



BetterWork
Bangladesh

2017 Newsletter

Our Programme at Glance

Dear Friends,

It has been almost three years since Better Work established its operations in Bangladesh, accepting the challenge of extending its mandate to the local garment industry amid widespread scepticism and fear towards what was then a largely unknown initiative.

Nevertheless, Better Work Bangladesh (BWB) has risen to the challenge. After joining forces with all levels of the garment industry, the programme began delivering its promises: improving working conditions and industry respect of labour rights for workers, while boosting the competitiveness of apparel businesses.

This year we hosted around 300 national and international garment sector representatives at our second Buyers' Forum, where we proudly reiterated our mission and beliefs with partners from government, employer associations and unions, as well as 80 members of international brands.

BWB aims to help the country win its own bet: becoming a middle-income country with a 50 billion USD export sector and good compliance conditions by 2021.

We deem it possible.

Still, we believe accomplishing that goal means the country's garment employers must begin seeing compliance not as an obligation, but a necessary tool to increase their competitiveness.

Our set of advisory, training and assessment is already sparking change inside our 120 affiliated factories: female workers have been given a chance to grow their careers, representative worker-management committees (PC) have been elected, factories established new medical wards and childcare facilities, terms and conditions of employment have become clearer in most of our factories, and legal limits on overtime hours have been monitored.

But there is still much to be done, and success is only achievable if all stakeholders join forces.

Thank you and enjoy the read!

The BWB team

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BWB and Fair Wear Foundation join forces to improve working conditions

Better Work Bangladesh started working in June with Fair Wear Foundation, an international multi-stakeholder initiative aimed at improving working conditions in the garment industry, to streamline factory-level operations and offer business partners new benefits.

Following the agreement signed in the Hague earlier in May, which includes cooperation with the UN programme in Vietnam and Bangladesh, the organizations have shared their factory lists and are currently aligning their work to avoid duplication of efforts inside overlapping companies.

“BWB wants to draw on the expertise of the Fair Wear Foundation’s Brands Performance Strategy which looks at how the brands are behaving in terms of their relationship with the factory,” said Louis Vanegas, Programme Manager of Better Work Bangladesh. “We want to see if we can adapt this to our programme.”

Vanegas said the Fair Wear Foundation had carried out several studies on the living wage of garment workers in Bangladesh in the past few years and that BWB wanted to learn from them and look for ways to integrate the findings into the BWB programme.

[Read more:](#)

BWB attends Business Forum in Hong Kong

Better Work Bangladesh and its sister programmes in Indonesia, Vietnam, and Cambodia attended Hong Kong’s Better Work Asia Regional Business Forum early in May showing over 90 members from international brands their projects and their current state of implementation.

Louis Vanegas, BWB Programme Manager, said this was an opportunity to understand the challenges BWB was facing on the ground and demonstrate the value the programme was adding to the brand’s corporate social responsibility programmes in the factories that were already affiliated with the programme or were about to join it.

“We talked about BWB work on sexual harassment issues and had a workshop focussed on our women empowerment programme known as ‘Women productivity toolkit,’” he said.

Vanegas said discussions at the forum also touched on a special course BWB was currently developing with the International Apparel Federation (IAF) where buyers and factories could learn about the implications of their sourcing practices and how these needed to be aligned in order for both parties to profit without negatively affecting working conditions.

Buyers also gave BWB ideas about how the programme could make its mandate more effective and ways to incentivize factories to continue to support its work.





Better Work forum highlights opportunities for Bangladesh's garment industry

Better Work Bangladesh held its second stakeholder and buyer forum in Dhaka in April to explore progress made by the programme, challenges remaining and how to continue improve working conditions across the country's garment factories while increasing their competitiveness.

Some 300 national and international garment sector representatives attended the forum, including partners from government, employer associations and unions, as well as 80 members from international brands.

Louis Vanegas, Programme Manager of Better Work Bangladesh – a partnership between the UN's International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group – welcomed the audience, outlining

the programme's work.

“We are here to unite diverse stakeholders, promote decent work for all and help the garment industry in Bangladesh thrive. We would like to see the sector attain the government's own goals: for Bangladesh to become a middle-income country with a 50 billion USD export sector and good compliance conditions by 2021,” he said.

Vanegas explained that the Better Work programme was currently engaging 120 factories and helping shift the mindset of garment employers in Bangladesh from seeing compliance as an obligation to being a business necessity that makes them more competitive.

[Read more:](#)

BWB's Sexual Harassment Prevention training sparks changes in attitudes and behaviour.

Four hundred employees spanning factory managers, supervisors and workers have so far received Better Work Bangladesh (BWB) sexual harassment prevention (SHP) training.

In line with the programme's philosophy of creating a snowball effect of better practices across its affiliated factories, more programme participants are expected to follow.

“We started delivering SHP training in two pilot factories in August last year through December,” said BWB's training officer Shipra Chowdhury, who conducted the seminars. “So far we've reached all the factories managers, half of the supervisors and one quarter of the workers. We are here to build capacities

so that they can continue on their own, thus making the training and its teachings sustainable.”

The Human Resources and Compliance General Manager at the company said they had always had a zero-tolerance policy concerning sexual harassment, but that BWB's work was really helping to spread awareness of guidelines many workers and management members were unaware of.

He said he had started noticing large improvements following BWB's training. In the past few months, only a few cases were reported instead of the previous five to six a month.

[Read more:](#)



Crown Wears and BWB: Taking the industry to the next level

With some 5,000 workers, a six-story building for another 5,000 in the pipeline and a long string of revamps, Crown Wears is a company setting the bar higher for the garment sector in Bangladesh.

Belonging to Sparrow Group, which supplies top international brands, the factory joined Better Work in 2015 and improvements to working conditions haven't stopped since.

Located in the country's central region of Mymensingh, some 75km north of the capital Dhaka, the factory provides full terms and conditions of employment, medical services and coverage of rent and living costs included in its workers' salaries, starting from the national monthly minimum of 67 US dollars.

Crown's Human Resources and Compliance Manager Nayim Ahmed said that, based on the factory's reports, the situation inside the facility has improved over the years and, mostly, after the company joined Better Work.

"Since then, we elected participation committees (PC), established a new medical ward and a childcare facility to host up to 35 children," Ahmed said. "Before, the nursery was very small and not well equipped, and the only doctor in the facility was often overwhelmed. We have now a female as well as a male doctor and have built two medical rooms, one for women and one for men. We also bought a fridge to keep vaccinations for the children."

Also, following Better Work's advice, the factory distributes food to breastfeeding mothers and their children twice a day.

Crown Wears is trying to apply the country's legal limits on overtime hours by allowing only two extra hours on top of the worker's eight-hour day.

[Read more:](#)

IFC/BWB bring skills to workers via women empowerment programme

Better Work Bangladesh and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) are implementing a project funded by Japan and the World Bank Group, providing 240 female garment workers in Bangladesh with the training they need to reach their full potential inside their factories.

Known as the "Women productivity toolkit," the project covers 30 factories enrolled with the ILO/IFC Better Work programme and offers technical training, as well as soft skills coaching, to the factories' best machine operators interested in occupying supervisory positions.

The training also aims to raise the workers' knowledge

of the different processes carried out inside the factory, which eventually reflects on their task and leads to an overall increase in productivity.

"In Bangladesh's RMG sector, four out of every five production line workers are female whilst only one in ten supervisors is a woman," said Eleonore Richardson, IFC's Programme Manager.

"This means 90 percent of the managerial talent in factories emerges from 20 percent of the workforce, resulting in the inability to fully exploit the potential of its workforce. This training will allow factory managers to tap into the full potential of the workforce by allowing greater career progression opportunities for women."



BWB brings shoes to barefoot workforce

Better Work Bangladesh is running a Levi Strauss Foundation-funded project that provides garment workers with shoes, as many in the Bangladesh's RMG labour force still work barefoot inside factories, a practice that oftentimes leads to fatigue-related injuries.

The programme has distributed 2,200 pairs of shoes since last December in two of its affiliated factories to workers who have been hunching at sewing machines, cutting, stitching, finishing, boxing and labelling barefoot since the inception of their career.

Sometimes workers refuse to wear shoes during their

activities out of habit, other times they are prevented from wearing them with the excuse of keeping the factory floors clean.

Preliminary results of the project show that when workers are allowed to wear shoes inside the factories premises they feel socially empowered and on the same level of their managers.

Also, initial data based on the feedback from workers and their supervisors reveal that wearing shoes boosts the mental well-being of the employees who also feel more motivated than before.

In Bangladesh, workers embrace factory floor democracy

When in 2015 Bangladesh amended its Labour Act to mandate representative worker management committees (in Bangladesh, Participation Committees) in garment factories, it was the breakthrough that Better Work had been waiting for.

"We were always keen to broaden our involvement in Bangladesh, but we will only intervene if certain conditions are in place. One of them is the legal requirement for openly elected worker representation on worker-management committees. So, we made the case to the government. Ultimately, they changed the law and we saw our chance to act," says Conor Boyle, Global Operations manager of Better Work.

However, in a country where just 300 of the existing 4000 garment factories have registered unions, the idea of openly elected worker representatives having a say in the running of factories was bound to meet some inertia. To build the case, Better Work took advantage of the change to the labour laws and



assessed a number of factories already participating in the programme, establishing that they were not compliant with the new law.

Better Work provided the factory with guidelines on the election procedure, including establishing an election committee, and continued to work closely with workers and management to support the process. And, by the end of 2016, workers in 12 garment factories were able for the first time to hold open elections for representation on their Participatory Committees. Although voting was not compulsory, more than 75 per cent of workers cast their ballot.

Read more:



Enterprise Advisors help bridge gap between workers and managers in Bangladesh

Bangladesh's 4500 garment factories, employing some 4 million workers, account for the second largest apparel and textile exporting industry in the world, behind only China. But poor pay and conditions have led to protests and strikes, making the role of Better Work an important one in the country.

Prolonged interruption has, in fact, had a major impact on the economy of the developing country, given garment manufacturing makes up 80 percent of Bangladesh's exports.

"There are so many opportunities for us to bring change," says Niaz, BWB Enterprise Advisor. "In factories I advise, for instance, the monthly salary has been miscalculated in a few cases, depriving some of

the workers of the minimum wage or the mandatory overtime pay."

Jahan Ishrat is also an Enterprise Advisor for Better Work Bangladesh. She sees the programme having an impact on the life of the workers in the premises overseen by her.

Ishrat recounts that working conditions inside factories have very much improved as Bangladesh's clothing industry has expanded over the past thirty years. Only recently, though, have managers become more open to advice from international agencies, she says.

[Read more:](#)

Better Work Bangladesh in numbers

- 140 affiliated active factories employing 267,076 workers, 149,534 of whom are women making up 56% of the workforce.
- There are currently 15 international buyers sourcing from Bangladesh and who are engaged with Better Work.
- 148 factories have received BWB Assessment Services.
- 846 advisory visits have been conducted.
- 198 Trainings and Industry Seminars (38 Industry Seminar and 160 Training sessions)
- 3,587 individuals, among them workers, mid-management staff and senior management members, had received training. The number breakdown is as follows: Workers 37%, Supervisors 20%, Workers & Managers 33% and Managers 10%.
- 1,559 women received trainings.
- BWB Project Advisory Committee (PAC) was set up in June 2016. This includes 4 government members, 4 representatives from employers' associations and 4 trade unions members.
- BWB and ACCORD collaborate on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) training. By April, xxxx trainings had been organized in xxxx factories and xxxx OSH Committee members received training.
- BWB has so far facilitated the procedure of 17 Participation Committees Elections according to the international labour standards and Bangladesh's Labour Law. BWB expects the election of 10 additional PCs by September 2017.
- BWB has begun expanding beyond Dhaka and working in the commercial city of Chittagong in November 2016.
- BWB has gone beyond the RMG sector and started working with footwear factories as of November 2016.

How Better Work can help *your* factory



**Improved
profitability**



Reduced cost



**Lower staff
turnover**



Fewer audits

Get involved

Contact seema@betterwork.org for more detail.

Increased *productivity*

Across all countries training supervisors through Better Work's Supervisory Skills Training (SST) increased the productivity of lines run by trained supervisors, especially women, by 22%



Increase
productivity

Higher *profits*

In Vietnam, the average firm enrolled in Better Work increased its revenue to cost ratio by 25% after four years of participation.



Increase
profitability

Greater *credibility* with buyers

Major Brands and Retailers like GAP, Abercrombie and Fitch, PVH, Levi Strauss & CO and H&M are partners with Better Work Bangladesh

Preferential access to trade *finance*

The IFC is focusing on Bangladesh to help with lower-cost financing solutions for factory safety upgrades in the garment and textile industry

Fewer *audits*

International experience shows that Better Work factories have fewer audits, saving both time and money

Improved *resilience*

Research shows that factories in Cambodia that were Better Work compliant are more likely to survive an economic crisis

About Better Work

Better Work is a global partnership between the United Nations' International Labour Organization and the International Finance Corporation, a member of the World Bank Group.

Our approach combines advisory services, assessments and training, aimed at delivering clear and continuous improvements in your factory.

We work with government, employers, workers and international buyers to ensure our approach is both relevant and sustainable

What do factories say?

"Better Work has a development approach rather than an audit or fault finding approach. We wanted to have something like this which look at things on a regular basis and point out where we are falling behind and help us to remedy those faults and finally become better."



Chowdhury A-A Quaseed
Director of Ananta Group
Dhaka, Bangladesh



International
Labour
Organization



International
Finance Corporation

WORLD BANK GROUP

BetterWork.

Our affiliated factories

Sl. No.	Factory Names	Location
1.	Ananta Jeanswear Ltd.**	Tongi
2.	Crown Wears (Pvt) Ltd.**	Mymensingh
3.	Dada (Dhaka) Ltd.**	Tongi
4.	Mahmud Jeans Ltd.**	Gazipur
5.	Genesis Denim Ltd.	Gazipur
6.	Romo Fashion Today Ltd.**	Gazipur
7.	Sparrow Apparels Ltd.**	Gazipur
8.	SQ Birichina Ltd.**	Mymensingh
9.	SQ Celsius Ltd.**	Gazipur
10.	SQ Celsius Ltd. (Unit-2)**	Mymensingh
11.	That's It Garments Ltd.	Gazipur
12.	Sterling Styles Ltd.**	Ashulia, Savar
13.	IRIS Fabrics Ltd.**	Gazipur
14.	Esses Fashions Ltd.**	Gazipur
15.	Int'l Knitwear and Apparels Ltd.**	Gazipur
16.	Ananta Denim Technology Ltd.**	Narayanganj
17.	Sinha Knitting Ltd.	Narayanganj
18.	Viyellatex	Tongi, Gazipur
19.	Colossus Apparel Limited (Unit 1)**	Tongi, Gazipur
20.	Colossus Apparel Limited (Unit 2)**	Gazipur
21.	Cortz Apparels Ltd.**	Gazipur
22.	Masihata Sweaters Limited**	Gazipur
23.	Sharmin Apparels Ltd.**	Ashulia, Savar
24.	S.F. Denim Apparels Ltd.**	Tejgaon, Dhaka
25.	Int'l Trading Services Ltd. (Wash Unit)**	Gazipur
26.	Shams Styling Wears Ltd.**	Savar
27.	Mawna Fashions Ltd.	Gazipur
28.	Standard Group Ltd.**	Gazipur
29.	The Civil Engineers Ltd. (Woven Unit)**	Savar
30.	The Civil Engineers Ltd. (Unit 2)**	Savar
31.	Global Shirts Ltd.	Chittagong
32.	Int'l Trading Services Ltd.	Gazipur
33.	Indesore Sweater Ltd.**	Gazipur
34.	Jeans Culture Ltd.	Mirpur, Dhaka
35.	Four Design (Pvt.) Ltd.	Narayanganj
36.	Hannan Knitwears Ltd.	Gazipur
37.	Fakir Apparels Ltd.**	Narayanganj
38.	Kazipur Fashions Ltd. (Unit-1)**	Dhaka
39.	Crazy Fashions Ltd.**	Dhaka
40.	Tip Top Fashions Ltd.**	Dhaka
41.	Wear Mag Ltd.**	Dhaka
42.	Adhunik Poshok Shilpa**	Dhaka
43.	Bestwool Sweaters Ltd.**	Gazipur
44.	Natural Denims Ltd.**	Savar

Sl. No.	Factory Names	Location
45.	Leatherex Footwear Industries Ltd.	Savar
46.	That's It Sports Wear Ltd.**	Savar
47.	Hannan Knit & Textiles Ltd.	Gazipur
48.	That's It Sweater	Savar
49.	Euro Jeans Ltd.**	Gazipur
50.	Zaheen Knit wears Limited**	Narayanganj
51.	Fakir Fashion Ltd.**	Narayanganj
52.	Birds RNR Fashions Ltd.**	Savar
53.	Jeacon Garments Ltd.**	Gazipur
54.	The Civil Engineers Ltd.	Dhaka
55.	Creative Collection Ltd.**	Gazipur
56.	Creative Wash Ltd.**	Gazipur
57.	Cotton Zone Ltd.**	Dhaka
58.	Esquire Knit Composite Ltd.**	Narayanganj
59.	Ayesha Washing Ltd.	Savar
60.	Arabi Fashion Ltd.	Gazipur
61.	Novel Hurricane Knit Garments Ltd.**	Gazipur
62.	Vintage Garments Ltd.**	Savar
63.	Standard Stitches Ltd. (Unit 2)**	Savar
64.	Safaa Sweaters Ltd.	Savar
65.	Cotton Club (BD) Ltd.**	Gazipur
66.	Raqueef Apparels Wash & Pkging Ltd.**	Savar
67.	Ananta Casual Wear Ltd.**	Gazipur
68.	Jinnat Knit wears Ltd.**	Gazipur
69.	Dekko Ready wears Ltd.**	Dhaka
70.	Dekko Apparels Ltd.**	Dhaka
71.	Mascot Fashions Ltd.**	Savar
72.	Mascot Garments Ltd.**	Savar
73.	Mascot Knits Ltd.**	Savar
74.	Birds Fadrex Ltd.	Savar
75.	Birds Garments Ltd. (Unit 2)**	Savar
76.	Fancy Fashion Sweaters Ltd.**	Gazipur
77.	Hannan Fashions Ltd.**	Gazipur
78.	Knit Asia Ltd.**	Savar
79.	Garib & Garib Co. Ltd. (Unit-2)	Gazipur
80.	Knit Plus Ltd.	Gazipur
81.	Next Collections	Savar
82.	JM Fabrics Ltd.**	Gazipur
83.	S.B. Style Composite Ltd.	Narayanganj
84.	Clifton Apparels Ltd.	Chittagong
85.	Mega Yarn Dyeing Mills Ltd.	Gazipur
86.	Barnali Fabrics Ltd.	Munshiganj
87.	Men's Fashions Ltd.	Chittagong
88.	MM Fashions & Composite Ltd.	Gazipur
89.	Essential Clothing Ltd.	Gazipur

Sl. No.	Factory Names	Location
90.	Crescent Fashion & Design Ltd.	Gazipur
91.	Pioneer Knitwears (BD) Ltd.	Mymensingh
92.	Zyta Apparels Ltd.	Mirpur, Dhaka
93.	Columbia Apparels Ltd.	Gazipur
94.	Ananta Garments Ltd.	Savar
95.	AKH Fashions Ltd.	Savar
96.	Modern Washing & Dyeing Ltd.	Gazipur
97.	Sajid Embroidery & Printing Ltd.	Gazipur
98.	Arunima Sportswear Ltd.	Ashulia, Savar
99.	AKH Shirts Ltd.	Savar
100.	Apparel Gallery Ltd.	Ashulia, Savar
101.	Express Washing & Dyeing Ltd.	Ashulia, Savar
102.	Refat Garments Ltd.	Ashulia, Savar
103.	Apex Footwear Ltd.	Gazipur
104.	Dress Shirts Ltd.	Chittagong
105.	Azim Mannan Garments Ltd.	Chittagong
106.	Eco Couture Ltd.	Gazipur
107.	Sawftex Ltd.	Gazipur
108.	Ayesha Clothing Company Ltd.	Savar
109.	Ayesha Clothing Company Ltd.-02	Savar
110.	Interfab Shirt Manufacturing Ltd.	Gazipur
111.	Aboni Fashions Ltd.	Savar
112.	Columbia Garments Ltd.	Gazipur
113.	Visual Knitwears Ltd.	Chittagong
114.	Angkshuk Ltd.	Savar
115.	AKH Apparels Ltd.	Savar
116.	Armana Apparels Ltd.	Tejgaon, Dhaka
117.	Armana Fashions Ltd.	Tejgaon, Dhaka
118.	Denimach Ltd.	Gazipur
119.	Denimach Washing Ltd.	Gazipur
120.	Denitex Ltd.	Savar
121.	Chorka Textile Ltd.	Narsingdi
122.	Debonair Ltd.	Savar
123.	Karim Textile Ltd.	Gazipur
124.	IRIS Design Ltd.	Gazipur
125.	Ananta Sportswear Ltd.	Savar
126.	Orbitex Knitwear Ltd.	Savar
127.	Global Fashion Garments Ltd.	Savar
128.	Global Outwears Ltd.	Savar
129.	Columbia Washing Plant Ltd.	Gazipur
130.	Tunic Apparels Ltd.	Mirpur, Dhaka
131.	The Well Tex Ltd.	Gazipur
132.	Medlar Apparels Ltd.	Savar
133.	Active Composite Mills Ltd.	Savar
134.	Tex Zone Knit Wear Ltd.	Gazipur
135.	Southern Services Ltd.	Savar

As of July 9, 2017

Better Work is a partnership between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) in collaboration with local and international stakeholders. It unites the expertise of the ILO in labour standards with that of the IFC in private sector development.

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