

Technical Workshop: National Initiative Preliminary Assessment: Lessons Learned, Trends, and the Way Forward

**Jointly Organized by
Ministry of Labour and Employment
And
U.S. Department of Labor, Improving General Building and Fire Safety Project,
International Labour Organization (ILO)**

**Venue: TBD
Date: October 15, 2015**

Context

Ready-Made Garment (RMG) is a strategic sector for the Bangladeshi economy, with an estimate of 3,500 export factories in operation, providing a source of employment for over 3.5 million workers. The industry exports totalled \$21.5 billion in 2012-2013¹, which makes Bangladesh one of the world's leading apparel exporters. However, repeated massive industrial accidents indicates hazardous working conditions in the sector, and made clear that building safety and occupational safety and health (OSH) require urgent attention.

Key contributors to the problem are: multiple responsibilities for town planning, a weak enforcement of standards for construction, insufficiently developed inspection systems, absence of collaboration among authorities at the different levels, chronic lack of adequate numbers of trained staff in both the building and factory approval and inspection processes, and lack of a culture of compliance. At the factory level, there is a lack of awareness among workers, supervisors and mid-level managers on working conditions and OSH issues. As a result, managers are not equipped to handle crisis situation.

In 2013, factory fires and a building collapse have resulted in deaths and injuries of thousands of workers. In response, the Government and social partners, ILO and other stakeholders have come forward to formulate time bound action plans which include Tripartite Plan of Action on Building and Fire Safety and Tripartite Declaration. Global brands and buyers (Accord and Alliance) have also announced a number of commitments in support of improving safety and working conditions in garment industry in Bangladesh.

To translate the commitments into action, in collaboration with the Government and the social partners, the ILO is implementing a technical assistance programme "Improving Working Conditions in the Ready-Made Garment Sector in Bangladesh" which has a component of preliminary assessments of RMG factories for structural integrity, fire and electrical safety:

The aforementioned initiative aims at long-term improvement of worker safety in the garment industry. The underlying message in this initiative is to ensure that sustainable mechanisms are in place to prevent future tragedies and ensure safe working conditions. Much was accomplished in this effort.

¹ BGMEA - COMPARATIVE STATEMENT ON EXPORT OF RMG AND TOTAL EXPORT OF BANGLADESH

In order to ensure all preliminary assessments conducted under the National Initiative are followed-up with lessons learned and clear recommendations, a workshop will convene to discuss the national initiative assessment and quality control process.

The workshop will convene **October 15, 2015** in Dhaka.

The objectives of the workshop is share lessons learned and recommendations to a sustained approach to improve safety conditions in RMG factories.

Expected Outcomes Workshop

1. Detailed presentations by ARUP on lessons learned for the disciplines of fire, electrical, and structural assessments.
2. Presentation of results of trends analysis
3. Discussion and consensus on the way forward

Participants

The workshop will bring together BUET, TUV-SUD, and VEC.