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**The Rising Youths**  
A SEIP e-Newsletter by PKSF

## Overcoming Covid-19 Challenges in Vocational Skills Training

Skilled youths are the most important workforces of a nation. They largely leads a country to socio-economic progress in a sustainable manner. Inclusiveness of youths gets prioritized in the development of the country nowadays. Aligning youth employment with Bangladesh government's plan of focusing on 10 industry-wise job demand sectors (Agro-Food, Construction, Health, Hospitality and Tourism, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Leather, Textile, Light Engineering, Readymade Garments (RMG) and Shipbuilding), a countrywide major skill development program named Skills for Employment Investment Program (SEIP) was launched in 2015. Through this program, hands-on internships in enterprises and institution-based training are organized in conformity with the National Skills Development Policy with a focus on

disadvantaged groups and labour migrants. Along with forwarding linkage for job placement and entrepreneurship development, it also offers opportunities for both wage-employment and self-employment after completing the skills training. From 15 May 2020, around 90% of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) centers remained closed because of the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. Currently, more than 1.2 billion students worldwide are affected by school closures amid the pandemic. The TVET sector was no exception to that. In Bangladesh, the vocational training centers were closed off on between 18 March 2020 and 13 August 2021. All ongoing training and related job placement activities were virtually halted. As a result, the trainees' learning processes were adversely affected. Livelihoods of the TVET trainers



and assessors were threatened. Mainstream education institutes switched over to online classes and distance learning programs to some extent, but in the sphere of vocational training centers, the same could not be done. As vocational skills focus more on hands-on activities, it makes remote learning particularly challenging. Remote learning approaches have not come up as a suitable substitute for practical exercises as the latter requires the use of equipment or materials which are not usually available at home.

Other causes of remote/online-based learning process in TVET include types of trainees, trainers and modality of training (apprenticeship-based). Consequently, a large number of trainees already dropped out from learning. It will be difficult in the future to get them back into training as they will be facing acute challenges to earn and support their families. As a growing number of people will have limited livelihood options, it leads to increased vulnerability to food insecurity, discriminating debt exposure and price hikes for essential commodities. TVET programs may play an important role in combatting the Covid-19 pandemic. They have significant potentials to contribute in three stages: the current “coping” phase, an intermediate phase when schools and businesses gradually reopen, and during the recovery period when structural changes are expected in both the education system and the labour market.

To overcome the repercussion of the Covid-19 pandemic, system contingency and disaster recovery plans need to be in place. Risk mitigation measures should be added to skills development strategies. Furthermore, online learning must be taken into account in curriculum/modular training development. Flexible assessment tools and methodologies should be in place. The serious lack of connectivity and digital skills among teachers as well as learners needs to be addressed. For teachers, relevant digital learning should be embedded in their ongoing training programs. Experience in e-learning by teachers and students in the context of Covid-19 should be well recorded and compiled to prepare for handling future crises.

Furthermore, refocusing the skills development programs to train healthcare workers and up skill returning remittance workers should be prioritized. As for the intermediary phase, when activities restart and schools gradually reopen, TVET can play a role in supporting the transition to most likely a “new normal.”

Lifting of lockdowns on schools and businesses will call for greater attention to health and safety measures and increased need to prepare for disruption in case of a new Covid-19 outbreak. Skills training coordination system by the government needs to be considered as an utmost priority as skill training is one of the humanitarian interventions to fight for resilience and sustainable development of the poor.

## Project Updates

32 Partner Training Institutes (PTIs) of SEIP project have so far registered 24,942 trainees under 18 different technical trades as of December 2021. Among the registered trainees, 20,606 were male and 4,336 female participants. In total, 23,763 trainees were certified. Of them, 19,373 were male and 4,064 were female participants. As female participation in the project is comparatively low, PKSf has emphasized on some trades like Fashion Garments, IT Support Services, etc., to ensure more participation of female. Besides, efforts will be continued to include more female participants in other trades as well. The cumulative figure of job placement was 16,419, of which 13,815 were male and 2,604 female. The number of wage earning job placement was 11,270 while that of self-employment was 5,149. In total, 272 trainees secured jobs abroad. SEIP is now about to finish its 2nd tranche or phase. Before this, the Tranche-1 and the Additional Tranche-1 phases were successfully accomplished.

### Enrollment Status

The enrolment data on the SEIP project shows that the gross total achievement against the enrollment target (35,800) is 70%, of which 17% were female participants. In the Tranche-1, the enrolment target was achieved fulfilling more than 100%, the 2nd Tranche secured 100% and the newly started 3rd Tranche has secured 9% so far. The rates of achievement in enrollment both in tranche-1 & 2 phases had to be compromised due to the Covid-19 pandemic as all the PTIs carried out their operations intermittently in compliance to the government’s nationwide lockdown guidelines.

### Certification

The overall projected data regarding certification shows that out of 24,942 enrolled participants, 23,763 got certified so far, which makes up a 96% achievement against its target. However, it is an optimistic sign that the rate of dropouts under this venture of PKSf is comparatively low compared to other SDCMU-enrolled project partners of SEIP project.



## Job Placement

Data on job placement status shows that out of 23,763 certified trainees, 16,419 got engaged in different jobs. The male-female ratio in job placement is around 6:1. It has been observed that 5,149 graduates got engaged in self-employment, which is 31% of the total employment, and the remaining 11,270 graduates secured jobs as wage earners. The overall rate of job placement is 69%. In the Tranche-1 phase, the rate of job placement was 79%. However, due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, all types of job placement activities experiences a slow pace.



## Employers' Meeting

Generally, PTIs hold regular meetings for employment enhancement. A series of employers' meetings to synchronize the demand and the supply between the TIs and the employers has been organized lately. Around 29 TIs working under the Tranche-2 of the project have organized 39 such meetings till December, 2021.



## Business Plan signed for Training PWDs and OAYs

On December 21, 2021 and 13 January, 2022 PKSF has signed two agreements with the Skills Development Coordination and Monitoring Unit (SDCMU) to conduct training for 400 Persons with Disability (PWDs) and 600

Orphan and Abandoned Youths (OAY) respectively. PKSF will implement these components through some specialized PTIs that already have substantially proven track records on PWD and OAY training programs previously.

## Community Mobilization Meeting

PKSF is committed to including participants in training under this project from different marginal sections like women, ethnic and religious minority groups, socially and geographically isolated groups etc. In ensuring optimal target groups within the SEIP training activities, PKSF under Tranche-2 of this project has organized 133 community mobilization meetings through 29 PTIs. Around 20,000 potential trainees or their parents have been informed of the core messages of SEIP project through these community meetings.



## Upcoming New Components

The Project Management Unit (PMU) is working with the SDCMU to finalize and sign agreements for training 1,800 Caregivers under Tranche-3. The business plan is expected to be signed very soon.

## Project under new leadership

As part of regular change of responsibilities by PKSF, this project has recently been brought under the leadership of Dr. Md Jashim Uddin, Additional Managing Director, PKSF. Meanwhile, Md Ziauddin Iqbal, Senior General Manager, PKSF has been appointed as the Chief Coordinator to oversee the project activities.

## Project Launching Orientation under Tranche-3 held

A day-long Project Launching Orientation program under Tranche-3 was organized by the SDCMU on its premises during 27- 28 December 2021. Heads of the TIs, focal persons, and accounts personnel from 27 TIs attended the program. Chief Coordinator Md Ziauddin Iqbal, former Project Coordinator Md Abul Kashem and other project staff members also attended the different sessions of the orientation program.

## SEIP-Trained Masud is an employer now

A forth-class government employee father thought his son would bear the family responsibilities once the latter completed his diploma in Electronics. The father would be relieved from the pressure of raising two other siblings of Masud. On the other hand, Masud had other plans wondering around his mind. He picked internet outsourcing as profession instead of just being a typical wage employee.

Masud Rana is from Beneyali village of Jhikargacha upazila under Jashore district. He secured a degree in Computer Sciences from a govt polytechnic institute in 2016. All his dedications and attentions were centered on online outsourcing activities. To reach his destination, he got himself admitted into a 3-month Outsourcing trade course under Skills for Employment Investment Program (SEIP) offered by Jagorani Chakra Foundation in Jashore city.

During his training period, he started searching alternative income-generating sources from online market places. He formed an online outsourcing in partnership with 5 other fellow trainees. They named it 'Future IT Home'. At the end of the formal training, Masud professionally started outsourcing business under different renowned outsourcing platforms online both through personal and organizational accounts. Since then, he and his firm never had to look back. He started receiving orders

from the USA, Canada, Australia and other places. His business activities are mainly US-based where he has established himself as Property Marketer. Meanwhile, he renamed his firm 'Rextent', which is registered as a company at Florida province in the USA. His firm has received various awards and recognitions (Edward, Analytics, Digital Sales) from big companies like Amazon and Google etc. His Upwork profile shows 100% job success rate. Fortune Home Buyer LLC, Pons Lion Gi Okie Weed Finder LLC and Savvy Home LLC by Greg Pierce, Profit ship-India etc are some of the famous buyers his firm deals with.

Now Masud Rana has turned himself as a young successful entrepreneur.

Besides, he has created a lot of job opportunities for unemployed youths. His firm currently has 22 employees, while he plans to extend the number of staff members up to 50 very soon to meet the increasing job demands.

At his firm, depending on skills levels, the monthly wage of an employer ranges from BDT 8,000 to BTD 30,000.

The total estimated value of this company is now BDT 10, 00,000. The average monthly income of his firm ranges from \$ 12,000 to \$ 15,000. Masud Rana wants to establish Rextent as one of the best Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) companies of the country. Within a few years, Masud plans to set up an office space for his firm on his own land property.



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