

## Women Empowerment

Jinnat Fashions Ltd., a concern of DBL Group collaborates with civil society organizations and knowledge partners in devising developmental programs around social issues such as women empowerment. As the RMG sector is female dominant, subject like women empowerment is very relevant to the industry and is also very instrumental in shaping the economy and society. For instance, the Global Women's Economic Empowerment Initiative (GWEEI) program, funded by Walmart Foundation and organized by CARE Bangladesh, aims at creating an enabling environment in which women attain their full potential, positively contributing to their careers and personal lives and the society as a whole.

### The Global Women Economic Empowerment Initiative (GWEEI)

The GWEEI program targets 150 Walmart-affiliated factories in Bangladesh, India, China, and Central America. The program was launched in 2011 in Bangladesh and India and the roll out of the project would be in five years. The objective of the initiative is to develop activities and capacities of women workers by providing them a variety of trainings on:

1. Advanced Level training on English Language
2. Life and functional skills for personal development
3. Health hygiene and nutrition
4. Workplace rights
5. Technical skills for skill development



The program offers two trainings: the Foundation Training for both male and female workers, and the Advanced Training, targeting only the female workers. The 15-hour Foundation Training, also referred to as the 'extensive' program, addresses the following topics:

- Overview of the program
- Communication
- Managing work and career
- Gender Awareness
- Health
- Applying the learning

The 100-hour Advanced Training is referred to as the 'intensive' program and entails the following:

- Overview of full program
- Functional literacy
- Health and nutrition
- Communication and problem solving
- Self-management and leadership
- Career planning
- Legal empowerment
- Parents' role in children's education
- Financial planning

The project was initiated in June 2012. 1,432 workers participated in the Foundation Training and 120 female workers from it were selected for the Advanced Training in accordance with CARE's requirements. 32 participants have already completed this training, while 28 have completed the literacy training. Till now, a total of 4 workers, upon completion of the trainings, have become Supervisors and 6 more are in the process.

## **Cases of workers who became Supervisors**

### **Success Story 1**

Ms. Halima Begum joined the company in January 2013 as a Junior Operator. She studied till Class 8. A month before the program ended in March 2014, she was promoted to Operator: generally after one year, Junior Operators only receive increments and not promotions. As she graduated from the training, she was made a Supervisor.

She shares that she learnt a number of issues from the training. Earlier, she was not organized and tidy in her work. She also had communication problems: she simply stated that she was unaware of the etiquettes when talking to people. The training enabled her to be ordered, which in turn made her more efficient. She applied the techniques of communication that she had learnt: this includes having better behavior (which she was unaware of) as well as the courage to speak. Regarding behavior, she found out that improper behavior will not lead to self identification. She also referred to the motto of 'Need to talk: cannot keep quiet', which motivated her in order to talk with people. In overall, she shared that she felt 'empowered' after the training and promotion.

Ms. Begum also stated that the learning from her training program not only helped her professional life but her family life too. For instance, she altered her and her family's food habit as she understood the importance of pursuing a healthy diet. The changes in her are recognized by her husband: the importance of her to her family went up.

As an advice to other female workers, she said: "Learn the work: you can be like me. Explain others about the work and have courage as well as willingness. Behave well with others."

### **Success Story 2**

Ms. Taslima Akter joined the company as a Senior Operator in 2007. Like Ms. Begum, her education was also till Class 8. She also received promotion to Supervisor in March of 2014 when the training program ended.

She shared that she enjoyed the added activities and responsibilities that were given to her because of the promotion. She feels good especially due to the honor she had received. The training helped her gain knowledge of communication skills which allowed her to be more receptive to her subordinates.

The interaction with people was possibly her greatest achievement. She shared that when she was an Operator, she did not interact much with others. After the promotion, she now has access to higher officials: had she not undergone the training, this was only possible after extended years of experience. A further benefit the promotion enabled her is the participation in the Mid-Level Management training sessions.

In order to inspire other women, she states: "Try. You can do it." Sharing her own choice technique, she also specified: "Learn how to teach people by hand."

### **Summary**

The cases above suggest the effectiveness of the GWEEI program. In order to sustain the program on our own, the GWEEI program is also offering training of trainers (TOT). Through TOT, we are getting Master Trainer who will be able to continue the training on their own even after trainers from CARE are done covering all units of DBL Group.

The program achieved the biggest success in Bangladesh. Due to this, Mr. John Perez, Latin America Corporate Engagement Specialist from World Vision, visited us in April 2014 and attended the training program, talked with the participants, and had a meeting with the management.