

Newsletter



December 2022 | Stories from the supply chain & beyond

Better Work Strategy 2022-2027

Partnership & inclusion for sustainable growth





Dear friends,

We are excited to share our latest updates from Better Work Bangladesh with you. The focus on the sustainability of the Bangladesh garment sector and how industry stakeholders can support it is ongoing and evolving. Building on the lessons learned from the past year, Better Work Bangladesh continues to leverage multi-stakeholder initiatives to further our efforts for a competitive garment sector, one that provides decent jobs to workers, good business for factories and brands, and socio-economic prosperity for Bangladesh.

We know that this can only happen with your support and collaboration, and we appreciate your unwavering support. As we approach the end of the year, I wish you and your loved ones a successful, happy, and healthy 2023. Thank you, and happy new year!

Mohamad Anis Agung Nugroho
Programme Manager
Better Work Bangladesh



437

factories enrolled with Better Work Bangladesh



47

international brands and retailers partnered



1.26 million

workers supported



50%

of supported workers are female

Bangladesh Business Forum 2022 Strategies for sustainable garment sector in Bangladesh



Better Work Strategy 2022-2027

Bangladesh Business Forum 2022

Panels discussion during the forum. © ILO

Around 400 representatives from the government, factories, brands, development organizations, employer organizations, trade unions, and development partners gathered at Better Work Bangladesh Business Forum in Dhaka on November 2–3, 2022, to discuss a wide range of issues critical for the growth and sustainability of the apparel industry. Discussions at the forum centred on the importance of partnership and dialogue to promote decent work and business competitiveness in the RMG sector, supported by coordinated capacity-building initiatives, improved labour market governance, effective social dialogue, and responsible sourcing practices in the supply chains.

Better Work Bangladesh Strategy 2022-2027 was also launched at the forum highlighting the future priorities and action plans.



Scan this QR code to watch
a video on Business forum



H.E. Nathalie Chuard
Ambassador of
Switzerland to Bangladesh

"Switzerland is supporting the Better Work to strengthen Bangladesh's resilience to economic fluctuations and equip the country to manage emerging trade requirements related responsible business conduct."

Partnership and inclusion for sustainable growth

Eight years into its existence, BWB's sustainability agenda is derived from its extensive in-country experience and commitment to creating ownership of the improvement process at the enterprise level to help build a self-regulated industry.

In its strategic phase 2022-2027, Better Work Bangladesh will strengthen its collaboration with the national stakeholders in the areas of trade competitiveness, diversification, a unified compliance framework, skills upgrading, and automation, paving the way for the RMG sector to be a vehicle for decent economic growth for Bangladesh in the wake of LDC graduation. The strategic phase will place a strong emphasis on promoting the programmes' sustainability through a renewed factory engagement framework. In partnership with the public and private sectors, the programme will work towards a sustainable and scalable transition of tools, frameworks, and mindsets from the programme to its constituents, enabling them to continue making positive impacts in this sector and in lives of the workers and their family.

The strategy will aim to achieve four outcomes:

Outcome 1:

Employers and workers uphold and are protected by national labour laws and fundamental principles and rights at work, and enterprises are more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive.

Outcome 2:

National institutions sustain Better Works' impact by leveraging the program's approaches, data, and evidence.

Outcome 3:

Enterprises adopt policies and practices on responsible business conduct to promote decent work.

Outcome 4:

Positive social and environmental impacts beyond the programme as they are adopted in other industries.

Partnership with trade unions Empowering workers with data

Better Work in 2022



Workers interact with a BW enterprise advisor at a factory. © ILO

Better Work Bangladesh continues to strengthen collaboration with trade unions to promote strong industrial relations in the garment sector. A series of workshops was organized on the use of data for decent work for trade unions under several workers' organizations and bodies, including the IndustriALL Bangladesh Council (IBC) and the National Coordination Committee for Workers Education (NCCWE). The goal was to educate the workers on how to make use of data to advance strong and effective industrial relations for decent work.

They were informed about various types of data collected by Better Work, public reporting issues, what data is currently shared with workers and their representatives, and the channels for sharing both inside and outside of the factory, such as annual reports and a transparency portal.

A total of 32 representatives from 16 IBC-affiliated worker organizations and 10 NCCWE-affiliated worker organizations attended the three workshops in March, July, and September 2022. The participants discussed various issues, including the need for data and the transparency portal.



260
factories assessed



1916
advisory visits



199
trainings conducted



5911
workers &
managers trained



55%
training participants
are female

Better Work-UNICEF joint initiative Mothers@Work

A decent workplace for working mothers

Over half of the approximately four million people employed in Bangladesh's apparel industry are women of reproductive age. It has been found that enterprises often fail to provide private spaces and breastfeeding breaks. Consequently, it negatively impacts children's health as well as high absenteeism and turnover rates among female staff after maternity leave.

Better Work Bangladesh and UNICEF responded by launching the **MOTHERS@WORK** initiative to strengthen maternity rights and promote seven minimum standards that address the challenges faced by young mothers.

The standards include paid maternity leave, the provision of breastfeeding and childcare facilities, flexible working arrangements, health protection, medical benefits, employment protection, and non-discrimination.

The initiative has been rolled out in 103 partner factories since 2017. The programme orients the factory's senior management, helps factories develop a workplace breastfeeding policy, and trains healthcare providers, supervisors, welfare officers, and workers. Better Work Enterprise Advisors maintain regular communication with factory managers and workers, particularly new moms, to raise awareness on the benefits of breastfeeding.

In total, 2286 people, including management and workers from 78 factories, were trained on the seven standards and the importance of exclusive breastfeeding. Management representatives include HR and compliance teams, mid-level management, welfare officers, M@W focal points, and health workers, while worker representatives include pregnant and lactating mothers, general workers, and members of mother support groups.

Going beyond RMG

Expanding the Better Work model in other industries

Better Work Bangladesh is scaling out its impact beyond RMG and beyond social compliance by working with non-RMG industry associations so they can use tools and methodologies from Better Work and adapt them to the needs of their sector. As part of this strategy, a multistakeholder consultation workshop was organized in June 2022 involving representatives from leading industries including leather goods, agro-processing, plastic goods, chemical, pharmaceutical, ceramics, electronics, tea, ready-made garments, hotel & hospitality.

ILO signed a Letter of Engagement with amfori to jointly support the manufacturing sectors in areas such as Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), Soft Skills and Productivity, Crises management, International Labour

Standards, and Emergency preparedness/response. Amfori is a global business association that promotes open and sustainable trade partnering with retailers, importers, brands, and associations in 40 countries.

Through this cooperation, the ILO and amfori expect to support the institutional capacity development of related industries, decent working conditions, business competitiveness, and inclusive economic growth, culminating in strengthened partnerships and improved social dialogue in the workplace.

Under this initiative, the first pool of master trainers was trained in three sessions on managerial skills development, crisis leadership and management system.





Awareness rally by workers and management officials at Apex holding limited. © ILO

BWB partner factories observe 16 days of activism against Gender-based Violence

Factories affiliated with Better Work Bangladesh held a range of activities to mark the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence from 25 November – 10 December 2022. Many factories organised rallies, discussions, and awareness sessions where workers and factory officials took part with colourful banners, festoons and placards containing slogans related to end gender-based violence and sexual harassment at workplace and communities.

The discussions attended by workers, harassment prevention committee members and factory officials looked back on the improvements and discussed the way forward to sustain the health and safety progress in their respective factories.

“With support from Better Work, our factories have an active complaint committee which takes preventive measures to make workplace safe for all.”



Sabina Akter
Worker
Apex Holding limited

Stay connected



Better Work – a collaboration between the United Nation’s International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group – is a comprehensive programme bringing together all levels of the garment industry to improve working conditions and respect of labour rights for workers and boost the competitiveness of apparel businesses.



International
Labour
Organization



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Creating Markets, Creating Opportunities

Better Work Bangladesh is supported by the following donor partners:



Kingdom of the Netherlands



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