



## Final Independent Cluster Evaluation – RMGP II and BWB

### QUICK FACTS

**Countries:** Bangladesh

**Evaluation date:** 31 July 2023

**Evaluation type:** Clustered

**Evaluation timing:** Final

**Administrative Office:** ILO CO-Dhaka

**Technical Office:** Governance

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**DC Symbol:** BGD/19/05/MUL; BGD/22/50/JPN

**Donor(s) & budget:** BGD/19/05/MUL - USD 22.5 million; BGD/22/50/JPN - USD 1,411,556; Department for International Development (DFID) 6.6 million pounds (US\$8,505,154) (01 July 2017 – 22 Nov 2020); The Netherlands Ministry for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (US\$8,179,474) (01 July 2017 – 30 June 2023); Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD), Canada (Canadian dollars \$10,000,000) (01 July 2017 – 30 June 2023); Government of Japan/ Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) (US\$ 1.4 million)

*Key Words:* Labour administration and inspection, labour inspection reform, industrial safety, readymade garment sector, Bangladesh, Occupational Safety and Health, Better Work Bangladesh, remediation in garment factories [Use themes as provided in i-eval Discovery](#)



## BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

### Summary of the project purpose, logic, and structure

The Tazreen and Rana Plaza disasters promoted a major effort to improve working conditions in Bangladesh. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) along with the Government, employers, workers implemented a programme— Improving working conditions in the ready-made garments sector in Bangladesh (RMGP) first phase from October 2013 to June 2017. Over the course of the first phase, the programme made a significant contribution as RMG factories were inspected, various standards harmonized, the labour inspectorate reformed, and progress made to establish a culture of Occupation Safety and Health (OSH). The first phase also supported Rana Plaza survivors to re-enter the workforce. In its second phase (July 2017 to June 2023), the development objective of the RMGP II programme was to ensure safe and decent working conditions contributing to improved competitiveness in the garment and other sectors in Bangladesh. RMGP II interventions focused on strengthening factory safety through remediation, labour inspection reforms and OSH in policy and practice. Strategic expansion of Better Work in Bangladesh (BWB) was also a key component of RMGP II interventions in Bangladesh.

### Present situation of the project

The project has completed its second phase by June 2023.

### Purpose, scope, and clients of the evaluation

The ILO commissioned a final cluster evaluation of RMGP II, conducted by a team of four evaluators. The purpose of the evaluation was:

- Review the **overall achievements** of the RMGP II and BWB in terms of outputs and outcomes
- Examine **relevance, design, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability** of RMGP II and BWB, including programme contributions to cross-cutting issues related to gender equality, non-discrimination, social justice, and environmental sustainability
- Assess how **management and governance arrangements** were appropriate, and how cross-cutting issues were addressed
- Identify the **main difficulties, constraints and distil best practices, lessons**, and insights from implementing the cluster of projects (RMGP II and BWB) in Bangladesh



- Provide **practical recommendations** that can inform future reforms in industrial safety, labour inspections and workers welfare in RMG sector and beyond in Bangladesh

The primary end users of the evaluation findings are the programme management team and the ILO Country Office in Dhaka, the donors (Canada, Netherlands, Japan, UK), ILO’s constituents, ILO technical and collaborating departments and in-country partners and stakeholders.

**Methodology of evaluation**

The evaluation gathered evidence to assess the OECD/DAC parameters - relevance, design, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, and management arrangement of the project. While doing so, the evaluation integrated gender equality, normative and tripartite mandate, and environmental sustainability as a cross-cutting concern throughout the analysis. A detailed set of evaluation questions and assessment methods used is described in the Evaluation Question Matrix (EQM) at Annex 1. The evaluation was conducted through a consultative and participatory process through online and in-person discussions. The evaluation reviewed the programme documents and conducted about 60 key informant interviews and focus group discussions involving 100+ ILO tripartite constituency partners from Government, Employers and Workers. The evaluation followed a utilisation focussed methodology that responds to both accountability and learning concerns of the ILO tripartite constituency. The evaluation was scope and time-bound and its limitations are highlighted in the evaluation report (section 2.5). The evaluation was conducted and completed during April to June 2023.

The UNCT-SWAP Scorecard was used as a tool to measure gender equality promotion at the country level. It considered different areas, including planning, monitoring, partnerships, leadership, resources, and results, providing a comprehensive overview of gender mainstreaming in the programme.

The DFID approach for assessing Value for Money was employed to evaluate the program's cost-effectiveness and impact on poverty



reduction. The four principal contributors to Value for Money - effectiveness, efficiency, economy, and equity - were considered.

## MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

**Achievements:** The RMGP II primarily intervened at the policy, regulatory, and industry levels, whereas BWB component of the programme intervened at the factory and worker levels. The programme interventions directly contribute to the implementation of the NTPA and are highly relevant to the needs of the RMG sector. The programme assisted the government in ensuring the remediation of active NI factories. The programme contributed to institutionalising remediation strategies (in the form of RCC followed by ISU in DIFE). The partnership and collaboration with various ministries and agencies resulted in the establishment of a factory licensing OSS with several GOB agencies /departments involved (BIDA, DIFE, BFSCD, RAJUK, and CDA). The programme provided technical assistance to the BGMEA and BKMEA to assist their members in OSH and remediation, and for strengthening safety committees. RMGP II assisted in a smooth transition of Accord and Alliance into new nationally registered initiatives (RSC and Nirapon respectively) with minimal disruption to their respective lines of activity. The programme made significant progress across all four strategic areas and achieved most of the log frame targets. The programme's outputs of policy/strategy documents, frameworks, tools, and advocacy materials are very impressive. The programme has contributed to the development of an OSH strategy, an NPA, a roadmap for DIFE, a gender strategy for DIFE, standard operating procedures for DIFE, factory design guidance, and numerous research reports, videos, and publications, modules, guidelines, etc. DIFE's institutional capacities, structures and systems have considerably improved. These long-term regulatory reforms are likely to assist the RMG industry in remaining more compliant, competitive, and forward-looking. The RMG industry as a whole has become safer over the past decade (over RMGP I and II). The programme supported a range of 'gender integration' initiatives across different institutions (DIFE, BFSCD). The programme has contributed to the creation of a secure and healthy working environment for women, as well as achieve some initial success in increasing the number of women in leadership positions of different committees. If systemic change and

institutionalization, catalysed by the programme, continues, there will be less need for direct ILO assistance because "systems" of initiatives (DIFE-NI, BIDA-FBCCI, DIFE-ISU, RSC, BW, Nirapon) and institutions that are capable of carrying out their mandates (DIFE, BIDA, FBCCI, BKMEA, BGMEA, BEF, WRC, IBC) are available to do so.

**Challenges, gaps, points for improvement:** The integration challenges of the RMGP II and SDIR projects limited complementarity and the coherence of one single programme. Remediation finance, phased out in 2019 as per the tripartite and donor agreed plan, may have continued relevance which needs to be further assessed. There are numerous untapped opportunities for RMG sector initiatives (DIFE-NI, RSC, Nirapon) to strengthen their connections and mutual learning. A sector-wide need was also perceived for a nationally defined unified code of conduct for safety, social (and environmental) compliances. While category 1 NI factories achieved 79% of remediation progress, it was also clear that about 55% of active factories achieved less than 50% of remediation progress during RMGP II. It was also noticed that BGMEA and BKMEA would need to carry out more follow up support after training to their member factories to ensure that enhanced capacities are translating into improved behaviours (in terms of safety culture) and actual change on the ground in terms of working conditions of workers (including women workers). Most of the transformative changes evidenced by this evaluation have happened in the domain of policy and regulatory framework and among the relatively large and medium-sized factories and with workers working therein. Many of the SME factories, including those who are not covered by any initiative (expected to be 1000+ factories), are left behind due to financial constraints, and a culture of safety has not yet been established in many of these factories. Overall, beyond safety, social compliance (except in BW factories) is less evident, environmental concerns are more so in these and even in some medium /large factories. DIFE gender roadmap is ambitious, needing strong implementation and cultural change within the organisation. NI factories continues to have lower representation of women in PCs /SCs or as welfare officers. Concrete changes (childcare facilities, maternity leave and other



benefits, complaint handling mechanisms, anti-harassment committee), freedom to complain require changes in norms and cultures at factory and societal level, which may require much longer and more strategic efforts. Further, if the BWB becomes the convenor, then the structural modalities of delivering the advisory support to its member factories would drastically change, requiring shift in roles and working modalities, which is being worked out by BWB. Overall, building on the momentum established over the last decade, systemic change in the RMG sector would require further processes of wide scaling of impact and institutionalisation.

### RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

#### Recommendations

The main recommendations are as follows:

1. Develop a fully integrated third generation of reforms / next phase of the programme, focusing on completing ongoing processes, institutionalization, and sustainability. Also, adapt and replicate the RMG model of compliance to non-RMG sectors.
2. Private sector-led initiatives (BWB, RSC, Nirapon) develop strong linkages within and with DIFE-NI, including cooperation modalities, unified code of conduct and operations, data sharing, and regular knowledge exchange.
3. Private sector-led initiatives (BWB, RSC, Nirapon) strengthen their work in social dialogue, skill building, leadership promotion of women, and behavior change of factory management to achieve a more inclusive and equitable environment in the RMG sector.
4. Frame a national unified code of conduct for safety, social, and environmental compliances, gradually covering export-oriented and risk-prone domestic sectors. This would guide all national and international initiatives supporting sector-wide compliances.
5. The ongoing process of systemic change and institutionalisation would need further boost through actions by the Government of Bangladesh and DIFE. Some of these actions can be supported by the ILO-Bangladesh. These actions are summarised as: a) stronger



	<p>institutional structure of ISU a developed with more staffing and financial resources, b) greater institutional coordinations among different departments of the GoB is needed. This is to ensure that LIMA and OSS achieve a higher degree of functionality and increased use among intended users, c) BGMEA and BKMEA are supported for conducting follow ups with their constituents in terms of ensuring ‘practice’ and ‘behaviour’ level changes at the factory floors which constitutes concrete improvement of safe and decent working conditions for the workers (including women workers) in the RMG sector, d) continue the operation of the ILO collaboration with FBCCI to extend the safety and health issues in all RMG factories and in other high-risk sectors.</p> <p>6. Re-examine the relevance of remediation finance and redesign it if needed, considering more flexible financing conditions, simplified procedures, and risk-sharing credit guarantees. Other UN agencies, donors, and the Government of Bangladesh can provide support in this regard.</p>
<p><b>Main lessons learned and good practices</b></p>	<p>The RMGP II facilitated a significant transformation in the safety culture in the RMG sector. This can be attributed to a combination of regulatory initiatives, policy reforms, new structures, effective protocols, working models, and strengthened capacities of tripartite stakeholders. The programme led to sustained enhancement of institutional and technical capacities and the culture of collaboration amongst different stakeholders. The RMGP II contributions to enhancement of technical and institutional capacity of DIFE can potentially contribute to impact beyond the RMG sector. Risk-profile based strategic inspections, digitization, and stronger enforcement capabilities are likely to pave the way for DIFE to become more effective in the future. Also, the long-term success of the ISU relies on the active participation and support of the government, particularly in providing ongoing technical expertise and resources as the programme expands and evolves with the growing business needs.</p> <p>Gender roadmap is a pioneering initiative at a government department in Bangladesh. Notables are also the BW’s innovations related to enhancing gender equality on factory floors. It is also</p>



learnt that continuous and consistent advocacy and innovations can provide the momentum needed for progress towards gender mainstreaming and women empowerment. Achieving greater impact would require an enabling working environment for women that addresses societal attitudes and establishing supportive systems.

While the OSH plan of action is a valuable resource for promoting workplace safety, emphasizing its implementation, regular review, and monitoring by stakeholders is necessary to ensure its effectiveness and adaptability to evolving needs and challenges in occupational safety and health. DIFE's helpline service is a much-needed support to workers to raise their grievances but it would need to improve its accessibility, gender sensitivity, and prompt resolution to maintain trust and encourage utilization.

Overall, the RMGP II has demonstrated that a successful sectoral reform model would essentially require a strong collaborative architecture, with a range of initiatives working with a common purpose even though modalities of implementation are different. The programme has shown that a Safety+ approach (incorporating social compliances) has higher potential in improvement of working conditions in the RMG factories. Also, addressing legislative gaps and ratifying conventions such as C190 can further advance country' credentials in international export markets.