

INDIVIDUAL CASE STORY | MSE SYSTEM

ROSA'S DREAMS ARE REALISED WITH THE HELP OF HELLOOMARKET

Rosa was a government employee who dreamed of having her own business. To make her dream a reality, she attended training to develop basic textile skills and obtain a certification. Eventually, she was able to start up Markeon Garment together with her husband and brother-in-law, and they began producing and selling a few garment items. However, they struggled to find a reliable market for their products.



Markeon Garment had been in business for a year when HellooMarket was piloted in 2019. HellooMarket is a digital marketing platform designed to help solve micro and small enterprise (MSE) challenges with retail space, visibility, and marketing. It links MSEs with over 1.2 million viewers monthly and includes fully integrated ordering, payment, and delivery systems. HellooMarket was designed and launched by BelCash Technology Solutions with support from LIWAY.

Markeon Garment was one of the pioneers who joined HellooMarket during its pilot phase. As Rosa explained:

“ When I first heard about an online sales option, I did not want to waste any time and went to their place packing a few T-shirts from my product set to give to them to sell on my behalf. Then, I couldn’t believe such an online sale was genuinely possible, but it worked, and I got my sales revenue amount in two days’ time. I continued sending items, increasing the number of items from time to time. ”

Based on the increased potential she saw for the business, Rosa bought additional sewing machines with lease financing and hired more staff, bringing the total to 33 permanent and temporary employees. However, when COVID-19 hit in 2020, it impacted the business in several ways. They not only experienced reduced demand for their garment products but were also told by local government officials to reduce their staff to comply with COVID-19 protocols.

As the manager of the business, Rosa was determined not to fire staff during such a challenging time. She decided to tackle the problem through shift work and drive sales by re-purposing production to make face masks, which she recognised were increasing in demand. Markeon Garment began selling face masks on HellooMarket, and increased visibility through the platform led to sales through other channels.

Rosa explained:

“ Face masks were the most marketable product then and I focused on producing as many as we could. This addressed two limitations: keeping most of the existing staff and producing more and earning a lot in the meantime. This, coupled with the online sales option, helped me a lot to progress without violating the COVID protocols. But this called for an increase in the number of sewing machines. I got a chance to get sewing machines on credit terms from Addis Capital without the need for collateral. I arranged my staff working time in a shift approach and managed to increase my production. My company became very successful with the new arrangement and our sales revenue increased tremendously. I got so many online buyers through HelloMarket. Eventually, my product became known, and I started supplying a lot of my product to others such as pharmacies and supermarkets. ”

Markeon Garment was able to maintain its staff and grow its business during the challenges of COVID-19. Within a year they were able to pay off the credit owed for the sewing machines and they VAT-registered the company. This helped them tap into opportunities to compete for larger bids.

Rosa attributes much of the company's success to joining HelloMarket three years earlier. As she explained:

“ Since I decided to join and start sending products to HelloMarket three years ago, my total supply reached more than 13,000 items. I also provided my products to supermarkets. I face no problem getting my sales revenue from HelloMarket. HelloMarket amounts to 50% of my market share. ”

Markeon Garment's success has enabled Rosa to cover university fees and expenses for her two daughters over the past three years. She is also better able to support extended family members.

Rosa has realised her dream of having her own business and her success is recognised by government officials and other market actors who at times invite her to participate in meetings. But her dream does not end here. Rosa has plans for the company to be an intermediate textile input provider for small-level textile workers. As with her initial dream, there are challenges to be overcome, which she highlighted as limited working space, capital for additional equipment, and scarcity of people trained in the textile profession. Twenty-eight of the company's 33 employees are temporary workers. This is due to a shortage of experts and other businesses snatching up full-time skilled workers with offers of higher pay.

Rosa is already trying to address some of the challenges. She highlighted the lack of needed skills at a TVET-led meeting; however, the problem persists. But Rosa too remains persistent. She continues to seek solutions to help her realise her dreams.