



Frances Klarzel

## WOMEN'S REASONS TO STOP WORKING IN NON-TRADITIONAL TRADES

### Introduction

To promote the employment of women and girls, EF encourages women to participate in non-traditional trades where fewer than 50% of the workers are women, in order for women to have an opportunity to earn the higher levels of income and to demonstrate the capabilities of women in society. A study on women in non-traditional trades in 2014 examined the perceptions of women on these trades and the factors that caused them to change trades or stop working (or not) in a trade usually done by men.

### Employment Situation of Respondent Trainees

Of the women respondents in this study, 68% of respondents in non-traditional trades were gainfully employed and 93% in traditional trades. The study results did not find a significant difference in

the salaries for non-traditional and traditional trades. The team determined the six categories to describe the many kinds of situations the women mentioned in the interviews: gainfully employed, working (not gainfully), self-employed, changed trade (employed), stopped working, and never employed.

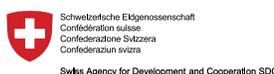
Among the respondents of this qualitative study in 2014, 122 women (82%) were still working in the trade for which they had trained. About 61% of respondents were either gainfully employed or self-employed with 94 (45%) qualified as gainfully employed using the strict EF definition of 'gainful employment' and 33 (16%) self-employed making over Rs 4,600 per month on average.

Seventeen women (8%) were making less than Rs 4,600 per month, so were classed as 'Working (not gainfully)'. Their income was perhaps lower because they received payment on a piecework basis for carpet or Dhaka cloth weaving but had stated an average monthly income. Ten women had changed from their non-traditional trade to work in a

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traditional trade, 42 (20%) had stopped working in the non-traditional trade, and 13 (6%) were never employed in that trade. The reasons for the overall rate of 30% of respondents who either stopped working, changed trades, or never worked in the trade are presented below.

### Reasons that respondents never worked, stopped, or changed trades

The reasons for the overall 30% of respondents who either stopped working in non-traditional trades, changed trades, or never worked were mostly family or personal reasons, which included family obligations, 'life events' such as child birth, and concerns for their safety of having to work moving from place to place.

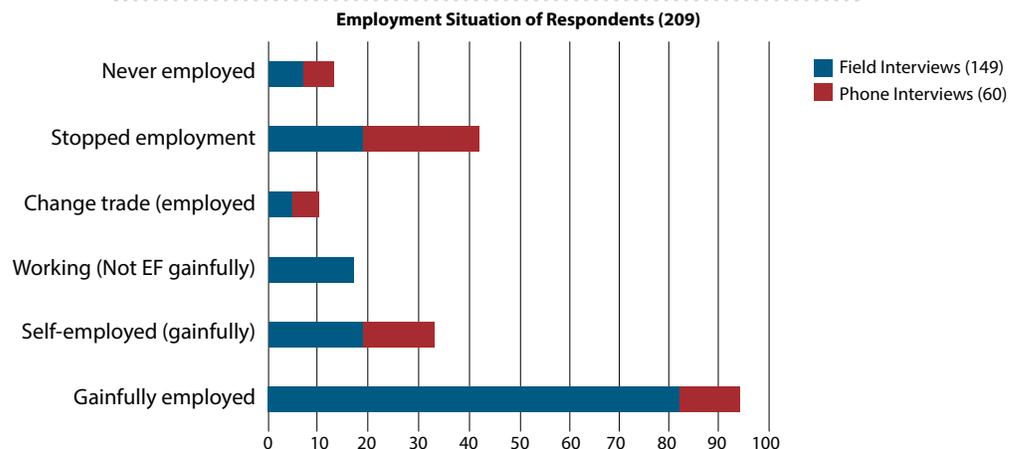
Ten women changed from working in non-traditional trades to working in traditional trades saying that their time would be more flexible for their household obligations and work site would be close to home for their family acceptance. For almost all women who changed, stopped, or never worked in the trade, family obligations, and 'life events' such as child birth were the main reasons for stopping the work.

The respondents who stopped working, changed their trade, or never worked almost all stated family or personal reasons, which included concerns for their safety when having to work moving from place to place. Respondents had changed their trades:

- Computer hardware to cashier
- Motor rewinding to dressmaker
- Mobile repairing to retail shop
- Aluminium fabricator returned to marketing in cooperative
- Furniture making to receptionist

**Family factors:** In interviews, 100% of women stated that family support was essential for them to be employed in any non-traditional trade. The social context could work either way – if the working situation contravened the social norms of a woman's community, she probably had to leave the work. The social context of family support could also encourage the woman to continue in the trade or the training. Most young women had cautious optimism that once married; their husbands and in-laws would support them in being employed in these non-traditional trades.

### EMPLOYMENT SITUATION OF RESPONDENTS IN FIELD AND PHONE INTERVIEWS



**Table 1: Summary of reasons given by respondents who were not employed**

	CHANGING TRADE	STOPPING WORK	NEVER WORKING
Personal, family, and social reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family Obligations</li> <li>Location of work close to home for ease of tending children, family obligations, and safety.</li> <li>Husbands did not know location of job - preferred stationary working place</li> <li>More comfortable in woman-friendly working environment like tailoring shop</li> <li>Uncomfortable to touch men cutting hair</li> <li>Physical disability that limited work in non-traditional trade</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After marriage, husband or in-laws not supportive</li> <li>Husband did not allow their wives to work outside due to unknown location of work</li> <li>Attending to family and children</li> <li>Pregnancy, childbirth, illness</li> <li>Prefer non-traditional trades like beauty parlour/tailoring</li> <li>Took training under peer pressure</li> <li>Socially unacceptable</li> <li>Continuing studies</li> <li>Uncomfortable cutting men's hair</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Took the training for knowledge. Now they are using it for their personal use.</li> <li>Took the training due to peer pressure but was not interested</li> <li>Family obligations- baby</li> <li>Location of work</li> <li>Studies</li> <li>Family illness</li> </ul>
Capacity and confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Had no proper idea of the work or of the working place, found the work difficult and then quit and changed the trade.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of other female employees in the office and discomfort in all male environment</li> <li>Strenuous physical work</li> <li>Lack of confidence while working in mobile repair.</li> <li>Insufficient knowledge of new technology</li> <li>Work location, did not like training content (Security Guard)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Failed the skill test</li> <li>Had not been provided with certificate</li> </ul>
Employment and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of demand in the trade</li> <li>Lack of interest in non-traditional trades. They took the trade to gain knowledge and to make use of it at personal level</li> <li>Got better opportunities in different trades</li> <li>Did not get work, doing tailoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of funds and high interest rates on loan</li> <li>Difficulties in finding good jobs</li> <li>Lack of opportunities in the market. Leather shoe making apparently had little demand</li> <li>Lack of interest in non-traditional trades. They took the trades to gain knowledge</li> <li>Replaced by previous employee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did not find work</li> <li>Lack of fund and high interest rates on loan to start their own enterprise.</li> <li>Insufficient training so difficult to get work</li> <li>Industry was closed – wood carver</li> <li>Stopped working to go abroad - security guard</li> </ul>

Married women in villages have challenges in non-traditional trades because it is difficult for them to leave their home or village. However, in certain new cities with lots of migrants, it was more socially acceptable for women to work in non-traditional trades, some of which, such as mobile phone repair, are in transition as social perceptions change as to whether they are “men’s work.”

T&Es said differences between the hills and Terai societies affected women’s continued employment in non-traditional trades. In Central Terai districts, where the proportion of women attending training in non-traditional trades is less than 10%, the Nepal Living Standards Survey 2010/11 shows that fewer girls in these districts attend school likely due to the social and cultural norms of their communities.

**Training and employment factors:** Three women said that the L1 training was either insufficient for them to get a job or to keep up with the advancing technology of mobile phones and televisions. Six women said that they did not receive their certificates or had not gotten a further license for various reasons. Among younger women respondents, four said that they attended the training due to peer pressure but that they were never really interested in the work or did not need the income, so they had either never worked or had stopped working.

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### Preconditions for non-traditional employment

For a woman to succeed in non-traditional trades, it is essential that the support of all her family members be gained before the training. The most common reason given by women who changed their trades or stopped working in a non-traditional trade was that their family did not allow them to do the work, or that their family obligations hampered them from doing the work so that had began doing trades with more flexibility and social acceptability. Most of those women who had taken the training but had never worked in the trade had taken the training due to peer pressure or just to gain the knowledge rather than be employed.

### Lessons learned

The challenges that women encounter due to their social vulnerability and the perceptions of their families and community members may cause them to stop working in a non-traditional trade or change to a trade that is more acceptable in their situation. To address the reasons that often cause women to leave their employment in non-traditional trades, the lessons learned and recommendations include:

Careful assessments of women's situation should be conducted as part of any Rapid Market Assessment in each particular locale for a deeper understanding of the social norms in the respective homes of the women and in the employment environment. Measures need to be careful and considered. The trades to be offered should then be matched with the situation of the women given the limitations faced by women in conservative communities.

Due to these limitations, women are interested in home-based enterprises and part-time work for greater flexibility. In some communities, it is better to promote trades where women can work from home or in a secure shop, rather than trades where a woman has to travel alone to work or for work. If training in non-traditional trades is being offered, it should be preceded with counselling to generate awareness among the family members of potential women trainees so that they support the women's employment in the trade.

### Case studies

Shiva Devi Poudel left her job in a cooperative to take the aluminium fabricator training. Her husband allowed her to go to the training because it was done in a shop but he stopped her from working because she had to go to different places. She was able to resume her work in the cooperative. *"It is difficult for married woman to go outside and work. I have family obligations."*



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Meera Kumari Chaudhary was a successful trainer after her graduation as a mobile phone technician. She was enjoying her work and making enough income. She lived with her brothers in Birgunj and her parents had allowed her to take this training and work. After she had worked as a trainer, she accepted a marriage proposal from a family but later had to quit her work because her in-laws did not like their new bride to work in a trade done by men. She could not convince them as with her own parents because she was new in the house although she has a deep desire to work. *"If I had trained as a beautician or tailoring, then after marriage there would have been no problem being married with a young child. In future, if I find traditional work, then I will do it."*



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