

Afroza Khanom : An enterprising woman who up in a hostile environment

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Our Correspondent, Dumuria: Afroza Khanam is an enterprising woman who grew up in a hostile environment. She was born on November 20, 1980 in a small village in Kharri Dumuria Upazila. Her childhood dream was to become a woman entrepreneur. However, due to a lack of opportunity, the dream remained dormant in her mind. After successfully passing Secondary School Certificate from J.K.S Girls' School in 1998 and Higher Secondary Certificate from Bangabandhu College in 2000, in pursuit of a livelihood she joined M

Primary School as a primary school teacher.

She got married in 2001. Her husband Robiul Alam is a Khulna City Corporation employee. She got a comrade to fulfill her dream. Inspired by her life partner, she quits her job and started a joint venture business with the intention of making her childhood dream come true. Afroza had two business partners. But due to differences of opinion, she started walking the path of her dream alone.

She noticed that fish was being sold everywhere in the area and there was a great demand for ice in the area. Thinking of the future of the business, she set up a fish market and an ice mill in Kharnia Bazaar with her savings. Gradually her ice began to be sold in various places like Mothertala, Kathaltola, Sholagatiya and Natun Rasta. The demand for ice increased but the production was less than the demand and could not supply enough ice because the mill had only one cooling coil and one crusher machine which also had low production. Thus the production of ice was going on with deficit.

On the other hand, as the cooling coils and crusher machines of the ice mill became old, with the cruel irony of fate, suddenly the whole machine broke down one day! The ice production process stopped completely. In this situation, it became urgent to change the compressor but the financial crisis stood in the way of this initiative.

Afroza became worried and thinks that this time her dream will come to an end. She searched for a way out of this danger. Suddenly she remembered the local extension agent for LEAF of her own union. When she contacted LEAF, he advised her to contact with the District Upazila Fisheries Office.

Later, she sought advice from senior upazila fisheries officer to re-activate the closed ice mill. Senior Upazila Fisheries Officer Md. Abubakar Siddique briefed her in detail about the Agricultural Innovation Fund-3 under National Agricultural Technology Project, NATP-2. The senior upazila fisheries officer wanted to know what she needs for the ice mill. Afroza said that the total cost will be BDT 11,55,000 including building repair, purchase of motor, power connection, purchase of compressor and accessories. Senior Upazila Fisheries Officer said, "you will not get all the money from AIF-3. 50% of the total cost will have to be spent from your own funds. The remaining 50% can be provided from the project, but given the check on condition that you will complete the work." The light of hope shined in her eyes.

After hearing the details of AIF-3 fund, a new sun rose in Afroza's heart. She thinks the factory of her dream will start again. Following all the procedures, Afroza Khanam applied for an AIF-3 grant, her proposal was approved by PIU, NATP-2. With the grant received from the government, the ice factory was started again as before. This time she installed a machine with double production and production began in full swing. The atmosphere became echoed by the sound of the machine. It seemed that the train of Afroza's dream had started running towards the destination at a great speed, Afroza doubled her dreams.

Now seven people work with Afroza Khanom in her 'Khornia Ice Factory' she herself manages the factory. She wants to involve her village women in various development work.

