30 a.m.	30
Preparing home assignment	6.30 - 7.00 a.m.	30
Breakfast	7.00 -7.15 a.m.	15
Study under private tutor	7.15 - 8.15 a.m.	60
Preparation for going to school	8.15 - 9.00 a.m.	45
Going to school (including travelling)	9.00 am. - 1.30 p.m.	270
Preparation for going to reading center (including lunch)	1.30 - 2.30 p.m.	60
Going to reading center (including travelling)	2.30 - 5.30 p.m.	180
Help mother in household activities	5.30 - 6.00 p.m.	30
Rest	6.30 - 7.00 p.m.	30
Study	7.00 - 9.00 p.m.	120
Dinner	9.00 - 9.30 p.m.	30
Going to bed for sleeping	9.30 p.m.	-