



A collective commitment towards safeguarding worker's safety in Bangladesh:

4 years of the OHS Initiative for Workers and Community

A report on the activities of the first phase of the OHS Initiative for Workers and Community and charting a future course

Report written by Moyukh Mahtab
Designed by Rosemary Jason

Commissioned by the California Collaborative:
Hesperian Health Guides
Labor Occupational Health Program, University of California, Berkeley
Labor Occupational Health and Safety Program, University of California, Los Angeles
Maquiladora Health and Safety Support Network

May 2021

Table of Contents

Executive Summary • iii

Report • 1-19

Appendix 1:

Project Timeline • 20-21

Appendix 2:

Curriculum Development Committee and Instructors • 22

Appendix 3:

List of Funders • 23-24



Executive Summary

Six Bangladesh labor, women's rights and public health organizations, supported by four occupational health and safety organizations in California, established a joint project called the OHS Initiative for Workers and Community to create 75 master trainers on workplace health and safety issues in 2016. The "train the trainer" program of 20 intensive sessions generated 88 trainers from the six organizations that expanded their own organizations' occupational health and safety (OHS) capacity and activities. The master trainers then conducted their own workshops in factories and worker communities reaching more than 6,450 people in more than 280 events involving workers from 192 factories and five worker neighborhoods in Dhaka, Bangladesh, over a three-year period. Eighty-three of the master trainers, including 47 women, continue to conduct activities on workplace health and safety.

During 2020, the OHS Initiative launched a COVID-19 Emergency Response program that distributed food and medicines to 1,440 families; established three mobile health clinics who served 13,500 people; established a 24/7 hotline staffed by two physicians who responded to 5,400 calls; and provided "psychological first aid" to 1,080 workers facing loss of wages, jobs and housing as a result of the pandemic.

The train the trainer program began with a five-day residential program on critical elements of effective trainings using "popular education" methods for training people with limited literacy and formal education. Fifteen one-day sessions were then conducted on key concepts of occupational health and safety, hazard identification and control, accident prevention, effective participation in factory

safety committees, and gender aspects of OHS for women workers. The program also included a field day to inspect a working garment factory so participants could practice their inspection and hazard recognition skills.

The training program – conducted entirely in Bangla – was developed by a Curriculum Development Committee including experts from each of the partner organizations, local universities, national fire service, government workplace inspection agency, and the local office of the International Labour Organization. Training materials were designed for a limited literacy audience and included audio-visual materials posted on line. "Refresher trainings" of three to five days were conducted with each of the three groups of master trainers, and one-day "Trainer Network" meetings were held to exchange materials and experiences from the 2-3 hour community-level workshops. Special sessions were held to highlight the gender aspects of workplace health and safety, including the prevention of gender-based harassment and violence, and also the hazards facing young workers on the job.

The net result of the OHS Initiative's first phase was to increase the OHS capacity and activities of each of the partner organizations, as well as the community-level workshops reaching more than 6,450 workers. OHS materials in Bangla and easily understandable to a worker and community audience have been developed and are available online. The partner organizations are currently discussing the next phase of the project, which may include expanding the focus to other hazardous industries beyond garment production, such as construction, tanneries and ship-breaking.





OHS Initiative for Workers and Community

On 24 April 2013, an eight-story commercial building in Savar, Bangladesh, housing several garment factories which employed thousands of workers, collapsed. The Rana Plaza disaster led to the death of 1,100 workers and long-term injuries for 2,500 more. Scores of volunteers joined in the efforts to rescue people trapped in the rubble of the collapsed building. Md. Forhad Hossain was one of these volunteers who witnessed first-hand the plight of those trapped inside, the despair of families hoping beyond hope that their loved ones had survived, and the devastating impact of factory owners' and international clothing brands' disregard for worker safety.



“ I have thought to myself many times what I could have done to prevent such an occurrence. This training has been a revelation for me – I have learned many new things that I would never have known. It will be very valuable if we can disperse this knowledge among workers. In the end, real change will occur only when they demand it.”

This is how, four years later, Forhad explained the significance and potential of the extensive “training of trainers” program on occupational health and safety offered by the OHS Initiative for Workers and Community. As part of the first batch of women and men to attend the Initiative’s five-day-long residential training – plus 15 subsequent day-long trainings – Forhad was one of the first “master trainers” who over the next three years would continue to impart their knowledge to thousands of garment workers in Bangladesh.

The OHS Initiative, a joint project of six Bangladeshi NGOs and the California Collaborative, has since then trained two more batches of master trainers. Over the course of its three years of operation, it has trained

88 men and women, of whom 83 have continued to promote awareness among readymade garment (RMG) workers regarding occupational health and safety (OHS) concepts, their legal rights, and prevention of workplace safety hazards and gender-based violence. These master trainers – over half of whom are women – conducted trainings on these issues for over six thousand workers starting in 2017 to the end 2020.

With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, when workers in Bangladesh were among the most severely affected through loss of jobs and accompanying stress, the Initiative decided to launch an Emergency Response Program¹. This

program targeted garment workers, their families and communities for food distribution, medicine provision, and psychological support. Three mobile medical clinics and a 24-hour hotline were established through the joint efforts of the partner organizations. Over a period of six months, the emergency program

benefited almost 1,500 families through food and medicine distribution, served 13,500 people through the mobile clinics and house visits, and responded to 5,400 callers over the hotline. Eighteen master trainers provided mental health support for 1,080 RMG workers after participating in a Psychological First Aid training.

The central goal of this document is to present the opinions and observations of the partner organizations, master trainers and other stakeholders of the OHS Initiative regarding their experiences – successes and failures, achievements and challenges – in order to chart a future path for the Initiative. Towards that end, a cursory survey of the RMG industry in Bangladesh and the key activities of the OHS Initiative since it began operations is first presented. ☒

¹ IHRB & Chowdhury Center for Bangladesh studies at UC Berkeley, “The Weakest Link in the Global Supply Chain: How the Pandemic is Affecting Bangladesh’s Garment Workers”, May 2021, <https://www.ihrb.org/focus-areas/covid-19/bangladesh-garment-workers>

RMG in Bangladesh:

Despite improvements since Rana Plaza, serious concerns remain

The RMG sector in Bangladesh today accounts for over 80% of the country's export earnings and is the second largest apparel producer in the world after China. Employing approximately four million workers, over half of whom are women, the contribution of the industry has been crucial to the country's much-lauded economic growth of the last three decades. However, the Rana Plaza collapse, and the previous Tazreen Fashion factory fire in which over 100 workers perished in 2012, starkly demonstrate that the industry's growth has not been accompanied by similar improvements in occupational safety and worker's rights.

The RMG sector has come a long way since Rana Plaza. Private initiatives, including the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh and the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety, have contributed to improving workers' safety and rights in the major factories through ensuring compliance. The national government also committed to prioritize workers' safety in the aftermath, leading to adoption of the National Occupation Safety and Health Policy and pledges to inspect all factories, to implement the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, and to strengthen the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE). These public and private efforts have indeed led to greater awareness among workers and better working conditions in factories. Safety committees with factory worker representatives have been set up in many factories, as per Bangladesh law.

Yet, as has been pointed out by workers and labor activists, structural and occupational

improvements have occurred mostly in the larger factories, with the more numerous, smaller, sub-contracting factories that employ thousands largely left out of the process. Laura Gutierrez of the Worker Rights Consortium pointed this fact out in a *Guardian* article in 2018: "In terms of the actual progress made in these [smaller] factories, it's a black hole."²

Other concerns about the industry include the weak provisions for the operation of trade unions and OHS in the Labour Law³. As recently as 2020, a minority staff report prepared for the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, assessed the progress made, noting that while international initiatives after Rana Plaza "significantly improved fire, structural, and electrical safety conditions" and "thousands of RMG factories across Bangladesh have been inspected or remediated," in recent years "the environment for union organizers and activists has deteriorated" and factory owners have not been held accountable for "unfair labor practices." The closure of the Accord's Dhaka operations and slow start of government OHS inspections, combined with the repressive government action on workers' demonstrations, such as those demanding an increase in the minimum wage, leave "many workers and worker advocates...concerned that standards for safety and rights could backslide, raising the specter of more accidents in the future."⁴ Especially now during the COVID era, the lack of worker protection against employer reprisals for organizing in general, and health and safety in particular, remains an unsolved problem in the RMG sector. ☸

2 Michael Safi and Dominic Rushe, "Rana Plaza, five years on: safety of workers hangs in balance in Bangladesh," *Guardian*, 24 April, 2018.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/apr/24/bangladeshi-police-target-garment-workers-union-rana-plaza-five-years-on>

3 Colin Long, "State of disunion," Star Weekend, *The Daily Star*, May 3, 2019.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/star-weekend/news/state-disunion-1737673>

4 "Seven years after Rana Plaza, significant challenges remain," Minority staff report prepared for the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, One Hundred Sixteenth Congress Second Session, March 5, 2020. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CPRT-116SPRT39906/pdf/CPRT-116SPRT39906.pdf>

Towards collective action for promoting OHS

"When the California Collaborative approached us about the project, we became interested because it was very innovative: six organizations collectively working with a focus on OHS, rather than having it as a small component."

*Kalpona Akter
Executive Director, Bangladesh Center for Workers Solidarity (BCWS)*

Forhad's words poignantly highlight how Rana Plaza was a wake-up call for many individuals and organizations to step up efforts towards improving working conditions in the country. And while incidents like Rana Plaza served to shine a spotlight on the RMG industry, poor OHS remains a concern for millions of workers employed in the shipbreaking, tannery, construction, and other Bangladeshi industries. As the International Labour Organization (ILO) points out, "over 11,000 workers suffer fatal accidents and a further 24,500 die from work related diseases across all sectors each year in Bangladesh. It is also estimated that a further 8 million workers suffer injuries at work – many of which result in permanent disability⁵."

This is the context in which the OHS Initiative for Workers and Community began – as an idea to increase the capacity of Bangladeshi organizations advocating for improved OHS standards in garment, ship-breaking, construction and other industries, as well as OHS awareness in the workers' communities.

Six Bangladesh non-governmental organizations with support from the US-based California Collaborative came together in the aftermath of Rana Plaza to form the joint project, each drawing on its expertise and experiences to collectively work toward a common goal: to increase knowledge, skills, and confidence in the field of OHS by increasing OHS knowledge "from the bottom up" – targeting workers and their communities.

The OHS Initiative started with the:

- **goals** of expanding the repertoire of each organization's existing trainers to include basic OHS information, concepts and activities; to share among all the organizations an approach encompassing public health, gender and workplace safety issues; and provide this information and broadened perspective to a wide range of workers.
- **objective** of generating a pool of 75 OHS trainers in the workers' and community organizations and train at least 6,000 rank & file workers in several industrial sectors by OHS promoters over a three-year period.
- **mission** of increasing the capacity of the six Bangladeshi partner organizations in the area of occupational health and safety through a "train-the-trainer" program conducted over three years.

Guiding Principles:

- **Focus** on grassroots workers and their organization.
- **Use "popular education" methods** to promote participation among those with limited literacy.
- **Do trainings in Bangla language**, drawing on local cultural knowledge.

⁵ International Labour Organization, "Safety and health at work in Bangladesh," <https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Areasofwork/safety-and-health-at-work/lang--en/index.htm>

The six Bangladeshi organizations – Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation (OSHE), Gonoshasthaya Kendra (GK), Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity (BCWS), Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS), IndustriALL Bangladesh Council (IBC) and Naripokkho – already had a wealth of advocacy and training experience.

The motivation of the four partner organizations (OSHE, BCWS, BILS and IBC) with long experience working on the issues of OHS, labor rights, and union representation to join the project was the close alignment of their goals with that of the Initiative, and the prospect of greater impact through collective efforts. The two organizations, GK and Naripokkho, that had not specifically focused on the RMG industry before, had been involved since Rana Plaza in working towards ensuring health rights, preventing sexual violence and empowering female garment workers in factories. These experiences were critical to their decisions to join the project, as both Tamanna Khan, President of Naripokkho, and Md. Ghulam Mustafa Dulal, Executive Director of Program of GK, explained. Tamanna Khan was elected chairwoman of the Initiative's Governing Board.

These six Bangladeshi organizations pooled their expertise to determine the scope of the training

program, develop appropriate modules relating to a wide range of OHS issues and pedagogical skills, implement trainings for developing 75 master trainers, and through them to conduct community level workshops reaching 6,000 workers over the course of three years. The California Collaborative's role would be to ensure fund-raising for the first three years, and to provide technical assistance and OHS and pedagogical materials as required.

An MoU to that effect was signed in November 2015, recognizing that each of the six partner organizations plus the California Collaborative would have “equal opportunity, voice, status and ownership” of the Initiative. In August 2016, the OHS Initiative governing board of seven representatives met to start planning the activities, hiring the staff and recruiting the trainers. On October 2, 2016, the OHS Initiative received the required approval from the Bangladesh government's NGO Bureau to begin its operations.

So, with funding amounting to over US \$54,000, contributed by the Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) in the UK, the World Solidarity Movement (WSM) in Belgium, the National Fire Association (NFPA) in the US, LUSH Cosmetic's “Charity Pot” in Canada, and a group of donors in San Francisco, California, the work of the Initiative began (see Appendix 1). ☼



Partner organizations



Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity (BCWS), founded in 2001 by former garment workers, is one of the country's most prominent labor rights groups. They work to improve working conditions and promote workers' rights by building the capacity of workers to advocate for themselves, and providing services such as labor rights education, leadership training and legal aid.



Bangladesh Institute for Labour Studies (BILS), the country's only labor institute, was formed in 1995. It provides research and information on labor laws and economic issues to unions and worker organizations in a variety of industrial sectors. BILS is widely respected among labor groups and works in an ecumenical fashion with all sectors of the fractured labor movement in Bangladesh.



Founded in 2003, the **Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation (OSHE)** is a leading OHS non-governmental organization that conducts training, research, policy advocacy and support services for workers in the garment and shipbreaking industries, among other sectors.



Gonoshasthaya Kendra (GK) is a public health organization formed during the 1971 Liberation War. Its clinics and hospitals cater to the healthcare needs of Bangladesh's poor, including workers in many industries. GK's health facilities in Dhaka and Savar have treated Rana Plaza collapse survivors and their families, as well as injured workers in numerous other industries.



IndustriALL Bangladesh Council (IBC) is made up of more than 20 trade unions in the garment, chemical and metalworking industries, including a dozen unions in the garment industry. The IBC is the national affiliate of the Geneva-based IndustriALL Global Union.



Naripokkho, founded in 1983, is a women's organization that provides information, training and support on gender issues for women workers on topics such as domestic violence and social discrimination. Naripokkho works with garment workers and their families in the Savar industrial area of Dhaka, including survivors of the Rana Plaza building collapse.



The California Collaborative, formed in 2015 to support the creation of the OHS Initiative, consists of four OHS organizations in the state of California: Hesperian Health Guides in Berkeley; Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP) at the University of California at Berkeley; Labor Occupational Safety and Health (LOSH) program at the University of California at Los Angeles; and the Maquiladora Health and Safety Support Network (MHSSN) in Berkeley.

Activities of the OHS Initiative: 2017 to 2020

"We always knew about the safety hazards workers face but that knowledge was so limited. This training gave us a deep knowledge and understanding regarding safety hazards faced by workers. I feel confident that I can provide the same training to the workers and am sure that if we can reach the workers with the training, they will be more conscious and careful of their workplace. Workers will be safer."

Aklima Akter, Master Trainer, BCWS

With OSHE acting as the Secretariat, and Repon Chowdhury as the Member Secretary of the Governing Board, the OHS Initiative began work during the fall of 2016 to launch the first Training of Trainers program the following year. After four staff were hired and the Board decided to focus on garment workers in the first phase of the project, a curriculum development committee was formed of members from the partner organizations (see Appendix 2).

This committee was tasked with evaluating, selecting, and working with staff to adapt existing national and international material on OHS, health, gender issues including violence against women, as well as conducting thorough discussions with external experts from institutions and organizations such as the National Industrial Health and Safety Council, university professors, the ILO, and Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC).

These outreach meetings ensured the support and assistance of OHS experts in developing a holistic curriculum as well as adopting popular education methods to enhance communication with workers with limited literacy.

Each partner organization selected five participants, leading to an eventual graduating class of 29 from the first training program launched in September 2017. This group participated in the first of the three intensive training programs, consisting of a five-day residential course in GK's facilities in Savar, followed by 15 day-long courses over the next several months. The training materials and methods – involving lectures, multimedia, group activities, and case studies – recognized the wide range of professions and educational levels of the participants. OHS issues such as ergonomics, risk and hazard evaluation,

chemical and fire safety, as well as training methods and techniques, legal frameworks, communication and leadership skills, and conflict resolution skills were covered. Facilitators for these trainings included resource persons from OSHE, GK, BILS, Naripokkho, local universities, national fire service, DIFE, and ILO Dhaka (see Appendix 2).

This training structure – beginning with a needs assessment of each batch of participants – was repeated over the next two years, with adjustments made based on accumulated experience. In 2018, 29 women and men participated, and in the third group in 2019, another 30 people received training. Thus, a total of 88 master trainers were generated through these training programs, 83 of whom continue to be active, and 47 of whom are women.

A continuous feedback process was developed by Initiative staff to include evaluations by participants at the end of the training sessions, as well as discussion of the worker outreach sessions after the community-level workshops. Initiative staff also organized refresher training sessions for participants from each batch to review key training topics and to explore new questions. Important suggestions were generated by these feedback processes and led to revisions of the curriculum and teaching methods, including addition of new labor law topics, incorporation of more female instructors, development of flip chart training materials more appropriate for people with limited literacy, and, due to the success of the factory visit described below, incorporation of more field-based activities. The creative and committed work by Initiative staff, especially the responsiveness to requests to incorporate more gender issues and to make materials more accessible to participants, played a central role in the successes of the project. ☸

Training modules of Training of Trainers

Based on the needs-assessment and outreach meetings by the Curriculum Development Committee, 16 training modules were developed.

THE FIRST MODULE, ON SKILLS FOR DESIGNING AND CONDUCTING TRAININGS, WAS GIVEN DURING THE FIVE-DAY RESIDENTIAL TRAINING:

Module 1: Basic TOT on Enhancing Training Quality and Facilitation Skills

- **Day 1:** What constitutes training, why it's important, the training cycle, how to conduct a training needs assessment, and determining training objectives.
- **Day 2:** Training methodologies, how to use brainstorming, role plays, small group discussions, guided studies, etc. to engage participants, selecting and developing training materials, planning and conducting trainings.
- **Day 3:** Facilitation skills, trainer do's and don'ts, and follow-up, monitoring and evaluation.
- **Day 4:** Each participant facilitated a 30-minute session, developing materials and choosing methodologies.
- **Day 5:** Continuation of participants' presentations of their 30-minute sessions; course review; self-assessment; and closing ceremony.

15 MODULES, ONE-DAY TRAININGS PRESENTED OVER THREE MONTHS:

Module 2: Basic Concept of Occupational Health and Safety focusing on Ready Made Garment (RMG) industries

Module 3: Legal Framework of Occupational Health and Safety

Module 4: Workplace Hazard and Risk Identification, Assessment and Risk Reduction Procedure

Module 5: Accidents in Workplace, Activities During-Pre and Post Period of Accident, Medical and Legal Support

Module 6: Workplace Chemical Safety, Electrical Safety, and Industrial Gas Cylinder Boiler Maintenance, and Safety Checklist

Module 7: Workplace Ergonomics and Importance of Mental Health in relation to Stress Management

Module 8: Special Training on Fire Drilling and Electrical Safety

Module 9: Roles of Department of Inspection of Factories and Establishment (DIFE) and Inspection Procedure and Checklist

Module 10: Factory Visit – Practical Demonstration of Hazard Inspection

Module 11: Effective Trade Union and role of Trade Union in workers' safety

Module 12: Factory Safety Committees

Module 13: Collective Bargaining Agreements and Conflict Management

Module 14: Gender Based Occupational Health and Safety and Reproductive Health

Module 15: Earthquake Risk and Vulnerability Mapping, Building Safety, Disaster Management and Evacuations Plan During the emergencies

Module 16: Leadership

Field day: Inspecting a working garment factory

An innovative aspect of the program – and exciting for the participants – was the one-day module facilitated by Mahfuzur Rahman, Deputy Inspector General of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE), which involved a field visit to a working garment factory. The DIFE leader walked the participants through the process of inspection and on-site assessment, and participants were able to apply the skills and knowledge they have learned over the course of the program on the floor of an operating factory.

On October 13th, Mahfuzur Rahman, Deputy Inspector General of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) in the Ministry of Labour and Employment spoke about his department. Rahman detailed the inspection process and highlighted the crucial role that workers can play in ensuring a proper factory inspection. Then he taught the participants how to develop a checklist and how to use it effectively.



The next day, participants got a rare opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge of factory inspections to real life. Divided into two groups

– one led by DIG Rahman, and the other by lead trainer Masum-ul-Alam – the participants inspected Dekko Apparels & Fashions Ltd., a factory with 600 workers. Each group was further divided into three groups – one looking into fire safety, another at machine safety, and the third at structural and general worker safety. A factory manager accompanied each of the groups and answered their queries.

After conducting their investigations, each group presented their findings, outlining the violations they had noted and suggesting remediation plans for the factory to ensure worker safety.

For a majority of the participants, it was the first time they could walk around and inspect a factory. One participant noted, “I’m a union organizer, but I would never be allowed to walk around a factory like this. And previously, even if I had been allowed, I would not have known what is and isn’t a violation.”

Another participant highlighted how being in the factory itself allowed them to make sense of the checklist. “If we had just been given the checklist, we wouldn’t get an idea about the actual lay of the land, and how to note the discrepancies. The DIG showed us exactly what to look for, and how to take down the notes.”

Since the factory is an Accord-enrolled factory and is far along in its remediation process, the participants noted what a compliant factory looks like. Participants pointed out that access to a less compliant factory would have generated, no doubt, a longer list of the irregularities and violations of safety standards.

Reported by Sushmita Preetha in 2018

Besides the Training of Trainers program and the refresher trainings conducted each year, special day-long seminars were organized to strengthen participants' knowledge and skills on specific issues. In 2018, two such seminars were organized titled "Gender and OHS," focusing on workplace and social hazards faced by women workers in particular, and "Youth and OHS" addressing the higher rates of injury and illness among younger workers.

In the second half of 2019, 75 women worker leaders also participated in a session on leadership skills organized by the Initiative. A five-day workshop was also organized for 30 master trainers on "Employment Injury Insurance," an intensive exploration of the national workers' compensation insurance program under consideration by the Bangladesh Parliament.

In 2018, regular meetings of the Trainers Network were started during the second year of operation. These meetings brought together master trainers who had already conducted worker outreach activities to share experiences, exchange materials and discuss best practices, especially given the constraints of time and limited literacy among workers.

Over the course of four years, the OHS Initiative produced and posted 19 short documentaries on YouTube, now available publicly online worldwide (type "OHS Initiative for Workers and Community" into the search engine). The YouTube page, first posted in May 2018, has videos containing sections of the instructors' presentations and recommendations, as well as participants' activities and feedback. A closed Facebook group for the master trainers was also established in 2018 to connect and support the trainers in conducting their grassroots-level workshops in the community and factories. Staff of the OHS Initiative have posted new and revised materials, technical information, and posted comments from the master trainers on their own experiences, challenges and successes to encourage their peers. ☒



Mitigating the impacts of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic hit Bangladesh hard, and it became clear that garment workers were among the most affected populations. Many factories closed and workers faced loss of salaries and loss of employment. In response to the pandemic, the OHS Initiative launched an emergency response program for garment workers which included food and medicine distribution, establishing three mobile clinics, a 24-hour hotline staffed by physicians and general education and awareness raising about the pandemic.

With a major grant from the Laudes Foundation, GK's expertise in public health, and the partner organizations' existing networks among workers, the emergency response program was able to establish three mobile clinics in communities where many garment workers live, and reached hundreds of families with food support. Special psychosocial support trainings were organized for selected master trainers who then offered assistance to workers affected by the pandemic.

Achievements and Successes

"I was not confident in speaking publicly. After my training and conducting outreach activities, I am more confident. As a volunteer, now I feel closer to workers and understand their issues better."

Anjina Khatun, Master Trainer, Naripokkho

The OHS Initiative for Workers and Community set a target of creating 75 master trainers with a wide and holistic knowledge of OHS issues, and then to multiply that rich human resource through outreach to 6,000 garment workers over three years. On that criteria, the Initiative achieved its goal: 88 master trainers, 83 of whom remain active, were trained in the three batches. They in turn reached 6,495 garment workers at the community level by conducting more than 280 trainings and meetings.

These outreach activities started immediately after the first batch of participants completed the Training of Trainers program. For example in 2018, field organizers for the OSHE Foundation arranged five day-long workshops, attended by more than 450 workers, on topics including workplace hazard identification, ergonomics, control of hazards, OHS issues particularly important for women workers, as well as labor law, leadership and life skills.

By the time the third batch of participants had started their training, master trainers from the first two batches had conducted over 200 community workshops. These enabled them to engage with 2,240 workers from 112 factories, almost 80% of whom were women, and over 90% under 35 years old, about OHS issues. The combined efforts of the three batches of graduates ensured community outreach through two-hour long



workshops reaching 6,495 workers from 192 factories and five working-class neighborhoods in Dhaka. This process ensured the integration or expansion of OHS activities into each organization's ongoing work.

The Initiative's expanded activities with factories, starting from 2019, also led to the organization of legally recognized unions at two garment factories. The 79 garment workers, including 57 women from managerial to production levels, who participated in the three training programs on Women Leadership and Gender Sensitivity are now working as active members of the Safety and Gender Committees in various factories. At the same time, through playing a role in the committees in their respective factories, workers trained by the master trainers on OHS issues were able to contribute towards creating a safer workplace for thousands of their colleagues. During COVID-19, master trainers and trained workers were able to generate awareness among the community regarding public health requirements and particularly about the importance of wearing masks.

The Trainers Network created a forum in which the challenges and successes of the worker and community outreach workshops could be evaluated and discussed. Master trainers pointed to a high demand and interest among workers for OHS-related information, despite the time and literacy constraints facing RMG workers. Most workers, they felt, have a simple understanding of OHS issues, but through these workshops they were able to gain a deeper understanding. They noted that the flipcharts and other teaching materials developed with workers in mind were relatable, engaging and accessible.

Swapan Pandey, a master trainer from BCWS, underscored the importance of the intensive training they had first undergone to the success of worker outreach: “To teach others, you need to have a very good understanding.” Asaduz Zaman, another master trainer from OSHE, echoed the same point: “I have participated in many trainings, but this was the broadest in its scope.” Another participant, pointing out the gaps in their OHS knowledge, said: “Before the training, I knew how unsafe our factories can be, but I lacked concrete knowledge. I wasn’t able to actually tell workers specifics about the kinds of risks, and what to do if they came across such risks. Even a simple chair can have a lasting impact on your health. Most importantly, the workers deserve better than to just accept everything handed to them.” The demand starting as early as 2018 from the Trainers Network for refresher trainings and more network meetings also attests to the degree in which the master trainers felt ownership of the Initiative and looked to it as a source of continued growth.

In the same vein, in an Initiative video documenting the completion of a training on trade unions, Laboni Akter stated that even though she worked with trade unions, it was a revelation to realize that trade union leaders have a dual role to play. One part is fighting for



the rights and demands of workers, she explained, but “we almost forget that smoothly running the union is just as important.” “Through the group work with other participants, these responsibilities came up clearly – I had not thought of this before,” she said, adding that this new clarity will help in her ongoing work with trade unions. Another clip, filmed during the training on fire safety, shows enthusiastic participants not only attending a lecture given by the former Director General of the Fire Service and Civil Defense, but then applying their knowledge about responding to fire hazards through the hands-on use of fire extinguishers.

These achievements, as Faiza Tuba, Programme Officer for Labour Rights of the Laudes Foundation, an Initiative funder, pointed out, are long-lasting assets. Highlighting the Initiative’s focus on workers’ and women’s empowerment and strengthening of factory level committees as crucial reasons for Laudes to invest in it, she said, “once committees start functioning, they are sustainable even if committee members change.”

Similarly, the rich body of Bangla-language teaching materials and modules, developed and improved upon by the Initiative, will continue to be important resources. The continued access to these materials, available through the Initiative’s website and the

“

There is still a gap of awareness among workers, so we need to do regular follow ups. But we see visible impact on workers whom we have trained.”

Khushbu Ahmed Rana, Master Trainer, BILS



videos on its YouTube channel, provides OHS resources that will benefit organizations and workers beyond the immediate reach of the project.

For Naripokkho and GK, organizations for which OHS and workers' rights are only part of their overall activities, the OHS Initiative has meant the development of experience and expertise which serves to promote OHS awareness beyond the scope of the project activities. Tamanna Khan explained that the resources developed and experience gained through the Initiative's work remain valuable for other projects that Naripokkho is involved in, while master trainers from the organization continue to confidently promote OHS issues in various forums and meetings.

GK, which works in the sector towards ensuring the health rights of workers – including advocacy for employers' contribution towards the health needs of workers – the OHS Initiative has meant engagement with a broader scope of OHS issues. Although, Ghulam Dulal pointed out, it might not be feasible for GK to incorporate all these issues as part of its activities immediately and will require greater engagement with employers first. But master trainers who have been trained through the Initiative and the resources it developed will continue to be important resources for the organization's work.

The Initiative's emergency response to COVID-19 through food distribution and the establishment of mobile clinics also led to tangible results which benefitted workers during a time of national emergency. Around 1,440 families benefitted from the Initiative's food distribution activities. Three mobile clinics began operating in working-class neighborhoods in Gazipur, Mirpur and Narayanganj beginning in June 2020, through which 13,500 people were served. GK's public health expertise was a key factor in ensuring that these clinics could cater to the immediate health needs of garment workers and their families. The Initiative also set up a 24/7 hotline staffed by two MDs who responded to calls from 5,400 workers.

The training on psychosocial counselling that 18 master trainers received enabled them to provide "psychological first aid" to 1,080 workers confronting nonpayment of wages, job loss, and other stress. Anjina Khatun, one of those trained in psychosocial support, explained that this was one of the key successes of the Initiative for her. She described providing mental health support to a female garment worker who was divorced in the midst of the pandemic, and to a worker couple who, in the early public panic, were refused entry into their home village. She explained how she tried to relieve some of the stress for those facing job loss, discussing employment alternatives based on their skill sets. In recognition of the pandemic's shadow impacts, particularly the global trend of increase in domestic violence, the training placed emphasis on domestic violence prevention.

At the same time, the emergency response continued to work towards raising awareness of workers and their community about COVID-19.

Overall, the Initiative's impact in only four years of operation has contributed towards a culture of OHS through relationships it has developed with workers, committees, factories, communities, and government. Admirably, it has also supported garment workers and their families during a time of unforeseen international crisis. ☸

Evaluating Strengths, Challenges and Gaps

"We were trained by the best trainers and experts in Bangladesh on a broad range of issues. I have gained self-confidence as a trainer and am now called by many organizations as a master trainer to conduct trainings – I can take a lead role toward advocating for OHS."

Asaduz Zaman, Master Trainer, OSHE

While the OHS Initiative has seen significant success in terms of its impacts and achievements, the process was not without its share of challenges. In sharing their experiences of success during the Trainers Network meetings, master trainers also identified problems they faced while trying to conduct workshops with workers. At the same time, Initiative staff and board members point out that a joint project of six organizations is a source of strength as well as a coordination challenge.

Interviewed master trainers focused on the comprehensive nature of their training process to be the biggest strength of the Initiative's work. They pointed out that compared to various trainings they had participated in before, the

Training of Trainers program's coverage of OHS issues and its participatory, hands-on approach was exemplary. The visits to factories facilitated by DIFE was a component of the trainings they highlighted as a strength.

On the other hand, the challenges they faced were mostly regarding their attempts to reach out to factories. They explained that these kind of OHS awareness trainings would be best conducted on factory floors, but employers were still reluctant to give that access. Many factory owners in Bangladesh, like elsewhere, have difficulty in accepting an active role for workers in the workplace for improving health and safety.

As a result, the trainings were mostly conducted on weekends – the only day off for garment





However, for many partner organization representatives, a limitation of the work was the lack of a more institutional form for the training program, such as an academy, which could continue to serve other organizations and workers on OHS issues.

Coordination among six organizations, each of which has their own specific goals and focus, was also cited by representatives and OHS staff as a major challenge. At the same time, as one partner representative pointed out, this also ensured transparency and accountability for all the organizations involved.

Project Coordinator Masud Parvez noted that while it was a challenge coordinating with six organizations, the combined expertise was one of the biggest strengths of the project. His experience throughout the project echoes his sentiment from 2018: “Though ensuring workers safety is always challenging, I am confident that as six well-known and respected organizations working together, we will overcome the barriers much more effectively than if it was any one organization working alone.” This strength in unity, the project’s ability to respond to the needs of trainers from very diverse backgrounds, and the continued feedback process were the biggest factors leading to success, for him. As for gaps, he pointed to the lack of employer trust and their absence as a stakeholder – which, in his view, should be seen as an opportunity to build on the project’s successes in the future.

Lastly, from the perspective of the California Collaborative, the expansion of the project’s initial goals to incorporate innovative activities, and the dedication and direction provided by the project staff, were key successes of the Initiative..

The combined perspectives of all these stakeholders are summarized on the following two pages: ☒

“Though ensuring workers safety is always challenging, I am confident that as six well-known and respected organizations working together, we will overcome the barriers much more effectively than if it was any one organization working alone.”

*Masud Parvez,
Project Coordinator*

workers often working a six-day week – and usually limited to 2-3 hours. These time constraints were often challenging for workers with family responsibilities, especially women.

For partner organization representatives, the biggest strength of the Initiative was its collective approach and pooled expertise. This ensured some of the best trainers in the country could come forward to develop a rich module. The representatives pointed out that these OHS resources would remain valuable assets for a range of future work beyond use during the three training programs. Similarly, the networks and relationships developed were a source of strength which would contribute to furthering the project’s goals.

Strengths and successes

Collective action: the joint participation of six diverse grassroots organizations over a four-year period led to greater impact. The process of ensuring participation of all partner groups in selecting trainers led to increasing institutional OHS knowledge and capacity for all partner groups. The involvement of six organization also ensured accountability and transparency.

Scope of trainings and seminars: 16 modules (as well online resources) were developed as sustainable assets that will continue to improve OHS in Bangladesh. The extensive range of OHS issues covered – including gender and women’s rights and youth-specific issues – facilitation and instruction by OHS experts, commitment to popular education methods, and improvement of leadership skills were key strengths of the program. Factory visits allowed for the application of theoretical knowledge gained from classroom trainings.

Master trainers: The network of 83 master trainers who remain active, including 47 women, serve as a forum for experience sharing and mutual support and learning. The number of master trainers generated, even considering those who dropped out, exceeded the project’s original targets.

Outreach to workers and factories: Despite the challenges, master trainers were able to reach a large number of factory workers, their families and communities and generate increased awareness of OHS issues. Workers have been very receptive to the workshops and master trainers assessed increased empowerment in terms of their ability to speak out and awareness about processes of complaint. The Initiative could also expand its impact by further increasing the establishment of and its participation in factory-level health and safety committees and anti-harassment committees.

Networks: Through the Initiative’s work, broader networks with OHS and labor rights organizations, government institutions, workers and employers have developed, which itself is important in improving OHS standards.

Emergency response: The Initiative was able to respond to a call from the Laudes Foundation – which was a vote of confidence in itself – to mount an effective COVID-19 emergency response program which mobilized the resources, skills, and participation of the partner organizations.

Staff: A strong staff felt ownership of the Initiative and exceeded the project’s original goals to conduct additional, innovative activities to expand the impact and scope of the project.



Challenges and gaps

Coordination of partners: Coordination of the participation of six independent partner organizations, all of which have their own full set of activities and priorities, coupled with the internal policies of partner organizations, such as the IBC policy of yearly changes of leadership, was challenging.

Ensuring participation: It was sometimes difficult to organize the participation of master trainers, who have their own work, family, and organizational responsibilities; and who also have limited time and resources for participation. Moreover, the issue of time was a greater challenge in reaching out to workers, who only get a one-day weekend. Without honorariums for workers participating in the workshops, it was challenging at times to ensure participation.

Curriculum development and teaching methods: Given the diverse educational and professional backgrounds of participants selected for the Training of Trainers program, development of suitable materials was challenging. However, in the course of the three years, multiple needs assessments and evaluations helped create resources for all groups of trainers in the program.

Limitations of outreach workshops: Inaccessibility of factory floors, reluctant employers, and lack of audio-visual equipment were challenges to conducting workshops.

Scope of the Initiative: While the original idea for the OHS Initiative was to expand its work to a number of hazardous industries, the initial focus was limited to the RMG sector. Some partner organizations such as OSHE and Naripokkho hoped that the Initiative could develop institutionally as an OHS academy, which could continue to support OHS capacity development for a large number of organizations and individuals. The funds needed for establishing such an institution would be considerable.

Funding: Securing ongoing funding for the project was the sole responsibility of the California Collaborative, with support from Initiative staff, for the project's first three years. The partner organizations' own funding needs made it difficult to free up internal organizational resources to fundraise for the Initiative. Moreover, the paucity of national sources of support for OHS, combined with the difficulties of accessing international funds for OHS projects by Bangladeshi organizations, will be a major obstacle to overcome in the Initiative's second phase.



Going forward: What's next for the OHS Initiative?

The first phase of the OHS Initiative has largely focused on the RMG sector. But dismal OHS practices, as discussed earlier, remain a major issue of concern for a range of other industries such as shipbreaking, construction, and tanneries in Bangladesh. At the same time, the work of developing systematic practices, policies and culture regarding OHS in the RMG sector remains far from over.

In discussing the future of the Initiative, it is helpful to understand the California Collaborative's own assessment of the lessons learned in the first four years of the project:

- It is possible and productive to organize a grassroots-level OHS project focused on increasing the knowledge and activity of workers and their communities.
- It is possible and productive to organize an OHS project with diverse but related worker and community-based organizations, not all of which have previous experience in OHS.
- It is possible to make a positive impact in factories and communities in the effort to improve working conditions through modest projects like the Initiative.
- It is possible to secure international support for OHS projects focused on increasing the knowledge, activities and confidence of workers, their organizations and communities in the arena of OHS.

Master trainers, who have seen the impacts their workshops have had on workers, are of the same mind when asked about the need for continuing the Initiative. They feel that there is a strong and unfulfilled demand for OHS-related training among workers. As Khushbu Ahmed Rana, master trainer from BILS, put it: "It is very important to continue the Initiative; other trainings focus only on leadership and trade unions, but OHS remains an underserved issue."

Similarly, speaking of the need for generating more master trainers, Asaduz Zaman from OSHE underscored that more competent trainers are needed since there are many sectors other than RMG where workers require OHS awareness.

Representatives from the six partner organizations too, although with some differing ideas, agreed on the need for the continued presence of the Initiative. For Shakil Ahmed from

BILS, the next step is to start discussions with all stakeholders to decide if and how the Initiative can focus on other industrial sectors as well as garment.

Kamrul Hasan from IBC, on the other hand, focused on RMG and the impact of COVID-19 on the sector. With work pressure increasing simultaneously with worker lay-offs – thus increasing the likelihood of accidents – he felt the next step should be to work more closely with the trained workers and employers to see how the commitments and learnings are being put into practice in factories. In a context where employers are not even trying to ensure vaccination for their workers, he asked: "How do we ensure OHS in this pandemic context?"

Those views are also shared by Repon Chowdhury from OSHE. Going forward, he saw the priorities as continued strengthening of committees in factories and working more

closely with employers and DIFE to ensure greater awareness about and implementation of the Labour Law.

For Ghulam Dulal from GK, the work done through the Initiative so far has been a preparatory phase, but that dissemination is a long-term process. He suggested exploring how the master trainers and their network, the training modules and resources, the factory committees that have been formed, and the network of the partner organizations can all be integrated and expanded. “It won’t be the same project going forward; we need to see how to make workers own it, how to establish the need for it.”

Project Coordinator Masud Parvez too pointed to the need for developing the network and relationships:

“We can provide modules and can include management training in our work. A lot of work in Bangladesh has been done in compliant factories, but we need to go beyond and also look at the noncompliant supply chain,” he said.

Kalpona Akhter of the BCWS highlighted the continued need and scope of the Initiative’s work. “This is only a beginning. Four years is not a long time. I believe the work should continue so that we can give it an institutional form and continue the collective action.” Moreover, partner organizations should step forward for fundraising as well.

Tamanna Khan made a similar argument, adding that if the Initiative can be registered as an independent entity, then the scope for funding will increase as well.

Visions of future work

- Developing more pictorial material for workers and promoting trained master trainers for facilitating ToTs. Developing online programs for master trainers to ensure more refresher trainings.
- Learning from the experience of COVID-19 expanding curriculum to prepare for psychological health issues and preparing trainers to support workers looking for new jobs if, for example, the garment sector shrinks.
- Assessing current level of worker awareness and planning for an integrated approach with current assets, involving more stakeholders.
- Ensuring greater involvement of employers and managers to show why OHS is good not only for workers, but for them as well. Involving union leaders from factories to ensure community involvement.
- Need for more sustainable presence of the Initiative through an institutional structure, for example, some form of OHS Academy.



Indeed, whatever the form and approach going forward, that there is a need for greater awareness and outreach regarding OHS issues is clear.

Speaking about the Initiative, George Faller, Chief Technical Advisor of the ILO's RMG Program, said: "There is scope for the work and workers are crying out for it." For him, the challenge is to go from creation of master trainers to the factory level committees: "All depends on how master trainers can reach out to factory floors."

Similarly, Tuomo Poutiainen, Country Director of ILO Bangladesh, also argued for the need for continuity, especially given that "the Initiative has achieved a lot with small resources." With the COVID-19 pandemic highlighting new challenges in RMG worker safety, the need for institutionalizing OHS issues at factories is crucial. He pointed to the need for assessing what investments are required for scaling up the work that has been done, as well as the possibility of the ILO working together towards its common goals.

What emerges from this wide range of perspectives is that the need and scope of work for the Initiative

is broad. Going forward, it has to assess in what ways it can build on the work that has been done in the first phase and which of the many of priorities – from expansion to other industries, to scaling up and systematizing OHS in the garment industry – it can best accomplish. Whichever direction that may be, it is evident from the achievements of the first phase – developing a rich body of OHS resources, training of 83 master trainers, building awareness of over 6,000 workers and providing emergency support to thousands more during COVID-19 – that the collective action exemplified in the OHS Initiative and the dedicated efforts of the master trainers will continue to be a source of its strength.

In the end, what matters is that the Initiative has been able to play a meaningful role in realizing the aspirations and needs out of which it was born. Indeed, the master trainers who continue to promote OHS issues today highlight over everything else the positive impacts the trainings had on their skills and confidence, and the immense potential of empowering workers that the Initiative embodies. ☼

“

I think, all workers of every sector should be provided this type of training to make them aware of safety hazards and legal rights. Sometimes, factory management takes advantage of and cheats workers because of their lack of knowledge regarding their legal rights. If the workers know the facts well, regarding their own safety, management could not violate workers' rights. That way, many problems would be solved by the workers themselves."

Sweety Sultana, Master Trainer,



OHS Initiative Timeline

2015

- November: Signing of MoU by 6 Bangladeshi organizations and the California Collaborative

2016

- August 31: First Governing Board Meeting. Agenda: Staff recruitment and drafting of project work plan
- October 2: OHS Initiative project approval from Bangladesh NGO Bureau
- November 1: Initiative staff hired

2017

- February 5: Governing Board meets to: form OHS expert committee, launch Initiative website, recruit first batch of trainers, and decides to focus on RMG sector
- April 1: OHS Expert Committee conducts first meeting
- July 5: Training needs assessment (TNA) of the participants
- September 12: First day of 5-day long residential Training of Trainers (ToT) meeting with 29 participants
- September 28: First of 15 day-long, nonresidential trainings
- October 14: Factory visit and inspection by ToT participants, facilitated by DIFE
- November 18: Graduation Ceremony for the ToT participants

2018

- March 31: First Trainers' Network meeting to share training experiences, challenges and feedback, 12 Master Trainers attended
- April 7: Second Trainers' Network meeting, 17 Master Trainers attended
- April 25 to 29: 5-day long refresher trainings for the 2017 graduates (First batch Master Trainers)
- June 25: Second batch training needs assessment (TNA)
- June 30: Launch of second 5-day long residential ToT with 29 participants
- July 26: First of 15 day-long, nonresidential trainings
- September 15: Factory visit and inspection by ToT participants, facilitated by DIFE
- November 1: Follow-up training starts for first batch of Master Trainers
- November 13: Graduation Ceremony for the 2nd batch of ToT participants
- November 18: Master trainers panel at 4th People's Health Assembly, "Challenges and way forward of promoting safety and health at workplace in Bangladesh," Savar
- November 24: Public round table discussion "Status of occupational health and safety and gender based violence at RMG sector: Challenges and way forward," Dhaka
- December 18-22: The Refresher Training of Trainers course for second batch of Master Trainers
- December 31: Communication skills development workshop held for youth garment worker leadership

2019

- January 18: Computer skills development workshop held for youth garment worker leadership
- May 4: Trainer's Network meeting
- May 23: Third batch training needs assessment (TNA)
- June 23: Launch of third 5-day long residential ToT with 30 participants
- July 3: First of 15 day-long, nonresidential trainings
- August 3: Factory visit and inspection by ToT participants (3rd batch), facilitated by DIFE
- October 13-17: Five-day long residential workshop on "Employment injury schemes and the prevention of occupational accidents and diseases" conducted by International Training Centre of the ILO (ITC-ILO), 30 master trainers attended
- October 25: Follow-up training, implemented by master trainers of all 3 groups
- November 22: First of 3 day-long trainings for women garment workers on "Women Leadership and Gender-based Violence"
- December 8: National round table discussion on "Promoting Occupational health and safety and realizing women's rights for an equal future in RMG Sector"
- December 10-14: The Refresher Training of Trainers course for third batch of Master Trainers

2020

- February 29: Second training on "Women Leadership and Gender Sensitivity" at Palmal Group of Industries. Formation of Factory Health & Safety and Gender committees
- April 17: Funding received for Emergency Response to Vulnerable Workers and Community in RMG Sector during COVID 19 pandemic in Bangladesh
- May 18: Governing Board Meeting to determine Covid emergency project activity, implementation strategy, and intervention area
- May 18: Approval of COVID project from NGO Affairs Bureau
- June 1: Started project for Emergency Response to Vulnerable Worker Community at Readymade Garments Sector during COVID 19 pandemic in Bangladesh
- June 15: Established three mobile clinics in Dhaka, Gazipur and Narayanganj districts and opened two Hotlines for medical and psychosocial counselling support
- June 25: Begin medicine and food relief distribution to vulnerable workers, continues through December
- November 13: Third training on "Women Leadership and Gender Sensitivity" at Krishi Bank Auditorium with 29 participants. Formation of Factory Health & Safety and Gender committees
- November 9-10: 18 Master trainers receive two day-long ToT on "Psychological First Aid"
- November 15: 18 Master trainers start providing 108 counseling sessions supporting 1080 RMG workers

2021

- February 12-14: Relief distribution to 240 garment worker families laid off without receiving severance pay

Members of the Curriculum Development Committee

- Dr. Mehjabin Chowdhury, Gonoshasthaya Kendra
- Ad. U.M. Habibun Nessa, Naripokkho
- Zakia Sultana, Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity
- Shakil Akter Chowdhury, Bangladesh Institute for Labour Studies
- Babul Akter, IndustriAll Bangladesh Council
- Alam Hossain, Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation
- Dr. Mahmud A. Shareef, North South University, Dhaka
- A.K.M. Masum ul-Alam, International Labour Organization
- Brigadier General (Retired) Nayeem Md. Shahidullah, National Industrial Health and Safety Council
- Dr. Nobin Howlader, Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments
- Engineer Md. Tayebur Rahman, Institute of Engineers Bangladesh, Dhaka
- Engineer Md. Hafizur Rahman, Institute of Engineers Bangladesh, Dhaka

Selected Instructors in the Basic and Refresher Training Programs

- Masud Parvez, OHS Initiative for Workers and Community
- A.K.M. Masum ul-Alam, International Labour Organization and later as an independent OHS expert
- Dr. Mehjabin Chowdhury, Gonoshasthaya Kendra
- Shakil Akter Chowdhury, Bangladesh Institute for Labour Studies
- Brigadier General (Retired) Nayeem Md. Shahidullah, National Industrial Health and Safety Council
- Dr. Mahmud A. Shareef, North South University, Dhaka
- Leaders of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments and the Ministry of Labour, including:
 - Sheikh Mostafizur Rahman
 - Dr. Rajib Chandra Das
 - Dr. Nazman Nahar
 - Mahzuzur Rahman Bhuiya
 - Manzurul Kader Khan
 - Md. Kabir Ahmed

Funders of the OHS Initiative

Funders for Calendar Year Operations (Funds in US Dollars)

Calendar Year 2017 Funders

Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (UK)	\$ 6,560
LUSH Cosmetics Charity Pot (Canada).....	\$ 20,000
National Fire Protection Association (US).....	\$ 2,000
San Francisco Donors Group (US).....	\$ 20,000
World Solidarity Movement (Belgium).....	\$ 5,660
Total Funds Received:	\$54,220

Calendar Year 2018 Funders

American Industrial Hygiene Association (US).....	\$ 2,500
GlobalWorks Foundation (US).....	\$ 2,500
Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (UK).....	\$ 6,560
Individual OHS professionals (US).....	\$ 5,250
LUSH Cosmetics Charity Pot (Canada).....	\$ 25,000
Maquiladora Health & Safety Support Network (US).....	\$ 6,400
San Francisco Donors Group (US).....	\$ 20,000
United Steel Workers union Local 675 (US).....	\$ 200
World Solidarity Movement (Belgium).....	\$ 9,334
Total Funds Received:	\$77,744

Calendar Year 2019 Funders

American Industrial Hygiene Association (US).....	\$ 5,000
C&A / Laudes Foundation (EU).....	\$ 22,400
Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (UK).....	\$ 6,475
GlobalWorks Foundation (US).....	\$ 2,500
Individual OHS Professionals (US).....	\$ 3,800
LUSH Cosmetics Charity Pot (Canada).....	\$ 25,000
Maquiladora Health & Safety Support Network (US).....	\$ 7,800
United Steel Workers union Local 675 (US).....	\$ 200
San Francisco Donors Group (US).....	\$ 20,000
Total Funds Received:.....	\$ 93,175

Funders of the OHS Initiative

Calendar Year 2020 Funders

OHS Training Program

American Industrial Hygiene Association (US).....	\$ 3,000
C&A / Laudes Foundation (EU).....	\$ 18,074
Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (UK).....	\$ 6,290
GlobalWorks Foundation (US).....	\$ 2,500
Individual OHS Professionals (US).....	\$ 3,000
Total Funds Received:.....	\$ 32,864

Covid Emergency Response Program

Laudes Foundation (EU).....	\$ 108,000
LUSH Cosmetics Charity Pot (Canada).....	\$ 5,000
Funds for Covid program.....	\$ 113,000

Calendar Year 2021 Funders – To May 1, 2021

American Industrial Hygiene Association (US).....	\$ 2,250
GlobalWorks Foundation (US)	\$ 2,500
Maquiladora Health & Safety Support Network (US).....	\$ 250
Total Funds Received:.....	\$ 5,000