



BANGLADESH EMPLOYERS' FEDERATION

DECENT JOBS THROUGH QUALITY APPRENTICESHIPS

Blog posted on 17 January 2019



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The ILO skills programme in Bangladesh, (the Canadian funded B-SEP Project), is supporting the expansion and scaling up of apprenticeship training in both the formal and informal sectors. The aim of the apprenticeship programme is to increase the number of skilled workers in occupations as required by companies and respective industry sectors.

The apprenticeship programme is being implemented through local partners and has resulted in improved employability, school-to-work transitions, personal and professional development, and access to jobs. Here are two case studies that show how the programme is affecting the livelihoods of two young people in rural areas of Bangladesh.

Overcoming gender stereotypes

Mosammet Shanti Begum never went to school. When she was 17 years old, she was married off in an arranged relationship like most of the village girls in northern Mymensingh Division. Now she is 30. Her husband abandoned her and their two children years ago.

At that time, she was forced to move back in with her parents. With no education and living in a village, her income-earning options were limited – a common story across the country. And so, she did what many women do and began a tailoring business. She had to sew day and night, just to maintain a subsistence income. Over time, more women began setting up tailoring businesses, and it wasn't long before the heavy competition resulted in Mosammet's meagre monthly income dwindling from BDT3,000 to BDT4,000, or about US\$ 35 to US\$ 47, to BDT 1,000, or roughly US\$ 12.



A relative who owned a motorcycle servicing centre mentioned what seemed like an unusual idea at the time: Mosammet could become a motorcycle mechanic. Her relative knew of a



local non-government organization (NGO) offering women access to apprenticeship training programmes with stipends for traveling expenses.

Mosammet had never driven a motorcycle and knew nothing about motors. But she felt she had no better option and needed more income. She took motorcycle maintenance instantly, surprising herself if not the whole village.

Now Mosammet works in her relative's servicing centre in Madarganj bazar of the Jamalpur District. It is rare in the Bangladeshi context to find a woman working in a marketplace where men normally do business. But her newly acquired skills have revved up her outlook on life: She doesn't mind the grease, is helping people and customers are happy with her work. She is proud of what she can fix and what she can earn and intends to set up her own motorcycle repair workshop one day.

An informal apprenticeship leads to big ambitions

Rabiul Islam dropped out of school in 2014 after secondary school. His father was a farm labourer with a low income. Hence, further education seemed a luxury he couldn't afford. So he started a job in a motorcycle workshop near his village, in Madarganj District in eastern Bangladesh. Because he didn't have the relevant skills, the workshop owner was reluctant to pay him a salary.



Amidst this, he learned from an announcement about an informal apprenticeship programme, implemented through a local NGO called BACE, that offered training on motor mechanics. Rabiul opted for it and began his apprenticeship at Bulbul Motor Cycle Service Center, also in Madarganj, in January 2017, with a monthly salary of BDT 2,000, or US\$ 23. After the three-month training course, his monthly wage was increased to BDT 3,000, or approximately US\$ 35. After completing the apprenticeship, he now earns BDT 5,000, about US\$ 58, and is considered a reliable employee.

Rabiul contributes to his family's household expenses, including his younger brother's education. He recently bought a refrigerator for his family. He says. "I want to work in a big company because, through this apprenticeship training, I have received a Government certificate from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET). Employers give value to this." Rabiul also dreams of opening his own workshop.

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