

Prevention, Compensation, Rehabilitation

Employment Injury Protection Scheme for Workers in the Textile and Leather Industries

Background

Apparel supplier to the world – that is how Bangladesh is seen today. The country is among the largest exporters and one of the major players in the global garment industry. Approximately 4,500 factories employ over 4 million people across the apparel supply chain in Bangladesh.

With regards to human rights, including workers' rights, much has improved in recent years within the industry, partly because the issue has attracted global attention. Still, there is room for further improvement. Major industrial accidents in 2012 and 2013 clearly demonstrated that workers are not fully protected while facing the risks of workplace accidents and occupational diseases.

Although legal provisions and strategies are in place for prevention, rehabilitation, and compensation, these are fragmented and have yet to be embedded in an overall strategy. Furthermore, even though companies in Bangladesh are subject to civil liability, only a notable few fulfil their legal obligations. The responsible government bodies require more resources to enforce the legal provisions to ensure that affected individuals have a fair chance of asserting their claims.

The Government of Bangladesh is aware of these issues and plans to introduce an employment injury protection scheme which will include measures of prevention, rehabilitation and compensation. However, the legislative frameworks, administrative structures and processes required for the roll-out of a statutory employment injury protection scheme are not yet in place.

Objective

The *Employment Injury Protection Scheme for Workers in the Textile and Leather Industries* (EIPS) project is working towards a national employment injury protection scheme in Bangladesh to ensure long-term protection for the workforce against work-related accidents and occupational diseases.

The project's target group comprises of industrial workers in Bangladesh. According to official statistics, 7.3 million people have employment contracts. These are usually unskilled workers in low-wage jobs, with women accounting for most of the workforce. The envisaged employment injury protection scheme will be introduced first for workers in the textile, garment, and leather industries.

Project name	Employment Injury Protection Scheme for Workers in the Textile and Leather Industries (EIPS)
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Commissioned value	6 million Euro
Project region	Bangladesh
Partner ministry	Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE)
SDG contribution	No Poverty (SDG 1), Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3), Gender equality (SDG 5), Decent Work and Wconomic growth (SDG 8), Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10)
Duration	January 2017 to December 2021



The project works towards sustainable development by improving working conditions in the textile, garment and leather industries in Bangladesh.



A study tour to visit the Thailand Social Security Organization was conducted to introduce partners from the leather sector to the concept of an EIPS.



The EIPS project is contributing towards the introduction of the employment injury protection scheme which is comprised of three foundational pillars under one umbrella - prevention, rehabilitation, and compensation.

Approach

The project is funded by the *German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)* and cooperates with the *International Labour Organization (ILO)*, funded by the *Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands* in Bangladesh.

The project aims at strengthening the existing approaches for prevention, rehabilitation and compensation that form the basis for an employment injury insurance. Thereby, it works closely with the *Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE)* and the *Department for Insepection of Factories and Establishments (DIFE)*.

Areas of intervention and envisaged activities

1. Strengthening existing approaches of prevention

Working closely with DIFE and a local communication agency, the project developed and implemented two gender-sensitive prevention campaigns, targeting top- and mid-level management. So far, more than 150,000 employees could thereby be reached, of whom approximately 58% are women. The campaigns were designed to address two distinct themes, firstly, occupational health and safety in general and secondly, health and hygiene interventions in the context of COVID-19.

2. Strengthening existing approaches of rehabilitation

In the area of rehabilitation, the project cooperates with 111 factories for the reintegration of injured workers into working life by integrating Return-To-Work (RTW) clauses into human re-sources (HR) policies. Factories commit to reintegrating workers who have had an accident on the job. A total of 82 factories changed their HR policies accordingly. The measure has been completed and 172 personnel have been trained as RTW coordinators, including 73 women. So far, a total of 12 cases had been recorded

in which workers had been reintegrated into working life successfully after an accident.

3. Agreement on Bridging Solution of an employment injury insurance scheme

In September 2019, the project partners, including the Bangladeshi and German Governments, the ILO and the *German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV)*, agreed to initiate the so-called *Bridging Solution*, a pilot of an employment injury insurance scheme on a limited scale for the Ready-Made Garment sector. In cooperation with the ILO preparatory measures for the implementation of the *Bridging Solution* have started in the end of 2019. After several stakeholder consultations, including constructive collaborations with international brands and the formation of a *Bridging Solution* Committee chaired by the MoLE, the parties agreed on the basic design of the *Bridging Solution*. The benefits will be provided under ILO Convention 121 as a supplement to the legal entitlements stipulated in the Bangladesh Labour Act and Labour Rules, thereby improving existing compensation measures.

Results

Managing the three areas of prevention, rehabilitation, and compensation under one roof is beneficial, as it increases the incentive for prevention and thus reduces the number of accidents. By supporting the roll-out of an employment injury protection scheme, the project makes a medium- to long-term contribution to sustainable improvement in working conditions in Bangladesh and to comprehensive protection for workers against workplace hazards.

The project will therefore play an active role in the realisation of economic and social rights for Bangladeshi workers by paving the way for the integration of other social protection programmes such as social health protection schemes or unemployment benefits.

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