



# TVET Reform Project Bangladesh Newsletter

October-December 2011/Issue 3

## DISADVANTAGED AND DISABLED WOMEN BECOME SUCCESS STORIES OF TVET REFORM: 12 NEWLY SKILLED WOMEN GAIN EMPLOYMENT

Twelve disadvantaged women and women with disabilities were the proud graduates of the second pilot program of the ILO Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Reform Project. The Graduation was held at the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP) in Ganakbari, Savar and, after industry assessment, it was announced that all twelve women have successfully obtained positions with Interfab Shirt Manufacturing Ltd Factory. The innovative pilot program is a joint initiative of the TVET Reform Project, CRP and Interfab Shirt Manufacturing.



*Some of the proud graduates at the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed. Photo: ILO/Sarah-Jane Saltmarsh 2011 ©*

In the pilot course, twelve women, including eight disabled and four underprivileged with low education levels have been trained at CRP over a four month period. Now that the women have successfully graduated, they will be employed with a Grade 1 Salary as Sewing Machine Operators. The women will then undergo another eight months of on-the-job training at Interfab. This process, with the

support of skilled trainers and supervisors, will give the women the opportunity to acquire the technical competence required to become multi skilled RMG workers. There is a huge demand for skilled workers in the RMG sector in Bangladesh and these women prove that underprivileged groups can play a vital role in meeting this demand.

“I used to feel that as a disabled person I could not do anything in life, but now I feel confident” said Shuely Akter upon graduating.

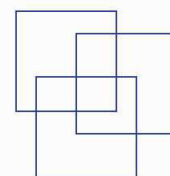
Contact us for your copy of ‘Breaking the Barriers’, a short publication explaining the program, including participant interviews.



International  
Labour  
Organization



European Union



## CONTENTS

- 2 Meet a member of the TVET Reform Project
- 3 New options for Dhaka's working children
- 4 Supporting supply of quality food for all
- 5 We demand clean hands
- 6 Disability no longer a drawback
- 7 Hamid and Hamida- what's the difference?
- 8 Culture, carp and capacity building at Coxs Bazaar
- 9 Secret of Japan's success comes to Bangladesh
- 10 Students earning, learning and succeeding
- 11 Partner Spotlight: Introduction to other EU-funded projects in Bangladesh
- 12 Further Reading

## WHAT IS THE TVET REFORM PROJECT?

The BDT 136 Crore Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Reform Project is an initiative of the Government of Bangladesh, funded by the European Union and executed by the International Labour Organization.

The Directorate of Technical Education (DTE), Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) and the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) are the primary government agencies executing the project.

The project recognizes that to reduce poverty and mitigate the limitations of inadequate school education, more people need to have access to both formal and informal TVET training to develop skills that will lead to employment.

TVET reform will ensure Bangladesh's competitiveness in the global market by improving the quality of vocational education and training. Skill development is essential for raising the standard of living for workers, especially women, ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups.

## MEET A MEMBER OF THE TVET REFORM PROJECT:



Belal Hossain is one of our three drivers. He always has a smile on his face and a story to tell. We talk mechanics, marriage and the Middle East.

**That would have been quite a tumultuous time to be living in the Middle East, tell us about the experience...**

It certainly was an interesting time but I had a really good experience. The people in all three places I worked; Baghdad (Iran), Doha (Qatar) and Ridayh (Saudi Arabia) were really welcoming and it was a great region to live in.

**What made you want to come back to Bangladesh?**

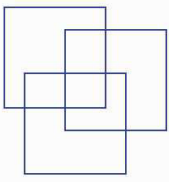
My family is in Dhaka; I came home to my beautiful wife Selina Akhter and we now have two sons and a daughter, and we even have our first grandchild! Taseen is now two and a half months old and she is very spoiled by my wife!

**You have come back to work for the ILO a few times now, what keeps you coming back to the team?**

We have a great team in the ILO and everyone is really easy to work with. All my family is in Dhanmondi so I am also never too far away from them which is important.

**You have had an interesting employment history Belal, tell us what you were doing before your current role:**

I am a mechanical foreman and specifically, an automotive and CNG mechanic by trade. I've been working as a driver with the ILO for 22 years now but I have also done some private driving stints in-between projects and I also moved to the Middle East in 1982 to work as a mechanic and driver for seven and a half years.



## NEW OPTIONS FOR DHAKA'S WORKING CHILDREN: COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP APPROACH ATTRACTS INTEREST FROM UNICEF AND BRAC

There is a lot of noise coming from the Mirhajirbagh Vocational Training Centre. It is filled with the voices of young people, and there are so many questions to ask...how do I take this apart? What about putting it back together? How do I stay safe when using this? How do I deal with a customer?

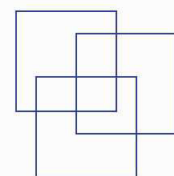
In a country where approximately 90% of young people aged 5-14 in the informal sector are engaged in hazardous work, the students in Mirhajirbagh, Bongshal and many other Vocational Training Centres involved in the ILO Urban Informal Economy (UIE) Project are making the most of every minute of education and skills training available. Their increased self-confidence can be seen and heard for miles around.

Child workers are not an easy group to reach. As they are working to support their families, they need to be able to continue to earn while learning. Skills training equips children with a marketable trade and creates a pathway for them to engage in meaningful employment upon completion. Flexible delivery allows children to continue working while they are learning. These two elements are the key reasons why the UIE Project, working in partnership with the TVET Reform Project, is seeing results.

The ILO TVET Reform Project has been working with the UIE Project, providing the support needed to ensure that children have the best chance possible of becoming skilled workers. The success of this partnership and the collaborative approach has sparked the interest of UNICEF and BRAC, who have agreed to partner with the ILO in 2012 to ensure even more young people across Bangladesh can look forward to a future of decent work.



*(Right) Learning, earning and succeeding - proud students at Mirhajirbagh and Bongshal Vocational Training Centres.  
Photos: ILO/Khurshid Ara 2011 ©*



## SUPPORTING SUPPLY OF QUALITY FOOD FOR ALL: RAPID GROWTH OF AGRO FOOD PROCESSING

Agriculture is the single most important sector of Bangladesh's economy. Over 65% of the labour force is engaged in agriculture but it accounts for just 10% of the country's exports and less than 20% of GDP. Agro food processing, one of the key sectors supported by the ILO TVET Reform Project, has the potential to close this gap however.

Expansion of the agro foods industry means significant production and processing-related employment generation in Bangladesh's rural districts. This will be a huge boost to the rural economy because industries will need to be located near the source of raw materials, particularly perishable agricultural products. Increased employment opportunities will mean a reduction in rural poverty, in post-harvest losses and wastes as well as in using by-products more efficiently. This will increase farmers' income by getting them better prices and also consumer welfare by increasing the availability of agricultural consumer goods.

There is growing demand for the agro foods industry in Bangladesh, however the industry growth needed to meet this demand is constrained by the lack of skilled workers. To meet this challenge, the TVET Reform Project in Bangladesh has selected the agro food processing industry in



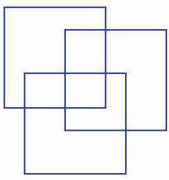
*(Above) The agro food processing industry offers a brighter future to people in the rural areas of Bangladesh. Photos: ILO/Sarah-Jane Saltmarsh 2011 ©*

Bangladesh as one of its five key industry sectors. By reforming the current system of skills development, the country can ensure the consistent supply of high-quality skilled workers needed for growth.

Recently, the newly-established Centre of Excellence Agro Food Skills Foundation (CEAFS), which was developed with the support of the TVET Reform Project, delivered the first of many competency-based Master Trainer/Assessor workshops. These workshops ensure that quality workplace trainers are available to equip workers with the skills they need on and off-the-job to meet industry demands.

Shafiqur Rahman Bhuiyan, Chairman CEAFS said "there is definitely a scarcity of skilled labour in terms of meeting the needs of both local and overseas markets. I am confident however that we can overcome this through quality training, assessment and RPL. CEAFS will work with industry and with training providers to ensure it".

As well as ensuring quality skill development, the TVET Reform Project is also focusing on improving the productivity of the agro foods industry (read more on page 9).



## WE DEMAND CLEAN HANDS: CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE BRINGS ATTENTION TO FOOD HYGIENE AT WORK

52,968, 52,969, 52,970 all together, grab your soap - we've done it! 52,970 children in multiple locations all across Bangladesh washing their hands at the same time led to Bangladesh holding a Guinness World Record for hand washing in 2009. This was a major achievement for a country where approximately 110,000 children aged under five die due to diarrhoea every year.

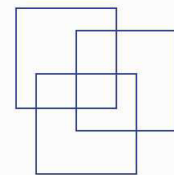
This year, the Centre of Excellence Agro Food Skills Foundation (CEAFS) has continued raising awareness of the importance of hand washing in Bangladesh. Through an agreement with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), 25 workers representing 10 baking organisations in Dhaka completed the CEAFS Competency Based Food Hygiene Training program. A major emphasis of the program was that hand washing and hygienic food handling is the most effective way to prevent the spread of disease.

The Government of Bangladesh, with the support of the ILO, has facilitated the development of Centres of Excellence in both the agro foods sector and the leather sector in Bangladesh. These Centres provide demand-driven training and resources, promote workplace learning and support organisations seeking to increase their productivity and develop their workforce.

*(Right) Bakery workers learning the importance of hygienic food handling practices in the workplace.*

*Photos: ILO/Mahrufa Jahan (CEAFS), 2011 ©*





## DISABILITY NO LONGER A DRAWBACK: ADVERSITY BECOMES OPPORTUNITY IN 12 OCCUPATIONS

The Government of Bangladesh, with the support of the ILO, has made significant progress in reforming the national technical and vocational training system in Bangladesh over the last four years. The National Skills Development Policy has been formulated and approved, and 12 program trials will be run in 2012 to test the country's new competency based training system. As persons with disabilities make up approximately 10% of Bangladesh's population, it is imperative that they are included in these programs. With an agreement signed this month between the ILO and a local disability-focused organisation, this is now set to happen.

The program trials will be held in eight institutions across Bangladesh, using five different sectors to test the new training system's capacity to meet industry's increasing need for skilled workers. Handicap International will work with the ILO in each of these eight institutions to ensure that each that they are all able to accommodate disabled persons. They will ensure that PWDs are included in each program trial and provide support in accessing employment and business opportunities on completion of the training by linking them with private sector and ongoing development programs.

The overall objective of the collaboration is to enhance the ability of all eight institutions to include disabled persons in training programs. These eight will then be



*Increasing the self-confidence and employability of disabled persons in Bangladesh through inclusive skills development programs are important priority areas for the Government of Bangladesh and the ILO.*

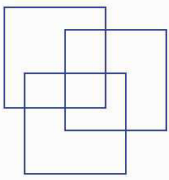
*Photo: ILO/Khurshid Ara, 2011 ©*

used as models to demonstrate to other Institutions across Bangladesh that persons with disabilities can be mainstreamed into existing courses and can then access meaningful employment.

The program trials will be held in the following industry sectors; information technology, transport equipment, agro foods and leather. Pilots will also operate in the ready-made garment and mechanical servicing sectors. They will run throughout 2012 with the support of a number of government institutions across the districts of Dhaka, Chittagong, Barisal, Jessore, Khulna, Gazipur and Savar.

We look forward to updating you on the progress of the program trials in future newsletters.

**Do you need expert advice, program support or counseling on how to ensure that a program or service is inclusive of persons with disabilities? Contact the ILO Disability Hotline on +41 022 799 6192 or write to the team at [disability@ilo.org](mailto:disability@ilo.org)**



# HAMID AND HAMIDA – WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE: ADDRESSING BANGLADESH’S GENDER BARRIERS

There is just one alphabet letter – ‘a’ -of difference between the names Hamid and Hamida. If you are interested however, in pursuing technical or vocational education in Bangladesh, this makes a huge difference. In a typical technical or vocational education class of ten students in Bangladesh, data suggests that only one student is female and the other nine are male. Approximately 91% of the students in public TVET institutions in Bangladesh are male and just 9% are female students.

In a country where the ratio of male to female in the population is currently 51:49 equal and the total population exceeds 150 million, women are a significant potential skilled labour force.

Women in Bangladesh face a multitude of barriers in pursuing technical and vocational education in Bangladesh however. Limited program choices, inflexible delivery modes and a lack of female instructors are some of the many obstacles which contribute to the small percentage of female students in TVET institutions. The Government of Bangladesh wants to change this however, with the support of the ILO, through the implementation of the TVET Reform Project. In the Skills Development Policy, recently approved by the Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, a number of pressing issues such as lack of course availability, workplace harassment and lack of support for women were not only recognized but delegated to be addressed by the National Skills Development Council (NSDC).

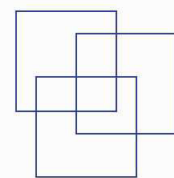


*Male and female students contributing equally to set tasks in an electrician course. Removing gender barriers is an important priority to the Government of Bangladesh and the ILO.*

*Photo: ILO/Khurshid Ara, 2011 ©*

This is the first time that such a high level effort has been made to address gender equality in the TVET sector in Bangladesh. The NSDC, with the support of the ILO, has already taken action and formulated two major goals; to increase the participation of women in TVET and to encourage women to challenge stereotypes by engaging in non-traditional trades. To achieve these, a gender working group, as part of the NSDC, will lead a series of consultations with government, civil society, training institutions and women’s organizations throughout December. The outcomes of these consultations will be discussed at a national consultation forum in January. The gender working group will then develop and lead the implementation of a national gender equality campaign across Bangladesh.

In our next newsletter we look forward to updating you on the outcomes of the national consultation forum and introducing you to some of the inspirational young women who are part of the team working towards gender equality in Bangladesh’s TVET sector.



## CULTURE, CARP & CAPACITY BUILDING AT COXS BAZAAR: SIXTH JOINT ILO & UNESCO WORKSHOP

What does the world's longest sand beach look like? How can government officials contribute to the implementation of the recently-approved Bangladesh National Skills Development Policy? Does a skill gap exist in Bangladesh's fish processing industry? All these questions and more were answered at the sixth joint ILO & UNESCO Capacity Strengthening workshop in Cox's Bazaar in December.

The Government of Bangladesh, with the support of the ILO, is reforming the country's technical and vocational sector to develop a market-responsive and accessible system. There is a broad range of public and private stakeholders involved in the reform, and multiple workshops have been run and are planned to ensure that all parties are equipped with the skills needed to operate in a reformed system.

A particular stakeholder group needing increased skills are the government officials of the Ministry of Education, Directorate of Technical Education, Bangladesh Technical Education Board and Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training. Enhancing their competence in strategic planning and analysis is imperative to successful implementation. To ensure that this group gets the specific education needed on these topics, UNESCO and the ILO have partnered to deliver a series of capacity-building workshops for agency staff.

The December workshop is one of a series of nine workshops held in different locations across Bangladesh. Government



*Releasing pigeons to symbolize peace marks the commencement of the cultural program at Cox's Bazaar Polytechnic Institute. Photo: ILO 2011*

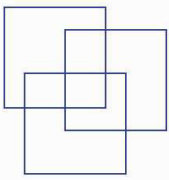
venues and infrastructure have been used to host all the workshops so that officials can be part of activities on the ground during the workshops, and also so that participants in regional areas can be involved.

**“By 2030, we estimate that we will be looking at an estimated 8 million enrolled TVET learners in Bangladesh through the Directorate of Technical Education. This huge increase needs human, financial and infrastructural resources to support it, and we are learning about how to plan for this” - Md. Shahjahan Mian, Directorate of Technical Education**

Participants focus on analyzing the country's current demographic and labour situation, what capacity they have to implement reform initiatives within their department and existing and proposed education and training policies. Participants then develop their own strategic plan of action for their TVET sub-sector.

In this sixth action-packed workshop, participants focused on beginning their strategic plans, but were also involved in a cultural program organized by the institute, working for a day with the local fish processing industry and shared in Bijoy Dibosh (Victory Day) celebrations. We look forward to sharing the outcomes of the upcoming seventh workshop to be held in Bogra Polytechnic Institute, in the northern reaches of the Rakshahi Division.





## SECRET OF JAPAN'S SUCCESS COMES TO BANGLADESH: FIRST KAIZEN IMPLEMENTATION

There are many reasons why Toyota is one of the world's largest carmakers and an organization which can set sales targets like 8.48 million units to be sold in 2012. What are the reasons? One is their focus on continuous improvement, through a system known as Kaizen. Now, through the TVET Reform Project currently being implemented by the Government of Bangladesh and the ILO, Bangladeshi organizations will have the opportunity to learn the system behind the success of a number of Japanese brands.

AHZ Agro Industries (Pvt) Ltd and NUR Food Industries are the first agro processing industries to sign agreements this year with the ILO to implement KAIZEN in their organizations. Implementation will take place from October 2011 to March 2012, and will focus on improving productivity. Kaizen training will be co-delivered by staff from the TVET Reform Project and the National Productivity Organisation, through a partnership between the ILO and the Ministry of Industries.

Improving the productivity of organizations improves their competitiveness in the global marketplace. As their profit margins increase, so does their need for skilled workers. Many agro food processing organizations



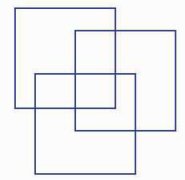
*An employee working in the research division of the TATKA factory in Gazipur.  
Photo: ILO/ MD Rafiqul Islam Bhuiyan 2011 ©*

like AHZ and NUR are situated in Bangladesh's rural districts such as Gazipur and Naranganj and this means a significant boost to rural economies.

AHZ Agro Industries is a fast-growing firm which currently markets over 30 products under the Tatka brand. It is currently one of the top five players in the processed food sector. NUR Food Industries is an emerging producer of packed food items.

**“AHZ will invest 10 billion taka in the dairy sector alone, buying milk directly from farmers and establishing Bangladesh's first two-stage milk pasteurisation plant in Sirajganj. We are looking forward to the Kaizen process of continuous improvement supporting us in these endeavours”** said AHZ Chief Executive Officer Anisur Rahman Mahmud.

Kaizen is a Japanese management strategy meaning 'change for the better' or 'continuous slow improvement'. It is a belief that all aspects of life should be constantly improved and originates from the Japanese words 'kai' (which means continuous or change and 'zen' means improvement or better). In Japan where the concept originated, kaizen applies to all aspects of life, not just to the workplace. Kaizen is the word that was originally used to describe a key element of the Toyota Production System.



## STUDENTS LEARNING, EARNING AND SUCCEEDING: PROMOTION OF APPRENTICESHIPS IN BANGLADESH

**National Apprenticeship Conferences** hosted by the Government of Bangladesh and supported by the ILO TVET Reform Project were held in both Dhaka and Chittagong this year.

Apprenticeship schemes help businesses all across the world to harness new talent. They ensure that workforces have the skills to meet both present and future organizational needs through a mix of on and off the job learning. In today's competitive global economy, there are many threats to the performance of an organization, but skills shortages and recruitment difficulties are two which can be significantly minimized through an effective apprenticeship scheme.

Labour and Employment Minister Engineer Khandker Mosharraf Hossain who inaugurated the Dhaka conference, said the government has taken a huge step to set up 38 more technical training centres and five marine academies to increase skilled manpower and apprenticeships are a key strategy.

The conference highlighted flexible apprenticeship schemes as a way to help tackle the country's huge skill demand and integrate learning into workplaces.

Mominul Ahsan, the CEO of the Centre of Excellence for Leather



*Conference participants discussing the benefits of different apprenticeship models in Bangladesh. Photo: ILO/MD Soeb Iftekhar 2011 ©*

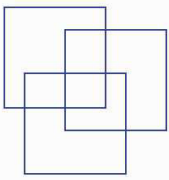
(COEL) said apprenticeships are building a committed and competent work force in the leather sector, increasing productivity and improving competitiveness. The Centre of Excellence for Leather, in just over the period of one year, has registered 571 apprentices with the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), with an additional 65 currently in the pipeline.

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

**For employers implementing an apprenticeship scheme in Bangladesh, here are two key financial benefits provided by the government:**

- 1 Expenses associated with supporting apprentices and implementing apprenticeship programs are tax-deductible. This includes tools and equipment, utility costs such as electricity and water, administrative needs and safety gear..**
- 2 Imported equipment purchased for apprenticeship schemes is free from import duties.**

**To find out more about why you should consider implementing an apprenticeship scheme, visit the BMET website: [www.bmet.org.bd/](http://www.bmet.org.bd/)**



## ACHIEVING TOGETHER: INTRODUCTION TO OTHER EU-FUNDED PROJECTS

We would like to introduce you to two of the other training and education projects funded by the European Union in Bangladesh:

### **Skills for Unemployed and Underemployed Labour (SkillFUL): Implemented by Swisscontact in collaboration with Centre for Mass Education in Science (CMES)**

SkillFUL focuses on improving the earning capacity of the labour force in the informal economy. The project utilises participation of training providers, business and industries, government organisations, local authorities, community leaders, professionals in skills development, and local elites during design to evaluation stages of marketable skills training programs. Primary concern and direction of the project is building the careers of the trained people by giving them relevant skills training and offering post training support services. The project working areas include Dhaka, Kurigram, Bogra, Sunamganj, Nilphamari and Jessore. The project is co-funded by the European Union and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

More info: [www.swisscontact.org.bd/inner.php?Title=35](http://www.swisscontact.org.bd/inner.php?Title=35)

### **TVET for Young People in the Informal Economy in Bangladesh: Implemented by Save the Children in collaboration with UCEP**

This is a three year project which began in 2011 and aims to contribute to establishing a flexible and demand driven TVET system in Bangladesh. The project addresses two key focal areas; human and social development and enhancing trade capacity and economic development.

Currently 1670 youth are enrolled in 12 vocational training programs. At least 40% of the participants are young women. The overall objective is to provide demand driven and flexible TVET for young people in the informal economy through direct service delivery and strengthened TVET systems, thereby improving young people's employability and income-generating capacity in the informal economy.

More info: <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/where-we-work/asia/bangladesh>.



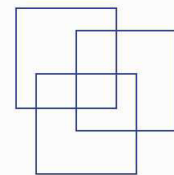
### SKILLS SITUATION IN BANGLADESH

- ▶ In Bangladesh around 49.5 million labour force work in both formal and informal sectors.
- ▶ About 88% of the workers are employed in the informal economy.
- ▶ The highest concentration of workers in the informal economy is found in the rural areas (92%), with most of them working in the agricultural sector.
- ▶ Around 40% of the total labour force in Bangladesh lacks any form of education and possesses little or no skills.



Sources: SkillFUL project literature, Save the Children project literature & EU project literature.

## FURTHER READING



### EDITORIAL INFORMATION

#### TVET Reform Project Chief Technical Advisor

Arthur Earl Shears

#### Newsletter Editor

Sarah-Jane Saltmarsh

#### TVET Reform Project

ILO Dhaka Office

House 12, Road 12, Dhanmondi R/A  
Bangladesh, 1209

#### Visit us on the web:

<http://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Projects>

To subscribe or unsubscribe to this newsletter,  
please email: [tvetreform@ilo.org](mailto:tvetreform@ilo.org)

### ABOUT THE ILO

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is the only tripartite UN agency with government, employer, and worker representatives. This tripartite structure makes the ILO a unique forum in which the governments and the social partners of the economy of its 183 Member States can freely and openly debate and elaborate labour standards and policies.

### ABOUT THE EU

The European Union is made up of 27 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms.



Successful female apprentices, trainers and supervisors in Bangladesh

Photos: ILO 2011 ©

Copyright © International Labour Organization 2011

The responsibility for opinions expressed in signed articles, studies and other contributions rests solely with their authors, and publication does not constitute an endorsement by the International Labour Office of the opinions expressed in them.

