

Social Dialogue – a story of personal transformation from the factory floor

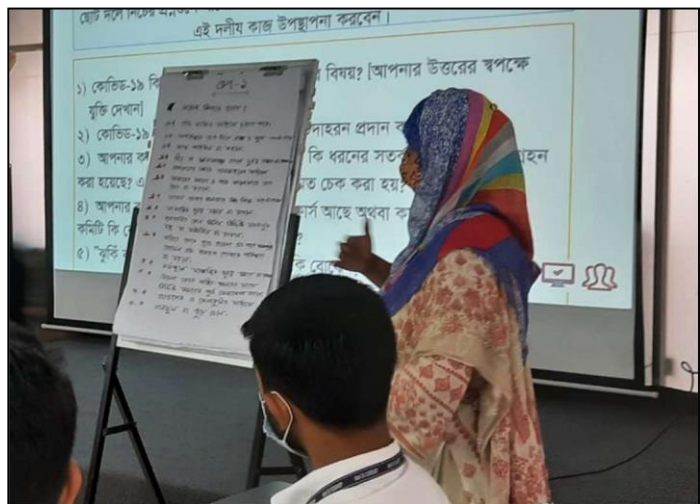
Twenty-five-year-old female garment worker has been working in the Readymade Garment industry for more than ten years supporting her husband and their baby girl along with her parents and sister. Because of not having enough money in her family when young, she was forced to drop out of school to help support her parents and siblings a young teenager. She was a shy girl who didn't speak up but did what she was told, both at work and at home.

"She was quite hesitant in meetings hesitating answering even a question not to mention speaking up and raising an issue. Now she seems happy to raise matters and concerns from her colleagues on the factory floor. It's a really positive change that we've seen"

- PC Management Representative

In 2014 she joined the RMG factory and is now working as a sewing operator on the factory floor. Her hard work and honest personality made her popular with her coworkers and she was put forward as a worker representative by her colleagues in the PC election that took place in August 2020. To her great surprise, she was elected as a member even though she had no idea what her new role in addition to being a sewing operator.

"I was struggling!" said by her when describing her first months as a representative. I was nervous and scared that I wouldn't be able to live up to my colleagues' expectations. I know my job on the factory floor, but this was a completely different thing" she continued. "As a PC representative, I had to talk to the management often, justifying our issues to them and then having to communicate back their response to my co-workers who all put their trust in me to do this job. While describing this, she looks slightly uncomfortable when she goes on; "I was of course happy to get elected, but I didn't know what our rights are and what I could and couldn't as a PC member. And I did not know how I should articulate myself and speak to the management. It all made me really nervous and instead of making me stronger, I actually became increasingly less confident". When she heard about ETI's training to PC representatives she saw a glimmer of hope – perhaps she could get some help to fulfill the expectations both she and her friends at work had placed on her. After four sessions, she tells us that she now has received training in how to bring up issues and engage with the



management, how to best prioritize issues she and her colleagues want to raise, and she also knows that each factory should have a Sexual Harassment Compliant Committee. "I am in the process of changing into a new person," she says smiling.

Her co-workers and management representatives have also noticed her progress. One manager told us that they feel happy and comfortable talking through the issues that she raises during the PC meetings; "she is consciously sensitive and behaves very responsibly and she knows what we can discuss and hopefully resolve and what lies outside our scope".

"She is more calm at home these days and is very keen for her daughter to start going to school"

- Parent of that PC representative

She is also discovering that she has become more meticulous when it comes to work as well – she gives it more importance and her time management skills have for example improved. She thinks that the soft skills she has learned as a PC representative are having a tangible impact on both her professional and personal life. Her development has not gone unnoticed at home

either – not only does she contribute financially but is also taking an initiative to put the family's limited resources to the best use while making some savings. "I want my daughter to have an education and not have to drop out early as I had to" she says. She is grateful that the factory management has allocated time for her to participate in ETI's training and that they consider the PC to be an important aspect of work to invest in. "And I am grateful to ETI for providing me with the opportunity to develop my skills and letting me get my confidence back - the training has done the trick to help me overcome some personal barriers!" she says with a laughter.