



An engineer checks electrical safety in a ready-made garment factory.

RMG factory inspections hit 77%

The number of export-oriented ready-made garment (RMG) factories in Bangladesh assessed for structural safety has risen to 2,703, representing 77 percent of the total. This follows a major effort by ILO to push forward inspections taking place under the National Tripartite Plan of Action for Fire and Structural Integrity (NTPA). Two private sector companies, TUV-SUD Bangladesh Pvt Ltd., and Veritas Engineering & Consultant were engaged in January 2015 to carry out the inspections, the goal being to complete as many as possible by the 2nd anniversary of the Rana Plaza collapse in April 2015.

The NTPA inspections are carried out under the ILO's Improving Working Conditions in the RMG Sector project funded by Canada, the Netherlands and UK. Inspections carried out under two other initiatives: the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety and the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety have progressed well and are near to completion.



RMG update

For an update on the progress of ILO's RMG programme please see [here](#)

Workers' Help line launched

The Government of Bangladesh has launched a telephone Help line for workers to make and resolve grievances relating to workplace safety or rights. The Help Line – 0800 44 55 000 – is run by the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) and has been established with the support of the ILO and Royal Norwegian Government. Calls received will be dealt with by either DIFE, the Fire Service and Civil Defence Department or the Directorate of Labour. In the initial phase the Help line targets ready-made garment workers in the Ashulia area. Once running smoothly, it will be promoted to workers nationwide.

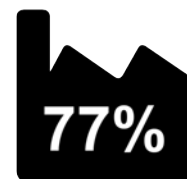
**Total RMG
factories**



**Total
inspected**



% inspected



Total closed



Figures as of 22 March 2015

110 newly recruited labour inspectors receive introductory training

A total of 110 newly recruited labour inspectors are learning the skills necessary to help enhance working conditions and workplace safety in Bangladesh.

A four-day introductory training course for the first 35 of the new inspectors commenced in Dhaka on 24 February 2015 organized jointly by ILO and German cooperation agency GIZ in collaboration with the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE). All 110 inspectors will have been trained by the end of March 2015.

The course sees the newly recruited labour inspectors trained in a variety of areas. These include national labour law, fire and building safety as well as inspection techniques. As part of the training, participants also take part in a factory visit to practice putting their skills to use in a real-life environment.



Newly recruited inspectors get down to training

ILO helps build capacity of labour inspectorate

ILO is implementing a comprehensive programme through its RMG project funded by Canada, Netherlands and the UK to train labour inspectors as well as to enhance governance and accountability of the labour inspection system. A labour inspection road map has been agreed between ILO and the Ministry of Labour that forms the basis for ILO support to this reform process. In addition, basic equipment such as motorcycles, office and inspection equipment is being provided to DIFE so that it can function effectively.

Labour inspectors employed by DIFE

June 2013 **92** → **270** Feb 2015

"It's a challenging job for us"



The new recruits

From just 10 female labour inspectors in June 2013 there are now 44, representing 17 percent of the total.

Amongst the newly recruited

inspectors is Farhana. "It's challenging but we are able to learn many things. When we walk in the factory the first time we feel so happy. But there are lots of obstacles as lady inspectors and sometimes there is less cooperation," she says.

"Proud to be a labour inspector"

25-year-old Aminul Islam hails from a farming family in Sirajganj District in northern Bangladesh.

A political science graduate Aminul passed the Public Service Commission exams and joined the labour inspectorate in January 2015.



Aminul Islam

"I feel very proud to have this job and to help create safe workplaces," he says. "As inspectors we have many challenges as often factory owners and workers do not understand the labour law and we need to help them."



A labour inspector chats with an RMG operator

Focusing on factory inspection follow ups

ILO continues to develop the capacity of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) to effectively follow up on RMG factory inspection reports on building and fire safety. Some 20 senior staff who manage DIFE operations at district level discussed how best to follow up structural, fire and electrical safety inspection findings in Dhaka, 5 March 2015. Carrying on from this, a series of training sessions for 60 DIFE case handlers commenced follow up work from 15 March.

Case handlers are the inspection staff who interact with the factory owners, handing over inspection

reports to them then undertaking follow up visits to check on the implementation of necessary remediation measures. Experts from the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety and the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety played a major role by sharing their experiences with the DIFE staff. Accord and Alliance have between them carried out some 1,800 inspections and have considerable expertise relating to inspection follow up and case management.

“By drawing on the considerable experience of the Accord and Alliance we are helping DIFE build internal management processes and skills to effectively follow up on the findings of fire and structural inspections in a systematic, comprehensive and transparent manner in respect of every single factory.” Maurice Brooks, ILO Fire Safety expert



Julia at work on the annual plan

Labour inspection road map points the way

A Labour Inspection Plan for 2015 has been developed by the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) in collaboration with the ILO's International Training Centre (ITC). In December 2014 a team of 13 DIFE officials worked with staff of the ITC to prepare the plan. Amongst the participants was Mst. Julia Jesmin, Deputy Inspector General of DIFE.

“Having an annual Labour Inspection Plan will make the inspection system more disciplined and better organized. It will also help ensure timely implementation of government policy to improve working conditions for workers. Although priority has been given to inspecting ready-made garment factories during 2015 we have also defined priority sectors and industries for every district,” she said.

The plan for 2015 focuses on five major areas of work: inspection of ready-made garment (RMG) factories, occupational safety and health, accident-related investigations, working conditions and occupational disease.

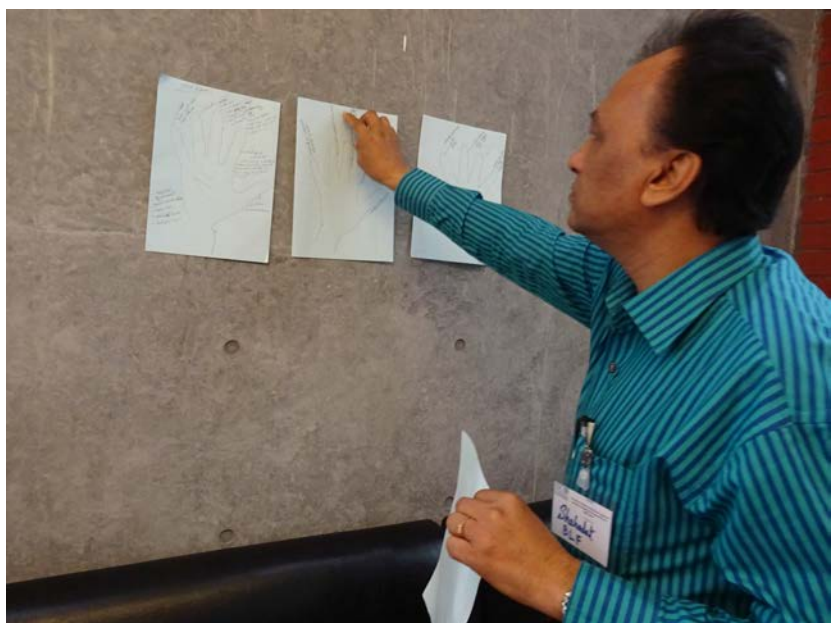
“Having an annual inspection plan is a new idea for DIFE. The planning team included the Inspector General and a good mix of other officials which ensured that the idea of an annual plan has resonated through the department and taken root.” Julia Jesmin, Deputy Inspector General, DIFE

Union leaders learn collective bargaining skills

While Bangladesh labour law provides workers with a number of rights, in practice workers still face challenges to ensure that they receive the rights to which they are entitled.

Unions have an important role to play in this regard and ILO, in collaboration with its Bureau for Workers Activities (ACTRAV) is carrying out a series of capacity building activities aimed at strengthening union educators in the ready-made garment (RMG) sector. They in turn will return to the factory floor to pass on their knowledge to workers in the sector.

A three-day workshop held in Dhaka 23-25 February 2015 supported by the US Department of Labor brought together 39 such trainers from National Coordination Committee for Workers Education (NCCWE) ready-made garment sector federations. During the event they got to grips with a range of issues relating to decent wages and collective bargaining.



Hands on training for union organisers

“During this training participants learned how to negotiate better. They will be able to understand where management is coming from as well as how to make informed proposals based on real evidence rather than out of the blue demands.” Ariel Castro, ACTRAV/ILO

Occupational health and safety training targets 750,000 workers in RMG sector

A major effort to build health and safety skills in the RMG sector is underway as part of ILO's RMG project funded by Canada, the Netherlands and UK. The training effort is being undertaken in close collaboration with the Bangladesh Employers Federation (BEF), Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers Exporters Association (BGMEA) and the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers Exporters Association (BKMEA).



The initiative sets out to create a safety culture at the workplace and implement practical measures to reduce risks of accidents including fire safety. A layered training approach will see training provided to 100 senior master trainers and 100 master trainers. They in turn will provide training to 7,500 mid-level managers and chief supervisors who will then pass on basic OSH skills and knowledge to some 750,000 workers.

Master trainer training has taken place in both Dhaka and Chittagong. Master trainers have been selected by the BEF, BGMEA and BKMEA and include their own staff as well as officers from private sector companies in the RMG sector. The International Training Centre (ITC) and Bureau for Employer's Activities (ACTREMP) of the ILO are providing the technical know how to deliver the courses which use the ITC-ILO Essentials of Occupational Safety and Health (EOSH) package.

“At the end of the full process there should be a better understanding of basic safety measures while safety culture at workplace level should also be boosted.” Paolo Salvani, ITC



*Better Work Bangladesh:
boosting productivity through
enhanced working conditions*

Better Work gets to work

Better Work Bangladesh (BWB) continues to make progress. On 17 January 2015, 17 of the factories registered with BWB came together for an information seminar where the initial stage of advisory services was launched through the introduction of a factory self-diagnosis tool. Advisory services are being provided in the use of the tool and through an improvement approach that encourages workers and managers to identify pressing issues and begin to address them immediately.

Interest in the BWB programme is strong with 30 factories registered. In addition, BWB has made significant contributions to cross learning and exchange of experiences with the labour inspection component of the ILO's ready-made garment programme, providing opportunities for inspectors to learn from Better Work experience and strengthen their monitoring capacity.

What is Better Work Bangladesh?

A partnership between the ILO and the International Finance Corporation, Better Work Bangladesh (BWB) is working to improve garment workers' lives by striving to secure safe, clean and equitable working environments.

To do so, efforts are underway to build strong relations between managers and workers who, with BWB support, can then take ownership and responsibility for continuously improving working conditions and eventually competitiveness at the factory.

Better Work Bangladesh is working with...

Factories



30

Buyers



13

Workers



54,000

Women



62%

For more information on Better Work see www.betterwork.org or contact emran@betterwork.org

Development partners urge finalisation of implementation rules

Development partners meeting with Government of Bangladesh counterparts recently urged the finalisation of the implementation rules of the Bangladesh Labour Act. The rules set out how certain important aspects of the Act should be implemented. These include the formation of Occupational Safety and Health committees, the creation of which was stipulated in the 2013 revision of the Act but which have yet to be established.



Finalisation of implementation rules will usher in the formation of Occupational Safety and Health Committees

The meeting took place in Dhaka on 9 February as part of the 3+5+1 consultative mechanism (see box). Other issues covered during the meeting included the hiring and training of inspectors by regulatory authorities and the importance of addressing sub-contracting as part of the overall supply chain. In addition, the importance of filling the US\$ 9 million funding gap in the Rana Plaza Compensation Trust Fund was also discussed.

3+5+1

The 3+5+1 meeting is a high-level consultative mechanism of five Ambassadors (EU, US, Canada, Netherlands and one other EU member state on a rotating basis) and three secretaries (Labour, Commerce and Foreign Affairs) plus ILO which meets to review progress relating to the ready-made garment sector including the Sustainability Compact.

2,860

Claims received by 30 Sept 2014 deadline*

70%

Of individual award amounts paid

\$21,000,000

Donated towards compensation for victims

\$30,000,000

Total needed to compensate victims

Rana Plaza compensation scheme update

On 24 April 2013 over 1,130 people were killed and hundreds injured when the Rana Plaza collapsed. The unprecedented scale of the disaster meant a coordinated, systematic approach was required to ensure the victims, their families and dependents would receive support for losses and needs arising from the accident.

ILO has played a major coordination role in this process as well as providing technical expertise on the design and operation of a compensation scheme in line with ILO Convention No.121 concerning benefits in the case of employment injury.

At the time of writing payments of a further 30 percent of the amounts awarded to claimants were in the process of being made. This would bring the amount paid to individual claimants to 70 percent of what they have been awarded. Further payments will depend upon additional funds being donated to the Rana Plaza Trust Fund.

For more information please see www.ranaplaza-arrangement.org

*not including 630 claims dealt with directly by Primark

Employment Injury Insurance (EII) to benefit workers and employers alike in the Bangladesh RMG sector

Bangladesh's workforce and industry alike would benefit from the establishment of an employment injury insurance (EII) scheme according to specialists of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Speaking at a Stakeholders Workshop on Employment Injury Insurance Programmes held in Dhaka on 24 January 2015, Anne Drouin, chief of ILO's Public Finance, Actuarial and Statistics Services Branch said, "An employment injury system for the RMG sector is the most cost effective and socially responsible way to enhance Bangladesh's reputation and competitive advantage in the RMG sector while allowing workers to be free of worry should they face an accident at work."

"An employment injury insurance scheme would spread the risks arising from accidents across all RMG enterprises. Everyone could be protected for less than 3 BDT (0.04 USD) per work-day per worker at the minimum wage. This is a sound investment for the RMG sector that will help attract further buyers," she added.

The workshop was organized by ILO to create dialogue for a better understanding of what employment injury insurance can do for the RMG sector and the Bangladesh economy as a whole as well as to explore various designs tailored to the Bangladesh context. Taking part were representatives of the government, workers and employers organizations, development partners and civil society.



An EII scheme would ensure that those injured in industrial accidents or the families of victims receive support

Benefits of EII schemes

For workers



Medical care



Rehabilitation services



Income support

For employers



Shared responsibility



Lower cost insurance



Enhanced reputation

"As a first step it makes sense to develop an EII scheme for the ready-made garment sector. This would send a strong signal to brands and buyers that workers are being taken care of and that labour rights in Bangladesh are being taken seriously. Once the scheme is established and operational it could be scaled up to cover workers in all industries in the formal sector." Srinivas Reddy, ILO Country Director for Bangladesh.

The workshop heard that development of a national EII scheme for Bangladesh would require active participation of the government, employers and workers. In the first instance, ILO and various development partners are planning to work in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh and social partners to complete a feasibility study that could serve to develop the autonomous institution to operate the scheme under government supervision.

Technical Schools and Colleges to deliver industry training

The Ministry of Education recently approved a proposal from the Directorate of Technical Education to grant 64 Technical Schools and Colleges (TSCs) more independence in financial management.

In the new arrangements, TSCs will be able to provide contract training in response to local industry demand and keep part of the profits for their own use; for example, to buy materials and supplies for regular programmes. Contract training opens the doors for companies to visit TSCs to discuss their training needs, and jointly develop training courses to meet those needs. It also encourages TSCs to approach industry to sell their programmes.

Financial decentralization is part of reforming Bangladesh's skills development system which is currently being undertaken by the Government of Bangladesh through the National Skills Development Policy and assisted by the ILO's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) project funded by the European Union.



Skills training to meet industry demand

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

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

Skills on film

ILO's TVET project has produced two films highlighting the possibilities for young Bangladeshi men and women to gain the skills they need for solid employment.



Rubina's Dream

Rubina wants to be an electrician, while her family has other ideas. Will her dreams come true? [Find out here](#)



Kick start

Surely fixing motorcycles for a living is a job for the boys. A group of determined young women show that in Bangladesh today, this is no longer the case. [Watch it here](#)



Nationally recognised qualifications provide skills industry needs

Government Polytechnics and Training Schools to become Registered Training and Assessment Centres

All 49 Government Polytechnics and 64 Technical Schools & Colleges (TSCs) are to become Registered Training Organizations and Assessment Centers.

Registered Training Organizations

(RTOs) are those training providers registered by Bangladesh Technical and Education Board (BTEB) to deliver technical and vocational education and training (TVET) services. The RTOs meet a set of national criteria covering areas such as management and instructor capacities, facilities and management systems. RTOs are authorised as providers of quality-assured and nationally recognised qualifications. There are currently more than 50 such qualifications being delivered across Bangladesh, covering skills from sewing machine operation to graphic design. Nationally-recognised qualifications equip trainees with the minimum required skills, knowledge and attitude that the industry needs and will have a government-issued National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework (NTVQF) certificate.

RTOs, Registered Assessment Centers and the NTVQF are all part of the National Skills Quality Assurance System which was initially piloted by the ILO's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Reform and Bangladesh Skills for Employment and Productivity (BSEP) projects funded respectively by the EU and Canada.

For a two-page fact sheet on the NTVQF, [see here](#)

For a short publication on why your institution or business should become an RTO, [see here](#)

Eight UN agencies in Bangladesh to work together on skills development

A delegation from the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) visited ILO's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Reform Project recently to discuss a joint approach to skills development by UN agencies.

UNIDO are the eighth UN agency to provide inputs to a joint concept note which has the National Skills Development Policy as the central theme to which agency activities will be linked. UNIDO join UNICEF, ILO, UNFPA, UNESCO, IOM, UNDP and UN Women in providing inputs. Once the joint concept note is completed, options for joint projects involving groups of UN agencies will be explored. Previously ILO has teamed up with UNESCO as well as UNICEF on skills development initiatives.

The UNIDO visit coincides with large investments by the government and development partners in skills development for both the formal and informal economy in Bangladesh.



South Asian Migrant Labour Charter discussed

The members of the South Asian Regional Trade Union Council (SARTUC) in Bangladesh met in Dhaka 28 January 2015 to discuss the 18th SAARC Summit Declaration, in light of the SARTUC Migrant Worker's charter and their Plan of Action. Areas covered included: Minimum Wages and Benefits; Social Security; Gender Equality; and the Migration Process.

ILO is providing assistance to SARTUC, which is a federation of national trade union centers in the South Asian countries. The assistance is focused on the implementation of a migrant workers' rights charter and the plan of action finalized by SARTUC in consultation with the trade unions of the Arab States. ILO actions in this regard are funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.



A Bangladeshi garment worker seeks new opportunities in Jordan

For more information see [here](#)

Migration-related publications from ILO

ILO's "Promoting Decent Work through Improved Migration Policy and its Application in Bangladesh" project sees it assist the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE) and the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) to improve the overall management of labour migration and to ensure protection and decent employment conditions to Bangladeshi migrant workers.

Over recent months the project has produced a series of publications relating to migration issues. These can be downloaded as follows:



Gender and Migration from Bangladesh: Mainstreaming Migration into the National Development plans from a Gender perspective

[Full version](#)

[Overview](#)



In the corridors of remittance: a study on the importance of remittances in livelihood strategies for Bangladeshi households

[Full version](#)

[Overview](#)



Skilling the workforce: Labour migration, skills recognition and certification in Bangladesh

[Full version](#)

[Overview](#)

Reinforcing ties: Enhancing contributions from Bangladeshi diaspora members

[Full version](#)

[Overview](#)



Causes of and potential redress for high recruitment and migration costs in Bangladesh

[Full version](#)

[Overview](#)



For more information

For more information on ILO's migration-related activities please contact nish@ilo.org

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



Kingdom of the Netherlands

Canada



SWEDEN



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra



NORWEGIAN EMBASSY

About us

The International Labour Organization (ILO) works with the government, workers and employers organisations to promote decent and productive employment opportunities for women and men in Bangladesh.

ILO activities focus on enhancing working conditions and labour rights. Considerable emphasis is being placed on the ready-made garment sector while other priority sectors include shrimp and leather. ILO also works to improve the national enabling environment for industry skills development and the increased employability of young and adult women and men. In addition, it places importance on enhancing social protection especially for migrant workers, children and indigenous people.



ILO's tripartite nature sees it work closely with the Government of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Employers' Federation (BEF), and the National Coordination Committee for Workers' Education (NCCWE). ILO also cooperates with many other key actors in civil society, academic and research institutions, private sector and the media.



For more information

For more information about any of ILO's activities in Bangladesh see www.ilo.org/dhaka or contact Steve Needham, Senior Communications Officer at needham@ilo.org or call Tel: + 880 2 8881425 or 8881467