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MIDLINE REPORT PAKISTAN

Insights in the impact on the socio-economic situation of youth participating in the Empower Youth for Work programme



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SUMMARY

Empower Youth for Work (EYW) is a five-year programme, funded by the IKEA Foundation. The programme focuses on enabling young people (especially young women) in rural climate-affected areas of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Ethiopia to seek and obtain economic independence. To realize these goals, the programme applies a holistic approach to effectively drive young people's economic and overall empowerment through 1) working on agency, capacity & skills, 2) linking young people to existing and new economic opportunities including access to finance and 3) the creation of an enabling environment by influencing social norms and policies.

This midline assessment is a qualitative assessment relying on in-depth interviews with youth (N=110) and FGDs with youth (9) and community members (5). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there were some restrictions in the methods used. Part of the interviews were for example done by telephone, and there were some delays in data collection, particularly in Layyah. In the analysis findings from the qualitative assessment were compared to the quantitative baseline findings where possible. This comparison is not one on one – but rather reflecting on a trend analysis in the results that may be linked to the projects achievements. The findings were all interpreted and reflected upon with the implementing partner organizations and social mobilizers involved in the project to contextualize the findings and ensure utilization of the findings in a concrete project response.

The midline findings suggest that the participants through trainings have improved and are able to use soft skills, technical skills, and entrepreneurial skills. Youth groups proved to be essential for passing on new skills within the youth's communities. Participants used these groups to teach others skills, creating a spill over effect within the communities. The increase in skills had an effect on the interviewees' agency. Increased confidence happened through increasing and practicing soft skills such as communication skills. Increased negotiations skills affected interviewees' independence positively. In addition, the trainings had an indirect effect on independence by helping interviewees increase their income and thus their financial independence.

In some cases, the increased skills contributed to interviewees finding employment or self-employment. A considerable group of young men and women mentioned that they had managed to find a job since participating in the EYW trainings, or started their own microbusiness. With respect to self-employment young women were in the majority. Interviewees noted that an increase in agency helped them secure employment. In turn, becoming employed can have a positive effect on agency by making youth feel more confident in their ability to find employment.

These findings suggest positive trends on the KPIs relating to use of skills, (self-)employment, and income. However, youth – and especially the women – do still face significant barriers. The main barrier includes social restrictions. For example, family and community members often don't agree with girls going outside alone for trainings, jobs or education. The midline findings do suggest that the increase in skills and agency allow interviewees to better deal with these barriers. In some cases, interviewees reported seeing changes within their communities as a result.

Lastly we would like to conclude with a gender analysis. Although the sample was not always large enough to draw clear conclusions regarding gender differences, we have tried to emphasize differences and similarity wherever possible. In conclusion we can say that women participated equally in trainings and made equally use of their skills, compared to their male peers. Their starting point at the times of baseline was low, so they easily gained improvements in terms of skills and agency. Also they managed remarkable in translating skills into economic opportunities – especially with regards to self-employment. And here we also find the challenge in interpretation of these results – as young women face severe social restrictions when deploying economic activities. Self-employment often is the only acceptable possibility in terms of economic empowerment. The results show that EYW has supported young women in dealing with these social restrictions. Also young men participating in the EYW programme have supported their female peers, sometimes even at the price of facing social restrictions themselves. This may not directly translate to economic gains for young women, but definitely helps them in the process of social empowerment.

Based on the findings of the interviews and FGDs, and in collaboration with the participants of the December reflection workshop, the following programme recommendations have been formulated.

1. As the skills trainings seem to have started a positive trend towards employment it is important to continue the investment. Especially the combination of soft skills, technical skills and entrepreneurial trainings work well in improving agency and employability. Most possibilities lie in the informal sector and in self-employment. The coming period EYW Pakistan will focus on these areas to match the skill demand.
2. Home business provide an economic opportunity to women that is otherwise not possible for women due to social barriers, these could be further supported in the EYW project in Pakistan. A new area to explore in this respect are digital solutions like e-commerce. Further, attention should be placed on how women and their business from home link to the market, which currently remains a challenge.
3. The midline findings showed that an enabling environment is crucial for women to join the EYW project in Pakistan successfully. Social restrictions make their participation challenging as well as result in an underuse of taught skills. Therefore, it is important to take into account the family environment of young women and preconditions (in terms of support and safety) that can enable young women to participate at the labour market.

1 INTRODUCTION

Empower Youth for Work (EYW) is a five-year programme (2016-2021), funded by the IKEA Foundation. The programme focuses on enabling young people (especially young women, 15-29 years old) in rural climate-affected areas of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Ethiopia to seek and obtain economic independence. To realize these goals, the programme applies a holistic approach to effectively drive young people's economic and overall empowerment through 1) working on agency, capacity & skills, 2) linking young people to existing and new economic opportunities including access to finance and 3) the creation of an enabling environment by influencing social norms and policies that facilitate young men and women's economic and overall empowerment.

To keep track of the progress to realize the goals of EYW, an impact evaluation strategy is set up comprising of a survey with target- and comparison group at baseline (2017), midline (2019) and endline (2021). The impact evaluation is part of the greater Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning framework of the EYW programme. The purpose of the impact evaluation is to discover the experience of young women and men from rural areas in obtaining skills, finding decent employment and overall economic and social empowerment. Herein, we also focus on the enabling role the environment can have, in particular for young women. This report shows the results of the midline assessment of the EYW project in Pakistan. Due to restrictions in data collection and the Covid-19 pandemic this assessment measures trends instead of impact – as the Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning framework of the EYW programme envisioned.

The midline assessment aims to identify:

1. How have (a selection of) values related to KPI 1, 2, and 3¹ changed over time compared to the baseline:
 - a. What are the perceived trends in relation to the baseline values?
 - b. In which ways do youth feel the program made a contribution to these changes?
2. What are the associations between agency and skills and employment outcomes:
 - a. In which ways is there a relationship between gaining new skills (technical, soft or entrepreneurial) and increased agency?

¹ KPI 1: # of young women and men who have the improved soft and hard skills required to pursue and retain decent employment, self-employment or a small business by EoP

KPI 2: # of young women and men who have gained new stable, fair and gender equitable jobs or an improvement in their existing job (more equitable, more decent, better working conditions etc)

KPI 3: # of young women reporting a decrease in social restrictions (e.g. GBV, mobility, ability to plan family size, excessive care work etc) that limit engagement in economic activities

- b. In which ways is there a relationship between skills and agency and achieving employment or socio-economic empowerment?
- 3. What are the associations between enabling environments and employment outcomes:
 - a. In which ways is there a relationship between reduced external barriers and achieving employment or socio-economic empowerment?

2 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The EYW programme aims to improve economic and social empowerment for young women and men living in rural climate-change affected areas in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Indonesia, and Pakistan. The Theory of Change consists of three pillars. The project works on improving young people's agency and skills (pillar 1), improving their economic opportunities (pillar 2), and creating an enabling environment for youth (pillar 3) to ultimately increase their social and economic empowerment.

In Pakistan, the project intends to reach 34,000 young people, of whom 70% are young women and 30% young men. Besides the main beneficiaries (the youth), other key groups are also targeted. These are members of the youths' households, community elders, tribal and feudal leaders, religious and opinion leaders, middlemen, the private sector (including local business owners and market actors such as microfinance bodies), relevant government departmental leaders at the village, the union council, tehsil and district levels, farmers' groups, NGOs, social protection organisations, schools and other educational institutes. Oxfam works together with the following partner organizations: Research and Development Foundation (RDF), Bedari and Bargad. The geographic locations of the project, rural and semi-urban areas of Jamshoro district in Sindh province, and Layyah district in Punjab province, are severely flood and drought prone. Punjab and Sindh provinces are among the most populated provinces in Pakistan (accounting for 75% of the total Pakistan population). Patriarchal structures limiting women remain predominant in the targeted districts of Jamshoro and Layyah. Agriculture and livestock, which are susceptible to natural disasters, are mainstay sectors for income-producing work in these areas. However, wages are low and work is not stable given the recurring disasters and displacement. Women are usually engaged in unpaid labour (12–14 hours daily). They lack access and control over financial resources and decision making. On top of this, they face gender based violence. The residents in the climate-affected rural and semi-urban locations in Jamshoro and Layyah lack access to knowledge on climate adaptation, job/entrepreneurial skills and economic opportunities that could make them more resilient to the ongoing climate change impacts. Improving conditions in the rural and semi-urban areas of Jamshoro and Layyah through capacity and market development and by changing gender norms can bring economic growth and enable the residents to build more resilient livelihoods.

3 METHODOLOGY

This midline assessment of the EYW project in Pakistan aims to answer the following question:

What are the main factors (internally and externally) determining whether youth (aged 18-24) in rural areas of Pakistan are able to obtain new or improved jobs?

Table 1 below shows by means of which methodologies sub-questions were answered

Table 1: Questions linked to methodologies and specific tools

	Methodology	Tool
KPI values description and trend comparison to baseline qualitatively	110 In-depth interviews with youth (60 in Jamshoro and 50 in Layyah)	Semi-structured interview – with timeline methodology ²
2a. Relation between agency and skills	In-depth interviews with youth (see above) 9 FGD with youth in Jamshoro (4 female groups / 5 male groups)	Semi-structured interview Participatory exercises for FGD
2b. Relation between skills and employment outcomes	In-depth interviews with youth (see above) FGD with youth (see above)	Semi-structured interview Participatory exercises for FGD
3a. Relationship between increased agency / reduced external barriers and achieving employment or socio-economic empowerment.	FGD with youth (see above) FGD with community members in Jamshoro (2 female groups / 3 male groups)	Participatory exercises for FGD Participatory exercises for FGD

² Timeline drawing combines a factual approach towards events and experiences with room for reflection, interpretation and sensemaking. People are encouraged to explore their recollections of key moments and experiences in their life. As a graphic technique, timeline drawing can draw out ideas that would be difficult to elicit solely through verbal transactions, trigger richer conversations, and build rapport. It allows people to form a holistic view of the topic being explored (Adriansen, 2012; Kolar et.al, 2015).

3.1 THE SAMPLE

They EYW midline study interviewed a total of 110 youth, 60 from Jamshoro district and 50 that are based in Layyah. The purposeful approach included in- and excluding criteria. Including criteria were youth that participated in one or more EYW project activities, with equal representation of soft-skills training, technical skills training, entrepreneurial training and youth group participation. In the selection the staff also took into account to include variety in employment status after training, skills attainment according to pre- and post-assessments, enrollment in multiple activities, and in success cases versus drop-outs. A balance between men and women and level of education was agreed that is representative to outreach numbers. Furthermore, the villages for the interviews were selected based on diversity in distance to the training center.

These 60 youth interviewed in Jamshoro district comprised of 39 young women and 21 young men in the age range of 15 to 29, living in a range of villages within the Jamshoro district. Their education levels range from uneducated to Master degrees. Here we choose for variety over representativity, hence we cannot disaggregate our findings for education level, but we ensured a representative variation. Table 2 below shows an overview of the occupational status of the interviewees.

Table 2: The sample by employment status from Jamshoro

	Unemployed	Employed	Self-employed
Women	22 (56.4%)	6 (15.4%)	11 (28.2%)
Men	16 (76.2%)	2 (9.5%)	3 (14.3%)
Total	38 (63.3%)	8 (13.3%)	14 (23.3%)

During the interviews, 13 respondents out of 60 (8 women, 5 men) reported becoming employed after taking part in trainings, though some quit their jobs again due to several reasons, like too little payment, challenges in transportation, and not realizing promises made at the moment of being hired. This explains while the current employment status notes 6 women and 2 men in employment. 19 interviewees (12 women, 7 men) reported starting their own business. These numbers don't fully align with the occupational status reported at the sampling stage of the midline study. It is possible that employment or self-employment wasn't reported at the start of the midline study for several reasons, for example if it had a more informal nature.

A total of 50 youth were interviewed in Layyah. These youth comprised of 16 men and 32 women (the gender of two interviewees is not known) in the age range of 18 to 31, living in a range of villages in the Layyah district. Their education levels range from some form of primary school to Master degrees. Table 3 below shows an overview of the occupational status of the interviewees from Layyah. No distinction is made between employed or self-employed since this is not clear from the collected demographic information in the Layyah district (e.g. a shopkeeper might own their own shop or be employed by the

shop owner). Overall, the interviewees from Layyah enjoy higher rates of employment than the interviewed youth from Jamshoro.

Table 3: The sample by employment status from Layyah

	Unemployed	Employed/self-employed
Women	8 (25%)	24 (75%)
Men	3 (18.8%)	13 (81,3%)
Total	11 (22.9%)	37 (77.1%)

During the interviews 10 women and one man reported become employed after taking part in trainings, and 5 women and one man reported starting their own business. As the interviews from Layyah were less comprehensive than the ones in Jamshoro, these numbers might not reflect reality.

At baseline 78% percent of women and 31% of men were unemployed, this was a combination of respondents in Layyah and Jamshoro, which makes comparison difficult.

1.1.1 INVOLVEMENT IN THE EYW PROGRAMME

EYW targets young women and men between the ages of 15 and 29. Although some project activities also target members of communities who may be older adults, most programme activities are focused on young people themselves. Youth can participate by following trainings on soft, technical or entrepreneurial skills, by participating in an internship or apprenticeship (or on-the-job learning) or by joining a youth group. Youth can choose their participation, based on interest, but availability of training is also a determining factor. During the midline study, the interviews primarily focused on participation in trainings. All youth participated in multiple trainings, in which they learned technical, entrepreneurial and soft skills. There were no significant gender differences in participation in trainings. There was only one interviewee who mentioned participating in an internships or on-the-job training, but during the reflection workshop in May it was noted that at least two interviewees participated in an internship.

1.2 REFLECTION WORKSHOPS

Online midline reflection workshops were held on May 14th, 2020, and December 7th and 8th 2020 to reflect on respectively preliminary and final results of the midline study. The participants consisted of staff from Oxfam in Pakistan and Oxfam Novib, staff from partners, and youth involved in the EYW programme. Reflections and suggestions from participants are incorporated throughout this report, and are clearly labelled where they appear.

1.3 STUDY LIMITATIONS

This study relies on in-depth interviews with youth and FGDs with youth and community members. The data was collected in Jamshoro in April and May 2020 and in Layyah in August and September 2020. In Jamshoro programme staff collected and transcribed the data after enumerator training and in Layyah a consultant, familiar with the region, collected and transcribed the interviews. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there were some restrictions in the methods used especially in Layyah. Part of the interviews were for example done by telephone, and there were some delays in data collection, particularly in Layyah. This is why the interview quality in Jamshoro ended up being higher and more elaborate than in Layyah. Therefore, the interviews from Jamshoro were used as the main source for analysis, with the interviews in Layyah serving as confirmation and elaboration. FGDs were only conducted in Jamshoro, and in smaller groups to ensure the safety of all participants.

The sampling of the midline assessment is designed to give a comprehensive overview of the target group of EYW. As this is a qualitative assessment, we could not ensure a full representative sample, but rather choose for a sample that reflects the variety of participants in the EYW project in Pakistan. Hence we only disaggregate the findings by gender and not by other socio-economic characteristics. Further, it is not possible to compare the baseline and midline findings as the methods of both assessment differ. Therefore, we only reflect on trends in relation to the baseline findings at the end of each result section.

4 MIDLINE RESULTS

4.1 RESULTS ON SKILLS AND AGENCY

This section answers the research questions related to the associations between gaining new skills and increased agency (the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices), as well as focus on several KPIs related to use of skills. Gaining new skills includes soft skills (personal attributes that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people), technical skills (abilities and knowledge needed to perform specific tasks) and entrepreneurial skills.

The interviewees participated in various types of trainings. This included a standard training, employment, farming, microbusiness, GALS, and theatre training. Women and men participated in the same trainings – there was not a specific gender preference visible in the enrolment.

All interviewees participated in multiple trainings. The standard training package is a 10 day training in which participants are mainly taught soft skills such as communication, negotiations, and job interview skills, but also technical skills such as writing CVs. This therefore overlaps with the employment training, which is a four day training in which participants are taught soft and technical skills related to employment. The farming training also lasts four days, and participants learned technical skills such as how to grow vegetables and how to make fertilizer. In the seven-day microbusiness training, participants learned technical and entrepreneurial skills. This included learning how to start a business with a small investment and how to manage and grow it. The GALS training focuses on self-development. Participants were invited to think about and draw their vision for the future and which steps they need to take to achieve this. In addition, GALS is related to social norms, and participants were taught about women’s rights and gender equality. During the theatre training, participants were taught soft skills, such as how to perform in front of their communities. The theatre performances were sometimes used as a way to address social norms within the community. This will be elaborated on in later sections. At baseline, youth indicated that they would like to learn several skills. First of all, 86% of women and 37% of men indicated that they would like to learn a technical skill. Participants also indicated that they might need to learn entrepreneurial skills to run a business. When it comes to soft skills, women at baseline were less confident in these skills than men, indicating a possible learning need for soft skills. The trainings at midline addressed these varying learning needs.

“Through Standard Package training, I have learned communication skills, CV Writing, interview skill and negotiation. I have developed my communication skills over the period using the acquired skills in the training.” (Male, Jamshoro)

	Soft skills	Technical skills	Entrepreneurship skills	Training related to social norms
Standard package (N = 94)	X	X		

Employment training (N=38)	X	X		
Farming training (N=69)		X		
Microbusiness training (N=60)		X	X	
Gender Action Learning System (N=64)	X			X
Theatre (N=24)	X			X

Table 4: type of training and skills taught

The different trainings thus focused on teaching the participants various types of skills, including soft skills, technical, and entrepreneurship skills, as table 4 portrays. On top of this, two trainings addressed social norms – in particular related to gender.

There were no interviewees who mentioned participating in internships or on-the-job training, but during the first reflection workshop it was noted that at least two interviewees from Jamshoro participated in an internship. The focus of the research is therefore on the trainings and the skills youth learned through participating in them. There were no significant gender differences in participation in trainings, despite the project targeted 70% women to participate.

4.1.1 SKILLS GAINED AND USED

Through the different types of training the participants learned soft skills, technical skills and entrepreneurial skills. In Jamshoro, the vast majority of participants mentioned gaining soft skills and technical skills, and half of the interviewees specifically mentioned improving their entrepreneurial skills. In Layyah, also a majority of participants mentioned gaining soft skills, about a quarter of the participants said they had improved their technical skills. Only a few people mentioned improving their entrepreneurial skills. The interviews from Layyah are less comprehensive compared to those in Jamshoro. It is therefore possible that these numbers do not reflect reality, as the interviewees weren't always probed on which skills they improved. For example, at least 20 interviewees from Layyah participated in the microbusiness training. It is therefore likely that more people improved their entrepreneurial skills – but this is difficult to judge as we did not assess the quality of the training. There were no gender differences in training participation and there were also no gender differences in skills gained and used. This is a surprising finding as we will see later in the results that women face social restrictions that hamper them in socio-economic empowerment. However, despite these restrictions they report to gain and use skills. This is also an interesting result in relation to the baseline findings were women reported to be more in need of attaining skills and less confident on their skills levels at the start of the programme.

Soft skills

Interviewees indicated an increase in communication skills. Some interviewees used to feel shy or hesitant when talking to others, but they have improved this through practicing these skills in the

trainings. Other communication skills were how to effectively negotiate, for example how to behave in an argument and how to convince people, how to present in front of a group of people, and anger management. In addition, the interviewees who participated in the employment training were taught how to perform and how to dress during a job interview and stated that this skills helped them a lot during job application processes.

One of the global EYW KPIs is use of soft skills. Participants applied the taught soft skills in their daily life in several ways. For example, interviewees mentioned delivering presentations to their class at school, and communicating and negotiating with family and community members. In addition, some of the interviewees were able to use the skills gained during actual job interview processes. This will be elaborated on in later sections.

The findings described above are further elaborated on through quotes in table 5.

Soft skills learned	Use of soft skills
<p><i>"We practiced during the session to communicate with other participants which I liked the most. Such exercises were very helpful to overcome my hesitation. Now, I can easily communicate with everyone and I feel much confident about it."</i> (Male, Jamshoro)</p> <p><i>"In the first training, we were taught how to communicate with people, how to interact with them and how to properly convey a message. For example, like when people move to another area or community, it is important to know how to communicate with people from a different area/ background in order to avoid any conflict and make people understand your message."</i> (Female, Jamshoro)</p> <p><i>"In the standard package, we were given training on how to improve our communication skills, we were taught English and also presentation skills."</i> (Female, Layyah)</p> <p><i>"I have learnt many new skills including anger management [...], communication & negotiation skills."</i> (Male, Jamshoro)</p>	<p><i>"I use the communication skill daily. For example, if a guest comes to home, I know how to talk to them, how to behave, how to entertain them. Before attending this training, I did not have enough confidence to meet people and to talk to any guest. I used to hide from them in my house. But, now I do not do that anymore."</i> (Female, Jamshoro)</p> <p><i>"During the training, I learned how to negotiate with people and I applied this technique on them to convince the people of my community."</i> (Female, Jamshoro)</p> <p><i>"I learned presentation skill and it helped me to deliver a good presentation in my class. [...] Now, I can easily stand in front of them without fearing."</i> (Male Jamshoro)</p> <p><i>"Before the interview, I again went through my training notes on interview skills and practiced again at home to do my best during my job interview. I used all the techniques that I learned from EYW trainings."</i> (Female, Jamshoro)</p> <p><i>"It has gotten a lot easier for me to interact with people and initiate meaningful conversations."</i> (Male, Layyah)</p>

Table 5: soft skills learned and used

At the baseline, the interpretation of soft skill was broader than the respondents now show, including concepts on problem solving, personal control, and leadership. Communications skills were not assessed, though one could argue that it is part of the three concepts above. At the time, respondents in Jamshoro scored 0.57 point on a 1 point scale and respondents in Layyah 0.68 – showing sufficient level of soft skills. While comparing to the baseline thus might not indicate a clear trend, the answers

provided during the interviews do suggest that the knowledge and the use of soft skills (KPI) has increased.

Technical skills

Participants mentioned several types of technical skills that they improved in – as further emphasized in the quotes in table 6. These included computer skills, language skills – particularly English, CV making skills, and farming skills. Computer and English skills were taught in the standard training package. The employment training included lessons on how to create a CV.

One of the KPIs is the “use of market-led technical skills reported by participants”. The interviewees noted using their taught technical skills in several ways. For example, interviewees were able to apply their CV making skills in actual job interview processes (see later sections). The technical skill that most interviewees mentioned using in their daily life, was farming skills. During the farming training, the participants were taught how to grow vegetables, how to care for livestock, and how to make fertilizer. In some cases, the interviewees reported that they had received seeds or livestock from the project to bring home. One interviewee explained that the participants were given seeds or livestock with the purpose of managing and multiplying them at home *“We have been provided these items to do something out of it. If we take care of it and manage it properly, we might be able to produce two out of one goat which will benefit us in long term.”* (Female, Jamshoro). This allowed some of the participants to start a business. This will be elaborated on in later sections. In addition, others argued that they now had access to better quality food, as produce from the market was reported to be of lesser quality than the homegrown vegetables.

Technical skills learned	Use of technical skills
<p><i>“During the training session, we learned English grammar and practiced speaking during the classes with other participants of the training. Now, I do not feel any hesitation and can communicate in English.”</i> (Male, Jamshoro)</p>	<p><i>“Nearby an empty plot, we found a small gardening portion where we grew our vegetables (such as tomatoes, potatoes, onion, chilies, green vegetables and so on) using the techniques which we used in our training.”</i> (Male, Jamshoro)</p>
<p><i>“In farming training, I learned about kitchen gardening that how to cultivate organic vegetables at home without having a large piece of agricultural land. The session trained us to grow fresh and healthy vegetables at home with less money. I also learned how to make handmade fertilizer which was easy to learn and free to make using the waste from home.”</i> (Female, Jamshoro)</p>	<p><i>“I applied that training and grow vegetables at my home. I get a lot of benefit from it. We get clean & fresh vegetables and we get to save our money through kitchen gardening.”</i> (Female, Jamshoro)</p>
<p><i>“In 2018, I received training on standard packages which involved training on matters like communication, CV writing, climate change, computer skills, and basic life skills.”</i> (Female, Layyah)</p>	<p><i>“Under employment training, I learned how to make a CV, what to include in a good CV and what does not look good on a CV. Using the learning from the training, I made my own CV for the first time.”</i> (Female, Jamshoro)</p>

Table 6: technical skills learned and used

At the baseline, only 22% of the youth respondents in Jamshoro and 13% of the youth respondents in Layyah reported having a technical skill. During the midline, 54 interviewees (93.3%) in Jamshoro and

15 interviewees (30%, number in reality might be higher) in Layyah reported having learned technical skills, and reported applying these skills in several ways. Because of this, we can presume that there has been a positive trend regarding the KPI of (market-led) technical skills.

Entrepreneurial skills

While there is no KPI on the use of entrepreneurial skills, there is a KPI on the perceived usefulness of skills taught during the entrepreneurship training. The entrepreneurial skills that interviewees were taught during the microbusiness training included budgeting, and how to start a business. In Jamshoro, of the 40 people that said they had participated in the microbusiness training, 19 reported that they had started their own business among whom women are in the majority. There is no complete information on the types of businesses started, but anecdotal examples include businesses in farming, livestock rearing and opening up a shop. The number was lower in Layyah, as only 6 people started a business. However, this could be explained by the fact that the Layyah respondents enjoy higher rates of employment – which can be explained by the economic opportunities in the area – according to partner staff. The results suggest that the interviewees were able to use at least some of the skills taught in the entrepreneurship training.

“I calculated everything like the seed money I would be needing to start a business, how much would be my revenue and how much profit I can get in a day/week/month. Such calculations and new learning made me push to start a business which I did.” (Male, Jamshoro)

The baseline only measured if respondents had the potential to become entrepreneurs. At that time it was found that both men and women had the potential to become entrepreneurs. The midline results show that this has become a reality – with especially remarkable results for female entrepreneurship.

Overspill effect

A result of the newly gained skills was that the interviewees started teaching others these skills. This is where their youth groups came into the picture: the interviewees that were able to participate in the training, often used their youth groups as a way to replicate the trainings to other young people in their community. This was particularly true in Layyah, where youth reported being actively encouraged to set up a youth group to replicate the skills they were taught.

“I replicated the same training with my youth group members from my village and they are getting benefitted out of it as well as they have started growing vegetables at their homes. Some of them sell the vegetables in the market and earn money too.” (Female, Jamshoro)

This shows that the trainings had an overspill effect onto other youth in the community. Not only did more youth than just the ones that participated in the trainings gain skills, the overspill also had an effect on the larger community. This will be elaborated on in the section on dealing with barriers.

While there is no KPI on this overspill effect, there are KPIs on the number of functioning youth groups meeting at least once per quarter, and on the total number of young men and women regularly attending youth group. While it is impossible to assess a trend in these areas with the midline data, the data does suggest that the interviewees and their community members attend youth groups, and that these youth groups are an important factor in passing on taught skills to the larger community.

All in all, the interviewees reported that they had gained soft skills, technical, and entrepreneurial skills through the different types of trainings they participated in. They were able to use these skills in various situations in their daily lives. This relates to the KPIs of use of soft skills and market-led technical skills, as well as – to a certain extent – to the KPIs on perceived usefulness of taught skills. Soft skills learned were mainly focused on communication, and included presenting and negotiation. Technical skills included language and computer skills, and – largely – farming. Entrepreneurial skills include business related skills, which some of the interviewees (majority female) were able to use by starting their own business. In addition, the interviewees replicated the taught skills in their youth groups, creating an overspill effect within their communities.

4.1.2 LINK BETWEEN AGENCY AND SKILLS

One of the KPIs included the use of agency and soft skills as reported by participants. This section will primarily focus on the link between the two, as well as the link between other skills and agency (please see further amplifications of the results through quotes in table 7). All of the interviewees – so both men and women - reported increasing their agency in some way after attending the training. This mostly fell within two categories: increased confidence and increased independence.

Increased confidence involved interviewees becoming more comfortable in talking to others, presenting in front of a group of people, and overall becoming less shy. This was often described as a result of increased soft skills such as communication skills. Interviewees noted how they used to be shy and found it hard to speak to other people or give presentations. Through the standard package trainings, they were able to improve and practice this. One interviewee also mentioned that next to the training in communication, the theatre training helped them increase their confidence as well, as it made them more comfortable to communicate to large groups of people. This shows a link between gaining soft skills and increased agency: as interviewees improved their communication skills, this provided them with more confidence. It could be argued that these reinforce each other, as increased confidence (agency) in turn can also lead to interviewees choosing to communicate with others more, thereby practicing their soft skills.

Increased independence involved interviewees being better able to make own decisions (including within the family), becoming less reliant on others, and becoming more financially independent. Increased independence was described as a result in soft skills as well, particularly negotiation skills. These skills allowed interviewees to directly negotiate about their independence with their families. In two cases in Layyah, women described an increased confidence to travel by themselves, therefore creating more independence.

In addition, one interviewee mentioned how having realised an increased income after the EYW trainings that made her more independent, as she had become financially less dependent on others. This in turn also led her to have more power within the decision making process in her household. This shows how the trainings can have a positive trickle down effects on the participants. Trainings focused on employment or starting a business can have the direct effect of increasing incomes, which in turn leads to increased agency. Some interviewees mentioned that changed norms around gender contributed to increased independence for some interviewees. This will be elaborated on in later sections.

Increased confidence	Link between skills and confidence	Increased independence	Link between skills and independence
<p><i>"I did not have a lot of confidence ability to communicate before these training sessions. However, after having received these sessions, I gained a lot of self-confidence and I have gotten really good in interactions with people. Moreover, I feel like I have my life more figured out now, as I have goals and ambitions decided for myself, for which I am working towards."</i> (Female, Layyah)</p> <p><i>"Earlier, I used to get afraid of people and I avoided talking to them. I used to feel hesitant and uncomfortable especially while talking to strangers or random people. [...] Now, I can talk to any one freely."</i> (Female, Jamshoro)</p>	<p><i>"I have learned good communication skills. It built my confidence. Now, I can talk to anyone anywhere. I have also learned how to deal with pressure and criticism by people. [...] I can negotiate with people and can convey my message to them."</i> (Male, Jamshoro)</p> <p><i>"Earlier I did not know how to communicate with people, what to say to them and what not to say. I did not have enough confidence to talk in front of many people. After being a part of the project, I have gained confidence, skill and experience which helped me to interact and communicate with people effectively."</i> (Female, Jamshoro)</p>	<p><i>"I do a little business of livestock. I use my saving to grow my business and make decision of developing my business on my own. [...] I do not ask for any financial help from someone. I am not dependent on anyone else anymore."</i> (Female, Jamshoro)</p> <p><i>"I was not able to travel locally before these trainings, as I was very afraid of going alone. But after these trainings, I traveled not just locally but to other cities like Lahore and Multan as well, that too by myself. Moreover, I wasn't able to convince my family before, but now it is a lot easier for me to get permission from them."</i> (Female, Layyah)</p>	<p><i>"Using negotiation skills I am able to convince my parents for permission to avail education opportunities. I feel more independent and empowered because I am able to achieve my goals, has decision making power, familiar with my responsibilities and determined to perform them."</i> (Female, Jamshoro)</p> <p><i>"I am no longer dependent on my parents. I have initiated my business. I earn from my business and fulfil my needs. I make my decision because I do not have to rely on others for financial expenses. Money in hand makes a girl very much empowered and independent."</i> (Female, Jamshoro)</p>

Table 7: Quotes related to the link between skills and agency

Youth respondents responded quite positively at the baseline to the question whether adults listen to their personal opinions, but quite negatively on the question about general appreciation of young voices among adults. In addition, baseline respondents had mixed views about feeling comfortable with expressing themselves and taking a lead role in their communities. It appeared that youth (both male and female respondents) were most comfortable with expressing their views, needs and aspirations amongst peers. The midline data suggests a positive trend on the KPI of use of agency. Interviewees reported being generally better able to express themselves within their communities, including to those who are not their peers.

In conclusion, the interviewees reported a change in agency in two ways: increased confidence and increased independence. Increased confidence happened through increasing and practicing soft skills such as communication skills. Increased negotiations skills as well as increased confidence affected interviewees' independence positively. In addition, the trainings had an indirect effect on independence by helping one of the interviewees increase her income and thus their financial independence. We do not know if this is a singular case or if more participants have experienced this.

4.2 HOW SKILLS HELP TO CREATE EMPLOYMENT, SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

4.2.1 EMPLOYMENT

One of the KPIs measures the number of young women and men with new and existing jobs. This includes the number of young women and men employed within existing enterprises after receiving information about vacancies and job fairs, after an internship, and after participation in skill training. This sections will primarily focus on young women and men employed after participation in skill trainings, and in particular how the taught skills helped them gain employment (see table 8 for more information).

In Layyah 11 interviewees reported become employed after taking part in trainings: 10 women (31.3% of all female interviewees) and one man (6,3% of all male interviewees). 14 interviewees in Jamshoro mentioned that they had managed to find a job since participating in the EYW trainings, at least three of which joined RDF as enumerators. We may question if joining RDF as enumerators can be considered a real job as it is a short term assignment only. These interviewees comprised of 8 women (20.5% of all female interviewees), and 5 men (23.8% of all male interviewees). As these numbers are small, it is difficult to conclude definite about them in terms of gender analysis – but it seems that women are reaching more results in terms of employment after taking part in trainings.

Other jobs included working as a teacher at a school, working at a bakery, at a textile mill, at an NGO, and at an academic institute (each of these options mentioned only by one interviewee). Another three interviewees mentioned that they had gotten a job offer that they rejected, for example because the salary wasn't high enough.

Both increased soft skills and technical skills led to employment, according to the interviewees. Soft skills that led to employment included an increase in communication skills and in particular job interview skills. Technical skills that led to employment included CV writing skills. Interviewees mentioned that they didn't know what a good CV looks like before, and that they learned it through the trainings. In addition, interviewees noted that an increase in agency also helped them secure employment, as it for example allowed them to be more confident during the job interview. One interviewee explained how employment in turn also had an effect on his agency: becoming employed made him more confident that he could secure other work in the future.

The interviewees also mentioned other factors that led or could lead to employment. This included having a vision (which was addressed through the GALS training, according to interviewees), access to education, and support from others. Another factor that could lead to employment is information on employment, which is included in the KPIs. Seven interviewees mentioned that they had gained information on employment through the project by visiting job fairs, which in some cases led to job offers.

Employment	Pathway of skills to employment	Other factors leading to employment
<i>"I do not own any kind of business however I teach at a private"</i>	<i>"I dropped my CV at school to apply for a job. After few days, I was"</i>	<i>"Like I said, planning is the first major step to acquire anything."</i>

<p><i>school. I took up the teaching job after my training sessions with EYW.” (Female, Layyah)</i></p> <p><i>“But after taking these training, I am working now. I work as a Community Resource Person (CRP) with Thardeep Rural Development Programme in their programmes of SUCCESS and DAFPAK.” (Female, Jamshoro)</i></p> <p><i>“I gave my best to the Fateh Textile Mill. Soon I heard back from them and got a job. It was a great experience for me, but I left that job because it was too far from my home and the salary was not enough for me. This job opportunity enhanced my confidence in myself and I realized that I am good enough to apply for further jobs and secure a good job position.” (Male, Jamshoro)</i></p>	<p><i>called for a short interview in the school. The communication and interview skill training helped me to prepare for my interview. As a result, my interview went well and I got the job.” (Female, Jamshoro)</i></p> <p><i>“I dropped my CV there and I received a call shortly after that. I got selected for the job and I liked the work as well. My communication skill and other skills played an important role in getting me that job. I worked there for 5 to 6 months.” (Female, Jamshoro)</i></p>	<p><i>If you plan everything perfect in the starting, the result would have been perfect as well. Moreover, family support especially support by your parents is very important to achieve anything. Hard work and determination also contributes in getting an employment opportunity.” (Female, Jamshoro)</i></p> <p><i>“After joining RDF and during GALS training, we were told to draw our vision during one of the sessions. I had a vision that I should be doing a good job as a teacher. For that, I would need to graduate with a B.Ed. Thus, I obtained admission in the university. I am currently doing B.Ed. After 1.5 years, I will be done with my studies and I will apply for jobs.” (Female, Jamshoro)</i></p>
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Table 8: Quotes on factors leading to employment

4.2.2 SELF-EMPLOYMENT

The KPI on the number of young women and men with new and existing jobs also measures the number of entrepreneurs who started their own micro-enterprise. Here, we specifically look at how taught skills helped interviewees in setting up their own business. As mentioned above, several interviewees started their own business after receiving training on microbusiness. In Jamshoro this included 12 women (30.8%) and 7 men (33.3%) and in Layyah this included five women (15.6%) and one man (6.3%). Some for example started selling the vegetables they grew. Others opened a business in handicraft. We do not have concrete information on how these businesses were affected by the Covid-19 restrictions and what the scale is of the businesses. These issues can be further explored in the endline. Though, the result seem to suggest that women reach better results in terms self-employment, in particular in Layyah. Hard conclusions are not possible by this type of data due to the small sample.

The use of several gained skills helped interviewees in starting their own business. Farming skills (technical skills) allowed participants to grow vegetables and care for livestock, which resulted in a product to sell. Entrepreneurial skills such as loss-profit analysis were applied to run the business. Finally, soft skills such as communication skills were useful for dealing with customers. Table 9 below shows quotes related to the findings.

Started microbusiness	Pathway of skills leading to entrepreneurship
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<p><i>"I have opened a shop at my home around 2 months ago and I am supporting my family financially." (Female, Jamshoro)</i></p> <p><i>"I have received micro business training which helped me to open a shop. I got the idea to open a small medium business after taking the training and I shared this idea with my elder brother. With his support, I opened a small shop of mobile selling and repairing in my village." (Male, Jamshoro)</i></p> <p><i>"I received a goat from RDF which I use to run a small business from home and earn money from it. I have opened a small shop and run it as per my learning from the training. It gets me a good amount of profit." (Female, Jamshoro)</i></p> <p><i>"Around this time I got enough confidence to set up my cafe, despite having some backlash from my family, I managed to convince everyone. In my cafe, I sold things like ketchup, chutneys, and achar which were handmade/hand-grown by myself." (Female, Layyah)</i></p>	<p><i>"This training also taught me to communicate with seller and purchasers effectively which was beneficial in running my business as well. I apply all the learning of micro-business training in my daily life." (Female, Jamshoro)</i></p> <p><i>"I have learned that how can I do my own business. Before taking this training, I had started a business with the help of my mother, but I faced loss in business so I had to shut it down. But after receiving this training, I have started a business again. I learned that how can I avoid the risks associated in a business and how can I grow my own business. Thus, I started this off and sell clothes in my home." (Female, Jamshoro)</i></p> <p><i>"I developed my communicative skill after being a part of these trainings, I have learned negotiation and it helped me to deal with the customers. Now, I am running a small business successfully." (Male, Jamshoro)</i></p>
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Table 9: Quotes related to self-employment

At the baseline, we measured the potential for entrepreneurship and concluded the following: "Both entrepreneurial potential and the preference for entrepreneurship is higher for men than women, meaning that if women are to become entrepreneurs, they not only need training but also need to be more 'motivated' to become entrepreneurs." As during the midline about an equal percentage of women and men in Jamshoro and a higher percentage of women in Layyah started their own business, the midline data contradicts this baseline finding and seem to suggest that both men and women have potential for entrepreneurship. At the December reflection workshop, participants reflected that entrepreneurship in some cases is the only way for women to generate an income due to cultural barriers. This could explain the higher number of female entrepreneurs in Layyah. While we didn't measure the actual number of entrepreneurs at baseline, the midline findings seem to suggest a positive trend on the KPI of the number of women and men who started their own enterprise, as multiple interviewees started a business after participating in the trainings.

4.2.3 INCOME

The interviewees reported that both employment and starting a business led to increased incomes. As numeric values of small sample sizes are difficult to interpret and people might not recall exact income increase or may find this sensitive personal information – we did not ask for precise amounts. In addition, leftover vegetables from farming skills led to some interviewees saving their money, as they didn't have to spend it at the market anymore. As noted before, increased income can have an effect on agency, as it leads to more financial independence.

At the baseline, we found an enormous gap in income between men and women. While the midline doesn't measure actual income, about an equal percentage of men and women in Jamshoro (around 19% and 17% respectively) reported increasing their income. In Layyah a higher percentage of men (25%) than women (15.6%) reported increasing their income. It is not certain whether this difference reflects reality or whether this is a result of the quality of the Layyah interviews. Nevertheless, these results suggest a positive trend on the KPI of "Average income of youth participating in the programme".

4.3 ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

4.3.1 RESTRICTIONS TO EMPLOYMENT OR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

One of the KPIs measures the "Average level of social restrictions to employment or entrepreneurship, as perceived by young women and men."

When asked about barriers foreconomic empowerment that the interviewees faced, the answers varied widely depending on gender. About half of the respondents in Jamshoro and Layyah mentioned how either they themselves or other youth in their environment faced some sort of social restrictions. They all agreed that women face significantly more social restrictions compared to men.

General restrictions for youth employment

Only very few male respondents in Jamshoro and Layyah described facing some sort of social restrictions themselves. They mentioned that their friends or neighbours did not agree with their job, or that they participated in the training and criticized them for it. In Layyah, the men received backlash for setting up mixed gender youth groups. Overall however, they faced very little social restrictions compared to women. In Jamshoro, all but one woman reported facing restrictions and at least 21 women in Layyah reported facing social restrictions (in Layyah, not all interviewees were asked if they experienced restrictions, so the actual number might be higher). Women reported facing many social restrictions relating to the norms around gender in their families, community, or the workplace. Social restrictions that women face include family members not agreeing with girls participating in trainings, education or employment, negative reactions from the community, and the tradition of early marriage for girls.

Specific restrictions for young women related to employment

Several female interviewees mentioned how their families did not agree with them either getting a job, going to school, or participating in NGO trainings. This often has to do with the notion of honour, and a girl who goes outside to pursue these things is sometimes seen as hurting the honour of her and her family. For example, one interviewee (Female, Jamshoro) mentioned how a family member made her stay at home for six months. Another interviewee explained that NGOs are sometimes considered a bad influence for girls, as they "*provide an opportunity for girls to talk to men*" (Female, Jamshoro). The interviewees elaborated that NGOs are sometimes perceived as going against tradition. For example, an interviewee explained that there is no time limit to work in an NGO, while generally girls are frowned upon when they stay out late. Girls participating in NGO trainings, was therefore sometimes seen as shameful behaviour by their families.

All of the girls who faced social restrictions, received those from their communities, including those who were supported by their families. Many of them explained that when they leave home for training, work or education, their neighbours will talk about them in a negative way. In some cases, this was a reason for families to not support their daughters to take part in work or trainings, as they were afraid of the social stigma that comes with it. This shows that social barriers can reinforce each other: negative reactions from the community can influence families to further limit their daughters, and vice versa. For example, an interviewee mentioned that her family was reluctant for her to join NGO trainings, as they were scared that the community would start talking about the girl, and that the family would be ridiculed for allowing the interviewee to be part of the trainings.

Community members in the FGDs also mentioned that they are hesitant about letting their daughter participate in NGO activities, because of sanctions by other community members. Especially in Layyah, both male and female interviewees faced community backlash for setting up - or participating in mixed gender youth group. They reported that participating was seen as unacceptable for girls, and therefore neither girls nor guys should initiate this. Even though men faced social restrictions, these restrictions were mainly related to social norms on what is deemed as acceptable behaviour for women.

Differences in restrictions for young women towards wage employment and entrepreneurship

This hesitance becomes even stronger when talking about social norms on different forms of employment and entrepreneurship. In both regions participants stated that when a girl is working for somebody else and earning money, people in the community gossip about her. This is especially true if she works with male colleagues. For example, community members may talk about her and think that she might be having an affair with these colleagues. In addition, they often target her husband, brother, or father, saying that they are dependent on the income of women. This is considered as a shameful thing, and will be elaborated on later on in this section.

The FGDs also showed that barriers exist when young women want to open their own business. While this is acceptable for young men, women often don't have permission to do so, or will be talked about badly when they do. However, if the business is within the home, this is seen as an exception. The acceptance of home based entrepreneurship was confirmed during the December reflection workshop, where participants noted that women might be more inclined to start a business from home as they might not have other opportunities to earn an income

The acceptance of home-based entrepreneurship is not only related to the risk of gossip when working outside the house, there is also a security threat from women who go outside alone. Examples of this violence – according to the interviewees – includes harassment, rape, or kidnapping. When these things happen to a girl this is seen as bringing shame to her and her family. The interviewees' stories seemed to suggest that putting restrictions on girls (for example not allowing them to go outside alone) is seen as a preventative measure to not only protect the girls safety, but also the honour of the family.

Early marriage as a specific barrier for young women towards employment

Interviewees also described how the tradition of early marriages for girls is another barrier to women's economic empowerment. Previous research by Oxfam conducted on marriage decision-making processes and social norms around child marriage, suggested that there was an existing social norm

that plays a role in influencing the age of marriage: respectable girls are married as soon as they are mature, to protect the family honour³. As young girls get married when they reach puberty, this deprives them of being able to choose an education or career for themselves, which was confirmed by the interviewees in the midline interviews. One interviewee explained that before marriage, the family influences the choice for education or a career, and after marriage the husband often has a significant say in this.

This suggests an overall lack of agency for girls throughout their lives. Most girls lack ownership over their own decisions regarding marriage, education or employment. In addition to this, previous research from EYW conducted by Oxfam found that roles and responsibilities in Pakistani families are very divided by gender, particularly in rural areas. There are only a few tasks that are seen as acceptable for both women and men to do. In this division of labour, women typically do unpaid care work, while men are involved in paid work. Furthermore, there is a belief that men cannot do the tasks that women do.⁴

Division of care tasks as a specific barrier for young women towards employment

The FGDs further discussed how the division of tasks are deeply entrenched in notions about what it means to be a man or a woman. The groups were asked to reflect on vignettes in which stories were told about families with different ways of dividing tasks (e.g. equally dividing household and income tasks, or either the man or woman taking on the majority of either of these). Interestingly, in all of the groups the participants agreed that they personally believed the most ideal way to share tasks is to divide them equally.

However, when reflecting on what their community would deem the most appropriate way to divide tasks, as well as about what the consequences of differentiating from the norms would be, a different picture is formed. Here, participants reflected that the most appropriate way to divide tasks is to have to women do the household tasks while the men go outside to work and earn money. So it seems that individual attitudes contradict general social norms in the community.

When women break this social norm, they are met with the social sanctions described earlier. Generally, they face negative reactions from their community and/or family members in the form of gossiping and in some cases harassment. However, it is not only the women that are met with social sanctions when they break the norm. When women go out to work, their husbands face criticism as well.

The FGD participants agreed that when women start having their own income, they become more independent. This is seen by the community as the woman gaining more authority. As women have control over money, this means that her family has to listen to her and her orders. This is frowned upon and generally considered shameful for the husband. FGD participants for example quoted that

³ <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/marriage-decision-making-a-family-affair-insight-into-marriage-decision-making-processes-and-social-norms-around-child-marriage-in-larkana-and-shikarpur-in-sindh-and-lodhran-and-muzaffargarh-in-pun/>

⁴ <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/if-a-woman-does-a-job-she-can-support-her-family-as-well-insights-from-communit-620925/>

community members will often make comments towards these men such as that they are “slave of a woman”. This shows that the division of tasks ties in deeply to notions about masculinity.

How masculine a man is perceived, depends on the tasks he and his wife perform. This is even further exacerbated when men perform traditionally considered feminine household tasks. Generally, all four FGDs noted that men performing household tasks is considered as not manly. This is true to such an extent that people in the community will comment that a man who does this is not a man but a woman instead. These negative reactions not only affect the man, but also his wife or their mothers, who the FGD participants noted feeling embarrassed when men perform their tasks. Because of this, it is often women that uphold these social norms. For example, one of the groups noted that mothers often don't allow their sons to contribute to household work, therefore discouraging them from taking an active role within the household. Therefore, while women generally face more social restrictions that inhibit their economic empowerment, men face social restrictions too in terms of the type of tasks they are able to perform while still being considered as masculine enough.

This vicious cycle inhibits men from contributing to household tasks and limits women's economic empowerment. Furthermore, for the EYW programme it is difficult to support young women into paid work, since this is not in line with society's expectations for their future. Nevertheless, it should be noted that in all of the FGDs participants said that there were examples in their community in which men and women had divided tasks. While these social norms therefore may be quite rigid, they are not entirely set in stone. Overall however, the lack of ownership for a girl to decide her future regarding marriage, education, and employment, in combination with limited options as to what society deems appropriate jobs for women, suggests that the girls face significant social restrictions regarding their economic empowerment.

Barriers related to the value chain for youth employment

Specifically relating to employment and self-employment, participants shared additional barriers during the reflection workshops. When it comes to employment, both men and women noted that jobs that are easy to get for youth often aren't decent. For example, they don't pay enough or require youth to hit certain targets before being paid. On top of this, economic opportunities are scarce and in some cases, there are no existing industries for youth to get into, participants in the December reflection workshop noted.

During the FGDs, participants explained that employees often face exploitation, particularly when doing agricultural work. They often don't get paid enough money compared to their working hours or don't receive their full salary. Additionally, during the interviews one woman explained that women get paid less compared to men, and that workplace harassment is common.

On top of this, youth face significant travel restrictions. Most employment and education opportunities in Jamshoro are in Hyderabad. As Jamshoro is in the outskirts of the region, it makes it difficult to travel to, and travel costs often outweigh the earnings. On top of this, girls often feel unsafe when travelling alone. Participants in the reflection workshop noted that this was the same for youth from Layyah.

Barriers to self-employment include girls being dependent on a network of middle men for procurement. As they face travel restrictions themselves on both a social, financial and safety level, they often have

to rely on men to go to the city to buy materials for them. As they need to pay these men, this means a decrease in income. The Covid-19 pandemic poses further challenges for both male and female business owners. As they cannot procure materials anymore, shops get sold out which causes a lack of income. However, participants in the December reflection workshop stated that the pandemic had also offered opportunities: as more business have moved online, in some cases this meant that women entrepreneurs for example no longer had to go to the market, providing a way to circumvent social barriers. As education moved online, it became easier for girls to participate in this as well, as they no longer needed permission to travel.

More general barriers relating to self-employment that men also face were discussed in FGDs. The first of these is the lack of initial income to start up a business. Youth mentioned that as people with low incomes hardly get by, they can't generate enough money for savings. In addition, many people within the community lack skills such as literacy, which makes it more difficult to start a business. Table 10 below further illustrates the barriers indicated with quotes.

Social barriers	Financial barriers	Individual barriers
<p><i>"They called me a characterless girl. They started character assassination and blamed me to have affairs with boys because I used to go outside of my home to receive education or some skills. They think that I may be doing something shameful for my family."</i> (Female, Jamshoro)</p> <p><i>"One of the main barriers which I guess everyone girl faces including me is harassment. There is no security for girls in this society. [...] In case something bad happens to a girl, people start doing victim blaming. Instead of supporting her, their family members start imposing restriction on them. They are kept inside their home and are not allowed to go outside even to receive education."</i> (Female, Jamshoro)</p>	<p><i>"I want to study further and get a decent employment but our finance issues are creating lots of trouble for me to pursue my dream of getting higher education. I do not have much money to get admission in a university. If I get into some public university and continue my education, then I will not be able to earn money by stitching as I will not have more time left to do such work. My family needs an extra hand to earn so I cannot give up stitching."</i> (Female, Jamshoro)</p> <p><i>"Our area has a primary school and not even middle school for girls. If someone wants to go for matriculation, such schools are very far from where we live, most of the locals cannot afford to send their daughters that far because of financial and transportation reasons. The fees for such schools are also high and not easily affordable for most of the families in my area."</i> (Female, Layyah)</p>	<p><i>"I was not good at communicating with people and lacked confidence to talk to people. [...] Lacking confidence is one of the biggest barriers which restrict people to avail many good opportunities."</i> (Female, Jamshoro)</p> <p><i>"I lacked confidence in almost all aspects of life. For me, going out and being a part of these training sessions was not easy."</i> (Female, Layyah)</p>

Table 10: Quotes related to barriers to employment

Comparison with baseline findings related to social restrictions

The barriers of social restrictions, especially for women was also seen at baseline. The results show that the respondents are divided on the difficulty for young men to become employed or start a new business but they are clearly negative about the chances for young women to do the same. Normative expectations of Pakistani community respondents showed much stronger appreciation for young males that enter the labor market than for young females. According to them, it is also much more common for young men to participate than for women (empirical expectations). This also coincides with the strong personal attitudes and normative beliefs in the community that it is much better when the man is the breadwinner outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family. At the time of the baseline we concluded that these views on gender equality may hamper young women in their participation in the labor market. The results from the midline seems to confirm these findings.

The main barrier the interviewees faced, were social barriers. These particularly affected women, who deal with more social restrictions than men. Family, as well as community members, often don't agree with girls going outside alone for trainings, jobs or education. Girls who do this are viewed as less honourable and their male family members are considered to be weak. The fact that girls face community backlash, reinforces families to not allow their daughters to go out. Harassment that girls face who break the norm is encouraging families to keep restrictions on girls in place.

4.3.2 CHANGING NORMS AND VALUES

While not part of the KPIs, some of the interviewees reported that through their participation in the EYW programme they had changed their norms and values regarding gender and women's rights. They stated that this was mainly a result of the GALS training. Nine male and twelve female interviewees in Jamshoro reported changing their opinion on this. Interviewees in Layyah generally did not reflect on their own values regarding gender, except for one male interviewee who noted that he previously was against his sister joining the EYW training sessions, but later changed his mind, and one female interviewee who reflected that the training had "made us change our mind" on gender. For women, this change led to increased confidence (agency).

The changed norms related to gender equality: both women and men reported seeing women as inferior to men before, but that the training had led them to re-think this. Here, the interviewees often referred to the social restrictions put on women by society at large or by influential people in their community, and how these led the interviewees to see women and men as different, including what is deemed an appropriate job. The interviewees elaborated that they discussed gender within the GALS training, and learning through the training that men and women have equal rights.

This for example reflected on the interviewees' opinions on the division of tasks. As mentioned before, previously conducted research suggested a rigid division of tasks between genders, with women taking up the majority of the household division of tasks and men generally taking up more paid work. During the interviews, one male interviewee (37) specifically noted that he had changed his norms around the household division of tasks. He stated that after receiving training, he started doing household work such as cooking and cleaning. Elaborating on how the GALS training had an effect on their norms around gender, interviewees reported that it made them aware of equality, and how their thinking on gender had been influenced by their communities or society at large. The interviewee that started doing

household work noted that he used to view household work as shameful because of taught gender norms. Table 11 further elaborates on this findings through quotes

Women and men changing norms	Training contributing to changing norms
<p><i>“Before receiving this training, I considered myself inferior as a woman because that’s what we were always taught throughout our lives that men are superior than women. Women should stay at home and be obedient of their husbands, fathers or brothers. But after receiving this training, I have understood my importance as a woman.”</i> (Female, Jamshoro)</p> <p><i>“I myself did not respect women and did not treat them fairly as such because we were mostly told that men are superior to women and I blindly followed this tradition. But now I respect them.”</i> (Male, Jamshoro)</p>	<p><i>“Most of the times, our elders teach us that men have more freedom in the society than women. It is good for women to stay at home and do home chores, that is what is perceived as a good womanhood in our society. After taking the training, we discussed that men and women have equal rights. Women should also have the same opportunities of education or employment which men have.”</i> (Female, Jamshoro)</p> <p><i>“In GALs training, I learned that there is no difference between girls and boys. Girls and boys are only different biologically. Gender is a social term and there is no difference between male and females. Before getting this training, I thought women have certain jobs to perform and men have their specific jobs to perform. Men cannot perform women’s jobs or tasks and similarly women cannot perform men’s job. But after getting this GALs trainings, I came to know that these are social terms and there is no distinction in their jobs.”</i> (Male, Jamshoro)</p>

Table 11: Quotes related to men and women changing norms

4.3.3 LINK ENABLING ENVIRONMENT AND SKILLS

This section aims to explain the link between gained skills and how interviewees deal with the barriers they face (see table 12 with illustrative quotes). While this wasn’t included in the KPIs, one of the KPIs does measure the “number of young men and women with improved skills to act as change agent to eliminate gender-based violence.” The midline results don’t specifically focus on gender-based violence, but instead look at how young women and men act as agents of change regarding overall social barriers.

When asked about how they dealt with the described barriers, the interviewees mainly reflected on how they deal with the social restrictions they face by their families or communities. There were three main ways to deal with barriers: Ignoring criticism, negotiating with family, and theatre performances.

Ignoring criticism

Most respondents that described how they dealt with restrictions state that they simply ignore the criticism they get from people in their community. The skills they had gained, helped to accomplish this

in several ways. First of all, the interviewees noted that they had become more confident through increasing their communication skills. This increased confidence helped them to not pay attention to criticism. In addition, one interviewee explained how having a vision and goal in life – something that was taught in the GALS training, helped her focus on that instead of criticism.

Negotiating with family

Another way interviewees dealt with social restrictions, was by negotiating with family and community members. Here, they could directly apply their taught soft skills as a way to overcome barriers. In some cases, the interviewees noted that the fact that others in their community had already had the training helped them to convince their family to let them join to. The success stories of those who had already participated were used as an example in negotiation. Similarly, when interviewees themselves had participated in trainings and replicated these in their own communities, they became the example themselves. In Layyah, some interviewees mentioned negotiating on others' behalf so that more girls could join the training sessions.

Theatre performance

Five interviewees (all from Jamshoro) mentioned how performing theatre was a way for them to deal with barriers, as they used it to convey messages on social norms – particularly relating to gender. In particular, they could bring across their own changed norms and ideas around gender in the performances. The theatre performances and other ways the interviewees dealt with barriers, in some cases had an effect on the community overall: interviewees reported that social norms were changing within their community. This shows that increased skills can lead to better ways to deal with barriers, which in turn can create a more enabling environment. This was confirmed during the first reflection workshop, where one man noted that since starting theater performances in his community, he witnessed a drop in cases of GBV. He saw this as a result of awareness raising. While it is possible to assess whether this change has been brought about solely through the theatre performances or other ways interviewees deal with barriers, it does show that there is a possibility for youth to act as agents of change within their community.

Ignoring criticism	Negotiation (incl. others as examples)	Theatre performances	Effects on community
<p><i>"I used to hear a lot from outsiders and our area locals of how inappropriate it is for a girl to get out of the house for a job and education. However, I ignored all of such negative comments and focused on my journey, as taught to us by GALS training sessions." (Female, Layyah)</i></p> <p><i>"I used to stress out a lot and these criticisms</i></p>	<p><i>"During the training, I learned how to negotiate with people and I applied this technique on them to convince the people of my community. [...] I always give them my example that the training has brought such changes in me and the same thing can happen to their daughters as well." (Female, Jamshoro)</i></p>	<p><i>"Through the theatre performances, many people have started realizing the women's roles and their rights. Now they allow their daughters and sisters to study further, choose their life partners, leave home for job or shopping and decide for their better future. Theatre performances bring positive outcomes in the</i></p>	<p><i>"I have observed so many changes in my community. Everybody is getting education nowadays especially girls. The girls are now working and taking their own decisions. [...] Our community members used to fix the weddings of their daughters as they are born. It was quite a norm back then, but</i></p>

<p><i>badly disturbed me as well. But I continued to work towards achieving my goal. I got a job, I developed my confidence and learned how to deal with people. Now, I simply ignore them and work to achieve my dream goals.”</i> (Female, Jamshoro)</p>	<p><i>“It was mostly female family members since they weren’t on board with how their girls will be working in NGOs which wasn’t a normal job for girls in Layyah to have. After persuasion and many conversations we made them agree to our project and eventually send their daughters to these trainings. We also asked them to come alongside if that is what will make them more comfortable, they can get to learn from the trainings and also see what their daughters are learning.”</i> (Male, Layyah)</p>	<p><i>society.”</i> (Male, Jamshoro)</p>	<p><i>now the mindsets of the people of our community have been changing. They have realized that education for girls is very important.”</i> (Female, Jamshoro)</p>
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Table 12: Quotes related to how to deal with criticism

In summary we can say that the interviewees dealt with barriers in three ways. One of the most common ways to deal with barriers, was to simply ignore the criticism the interviewees received from community members. An increase in confidence and a clear vision for the future helped with this. Another way to deal with barriers was to negotiate with family and community members. Here, interviewees could directly apply their negotiation skills. Having success stories from other participants sometimes helped persuade family or community members. Finally, the theatre performances helped interviewees deal with social barriers, by addressing and discussing gender norms.

4.4 VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The interviewees were asked about their vision and dreams for the future. Here, the answers fall into two categories: visions that relate to personal development, and visions that relate to supporting other youth. There were more women who had visions related to supporting others than men, who were more often focused on personal development.

When participants talked about their dream being related to personal development, they often talked about the type of job they wished to have in the future. Examples of this include becoming a lecturer or teacher, joining the army, working in a bank, or becoming a lawyer:

“I envision my dream job being a lawyer for many reasons. I would like to be lawyer because I like to argue and negotiate about what I believe in and look for evidence to support it. For example, I get really competitive when I debate with my brothers about politics and logic. Ever since I was a little kid, I loved thinking about things in a critical or different way.” (Female, Jamshoro)

Other dreams that interviewees described relating to personal development included starting their own business, going abroad for work, pursuing a PHD, or having a more stable income.

In some cases, the wish to support other youth overlapped with personal development goals. For example, several interviewees stated that they wished to become a teacher or create education opportunities, so that they can support other youth and women directly. In some cases, the interviewees specifically mentioned wanting to pass on skills they learned through the EYW trainings.

“I want to open a vocational center in my area to help local females. Then is there are not a lot of jobs available for an educated woman and a vocational center would be the perfect opportunity for them to make a living for themselves. There are a few people in our area who are willing to give their land for this purpose.” (Female, Layyah)

Others described their wish to support others in a more broad sense, commenting on how they would like to see a more enabling environment for youth and women in Pakistani society. One interviewee (Jamshoro 5) described how they wanted to change the *“negative thinking of people”* through theatre about girls’ economic empowerment. Others talked about how they wished that girls would be no longer criticized for studying or working outside of their home, and that they have equal rights and opportunities for education and employment.

“If I have to dream big, I want to see more inclusive society that promotes diversity and inclusion. A society where people have access to different opportunities. They have opportunities to attend school and university. I also want to change social or gender norms of the society which create hurdle in women economic empowerment.” (Female, Jamshoro)

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 FINDINGS

With this research we aimed to show the initial contribution of the EYW programme in Pakistan from the start of implementation to the midpoint of the programme.

All in all, the midline findings seem to suggest that the participants have improved and are able to use soft skills, technical skills, and entrepreneurial skills by participating in the trainings. Soft skills learned include communication skills. Technical skills include language, computer skills, and farming. Entrepreneurial skills include business related skills, such as loss-profit assessment. Youth groups proved to be essential for passing on taught skills within the youth's communities. Participants used these groups to teach others skills, creating an overspill effect within the communities. The increase in skills had an effect on the interviewees' agency, as in some cases, it helped them increase their confidence and independence. Increased confidence happened through increasing and practicing soft skills such as communication skills. Increased negotiations skills affected interviewees' independence positively. In addition, the trainings had an indirect effect on independence by helping interviewees increase their income and thus their financial independence.

In some cases, the taught skills contributed to interviewees finding employment or self-employment. 25 interviewees mentioned that they had managed to find a job since participating in the EYW trainings, and another 25 reported starting their own microbusiness. Soft skills that led to employment included an increase in communication skills and in particular job interview skills. Technical skills that led to employment included CV writing skills. In addition, interviewees noted that an increase in agency also helped them secure employment, as it for example allowed them to be more confident during the job interview. In turn, becoming employed can have a positive effect on agency by making youth feel more confident in their ability to find employment. The use of several gained skills helped interviewees in starting their own business. Farming skills (technical skills) allowed participants to grow vegetables and care for livestock, which resulted in a product to sell. Entrepreneurial skills such as loss-profit analysis were applied to run the business. Finally, soft skills such as communication skills were useful for dealing with customers.

While these findings suggest positive trends on the KPIs relating to use of skills, (self-)employment, and income, the youth – and especially the women – do still face significant barriers. The main barrier includes social restrictions. For example, family and community members, often don't agree with girls going outside alone for trainings, jobs or education. The fact that girls can face community backlash, can reinforce families to not allow their daughters to go out. However, the midline findings do suggest that the increase in skills and agency allow interviewees to better deal with these barriers in several ways. For example, increased confidence helped interviewees to ignore criticism. Negotiation skills allowed participants to negotiate with their families and community, sometimes using success stories from other participants to help persuade them. Theatre performances helped interviewees deal with

social barriers, by addressing and discussing gender norms. In some cases, interviewees reported seeing changes within their communities as a result.

Lastly we would like to conclude with a gender analysis. Although the sample was not always large enough to draw clear conclusions regarding gender differences, we have tried to emphasize differences and similarity wherever possible. In conclusion we can say that women participated equally in trainings and made equally use of their skills, compared to their male peers. Their starting point at the times of baseline was low, so they easily gained improvements in terms of skills and agency. Also they managed remarkable in translating skills into economic opportunities – especially with regards to self-employment. And here we also find the challenge in interpretation of these results – as young women face severe social restrictions when deploying economic activities. Self-employment often is the only acceptable possibility in terms of economic empowerment. The results show that EYW has supported young women in dealing with these social restrictions. This may not directly translate to economic gains for young women, but definitely helps them in the process of social empowerment.

5.2 PROGRAMME RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the interviews and FGDs, and in collaboration with the participants of the December reflection workshop, the following programme recommendations have been formulated.

4. As the skills trainings seem to have started a positive trend towards employment it is important to continue the investment. Especially the combination of soft skills, technical skills and entrepreneurial trainings work well in improving agency and employability. Most possibilities lie in the informal sector and in self-employment. The coming period EYW Pakistan will focus on these areas to match the skill demand.
5. Home business provide an economic opportunity to women that is otherwise not possible for women due to social barriers, these could be further supported in the EYW project in Pakistan. A new area to explore in this respect are digital solutions like e-commerce. Further, attention should be placed on how women and their business from home link to the market, which currently remains a challenge.
6. The midline findings showed that an enabling environment is crucial for women to join the EYW project in Pakistan successfully. Social restrictions make their participation challenging as well as result in an underuse of taught skills. Therefore, it is important to take into account the family environment of young women and preconditions (in terms of support and safety) that can enable young women to participate at the labour market.

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