

## Tampaco Foils disaster shows no room for workplace safety complacency



All workers in every industry have the right to a safe workplace

We are deeply saddened by the loss of life resulting from an explosion and fire at Tampaco Foils Limited in Bangladesh on 10 September 2016. On behalf of the International Labour Organization (ILO), I would like to extend our sympathy to the families of the victims. We wish those injured a full and speedy recovery.

There have been major efforts to enhance workplace safety over the past three and a half years in Bangladesh, mainly focusing on the ready-made garment sector. Significant work has also been directed towards enhancing the capacity of the Fire Service and Civil Defense Department, as well as the country's labour inspectorate - improved working conditions and safety standards across all industrial sectors also depend on strengthening these organizations.

Despite progress, the incident at Tampaco Foils highlights that there can be no room for complacency and much ground still needs to be covered. Strengthening the capacity of regulatory oversight bodies is key as is the need to bring together diverse stakeholders to establish a stronger culture of preventative safety in all industrial sectors. *The ILO is ready to further support Bangladesh's efforts to ensure the safety of its workers.*



ILO Director General Guy Ryder

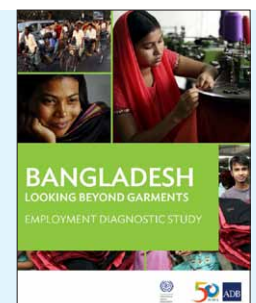
***ILO Director General Guy Ryder recently made the following statement in response to the fire at Tampaco Foils.***

## Bangladesh beyond garments

### Bangladesh: Looking beyond garments - an employment diagnostic study

This joint ILO/ADB report looks at areas and actions for Bangladesh to develop its economy away from over reliance on the readymade garment sector.

Download [here](#)



#### Where are the links?

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

# New checklist supports labour inspection efficiency

*A new inspection checklist developed by the Department of Inspections for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) with the support of ILO's RMG programme funded by Canada, the Netherlands and United Kingdom marks another major step in the process of creating a modern, credible and transparent labour inspectorate for Bangladesh. ILO Programme Officer Hasina Begum explains just why the check list is so important.*



The check list will help enhance labour standards in the RMG and other sectors

Bangladesh Labour Act and the Labour Rules it is basically a translation of the regulatory provisions into a practical tool. This check list also considers areas not explicitly covered in the law such as violence against women in the workplace and gender-based discrimination.

## What sectors does it cover?

It is a factory inspection checklist developed through a long consultation and field testing process that covers RMG factories as well as other large factories in sectors such as cement, glass, jute and textiles. However it is broadly applicable to all large factories. DIFE is also developing other checklists for the construction, ship breaking/building, hotel/restaurant, shops and establishments and shrimp sectors.

## What difference will this check list make?

ILO's RMG sector project has been supporting DIFE to develop a modern, credible and transparent labour inspectorate since 2013. This check list is a fundamental tool that will contribute to the establishment of such a system. It will basically help DIFE to do its job better by obtaining information in a more systematic and comprehensive manner. It will also help DIFE leadership to make informed management decisions as well as carry out follow up actions.

## Paper or technology?

A paper based check list will initially be used, however the target is that by mid-2017 the entire process will be carried out via an app which ILO is helping to develop. Once the automated system is in place, reports will be generated through the system and it will be much easier for the DIFE to assess and act on information.

## How does the checklist fit into wider DIFE reforms?

This check list forms part of a management reform road map that ILO has helped DIFE to develop and implement. Other elements include Standard Operating Procedures, an integrated knowledge management system, the establishment of technical units as well as comprehensive training.

## Why is this checklist necessary?

The check list is the key tool for labour inspectors to collect information on factories in a systematic and comprehensive manner. That data is then used to encourage or require employers to improve the factory to comply with the law.

## What happened previously?

Previously there was no comprehensive, uniform list in use. In view of this, ILO joined with DIFE to develop a new list. It includes building and structural safety as well as occupational safety and health, employment conditions and service issues. Developed in line with the



# Trade unions add voice to labour inspection strategy development

*Trade union representatives came together in Dhaka, 2 June 2016 to gain better understanding of labour inspection policies and strategies in Bangladesh.*



Trade union members look at labour inspection

In all, 28 trade union leaders and representatives of the National Coordination Centre for Workers Education (NCCWE) and IndustriALL Bangladesh Council (IBC) took part. The one-day event was a follow up to a December 2015 workshop that sought to help the union representatives gain better understanding of national policy, planning and implementation relating to labour inspection issues. By doing so it is expected that trade unions are better able to provide input and feedback to the development of strategies and plans so that workers' concerns can be better reflected.

***“This workshop helps trade unions get up-to-date on current labour policy developments. This will allow us to provide feedback representing workers’ concerns before the policy and strategy are finalized. It will also help unions monitor the implementation of labour inspection policy and strategy at workplace level.”***

Mr Naimul Ahsan Jewel, Member Secretary of the NCCWE

## Trade union engagement with Better Work discussed

***Union participation in Better Work programme encouraged.***

Better Work Bangladesh (BWB) held consultations with members of the National Coordination Committee for Workers Education (NCCWE) and the IndustriALL Bangladesh Council (IBC) recently to foster greater engagement of workers’ organizations in the programme.

The consultations took place 22-23 August 2016 in Dhaka. They created opportunities for workers representatives to participate in Better Work’s efforts to address workplace problems and sought to ensure union participation in sectoral and national-level discussions on topics such as industrial relations.

The event was inaugurated by Mr. Louis Vanegas, Programme Manager BWB, Dr. Wajedul Islam Khan of the NCCWE and Mr. Kutubuddin Ahmed of IBC. Participants joined the event from union federations in Dhaka and Chittagong.

*“This consultation will allow workers’ organizations to actively contribute to the BWB implementation process and improve the livelihoods of workers engaged in the RMG sector,”* said Louis Vanegas.



Discussing collaboration with Better Work

# High interest rates, low financial literacy amongst barriers to RMG remediation: IFC/ILO Study

***High interest rates and a lack of financial literacy are highlighted as major obstacles to factories in the Bangladesh Ready Made Garment (RMG) sector from obtaining remediation financing according to a report launched by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and ILO in Dhaka, 20 June 2016.***

According to the report, interest rates that can range from 9%-18% were cited as a barrier to carrying out remediation. Meanwhile RMG owners also need support to present audited balance sheets, profit and loss statements and cash flow projections to banks and prospective investors.

Entitled *Remediation financing in Bangladesh's Ready Made Garment Sector: An Overview*, the report was jointly commissioned by IFC and the ILO to analyse the cost of safety remediation for structural, electrical, and fire safety work in RMG factories, as well as the ability of factories to finance this work. Production of the report was supported by Canada, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.



Following safety inspections, remediation work is now top priority in the RMG sector

Remediation financing in Bangladesh's Ready Made Garment Sector: An Overview can be downloaded [here](#)

***"Efforts are needed to ensure that financing is available and accessible for all RMG businesses; however, those which are already able to self-finance this work or access loans should do so without delay."*** Gagan Rajabhandari, Deputy Director of ILO Bangladesh

## Electrical safety training to help reduce fire risk in RMG sector

***Training to build the electrical safety skills of inspectors to reduce risk of fires in RMG sector.***

A major new training programme will build the electrical safety inspection capacity of the Bangladesh fire service, labour inspectorate and industry organisations, helping reduce the threat of fires in RMG factories.

Launched on 3 September 2016, the training has been organised by the BFSCD with support from the ILO's Fire and General Building Safety project funded by the US Department of Labor. The initiative will see 315 inspectors from the BFSCD, Department of Inspections for Factories and Establishments, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, and Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association gain in-depth knowledge of electrical engineering considerations as they apply to fire safety.



Fire inspectors get to grips with electrical risks

For more see [here](#)



# Denmark joins social dialogue programme

Danish Ambassador Hanne Fugl Eskjær and Acting Country Director of ILO Bangladesh Gagan Rajbhandari signed an agreement on 30 June to work together on the Social Dialogue programme.

“Denmark and our partners have a firm belief that fundamental principles and rights at work are promoted best through effective social dialogue. I am proud that this project will be realized for the benefit of thousands of workers in the RMG sector,” said Ambassador of Denmark to Bangladesh Hanne Fugl Eskjær.



Danish Ambassador Hanne Fugl Eskjær and ILO's Gagan Rajbhandari sign the agreements

## ***Signing paves way for dialogue, conciliation and arbitration activities to begin.***

ILO's 'Promoting Social Dialogue and Harmonious Industrial Relations in the Bangladesh RMG Industry' project which is funded by Sweden and Denmark is set to start operations following the signing of the project document on 31 July 2016.

The initiative will focus on the development of dialogue mechanisms and relations between employers and workers and the development of conciliation and arbitration mechanisms into a more credible, trusted and transparent system.



Shamima Nargis, Additional Secretary (UN) of Economic Relations Division and ILO Country Director Srinivas Reddy

# ILO Shrimp project ends

***ILO's "Improving Labour Law Compliance and Building Sound Labour Practices in the Export Oriented Shrimp Sector in Bangladesh" project has come to a close.***

Major achievements of the initiative include the enhancement of the capacity of staff of the Department of Inspections for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) and Department of Labour (DOL) to perform their labour law compliance functions. The development of an industry specific inspection checklist for DIFE inspectors is a good example of a practical action that will have long-lasting benefits. A guide to help employers and owners of shrimp processing factories better understand and undertake compliance of national labour legislation will also pay long-term dividends. Meanwhile, the capacity of union staff has been improved while some 8,700 workers have been trained in rights and safety areas through a number of innovative initiatives.



The shrimp sector is a major export earner for Bangladesh

# Working towards employment injury protection for all

*The Rana Plaza collapse, Tazreen factory fire and subsequent efforts to provide compensation to victims highlighted the need for a national scheme to support employees and their families in event of accidents or injury at work. Andre Picard, from ILO's Social Protection Department talks about the development of such a scheme and what happens next.*

## What has been done so far?

It has been necessary to create a broad consensus amongst government, employers and workers organizations about the need for, and the feasibility of, a national Employment Injury Protection and Rehabilitation scheme. A preliminary feasibility study was carried out during 2015 which showed it is affordable and that the legal framework can be adapted without huge changes. It further identified the steps needed over the short-term as well as over the next 3-5 years. This would see the introduction of an interim bridging solution as well as the development of a national scheme that is affordable and sustainable over time for all workers in Bangladesh.



Workers need coverage in case of an accident

There has been a lot of discussion with counterparts so that they are more familiar with the concept. The issue of costing and its effect on production costs charged to buyers are crucial elements for all parties. The international players have an indirect key role.

We are now launching a comprehensive 'Establishment Survey' that will take some months to complete and will give us hard data on the accident rate in industries including RMG, construction, retail, and services; economic sectors representing 45% of national GDP. With this we can make credible costings for different benefit package options. In parallel with the study, we will discuss with stakeholders the kind of benefits they want to provide based on a minimum of what is in ILO's Employee Injury Benefits convention.

## How much would it cost and who will pay?

This depends on the results of the survey. However it is likely that the cost should not be more than around 1% of wages. Taking the RMG sector as an example, at the minimum salary of 5,300 taka a month the cost would therefore be no more than 53 taka per employee per month. This is comparable with other countries in the region with similar schemes such as Cambodia (0.8%) Malaysia (1.25%) and Vietnam (1%). The cost would be borne mainly by employers although some small employee contribution is also being discussed by national counterparts.

## How and when would the scheme start?

The idea is to start with the RMG sector and then gradually expand to other industries. We would start with a pilot of 25-50 RMG factories which are willing to participate. Realistically it may be 5-6 years before the full scheme is launched.



## What happens in addition to the survey?

Legal considerations are being pursued and efforts made to process the necessary changes to allow the creation of a national institution responsible for the administration of the scheme. Institutional arrangements will have to be quickly put in place so operations can start as soon as possible. An institution with a tripartite governance structure is needed to manage the scheme. This will most likely be an existing institution to avoid lengthy delays in establishing something totally new. Building institutional capacity will then be the main challenge. It will be necessary to find the right people, hire and train them. Many other details also need to be considered including how to collect contributions, pay out benefits, carry out medical assessments and make periodical payments rather than lump sums etc.

In parallel, a bridging solution is under study so any victim of a work-accident is covered in case of an injury until the national scheme is fully operational.

## Will the scheme be compulsory?

It would ultimately be a requirement for all industries and sectors. The scheme would be purely related to workplace accidents or workplace related illnesses. While it provides health benefits linked to such injuries, it differs from a general health insurance scheme that covers all types of illnesses from different sources.

## Who is involved in this initiative?

The Government of Bangladesh is working closely with ILO and Germany to establish the scheme. There is very close coordination and consultation with employer organizations well as trade unions. Brands and other countries are also very interested in making a national Employment Injury Protection and Rehabilitation scheme a reality for all workers in Bangladesh.



The Rana Plaza and Tazreen disasters highlighted the need for a national employment injury social protection scheme.

# Alumni network to support development of employment injury social protection scheme

***An alumni group comprising government, employer and trade union representatives will help facilitate the development of a social protection scheme in Bangladesh for those suffering workplace injury.***

Launched by State Minister for Labour and Employment Md. Mujibul Haque in Dhaka on 18 August 2016, the 48 group members took part in recent international study visits and exchange programmes held with the support of the ILO and the German Government to help them better understand the principles and operations of employee injury schemes.

In November 2015, 17 participants travelled to Cambodia and Malaysia to gain first-hand experience of how employment injury insurance schemes in those countries operate. Meanwhile, two exchange visits to Germany in August 2015 and April 2016 saw the 48 participants study the impacts of social dialogue mechanisms on working conditions, workers' welfare and competitiveness.



State Minister for Labour and Employment Md. Mujibul Haque launches the network



Abdul Kaiun

***On the trip to Germany I learned about social dialogue, ergonomics and their accident insurance scheme. This alumni group is a good idea as if we work alone we cannot do anything and an EII scheme is essential for Bangladesh.***

*Abdul Kaiun, Deputy Inspector General, DIFE*

***I never dreamt I would have a chance to go abroad and Germany was very nice. The social dialogue concept is not only useful in the workplace but also in family life too. We have a Worker Participation Committee at the factory and I can now participate more actively.***

*Poppy Akhter, Senior operator, DBL*



Poppy Akhter



Razequazzaman Ratan

***We learned a lot on the trips to Cambodia and Malaysia. In Bangladesh we talk a lot about productivity and wages but not about social security. If we have social security the workforce will be more satisfied and a satisfied workforce will always produce more.***

*Razequazzaman Ratan, General Secretary, Socialist Labour Front*



# Survey reveals need for skills and employment support for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ITPs)

*A pressing need exists to create more productive employment opportunities among Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ITPs) in Bangladesh according to a new survey.*

The 'Skill and Employment Baseline Assessment of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Bangladesh' was carried out by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) for the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) with the support of the ILO. A consultation to share the survey results with stakeholders took place in Dhaka on 10 August 2016.



The workshop participants led by Mr. Naba Bikram Kishore Tripura, ndc, Secretary, Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (4th left)

Amongst the findings were that informal employment among the ITPs stands at 89.84% compared to the national rural average of 87.5% while skills levels of the ITP employed population are extremely poor. Only 2.63% of ITPs can be considered skilled workers while over 80% have either no or very limited levels of skills training. In addition to data about skills and employment the survey also covered areas such as education levels, dwelling types, and access to fuel, food, drinking water and toilets.

A summary of the survey findings is available [here](#)

## Enterprise Based Training (EBT) taking off in RMG sector

*The role of Enterprise Based Training (EBT) to enhance skills in the garment sector was discussed by industry leaders recently.*



CEBAI Board President and former BGMEA President Md. Atiqul Islam addresses the workshop

Views on best EBT practices along with the role of the Center of Excellence for Bangladesh Apparel Industry (CEBAI) to promote EBT were shared by industry leaders, brands and development partners. The future direction of CEBAI to support RMG skills development was also discussed. Ten RMG factories in Bangladesh are currently carrying out EBT with CEBAI support. CEBAI is supported by BGMEA, ILO, H&M and the Swedish government.

# Short stories

## Shanta cooks up a brighter future

17-year-old Shanta Akhtar's family always struggled to make ends meet. But the chance to undertake a vocational training course in cookery has transformed Shanta's future and helped her to avoid an early marriage.

Read Shanta's story [here](#)



Shanta Akhtar

## Building bridges for indigenous people



Sulekha Mrong

To mark the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples (9 August), Sulekha Mrong, an indigenous Garo woman from Bangladesh explains how an ILO initiative helps indigenous people to better understand their rights as well as forge positive relationships with government authorities.

Read about it [here](#)

## Jute means jobs

Thought the Bangladesh Jute industry was a thing of the past? Think again. The industry needs more and more skilled staff and an innovative partnership supported by ILO between Panchagarh Technical School and College and a leading jute company is helping meet this demand.

Read about it [here](#)



Jute workers jump for joy!

All ILO Bangladesh feature stories can be found [here](#) or at <http://bit.ly/2crvfA5>



# Round Table Discussion marks World Day Against Child Labour



Round table participants led by Md. Mujibul Haque, State Minister of Labour and Employment

## ***Government commits to end child labour***

The Government of Bangladesh has committed to end hazardous child labour in Bangladesh by 2021, and that all forms of child labour will be removed by 2025. Md. Mujibul Haque, State Minister of Labour and Employment made the comments at a round table discussion supported by ILO to mark the World Day Against Child Labour on 12 June, 2016.

For a Bangla-language report on the event see <http://bit.ly/28tFATm> or in English at <http://bit.ly/2c3XOn5>

## **ILO supports child labour legislation review**

***A review of legislation relating to child labour in Bangladesh was held in Dhaka on 13 June 2016.***

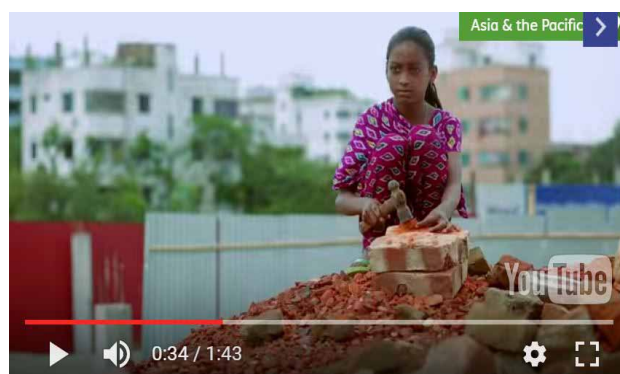
The review is seen as a first step in a major effort to identify gaps and harmonize laws relating to Child Labour in Bangladesh. Taking part were senior representatives of the National Human Rights Commission, Ministry of Labour and Employment, trade unions and civil society as well as the ILO.

Gaps highlighted in the review included ILO Convention 138 on the minimum age of employment not being ratified, the informal sector being excluded from labour law protection - particularly child domestic work - as well as there being no definition of light work in the Labour Act. A lack of effective enforcement was also noted. The review was supported by ILO's Country Level Engagement and Assistance to Reduce Child Labour (CLEAR) project which is supported by the US Department of Labor.

***"We welcome the Government's decision to raise compulsory education up to grade 8. If this becomes mandatory by law, it will have a considerable impact on the reduction of child labour."*** Gagan Rajbhandari, ILO Deputy Director

## **Video: Giving kids a better future**

A video highlighting the need to eliminate child labour in Bangladesh has been developed by the Government to mark World Day Against Child Labour in collaboration with ILO, Manusher Jonno Foundation, Save the Children, BSAF and World Vision. Watch it at this [link](#)



# ILO and IOM ink agreement to strengthen collaboration

*The ILO and International Organization for Migration (IOM) have agreed to strengthen their collaboration in Bangladesh around activities of common interest, in particular safe and skilled migration.*

A Cooperation Agreement signed in Dhaka on 25 May 2016 by Mr. Srinivas Reddy, ILO Bangladesh Country Director and Mr. Sarat Dash, IOM Bangladesh Chief of Mission will see the organisations work more closely together.

The agreement will guide both agencies to implement their programmes in Bangladesh in the field of migration and labour rights through the formulation of strategic partnerships and joint activities. Support will also be provided to the Government of Bangladesh to achieve its commitments to regional and international forums and frameworks on migration and employment.



(From left) Mr. Md. Shahidul Haque, Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Mr. Sarat Dash, IOM Bangladesh Chief of Mission, Mr. Srinivas Reddy, ILO Bangladesh Country Director and Ms. Begum Shamsun Nahar, Secretary, Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment

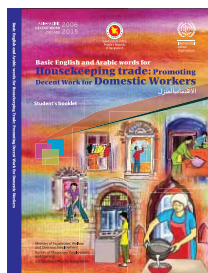
## Language skills for migrants

*A series of resources have been developed to give migrants to English and Arabic speaking countries basic language skills.*

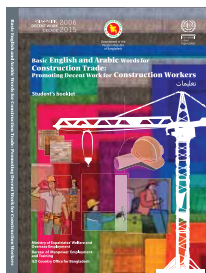
The materials cover migrant workers who will work in the electrical, construction, domestic work and care giving fields. They feature basic vocabulary and phrases to help them in their working lives overseas. The materials include instructor's manuals and student's booklets in each area. A series of audio visual aids have also been produced to support the training.

The materials were developed by the ILO's "Promoting Decent Work through Improved Migration Policy and its Application in Bangladesh" project in collaboration with the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment and the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training with the support of the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (SDC).

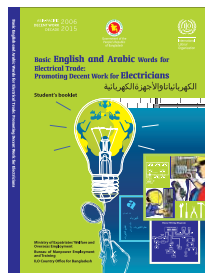
Download the instructor's manuals and student's booklets at this [link](#) or at <http://bit.ly/2cdbsXn> Please contact [dhaka@ilo.org](mailto:dhaka@ilo.org) to receive the audio-visual materials.



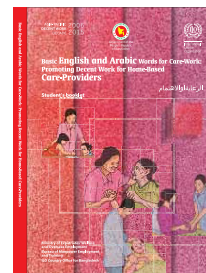
Domestic workers



Construction



Electricians



Care givers



# ILO Asia Pacific Regional Meeting

The ILO's Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting will take place in Bali, Indonesia, from 6-9 December 2016. The 16th APRM will bring together the ILO's tripartite constituents from Asia, the Pacific, the Gulf and Arab states. [www.ilo.org/aprm16](http://www.ilo.org/aprm16) #ILOAPRM

## Students visit ILO

A group of graduate students from Dhaka's North South University visited the ILO recently to learn more about ILO's activities in Bangladesh.



North South University students visit ILO

If your university or organisation would like to receive a presentation on any area of ILO's work please contact Steve Needham at 01787680995 or [needham@ilo.org](mailto:needham@ilo.org)

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

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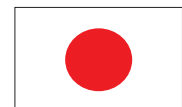
Kingdom of the Netherlands



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From  
the People of Japan

## For more information

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

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