

Newsletter

ISSUE 1, 2020 | STORIES FROM THE SUPPLY CHAIN & BEYOND



GEAR: 79 female workers promoted to supervisors

Helping female workers climb the career ladder through Gender Equality and Returns (GEAR) initiative

Stories behind the clothes we wear

We asked 10 questions to a garment worker to discover her stories

Towards new frontiers of compliance

A closer look at the growth and triumph of a BWB partner factory over the past few years

BETTER WORK BUSINESS FORUM

Industry stakeholders met at BWB's annual event in October to discuss issues critical for the sustainability of the RMG industry

PARTNERING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

BWB partnered with the Sustainable Apparel Forum (SAF) 2019 held in Dhaka on 5 November

INDUSTRY SEMINAR ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION

BWB partnered with H&M to offer a better understanding of sexual harassment and the prevention mechanisms in light of the High Court Verdict

PROMOTING BOILER SAFETY

BWB organised an Industry Seminar on Boiler Safety on 10 October

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS WITH TRADE UNIONS

The promotion of sound Industrial Relations practices is a key dimension of our work in the industry

INTEGRATED ADVISORY WORKSHOPS

BWB's Integrated Advisory Workshops continue to build industry capacity

THE MANAGER

Dear friends and colleagues,

We hope 2019 has been a good year for you. Our focus on sustainability has defined our activities in 2019, as it will continue to do so. BWB's sustainability strategy sees constituents and the driving seat and defining the industry. Governments, are all elements of the same and further improves our Law and core labour element and industrial framework and mindset to conditions are standard in to this process, as are tices across the supply es our consultations, pacity-building initiatives national level.

g with you in 2020.

ard



25

INTERNATIONAL BRANDS AND RETAILERS



54%

FEMALE WORKERS

“I hope you love this dress as much as I enjoyed making it”

There are many stories behind each piece of clothing we wear. We asked 10 questions to Ayesha Akhter Nazma, a Trimming Operator at SQ Celsius Ltd located in Gazipur, Dhaka.

1 **WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE ITEM OF CLOTHING? DESCRIBE IT TO US AND TELL US WHY IT IS YOUR FAVOURITE?**

I love Saree, especially the red ones. I have at least five red Sarees. I love this garment because it gives you an elegant look and provides endless matching possibilities.

2 **WHAT DOES A TYPICAL DAY OF WORK LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?**

I arrive at work by 7:30 am. Then I look at the day's target and get to work by 8:00am . I love to walk in the lawn of the factory and hang out with colleagues during lunch break. I usually don't miss my target and finish my work in time.

3 **WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE WEEK-END/YOUR DAY OFF?**

Weekends are fun! I cook special dishes every weekend. I also try to spend more time with my husband and my eight-month-old daughter. Sometimes we go for shopping, visit relatives and attend weddings!

4 **WHAT IS THE BEST THING ABOUT YOUR JOB? AND THE WORST?**

I get to meet new people here. As a Participation Committee (PC) member, it also feels good to be able to help others. The worst thing about my job is that I have to get up early in the morning!

5 **DESCRIBE THE CLOTHES/SHOES YOU HAVE MADE OR HELP MAKE TODAY?**

Currently, we are making ladies sweaters on our production line. Made from very high-quality knit fabric, this burgundy sweater looks and feels very comfortable.

6 **IF YOU COULD ASK THE PERSON WHO ENDS UP WEARING THIS ITEM OF CLOTHING A QUESTION, WHAT WOULD IT BE?**

Do you like this dress? I hope you love this dress as much as I did making it.

7 **IF YOU COULD CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT WHERE YOU WORK, WHAT WOULD IT BE?**

I wish we had flexible working hours in our factory.

8 **HOW DO YOU TYPICALLY SPEND YOUR WAGES?**

My salary is mostly spent on housing and food. But I save some money from my salary every month. I have already bought a piece of land in my hometown. I am saving to build a house on the land.

9 **WHO DO YOU ADMIRE MOST IN THE WORLD?**

My parents. They are always ready to catch me when I fall.

10 **WHAT ARE YOUR PERSONAL AMBITIONS/DREAMS FOR THE FUTURE?**

My dream is to give my daughter the best education possible so that she can live a happy and successful life.



that could help us reach commonly-shar...
improve and monitor our performance...
compliance and the social area of the bu...

One of the leading apparel manufacturers...
Group has been operating for the past 2...
producing knitted sweaters for internati...
adding lingerie and shirts to its portfolio

Its work has been growing in size and q...
What began with an initial workforce of...
has grown to encompass 18,000 emplo...
in the company's different facilities. All...
currently affiliated with BWB.

“Back in 2015, each brand we worked wit...
to assess compliance,” Abid says. “Diffe...
to carry out specific audits. But this was...
real, sustainable improvement to the wa...
people and to social compliance.”

Helping each factory develop its own ca...
power of Better Work, Abid says, adding...
help factories to face audits, rather it ma...
own responsibilities and prepares them...
for their own actions.

One of the key manufacturing units of t...
Ltd., shows the success of this factory-...
Revolution.

Meanwhile, absenteeism has reduced by...
rate has decreased by 0.5%, and the av...
has also increased. Workers have becom...
starting to see career prospects within...
improvements have reflected on the ov...
productivity.

BWB has conducted a series of training and seminars in SQ Celsius Ltd. over the years, touching on supervisory skills enhancement, skill development in the workplace and maternity protection.

UP AND BWB: TOWARDS FRONTIERS OF COMPLIANCE

ark Bangladesh and SQ Group began in March 2015.

g local branch of the UN programme was taking its...
ladesh's garment sector, the second largest in the...
.5 percent share of the global apparel market. SQ...
bilid entrepreneurial reality in the country. Still, the...
ng was missing in its day-to-day dynamics across

ernational results, Better Work launched its...
ash, confident of its core message that compliance...
ed a mere obligation, but a business necessity that...
competitive.

y SQ was looking for.



“Thanks to BWB, workplace communication among our 3,400 workers, management, middle management, associates and operators vastly improved. We have created an environment where people feel free to share their thoughts and suggestions. The factory has eventually become self-reliant in terms of compliance.”

Warisul Abid
Chief People Officer
SQ Group

machines, each producing an average of 300 pieces a day, against a maximum of 10 produced manually.



Immediate action was taken to meet the workers' demands. Liquid soap has been added to all restrooms, while electronic hand dryers have replaced overused towels.

Employees have also been lamenting the absence of ATM machines in the factory's proximity. Following the PC's request, a new one has been set up in collaboration with a local bank.

Operator Sahana Akhter, 28, says she has become the vice-president of the factory's Safety Committee following BWB trainings.

Akhter proudly says the factory is now also granting "special leave" for those who have suffered a workplace injury. This type of leave doesn't affect the worker's regular leave, like sick, casual or annual vacation.

SQ Group's Abid says the cooperation with BWB has boosted workers' confidence and put the

personnel and professional. I can now more confident in communicating with others. We established with the management's support grievance mechanism procedures to address workplace violence issues, among others. I feel proud to be able to contribute to the efforts to build a happy and safe workplace."

Sahanaj Akhter
Operator
SQ Celsius Limited



As one of the largest sweater manufacturer in the country, the knitting department of SQ is computerised. In the past, one operator operated a single machine, today the same operator can operate multiple machines. "We guided our workforce through the and boosted our training centre to help them gain further skills for the new technologies, eventually creating multitasking operators." "This, in turn, has improved their earning potential. Those who are not have been moved to different areas which still require manual work."

Operator Md Shajahan Mia says he has become increasingly efficient thanks to technology and automation over the years. He is one of the around 400 workers trained to operate on a fully automated machine. His section's productivity has increased following automation, he says. Higher productivity means a higher salary, leading to eventually rake in a monthly salary of the previous USD165.



atives from the brands, owners and employers gathered at the Bangladesh Business Forum on 2 October to discuss critical for the industry of the sessions centred on highly competitive industry supported by good governance, and responsible and ensure decent work prosperity for the industry about the key issues Forum.



Strengthening partnerships with trade unions

Better Work Bangladesh continues to strengthen collaboration with Trade Unions to promote strong industrial relations in the garment sector. On 3 November, BWB organised a workshop with trade unions under the National Coordination Committee for Workers Education (NCCWE) to create a better understanding of Better Work and its work and discuss ways to work more closely to promote strong industrial relations in garment factories. Another daylong workshop was organised with trade unions under the IndustriALL Bangladesh Council on October 23. The objective was to build more collaboration and understanding of our shared goal of ensuring strong and effective industrial relations in the garment sector.



Sexual harassment prevention: ILO Seminar on verdict

BWB in collaboration with the ILO organised an Industry Seminar on 10 October to discuss the Court Verdict on Sexual Harassment in Bangladesh. Around 40 garment factories attended the seminar was designed to improve better understanding of sexual harassment and mechanisms in light of the Court Verdict. The ILO's recent convention to combat harassment in the workplace efforts to prevent sexual harassment in the world of work. BWB has organised a series of garment factories address by putting into place and manage and address and promoting female s and facilitating meaningful dialogue with fairly-elected

79 GEAR-trained female workers promoted to supervisors

A total of 79 female sewing machine operators were promoted to supervisory roles in 12 M&S suppliers factories as part of the Gender Equality And Returns (GEAR). GEAR is a special initiative of Better Work Bangladesh and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to promote career progression opportunities for female workers in the garment sector. Rolled out in 2016, the initiative was scaled up and a total of 106 female sewing operators were trained in 2019 to improve their skill set so that they can step up to supervisory roles. Meanwhile, BWB's factory services have been helping to create a supportive and enabling environment to better support the career progression opportunity opportunities for the female workers. GEAR so far covered 54 factories (28 in the pilot phase and 26 in 2019). In 2020, GEAR is expected to enrol another 25 factories.

Partnering for sustainability



BWB partnered with the Sustainable Apparel Forum (SAF) 2019 held in Dhaka on 5 November to help facilitate a meaningful exchange of knowledge to demystify issues surrounding the sustainability of Bangladesh's garment industry. Presenting the keynote speech at the event, BWB Programme Manager Anne-Laure Henry-Gréard affirmed the programme's strong focus and commitment to driving sustainable change in Bangladesh's garment industry. "Experience from the Better Work programme across nine countries shows that sustainable changes and improved working conditions benefit workers

Promoting boiler safety

BWB organised an Industry Seminar on Boiler Safety on 10 October. Approximately 50 participants from BWB partner factories and service provider organisations attended the seminar as well as Engineer Md. Ziaul Hoque, Deputy Chief Inspector of Boilers. Boilers, if not properly maintained, are a high risk to safety in garment factories and contain explosive



Organised five daylong workshops in 2019 to improve capacity

Organised five daylong workshops in 2019 to improve capacity to the garment factories. Around 20 factories The daylong supporting improve capacity in mechanism, Chemical Safety and

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Better Work is a partnership between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC). On-the-ground in eight countries across three continents, Better Work brings together all levels of the garment industry to improve working conditions and respect of labour rights for workers, and boost the competitiveness of apparel businesses.



Better Work Bangladesh is supported by the following donor partners:

