

press release

Standard Chartered and UCEP Bangladesh launch reskilling programme for Covid-19 impacted workforce in northern Bangladesh



January 20, 2021 – Standard Chartered and UCEP Bangladesh launched the re-skilling and employment reintegration programme in Rajshahi for economically vulnerable individuals who have lost their livelihoods due to the impact of Covid-19. Bitopi Das Chowdhury, Country Head of Corporate Affairs, Brand and Marketing from Standard Chartered Bank and Didarul Anam Chowdhury, Director of Programme and Innovations from UCEP Bangladesh amongst other senior management were present at the ceremony held on 20th January 2021.

Under this initiative, UCEP Bangladesh is conducting a rapid needs assessment study to identify the skills gaps in both formal and informal sectors, and the opportunities created by the disruptions caused by Covid-19. Based on the findings of this study, demand-driven training programmes will be developed that will prepare participants with the skills to best meet current and future demands of the job market. The graduates will then go through a job placement programme to complete their reintegration within the economy.

Speaking on the occasion, **Bitopi Das Chowdhury, Country Head of Corporate Affairs, Brand and Marketing from Standard Chartered Bank** said,

“Our battle against Covid-19 has once again demonstrated the incredible resilience of the hard-working people of Bangladesh. Yet, to maintain our nation’s growth momentum, successful reintegration of our workforce to the post pandemic economy will be crucial. After a series of



initiatives that provided immediate support to vulnerable communities, we are now launching the second phase of our support programmes, which focuses on the development of a future ready workforce. We thank UCEP for partnering with us on this initiative that will not only provide our beneficiaries with the right skills, but will also provide job placement, securing their livelihood.”

Didarul Anam Chowdhury, Director of Programme and Innovations, UCEP Bangladesh, said, “The Covid-19 pandemic has not only crated hindrance and challenged us to run normal activities but also offered emerging opportunities in the domestic market, especially in health care, agriculture based trades and ICT based service sectors. Standard Chartered Bank has been supporting UCEP Bangladesh in skilling and re-skilling the youth, especially the females in range of demand-driven occupations. Through this new partnership, UCEP Bangladesh will reintegrate the youth and young adults who have lost their jobs due to COVID-19 with wage employment through Recognition of Prior Learning assessment and re-skilling. Food-Aid will be provided in this program as cushion for the beneficiaries to invest their meaningful effort for reskilling and reintegration.”

Standard Chartered is currently focusing its community support measures in five key areas:

- **Providing life-sustaining food and hygiene support** to 120,000 individuals, providing 3,600,000 meals and personal hygiene material through Bidyanondo Foundation, BRAC and Kumudini Welfare Trust.
- **Supporting life-saving medical services** for 560 critically affected COVID-19 patients through Sajida Foundation and Bidyanondo Foundation.
- **Supporting livelihood** of 2,000 farmers by directly sourcing 200 tonnes of fresh produce and delivering them free of cost to 200,000 direct beneficiaries with OBHIZATRIK Foundation.
- **Supporting education** by contributing BDT 109,135,000 (USD 1.3 million) to UNICEF to be used for protection measures and remote education of vulnerable children.
- **Supporting the healthcare workers fighting on the frontlines** by contributing BDT 25,185,000 (USD 300,000) to Red Cross programmes.

The Bank had announced a broad range of support measures for its retail customers and businesses, including loan repayment holidays, fee waivers or cancellations and loan extension facilities, in addition to the government-led support measures. It has initiated a US\$1 billion global financing programme for companies that provide goods and services to help the fight against COVID-19. It has also launched a US\$50 million fund aiding communities affected by the pandemic across its global footprint, including Bangladesh.



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