

Transforming Worker Well-Being in Bangladesh's Ready-made Garments (RMG) Sector

Shojag Coalition's initiatives through "Promoting Gender Justice for Women Workers in Readymade Garments Sector and Advocating Women's Safety During Local Commute and Public Space in Bangladesh" project have been reshaping the garment industry by fostering collaboration, enhancing worker well-being, and ensuring safer workplaces. Through targeted interventions, Shojag empowers workers and management to co-create equitable solutions.

Study Scope and Methodology

Factories Studied:

- **Participating Factories (Shojag):** Inside and outside EPZ (Export Processing Zones).
- **Non-Participating Factories:** Included for broader insights and comparative analysis.

Participants:

37 FGDs

23 KIIs

With factory management, trade union leaders, NGOs, community members, and transport staff

Key Findings

Worker Well-Being

Participating factories improved worker well-being with timely salaries, approved leave, and daycare access, reducing school dropout rates significantly driven by awareness raised among workers and management on:



Human Rights



Legal Rights



Gender-based Violence (GBV)



High Court Directive (HCD)



United Nations Guiding Principles (UNGPs)

“

After Shojag intervention, we don't need to go to the street. We can resolve any problem amicably with the management.

– Women workers from Shojag factories.

Persistent Challenges in Non-Participating Factories

Non-participating factories grapple with persistent challenges due to insufficient awareness of rights and workplace protections. Several critical issues remain which are

01

Delayed Salaries

Delays in salary payments undermine workers' financial stability and create ongoing stress, exacerbating their vulnerability to economic hardships.

02

Denied Leave

Denial of rightful leave disrupts work-life balance, affecting workers' mental and physical well-being, particularly in times of personal or family emergencies.

03

Verbal Abuse

Verbal abuse fosters a hostile work environment, eroding trust, morale, and the overall workplace culture.

04

Systematic Discrimination Against Pregnant Workers

Discrimination against pregnant workers perpetuates gender inequality, depriving women of fair treatment and essential protections during a critical stage of life.



We have no one to help us to overcome the anarchism of the management.”

– Workers from non-participating factories.

Gender-Based Violence and Awareness of Rights

Progress in Shojag Factories:

- Reduction in GBV cases due to active Complaint Committees and Shojag Sathis.
- Workers trained in labor laws and grievance mechanisms.
- Free legal support boosts workers' ability to challenge unfair practices.

Gaps in Non-Participating Factories:

- Policies remain symbolic and are rarely enforced.
- Lack of leadership training and ignored complaints perpetuate a hostile environment.

Shojag's Impact

Success Stories:

- Over **150** grievances resolved by Shojag Sathis in the past year.
- Effective implementation of **High Court Directives 2009** and Factory Codes of Conduct in factories working with Shojag Coalition.

Challenges and Opportunities

AWARENESS

Many workers remain uninformed about their rights and grievance mechanisms.

SYSTEMATIC ISSUES

Delay in timely salary payment and poorly managed overtime shifts hinder progress.

Recommendations for Sustainability

- **Training and Awareness:** Train 100% of workers and management in GBV/Sexual Harassments prevention and labor laws.
- **Policy Implementation:** Strengthen mixed-representation committees to address grievances transparently.
- **Scaling and Expansion:** Extend Shojag's initiatives to non-participating factories.
- **Safety and Commuting:** Ensure secure 24/7 transportation and provide adequate safety equipment.
- **Collaboration:** Partner with government, industry associations, and NGOs to sustain and scale impactful interventions.

Call to Action

- **Factories:** Implement comprehensive safety measures and transparent recruitment practices to foster a secure and fair working environment.
- **Civil Society Organization (CSOs):** Strengthen systems to promptly address harassment, bullying, and workplace conflicts while fostering harmony, and collaborate with stakeholders to ensure consistent adherence to workplace policies and standards.
- **Government Bodies:** Enforce strict compliance with labor laws, workplace safety standards, and fair recruitment practices.
- **Law Enforcement Agencies:** Strengthen mechanisms to address harassment, bullying, and workplace conflicts promptly and effectively while fostering harmony between workers and management.