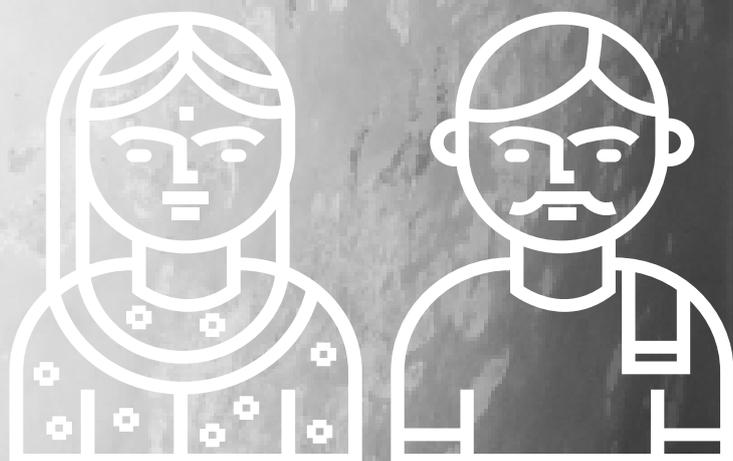


# STEP Academy On The Job Training

## Programme Impact Report 2020



# 1 Executive Summary

A whopping 90% of India's workforce is comprised of unskilled workers, a trend that has remained unwavering in the past few decades.<sup>1</sup> A considerably large proportion of this unskilled workforce constitutes people who migrate within the country in search of livelihood. Most of these workers remain employed in unorganized sectors for their entire lives, with limited opportunities for wage increase, promotion, or retirement benefits. Moreover, since India's labour laws can vary according to the skill level, the lack of skill or a specialization amongst the vast majority of this workforce can impede their ability to seek social security and other workforce benefits.

The already fragile ecosystem the average unskilled worker finds themselves in was fractured further by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. According to estimates by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, the unemployment rate shot up to a whopping 25%<sup>2</sup> because of the pandemic, resulting in almost 12.2 crore lost jobs. Migrant workers, who form a significant portion of unskilled labourers, were disproportionately affected by the pandemic, losing their jobs and left stranded without any social security nets.

In April 2020, 23.5 lakh workers returning to Uttar Pradesh following the pandemic underwent a skill mapping exercise held by the government. 16.67 lakhs or 70% of them were found to be unskilled, and 18 lakhs wanted to find work in UP itself.<sup>3</sup> Among the skilled labourers, as much as 16% were engaged in construction work in other states, while 10% were low-skill workers such as painters, carpenters, tailors, drivers, plumbers and electricians. According to the Stranded Workers Action Network (SWAN), 13% of the 17,000 migrants they were in contact with desired to seek work in their hometowns in the future.<sup>4</sup>

What has become apparent is the need for a structured and recognized future for unskilled workers. The 'Skill India Mission', launched in 2015, was a good start towards this goal. The aim of the program is to impart skills training to 400 million people by 2022, driven through flagship schemes like 'Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Prohastan Yojana' and 'National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme'. However, by 2019, only 25 million people had been trained under these schemes.<sup>5</sup> The Garib Kalyan Rozgar Yojana has been used to further this agenda: with a specific focus on training unskilled daily wage labourers, reaching out to 300,000 migrant workers in its pilot stage.<sup>6</sup>

An opportunity to upskill through rigorous inputs on both theoretical and practical aspects of at least one trade can provide an opportunity for these

workers to not just improve incomes but also improve their ability to demand other workplace benefits and employability options.

Present day labour markets are structured in a way where there is little to no difference between entry level wages in the organized sector and in casual daily wage labour. This serves as a serious deterrent in encouraging rural youth to diversify to organised sector jobs, especially since many of them are also seasonal migrants. While the state programmes focus on skills pertinent to the formal sector, such as computer training and retail, skill development resources for sectors such as construction are still not very evolved. Given that the construction sector is known to be the largest employer of migrant workers with over a 40 million strong workforce<sup>7</sup>, any disruption in this space is only possible through a sustainable and scalable skilling programme in both construction and related sectors.

Aajeevika Bureau has worked on the well-being and advancement of rural migrants and youth since 2004, particularly in southern Rajasthan & Gujarat. They have been a regional and national voice advocating for systemic policy responses for financial inclusion, social protection and skill development for migrant youth. The organization has also been instrumental in impacting over 1,00,000 migrant workers through skill-upgradation, wage mediation, financial inclusion, legal education, destination support, and more. In 2011, Aajeevika set up the Skill Training Employability and Placement Academy (STEP) Academy. The On-the-Job Training (OJT) programme is one of STEP Academy's unique training models that is aimed towards skilling construction & service sector workers who are currently employed and cannot afford to take time off to seek classroom training.

In February 2020, Aajeevika Bureau invited *niiti consulting* to evaluate the impact and relevance of the OJT programme over the years in terms of improving socio-economic conditions for migrant populations. To this objective, the research team at *niiti* designed a study that attempted to answer the following questions:

- 1** Is on-the-job training a preferable and relevant model for upskilling migrant populations?
- 2** Does the OJT programme have an impact on wage improvement?
- 3** Does the OJT fast track the wage increment opportunities for migrant populations?
- 4** Does the OJT help employability of migrant populations?

The study found that the OJT training curriculum and delivery method is most conducive to enable migrant workers to improve their income status in the least possible time. There has been a steady increase in the number of participants in the OJT programme- from 103 workers trained in 2012 to 719 trained in 2019 , demonstrating its relevance has stayed through the years. There were several instances of OJT participants getting skilled in more than one trade and moving up the value chain in terms of employability options. Over 92% of the candidates surveyed in this study who had completed their OJT programme were able to seek and receive a wage increase commensurate with the trade they specialized in. About 93% of those who received a certificate, found work at a site other than their training site, demonstrating portability and improvement in employability options for migrant workers. A significant portion (>70%) of the trainees stated that they want to continue to grow up the value chain by becoming contractors and/or trainers, highlighting that the programme also successful in raising aspirations for a population that has limited avenues for skill enhancement and employment opportunities. A majority of the candidates were able to improve their wages immediately upon commencement of the OJT programme. 60% completed the programme within the stipulated 45 days while the rest took about 60 days to complete the programme and become eligible for being certified as a “karigar” (skilled artisan). The average time taken for an OJT trainee to receive wage increase commensurate with their newly acquired and certified skill was about 4 months. The study also found that a significant number of OJT trained skilled workers had availed the Shram Sarathi Vriddhi loan and used the loan to set up their own practice in the trade they learnt in the programme.

## **Understanding one’s rights, being communicative and passive-assertive are as important as the skill training itself to ensure that skilling translates into improved employability.**

**RAJEEV KHANDELWAL** Co-Founder, Aajeevika Bureau

A highlight of the findings was a high degree of understanding among the participants of their rights and life skills, and the significant contribution this has on their ability to improve retention in existing jobs, enhanced employability, and demand for better work conditions. Almost 88% knew where to go for help and mediation if they did not get the pre-negotiated wages, and a significant number of trainees mentioned being part of a workers’ collective or associated with a “shramikendra” (labour centre).

The programme, however, is heavily skewed in favour of male participants, with women participants accounting for only a little over 10% of the total trainee pool. While this reflects the gender skew in the overall workforce within these sectors, there is significant scope for this programme to contribute to bringing in gender parity at least in some trades in the construction sector. The study also found the OJT programme relevant for all age groups with the sample population ranging from 18 years to over 50 years.

The study also found a strong correlation between sustained impact of skill training with the level of trust they have in the organisation backing them. The fact that Aajeevika Bureau provides them support which goes well beyond simply imparting skills is why the OJT programme proves to be a successful model on so many fronts. If such an OJT model is to be replicated and scaled, the success could also lie in ensuring that the foundation of such programmes is deeply embedded within the communities that it chooses to serve and that the programme itself is driven by holistic outcomes centered on individual and community growth, as opposed to merely ensuring learning outcomes.

## 2 Background

In India, there are a variety of skill development models – government-funded programmes that fully or partially subsidize training/apprenticeships, market-led trainings (where trainees pay for the course), market-led apprenticeships and industry-led/on-the-job training. The not-for-profit National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) was set up as a public-private partnership (PPP) to stimulate private sector participation in the Indian skill development sector. However, despite some strides made in improving skill gaps in the organised sector, a sustained effort to skill workers in the unorganized sector continues to be a daunting challenge. In addition to wage barriers, there are additional challenges arising from a large majority of India’s unskilled population being migratory in nature and given poor labour laws, there are few incentives for youth to improve their skill quotient and seek employment in more organised jobs.

### 2.1 Status of Unskilled Workers

Out of 47 crore workers in the country, only

**2.2%**

received any formal vocational training, and 8.6% received non-formal vocational training<sup>8</sup>

**89.2%**

of the total workforce in India is made up of unskilled workers.<sup>10</sup> This number stands at 10-40% in most developed countries.

**Migrant workers are prevalent** in certain industries. According to one study,

**90%**

of labourers employed in the construction industry are internal migrants<sup>9</sup>

**71%**

of India’s population does not have an upper-secondary education, so the access that most people have to formal educational training is limited.<sup>11</sup>

Approximately 70 million additional individuals of working age (15-59 years) are expected to enter the country's labour force by 2023 – using the same estimation model, the total workforce will then include approximately 404.15 million people. This will include 59 million youth (individuals aged 15-30 years).<sup>12</sup>

By 2022,

**1090 lakh**

**skilled employees will be required,**  
in only 24 key sectors.

In the **Construction industry,**

**320 lakh**

will need training, putting it at the top of the list  
of sectors needing incremental training.

**Retail, Logistics, and Textile & Clothes** follow construction as the sectors with the highest projected human resource requirement by 2022.<sup>13</sup>

Amongst India's informal workers, who are skilled artisans, a vast majority have skills that have not been formally recognized. Recognition of their skills – holding a formal certification, or validation by a third-party cannot just improve their opportunity to seek better income, but also improve their overall bargaining power. In a third-party evaluation of the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), 79% of individuals who had some form of certification said that it has made them more confident about getting a better job.

**Trades like plumbing and masonry are not naturally aspirational. But being skilled in a trade, any trade, can significantly boost their wage-earning ability. And certifications help in giving those trades that due recognition.**

**VARUN TANDON** Senior Vice President, National Skill Development Council of India

There is a growing consensus, worldwide, among policymakers and industry observers on the need to shift from a purely 'academic' approach to imparting skills in educational institutions. In Austria, Germany, and Switzerland, extensive apprenticeships offer a way of upgrading the quality of jobs, especially in manufacturing, commercial, and managerial positions. In these countries, apprenticeships begin mostly in the late high school years, absorbing 50-70% of young people on their way to valued occupational qualifications.<sup>14</sup>

**Brick and mortar training centres in the context of skilling and upskilling are overrated. A combination of a mobile based flipped classroom model and adequate opportunities to practice skills on ground are critical to address skill gap.**

**B. GANESH** Founder, SkillTrain

The Ministry for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has recognised the need for on-the-job training through apprenticeship, skills recognition, better data collection, pre-departure trainings, and certification among other initiatives. While there has been some progress on labour management information system (LMIS) and the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF), where nearly 7,000 occupational standards and 15,000 entry-level skilling needs have been identified, there has been limited evidence that the skills development for migrant workers has delivered on its potential. Workers are still too often selected according to their ability to pay recruitment fees rather than on their qualifications or potential. When they return home, the skills acquired abroad are rarely recognized and put to good use.<sup>15</sup>

**More collaboration and knowledge sharing are fundamental to improving the efficiency of skills recognition systems for migrant workers. Policy-makers at both ends of the corridor need accurate assessments of skill needs and gaps, and up-to-date information on the changing needs of business.**

**DEBORAH GREENFIELD** Deputy Director General, International Labour Organization

## 2.2 Challenges Faced by Migrant Unskilled Workers

Despite their significant numbers & contributions to the national economy, many unskilled workers have been relegated to the margins of society. Most unskilled workers tend to be engaged in the informal sector, where the lack of formal labour contracts increases uncertainty regarding payments, duration of employment, security of employment and more.<sup>16</sup> The competition for the limited number of jobs also tends to be fierce: further driving down the wages an unskilled worker can expect for a day's work.<sup>17</sup>

Among unskilled migrant workers, most tend to enter the workforce in early years, with low skills. According to the Aajeevika Bureau, a mere 0.62% of migrant workers have a professional or vocational degree. Unless given access to sufficient and the right training, the workers show high attrition rates and retire early, which nullifies the impact of employment access in their prime years and sends them right back to poverty.<sup>18</sup>



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**Photograph 01** Focus group discussion with trainers and trainees at Gogunda

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A recent study exploring migrant lives in urban areas, particularly in the post-COVID era highlights the structural causes and dire consequences of excluding unskilled workers from urban services.<sup>19</sup>

- ① Almost **98% of workers had never contacted local elected officials or administrative staff** for help with public services.
- ② **83% used communal toilets** with no restriction on the number of people who could use it.
- ③ A majority **did not have fixed residence** in their destination (workplace) location
- ④ Exclusionary urban policies and schemes result in migrant workers being **excluded from PDS, water, sanitation, and affordable housing schemes**

**I could hardly earn INR 150 a day because I was not skilled. But now that I am skilled in masonry, I can earn upto INR 500 a day. There is no scope for any improvement in quality of life if one cannot earn at least INR 500 a day.**

**PEMA RAM** Mason (Gogunda)

In another study to understand the impact of the pandemic on informal workers, 25% of the respondents reported that their employers refused to pay them for services rendered.<sup>20</sup> Women, especially, are adversely impacted, more so than the men- both in terms of opportunities for skilling as well as employment. Women are rarely employed in skilled roles, and their access to fair wages and social security is lower than that of male migrants.<sup>21</sup> This is especially worrisome in a country where women's labour force participation has been steadily on the decline since 2004-05, dropping to a mere 27.4% (2015-16), from 42.7% (2004-05).<sup>22</sup>

## 2.3 Skilling as a Key Factor for Development

*The dignity of labour depends not on what you do, but how you do it.*

**EDWIN OSGOOD GROVER**

There is currently little research done on the effects of skilling on unskilled workers. Most studies often exclusively focus on effects of skill building on graduate & post-graduate students.<sup>23</sup> When studies do address unskilled workers, they are often lumped together with advanced skilling, dedicating a majority of their attention to the latter, and seldom exploring the former exclusively.<sup>24</sup>

**Opportunities to improve wages for unskilled workers are very few. Jobs are few and salaries in most sectors are stagnating. In our experience, wage increase is easier to negotiate when the skills are specialised, e.g., e-commerce related, etc.**

**CHETAN KAPOOR** COO, Tech Mahindra Foundation

The challenges posited by an unskilled labour force is significantly different from the ones faced in the skilled sector. Given the number of people entering the workforce every year, and the pressure of a growing economy, there is a real and urgent need to understand the impact of skilling on unskilled workers. Not only will this shed light, particularly on their income, professional development, and general standard of living, it will also help map a better labour force participation of a country where an overwhelming majority of the population is going to be of working age within a few decades.

So far, it can be deduced that the lack of a formal training infrastructure can hinder unskilled workers from gaining earning growth, and result in underemployment. Studies have found that the lack of training opportunities has disproportionately affected the low skilled workers, with most of the earning growth being concentrated among high-skill and high-income workers.<sup>25</sup>

Evidence from past studies indicates that skilling can lead to increase in wages. Research carried out on the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) shows that people who received a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) certificate were earning 19% more than non RPL certified people, and post-certification, they saw a 25% rise in their earnings.<sup>26</sup>

## 2.4 The Case for On-the-Job Training

While the case for skilling has been made apparent, there's evidence that skill-training alone is not sufficient, without support services that can enable unskilled workers to leverage the training in an optimum manner to improve their life circumstances.

**Skilling needs to be looked at in terms of roles and not sectors. Bringing about a behaviour change in terms of the need to work and constantly upskill is a big part of the training process for skilling to be sustainable.**

**PRERIT RANA** Founder, Agrasar

On-the-job training, as a skilling format that can increase economic integration of migrant workers, has been recognized by the ILO. This has promoted Technical Vocational Education & Training (TVET) programmes as an efficient way of helping migrant workers establish their ties with private

employers and acquire the specific skills they would need to improve their employability.<sup>27</sup> Including the employer in the training process has several benefits: the organization that has already hired the employees would benefit from the improved quality of work post-training.<sup>28</sup> A study conducted on on-the-job training among rural migrant workers in China found that involving the employers in the training process resulted in a reduction of the workers' turnover, as well.<sup>29</sup>

In the Indian context, several OJT programs (besides Aajeevika Bureau's) have seen success in varied fields: this includes Agrasar (employability training across numerous roles in different industry sectors)<sup>30</sup>, Tech Mahindra SMART Program (skilling people primarily in hospitality, IT & ITES)<sup>31</sup>, and Skill Train<sup>32</sup> (vocational training content for migrant & agricultural workers).

While On-The-Job Trainings (OJT) seem like a potential solution to address the skilling issues for a substantial section of the population, they come with their own set of challenges.

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## CHALLENGES OF OJT TRAININGS

1

### Lack of appropriate skilling programmes

There are very few programmes available, especially for unskilled workers, where apprenticeship or 'learn-while-you-do' methods are allowed, parallel to their daily work

2

### High student to teacher ratio

Where apprenticeship models are available, the ratio of students to mentors is high, leading to suboptimal learning outcomes

3

### Reluctance of employers

Many employers do not want to take on the financial burden of skilling an unskilled employee, especially when the future is unknown (as the employee may seek greener pastures after receiving the training)

4

### Difficult to get buy-in needed from multiple levels

Mostly, the training will be directly provided by the contractors or direct managers, not the top-level bosses. Both the employer and the supervisor need to be clear about their buy-in. A certain level of incentivization might be required to get buy-in from the supervisors and trainers.

5

### Lack of assessment and certification of skills

Especially among low-skilled workers, there are few formal mechanisms by which the trainee's competency can be measured and formally certified.<sup>33</sup>

6

### Possibility of attrition

OJT programmes also face increased drop-out rates owing to seasonal migration, especially around festival & harvest times, like most other skilling interventions

7

### Aspirational issues

Poor education levels, lack of awareness and inability to see beyond everyday struggles results in many workers not seeing the need for up-skilling, or have not had the opportunity to consider it.

8

### Challenges for women workers

Women workers are even less likely to choose or be chosen for upskilling programs, especially in industries that are not considered traditionally feminine. This is due to the perception that they lack labour 'skill' of their own, and rather, just act as supplemental to the male workers.<sup>34</sup>

## 2.5 STEP Academy's OJT Programme

In response to the unique needs and issues of the unskilled and semi-skilled local workforce, Aajeevika Bureau established the Skill Training Employability and Placement Academy (STEP Academy), a learning and training institute for the rural youth. The main intention of the academy is to build technical and life skill competence with a view of helping young people build suitable career paths for themselves. Aajeevika Bureau identified the need for a different program when older & married unskilled workers

**It is critical that whatever skill training is imparted to the unskilled migrant workers translates fairly quickly into wage improvements. The OJT programme was designed to be an intensive, time-effective training module, that helps the worker learn without impacting their existing capacity to earn. We included a life skill coaching component and understanding workers' rights in the curriculum right at the start of the initiative as we believe that for any skill training to be sustainable, trainees need to be equipped with holistic knowledge that is relevant and practical.**

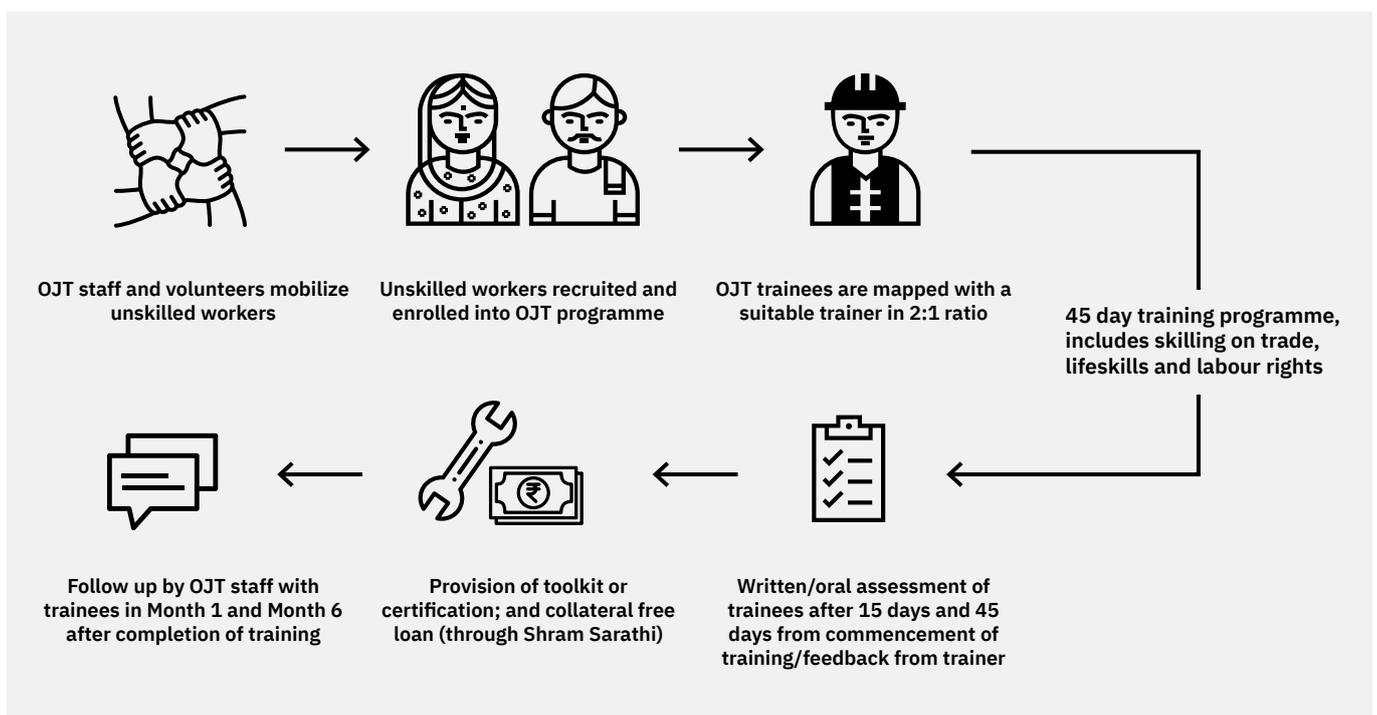
**SANJAY CHITTORA** Head, STEP Academy and OJT Programme

expressed reluctance or inability to participate in certain STEP Academy programs like Hunar (a 30-day residential program) or Unnati (15 day advanced refresher program). Participation in such upskilling programs would mean forgoing their earnings for the entire period, and for those with familial responsibilities, this was a difficult task.

The OJT was designed as a short-term “earn and learn” program intended for:

- ① Low-income, out-of-school, unskilled youth looking to migrate in search of livelihoods
- ② Migrant youth currently working in the informal sector, in risky jobs with few career advancement and income increase opportunities
- ③ Returning migrants facing unemployment or underemployment back at home
- ④ Adolescent girls and women from migrant families with a desire to work, but unable to do so due to restricted mobility

## 2.6 On-The-Job Intervention Toolkit



## Components of AB-OJT

### Recruitment

The trainees for the OJT programme usually come from three sources:

1. Helpers and other unskilled workers at a worksite who get to know about OJT through work collective meetings, mobilisation and outreach of OJT staff, or other OJT trainees.
2. Unskilled workers in source or destination communities who are in search of sustainable livelihoods. They are connected usually through the local Aajeevika Bureau staff or volunteers or a nearby “shramik kendra” run by Aajeevika Bureau. Occasionally, OJT trainees hailing from these communities also recommend their friends and persons known to them.
3. Potential workers identified by trainers either within their worksites or their communities, who are then taken under their wing.

### Mapping Trainees and Trainers

#### CASE STUDY Patram Prajapati

Patram Prajapati migrated from his village in Bansura district in Rajasthan to Ahmedabad in Gujarat and started working at a young age as a helper in a construction site. He would get INR 250 per day for his work. He would hardly get work for about 20-22 days a month. In 2016, he came in contact with the Aajeevika Bureau’s OJT staff and he decided to enrol into the programme to skill himself on marble fitting. His trainer, Giriraj trained him for 45 days during which he also received training on life skills. Within a month of his completing the OJT, Patram received an increment of INR 100 to his daily wages. Within a year (2017), he was considered a skilled marble fitter and was able to take up independent assignments, training other unskilled workers in the process. For the past few years, Patram gets a minimum of INR 600 per day and is in demand for his work throughout the year across multiple worksites.

1. The trade in which the skill mapping is done is usually the one that is most in demand in and around that worksite.
2. Trainees are mapped with suitable trainers in the ratio of 2:1, respectively.
3. Care is also taken by the staff to ensure that the trainee and the trainer are a good match and have some things in common with each other, for example, common language, ethnic background, etc.

4. Trainers are paid INR 1500-2000 per trainee to compensate for their time and materials used up during the training. The trainee avails the training / support at a nominal fee of Rs. 300 (Due to the pandemic this fee is waived off and the OJT team is offering this training free of cost till 15 Aug).

### **Skill Training**

1. **Training format:** The trainee shadows and learns from the trainer during the work hours. At the end of each day for approximately two hours the trainee practices his craft under the supervision of the trainer.
2. **Curriculum:** The trainee is expected to be trained based on a structured curriculum that is painstakingly developed by the staff over time. Firstly, when a new training starts the staff first interviews expert individuals with extensive experience in that sector, to understand the requirements from a skilled worker. Based on this the staff develops the curriculum. For example, for construction, some key skills identified through interviews were measurement, proportion of materials, finishing. A valuable source of information for this are the trainees who have graduated from OJT, and are working in different geographical regions. Based on their feedback, the curriculum is refined periodically. Currently there exists a curriculum for all major trainings like construction, painting, carpentry.

### **Validation of Skills**

The skills are validated in two ways:

1. Observations and feedback from the trainer
2. Testing conducted by the OJT staff

**I joined the OJT programme because I was motivated by the idea that upskilling myself will help me earn more. And I was aware of Aajeevika Bureau's work.”**

**RAJKUMAR** OJT Trainee, Bakeri City, Ahmedabad

### **Life Skills**

This involves a two- hour session which touches upon a variety of topics like negotiation, financial knowledge, legal issues, imparted through games, role play, storytelling etc. The emphasis is on ways to present themselves as skilled workers in the labour market.

## Starter Kit

At the end of the training Aajeevika Bureau provides the trainees with a starter kit (e.g. toolkits, safety kits, loan, funds etc.) with some of the basic equipment they need to get started in their profession as skilled workers. This is worth around INR 2000.

Each candidate is also given a safety kit (comprising of a helmet, gloves, and shoes) for use in their workplace. During the course of the study, masks, and sanitising materials (hand sanitizer and/or soap and handwash) were also added to the safety kit, given the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

The STEP Academy partners with Shram Sarathi to provide trainees with easier access to credit, if the trainees want to start their own business. The staff continues to guide the trainees post training on key entrepreneurial decisions.

## Receiving a certificate

After the training is complete, the trainee is awarded a certificate. This is a formal ceremony often held at a worksite in the presence of trainees co-workers or at the monthly meeting of the collectives.

## Mentorship and follow-up

Trainees are followed up by OJT staff at the end of month 1, and month 6, from the time of commencement of the training.

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TRAINEE	TRAINER	OJT STAFF
Shadows & assists the trainer during his activities	Mentors and guides the trainee in the performance of the job at the worksite	Recruit trainees and map trainers with them based on their aspirations, profiles and suitability to trade
Actively performs the tasks under the guidance of the trainer, for a few hours every day (approximately 2 hours)	Observes overall behavioral skills and guides on life skills / informs OJT staff	Provide and monitor life skill training
Awarded a certificate in a formal ceremony, held at the worksite in the presence of the coworkers	Receives a ₹ 2000 remuneration per trainee as compensation for their effort & for materials used by the trainees	Keep training curriculum relevant and updated
Receives a toolkit at the end of the training, to enable their future employment as skilled worker		Assess and follow up with trainees and trainers
		Networking with potential employers, worksite managers, etc.

## 2.7 Keeping the Curriculum Relevant and Updated

The training process follows a structured curriculum developed by the staff.

### Expectation gathering

When a new training starts, the contractors, employers, builders, and skilled workers are interviewed to understand what exactly a 'skilled worker' in the trade is expected to know. The curriculum is developed based on the findings.

### Expectation assessment

Once the training is over, the skilled workers who have graduated the OJT are asked about how well the training prepared them for the jobs they are working at, and what skills they were left lacking. Based on the feedback, the curriculum is then refreshed periodically. During our evaluation, the niiti research team learnt that the construction curriculum had been revised 5 times between 2013-2020.

**When we start a new training in any trade we first talk to the trainers and/or contractors. Based on their feedback, we calculate how long it will take to learn. We are also constantly assessing new techniques that are coming into the market. We also seek inputs from trainees when they go to work with a different contractor on skills they still lack that would help them get paid better. This then gets added to the curriculum in subsequent revisions.**

**JAHID MAKRANI** Senior Associate, STEP Academy

Aajeevika's experience in the field has reinforced their belief that the curriculum needs to extend beyond mere technical skill training. Migrant workers tend to come from low-income & disadvantaged groups, and often struggle with low-confidence, low-aspirations, and limited bargaining power. To ensure that the training increases their ability to succeed in their job, a strong life-skills component is necessary. This is done through a dedicated four-hour or half day session that touches upon topics like financial knowledge, legal issues, negotiation, etc.

## 2.8 Continued Assessment and Monitoring

During the training period, Aajeevika Bureau monitors the performance of both the trainers and trainees. This is done by phone and in person.

1. Trainees are tested on the 15th day of training, and on the 45th day, at the end of the training. The written test is followed by a practical test, which is validated by the trainers and OJT staff. For those workers who have limited reading and writing skills, the written test is modified and conducted orally.
2. Follow-ups are conducted at the end of the first month, and after 6 months of completion of their training, to assess progress and provide any necessary mentorship they might need from the OJT staff
3. Trainers are assessed through feedback from trainees on their experience with the trainer at the end of their training cycle, and the ability of the trainees to improve their wages on site.

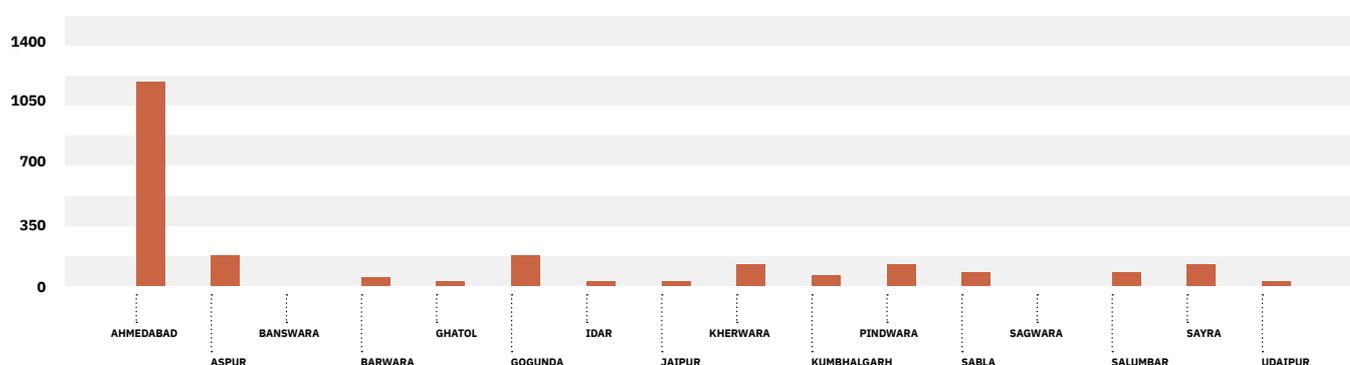
**The exam to determine uptake of skills is taken at the nearest Aajeevika centre or at a convenient place for the trainees and trainers. But in our experience, periodic assessment every 15 days is critical. During monitoring, we try and continue to stress on the importance of life skills and aspirations.**

**AJAY SINGH** Senior Program Associate, STEP Academy

## 2.9 OJT Over the Years

Over 2500 migrant unskilled workers have been trained under the OJT programme since its inception in 2012. The split of the relative enrolment of participants in the programme, by location in Rajasthan and Gujarat are shared in the graph\* below:

\* Numbers for Banswara and Sagwara were two and five respectively and too small to be reflected in the graph.



**Figure 1** OJT Trainees by location (2012–2019)

# Evaluation Methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to ascertain the impact of Aajeevika Bureau / STEP Academy's 'On the Job Training (OJT)' program. The evaluation attempted to answer four learning questions:

- ① Is the OJT a **preferable model (apprenticeship model) for upskilling for migrant population** (based on cost of training, nature of construction industry, etc.)?
- ② Is there a **wage impact** of the OJT programme for the candidate?
- ③ Does the OJT **fast track the wage increments** for the candidate?
- ④ Does the OJT help **retention** of the candidate?

## Proposed Sample Size

The sample size for the trainee group was set at 300, which was 12% of the total trainees who underwent the OJT program between 2012 and 2020. The sample size for the unskilled control group was set at 150, and for the skilled control group it was 150. The sample size for the trainers was 2 from each centre. The data collection period was decided as April to May 2020. Initially all data collection was planned to be in person. However, the countrywide quarantine imposed due to COVID-19 affected the data collection for the evaluation in terms of sample size, method and time period. The sample size for the skilled control group was reduced to 30. Since the OJT staff had the contact details of the trainees and trainers, the data collection for these groups was carried out over the telephone. The data for the control group was delayed and collected in person at worksites, after the quarantine restrictions were eased. Finally, the sample size was reduced for the skilled control group to 30 because per worksite there are fewer skilled than unskilled workers and travelling to distant worksites was restricted. The data collection was delayed and took place during April to June 2020.

Data was collected primarily in two ways -

### **Survey**

The survey which was administered to the trainee group and control groups contained a wide variety of items, like multiple choice, yes/no type, as well as a few long answers.

### **In-depth Interviews**

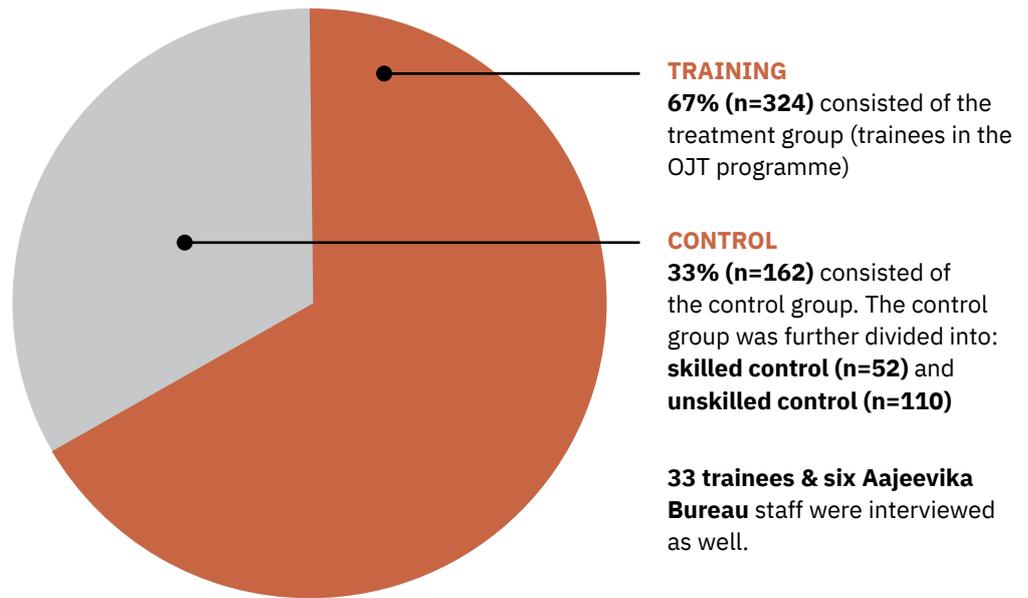
Semi-structured interviews with trainers, Aajeevika Bureau staff and key informants.

Seven data sources were included in the study

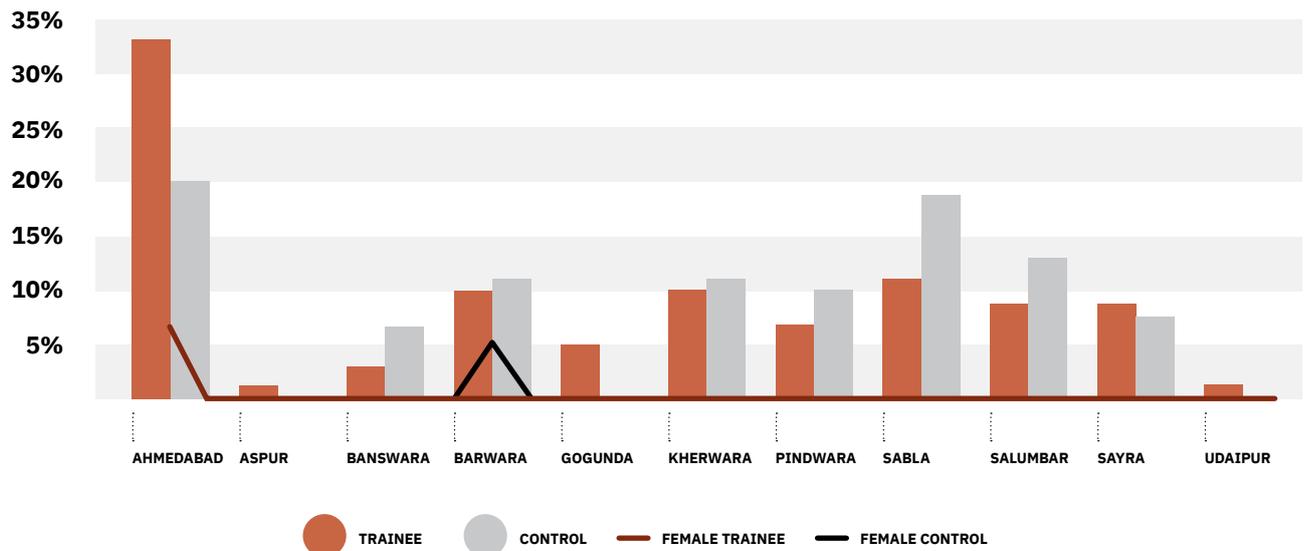
1. Program records of Aajeevika Bureau with detailed records of trainees, from 2012 to 2019 with the research agency.
2. Trainees of OJT program (Treatment Group)
3. Unskilled workers recruited from different worksites in and around the community (control group)
4. Skilled workers - Workers who had received no formal training, but had managed to skill themselves while working with different trainers over the years, or might have received training at a centre other than OJT (Control group)
5. Trainers associated with the OJT programme
6. Key informants of three types:
  - a. Experts running an apprenticeship style program
  - b. Practitioners / Experts working in the sector
  - c. Experts in the skilling / capacity building
7. Aajeevika Bureau / STEP academy staff

## 3.1 Sampling

The total sample size for the survey was 486. The average age of the trainees, as a group, was close to 30 years. Their ages ranged from 18 to 56. The range for the control skilled group was 18 to 52 years, with 30 years as average age. The control unskilled group ranged between 19 to 55 years, with an average age of 28 years.



**Figure 1** Sample Size



**Figure 2** Sample Distribution

A majority of the trainee sample came from Ahmedabad (33%) followed by Sabla (11%) and Barwara (10%). For the control group, a majority of the sample came from Ahmedabad followed by Sabla (19%) followed by Salumbar (13%).

Only 6% of the control group sample consisted of women, and all of them came from Ahmedabad. This number is reflective of the female participation in construction, manufacturing, or hospitality sectors, which tend to be male-dominated and offer little opportunity for unskilled women to gain skills.

## 3.2 Log Frame Analysis

Since there was no existing log frame model for the OJT programme, the research team created a log frame for the programme based on inputs from Aajeevika Bureau staff, and information gleaned from the field visits conducted in February 2020.

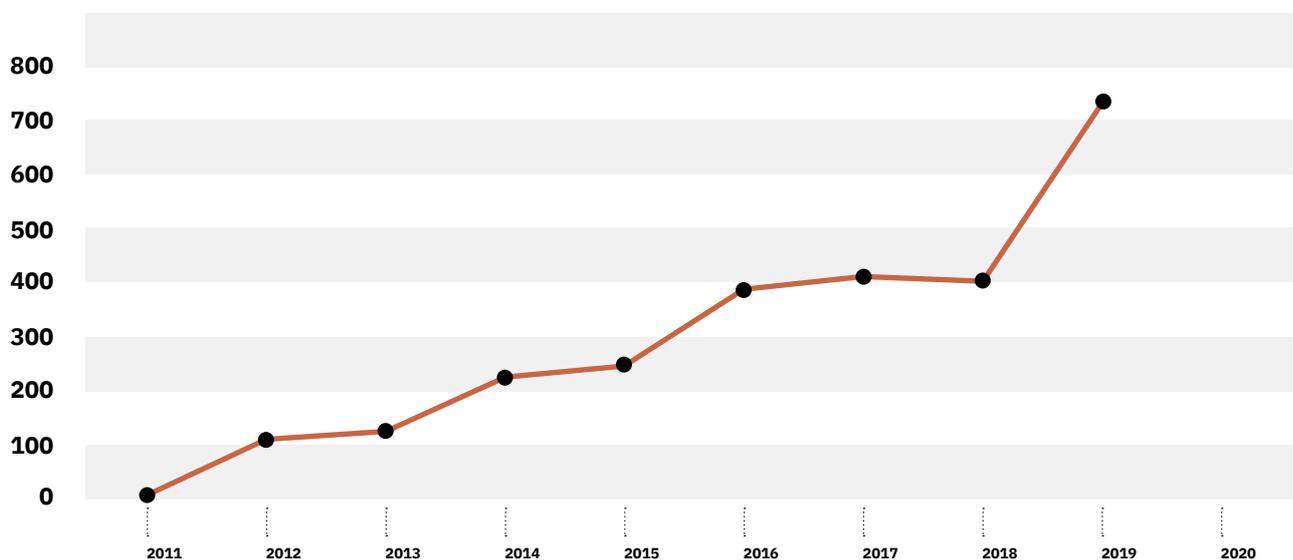
ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACTS	
Workers and supervisors part of a collective that come together for OJT skilling programmes	Workers are trained and validated in a skill by supervisors	Workers are able to fill in opportunities for skilled labour	<b>Workers upgrade their skills and improve their earning potential</b>	QUALITY OF LIFE
Adequate workers of both genders are recruited into OJT	Workers are aware of their rights	Workers with newly acquired skills are able to demand and get increased wages	<b>Workers improve their living standards through wage increase</b>	
Supervisors are monitored and facilitated for training and validation	Supervisors recommend a wage increase for the worker for their new skills	Workers get adequate wage increase due to improved skills at a faster rate		
.....				
Supervisors and contractors are sensitised to availability of improved skills	Workers are trained on life skills, discipline and work ethics	Workers are able to work longer with a contractor due to improved skills	<b>Workers improve their job retention</b>	RETENTION
Training content includes skilling, life skills and awareness of labour rights	Supervisors or trainers are incentivised to improve conditions for workers	Workers demonstrate better work ethics and productivity	<b>Workers are able to perform tasks better and be valued employees</b>	
Supervisors train 2–3 workers at a time	Localised training creates larger pool of skilled workers at a site	Contractors prefer locally available unskilled workers		
.....				
OJT certification is based on rigorous validation of skills	There is an adequate pool of skilled supervisors who train workers in popular vocations	Workers are skilled in vocations where there is a high demand	<b>Workers increase their employability options</b>	RELEVANCE
Life skills coaching and peer interactions	Validation from supervisors or certification from Aajeevika Bureau has credibility	Skilled workers are able to work in different geographies and with different contractors	<b>There is equal opportunity for men and women</b>	
Training content has components that improves access to women	There is a significant proportion of women are included in the OJT programme	Workers feel confident of their newly acquired skills		
	OJT Training content is relevant and practical	Women are able to demand and get wage increase owing to improved skills		

The data collected from the surveys and exploratory interviews was analysed and the findings presented below:

## Quality of Life Improvement Through Wage Increase

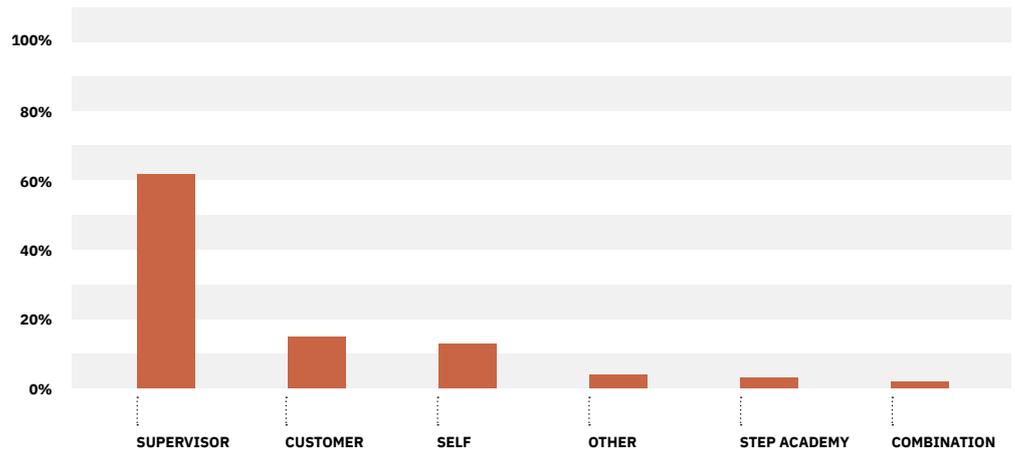
The OJT programme is relevant and addresses the workers' needs of improved income and employability options.

The enrollment in OJT has been on an upward trajectory since 2012, with a significant jump between 2018 and 2019. However, there was a gradual plateauing between the years 2016 and 2017 followed by a slight drop between the years 2017 and 2018. Before 2017-2018, the program was carried out only in destination sites or cities like Ahmadabad. The understanding was that the OJT program was more suited to cities, while other skilling programmes including residential trainings were more suited to source sites or rural areas. However, a study conducted by Aajeevika Bureau found that families were not positively impacted by these services, whose reach was limited to the individuals. The study recommended a higher focus on migrants returning from work destinations. Since then, recruitment for OJT is also done in source locations, which accounts for the improvement in uptake of OJT trainees.



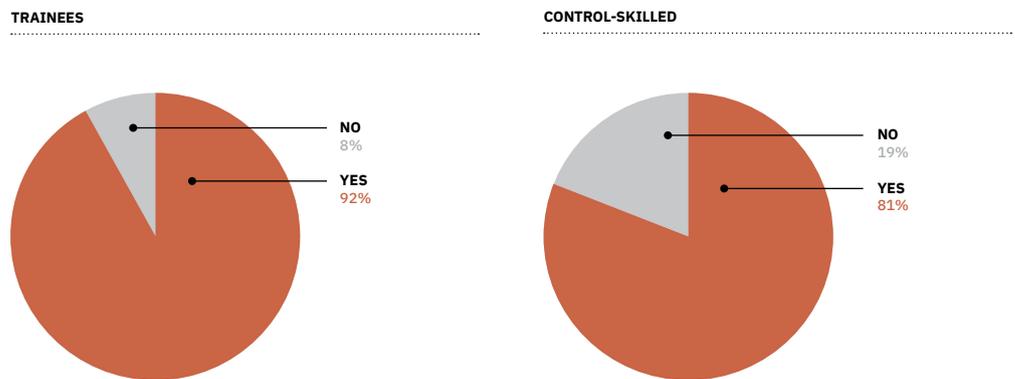
**Figure 3** Number of OJT trainees annually

OJT programme offers an opportunity to migrant workers to be certified as a skilled *karigar* in a trade improving opportunities for improvement in wage and employability.



**Figure 4** Validation of Training

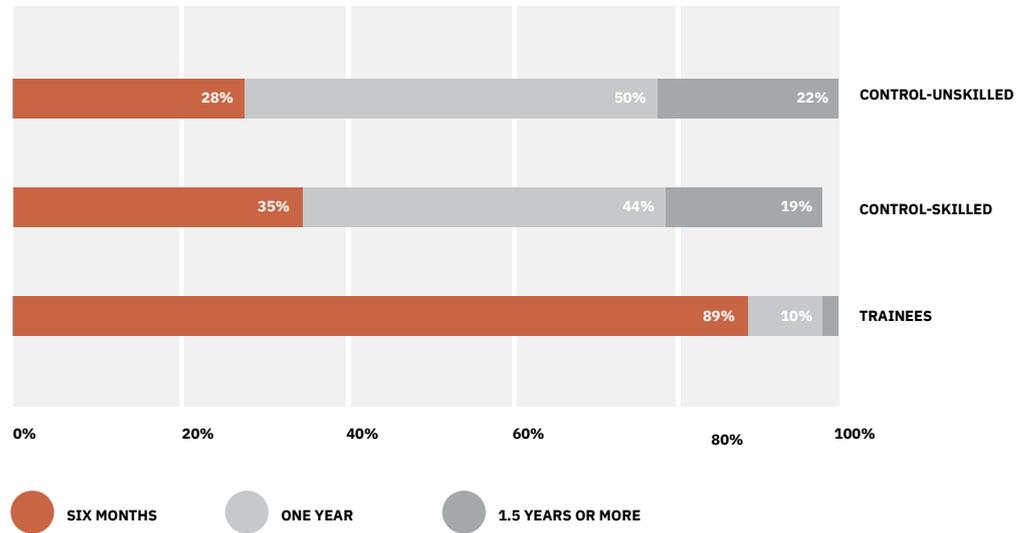
Approximately 60% of OJT trainees recruited annually received their certification and had their training validated by their supervisor. About 15% of the trainees shared that their training was validated by the customer. Only about 13% validated their skills themselves. The validation and certification of their status as a “*karigar*” helped them improve their wages in their current worksite, but more importantly, helped many of them move away, and start their independent contract work. This provides evidence of portability of the training, and demonstrates relevance of the trade and quality of the skill acquired.



**Figure 5** Wage Increase Post Training

The OJT training enables workers to receive wage increase, at a faster pace. 92% of the OJT trainees confirmed about receiving a wage increase post certification. The wage increase was comparable with the wage received by the skilled workers in the control group.

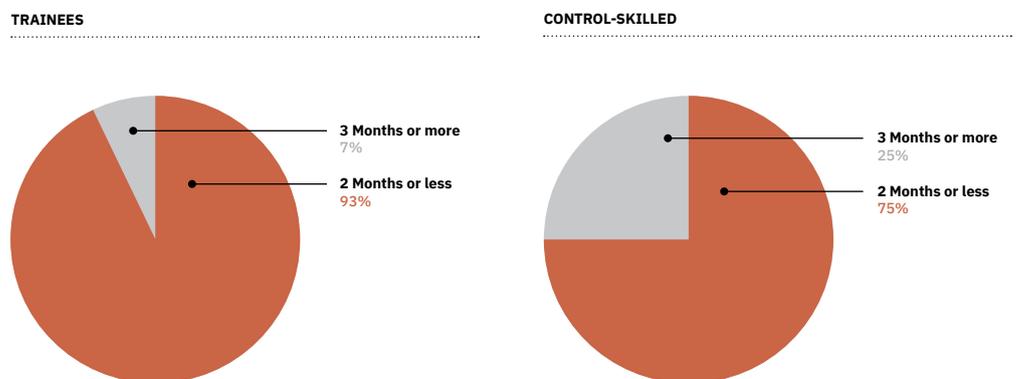
When asked on the average time taken for the wage increase, 89% of OJT trainees mentioned that they were able to improve their daily wages within 6 months which is significantly faster compared to the average time taken for the control group.



**Figure 6** Time Taken for Wage Increase

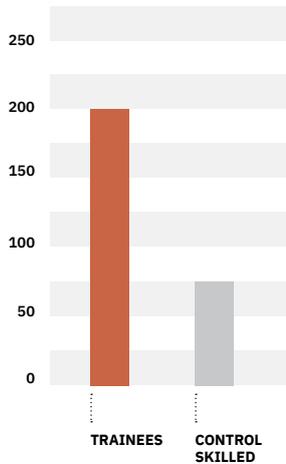
A key point to note here is that nearly 100% of the OJT trainees got a wage increase within a year of completing their training. This shows that the training provides them with the initial kickstart they need to meet a demand in the market.

This is not surprising, since the turnaround time for the training is quite fast. 90% of the surveyed workers who were trained through the OJT programme were able to get trained in their chosen skill within 2 months. This is significantly faster than the time taken by skilled workers in the control group, a majority of whom took 3 months or longer.



**Figure 7** Average Time Taken to be Skilled

## Retention



**Figure 8**  
Average Time Spent at a Worksite

One of the key outcomes expected from the OJT training is to promote worker retention within their site, as it gives them an opportunity for a stable income. Workers are retained better when they demonstrate productivity, good work ethics, and their work is appreciated by the supervisors.

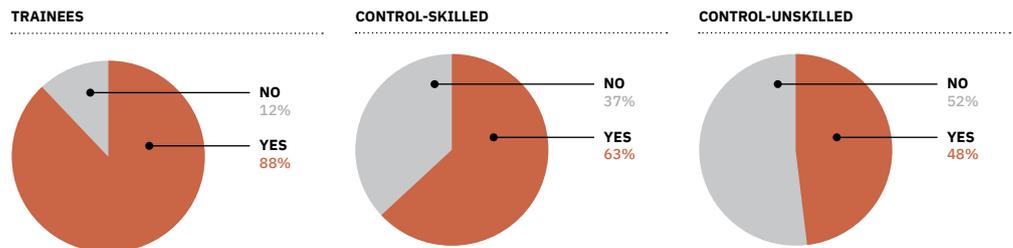
The study found that the average time spent by a trainee at a worksite after completing OJT was approximately 199 days or a little over 6 months, while for the skilled control group, the time at each site is considerably lower, at about 50 days per site.

As workplace retention increases, and work quality is valued more, it is critical that workers are also able to negotiate with the supervisors about the terms of work. Almost 88% of the OJT trainees knew they could seek help if they did not get the pre-negotiated wages, compared to only 63% amongst their skilled peers. This percentage drops even further among the unskilled control group, where only about 48% felt they could exert any rights or knew where to seek help related to their labour rights.

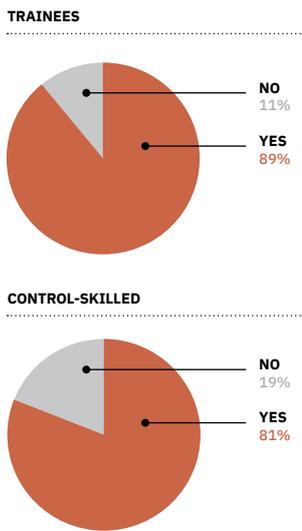
This finding indicates better self confidence and greater faith in their own negotiation skills, possibly resulting from the knowledge that they have an in-demand skill. We also believe this has a direct correlation with the trust they have in organizations like Aajeevika Bureau, which are more than just skill providing entities. Programs like Aajeevika Bureau enhance the workers' ability to fight for wage increases and labour conditions by acting as a support system that provides them with strong community connections.

**I trained four OJTs in 2017. They still work with me at my worksite. They are diligent, hardworking and trustworthy. I have increased their wages twice over since the training because they are skilful and help me manage the projects I take up.**

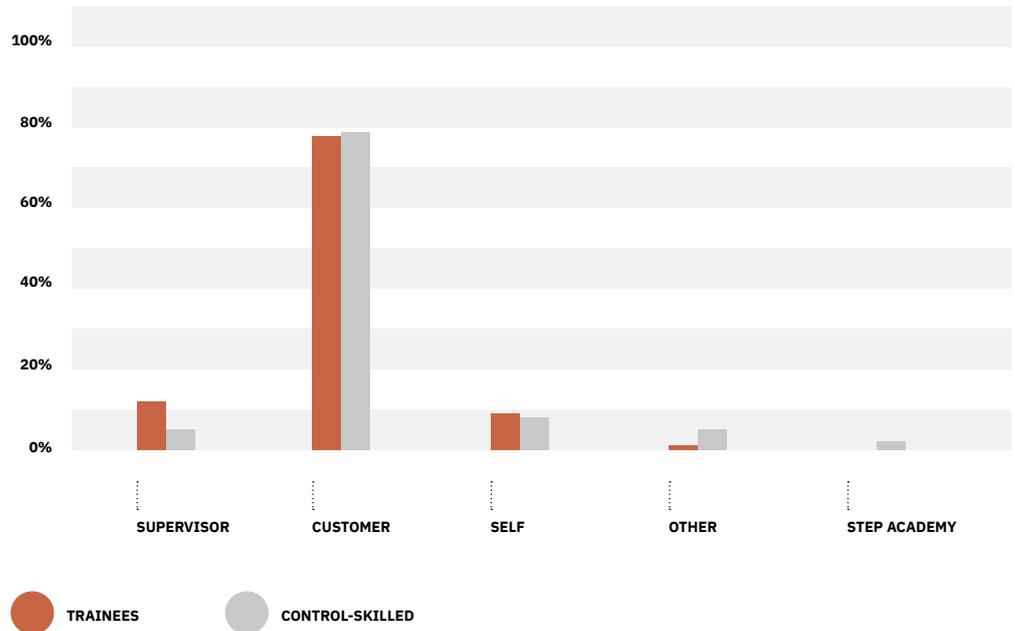
**MALAM SINGH** Trainer, Sayra Centre



**Figure 9** Knowledge of Labour Rights and Ability to Seek Help



**Figure 10**  
Wage Increase Recommended by Supervisor

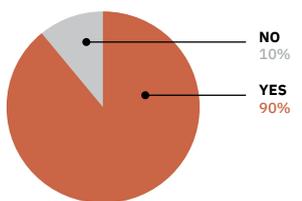


**Figure 11** Job Roles post-OJT Training

Another way the retention can be measured is in terms of the confidence and interest of the supervisor in retaining the worker at the worksite. Almost 89% of OJT trainees that we surveyed reported that their supervisor recommended a wage increase for their new skills. This is comparable to 80% of the controlled skilled group reporting that their supervisors recommended a wage increase on their behalf. This demonstrates that gaining skills in a trade improves the value of the worker in the eyes of the employer, and raises retention from the employers' side.

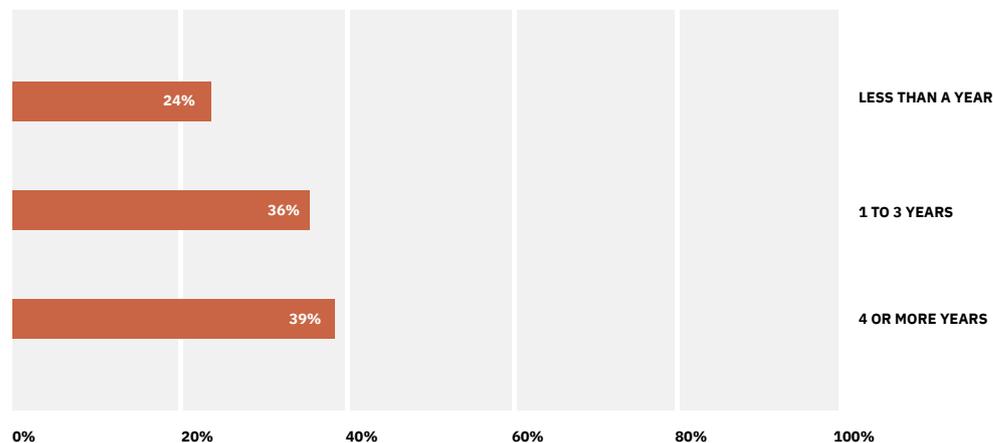
Almost 78% of OJT trained workers feel they can work independent of their supervisor, as a skilled worker at par with other skilled karigars. Around 10% also felt that they could independently take up petty and large contractual work which gives evidence of improved aspirations post OJT.

A significant finding in the study was that a whopping 90% of the OJT trainees surveyed felt confident about training others in the trade they have learnt. This is a strong indicator that they see themselves as established professionals in the field. This indicator could also enable the programme to be sustainable in the future, as trained participants could be seamlessly enrolled as OJT trainers.



**Figure 12**  
Ability to Train Other Workers

Of the 33 trainers in the sample, 29 (almost 88%) had trained more than one batch of OJT trainees. The average number of trainees trained by one trainer was 11 with a range of 2 to 35.



**Figure 13** Trainees associated with OJT

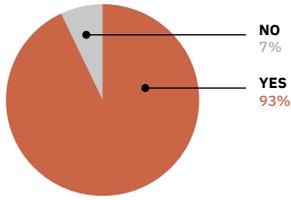
Another significant impact of the OJT program is if trainers and supervisors find the OJT model worth their time, and would want to train more trainees in any given time period. The data collected from trainers showed that the number of them who have worked with OJT has stayed more or less consistent over the years, indicating that they continue to find it relevant and useful in the context of their own growth and the workplace. 39% of the trainers have been associated with the programme for 4 years or more. Many of them have been associated with the programme since its inception, in 2012. This indicates that the programme could be on its way to becoming self-sustaining, given the right environment to operate.

### CASE STUDY Umesh Garasia

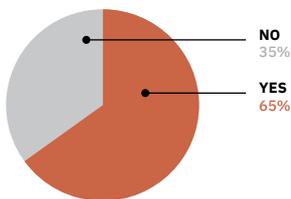
Umesh Garasia migrated from Kherwara district in Rajasthan at the age of 17 to Ahmedabad in Gujarat. He was married and he had to drop out of school to bear family responsibilities. He started getting odd jobs often as a helper in centering work at a construction site. Employment was irregular and he would earn INR 250 a day on days he would get work. He found it extremely tough to manage his own survival in the city, let alone be able to send money to his family. In late 2017, he attended a collective meeting of construction workers organized by Aajeevika Bureau. He found that several construction workers had come from different parts of the city and some of them were felicitated for completing the OJT training and given tool-kits. He got himself registered for the new OJT batch that very month. His supervisor Rameshbhai, who was also a member of the collective, became his trainer and after he completed his 45 day long training, he continued working with Rameshbhai.

His wages post-training, increased to INR 600 and there was some stability in terms of employment opportunities. Encouraged by Rameshbhai, he decided to enrol himself with the OJT programme as a trainer. Since 2018, he has already trained four workers, and he feels especially proud of this. He believes OJT offers an opportunity to migrant unskilled workers like him to seek better income and employment opportunities while continuing to earn. He is now a part of the Humsafar group – a workers collective promoted at their work site.

## Relevance



**Figure 14**  
OJT certified workers who found jobs related to their trade in a new worksite



**Figure 15**  
Certification helped find new work for OJTs

A main objective of any successful skilling programme is to expand the trainees' opportunities for employment in the future. A parameter that the research study chose to explore is the percentage of OJT certified skilled workers who found a job other than their training site, as that would be a true measure of the relevance of their skill and the quality of their skilling. The data from the survey showed that 93% of the OJT trainee respondents indicated that they had found employment outside of the site they were trained in.

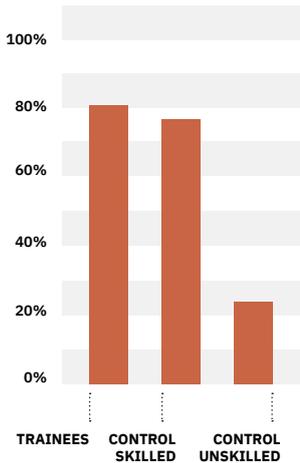
The high percentage also indicates that the trades chosen in the OJT programme are in high demand in the market, and the curriculum is portable across geographies. This also indicates that the trainees and certified OJT workers feel confident about working with different contractors and worksites. About 65% of the surveyed OJT trainees mentioned that the certification received from Aajeevika Bureau helped them find new work opportunities.

Once the OJT trainees complete their training, and the trainers and OJT staff validate their skills post assessment, the OJT staff organizes a formal event at strategic locations in both destination and/or source sites. These could include a labour collective centre, Aajeevika Bureau's shramik kendra, village panchayat office, etc. The formal certificate and tools are distributed at these events.

The survey respondents mentioned that they felt a great sense of achievement and recognition at these events. The OJT staff also leverage these events to inspire and motivate others in the community to pursue OJT training. However, the organization believes that certificate by itself is not sufficient to get a job in this sector, but it is good to have some documentation to showcase skills. The research team did not find much evidence of the certificate being recognised outside of the geography where OJT is actively promoted. STEP Academy seems to have limited focus on specific initiatives that could help build better credibility for the OJT certification. Given that a majority of the trainees share that OJT certification helped them get new work, a specific focus on this area might be worth exploring.

**OJT completion certificate is important but using it as a marketing tool needs to be reinforced better. At Aajeevika, our focus has been to ensure wage increase post training.**

**RAJENDER** Gogunda Centre Head, Aajeevika Bureau



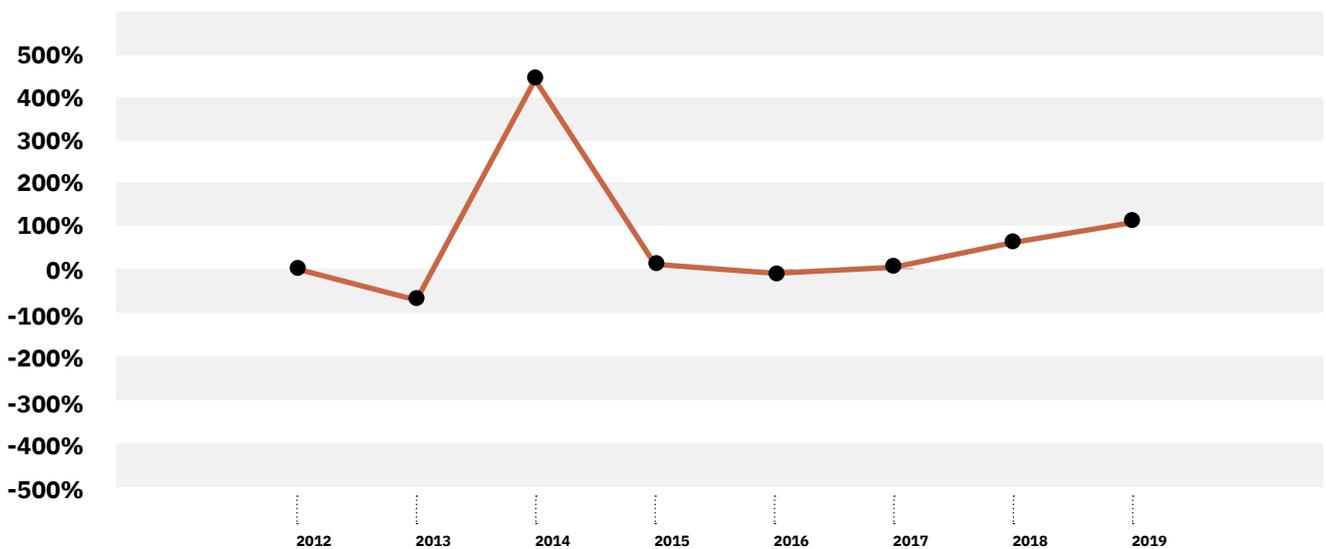
**Figure 16**  
Aspiration to become a Contractor or Supervisor/Trainer

It is noteworthy that 81% of the OJT trainees surveyed feel they can do more and aspire to move up the value chain. This is marginally higher than other skilled workers in the community and significantly higher than unskilled workers. This indicates that there are components in the OJT that encourage migrant workers to aspire for a career and jobs that are considered more remunerative and stable. The findings show that trainees want to continue to grow vertically and become trainers and supervisors but also laterally into contractors by learning advanced skills.

## Impact of OJT on Women Workers

A parameter that the study chose to explore was the impact and relevance of OJT type apprenticeship model among women. Within the survey sample, the number of women respondents was low, reflective of the low number of women at worksites and an even lower number of women enrolled into skilling programmes. Some findings and analysis of data under the gender lens are presented below.

The research team found that there was a conscious attempt to increase the number of women participants in the OJT programme over the years by the STEP Academy and Aajeevika Bureau programme staff. However, the enrolment of women has been erratic. The trend over the last 2 years has shown promise. We could ascribe this steady increase in the last two years to the active work with communities and families for recruitment instead of individuals since 2016-17, but the study could not find any other direct evidence that could verify this.

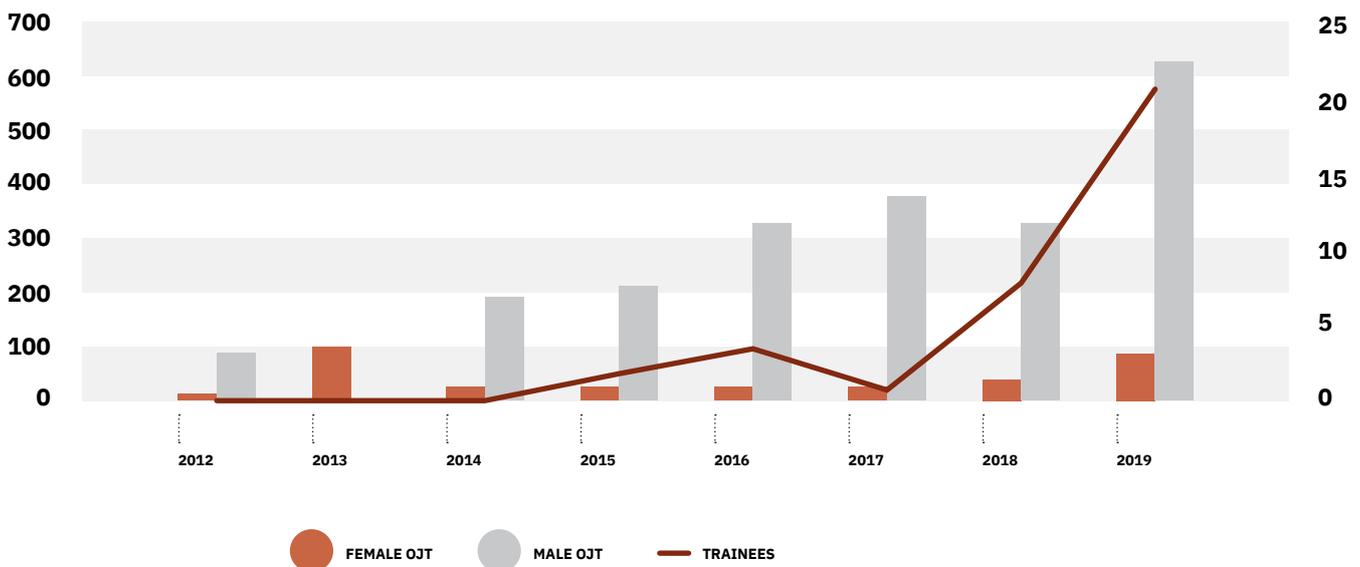


**Figure 17** Women Workers in the OJT Programme (2012-2019)

As a first step towards then changing mindset of OJT staff and introducing more women-focussed trades in the OJT programme, Aajeevika Bureau reached out to Azad foundation, an NGO that specializes in teaching commercial driving to women. Azad Foundation conducted gender trainings for the staff, that resulted in building a new gender sensitisation training for male volunteers from the community who play a key role in mobilising communities for enrolment into OJT programmes.

**We want to ensure that annually we make a conscious effort to enrol more women in the OJT programme. Our target is that women should constitute at least 15-20% of the total participant strength every year.**

**SANJAY CHITTORA** Head, STEP Academy



**Figure 18** Women participants in OJT are on the rise but gender gap still wide

**I have trained over 10 people in the OJT programme on masonry so far, of which 3 are women. Women hesitate to skill themselves or aspire to move up the value chain because they are not encouraged to be confident and express themselves freely- both at home and work. The women who I have trained are very good karigars, but they only get INR 400 a day whereas their male counterpart could easily get INR 600 for the same trade.**

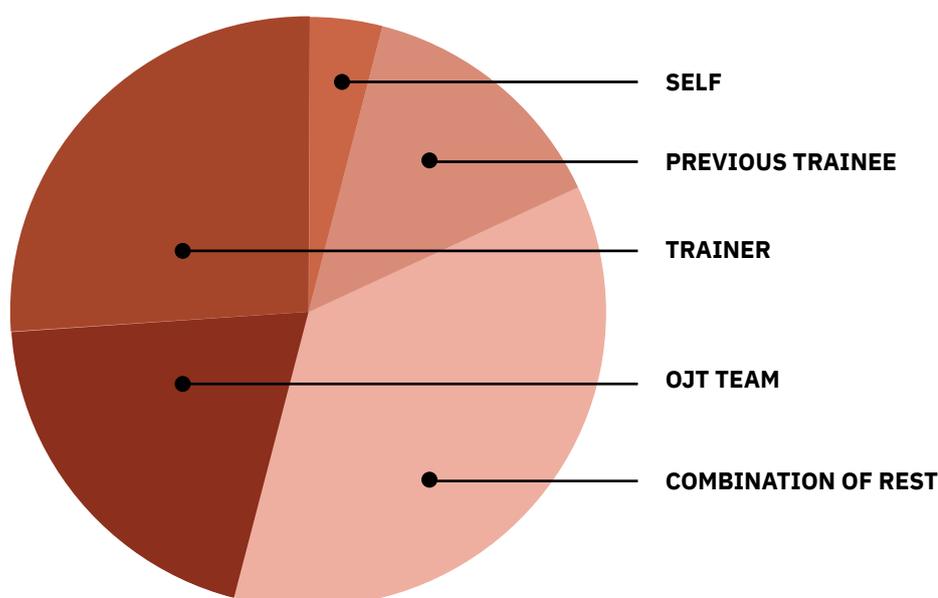
**PANNA LAL** Trainer, Gogunda

## Programme Feedback

Beyond the metrics already discussed, the research team observed and analysed data on wage increase, relevance, impact on employability, etc., they were also keen to seek feedback from the OJT trainees and trainers, as well as OJT staff on aspects of the programme they felt were the most useful. The aim of this exercise was to determine gaps and highlights of the programme that could be useful in supporting decisions around scaling and replicating the programme across other geographies and expanding vertically within the current geographies where OJT is rolled out.

56% of the OJT trainees surveyed mentioned that the Aajeevika Bureau team members and OJT staff were responsible for motivating them to enroll into the OJT programme and aspire higher. 26% credited their trainers with motivating them and 14% mentioned that they were motivated by the growth they saw in other trainees they came in contact with. Very few (4%) mentioned that they went out seeking for a self-improvement programme. This helps highlight the low level of awareness amongst most migrant youth, and the critical role played by community mobilisers in providing information, opportunity and mentorship in upskilling rural migrant youth.

As evidenced by the OJT Intervention Toolkit, several aspects of the OJT program are sustainable and have stood the test of time. The mapping of trainees with appropriate trainers, low student-trainer ratio, ability to learn a trade while working, certification at the end of the training, provision



**Figure 19** Person who motivated trainee to join OJT

**I came to know about the OJT programme through the Aajeevika bureau staff. I trust them because they care for my welfare. I became a trainee in the programme and then a trainer. All the trainers are also members of the shramik sangathan. Being a part of a collective makes a big difference.**

**MAHESH BHAI** OJT Staff and Trainer, Ahmedabad

of workplace ready toolkit, life skills training module, and possibility of a collateral free loan from Shram Sarathi are all unique components that set the OJT programme apart. These components also make the programme a step above a mere skill provision course, as it also empowers the workers and gives them tangible and transferable abilities.

When the OJT trainees were asked to rate the component they value the most, nearly half (43%) mentioned that the opportunity to work closely with a trainer was what they appreciated the most. The opportunity to learn a new skill/trade without compromising on their ability to earn was the second most valued (35%) item cited by the respondents. Life skill learning was only highlighted as a valued component by 10% of the respondents, but trainers mentioned that adopting life skill coaching was what helped them determine the quantum of wage increase and ability to go independent.



**Figure 20** Aspect of OJT that participants value most

The trainers are a key driving force behind the OJT process. Several trainers in the OJT programme have a longer association with Aajeevika Bureau. When they were asked to respond on what motivates them to be trainers in the OJT programme, 42% said that they are motivated by the respect and recognition

**When I see my trainees doing well, earning more and excelling in their job, my heart fills with pride. Several trainees that I have taught masonry are now trainers themselves. Some even have started taking independent work. It is my aim to train as many people as possible so we can make life better for others.**

**MORSARAM** Trainer, Pindwara

### **CASE STUDY** Vikas Kumar

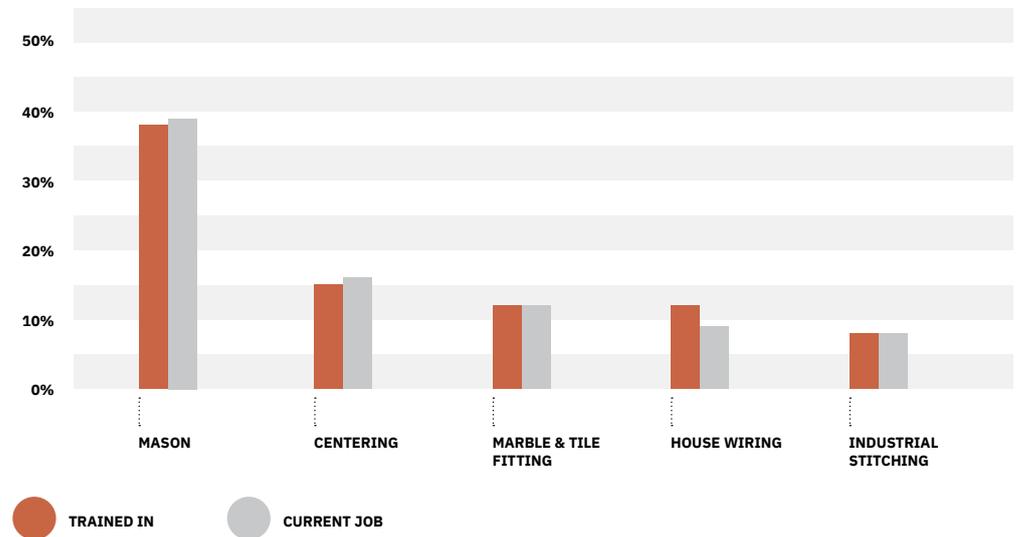
Vikas Kumar is a resident of Kherwada near Udaipur city. He and his brother worked since a young age as daily wage workers at construction sites in Udaipur. They would earn INR 250 per day each but that was hardly adequate to meet family expenses. Within two years (2016), he realised he needed to do something that would augment his income. He was inspired by an Aajeevika Bureau staff member from Kherwada who used to visit his worksite and he decided to follow his advice and enrolled in the OJT programme to learn masonry. Within 6 months of his training, he was able to increase his daily earnings to INR 350 per day. By 2017, he felt confident about taking up independent projects on masonry, which enabled him to earn INR 500 per day. He felt he could take up larger projects but was limited by the inability to invest in better masonry equipment and ability to put together a larger team. In 2019, he applied for a loan from Shram Sarathi, India's first dedicated financial services institution that offers wealth solutions to vulnerable migrant workers and their households, and received INR 50,000 against no collateral. With this loan, he was able to buy better equipment and started taking up larger contracts, hiring upto 12 members in his team. At present, Vikas has nearly paid back his loan and earn upto INR 1000 a day.

they get from their trainees, and 36% mentioned that it actually helps them expand their own knowledge and improve their ability to take on more work (since their trainees often joined them post-training). About 21% mentioned that they were motivated by other trainers they know and wished to emulate them. Interestingly, no trainer reported becoming a trainer to supplement their income, or cited the fee they received as a motivation factor. No trainer felt that the time they spent with the trainee was a deterrent either.

**“Life skill training is conducted by the STEP Academy faculty either at worksites or at a shramik centre. But often it is tough to get everyone together, especially at a worksite, so the quality of delivery of this training could be improved.”**

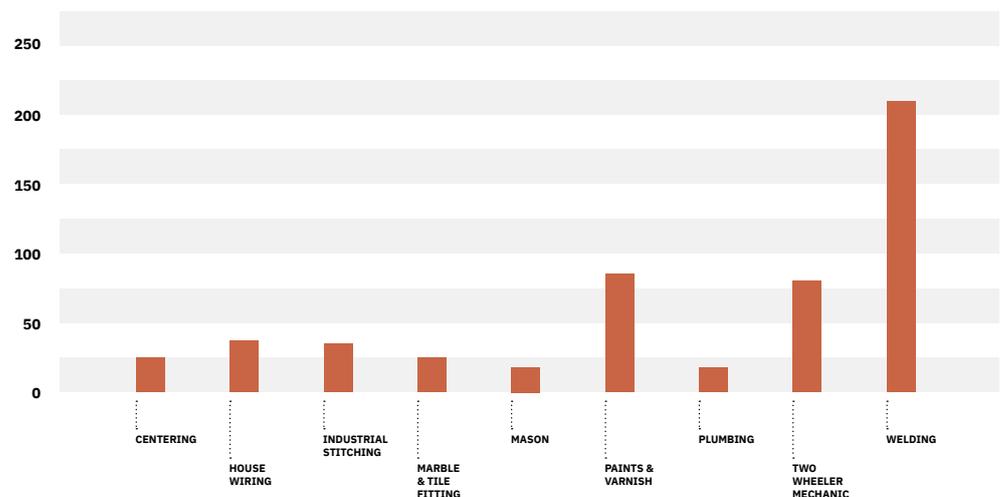
**SANJAY CHITTORA** Head, STEP Academy

When the research team reviewed the trades most in demand, masonry (37%) seemed to be the most popular, followed by centering (16%), and marble fitting (13%). This was in direct proportion to the job the trainees were employed in.



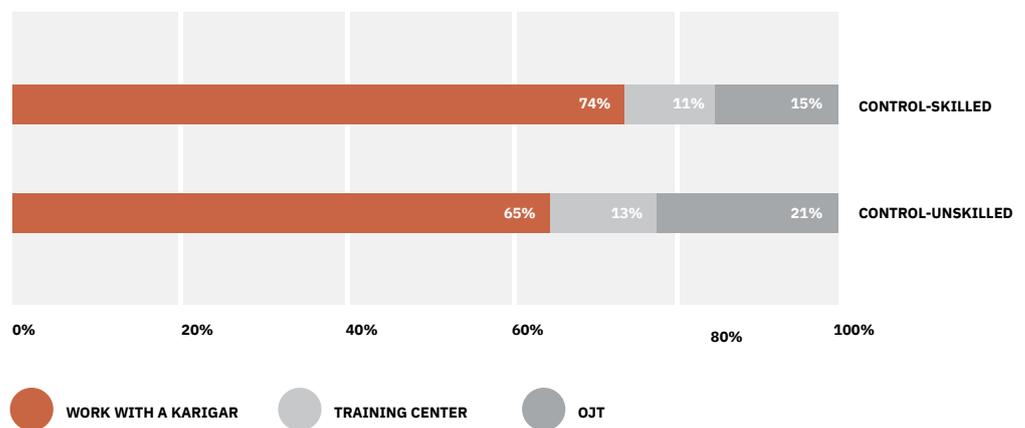
**Figure 21** Most in-demand skills v/s jobs the trainees were employed in

When the data gathered by the STEP Academy over a six-month period was reviewed, it was indicated that the most popular trades were not necessarily the most rewarding in terms of wage increase. Some trades like welding (>200%), and paint & varnish (87%) showed a much significant difference between wages drawn by unskilled and skilled workers. The low popularity for these trades could be a reflection of the knowledge of trades known to respondents at the time of survey, or the geography they belonged to.



**Figure 22** %age Income increase after OJT training by trade

The survey revealed that only 11% of the unskilled workers and 13% of the skilled workers mentioned that they prefer acquiring skills through a regular training centre model. Another interesting insight was that only 21% of the skilled control group, and 15% of the unskilled control group mentioned that OJT would be a preferred form of skill learning for them, despite the fact that 65% and 74% percent respectively mentioned that their preferred way to learn a new skill is by working directly with a practising karigar. This indicates that a majority of the control group respondents are not aware about the OJT programme, or did not know that it provides apprenticeship based skill learning with practicing karigars. The research team concluded that in either case, there is an enormous scope for Aajeevika Bureau and the STEP Academy to familiarize a large section of the migrant worker population with the OJT programme and the impact it has had on those who have leveraged it for improving their career options and quality of life.



**Figure 22** Preferred form of upskilling for skilled and unskilled workers

### 3.3 Limitations of the Evaluation

Due to the rapid spread of the Coronavirus pandemic (almost immediately after we commenced the evaluation study in Feb 2020), strict lockdown was imposed between March and June 2020, which was subsequently relaxed between June and July 2020. Consequently, data collection had to be staggered, as construction worksites had shut down during the strict lockdown period. The treatment group data was collected before the control group, and that could be a limitation in terms of how the survey was answered. Overall, the research group felt that the participants in the treatment group showed more pessimism in their responses to questions around future aspirations than the control group.

Another limitation of the data collection is that owing to travel restrictions, data for the treatment group was collected over the phone. While the OJT trainees were known to the staff, and they enthusiastically agreed for telephonic conversations because of the pre-established rapport, the conversations could have been perceived as impersonal, which in turn might affect how candid the participants are in their responses. In contrast, the data for the control group was collected in person.

Thirdly, the sample size for the skilled control group was considerably smaller than originally planned, because availability of skilled and unskilled workers at construction worksites and other locations were not optimal during the course of the study.

All data collected during the survey is however used without incorporating any value for bias in the analysis.

# Recommendations and Next Steps

After reviewing the impact of STEP Academy's On-the-Job Training (OJT) program, the evaluation team felt that the apprenticeship model introduced by Aajeevika Bureau is both unique and necessary to meet its set goal of upskilling migrant unskilled population and offering them a more stable and meaningful direction to livelihoods. It attempts to fill a yawning gap in skilling opportunities available for its demographic dividend in India. Not surprisingly, most of the interventions are focussed around the construction sector, as that industry offers opportunities to the maximum unskilled population, but interventions are also planned around non construction activities that could offer alternatives to migrant youth who have limited employability options.

The study team strongly recommends that the programme be strengthened further in the geographies it is currently operating in. There is adequate evidence presented in this study that mobilisation activities involving communities and families have had a significant impact on the awareness and interest amongst unskilled workers to enroll into the programme. There should be a special focus on working with male members in the community, and engaging with them to improve enrollment of women into the programme. Trainers also need to be sensitised to encourage more women to join them, as trust in trainers has been consistently rated as the biggest motivation for trainees.

The study team felt that certain aspects of the programme could be strengthened which could yield higher dividends in an already well-run programme. They are being summarised for convenience.

- 1 More focus laid on **mobilisation and awareness** around OJT, perhaps through enrolling more **community-based volunteers**, or past trainees and trainers to improve enrolment .
- 2 **Follow up post-completion of the OJT programme should be increased from 6 months to 1 year.** This could be done with

the help of the trainers and volunteers with guidance from OJT staff.

- ③ Focus should be laid on **highlighting career trajectory for past trainees** who have gone on to become supervisors and contractors, and inviting them to be mentors to the new OJT recruits. They can be invited to speak in the worksite collectives, or in community events.
- ④ **Case studies of entrepreneurs developed through the Shram Sarathi Vriddhi loan should be documented** and shared. Strengthen the Shram Sarathi investment pool, so the loan provision to future OJTs can be sustainable.
- ⑤ The **practice of inducting skilled OJT workers as trainers should be continued** and strengthened.
- ⑥ Alternative ways of strengthening the life skill coaching, including **mobile based interactive learning** could be explored, given that it is a component that has a significant value, but low in perception amongst the trainees.
- ⑦ **Expansion into other trades outside of construction** needs to be explored. There is also some progress on this front with positive results.
- ⑧ Deeper engagement should be promoted within the communities, especially male workers, to encourage their wives or other female family members to upskill themselves. Trainers also need to be coached to encourage women at worksites, to **improve gender balance in enrolment as well as outcomes**.
- ⑨ The certification provided post training for workers has a significant value, especially when workers seek out jobs outside of their current worksite. The **credibility of this certificate could be further strengthened** through advocacy initiatives with the government and/or other credible industry bodies, that will improve the portability of the skill acquisition
- ⑩ Currently, OJT programme doesn't critically look at the skillset of trainers to determine level of expertise at a systemic level.

In a few locations, where they trained the trainers in additional skill sets, both trainers and trainees benefited from it. The OJT programme needs to look at **training the trainers as a key component of the curriculum and programme intervention.**

The key highlight amongst the findings in this evaluation study was that having a deep link within the community and the high level of trust the migrant workers have in Aajeevika Bureau is one of the main reasons for the success of the OJT programme. The research team recommends that STEP Academy should focus on scaling vertically within the geographies that Aajeevika Bureau operates, as there is still tremendous scope for higher enrolment and expansion of the portfolio of skills within the OJT. To expand beyond the geographies (Rajasthan and Gujarat) that Aajeevika Bureau operates in, they could form partnerships with other NGOs who are working actively with migrant populations and help them build an OJT programme.

The value of expanding the OJT programme within the geographies currently covered, and expanding it to other geographies through partnerships can provide for the migrant unskilled workers, one of the most marginalised groups in India, an opportunity to seek sustainable livelihoods and find dignity in work and life. ■

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