

Inspection completion marks major milestone in Bangladesh RMG safety



A milestone in Bangladesh worker safety has been reached with the inspection of almost all export-oriented RMG factories for structural, fire and electrical safety. Emphasis will now switch fully to remediation efforts.

By the 31 October 2015 deadline for assessments to be carried out, 1,475 RMG factories had been assessed through government efforts supported by the International Labour Organization (ILO). A further 2,185 factories have been inspected by the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety and the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety.

A number of significant actions have taken place to underpin the inspection process under the national initiative. These include the harmonization of inspection standards, the establishment of a review panel to assess factories identified as dangerous, and capacity building for, as well as enhanced collaboration between, labour inspectorate and fire service staff who will follow up on inspection reports.

For more see [here](#)



"Following Rana Plaza, commitments were made to assess the structural integrity of all active export-oriented RMG factories to identify those with high risk of collapse. To date, 37 such factories have been closed and potential loss of life avoided. We now turn our full attention to the challenge of remediation and ensuring a safer RMG sector for all who work in it."

Syed Ahmed, Inspector General of the Department of Inspection of Factories and Establishments

ILO's support of the national inspection initiative is funded by Canada, Netherlands and the United Kingdom

"All exporting RMG factories now need to develop and implement Corrective Action Plans to remedy shortcomings identified by the inspection process without delay. Meanwhile, factories producing for local markets must also be inspected for safety and rights violations." Srinivas Reddy, ILO Bangladesh Country Director



50 for freedom

Help make a stand to end modern slavery

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has launched a new global campaign to end modern slavery, in partnership with the International Organization of Employers (IOE) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). The 50 for Freedom campaign aims to mobilize public support and influence in at least 50 countries to ratify the ILO's Forced Labour Protocol by 2018.

What is the Protocol?

The protocol is a legally-binding treaty that requires governments to take new measures to tackle modern slavery in all its forms. It is an attempt to bring legislation on forced labour and trafficking up to date as the convention on forced labour dates from 1930. The new text was agreed by a majority of ILO member states in 2014, and includes measures to prevent contemporary forms of slavery as well as protecting and compensating victims.

They may not be in chains but...

1. They've been tricked
2. They've been isolated
3. Their passports have been taken away
4. They're working off a debt
5. They're promised wages, but are never paid
6. They work extreme hours, but don't earn overtime
7. They live and work in abusive conditions
8. They've been threatened or intimidated
9. They're physically trapped
10. They've been beaten or raped

You can play a part in the fight to end modern slavery

Sign up to join the 50 for Freedom campaign.

Visit <http://50forfreedom.org>

Sweden, Bangladesh and ILO to boost rights and relations in garment sector

Launched by ILO and funded by Sweden a new project will enhance labour relations in the RMG sector through improved dialogue between employers and workers, particularly at workplace level.



An agreement to launch the project was signed in New York 26 September 2015 by Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation Isabella Lövin, ILO Director General Guy Ryder and Secretary of the Bangladesh Ministry of Labour and Employment Mikail Shipar. The event was witnessed by Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven, Bangladesh Foreign Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali and Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque. **For more see [here](#)**

"ILO seeks to make the world's factories and workplaces safe and decent places to work. While much progress has been made in Bangladesh over recent years, this initiative will contribute towards improved working conditions and labour rights in the garment sector, in line with relevant international labour standards." ILO Director General Guy Ryder



(from left) Hans-Joachim Fuchtel, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development; Mikail Shipar, Secretary, the Ministry of Labour and Employment of Bangladesh; Dr. Gerd Müller, Minister, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Federal Republic of Germany; Srinivas Reddy, ILO Country Director for Bangladesh; Dr. Thomas Prinz, Ambassador of Germany to Bangladesh.

ILO, Germany and Bangladesh join hands for Employment Injury Scheme

The three partners will work together on the design of a suitable Employment Injury Social Security Scheme for the Ready Made Garment Sector which will later be expanded to other industrial sectors.

A Letter of Intent was signed at a ceremony held in Dhaka 6 October 2015 by Dr. Gerd Müller, Minister, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Federal Republic of Germany along with representatives of ILO and the Bangladesh government. ILO's Social Protection Department and the Dhaka Country Office are facilitating development of the scheme in collaboration with German organisations German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV) and GIZ. **For more**

"The support of Germany reflects the importance the international community places on developing social protection for workers and we encourage other partners to join us in this undertaking." Srinivas Reddy, ILO Country Director

“My Labour, My Rights” radio show reaches workers nationwide

ILO with the support of the Government of Bangladesh and the Government of Norway launched a Bangla-language radio show for workers entitled My Labour, My Rights on 4 September 2015.

Featuring workers’ rights experts, the one-hour radio talk shows broadcast on Radio Today (89.6FM) every Friday at 5pm help create better understanding of rights and responsibilities in the workplace. The shows provide practical and useful information to listeners. Subjects include women’s rights in the workplace; overtime and working hours; festival pay and leave; dangers in the workplace; the role of labour inspectors; forming a union; taking leave; losing your job; and rights of temporary or seasonal workers. **For more see [here](#)**



Dr Wazed Ali, trade union leader from the National Coordination Committee for Workers Education interacts with callers to the show

'Pot Songs' help get message across to shrimp workers

ILO has turned to tradition to help workers in the shrimp industry better understand their rights.

‘Pot Songs’ - a traditional performance featuring painted banners, music and dance are being performed in shrimp processing factories and worker communities in the Khulna and Chittagong areas. Scripts have been developed to incorporate rights-related messages in a manner which is both informative and enjoyable for all.



The Pot Song singers in action

The ‘Pot Songs’ form part of an extensive series of events being held to raise awareness on labour law compliance issues and occupational safety and health for shrimp sector workers. A training programme held in collaboration with the Bangladesh Frozen Food Exporters Association is also seeing rights training provided to some 2,700 workers at factory floor level.

Sowing the seeds of workplace cooperation

At the heart of many workplace problems are poor labour-management relations. ILO is putting emphasis on building skills at all levels to enhance workplace cooperation.

Training has already taken place to create a core group of 28 staff from factory management, industry organizations, unions and management colleges to become master trainers in workplace cooperation.

A second phase, organised by ILO in collaboration with the Bangladesh Institute of Management (BIM) will see the trainers share their skills with managers and workers in a further 100 RMG factories.

Partners involved in this initiative include the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters

Association (BGMEA), the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), National Coordination Committee for Workers' Education (NCCWE), IndustriALL Bangladesh Council (IBC), Bangladesh Export Zones Processing Authority (BEPZA), BIM and the Industrial Relations Institutes. **For more see [here](#)**



"Sometimes supervisors shout when the sewing machine breaks and production stops. But shouting does not solve the problem. We need to learn how to communicate better."

Anju Aru, RMG factory sewing machine operator who has participated in workplace cooperation training

ILO trains government and trade union officials on new labour rules

ILO has provided training to help government officials and senior trade union leaders better understand the newly adopted Bangladesh Labour Rules.

The newly adopted Bangladesh Labour Rules, which were issued by the Government of Bangladesh on 15 September 2015, set out how the Bangladesh Labour Act is to be implemented. Two separate two-day training workshops saw 30 officials from the Department of Labour (DoL) and 26 senior leaders of RMG trade union federations take part. The workshops aimed to orient participants on the interpretation and application of respective Rules in regard to the mandate and functions of the Director of Labour, registration and functions of trade unions, unfair labour practices as well as other areas.



Members of RMG union federations from NCCWE and IBC



Participants from the Department of Labour

ILO's activities to develop workplace cooperation and better knowledge of the labour rules are funded by Denmark and Norway.

Training focuses on union registration and anti-discrimination procedures

Trade unions and officials of the Directorate of Labour are working with ILO towards developing standard operating procedures relating to the registration of new unions and cases of anti-union discrimination.

In March 2015, the Directorate of Labour launched on-line systems with ILO support for the registration of trade unions and case management related to unfair labour practices. The online systems were developed to help provide more transparency and accountability to the trade union registration process as well to receive allegations of anti-union discrimination.

Two, two-day workshops held in Dhaka in August saw Directorate of Labour and union officials learn more about what constitutes anti-union discrimination and how to systematically address it. These skills will be put to use to help enhance the effectiveness of the online systems. Union leaders and organizers from the National Coordination Committee for Workers Education (NCCWE) and IndustriAll Bangladesh Council (IBC) also learned how to make an online application for a new union registration and how to appeal in the event of an application being rejected. **For more see [here](#)**



Shrimp processing industries discuss labour compliance



Representatives of employers and workers of 33 shrimp processing factories in Khulna helped develop a labour compliance checklist for shrimp processing factories recently.

Two training workshops conducted by ILO were held 16-17 September and 21-22 September to discuss the checklist which is designed to promote voluntary self-assessment of the shrimp processing industry in compliance with national labour standards and to address identified gaps.

The checklist will be finalized after the Bangladesh Frozen Food Exporters' Association (BFFEA) and the Khulna Department of Inspections of Factories and Establishments (DIFE-Khulna) have reviewed it and provided their inputs. The proposed checklist compliments a range of other efforts being implemented under the ILO project "Improving Labour Law Compliance and Building Sound Labour Practices in the Export Oriented Shrimp Sector in Bangladesh" which is funded by the Government of Bangladesh.

For more information see [here](#)

Strengthening of labour inspectorate continues

A comprehensive labour inspection training programme was launched on 16 August 2015 that will see 160 labour inspectors gain the skills needed to boost working conditions and worker safety in Bangladesh.

The 40-day course forms part of ongoing efforts to enhance the capacity of the Department of Inspections for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) and covers a wide range of subjects that will enhance the professional skills of both newly recruited inspectors as well as more experienced colleagues. The course has been developed by DIFE and the Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management (BIAM) with the support of ILO. **For more see [here](#)**



Labour inspectors taking part in the training

“This training forms an integral part of ILO’s capacity building activities to help Bangladesh develop a modern, transparent and credible labour inspection system. It will give inspectors a deeper understanding not only of how to carry out inspections but also how to conduct themselves as competent and confident government officials.”
ILO Country Director Srinivas Reddy



OSH work moves into RMG factories

ILO’s work to enhance Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) in the RMG sector continues. A core group of master trainers trained in collaboration with the Bangladesh Employers Federation and Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association are now passing on their knowledge to mid-level managers and supervisors in 400 factories. They in turn will help train up to 800,000 workers.

With the recent issue of the Bangladesh Labour Act rules, safety committees can now be formed in the RMG as well as other sectors. ILO is developing an OSH kit that will help guide committees in their work and developing a large scale advocacy campaign and materials to help boost awareness of OSH issues amongst workers and management. In addition, guides are being developed to help unions better understand OSH issues and pass skills on to their members.

ILO’s activities to strengthen the labour inspectorate and to boost OSH take place as part of the Improving Working Conditions in the Ready-made Garments Sector Programme funded by Canada, the Netherlands and United Kingdom.

Fire department gears up for RMG remediation

Carrying out safety inspections of RMG factories is an achievement. However safety of workers will only be assured if inspection findings are followed up and acted upon.

The fire service has a vital role to play in this regard, ensuring that the practical steps needed to avoid fire risk in factories are taken. ILO is helping members of the Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defense (BFSCD) to follow up on the findings of RMG factory safety assessments in a more a sustained, systematic and effective manner.

A training workshop held in Dhaka 13 August 2015, brought together senior fire prevention officers to help them better manage the follow-up process and collaborate with counterparts from the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE). **For more see [here](#)**



Common DEA assessment standards discussed



Stakeholders involved in inspecting Bangladesh's ready-made garment factories for structural, fire and electrical safety met in Dhaka 17 September 2015 to develop harmonized guidelines for Detailed Engineering Assessments (DEA).

DEAs are necessary to determine the safety of the structure when preliminary assessment reports reveal issues that require further analysis or when there is insufficient information available about how a building was constructed.

"Emphasis is now moving from preliminary inspections to remediation and corrective action. This needs a consensus and joint understanding of how to carry out DEAs as basis for remediation work," said ILO's Tuomo Poutiainen. **For more see [here](#)**

"The development of these DEA guidelines will not only be valuable for the RMG sector but for buildings in general. They will have a long-term beneficial effect for building safety in Bangladesh." Dr. Jamilur Reza Choudhury, renowned as the 'father' of Bangladesh civil engineering who is providing support to the process.



Both events were organized by the ILO with the support of the Ministry of Labour and Employment and the US Department of Labor funded General Building and Fire Safety project.

Swedish Deputy Minister visits CEBAI

Swedish Deputy Minister for Employment, Ms Irene Wennemo visited the Centre for Excellence for the Bangladesh Apparel Industries (CEBAI) 16 November 2015.

During her visit Ms Wennemo spoke with students and staff at CEBAI, which is implemented by ILO and the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) with funding from the Swedish Government and H&M.

Courses currently underway at CEBAI include those offering basic sewing machine skills needed to obtain work in the sector.



(From left) Atiqul Islam, former president of BGMEA, Md. Shafiul Islam (Mohiuddin) former president of BGMEA, Swedish Deputy Minister Wennemo, Md Siddiqur Rahman, President of BGMEA, Swedish Ambassador Johan Frisell and Faruque Hassan, Senior Vice President of BGMEA

CEBAI receives industry accreditation

The Centre of Excellence for Bangladesh Apparel Industry (CEBAI) has received accreditation as a Registered Training Organization (RTO) from the Bangladesh Technical Education Board, the statutory authority for quality assurance and certification for Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

The RTO certification will enable CEBAI to run training courses as per the National Technical and Vocational Qualification Framework (NTVQF), which is based on competency based training methodology. The accreditation will also help CEBAI conduct certification for recognition of prior learning (RPL).

Apprenticeship Programme to Boost Furniture Skills



A programme that will see up to 1,400 skilled furniture sector apprentices trained was inaugurated 12 November 2015.

ILO's B-SEP Project, funded by Canada, is facilitating formal apprenticeship programmes targeting 6,000 beneficiaries in five priority industries including furniture. The initiative recognises the key role industry has to play in developing skills through apprenticeships for young people.

The programme is partnering with multiple enterprises within the furniture sector. The inauguration took place at Nadia Furniture Ltd. which will train 100 workers including 23 women. Initially running for six months the initiative targets carpentry and lacquer polishing.

Building a stronger skills development system for Bangladesh

In these excerpts from a recent interview, ILO's skills team explain how ILO positions itself in a field that has become a priority for many development partners.

What are ILO's main achievements to date in the skills field?

Since 2007, ILO has worked to address Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) weaknesses in Bangladesh by working with government and numerous stakeholders to design a new system. Fundamental to this has been the development of a new National Skills Development Policy including a National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework. This provides the foundation that all other skills initiatives should be based on. All training should be aligned with the National Skills Development Policy and qualifications framework so that everybody speaks the same language and develops courses that can be measured against each other.

What impact is the new policy having?

Since it was developed, numerous recommendations in the national policy have been addressed with many taken up by ILO's EU-funded TVET reform project and its Canadian-funded BSEP project. Trainers have been trained and certified so they can teach better. The apprenticeship system has been reinvigorated and Industry Skills Councils created to provide the link between training and employment. Public-private partnerships have also been successfully forged while recognition of prior learning and enterprise based training is also coming up.

How does ILO see its role in the skills field?

ILO is involved in the development of a skills system and not in the delivery of numbers. Going forward we wish to position ILO as an advisor which promotes a positive environment for other projects to come and deliver based on those strategies and tools which have already been developed.



The National Skills Development Policy provides the foundation upon which all other skills initiatives should be based.

ILO plans to launch a new initiative called 'Skills 21'. What will it do?

The main difference between what ILO is doing and what other projects are doing is systems development. The new Skills 21 initiative under development will look at the additional things we need to do to improve the Bangladesh skills system. We are suggesting to expand from a National Technical and Vocational Qualification Framework (NTVQF) into a National Qualification Framework (NQF). By doing so Bangladesh would have a full qualification framework that includes both vocational and higher levels.

Another area is to address the common complaint that there aren't sufficient qualified trainers or assessors in the new system. Part of this undertaking will be to establish a national center for skills education. Seven training centres will also be targeted to become model TVET centres. This will help give the government a good idea of the costs and challenges of replicating the approach throughout the entire country.

See a 2-page fact sheet on the National Skills Development Policy [here](#)

See the full National Skills Development Policy (English/Bangla) [here](#)

Financial inclusion key to social security for migrant workers

Speakers at a national dialogue programme on ‘financial inclusion and social protection for migrant workers’ jointly organised by ILO on 21 October 2015 stressed the need for policy adoption to ensure greater welfare for returning Bangladeshi workers.

The dialogue titled “Safeguarding Interests of Bangladesh Migrant Workers: Issues of Financial Inclusion and Social Protection” was jointly organised by the Government of Bangladesh, ILO and the Centre for Policy Dialogue.



Srinivas Reddy, ILO Country Director; Srinivas Reddy; AHM Mustafa Kamal MP, Minister of Planning; Syed Manzur Elahi, Member of CPD Board of Trustees; MA Mannan MP, State Minister, Ministries of Finance and Planning.

Speaking at the event ILO Country Director Srinivas Reddy stressed the need for simpler processes and reducing the cost of fund transfers for migrant workers, “The cost of remittance transfers needs to be reduced. Workers and their family members facing a crisis should have social security to fall back on. The families of the workers need to be helped to graduate from being remittance beneficiaries to skilled workers and entrepreneurs.”

New migration publications



The Homecoming
This study develops a comprehensive profile of migrant workers who have returned to Bangladesh.

[Download publication](#)



Skills for the international labour market: Bangladesh Country Report
Part of a multi-country labour market trend analysis for migrants from South Asia to the member states of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf
[Download publication](#)

“The money brought back by the migrant workers, is their money and they have the full right to spend it as they wish. But we have the responsibility to create better options for them so that they can also invest their earnings for the future and also raise awareness among them about the benefits of doing so.” Mr. Nurul Islam, B.Sc., Minister for Expatriates’ Welfare and Employment, Government of Bangladesh.



For a fee: The business of recruiting Bangladeshi women for domestic work in Jordan and Lebanon

[Download publication](#)

[Download Executive Summary](#)

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Canada



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From the People of Japan



Know your labour rights

ILO has produced a short and easy to understand Bangla-language brochure explaining basic labour rights for workers.

Download it [here](#) or contact dhaka@ilo.org to receive copies.

ILO's labour rights work in Bangladesh

This English-language leaflet explains ILO's work in Bangladesh in the labour rights field. Download it [here](#) or contact dhaka@ilo.org to receive copies.



For more information

See www.ilo.org/dhaka or contact Steve Needham, Senior Communications Officer at needham@ilo.org or call Tel: + 880 2 8881425 or 8881467

Where are the links?

This newsletter is designed to be read on the screen. Click the links and they will take you to more information on the ILO Dhaka website. If you receive a printed version, all links lead to www.ilo.org/dhaka