

SOCIAL COMPLIANCE



round table
গোল টেবিল বৈঠক

Fourth Bangladesh Round Table on Social Compliance
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Dhaka Sheraton Hotel

Documentation



Conveyor



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BSCI is a leading system aiming at improving social compliance in the supply chain of companies sourcing globally. Created in 2003 and with headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, the BSCI provides its member companies a uniform methodology and tools to involve their suppliers in a continuous development oriented process. In addition to this, the dialogue with stakeholders on different levels plays an important role in BSCI's approach.

Organizer & Facilitator



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LIFT Standards e.K. is a consultancy firm providing advisory service on social compliance with audit, remediation and enhanced productivity service to improve the working conditions.

LIFT Standards has been established 2001 in Dhaka and has a proven record to intensively worked in Bangladesh with suppliers and buyers in the interest of improved working conditions.

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I. Participants List

| Name | Organisation | Position |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| Md. Israfil Alam | Member of Parliament | Chairman Standing Committee of Ministry on Labour & Employment |
| Md. Abu Talib Miah | Ministry of Labour & Employment | Joint Secretary |
| Mily Biswas | Police, Dhaka Range | Addl. Deputy Inspector Gen. of Police |
| Aslam Sunny | BKMEA | Vice President |
| Mizanur Rahman | BKMEA | Compliance Officer |
| Md. Emdad-ul Haque | BGMEA | Deputy Secretary, Compliance Cell |
| Mushfiqa Mustafa | BGMEA | Compliance Consultant |
| Dietrich Keschull | Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI) | Representative in India |
| Maren Boehm | Hermes-OTTO International | Corporate Responsibility Representative Asia |
| Abu Arshad Khondoker | Walmart | Supplier Development Manager |
| Alam Zahangir | Walmart | Supplier Development Specialist |
| Rejaul Haque | Bestseller | Coordinator SER |
| Alain Vallois | Green Channels | Managing Director |
| Monir | Islam Garments Ltd. | Manager HRD Compliance & SCS |
| ATM Mahbulul Alam Milton | Masco Industries Ltd. | Director Operations |
| MD. Eunus Al-Mamun | Masco Industries Ltd. | Manager (HR & Compliance) |
| Ahmed Ullah | Han Apparels Ltd. | Director |
| Md. Emarat Hossain | Fakir Apparels Ltd. | Sr. Manager (HR, Admin and Compliance) |
| MD. Kabirul Hasan (Miraj) | Knit Concern Ltd. | Manager HR (Admin & Compliance) |
| M. Haider Reza | Monno Ceramic Industries Ltd. | Sr. Manager (Labour & Welfare) |
| Md. Quaimul Islam | Dekko Apparels Ltd. | Manager - Social Compliance |
| Nazmul Ahsan | | Manager HRD & Social Compliance |
| Shameem Ahmed | miswar group | Managing Director |
| Mostafa | Dragon Sweaters Ltd. | Managing Director |
| Stefan Frowein | European Union Delegation to Bangladesh | Ambassador Head of Delegation |
| Zillul Hye Razi | European Union Delegation to Bangladesh | Trade Advisor |
| Rolf Dieter Reinhard | Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany | Deputy Head of Mission |

| | | |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Asif Ayub | Embassy of the United States of America | Economic and Commercial Specialist |
| Md. Manjur Morshed | GTZ | Senior Social Compliance Advisor |
| Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmmed | Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) | Assistant Executive Director |
| Alonzo Glenn Suson | American Center for International Labor Solidarity | Country Program Director |
| A.K.M. Nasim | American Center for International Labor Solidarity | Legal Adviser and Program Officer, LLSCP |
| Kalpona Akter | BCWS | Executive Director |
| Adv. Md. Borkot Ali | BLAST | Assistant Director (Legal) |
| Wajed-ul Islam Khan | Bangladesh Trade Union Kendra (BTUC) | General Secretary |
| A.K. Md. Mahbubul Alam | Bangladesh Trade Union Kendra (BTUC) | Vice President |
| Montu Ghosh | Garment Labour Trade Union | |
| Ruhul Amin | Garments Sramik Trade Union Kendra | General Secretary |
| MD. Towhidur Rahman | Bangladesh Apparels Workers Federation (BAWF) | President |
| Lutfar Rahman | Bangladesh Trade Union Centre (BTUC) | Vice-President |
| Shamima Nasreen | Shadhin Bangla Garments Sramik Karmachari Federation (SBGSKF) | President |
| Farid Hossain | AFP Bureau Chief | Moderator |
| Christian von Mitzlaff | LIFT Standards e.K. | Managing Director |
| | LIFT Standards team | Farhana von Mitzlaff Amena Iffat Mehedi Hassan Naim Ullah |

II. Preface

The 4. Round Table on Social Compliance continued the discussion from Round Table of August 2010 where the unrest and the minimum wage issue had been in the focus.



This Round Table agenda has been the ways towards an effective workers representation with participants from the private sector, the suppliers, European and American buyers and business associations, a wide representation of the trade unions, labour activists and advisors, the Ministry of Labour & Employment represented, the Bangladesh Police,

Members of Parliament and Diplomatic Missions of the European Union, Germany and United States of America.

The Round Table articulated interest is to be a dialogue platform, meet regularly with a set of dialogue rules enabling frank discussion in a constructive and respectful manner.¹

Major emphasis has been articulated at this Round Table on the importance holding a dialogue with diverse stakeholders on an 'eye-to-eye' level. The importance of a 'two-way communication' has been highlighted when young workers from rural area needs articulate and be listen to.

The Bangladesh Police noted the immediate need on an effected crises management which includes the workers organisation. Many more and substantial contribution are herewith documented expecting this compilation will facilitate to draw further conclusion contributing to a stage of a healthy industry environment.

The Business of Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI) sponsors as stakeholder dialogue this Round Table on Social Compliance and LIFT Standards e.K. is the facilitator and organiser.

¹ See documentation Formation Bangladesh Round Table 7. Oct. 2009, page 16

III. Agenda

“Towards Effective Workers Representation” - The Ways of Implementation -”

held on Tuesday 26th October 2010, 9:00 –14:30 p.m.

at Bakul Room, Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, followed by a lunch.

Programme

- 08:45 Registration
- 09:00 Opening part with addresses by key participants
- 10:00 Address by Special Speakers: Md. Israfil Alam, Chairman Standing Committee of Ministry on Labour & Employment
Mr. Stefan Frowein, Ambassador, European Union
- 10:45 Tea break
- 11:00 In-house Dialogue: the ways of implementation:
- Expectations, possible active support and mode of operation
 - Compliance challenges 2011 and Round Table outlook
- 14:30 Closing and lunch invitation
-



IV. Address during the opening session

For the opening session the press has been invited and participants from each stakeholder group has been asked to briefly address the Round Table on the question of implementation of Social Compliance in Bangladesh. Which relevance do they see in this initiative and how to contribute towards the objective of Social Compliance in Bangladesh.

On behalf of the stakeholder group the following person addressed the Round Table (in chronological order) after a brief welcome by the Organizer and introduction to the local moderator Mr. Manzurul Ahsan Bulbul:

1. Mr. Alam Sunny, Vice President BKMEA
2. Mr. Towhidur Rahman, President BAWF
3. Dr. Stefan Frowein, Ambassador European Union
4. Ms. Mily Biswas, Addl. Deputy Inspector Gen. of Police
5. Ms. Maren Boehm, Otto International
6. Mr. Ahmed Ullah, Han Apparels Ltd.
7. Mr. Montu Gosh, Garment Labour Trade Union
8. Mr. Rolf-Dieter Reinhard, German Embassy
9. Mr. Md Israfil Alam, MP, Chairman of Standing Committee the Ministry of Labour & Employment

Mr. Aslam Sunny, Vice President, BKMEA

Aslam Sunny- Good morning, Honorable Member of Parliament and ladies and gentlemen. Today we will discuss about our social compliance and workers representation. According to our labour law 2006, any factory has more than 50 workers, needs to elect Representation Committee. We differ in this point, because if you follow this procedure, the following problem may be created. Section-wise conflict, area base conflict, political conflict and conflict with the outsiders like *jhut* business and others. In Bangladesh, we know our country and its real situation with



outsiders and have no good experience with election as businessmen. If we would follow elected Participants Committee in our factory, I will point out four points here, you should really think about them:

As you know Bangladesh factories are categorized to A, B and C category. All the factories don't have the same standard. They don't work with the same buyer level. All buyers don't pay

same price level. We cannot even make *one* rule or *one* system. We do have an efficient labour law and I think, my association BKMEA and BGMEA will also agree with me. If we follow the labour law and coordinate with the Labour Ministry and labour participants district wise, our follow up team will be working with our members factories. If they would follow all the minimum wages and all the conditions like doctors, health and day care facilities and if we confirm everything like minimum wages declared, I think there is no need of a Participating Committee. Selected participating committees are already working. BKMEA already forces our members to have Participating Committees.

I passed the BSCI audit two years back and need to be audited again next year. By then BSCI cannot allow my factory to pass, if our committee is not elected as the law directed to have an elected committee. BSCI will not consider this Participation Committee legal.

With the presence of our labour leaders, our parliamentary committee chairman and buyers, I can give you the example of our Chittagong port. One and a half years back, we were so efficiency, that only in one day we could shipped out everything and one day sufficient to import everything. But only one and a half years later, with free factories and politics and everything. To our trade union leaders over there, *what is the responsibilities of those persons?*

I am importing yarn from India and you are aware of the crisis of yarn in the world. I am waiting 25 days to clear my goods! What is about the commitment to my buyers? We are working under lead time and our competition is China. With their mother vessels, they are going to ship at only 15 days. India has five ports and they are also our competitor and ship out in only 45 days. But still we are talking about 60 days, 90 days and 120 days. I am working with some buyers who are working only with 25 days as repeat orders. This is the practical scenario, this is the reality. If our ability is like this, we are out of the market in this world by our competitors.

Now which point to at and I think everybody will agree: If I would declare election in my factory of 5000 workers, grouping will happen either section wise like dying, knitting, finishing section. Who is going to be the Vice President of this committee? This question will mount to a conflict. We have conflicts area base, some came from Noakhali, some are from Dhaka, some come from outside. Making grouping area wise is a real phenomena in Bangladesh. And then the political conflicts: some are from Awami League, some are from BNP, some are Communist - this kind of thing. And the conflict with the outsiders, the *jhut* business:

The conflict is with the outsiders, the *jhut*. We have the records and in the presence of our honorable MP and DIG, all the conflict is going on. The crisis is going on for last few years and everything is involved with the outside people, the outside terrorist. I think garment sector is not *out from our society*. If our society would not allow this kind of things, we would love it. At present, we differ form holding election procedure as it impossible to apply in this situation. Thank you very much.

Mr. Towhidur Rahman, President BAWF

Good Morning, my name is Md. Towhidur Rahman, President of Bangladesh Apparels Workers Federation. I am giving thanks to the organizer for inviting me to this important Round Table meeting. Hon'ble Chairman Standing Committee on Ministry of



Labour & Employment, Mr. Israfil Alam.

I disagree with the VP of BKMEA because you should remember that Bangladesh is a member country of ILO and Bangladesh also signed the ILO Convention 87 and 98. We do not agree with your viewpoint on the Participation Committee. We want free and fair democratic trade union movement in the RMG factories. If we do not allow the trade union practice in the RMG, our image of Bangladesh is also internationally damaged. Continuous complains of our industries in the international arena, like not granting labour rights, RMG owners are not permitting trade union rights, the minimum wage, weekly holidays, maternity benefits etc. Shouldn't we think to build up our image and to go through this without political interference and conflict trying to build up a labour union in the RMG? This would be the solution of RMG violations, the unrest and the others.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Stefan Frowein, Ambassador European Union

Thank you very much. I just came from another session on Disaster Risk Reduction in the same hotel. Let me first congratulate BSCI and LIFT for organizing the Fourth Round Table. As you know, I was here last time and had the pleasure to make a short statement, which you put as well in your publication and I saw that the publication really reflects how lively the discussion went last time and how much it is useful to do this kind of exercise. I think it is useful because here you put around this table at high level people from different parts, who are involved and are stakeholder in the RMG sector. Here are the workers, owners and development partners, there are think tanks and people who try to give the process of dialog a chance. Last time I was very impressed by the presence of the Minister of Labour & Employment, who himself made very strong contribution to the discussion. I felt this was a sign of good governance in the sense that the government wants to be part of this dialog and wants to be in it. Same applies for us, the development partners. We feel that we have a say in this and we should be a part of it.



You know that the European Commission is for a very long time quite active in this area: First of all, we have in Bangladesh the biggest trade related technical assistance program in the world. In no other country we do as much trade related technical assistance, which means assisting Bangladesh, the government, the private sector, the civil society organization, whoever is involved in, to improve the capacity and the quality of exportable goods. Readymade garments, which is your subject today is one of the big actors in that area so we are naturally involved with that. We usually work in this context with ILO and the core labour standard certainly is one issue but social corporate responsibility in general is an item, which we feel is an important issue too. We try in our dialog with the government, in our dialogue with producers, in our dialogue with the private sector in general to show how much we feel this is an important issue. I think this forum is an excellent opportunity to exchange views and I think if you want to make progress in that area, it is necessary

that we listen to each other. Today I have the impression, that this exercise, at least from my point of view, is very much a listening exercise and give everybody a chance to put his point of view on the table. Already the fact that this different stakeholders sit at one table at eye level and talk to each other under the leadership of some serious people who know the sector well is a very good initiative. I am here to simply show support to your initiative and I wish you luck in achieving small steps as I am pretty sure we can not expect from round table and discussions like this that we walk out from this room and we have the new strategy and everything will change tomorrow. However, I think without these discussions we might get stuck. You therefore are doing something very important, you are doing the right thing.

You have to have patience, I think it will not be fast and it will have to be repeated so that it settles in as a normal process of talking to each other about the problems and the point of views from each other. At the end of the every stakeholder has a legitimate positions and view points, of which *he* can only explain to the other side, if the other side is willing to listen. The 1st step of finding solutions is to *sit*, to *talk* and to *make clear* what the position is. I think the willingness to exchange is the 1st signal of willingness to find solutions.

so thank you very much for inviting me and thank you very much for your very interesting initiative which is already at its 4th round. The participation looks extremely encouraging as we see so many stakeholders around this table and making contributions.

Thank you very much.

Ms. Mily Biswas, Addl. Deputy Inspector Gen. of Police

Thank you, good morning, Honorable Member of Parliament and other respected participants, Asamalaikum. You know that our job is something like the popular bangla proverb: "*the snake will die but the stick will be as it was*". This RMG sector in my own experience, during my duty, I found huge factory buildings are burning in flames, roads are blocked by thousand of workers like a huge mob, throwing stones and bricks to their own factories and confronting with us.



What is my duty? To clear the road for the fire fighters and deploy force to minimize the situation? How could I help the situation where I should not feel that the *workers are the snakes and my force is the snake hunter*. At this stage we must have effective workers representation. We must have a holistic approach to address the situation. The government has already formed an Industrial Police for this RMG sector. It was needed

for the immediate security of the factories and the factory owners, it was a demanding phenomenon.

In my opinion, not only in the workers' opinion or workers' demand: In reality it is for sake of the industry itself, who must have its organizational setup. Workers organization is needed for workers safety and safety for whole scenario. My point is

it would be effective for all short of crisis management and the conflict could not get shaped as a disaster. From our law and order point of view, we could have the chance to talk with the leaders and make arrangement of dialog with the factory owners for negotiations. Our RMG is a very big matter for our economy, huge job market is there, our poor people have a survivor point. We need to make it fully compliant for our image of this beloved country, for the importers, for the workers, owners and for all. We are ready to serve for the sector, what it needs actually, we will not hunt anything, together we will create. Thank you very much.

Ms. Maren Boehm, Otto International

I really appreciate getting different views already in the 1st half of this round table and I can only support what Mr. Frowein just said. This is very nice forum for discussion, for exchanging views in a meeting on an eye-to-eye level. In regard to the workers representation, I strongly believe that this is an absolute *must* to have and from the discussion we have in the factories with owners, with workers and with the unions, the NGOs, also reflected today, I feel the fear not all parties are very happy with workers representative as it might be associated with certain dangers. However, I believe that *workers representation* does not necessarily mean that workers are fighting for rights, which might be so or not. to word it carefully, but let me rephrase it: I don't see a danger coming from workers representations, if there are well managed. Rather see I a lot of input from workers given to a factory. The workers are the ones who know processes, who know the factory very well as they are sitting there and doing the job everyday. Workers participation is not only about wage discussion but if you have an effective participation and as Mr. Kebschull mentioned, in China and India, where we have workers cells in place at many factories, they do give a lot of positive input. Input like reducing accidents and finding measures on how to implement certain betterments in the factories. I also agree with the Police Officer, Ms. Mily Biswas regarding a necessary *representative* you can talk to - regarding needs and requests - to have a channel or a person is an absolute *must* to really contribute minimizing the risk and unrest in the garment industry.



With regard to the ways of implementation, I hope that we will get a lot of input from this round table today and also different ideas and views about how this can be done effectively. Thank you.

Mr. Ahmed Ullah, Han Apparels Ltd.

Bismillahir rahmanir rahim. Thank you very much Mr. Chairman and thank you Christian von Mitzlaff for inviting me to attend in this round table meeting. This is my 3rd time to attend this meeting.

My friend Mr. Aslam Sunny already explained our position at the moment, the owner's position. At the last meeting, I mentioned that we are working as a *indigo* farmer. You know about the *indigo* history long time back and what happened about this *indigo* during the British period. We are doing the same, one of my factory is locating in Savar outside Dhaka. The factory is fully in compliance. We giving more

compare to a compliant factory. We are providing Provident Fund, we are giving food allowances and all medical facilities even though I am facing problems. Previously I hardly received complains but after implementing all those facilities, I am receiving complains and demands from workers everyday. We have a very active Workers Association with who is entitled to contact with my buyer. Luckily my buyer in USA, realizes what actually is happening. After giving so many things we are not in a position to work. My possible future decision be may to close all my factories. You see, after fulfilling all those facilities, we are not happy. As this is my 4th meeting, from this discussion, some solution and idea should come out.

Again another thing: we are not against the unions either the BGMEA or BKMEA. But we have to change our mentality. Discussion is needed but in a good way with good mentality. Thank you very much.

Mr. Montu Gosh, Garment Labour Trade Union

Thank you. All the respected persons here, I congratulate all the persons for discussing such a good thing. My brother, the owner said, that they don't have any denial of allowing trade unions. But *what* is the problem – it is the mentality. < I do not appreciate trade union as they are not yet grown up >, *this* is the idea of our respected owners.

The workers in the factory, coming from villages and they are young ladies and boys without any earlier idea of becoming a worker. Working for 8 to 12 hours without having any representative to communicate to the proper person. Here is the problem! When a man is thinking of problems in himself or for the whole of the workers, he can not speak, he cannot go to the proper person to speak. The only way is to express collectively, is trade union. It is wide known world factor that the factories in our country are grown up and we expect this sector will more grow. But what would be the way of running these factories nicely? The way is to give the opportunity to the workers to express their views, their problems and the owner would be able to solve those problems. The maximum of the garments factories are run by a manager, director or someone else in our country, who do not understand the problem of the workers and they don't come to the heart of the workers. I would invite our respectable owners and other guest here to reflect: If we want to do progress in these factories, we have to communicate with each other to develop ourselves. Without this, it will not happen, because if I can't express myself to the owner, continuing simply with one way communication will not be possible in future. Thank you very much.



Mr. Rolf-Dieter Reinhard, German Embassy

Thank you very much Mr. von Mitzlaff, Ladies and Gentlemen, Honourable Member of Parliament. I am very happy to be here, participating for the 1st time at this Round Table, thank you very much for inviting me.

I think this is a wonderful occasion in our view, speaking on behalf of the German Embassy, we are very much appreciating this as a business driven event as it is in the industry interest to bring together stakeholders to work on these issues. Speaking for the German embassy in Dhaka, Germany is over 40 years development partner of Bangladesh with a very strong interest on social and economic development of this country. Within the European union we are probably the largest market and business is very successful in Germany, getting our applaud here. Beside this, we also see a huge potential of further business also in regard to German companies coming to Bangladesh to invest and create employment. However, we also see that there is an issue of perception, and this negative perception of Bangladesh - we see at the Embassy daily - holds German companies back to engage and to come to Bangladesh looking for business partners. I think this is something we have to realize. From this perspective, I am very happy that such a round table can take place and that the discussions you have are moving on also we wish we of course good luck for this.

The German government encourages this initiative of business to improve social and environmental standards and of course their relationship between workers and employers. Referring to our experience in Germany after the destruction in World War II and recreating our economy, this has been one of the key elements I believe, that help us to move based on an achieved sort of social harmony in the industry. If you look at the statistics of strikes in Germany, they are pretty low and other kind of industrial actions. In our experience, at least that's the way we interpret things in Germany, this social harmony among the industry, has been one of the key driving force for our economic success. It was a comparative advantage, it was a competitive advantage that we could have. I wish that you will achieve it too and I hope that this Round Table will be able to contribute to.

Before I close, I want to mention with regard supporting business moving on these issues, the German Embassy is supporting a conference end of this week, the 28th October. The conference is titled 'Global And Social Responsibility of Entrepreneurs' with the idea to send a positive message to Germany, doing business in Bangladesh is possible, it is rewarding and there is plenty of scope for activities and opportunities. Thank you very much.

Mr. Md Israfil Alam, MP,
Chairman Standing Committee Ministry Labour & Employment

Good morning everybody. 1st I like to thank Mr. von Mitzlaff from LIFT for organizing this wonderful Round Table to exchange the views between producers, buyers, government, workers and policy makers about RMG sector of Bangladesh. We know that this sector is very important for our national economy and the whole nation is very attentive in this sector. Personally I believe very strongly in free, fair and responsible, productive and democratic trade union or workers representatives in RMG sector. In according with ILO Convention 87 and 98 and also in the light of article 37, 38 of our Constitution, the highest law of our country. This article is directly related with our fundamental rights. There is no scope to deny the right to organize and the right to bargain of workers side. But there are some



problems: The forum of owners and buyers forum is very strong in our country. But the workers forum is very weak, unorganized and non-unified. Our trade union leaders are more political leader than trade unionist. Most of our trade union leaders are directly involved in our national politics. This is the main weakness of our workers forum. I think all trade union activist of Bangladesh should be unified, organized and to respect political parties and regional feelings. Our workers forum could then be strong.

According to Labour Law 2006 a probation of trade union is exists. We are working to review this Labour Law, in which workers rights of trade union will be free and fair. But I personally like to encourage (welcome) the *responsible* trade union. In the name of trade union no vandalism, no destructive activities should be allowed in this sector and everybody, those who are related with this sector, should come forward to ensure a peaceful Industrial Relation in the RMG sector.

Another issue are the wages. Recently we declared a fair wage structure in according to our socio economic condition of Bangladesh. However, I am in doubt whether the owners successfully implement this wage structure. Regarding this issue, I must request the buyers to ensure the fair CM, to ensure the 'ethical buying concept'. If the CM will not be increased, the new wages structure might fail So many garments owners might be incapable to carry out the load of newly increased wages. Therefore, I further draw the kind attention of the Buyers Forum to increase the cost of production in order to ensure the ethical buying.

Thank you very much everybody.

End of Opening Session

- Tea break -



V. Working session

Introduction of group tasks – Brainstorming Circuit

The moderator welcomed the returning participants to the working session to put the thoughts and opinion onto this floor.

BGMEA is not present on executive level although we were expecting President Mr. Murshedy, Directors Mr. Reaz Bin-Mahmood and Mr. Azim, who confirmed their participation.

Mr. Sunny, Vice President BKMEA left and BKMEA will continue to be represented Mizanur Rahman.

Comment by the BKMEA representative: Thank you, I am representing BKMEA and as much as it concerns BKMEA, I want to inform that our 27 members Board of Directors is scheduled to meet the Commerce Minister at 12pm today. For this reason, our Vice President Mr. Sunny left with the directions to attending the rest of the meeting. Thank you.

Mr. Wajed-ul Islam Khan

Thank you and thanks to LIFT Standards e.K for organizing this social compliance forum. We really need this type of brainstorming meeting, its very important to us. We are really lacking and are deprived of our social compliance in particularly in the RMG sector, which is a very important and encouraging industry of our country.



RMG is the most growing industry in our country and the social compliance is yet to be implemented in many of the industries and the number is uncountable. Regarding this, in one sentence I want to say that it is being absent in many of the industries, particularly in garment sector. Regarding the agenda "*towards effective workers representation, the ways of implementation*", I think this is a major issue that needs to be addressed and it is timely taken up by LIFT Standard e.K.

Many of the BGMEA leaders used to talk with me many times. But when lot of workers are in the streets, *BGMEA don't know with whom to dialogue*. That is the major concern that they don't find any person to speak to. That is the major issue and major problem!

We believe strongly that if we can establish a good atmosphere, a good dialogue which a lot of problems can be solved across the table. But when I talk, they don't get any importance from the owner side, this is a sad part from the employers' side. Though the major part of employers are absent today, I don't know to which extend my opinion will be effective. What I am saying is after long years of experience.

ILO has come up with two Conventions 87 and 98, where the Freedom of workers Association is guaranteed and Collective Bargaining, which is very important to solve the problem systematically and across the table. This is a very important issue and

we already have those two ILO Conventions and when implementing these, it can be the best way of representation and best way to solve the problems in the RMG sector or in any other industry.

It's true that Bangladesh has its own labour law, but the implementation is not up to the mark and not done properly. Particularly in RMG sector the employers discourage the trade union rights very much. Initially few years back in the EPZ area, it probably started with the Workers Welfare Committee and WRWC but did not give any positive result. Again they came up with plant level participation committee and I think, it won't give positive result too. We think that there is no alternative to free fair trade union rights to get established in the industrial sector. Already our government accepted these two Conventions 87 and 98 with no question left regarding their implementing.

My proposal by my organization, the Bangladesh Trade Union Centre: We say that trade union is the only alternative, which can be most effective workers representation in the industrial sector and that is the best way of implementing and solution of the problems in the sector. Hence I humbly submit my presentation and want to close stating, if the employers would come up with trade union rights for everybody, without restriction, then 90 percent problem can be solved across the table - I can assure that. Thank you very much.

Mr. von Mitzlaff

Thank you Mr. Wajed for bringing us straight into the topic. If you permit, I like to add my observation. I am with Bangladesh for last 15 years and since I first got in touch with this sector as an ILO official, I feel the pulse, the requests and the pressure in regard of workers representation. As you mentioned, it started with the Workers Welfare Committee then it developed to the Workers Representative Welfare Committee as you mentioned in the EPZ. Now we are discussing about the Participation Committee and above all there is always the request of the full right of trade union. I like to elaborate a bit what I briefly mentioned in the opening session.

I think we presently see different approaches discussed in the country and which are going to be implemented. I propose we brainstorm on the pragmatic ways of how further to develop. For myself, I stay an outsider, as I don't have stake in this sector only here to facilitate and help to bring this Round Table together. But what I observed and is documented throughout the last three Round Tables is, the clear statements to implement the ILO Conventions. However, hardly we see well functioning trade union in this industry, which is to take notice. How are we going further?

Recalling the positions expressed previously and today is, the hesitation by the Bangladesh business sector is to give access to trade union and rather to search for other model and concept, which I understand, is contested by the trade union.

Nevertheless shouldn't we give a thought which are pragmatic steps forward? The fortune of Germany's young history is the re-unification of East and West Germany. It is different, but still I like to mention the time of cold war between the two superpowers. Being a resident in Berlin and experienced the 'Cold War, the Communist ideology literary face to face with the free market capitalism. The Germans have been fortunate of few statesmen's policy, to explore pragmatic approach ('Realpolitik') to achieve small steps, which helped to narrow the gap. Eventually this has definitely contributed to the 'melting down' of the Wall and

overcome the ideologists and this dramatic conflict. As this came instantly to my mind, I share with you.

Don't we need pragmatic ways forward? I remember talking about trade union and workers representation since I first have been to Bangladesh. Still, it seems so little progress and demonstrated cooperation has been achieved for one decade. This forum can elaborate ideas and find possibilities. They might not always be politically correct, but perhaps pragmatic.

Just food for thoughts for the discussion at a time, where decisions on what and how to implement are immanent: the legally required Participation Committees, the two ILO Conventions and the upcoming Better Work Programme to act on.

As a side note, we have a new participant here. I assume he knows very well about the experience in Cambodia of 'Better Work'. This is also presently discussed at the level of the Ministry of Commerce. In summary are different concepts discussed of what to do to improve workers representation. I invite you to comment on my observations.

Group assignment

Along your professional group we continue with the same setting as previous Round Tables: the suppliers group, the business members association group BGMEA, BKMEA and also BSCI, the buyers, trade unionist, labour activist, the government, the law enforcing agency and the Parliament members.

Please brainstorm and write on the cards, according to your proposal / suggestion, what does is need from your personal point of view the next step to develop effective workers representation in the factory?

Mr. Quaimul Islam

Thank you, I am Quaimul Islam from Dekko Apparel, looking after social compliance. Theoretically, workers union and ILO Conventions, nobody will differ that it is really needed for a fair industrial sector in Bangladesh or anywhere else. In Bangladesh we don't have any history of a practice of fair labour union. Therefore we have to consider Bangladesh as a special case and no theory can be implemented in a bookish way. We have to consider our history, our culture and our overall situation. We have to implement it in a creative way, not in a mechanical or theoretical or bookish way. Considering the situation, I would like to explain that in Bangladesh we are planning to introduce fair labour union or something like this, which I can compare with an example: We are planning to handover knives and tools to some guys for operation who are not trained and don't know how to operate. Should we call them *surgeons*? My point is, before handover the *tools and knives* and to give the freedom to operate a patient, let him trained up 1st. He should know why the operation is needed, how to do it and what will be the benefit. Its good for a fair and healthy industrial sector to proceed via negotiation, discussions, dialog. But before implementing, we have to train up both the parties. Our main lacking is in the area of our workers and even leaders. We have to plan - in my opinion - areas like BGMEA, BKMEA, Ministry of Labour & Employment, workers union leaders, NGOs and Institute of Labour Studies, those kind of organizations should arrange crash programs all over our country to aware the workers about their rights and responsibilities on the questions of: *What is a union? What sort of thing they should*

do and should not do for their companies. Without the industry they will not survive, no industry, no workers.

Actually we really want a fair industrial sector but before we have to train up our people. Those, who will actually act as a real component to make the sector healthy and efficient. Thank you very much.

Mr. Alonzo Suson

American Center for International Labor Solidarity

Good morning, my name is Alonzo Suson. I am very new to this country so primarily I have a lot more questions than contribution. Since I am new, I ask a lot of question to my stuffs and to people I met. When I came in August, something happened, there were a number of strikes and burnings. The newspapers and TVs reported on violent and big unrest. I asked to my staff, how many factories are actually burning, how many out of 5000? He said, probably a handful. *If it's a handful, is that the real picture?* It must not be the real picture if it just a handful and it just happened in the big downtown where the media and TV could capture the situation.



I also liked what Mr. Israfil Alam said about power: *The buyers are powerful, owners are powerful in the different sector but the union is weak.* I said to my staff, well if there is a big disturbance in the union, how many factories out of 5000 have unions? I said 500 factories? My staff reacted, Alonzo are you crazy? It's less then 500, maybe 250, which is not even 10%. Workers representation is basically around 5%. The question then is: what about the 95 percent? Are there no workers representation? That's a big problem.

If there were trade union competition, those 95% could compete here. But what about registration? How many have been registered in last two years? I said to my staff, that find out, I need to know. But he said sorry Alonzo, it's hard for me to find out, how many got registered. So why is there a problem?

Issues of Collective Bargaining: How many CBA do we have? Can u give me the numbers of registered CBA with their framework agreement? So how do things get settled? What goes to the Labour Court and how long does it need to settle questions there?

Some of those representation issues can be dealt with like the registration. But the issue of having a union power having a real partner in a Social Dialog is a very important issue. Here in Bangladesh the movement has a number of elder statesman, whereas during my 6 years in Cambodia, where the union movement is much more younger, I have been regarded as *father*. I said, *no, I am not a father, I am a brother, maybe an elder brother.*

I think we should look out to the seriousness of numbers like what percent of union are in the industry and why is there a problem? How many collective bargaining agreements exist and how does a grievance issue get resolved? It just needs more questions to raise. Thank you.

Mr. Syed Sultan

Thank you Mr. Moderator, for giving me the floor. Mr. Israfil Alam, MP and other distinguished guest and participants. I am not a selected speaker but some issues came up, where we need to respond and to discuss specially our brother Quaimul Islam what he mention in his address that Bangladesh trade union movement doesn't have a history of organized and moderate movement.

Actually I think it's the lack of knowledge about the history of the trade union movement of Bangladesh. I would like to request if anyone wants to comment about the movement, try to know the role it played in last 50 or 100 years. The international movement, the democratic movement, in the freedom struggle and the place where we are sitting now, at a time when we have the atmosphere to sit together, exchanging views and dialogue, all actually came due to the long struggle of the trade union movement and the workers movement of this country. It's not anything bookish. We are sitting here to find out a way of making effective workers representation. Unfortunately the two sides are empty now, those who talked in the morning. They should have ensured to have representatives staying behind. The first speaker from the employer's side told that if we go for election there will be lot of competition, area wise competition, political competition and it would vanish the factories. But this is the very basic principle of making the representation. Who can represent whom without an electoral process and who will talk? Just at this table if we would invite some employer from Ashulia, those without any role in BGMEA or BKMEA, whether they would represent the owner side? - I don't think so.

It is the electoral process, which will determine the real and effective representation of stakeholders. Who has the right to represent the workers, if not elected? Are they selected by the owner? So that's the very principle that they are denying. That need to be actually discussed very deeply and open minded. How we can make an *effective representation*. Without an electoral process and the legal process we can't make it. This is one of my points that needs to be considered through this person from BGMEA is not here.



If you go 5 years back, once Bangladesh government decided to appoint an administrator at BGMEA and whole BGMEA people came to the streets to demonstrate and it was the burning of the statue of this administrator. Why? Because BGMEA representation is an electoral process and you know, BGMEA is the only trade organization in the country those who share the panel for one year and then another one year, for 1,5 year and another 1,5 year. It's the only trade organization. Each and every trade organization has a term, periodical election. They have two panels for the whole period. If I am wrong please correct it. And we accept it. Does that mean that BGMEA is breaking down? Does not mean that the whole RMG trade is worse. So denying the very democratic process and worsening the cultural and moral value of the nation, like a marshal dictator, that *we are not fit for the election, we are not fill for the democratic process*. I don't think that it will help us to go forward!

In order to go forward, we actually need to consider ourselves that we are in a *boat* and the *industry* is the boat. We need to run the industry, we need to take the industry in the bank. We need everyday a forward looking agenda to run the industry. So let us have a discussion like this that we need a representation for each and every stakeholder. It is a huge industry. This country does not have any experience to deal with these huge industrial, not the owner, not the trade union, not the government also. That is fact. The Industrial Dispute is the integral part of the industry. We will have Industrial Dispute, whatever the measure we take. It is a continuous thing, it is an integral part of the industry and we cannot manage it by saying that it's a law and order situation and police will take over. No, no, never it happened. It should be settled within the Industrial Dispute settlement process and effective representation is fundamental and government should be the referee. Thank you very much.

Observation by Mr. Israfil Alam

Thank you very much. I am sorry as I had the interest to stay here for a long time but an important call reached me regarding the labour policy, which is going to be updated. I should take part there and have to leave this program.

I've said my opinion regarding trade union and workers participation. I think without proper and adequate participation of workers, dialogue in between the owners, government, buyers and other stakeholders would not be successful. I therefore am trying to emphasize to ensure the real worker's presentation. Trade Union rights are a fundamental part of human rights. So nobody should say anything like *trade union history is bad, is not acceptable*. I can't disagree with them. There are some bad instances of trade unions in past history. But we have to be confident to make a good future. In light of past history, we should not stop our future. Owners and employers should be confident that everybody should come under the legal framework. If workers will come under the legal framework owners, government will play their roles under the legal framework. Then there is no scope of any problem or distractive activities or any unruly, unlawful activities. The main problem is absence of legal and legitimate trade union and workers representations. One of my brothers was trying to say, that there are only 200 trade unions out of 500 factories. It is



very, very little. If we want to form trade union in every factory, all works can come under the legal framework. Then they would have no scope to create any illegal or unlawful activities because trade union is guided and governed by the specific legal guidance, the specific legal order. If anybody breaks the law/ violets it, there is provision to punish them. But now, if there is no trade union in accordance to our labour law,

there are no legal barriers of doing bad. People could do anything bad, and there is no body to take the responsibility of illegal activities. This is the problem. There are a lot of workers like 1000 and more of workers in a factory. If they have no legal guidance, no legal frameworks, they can do and undo everything. But if there are legal barriers, if there is legal framework, they cannot do anything. So, I think and

personally believe that, all workers of RMG sectors should be brought under the legal framework and it is possible only by ensuring trade unions - the *responsible trade unions*. Under the labour law, under the ILO Convention and under our Constitution, these are steps and activities, those decisions can be helpful for owners, for industries and for everybody.

Another problem of this sector is that our owners and leaders of BGMEA and BKMEA have some wrong ideas about trade union leaders and trade union activist. Trade union leader should be elected and should not be nominated by owners. They should be elected by original workers, those are directly related with the factories work. I strongly believe that real workers and *real* leader of workers, would never destroy their machines, destroy the factories, destroy their assets. Because, the factories and machineries are the main wheel of their life. If machines are stopped, their lives will be stopped. So, I like to emphasize on these issues that workers representative should be elected by the original workers by the main workers of factories. Trade union rights should be ensured, should be free and fair in RMG sector. The industrial relation will be ensured and any vandalism, destructive and others unruly and unlawful activities may be stopped and controlled. So many ideas and issues have aroused in the seminar. I think our colleagues on our owners side, buyer sides and workers leaders all are very senior and expert than me and they will contribute in this discussion. I have a very simple message to all: The government is very interested to ensure the trade union rights in the RMG sector.

Government is working for that. It is working to update the labour policies of Bangladesh in accordance with the ILO Conventions and our election 'manifesto' and the government is working to amend the labour law by which all workers will have their legal rights for making trade unions for joining trade unions and ensuring their bargaining authorities and rights. Our honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said in the Parliament that garments workers should have trade union rights. Our Labour Minister, several times he has said that the garment workers should have trade union rights. I therefore request the owner side, the leaders of BGMEA & BKMEA for showing their liberal attitude to accept this trade union condition, to allow the trade union rights of RMG sector as this is their legal right. This their fundamental right. By denying, by rejecting any fundamental rights of any people, peace and stability cannot be ensured. Thank you every body.

Mr. Mahbubul Alam

Mr. Israfil Alam, MP, Chairman Standing Committee. If his remarks which he spoke here, if the government implements, there will be no problem in the RMG sector, but unfortunately I think, that will not be implemented. I will give you some examples about the RMG sector and effective workers participation of the trade union. Some of the employers representatives', those of who are employed to look after the workers, they remark in such a way, that is too hard to the workers representative as well as to the workers.

You know the 2nd largest export earners are the tanneries. The tannery workers union is there. There will be no dispute in the tannery sector. Tannery employees association always advocated to allow the union for the workers. But in the RMG sectors they are not allowing the trade union. One example I want to show you: In the year 1996, the Lakhxma Fashion Apparels in Uttara union was registered and the leaders were dismissed. I asked the owner why are they dismissed? The owner said 'it is my right', but they don't have any right to dismiss the worker without showing

any cause; Without any default. This is the attitude of the employers of RMG, the entrepreneurs of RMG.

Another example that I'm giving you regarding Social Safety: the ILO came up with a huge amount of money to construct the houses for the RMG sector employees offering the entrepreneurs of RMG to take the money with only 1% interest. But the owners and entrepreneurs, BGMEA and BKMEA refused to take the money. Why? When I discussed with the Gogon Vandari last month, he told me.

Another example, I want to give you: one of our RMG leader in Ashulia, Abu Reza Choudhury Tuhin, was arrested on 2nd September at Gulistan. The police made a statement that *on 3rd that he was arrested on 3rd with arms*. This is the history which going on in our country. Because of this sort of unfair practice by employers and some of the government people, the RMG sector became unrest. If they would stop all these things, I think there would be no chaos and confusion. There would not be any sort of agitation against workers.



Another example I want to give: In the year 2006 by 22-26th May, all the RMG sector came out with their only demand: The behaviour of the employers and their representatives in the factories. The Government settled it and the workers who hesitated, government already take up the case. This year, when the wage commission was declared, some of the workers came out. They did not accept this wages structure because the Prime Minister had declared in Parliament that the Minimum Wage should be 5.000 Taka. Prime Minister has given the declaration later on demand of the employers of 3.000 Taka. It then became 2000 Taka and 800 for house rent and 200 for medical allowances, all together 3000 Taka. Now BKMEA and BGMEA are trying not to implement this wage structure. *How?* They ask the

government that we are not able to implement this wage structure unless the incentive package, a cash package is given to them. This is the real story in our RMG sector.

When we employers see here those employers representatives - I don't undermine them - but they are not the decision makers. I think they is no Labour Director from government here. He s also absent. I don't know whether they were invited or not. This is the real picture in our country. For the RMG sector, workers representative Labour Director should be represented as such an important issue or Labour Ministry should represent such an issue. BGMEA, I think BKMEA also have some problem there. I think if one of the directors were present, then there will be no problem. Whether all the directors want to meet the Commerce Minister? - That is the reality. But they don't count this seminar as an important issue. This is what's going on in our country. I want to conclude this way: Mr. Israfil also told here, *nobody is beyond the law*. If this is correct, in that case, our Labour Law permits to allow trade union in the RMG sector. Labour Directors should then give this immediately to all trade unions submitted. BKMEA, BGMEA can't terminate the workers without the permission of the Labour Director. When they submit the register for the trade union for the registration, inspectors should inspect the factories weather they are behaving properly, they've kept everything according to the legal frames or not. But

no inspector is visiting the factories. If they would follow these three issues, I think, not only the RMG sector in Bangladesh, but all the workers will be peaceful and the industry would run perfectly and there will be a good production. Entrepreneurs Vice President Mr. Aslam Sunny, gave the example of the Chittagong port. Why the CTG port is mentioned here? The CTG port Distributer is only responsible, who is connected with the entrepreneurs, owners and the employers, not the workers! But the workers were blamed for those reasons. This is the reality. I think Mr. Farid knows as reporter all the stories. He can also explain all this things. Thank you all.

Mr. von Mitzlaff

Thank you Mr. Mahbubul for your thoughts and your examples. Regarding the invitations we sent out, I can tell you it is very difficult to reach the high levels. We did a lot of running and knocking at the doors to get the re-confirmation even though I had the confirmation already. Although we have non-filled seats today, I am happy that workers bench is this time over proportional presented. However, the private sector and government needs also to be here.

Regarding the Labour Minister, I can share with you that he was quite pleased with the Third Round Table, although he has been quite sceptical in the beginning, but I heard that he gave appreciation after Round Table. Unfortunately is he at present not in the country, and I assume, that with his presence, we would have filled the chairs. In brief, all have been invited including the Director of Labour. This format may need more 'pulling factors' than just an invitation from the organizer. The concept of this Round Table is to listen to others, those having a stake and who have influence on high level. The Organizer only has one channel of communication but the message of coming together here needs to be spread from multiple sides. The same probably applies for BGMEA. How much did I try to reach for the president, who finally has confirmed. By experience I am facing either regrets or even no respond. This time I share with you this difficult situation. We are trying very hard to bring this Round Table together and I may need to ask your support in future in order to get an appropriate response to this valuable initiative.



Coming to the brainstorming and card writing my question is the following:

What does it need to develop
"effective workers' representation"?

In my observation, decisions are to be made at present: The decision either to implement trade union, the Participation Committee and or the Better Work Program. I would welcome to comment my understanding, whether this question is eminent for decision in the coming months.

Which is every group viewpoint on how to proceed in a pragmatic way? In case it is not going to be happened, which would be the consequences? Finally which approach (way) would you support?

My assumption is that each professional group will probably build their mind of this sector-political question. Like on the buyer's side, which strategy going to support, it is on the supplier's side, which strategy going to accept and to co-operate with? On the workers' side: How to cooperate and to contribute best? Similar for those with a stake building a conducive environment. For the trade advisors, which recommendation would they give? And finally, how will the government manage those requests and expectations?

As Mr. Israfil Alam said, the Labour Code is going to be revised. Effective Workers' representation is an ongoing agenda and request by the trade blocks, of which we have representatives here to open up for trade union, for the participation committee or the Better Work.

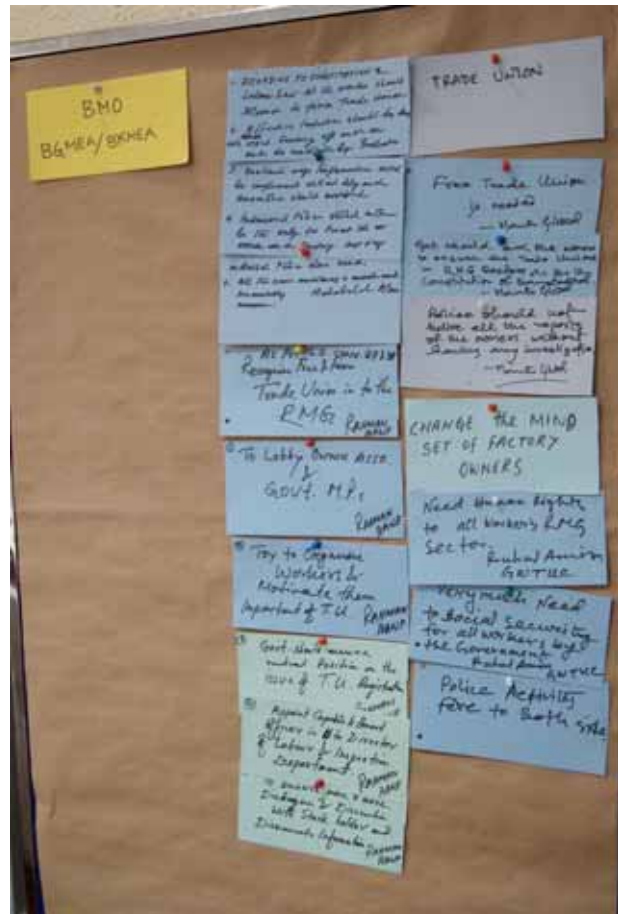
Where do you see the comparative plus and minus? How do you want to position yourself against those questions. In summary, please discuss on the three strategies options opening in related to Workers Participation Committee, Trade Union or the Better Work Committees. Please put down your comments and with whom you would collaborate in which scenario.

Comment from a participant:

It would be more beneficial if those questions would be given to us as BGMEA and BKMEA ahead of the Round Table session to contemplate, as we need to prepare with our bosses. Also is the participation quite reduced and we can reconsider how to module and stage our Round Tables.

Reply by the Organizer:

I do understand but here we exactly see the lacking of interest in this room of the policy makers from the private sector side. In case we would have the policy makers here, they would contribute directly. The concept of this Round Table is not meant as an academic process by sending out the questions, having them processed through the respective research and finally being read out in the consecutive session. Otherwise we would not have a dialogue here.



Groupwork presentations

Trade Union

thank you very much and I will present on behalf of workers organization. A lot of suggestions and strategies are here. According to the constitution and the labour law, all the workers should allowed to form trade unions. Effective inspection should be ensured and to visit factories and do the needful by the industry. Declared Wages

implementation should be implemented without delay and all groups should be benefited.

- As per ILO convention 87 and 98 recognized free and fair trade union into the RMG.
- To lobby owners associations government official ministers and MPs.
- Try to organize workers and motivate them about the importance of trade union.
- Government should ensure neutral position on the issue of trade union registration.
- Appoint capable and honest officer into the Directory of Labour and Inspection Department.
- Ensure more stakeholder dialogue and disseminate information.
- Governments should ask the owners to ensure more dialog and discussion with the stakeholders and disseminate information.
- Police should not believe all the reports of the owners without having any investigation and their activity shall be fair to both sides.
- Change mind set of factory owners.
- Social security of all workers by the government very much needed like medical facility, workers dormitory and transport.

Comment:

My name is Kalpona Akter and I am working for BCWS. One thing I just wrote here is that the mind set of factory is the biggest obstacle we are facing implementing the



trade union rights or participation or better work, whatever it is. Main obstacle: Our owner has to think positive. There is a law, there is ILO convention, international labour standard and COC but nothing will be implemented end of the day if they do not change their mind and if they don't come one step forward. As it is not possible to get our workers educated regarding workers right if the owners do not come one step forward. Therefore it is very necessary to change our factory owners mind set. Thank you.

Labour activist

Question on how to change the mind set of the owner.

Kalpona: The 1st step I think what we can do, you know there is a buyers forum. at least once a time if we think that we want something good for workers and good for industry as well and the next step can be to sit together and spend as much time as we can in a room like if today if we have the representative from BGMEA and BKMEA, there can be some outcome from this meeting. so the next strategy can be taken like one round table or one workshop to do like this way and just have some outcome right away.

Syed Sultan: Thank you very much, on behalf of the labour activist.

We have very small number of cards because we want to stick to the subject "effective workers representation". As trade union group already suggested many things so we went go for many suggestion regarding trade union.

1st the **Better Work**: We like to say, that we support the program as it was initiated by ILO and we know about good example from Cambodia. But government should make it mandatory for the all factories. It should not be volunteer, this one will join and this one wont. In that case it would work. In our experience some good factory will join, those who already have better working conditions. Consequently the whole project will circle around them and will be shown globally. But the others - the majority - will be out of this circle. We have this experience, therefore it need to be mandatory and to start with a bottom line or minimum standard as a point of departure.

Within 3 to 6 months each and every factory should practice and maintain those bottom line like Child Labour. We have experience with many programs doing this and that and you will only get the result when the project will end. And then there is no change.

Therefore there should be a 'time bound minimum bottom line program'. Within 6 months each and every factory should comply with this minimum standard like Freedom of Association, Participation Committee, Minimum Wage implemented and the bottom line is, it should be time bound, it can not continue for 3 or 6 years and continue like a project. Once it is over, what will happen?

2nd We can make group off factories, not everybody will complain everything at a time. After the bottom line, there should be time bounded step by step strategy to increase more and more without burden the factories, which we don't want. Participation of the trade union and the civil society should be ensured in the Better Work Program, not like the Commerce Ministry and other committees to choose the trade union and NGO representative, who may not have any relation inside the workplace. We have this experience from the Compliance Committee and the Crisis Management Committee. I am not saying about everybody, but we have some members we even don't know in Bangladesh but got to know from abroad he or she is doing very nice job for RMG workers and s/he is a great leader in Bangladesh and we have invite him or her to the Crisis Management Committee. We don't want to repeat these things and there should be proper selective mechanism. I am not saying that election for everyone and proper representation should be there in the committee. 3rd Participation Committee: We have a debate with all the trade union that we want trade union. Of course is the Participation Committee not the substitute of trade union. However it is also legal rights of the workers. It is a room of social dialog and discussion, so we say yes to the Participation Committee but not as the substitute of the trade union - it should be supplementary and democratically elected, not selection by owners and management. The save guard of the Participation Committee are the representatives and their due recognition. When they sit together, they should not be treated as a sub-ordinate or workers and a person who act nicely and effectively and he or she should not see himself/herself next day in another factory or in another section or another area. I repeat that the proper safeguard and recognition of the participation committee member is very necessary.

We have already some experience that effective participation in the committee meeting, though it is selected, not elected; even then they are facing some transfer problem and everything. Take it as an opportunity to training for the future trade union leader, as a training to habituate workers to elect the representative. It is good for the owners and its good for the trade union also. The Participation Committee at present can be a scope or room for social dialog to exchange the communication and in future it can be treated as a platform to produce the future leadership. But one thing should be sure, it is not a substitute of the trade union. Regarding the trade union, actually first thing though it should not be as a recommendation but as Kalpona says, a mindset first should accept as fundamental rights and is the part of social development, production and as a social partner. Otherwise you can't proceed actually. So those are the first steps, I would like to say for effective representation.

Beside this should the registration process be easier. Especially the percentage of workers in the factory. Now its 30% in average and in RMG it is not possible, so it should be counted down like in India with maybe 10%. In other countries, it may be even less than 10%. So that's one thing and second thing as you recommended in the 3rd Round Table whether we can think about an industry based union in this sector or not. One thing I mentioned many times is that the RMG is a big, a unique and exceptional industry in Bangladesh and with few labour experience. So every process, we should not go the very traditional way. We should think differently on how to address.



If we would accept 'sector based union', like in modern countries, it could be more accepted by the owner. But presently each and every factory should have a union with union competition, whereas 'industry based union', would be a good start for the implementation. Many negotiations now happen actually in industry based.

In regard of the professional groups in the EPZ of the RMG sector, which forms a huge professional group on the managerial and on mid-managerial level. They should also be allowed for union. They have also sufferings. They are always blamed for the representation of owners but you know, they are *in between*. We blame them actually for abusing and torturing and when the situation worsens, the owners say that they are responsible. But how do they become responsible, if there is no direction from the owner? No opportunity is given from the owner. Therefore I think, some mid-level proportional group shall also be entitled including the security guards, the contract workers, they also should be allowed for this.

To point out is the continuous capacity building, to know how to deal with a huge sector with factors of 80% of women group for example, who are a different type of

workers. This is a different type of industry, an international chain industry. *We* should come forward and we and other organization actually are always ready for. *We* (workers organisations) actually need go be free from owners and other influence. 'Other influence' means those, who want to control the union for their own purposes. *That* union should be free from those influence. If you have any question, we are here.

One more, a concluding remark referring to Kalpona's 'owners mind set': *We* did a lot for our part; there isn't any crisis in RMG sector in Bangladesh where trade union didn't come forward, every time since the 1990 Saraka Garments fire to last the month letter to the American Congress. We responded each and everything in favour of the factories and industries. Even in last month, all the trade union in RMG and national trade union issued a joint statement with the American Congress that we are with this factory and please allow sometime to practice those things. For changing the mind set actually we need to think *the other way*. The owners should come forward what they expect from us. If they only expect that we should give up the industry and go to home, then we have nothing to do. But in each and every crisis, in 2006 our leaders went to EPZ and Ashulia without any conditions and we signed the MOU to save the country and to save the owners and everything. Thank you very much.

Suppliers Group

Thank you very much. There is no controversy to accept our labour law or the ILO conventions. Moreover it is the challenge, to find the way out: How to implement it? The law is written within few lines but the main challenge is to implement it! So my focus was to make it in a creative way, considering our situation, our people and our working groups standard. I didn't deny accepting our law or the ILO conventions. That's why, our main target is to make it an effective participation. All parties, all the stakeholders, especially when we are discussing about the workers participation, we have to educate this group. Yes, I understand these are the guys, the first generation in the industrial sector, I expect and I hope when the 2nd generation or may be 3rd generation of workers, when they will come to our factories, will find better working conditions and have gathered more knowledge about their responsibilities and duties. The factories and organizations working with them, we will have the responsibilities to train them up and make them aware about their responsibility - not only their demands. They have to discharge their duties also. I want to emphasize one thing, one data i.e. in an average the efficiency level of our workers is below 35% and the countries around us have more than 45%. We have to develop altogether not convicting any other parties. Consequently we focus on train up our workers, make them aware about their responsibility and their rights and before demanding, they have to deserve it. Actually we have the responsibility to train them up and we shall not say, "go assess yourself", they can not.



Another point is the mid-management working with the workers, not the employers directly. There is a major gap in the concept of handling people and workers and they should be train up about their duties and laws. I appreciate the idea of Mr. Sultan, not to generalize the law for all factories. Let's segregate to different A-B-C categories. It is a very nice idea to get a good result and I appreciate this idea not to treat each factory at same pace for implementation, rather let's develop some plan and categories.

There is no controversy that all activities should be within the law. I agree that a bottom line shall be defined and accountability should be applicable in all parts. We have very few inspectors and most of them don't go to the factories. Employers and investors get the chance for illegal practice. Whatever our plan or strategy will be, a strong accountability should be there and in accordance with Kalpona statement on the owners mind, 'without a changed mind set, no strategy or plan will work'. Lets work together to develop our country. Thank you very much.

Mr. **Suson**: It is not true that high wages improve productivity. From what I have seen is that management set up to make the work more productive. The other issue is how workers are flexible to rearrange the way they do their work. I just wonder what are the problems in terms of productivity here in Bangladesh, as sometimes we just generalized productivity. I know some unionist, who says all you have to do is give higher wages to be more productive, which is not really true. There is also a point, how the work is actually done and organized. It's actually a problem, which both parties can resolve if they work together and dialog: What the workers need to do, to be productive? How does the management organize the work to make it more productive? From what I understand is, some of the employers mind set is still on a very 'not believing' modern production. For example there is longevity of workers in industry only two and a half years, which surprises me. I thought it should be longer because the industries have been here for decades and workers seniority should be 7 years but since the average is only 2,5 years indicates the high turnover rate. That's not productive!

Quaimul Islam: Actually I didn't mention that high pay relates to high productivity. Only a limited connection exists as a component for productivity but not the only one. High pay will not provide high productivity. Rather it depends on the factory management, workers profile, the way we treat workers and we manage the job, those are the important factors. I agree with you that the very high turnover is a barrier for our industry. Most of our factories do not use production engineering, which is needed to increase the efficiency level. Our leaders emphasize also, if *you* expect more, *you* have to give more. It is their responsibility to motivate them, before expecting, you have to gain it by your work. Thank you very much.

Buyers group

I am presenting the buyers group and few points have indeed emerged from Mr. Sultan and Ms. Kalpona's contribution. According to the law, trade union is our legal obligation. We cannot show it as a substitute of another. We want the election procedure to maintain. We equally have the expectation of clear guidelines for the Worker Participation Committee (WPC), for the trade unions and in regard to worker - management relation, their responsibility and duties realizing this interdependency. The mind set up of owners and mid-level management as well as few trade union activities is a valid issue. We think that all parties and stakeholders need to realize this. In regard to the Better Work Programme, it would be most welcome if it comes to Bangladesh. Thank you.

Diplomatic Missions

Asif Ayub: Good afternoon, I believe I am the only from the diplomatic group present this afternoon and I have only few recommendations. I like to mention that my observation and recommendation are totally personal and of my own.

1st of all I like to compliment the 'mind set issue'. Yes, that is a very big requirement for the growth of the sector. But the mind set issue should not only be for the owners, it should be also for the workers. Number one of my recommendation is to monitor the implementation of labour laws and regulations. We have so many regulations to follow, like the building law, environmental conditions, ILO Conventions and the Bangladesh Labour Law itself. But it is very hard to believe that they are properly implemented. If we would have an awareness program for the workers as well as for the owners and if we monitor the enforcement of the laws, then I believe this sector will grow and this type of dispute will decrease.

The other issue is the understanding of sustainability in the context of Bangladesh.



We are talking about the social compliance, environmental compliance and other legal compliances but we have to think about the sustainability. Until and unless we do not sustain in the global market, it is useless to follow this social and legal compliances.

Then we have to help manufacturers and understand the significance of taking responsibilities in sustainable issues. What are the sustainable issues? We are following up social compliances, we are following up legal compliances, its beyond that, its like doing CSR work for the local communities and your neighbours; those kind of things have to be understood to the manufacturers. There are lots of things to be monitored beside these issues.

My last point is enhancing workers ownership. Well, in the last organization I worked, I visited a factory where the manager told me,

that whenever *you* give something to the worker, *they* think it is *their* right. They don't think, whether it's the right, it's the welfare, it's the extra benefits the company is giving you like the free lunch, medical. There are definitely some rights in line with the human rights law. But there are also few things, which the company gives by their own. This has to be understood by the workers and they need to think that factory belongs to them also. If they don't work properly, if they don't follow the compliance, they are going to loose the order. Finally it won't only be the owner, who will be penalized, it's will be also the workers because they will loose their job. Thank you.

Syed Sultan: You have said that if you don't have sustainability then what is the use of social and legal compliances. Our position from the trade union is very clear, we need a sustainable RMG sector and industry in Bangladesh with social and legal compliance. That understanding need to be clear.

Development Agent

I am Manjur Morshed, working in GTZ. Basically in the context of worker representation from development side, I have selected some points on how we can actually contribute for this improvement in this industry. We believe in training, specially for capacity building, awareness raising and the real implementation. There cannot be any alternative to training and providing training to both workers, management and as well trade union leaders. We also get the requirement and the demands from trade union leaders that they should be trained about the rights and responsibility in line with the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 in respect of trade unions. We would also like to provide training of negotiation skills, just the knowledge about rights and responsibility will not work. If they can gain the skills how to negotiate in a healthy manner, then it can bring some result from the discussion I believe. It is also definitely much required to make it happen to capacitate the strength of the Labour Inspectors and IRI, the Institute of Industrial Relations, which is under the Ministry of Labour & Employment. We would like to provide technical assistance to interested factories. In this seminar, I would like to invite and propose from GTZ that if there is any factory or any supplier interested to form participation committee or trade union, actually trade union context different in a sense of law because it's the employers, they can not encourage or discourage, there will be a legal violation on the part of the employers. If they need any assistance for this respect, then we GTZ would be very happy to provide the legal and technical assistance in this respect and we always welcome any stakeholder for this too. We think that organizing the workshop, seminars round table, discussions freedom of association can also help for creating the environment to have very good workers representation. These are the issues we work on. If you have any suggestion, comments or questions then you can ask us so that we can add and follow-up. Thank you.



VI. Discussion on Outlook for 2011

Agenda and expectations for the Round Table during 2011

Mr. von Mitzlaff: Thank you Farid for moderating this working part. I noticed new development throughout the today Round Table discussion. The today participants, expressing their interest looking for ways to cooperate while acknowledging the other group position. This already is an achievement.

- I am sensing and believe that when those words coming for the suppliers side in the presentation, “yes, lets cooperate”, addressing this towards the trade union bench I sense more than lip service but a hint of sincerity. This development is to continue and the build up of a majority in opinion can result in planning pragmatic implementation.
- One example is common understanding that workers representation has to be elected and the question of selection does no stand anymore.
- Furthermore I hope that the contacts this Table enables between the groups will **generate ideas to be initiated by the round table** and help for trust-building and alliances in supporting the objectives of this Round Table.

I appreciate those statements and understand the political relevance and strive for pragmatic solutions. Questions for 2011:

1. Which are the major challenges for Social Compliance in the RMG?

2. How shall the Round Table contribute to challenges next year?

Your answer could help the how to plan the next Round Table. BSCI plans to support the Round Table in 2011 as their commitment to a continuous process.

Reply by one participant: The challenge for 2011 in RMG sector will be to implement the new wage structure. In this regard we need support from our buyers’ side, they should increase the CM, so that we can contribute.

Mr. Alain Vallois: Already we are paying 30% increased CM since July 2010.

Comment on ‘CM’ by Ms. Maren Boehm:



This is the level! Everybody has to increase the minimum wage. It is not only one or two factories. The general level for buyers is going up and of course, in the end it is us, the buyers, who are paying the price. But I like to go one step further: Yes, we have to implement the minimum wage but I really wish that regular reviews of minimum wage could also be done and not to wait another four years. The minimum wage shall be reviewed on a yearly base if not even more often. I think this is one of the big challenges.

Regarding the 2nd part of your question: you were talking about lip services and to avoid this, you made a very nice suggestion – “lets work together”. Maybe we can really think of

starting some kind of project next year. Speaking from the experience of the German round table, we have been in a phase of discussing, exchanging views, trying to walk in each other shoes and after two years the round table for compliance in Germany started small projects and also bigger project. It could be a brochure or could be anything. I think it would be a nice target and also outcome, if we could manage some pilot project abc .. or whatever in this Round Table for 2011.

In regard of funding we will probably don't have one source so we have to think of multiple sources, which might also be one of the challenges here. I mean, if we really have a commitment among all of us, then maybe we should have some financial commitment in the end.

Trade Union:

From the trade union side, we think that next year we will face two main challenges.

1. The implementation of new wage because lot of owners are not ready to pay those wages and some difficulties we have already seen. Like degrading their workers from 3 to 5 grade, which is simply changed in the payment calculation software. Like many information we have from the workers, last month they were grade 3 but this month they are grade 5. I think after Eid in December, when the workers will collect their major Edi bonus they will not get their minimum wage. At that time some procession and rallies might be self-organized by the workers, not from the trade union side. In spite we as trade union are always blamed from the owners and the government, we would destroy the industry.

2. The 2nd challenge is the issue of trade union. I think if we don't provide or can't organize trade union in the factories, owners are not compromised or ready to reduce their unrest from the factory. How they will solve a 5.000 workers problem without a numbers of workers representatives? How they will talk to 5.000 or 10.000 workers? This is unbelievable and I think this is not practical. You should allow trade unions and I think you saw a good example at the Adomzi Jute Mill, which is the biggest jute mill in South Asia, without any burning in the factory for last 40 or 50 years and no vandalism inside the factory. Yes, some political interference with the trade union, coming into Dhaka for the interest of political issues. But workers or trade union didn't burn the factory in last 40 years. Amin Jute Mill, EMC Jute Mills, Karim Jute Mill, ... we have lots of good examples. With trade unions, you have no vandalism or destroying activities or fire incident will happen; I ensure you that. Thank You.

Syed Sultan: I am thinking that we are entering many new agenda in RMG sector next year with the new minimum wage ... new labour policy with the revision of the labour law while the world is coming out of the economic recession and new business will emerge. Considering the whole picture, I actually agree with our sister from Otto Group that the main challenge not only for this Round Table but for Bangladesh is, transferring the 'lip service' into action. We have a huge *talk* in seminars and other occasions. To me this is the main challenge how to make our own - *my own* - word into action. If we can make a project and work together, brining the stakeholders and civil society together acting as a watchdog on how the Better Work Program will work whether it will actually work in an effective way or will it become just another international project, like other projects? The Ambassador of European Union told that they assist lot for the capacity building for trade in Bangladesh. But what is the real situation, can anybody inquire or investigate these things? What about those projects? There is no watchdog or 'sideline' organization or activities to watch those projects. Once it is under UN or another funding, everybody

assumes, it is going well. Only last week there was an evaluation that even UNFPA supports BGMEA for a long time to educate the women workers for maternal care and others. But the project evaluation says, that they don't find any difference between the project based factories and the other factories. That is a newspaper report. You see, there are a huge number of projects ongoing. BGMEA and BKMEA receive donor from several international communities for improving the workers medical care and others. –

This just to state, how and where to discuss the progress of the Better Work Program? Another concern is how to advocate the labour policy. Myself, I am a member of the Labour Policy Draft Committee. I know that the government has a very good will and gave me free hand to draft according to ILO standard and constitution and we drafted accordingly. We included the suggestion of a sector based union for example. Now it is the time to act.

About the continuation of the round table: I can give a nice example: when we start our group work today, we had many difference between brother Quaimul and me. But at the end we from the labour group, took one of his point as an effective point and he from the supplier group, also took one of my point as an effective point. *That* is the result of the round table and we should continue it.

I am **Arshad** from Walmart. I think in our garments sector, more than 80 percent are women workers so we need to think how we can work on the women empowerment. In our next session we could discuss how we can help the female workers empowerment.



We also feel in Bangladesh is lot of scope to improve workers efficiency, to improve the productivity and reduce the wastage in the industry. If you can save money and improve productivity, it will definitely help women empowerment as well. When the workers will be multi-skilled, the conflict between the workers and the mid-level management will be reduced.

Finally we feel that effective communications should come to the industries. Thank you.

Mr. **von Mitzlaff** asked for clarification, whether these points were compliance challenges for next year or issues to discuss at the Round Table?

Mr. **Arshad**: I think we could get ideas from different stakeholders whether they are working on the women empowerment or they have thought process, something which will help to empower the women in this industry?

Mr. **Suson**: 1st of all, I don't believe in different stakeholders coming together for good will. Good will may be for one time but it doesn't sustain. Usefully people get involved because of self-interest and one level this round table is good and we should figure out how to piggy-back on the Better Work concept as it will have similar stakeholders. You are advanced of one year and having identifying issues already.

In terms of interest the practice of why factories or suppliers participate is because it is good for business. They are businessmen and we are all a part of it to make the industry good and profitable, this is the concept of Better Work. It is good social but actually it is how to make it productive and good for buyers, good for workers and good for business.

Let's be honest, it is not good only being 'goody', that's what it is. That's why I urge to be mandatory for the brand that the product being produced under social standards, no child labour, with freedom of association and unions are able to be a part of this partnership. For this reason I also raised the issue of productivity, also an issue taken up by the management but it should also be taken up by trade union. To continue this, there should be more than just good will. Therefore I suggest to take as given what is already happen and if there is similar round table of Better Work next year, how will you intersect? It is very important because that program, there is a momentum to have it done here in Bangladesh.

Mr. **von Mitzlaff** asked Mr. Suson: As you explained that 'good will' is not sufficient to make a Round Table sustainable, can I ask you: What has Better Work to offer for their stakeholder forum?

Mr. **Suson**: What Better Work will be offering I think is the fact, that the buyers will urging their partners to be of that. That the trade might possibly be much more easier. Because of the transparency of the production there are many things that is dangle to make it happen. There are more stake for people to participate.

Dr. **Kebschull**: Thank you very much. I think there were many very good and constructive proposals and we have a lot of discussion here. Just looking for the year to come and looking back a bit. I would say that one thing with regard to the social compliance, which is still for me one of the key issues, is that we have achieved a lot by having one minimum standard for social compliance by BSCI. There they have now more than 600 companies, which accept the audit done by one of the member companies. This saves time, money and gives a certain edge to the country because with that you can export your better in the international market. BSCI has done one step further as far as I know, that they have accepted the SA8000 audit. If somebody is audited according to that, he has not to undergo a BSCI audit. But still we have the audit of Walmart, IKEA, Nike, Reebok, adidas and what so ever goes on. I think the question is, how can we bring all these including UK standards under one roof. How can we simplify the whole procedure and make something, which is mainly pushed not by foreigners but by Bangladesh. That was the 1st point.

The 2nd point which I wanted to make. After being present in this round table for the 3rd time and listening carefully, I found it great, the way we discussed. Still, today for example, I have some difficulties to understand the final message. What did we accept, what were the points where we did not agree? Are we at present happy with a situation to have workers participation committee or is it already all agreed to have the ILO Convention implemented? I feel in the future we should come to a position that at the end at least we can summarize the points, which have been accepted. These accepted points should then be disseminated to all those, who had better things to do than come here or

who had to go out for very urgent reasons. There must be a follow up for this. Otherwise this is a nice gathering, I enjoy it but I think there should be something. It should not that when we speak about minimum wages and then in the next round we are not talking about it anymore. When you speak today about worker representation, there must be a follow up in the next year. We have to take up these points again and we have to bring it to the knowledge of the employers association, the Ministry of Labour & Employment, the Ministry of Commerce and who ever is involved in it including to the discussed women group. Thank you.

Mr. von Mitzlaff: Thank you for your comments. It is indeed a challenge for the Round Table to develop ground of common understanding and to being present with sufficiently senior participants in the position of make policy statements. For instant is the subordinate staff not in the situation to make statement on behalf their organisation as long they are not authorized to do so. This is the situation and precisely the situation why we need top decision makers to be present. Nevertheless we should further advocate on high level participation.

It is an interesting idea, to come up with statements, which will be disseminated on behalf of the Round Table. May I ask whether such common statement can be achieved and shall be disseminated?

Dr. Kebschull: A common statement could also be that 'no consent has been achieved in a certain part'. That this is also a common statement as we can not expect, we all have same opinion immediately. Its would be important to give a clear picture what the Round Table has said and where we have agreed upon. I think that's a point which can be passed on and also can be followed up properly.

Mr. von Mitzlaff: I note that we don't have an instant vote on this question on a sort of Round Table conclusion to disseminate.

We come the end of this Fourth Round Table, lunch waiting in the next room.

Please make your feedback on the chosen topic and any eventual proposal.

Thank you for having following the invitation and participated until the closure. I do hope that we are succeeding building alliances with an active Round Table in 2011. With the understanding of other developments and approaching Bangladesh next year I like to close for today expecting to contribute to the interest of a vital industry sector enjoying good relation to the workers.

You are cordially invited to join us for lunch next door.



VII. Pictorials













VIII. Feedback and Comments by the participants

Mr. von Mitzlaff requests the participants for feedback or comments on Round Table on four points.

1. How you perceived the usefulness of this Bangladesh Round Table on Social Compliance?
2. What is your comment on the today's chosen topic?
3. Which are your comments on the discussion we had respectively the observation notes.
4. Which is your recommendation for the next Round Table or the process of this Round Table?

Comments

- Usefulness: Good to have dialogue
- This round table will be more effective if, there prevail government, decision makers and factory owners also.
- What is much necessary where government published and fixed minimum wages but now my question is why collective bargaining agents, Trade Unions.

Unknown

1. This round table is made successfully to sit together different stakeholder.
2. Round table should be organized on Saturday. I think then all stakeholders can join nicely.
3. Try to disseminate all recommendation to the participated organization.
4. Owner, TU, and Buyer are agreed to all legal rights and Int. Conv. should be organized.

Md. Towhidur Rahman, President, BAWF

1. Media session will be later – after discussing is the working group.
2. Invite more buyers in this round table.
3. Ensure high official from BGMEA/BKMEA/ILO, Ministry of Labour, Director in this round table.

Unknown

1. The effective worker's participation is a good topic but unfortunately – the key stakeholders and decision makers were not here to discuss it. i.e. – registration, termination of union leaders, and the expansion of Trade Union.
2. I found the round table for good in networking since I am new and get to meet with number of people.
3. Participation went down as time goes along.
4. Thanks for being able to participate.

Alonzo Glonn Suson, Solidarity Counselor

1. To reduce time of opening session.
2. To start in time.
3. To increase time for brain storming.
4. To maintain closing time strictly.
5. Confirm attendance of BGMEA and BKMEA senior representatives.

Md. Quaimul Islam, Dekko Group, Compliance Manager

We appreciate such type of program and it is very helpful to implement to effective workers representation. Lots of thanks on behalf of Masco Group, also we want to participate in the next program in 2011.

Masco Group

Social Compliance Round table "Towards Effective Worker's Representation" is very effective and very important for this time. We want to represent the worker participation as constructive, democratic, fair and free to develop the RMG sector in Bangladesh.

Thanks a lot for the organizer.

Unkown

1. Usefulness
2. Topic may be modified
3. Discussion not very organised
4. Continue this type of dialogue

Shamima Nasrin, (SBGSKF)

1. I find this round table quite good.
2. Topic is excellent.
3. Discussion was good. Inspection department officials should be invited for this sort of discussion.
4. This topic should be more discussed. Next round should suggest recommendation more specifically.

A.K.M. Nasim

1. Useful
2. Topic in more modified manner.
3. Discussion could be more effective.
4. Next Round Table can be continued.

Lutfar Rahman

1. It could be useful if it can contribute something to the formation of a national garments policy.
2. Topic is well chosen in terms of crisis.
3. Discussion were lively.
4. Factory workers should be invited along with labour leaders.

Bangladesh Police



IX. Media coverage

Newspaper Clippings

The Daily Kaler Kantha, dated 27-10-10

--The speakers in the Round Table conference at hotel Sheraton in Dhaka, Bangladesh

--The absence of the Trade Union is the cause of unrest in garment sectors in Bangladesh

It is impossible to introduce or to impose labours trade union in the garments sector in Bangladesh only because of the unwillingness of the owners and the entrepreneurs of the mills and garment industries. The owners of the industries said that the present political and social atmosphere are fully liable not to flourish the trade union functions.

Yesterday, the 26th October 2010, a round table conference was held in the hotel Sheraton in Dhaka, the speakers made speeches. The round table conference was arranged by the help of LIFT Standards e.K. in honour of Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI). In the round table conference, Mr. Christian Von Mitzlaff said in favour of LIFT Standards e.K. of European Union.

The owners of the Bangladeshi garments sector do not obey the rules and laws, obligations of ILO conventions. As a result, sometimes the labours unrest is found. If there is a trade union is found in this sector, the labour unrest is found less. If this can be done between the owners and the labours, both sides' interest will be found.

Mr. Israfil Alam, the chairman of the parliament committee of labours said that 'trade union' is very essential for the development of the fate and future prosperity of the labours. There is also a provision of the labour union in the constitution of Bangladesh. In our country, Bangladeshi owners of the industries are very strong and stout in every side, yet the labours are not able to form union or anything in their favour. Beside these, the labour leaders are connected with the local politicians. The labour leaders do not maintain and see the interests of the labours and they do not see the betterment of the labours. In the discussion, Mr. Stephen Froeign, the members of the European Union Commission said that a good relationship should be grown up between the owners and the labours by consultation to remove these difficulties and anomalies. He also added that stress should be given by the owners to remove these things in favour of the labours. Dietrich Kebschull, the Business Social Compliance Initiative, added China and India also do not give



permission to introduce labour unions in the garments sector. Although the china is a communist country, there is no existence of labours union. In India it's also the same.

Mr. Marin Boham, the member of OTTO group said that if the demands of the labours can be mitigated, labour unrest should be lessened.

Mr. Israfil Alam, the chairman of the parliament committee, added that Trade Union is fundamentally needed in the garment sector. The chairman of BKMEA, Mr. Aslam Sunny said that if we try to found Trade Union in the garment sectors, the labours become disunited and they make grouping and political unrest. The labours make friendship with the terrorist for Jute business. But the speech of aslam sunny was respected by Towhidur Rahman, the chairman of Bangladesh apparels that the owners do not give the wages, salary and allowances, bonus timely and they always remain against the labours . as a result sometimes the labours bound to go to roads to mitigate their demands. The owners of the factories always try not to give and fulfill their demands prophesy. The labour leaders Montu Ghosh said that labour laws and facilities are abode by the whole institutions of the world not in Bangladesh at large.

New Age

27.10.10

NEWAGE

Trade union is important to develop RMG sector: buyers

Staff Correspondent

FOREIGN buyers on Tuesday said effective workers' representation was important to further develop the readymade garments sector in Bangladesh.

Mohammad Israfil Alam, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee for labour and employment ministry, who was also present at a roundtable discussion in the city, said there was no way to deny trade unions according to the country's constitution.

The RMG factory owners said they were not against trade unions.

They were speaking at the roundtable discussion on social compliance held with the theme 'Towards Effective Workers Representation'.

The trade union leaders present at the discussion called for changing mentality about trade unions.

The discussion, organised by LIFT Standards e.k. and Business Social Compliance Initiative, was held at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

Business Social Compliance Initiative's representative in India Dietrich Kobschull said buyers were generally interested in social compliance which was also an important issue in India and Japan at present.

Speaking on the occasion, European Commission ambassador Stefan Frowein said if different stockholders of the garments sector listened to each other that would be in the best interest for all of them.

Mohammad Israfil Alam said the buyers' and the owners' forums were very strong while the workers' forums were very weak as there were many political shades among the trade union leaders.

'Workers' right to trade union is fair,' he said, adding that in the name of trade union no vandalism should be allowed.

Mohammad Israfil urged the buyers' forums to increase the cost of products to help the garment owners as many of them were incapable to implement the new wage structure for RMG workers.

He also urged the garment owners to consider bonus for workers before coming Eid-ul-Azha on a compassionate ground and cautioned that no excuse would be allowed in implementing the new wage structure.

Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association's vice-chairman Aslam Sunny said situations like political conflict between the ruling party and the opposition and unrest at Chittagong port hampered their business.

Trade union leader Montu Ghosh said most of the workers working in the garment sector came from villages and were young and women.

'They have no idea about anything,' he said, adding that through effective trade unions they could ventilate their grievances.

Labour director Abu Taleb Miah, additional deputy inspector general of police Mily Biswas and Bangladesh Trade Union Kendra general secretary Wajed-ul Islam were also present at the discussion.

Sonali Bank Govt asks for Sweepers lav

The Daily Star

Tuesday, August 10, 2010, Business

Star Business Report, B3

The Daily Star

Govt to permit union at RMG units

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government will implement trade unionism in the garments sector from next year to ensure worker rights, Israfil Alam, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the labour and employment ministry, said yesterday.

Pointing to the fact that garment workers can hardly realise demands from their owners in absence of trade unionism, he said consequently the workers frequently vandalise factories.

"Once trade unionism is allowed in the sector, workers will come under legal bindings and enjoy freedom of association and realise their rights through collective bargaining," he told a discussion in Dhaka.

The lawmaker said there should be no excuses for delay in implementing the fresh minimum wage structure for the garment workers within Monday, because all the stakeholders have already agreed upon it.

Germany-based social compliance agency LIFT Standards organised the roundtable on 'Towards effective workers' representation -- the ways of implementation', at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association and the international buyers have some responsibilities in establishing worker rights, Alam told reporters after the roundtable.

"I asked international buyers to follow ethical buying practices in payment for purchasing Bangladeshi garment items."

He said there are 148 registered trade unions and 250 workers' welfare associations in Bangladesh.

Montu Ghosh, an adviser to Garment Sramik Trade Union Kendra, said hundreds and thousands of workers are not able to bargain with owners in absence of unionism.

"Nobody wants to speak in fear of losing their jobs. We are demanding healthy trade unionism. We do not want any political interference."

Towhidur Rahman, president of Bangladesh Apparel Workers Federation, said the government is bound to allow trade unionism in the industrial units because Bangladesh is a signatory to the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

"The workers have freedom of association and collective bargaining. We want free and fair trade unions without political interference."

Stefan Frowein, the outgoing ambassador of the European Union, said the EU has been working with ILO to promote dialogue between owners and workers of the garment units.

The trade unions should be formed with representation from all stakeholders, Frowein said.

The roundtable was chaired by LIFT Standards Managing Director Christian von Mitzlaff and moderated by senior journalist Farid Hossain.

Television News:

Boishakhi news 26.10.10



ETV News 26.10.10



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