The Story of Binda Sunar

A woman migrant worker from Dhading district in Central Nepal takes part in a tailoring course to generate income to pay her family debt.
A strong aroma of bamboo shoots tingles your senses as you enter the small hut through a makeshift door.

A modern gas stove is stacked in the middle of the room. On top of that is a *kadahi* half-filled with bamboo shoot soup.

This is home for 25-year-old Binda Sunar, who is blowing to light up the fire for cooking.
Binda left abroad for work in 2011. “I had always wanted to go abroad, hoping to escape poverty and hardship,” she said. However, her life in Kuwait was extremely challenging.

She had to work for 18 hours a day to earn NPR 18,000 (US$180) per month. She kept on enduring inhumane working conditions and separation from family with a hope that her son could study and live a life of dignity.
Two years after she left Nepal, her mother-in-law got seriously ill.

Binda returned home when her contract ended in 2013.

“I had no interest to extend my contract any longer as my mother-in-law was not in a condition to take care of our 4-year-old son,” she said.
Binda's family is now complete. Her mother-in-law’s health has considerably improved, and the couple gets to spend quality time with their son.

However, having run out of her savings, Binda recently began thinking of working abroad for the second time.
Fortunately for Binda, a friend told her about a tailoring training program run by UN Women for women migrant workers who have returned home.

The program provides women with 390 hours of vocational training on tailoring. Binda enrolled immediately, and got a chance to learn a new skill set, together with 12 other returnee women migrant workers.

It has just been a week at the training center. However, she is happy with the pace of her learning.
Binda is currently learning to sew simple garments such as caps, vests and trousers.

“I receive a lot of support from my peers, especially when I miss classes and need to catch up,” she said.

“Also, the trainer is always there to provide extra time and support if any of us are lagging behind,” she added.
For Binda, the provision of a child-care facility is the best thing that motivates young mothers like herself to come to work every day.

Currently, two women have brought their small kids to the training center, where a friendly child attendant is available to take care of them.

With the festivals coming up, her son will have a month-long holiday, and Binda plans to bring him to the training.
Binda thinks having a skilled workforce is crucial to the country’s future, and would provide an alternative to hundreds of women who migrate from Nepal for work every day.

Personally, this training is a dream come true for Binda, who aspires to open her own tailoring shop and generate income to pay off the debt the family took to pay for her husband's flight and visa to Malaysia.
Participants of the vocational training for tailoring listen carefully to their trainer as she teaches them ways to sketch designs. The tailoring training is part of the “Future We Want” project funded by Zonta International and supported by UN Women.

Photo: Gonzalo Bell/UN Women