



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF DENMARK



DENMARK EXPORTS GOOD WORKING ENVIRONMENT TO BANGLADESH

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STRATEGIC SECTOR COOPERATION

Partnering with Denmark for the Sustainable
Development Goals



INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Strategic Sector Cooperation is a new concept from 2015 where sustainable development and economic diplomacy goes hand in hand. In this way, the project benefits workers in Bangladesh, the local garment business community and the Danish private sector.

DANISH KNOW-HOW

“The primary objective of this project is to establish an expert group, which provisionally consists of 40 employees from Bangladesh’ labour inspectorate. They will be responsible for developing the inspection activities in machinery safety, accident prevention, chemical safety, ergonomics and construction safety. These are areas where there is a real need for specialist knowledge and areas that previously have been neglected. The experts will be able to advise legislators, but also train inspectors in the districts to carry out inspections in these disciplines,” says Elsebeth Jarmbæk, who is a project manager for the Danish Working Environment Authority.

A Strategic Sector Cooperation project between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, the Ministries of Employment in Denmark and Bangladesh has now been in progress for 1½ years. In practice, it is a collaboration between the working environment authorities in the two countries. The intention is to strengthen the Bangladeshi labour inspectorate in order to improve occupational health and safety in all industries, but with particular focus on the country’s textile industry. This industry is of particular importance in Bangladesh because it exports garments to countries all over the world, including Denmark.

In addition to benefiting workers in Bangladesh, the project will also benefit the Danish fashion and textile companies that would like to see improved occupational health and safety regulations.

A training program planned for the new expert group is expected to conclude with a study tour to Denmark during spring 2018.

The project also involves collaboration with the United Federation of Danish Workers (3F) and Danish businesses and organisations that already have projects in the country. Through this collaboration, training has been carried out for local representatives of Danish companies, health and safety managers from Danish companies' trade partners and Bangladeshi trade union representatives.

DANISH REPRESENTATIVES VISIT BANGLADESH

On 1 February 2017, Denmark's Ambassador in Bangladesh, Mikael H. Winther, and the Permanent Secretary of Bangladesh' Ministry of Labour and Employment, Mikail Shipar, were invited to a seminar for Bangladesh' National Council for Industrial Safety and Health. At the seminar, Danish representatives talked about the value of tripartite collaboration and occupational health and safety in Denmark. Four Danish representatives took part. Three from the Danish Chamber of Commerce, 3F and Aalborg University – who are conducting research into the correlation between working environment and productivity in Bangladesh – as well as a director from the Danish Working Environment Authority.

The main points were that a good working environment pays off and the Danish presentations were well received by the National Council for Industrial Safety and Health. Not least, Peter Hasle's research on the correlation between working environment and productivity in the textile industry in Bangladesh appeared to strike a chord.

“The main idea of the project is to show that working environment is not just something you do to comply with government rules – but that it can provide a well-run company with greater productivity. We have collected data from 50 companies and the preliminary research results show that companies with high productivity also have a relatively good working environment,” explains Peter Hasle.

3F ASSISTS

3F is also determined to push for improvements in the working environment in Bangladesh.

“We have six partner organisations in Bangladesh that we assist in creating better conditions for their members, social dialogue and decent jobs. We strive to help our sister organisations in Bangladesh in the textile industry to develop professional skills and to develop their own strategy,” explains Jesper Nielsen, International Advisor for 3F.



FACTS

It is estimated that between 10 or 20 Danish companies within the textile and garment sector are importing products from Bangladesh. However, in recent years the country has experienced several fires and accidents in factories producing textiles and garments, where the working conditions are often extremely poor. In July 2017, 13 people lost their lives and many were injured after a boiler explosion in a textile factory. In September 2017, six people lost their lives when a fire broke out in another textile factory. The textile and garment sector accounts for about 80% of the country's total exports and employs almost four million people.

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