



ILO Director-General Guy Ryder meets Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

## ILO Director-General recognizes working conditions progress in Bangladesh, highlights need for better industrial relations

***ILO Director-General Guy Ryder has acknowledged progress made by Bangladesh to improve working conditions and grow its economy while stressing the need for more social dialogue and better industrial relations.***

“Since 2013 Bangladesh has come a long way to make its garment industry safer and to improve working conditions. We can be positive about the progress made but the job is not yet finished,” he said. However, the Director-General added that, “Productive industrial relations is one of the keys to successful development and I encourage employers and workers to work together in a more cooperative relationship.”

Mr Ryder was speaking following a four-day visit to Bangladesh that took place from 10 to 13 December 2016. During his stay, Mr Ryder met the Hon. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and also discussed a variety of work-related issues with Government ministers, workers’ and employers organisations as well as development partners.

Mr Ryder took part in the Ninth Global Forum for Migration and Development and the Dhaka Summit on Skills, Employability, and Decent Work 2016 held as part of the ILO’s Future of Work initiative. He also visited two RMG factories where he had the chance to see some of the work undertaken over the past three years to improve factory safety.

## Bangladesh Business and Disability Network launched

A new network has been launched to support the needs of businesses employing people with disabilities or which are seeking to make their workplaces more disability inclusive. Launched by the Honorable Prime Minister 11 December 2016, the Bangladesh Business Disability Network will play an important role in facilitating companies to recruit and accommodate a more diverse workforce.

For more information see: <http://bbdn.com.bd>



### Where are the links?

This publication is designed to be read on screen. In order to facilitate readership a number of printed copies are also distributed. Unless otherwise mentioned all website links lead to [www.ilo.org/dhaka](http://www.ilo.org/dhaka)

# 'Skills 21' set to drive Bangladesh skills sector development to next level

***A new ILO skills development programme funded by the European Union will further modernise the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system in Bangladesh.***

At a ceremony held in Dhaka on 12 December 2016, a Joint Declaration on the launch the 'Skills 21 - Empowering citizens for inclusive and sustainable growth' project was signed by representatives of the Government of Bangladesh, EU and ILO.

Secretary of Education, Mr Md Sohorab Hossain signed on behalf of the Government while Ambassador Pierre Mayaudon and Director-General Guy Ryder inked the agreement for the EU and ILO respectively. Honourable Minister of Education, Mr. Nurul Islam Nahid and State Minister for Labour and Employment Md Mujibul Haque witnessed the event.



(from left) Minister of Education, Nurul Islam Nahid; ILO Director-General Guy Ryder; EU Ambassador Pierre Mayaudon; UN Resident Coordinator Robert Watkins; and Secretary of Education Md Sohorab Hossain take part in the signing.

The earlier EU-funded TVET Reform Project which ended in December 2015 successfully established the foundation for a new, demand-driven, competency-based system for skills development in Bangladesh including reforms in the formal TVET system. Set to run from January 2017 to December 2020, Skills 21 will strengthen the National Skills Development System by continuing earlier reforms and by developing a National Qualifications Framework.

## What will Skills 21 do?

Skills 21 will work on priority areas including:

- Continuous strengthening and improvement of the quality of the TVET/skills development system, including development of a National Qualification Framework (NQF)
- Establishing a more conducive legislative, regulatory and institutional environment including development of a Sector Wide Approach (SWAP) in the TVET/skills development sector
- Improving access to and equity within the TVET/skills development system including expansion of model TVET institutions

***"A modern and inclusive skills system will provide a solid base for the future development of Bangladesh. The Skills 21 initiative will build on past achievements and ultimately provide greater access to quality vocational training for men and women alike."***

***Mr. Guy Ryder, Director-General of ILO***

## More about Skills 21:

A fact sheet in English and Bangla on Skills 21 can be downloaded [here](#)



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina opens the Dhaka Summit on Skills, Employability and Decent Work 2016

## What will the future of work hold for Bangladesh?

***A summit looking at the future of skills and employment in Bangladesh took place in December 2016 as part of the ILO's Future of Work initiative.***

The "Dhaka Summit on Skills, Employability and Decent Work-2016" organised by the Bangladesh Employers Federation (BEF) brought together representatives of government, employers' and workers' organizations as well as civil society and development partners.

The summit was held as part of the ILO's Future of Work consultations. These are taking place in 130 countries worldwide in the run up to ILO's 2019 Centenary celebrations. The events aim to create better understanding, and strategies to effectively respond to the major processes of change affecting global workplaces.

The Dhaka consultations focussed on four key areas namely skills, youth employment, global supply chains and social dialogue: areas chosen by stakeholders as being most relevant to Bangladesh as it looks to shape its future work environment.

Following the two-day summit a 'Skills declaration' was made that captured the key areas of agreements from the two-days of discussions. Output from the national dialogues held worldwide will contribute to a High Level Global Commission on the Future of Work that will be established in 2017. The Commission will publish a report and recommendations in the course of 2018 with these feeding into an ILO Centenary Declaration in 2019.

***"Ongoing skills reform and accompanying investment are essential for Bangladesh. I am heartened to learn of the considerable changes to the local skills environment that have taken place, involving a wide range of local and international stakeholders."***

***Mr. Guy Ryder, Director-General of ILO***

### Dhaka Declaration

The Declaration on the outcomes of the Dhaka Summit on Skills, Employability and Decent Work can be downloaded [here](#)

# Major new programme to boost social dialogue and industrial relations

*A new programme aims to improve workplace relations in the ready-made garment sector by enhancing dialogue between the government, employers and workers.*



Minister of Labour and Employment Md. Mujibul Haque speaks at the launch

Launched 11 December 2016, the Promoting Social Dialogue and Harmonious Industrial Relations in the Bangladesh Ready-Made Garment Industry project is funded by the governments of Sweden and Denmark and implemented by the ILO in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh, employers, and trade unions.

Running until March 2021, the initiative will develop dialogue mechanisms between employers and workers, particularly at workplace level as a means of preventing and resolving

disputes. It will also work to strengthen the capacity of workers and employers organizations as well as government to engage in conciliation and mediation.

The project will be initially piloted in the RMG sector, with gradual scaling up within the sector. However, the impact of the project and particularly that of the dispute resolution mechanism will cover all other sectors.

***“With its focus on strengthening social dialogue and constructive dispute resolution, this project provides a defining opportunity for Bangladesh to achieve its social and economic transformation goals, through partnership and inclusion.”***

***Mr. Guy Ryder, Director-General of ILO***

***“The Government of Bangladesh is fully committed to fostering better workplace relations. This important project, through its core focus on improving industrial relations through social dialogue, will benefit every industry across Bangladesh.”***

***Md. Mujibul Haque, Honourable State Minister, Ministry of Labour and Employment***

**Promoting Social Dialogue and Harmonious Industrial Relations in the Bangladesh Ready-Made Garment Industry project**

An animated infographic highlighting the activities of the project can be downloaded [here](#)

Fact sheets providing basic information about the project in English and Bangla are available [here](#)



# Promoting social dialogue and harmonious industrial relations in the Bangladesh ready-made garment industry



## What do we want to achieve by March 2021?

### 1 Sustainable improvements in social dialogue, workplace cooperation and grievance handling

Improved dialogue between unions and employers in



unionised RMG factories

Systematic approach to workplace cooperation in



non-unionised RMG factories

Simple and effective grievance handling procedures in



RMG factories

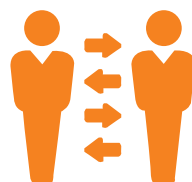
Enhanced grievance handling capacity for the Department of Labour



A pool of 15-20 national conciliators formed



A credible, efficient and transparent arbitration system



Establish sustainable and effective mechanisms for conciliation and arbitration

## 2

### 3 Enhanced capacity of employers and workers organizations to dialogue, prevent and resolve disputes

Worker Resource Centres established to support trade unions



Employers organizations better equipped to promote workplace cooperation



Carried out in collaboration with:



NCCWE



# Development partners signal intent to continue ready-made garment sector support

***Representatives of the governments of Bangladesh, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom as well as the ILO signed a Memorandum of Intent on 11 December 2016 to continue efforts to improve conditions in the Bangladesh ready-made garment industry.***

The partners currently collaborate in the 'Improving Working Conditions in the Bangladesh Ready Made Garment Sector programme' which is implemented by the ILO and funded by Canada, the Netherlands and United Kingdom. With the initiative set to end in June 2017, the Memorandum signals the interest of the partners to continue with a second phase.

Since it was launched in October 2013 the initiative has supported government efforts to inspect over 1,500 RMG factories for structural, fire and electrical safety. The capacity of the Department of Inspections for Factories and Establishments has been greatly enhanced while steps have also been made to boost safety and health in the industry.

Areas under consideration for a second phase of the project include support for the establishment of a Remediation Coordination Cell to oversee remediation of RMG factories. Work to strengthen regulatory capacity as well as build the occupational safety and health capabilities of employers' and workers' organizations is also likely to continue.



Signing the memorandum were Mikail Shipar, Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh; Guy Ryder, Director-General of the ILO; Leoni Margaretha Cuelenaere, Ambassador, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and Jane Edmondson, Head of DFID Bangladesh.

## ILO and UNFPA to collaborate on gender issues

***ILO and UNFPA to combine efforts relating to workplace violence as well as sexual and reproductive health rights.***

The ILO and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) have agreed to strengthen their collaboration in Bangladesh around activities of common interest, in particular efforts to combat sexual and gender based violence as well as to strengthen sexual and reproductive health rights.



ILO Country Director Srinivas Reddy, UN Resident Coordinator Robert Watkins and UNFPA Country Representative Argentina Matavel Piccin at the signing.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between ILO and UNFPA in Dhaka 30 November 2016. The MoU will guide both agencies to collaborate on matters of common interest. The partnership between the two UN Agencies will contribute to efforts making workplaces free of sexual and gender based violence as well as more supportive of the sexual and reproductive health rights of women and girls. One of the first areas of collaboration will be the undertaking of a survey to better understand the reasons for women choosing to leave the RMG industry as they get older.

# Improving Fire and General Building Safety in Bangladesh project comes to a close

***The US Department of Labor-funded Improving Fire and General Building Safety project has come to an end having made a major contribution to workplace safety in Bangladesh.***

Running from January 2014 to December 2016 the project has helped boost RMG sector fire and building safety in the aftermath of the Tazreen and Rana Plaza disasters. Working in collaboration with the Fire Service and Civil Defence department, Department of Inspections for Factories and Establishments, employers and workers organizations as well as the Accord and Alliance the project delivered a number of major achievements.

## Harmonised standards and protocols

The project contributed to the development of a common protocol for fire, electrical and building safety remediation and oversight for RMG factories. A harmonised system of reporting for factory inspections was established. This ensured that inspection reports from the various initiatives could be easily compared. The project also helped forge consensus on common standards for Detailed Engineering Assessments. This work will help form the foundation for the work of the Remediation Coordination Cell being formed to follow up on RMG factory remediation.

## Capacity building

Capacity building was another priority. The project helped create a core of master trainers within FSCD to build inspection skills of colleagues nationwide. Fire service staff can now more effectively inspect factories, develop emergency action plans and carry out evacuation drills. They have been trained on how to effectively follow up on inspection reports in a systematic manner and to collaborate with their counterparts from the Department of Inspections for Factories and Establishments to carry out joint follow up inspections. Recognising that the majority of RMG fires are caused by electrical faults, comprehensive training set out to raise awareness of potential electrical safety hazards and build understanding on the design of fire detection and alarm systems.

## Online course builds fire inspection capacity

Access to quality training material for fire inspectors is limited. For this reason in 2016 the project launched an interactive online course to help enhance the capacity of fire inspectors.

The course is available online in both English and Bangla at <http://bit.ly/2iE45uh>



Fire inspectors in action in an RMG factory

## Bangladesh RMG sector fire statistics

Year	Fire Incidents	Deaths
2012	257	116
2013	253	19
2014	152	1
2015	30	0
2016	311 (143*)	0

\*311 reported, 143 responded to as others dealt with by factory  
Source: Fire Service and Civil Defence

***“Many of the achievements of the Improving Fire and General Building Safety project will form the foundation for ongoing efforts to improve safety not only in the RMG industry but in all sectors. It has undoubtedly made a major contribution to workplace safety in Bangladesh.”***

***ILO Country Director for Bangladesh Srinivas Reddy***

# Occupational safety and health (OSH) round up

## OSH training for 800,000 RMG workers launched

800,000 ready-made garment workers across Bangladesh will benefit from an occupational safety and health training programme launched in October 2016. This is the third phase of an initiative that has seen a core group of 114 master trainers from BEF, BGMEA, BKMEA and RMG factories train 8,038 RMG managers and supervisors in occupational safety and health. In the latest phase, this group will now go on and build awareness of key OSH issues amongst 800,000 workers in 585 factories by June 2017.



Government, industry and development partners launch the training



BKMEA launches its OSH unit

## BKMEA forms OSH unit

The Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exports Association launched an internal 'OSH Unit' 24 November 2016 to coordinate OSH activities. The OSH unit will play an important role to support OSH and will continue its work once ILO support to the sector has ended.

## Women shout out for safer workplaces

A four-day event held in October 2016 brought together 30 women organizers and officials from the National Coordination Council for Worker Education and IndustriALL Bangladesh Council. Participants discussed issues specific to women's working conditions and rights protection. The group also sought to develop strategies and plans for women's participation and leadership in ensuring safer workplaces for women workers in the RMG sector.



Female trade union members get involved in OSH



Trade union members discuss OSH strategies

## Trade Union RMG OSH educators' conference

A conference held 4-7 December 2016 brought together some 65 trade union members from NCCWE and IBC who had been trained by ILO in OSH. The event allowed them to share best practices and experiences in order to help boost their efforts to pass on OSH skills to others in the RMG industry. The event was held with the support of ILO's Workers Bureau ACTRAV.

***The above activities were all carried out by or resulted from actions of the Improving Working Conditions in the RMG sector project funded by Canada, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.***

# Labour Inspectorate reform takes further step with Inspection checklist launch and Code of Ethics adoption

*On 1 January 2017 the Department of Inspections for Factories and Establishments formerly adopted its inspection checklist and a Code of Ethics.*

The check list is the key tool for labour inspectors to collect information on factories in a systematic and comprehensive manner. Data is then used to encourage or require employers to improve the factory to comply with the law. A user guideline was also launched to help inspectors understand the principles of the checklist. In addition, monthly inspection targets for every district have been established as well as factory selection criteria and a factory grading policy.

In view of the importance DIFE places on accountability and transparency, a Code of Ethics was adopted at the start of the year. This provides guidelines, instructions and advice to all DIFE staff on how they should carry out their work to ensure that integrity remains at a high level. The institutional reform of DIFE is supported by the ILO's Improving Working Conditions in the RMG sector programme funded by Canada, the Netherlands and the UK.

For more information about the labour inspection checklist see [here](#)



Inspection checklist another step in labour inspectorate reform



Industry leaders discuss RMG expansion

## CEBAI at the heart of push for USD 50 billion in RMG exports.

*Center of Excellence for Bangladesh Apparel Industry supporting efforts to upskill RMG industry*

A roundtable discussion on “\$50 Billion Export Target and the Role of CEBAI” was held on 19 December 2016. The BGMEA in association with the Center of Excellence for Bangladesh Apparel Industry (CEBAI) and the ILO organized the discussion. Various stakeholders took part to share their views on how CEBAI can contribute to achieving the USD 50 billion target for RMG exports by creating a skilled workforce for the sector.

The event heard that achieving \$50 billion in garment exports by 2021 is possible if Bangladesh can create adequate skilled manpower. The need for skills development was highlighted by the fact that there are more than 20,000 expatriate experts working in the sector due to the shortage of skilled and technical staff. Diversification and value addition were also identified as key areas in which Bangladesh has the scope to increase its garment exports.

**The Centre of Excellence for the Bangladesh Apparel Industry is supported by ILO, the Swedish government and H&M.**

# Building workplace safety in the RMG sector

***ILO's RMG programme funded by Canada, the Netherlands and United Kingdom was launched in the aftermath of Rana Plaza to improve working conditions in the RMG sector. Programme manager Tuomo Poutiainen explains progress to date and how this work will be built upon.***

## What are the main achievements of the programme to date?

The fact that over 1,500 factories have been assessed by the national inspection initiative and that the foundation for an institution that will take this work forward has been developed. That is a big achievement. Secondly, the labour inspectorate reform itself. There is now a complete new game plan for the labour inspectorate. It may not be completely fulfilled and reform continues but the direction, structure, key personnel, tools and resources for the labour inspectorate to do a proper job have been established through the support of this programme. Thirdly, our efforts to build an overall understanding of the importance of addressing Occupational Safety and Health and the means of the government, employers and trade unions to act on it is a legacy to build on.



RMG Programme Manager Tuomo Poutiainen

## How will the factory inspection work be carried forward?

We are working together with the government to establish a Remediation Coordination Cell to drive compliance and remediation forward. This dedicated unit will bring together the Labour Inspectorate, Fire Service and those responsible for building permits in one agency that has credibility, is trustworthy and can effectively manage fire and structural safety. The RCC will provide remediation follow up and assistance to some 1,500 factories under the National Initiative so that they know what to do, how and when to do it.

## What progress has been made relating to labour inspection reform?

The reform process that the government has put in motion with ILO support is aimed at reforming the totality of the labour inspectorate and creating a new culture of inspection. We are working in a number of key areas. One is the system of labour inspection itself. The business practices, the checklists, what labour inspectors do when they go to factories. Secondly, a lot of new staff have joined the labour inspectorate and have been trained. Thirdly, a lot of work has been done in terms of credibility and transparency. It is important that the workers and employers trust and understand what the labour inspection system is there for and how they can work with it.

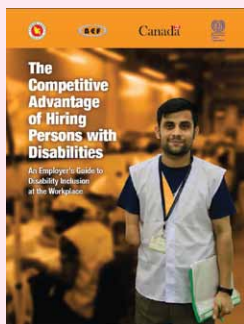
## Has Occupational Safety and Health Improved?

While there continues to be a lot of challenges relating to OSH, the foundation for a longer-term safety and health culture is being created now. Safety Committees are being formed in factories. OSH units have also been created within the labour inspectorate and employer organizations and a network of trade union OSH focal points established. The work that is being done in the garment industry will ultimately benefit all other industrial sectors in Bangladesh.

## What is the ultimate goal of these efforts?

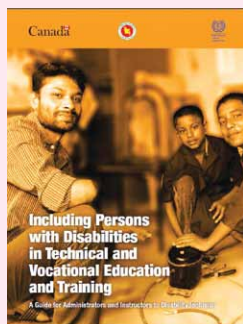
It is important that the learning and investment we are engaged in will actually promote a more compliant, competitive and forward looking industry that is not stuck with a mindset of minimum standards. Seven to eight years on from Rana Plaza we hope to leave a legacy of stronger laws, systems and governance mechanisms that translate into a safer industry.

# Publications



## The competitive advantage of hiring persons with disabilities

The publication (available in Bangla and English) highlights to employers the benefits of hiring staff with disabilities and how to do so successfully.



## Including persons with disabilities in Technical and Vocational Education and Training

This guide (available in Bangla and English) for administrators and instructors shows how TVET institutions can better attract and serve students with disabilities.



## Disability inclusion in the Bangladesh skills system

This short publication (available in Bangla and English) gives an overview of ILO's approach to disability inclusion in Bangladesh.

## Manual for capacity building of DIFE inspectors on follow-up of preliminary safety assessments and CAP development

This manual provides guidance for inspectors on how to follow up preliminary safety assessments of RMG factories and the development of Corrective Action Plans (CAPS).



## OSH kit modules

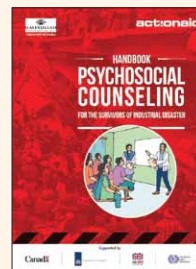


### Safety Committees



### Managing safety and health

These modules forms part of an 'OSH kit' to be distributed to all RMG factories. Covering the areas of managing safety and health, and establishing Safety Committees, the modules will provide guidance and support to newly formed Safety Committees to help them function effectively.



## Psychosocial counselling for the victims of industrial disasters

Based on experiences following the Rana Plaza disaster, this guide (English and Bangla) has been developed to share practical guidelines for those working with survivors of traumatic incidents.

All of the above publications can be downloaded [here](#)

# 16th APRM calls for more inclusive growth

The 16th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting (APRM) of the ILO concluded 13 December 2016 with a call for governments, workers' and employers' organizations in the region to do more to promote inclusive growth, social justice and decent work.

At the closing ceremony of the APRM, delegates agreed a Bali Declaration which outlines priorities for policies and actions at national level and by the ILO.

*"Governments, employers and workers in the region agree that action to promote decent work fosters inclusive growth and social justice, stimulates economic dynamism and innovation, and drives sustainable development,"* the Declaration states.

Download the Bali Declaration [here](#)



ILO Director-General Guy Ryder addresses the APRM

## ILO's activities in Bangladesh take place with the support of:

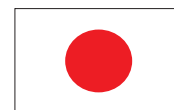
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