



April 22, 2017

**Survey Commissioned by
ActionAid Bangladesh**

Unforgettable and Unforgivable Rana Plaza

Preliminary Findings of 4th Follow up Survey on the Status of Rehabilitation and Reintegration of the
Survivors and Families of Deceased
and
A Critical Reflection on the Status of Changes in RMG Sector Post Rana Plaza Collapse

Report Team

Team Leader and Reviewer: Aamanur Rahman
Lead Researcher: Nuzhat Jabin
Research Assistant: Laila Tasmia
Tele- interview and Data Processing: The Nielsen Company (Bangladesh) Limited

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Introduction

1.1 Background

The 24th of April 2017 marks the 4th anniversary of the deadliest industrial disasters- the collapse of Rana Plaza, a building that housed multiple ready-made garments factories among others. On 24th April 2013 the eight-story in Savar building collapsed, killing more than 1135 garments workers. Around 2438 workers were rescued alive (2438). It is revealed from ActionAid Bangladesh panel surveys of 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 that post-traumatic stress and long term physical challenges still persist among the survivors. Since the incident many industrial reform programmes have been undertaken by the government, brands, manufacturers, CSOs, bi-lateral and multilateral agencies, however focus on the survivors have faded away.

To follow up on the rehabilitation status of the survivors and to capture the changes occurred in last one year ActionAid Bangladesh commissioned the fourth panel survey in 2017. The survey followed the comprehensive database of the survivors developed in 2013 and 2014.

The survey also reviewed the status of reform programmes initiated since 2013 based on the literature available to the public.

The specific objectives of the current study are as follows:

- To capture the progress around socio-economic rehabilitation of the survivors and families of the deceased through a panel survey.
- To track the status in the policy architecture and progressive reforms around labor rights and work place safety
- To explore way-forward for re-thinking and accelerating the reform initiatives.

The study comprises of two sections. Section A will focus on the survey findings and Section B will reflect on the current status of the stakeholder initiatives undertaken to address the challenges in the RMG industry post Rana Plaza tragedy.

1.2 Scope and Limitation

The present survey is a reflection of the progress of the socio-economic re-integration of the individuals in the database of survivors and families of deceased which was first prepared during a comprehensive survey conducted six months post Rana Plaza collapse. The first survey covered a total 2297 people (both survivors and families of the deceased). It was updated in 2014, 2015 and 2016 through consecutive follow-up surveys. Therefore the percentage referred in the present survey is that of the respondents reached and not of the total number of survivors or families of deceased. The survey focuses on the rehabilitation and reintegration scenario, limited to social, economic and physical aspects of the affected

people. It is an effort to track the development of these people, analytically comparing with the previous panel surveys.

The information on psychological condition, physical health status, financial support and other services received are based on the perception and acknowledgement by the respondents. The survey does not address the information of the missing claimed. The section that reviews the post-Rana Plaza developments is based on secondary data and it reflects the opinion of the experts of relevant sectors.

1.3 Methodology

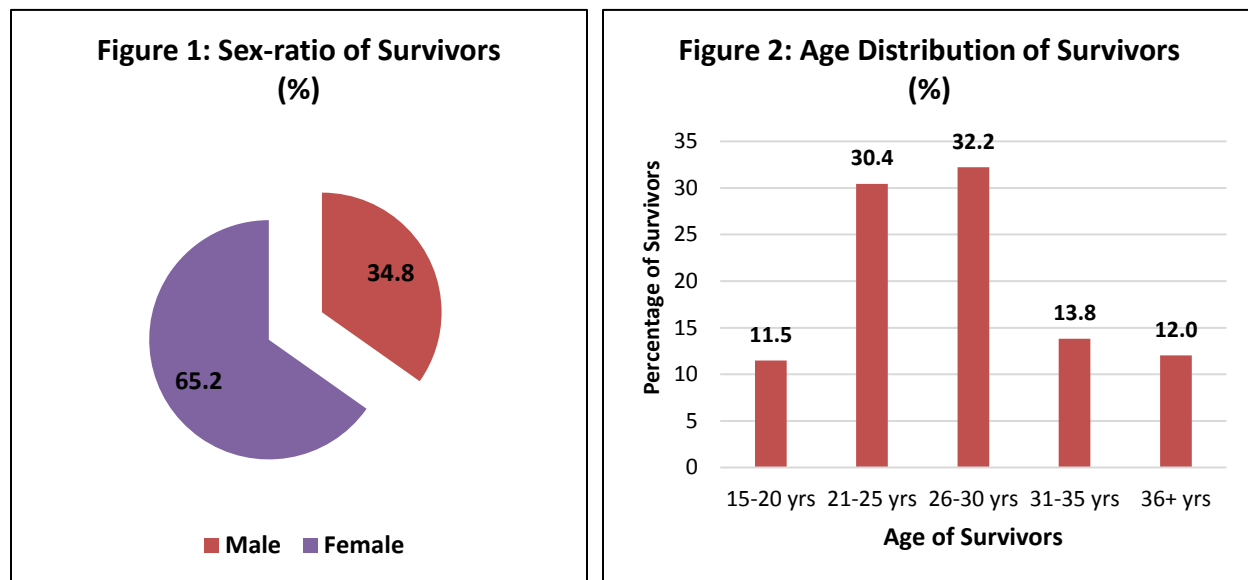
The survey generated primary data collected from the respondents. In the present survey all of the respondents (survivors and kin of the deceased) were interviewed over phone. The phone interviews were conducted during March 12-24, 2017. Two separate sets of semi-structured questionnaires were used for the survivors and the family members of the deceased. On accumulation of information, the 2017 data were recorded and the database has been updated to compare with previous records.

In 2017 survey, 1403 survivors and 607 kin of the deceased were covered. To capture the progress in various reform initiatives relevant reports of government and non-government organizations were reviewed and analyzed. Besides, expert opinion was sought on different issues for cross-checking and validation of information.

Section A: Survey on Socio-Economic Reintegration of Rana Plaza Survivors and Families of Deceased

2.1 Demographic Information of the Respondents: Age-Sex-Marital Status

Among the survivors surveyed most are women. Out of the 1403 survivors surveyed, 34.8 percent are men and 65.2 percent are women. Majority of the respondents are young with 74.1 percent aged below 30 years. 73.8 percent of the respondents are married, 11.5 percent are single, 3.6 percent are widowed, 3.4 percent are divorced and 3 percent are separated.



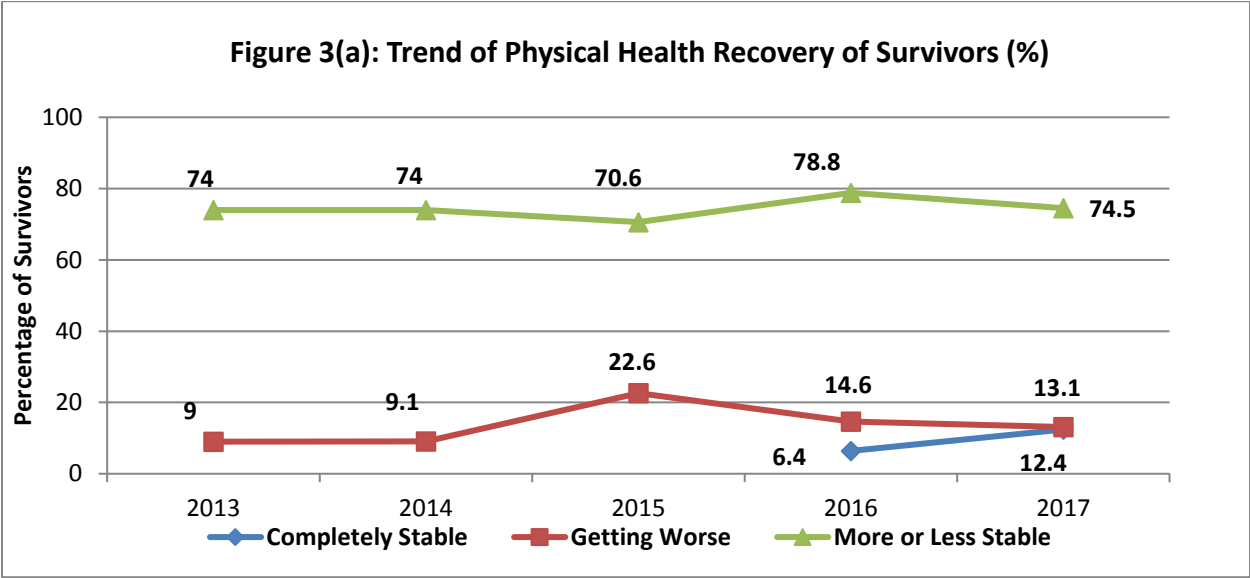
In the case of families of deceased, of the total sample size of 607, 73.3 percent of the respondents are men and the remaining 26.3 percent are women. Respondents were mostly spouses (27.8 percent), brothers (21.7 percent) and fathers (16.8 percent) of the deceased workers.

Most of the respondents are living in the same place where they were 10 months ago. Equal percentage (8.7) of survivors and families of deceased has relocated to other areas mostly due to a change of workplace (43.4 percent and 41.3 percent).

2.2 Progress around Physical and Psychosocial Health of the Survivors

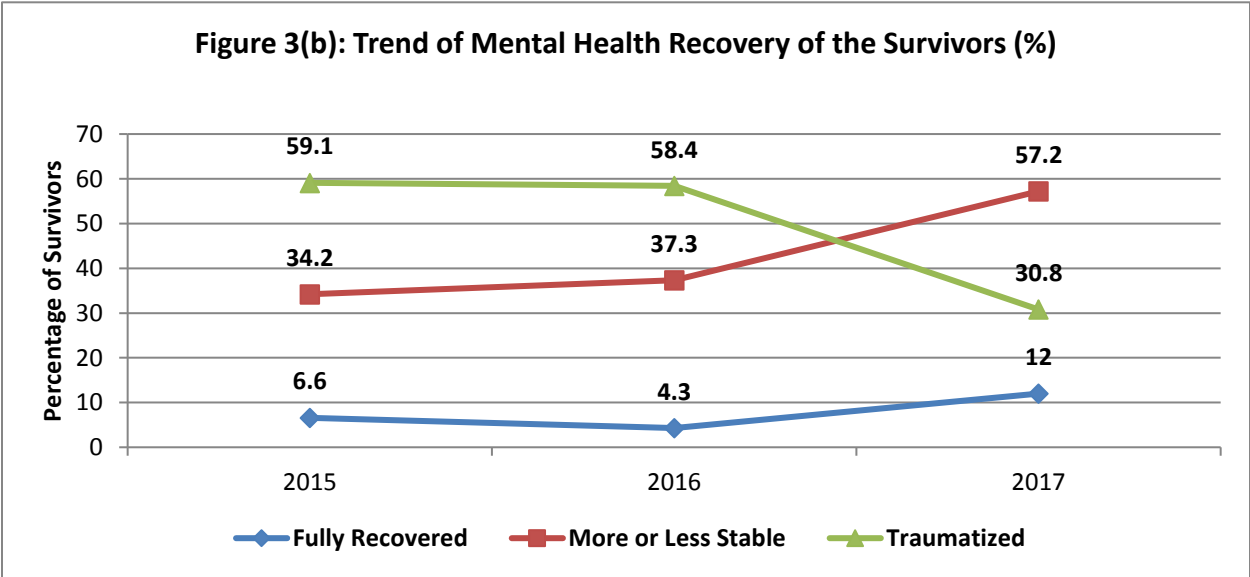
Recovery from the injury is still a cause of concern. In the current survey, 13.1 percent said their condition is getting worse, 74.5 percent of the respondents said their physical health was somewhat stable and 12.4 were completely stable. The survey conducted in April 2013 showed that health of 9 percent of the survivors were getting worse and 2014 survey showed 9.1 percent had reported that their condition was getting worse and 1.5 percent was at serious risk. The 2015 survey showed 70.6 percent people responded that they were somewhat healed, while 22.6 percent reported that their condition was getting worse. In the 2016 survey, 78.8 percent survivors reported that their condition is more or less stable and

only 6.4 percent said they are completely stable. Of the 13.1 percent who reported that their condition is deteriorating in the current survey listed headache, pain in hand and leg, back pain as some of the major problems.



The trend of 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 (figure 3a) surveys show that physical health status of the survivors is improving though long term and recurring injuries remain an issue of concern. Although the physical health condition is improving 34.1 percent survivors still face some difficulty in performing daily activities and 38.3 percent visit clinic hospital due to injury from the building collapse for diagnosis (59.2 percent) collecting medicine (41.5 percent) and (20.5 percent) physiotherapy.

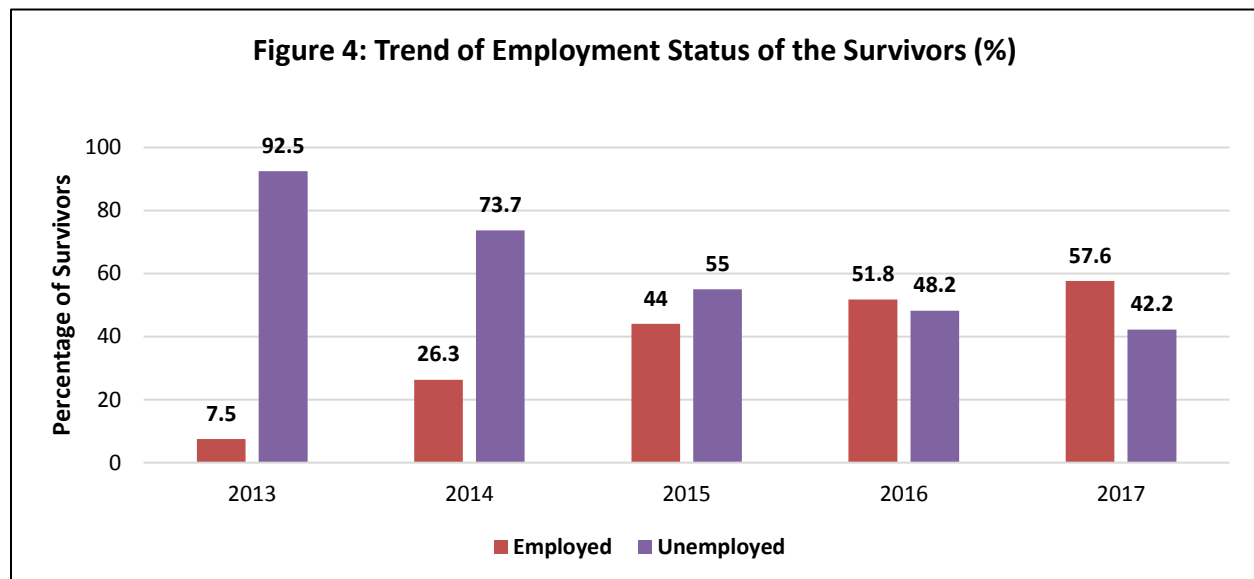
In terms of psychosocial health (figure 3b), 30.8 percent are still traumatized in comparison to 58.4 percent survivors last year. Although a major shift in terms of post-traumatic stress management, the



number is still too high. Until survivors somewhat or fully recover from the trauma, this will continue to hinder their private and work life. Currently 57.2 percent reported that they are more or less stable and 12.0 percent have recovered fully.

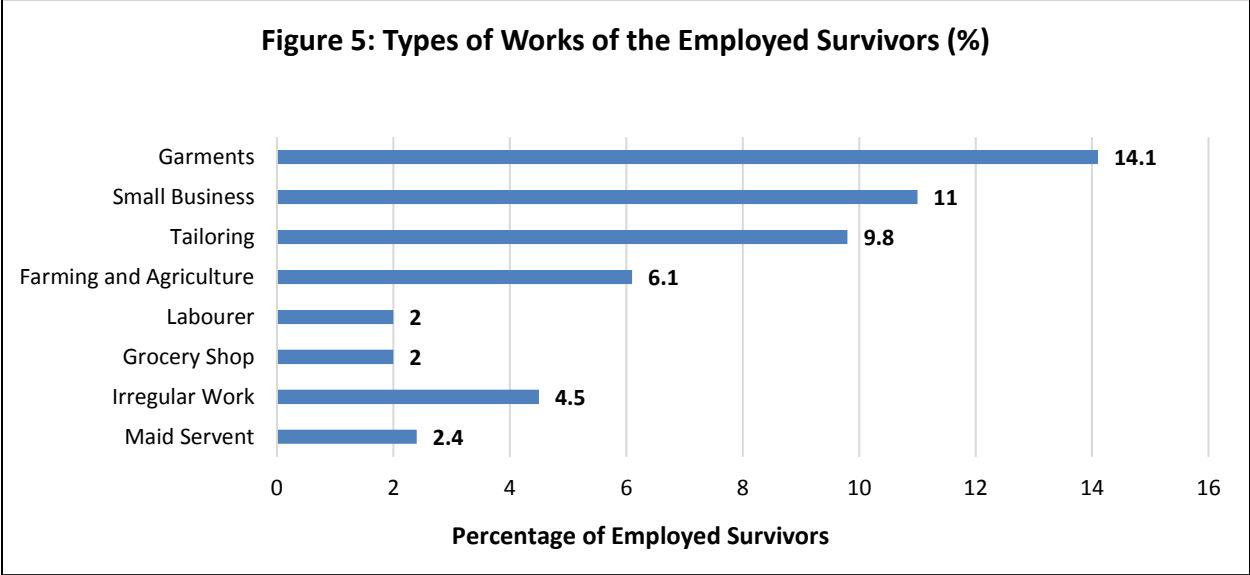
2.3 Changes around Livelihood Restoration and Rehabilitation of the Survivors

With regard to the current employment status, the present study found that 57.6 percent survivors- 5.8 percent higher than last year- are engaged in various types of wage and self-employment. 42.2 percent survivors claimed that they were unemployed when the survey conducted. It reflects that more survivors are entering into the job market and self-employment though the progress is somewhat slow. Due to trauma and injuries many workers find it difficult to work for a long hours in typical work environment like shops or factories. When asked how long they had been unemployed, 78.3 percent had been unemployed for two months and only 1.9 percent had been unemployed for more than six months. Those who are unemployed cited physical weakness (48.1 percent) and mental weakness (33.4 percent) as the



main reasons for being unemployed. Figure 4 shows the trend of employment in the last five years. In the previous (2016) survey, 51.8 percent of the survivors were engaged in various types of wage labour or self-employment, while 48.2 percent were unemployed at the time of the survey. The 2015 survey found that 44 percent survivors were engaged in various types of wage and self-employment while 55 percent survivors were unemployed during the survey.

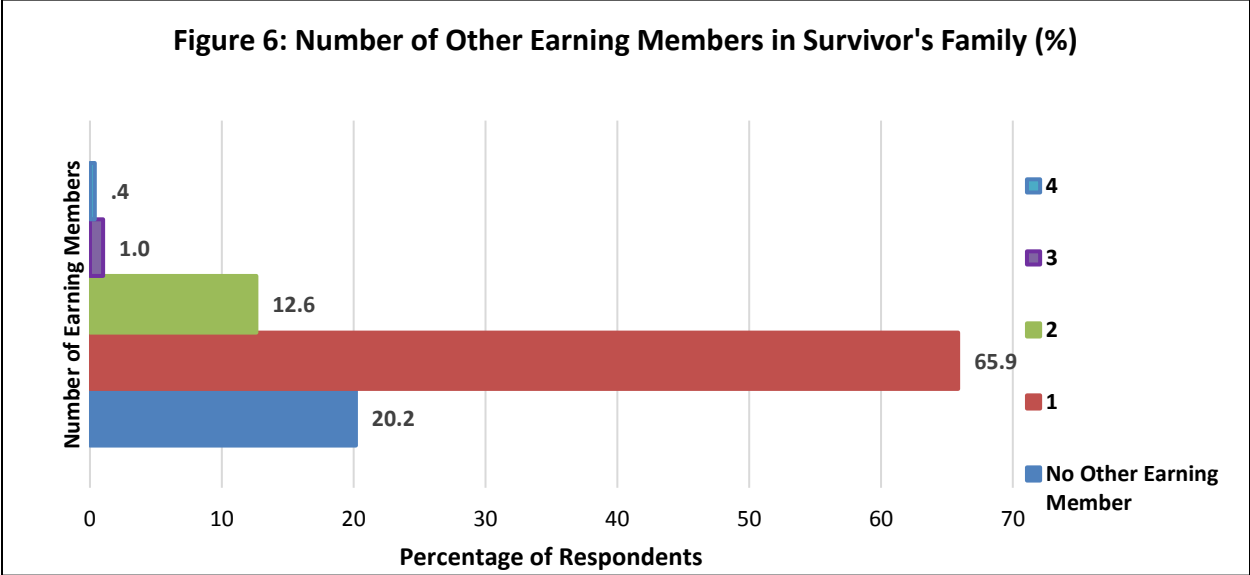
Among the currently employed (figure 5), majority (14.1percent) are found to be working in garments factories, 11.0 percent are involved in small business, while 9.8 percent are working as tailors. Additionally, 6.1 percent are engaged in agriculture, 2.0 percent are running grocery shop, 2.0 percent are engaged as wage labor and. 4.5 percent are engaged in irregular works. Aside from these, survivors are engaged in other types of income generating activities such as household help, salesperson, auto rickshaw driver, mobile phone repairing work etc. Although workers are returning to garment factories for work, the percentage this year is lower than the previous year (21.4 percent).



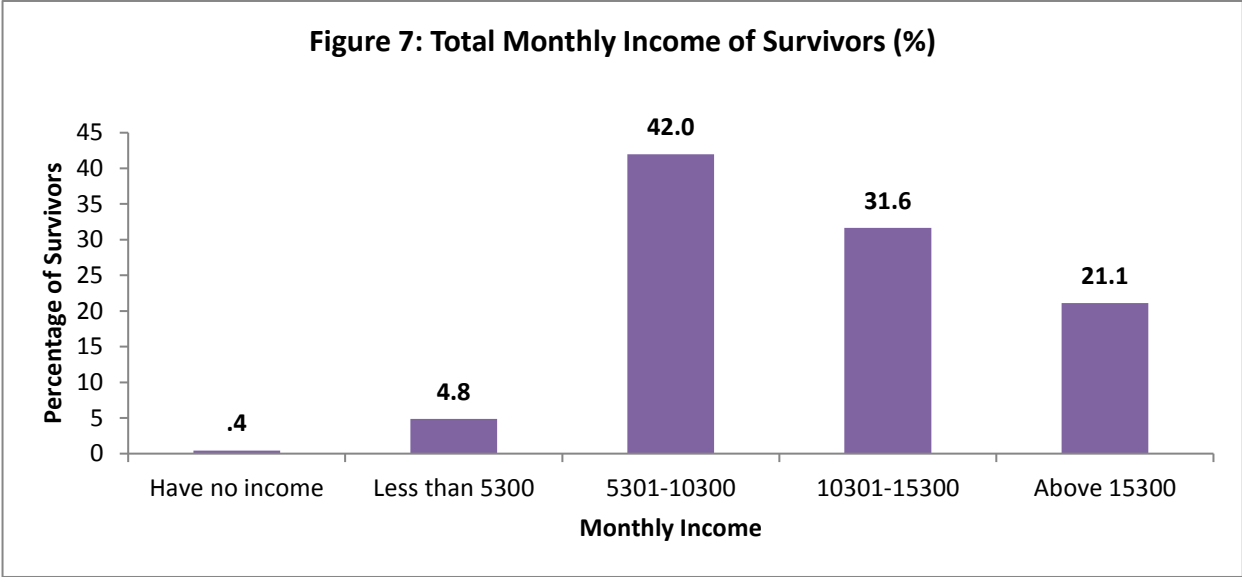
In the previous survey physical weakness (56.5 percent) and mental weakness (34.1 percent) were cited as the main reasons and it is noteworthy that the percentage for both has reduced as per the current survey.

2.4 Income Security for Survivors

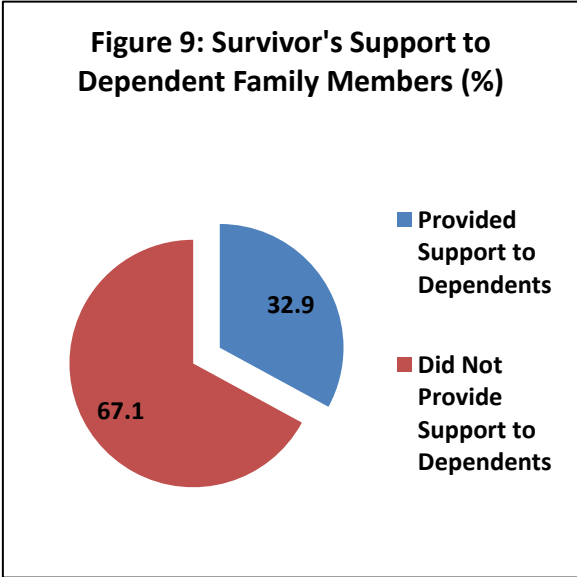
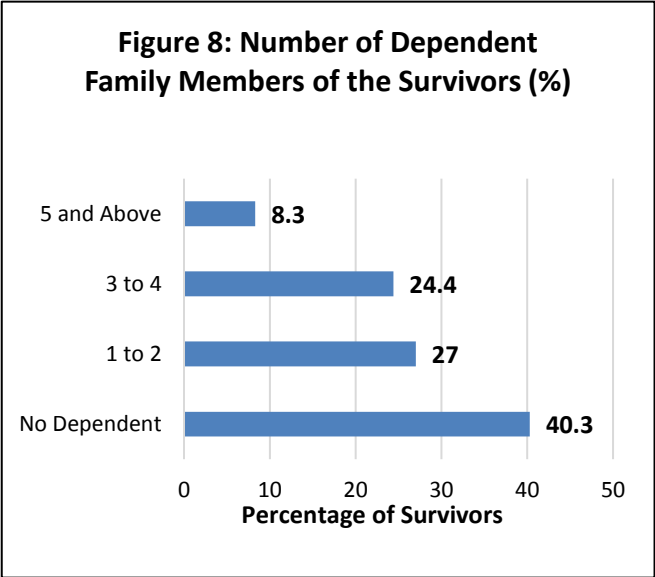
Among the respondents, 65.9 percent (figure 6) survivors have one other earning member in the family. According to the survey, the total family income (figure 7) for 68 survivors (4.8 percent) is less than the minimum wage of BDT 5300, mainly from employment/ small businesses. For 42 percent the income is between BDT 5301 and 10300, for 31.6 percent the income is between BDT10,301 and 15,300 BDT and 21.1 percent have income above 15,301 The situation has changed significantly since 2015 when the



average income of 76 percent of survivors was less than BDT 5300. Evidence shows that overall income of the survivor is increasing compared to their income in 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016.

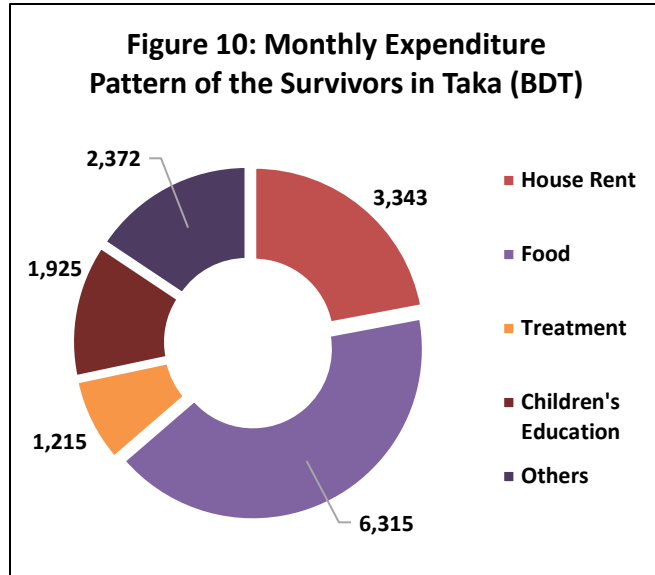


Although 59.7 percent (figure 8) survivors responded that they have one or more family members dependent on their income, only about 32.9 percent (figure 9) of the total survivors surveyed managed to support their families/dependents in limited capacity over the last ten months. This is a clear indication that an incident like this has put not only the individual but the entire family of that individual at risk in the longer-run and caused suffering from the loss of income and pushed the family to further hardship.



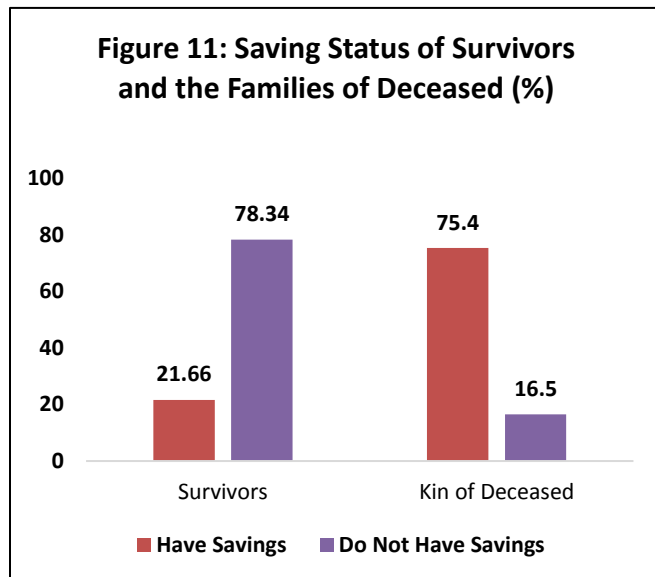
2.5 Expenditure Pattern of the Survivors

As regards monthly expenditure of the survivors, the average monthly expenditure is BDT 10,560. On average BDT 6,315 (figure 10) is spent for food, BDT 3,343 is spent for house rent, BDT 1,925 for children’s education and BDT 1,215 for treatment. Therefore, food is the major area of family expenditure of the survivors. As observed in the previous surveys, there is no significant change in the regular expenditure pattern.



2.6 Pattern of Savings of Survivors and Families of Deceased

Figure 11 shows that out of the 1403 survivors surveyed 21.66 percent (304 people) acknowledged that they have savings in some form. Among these 304 respondents 41.1 percent have savings between BDT 50,001 to 100,000 and 23.4 percent have more than BDT 100,000 as savings. It is to be noted that the range of values for savings is wide with the minimum and maximum being BDT 2000 and BDT 1,500,000 respectively.



In the case of monetary support received by the families of deceased, 16.5 percent of the respondents said they have no money saved and a further 8.1 percent were unwilling to disclose the information on savings. Majority

(22.3 percent) has savings between BDT 100001 to 300000 and 10.4 percent have savings over BDT 1,000,000.

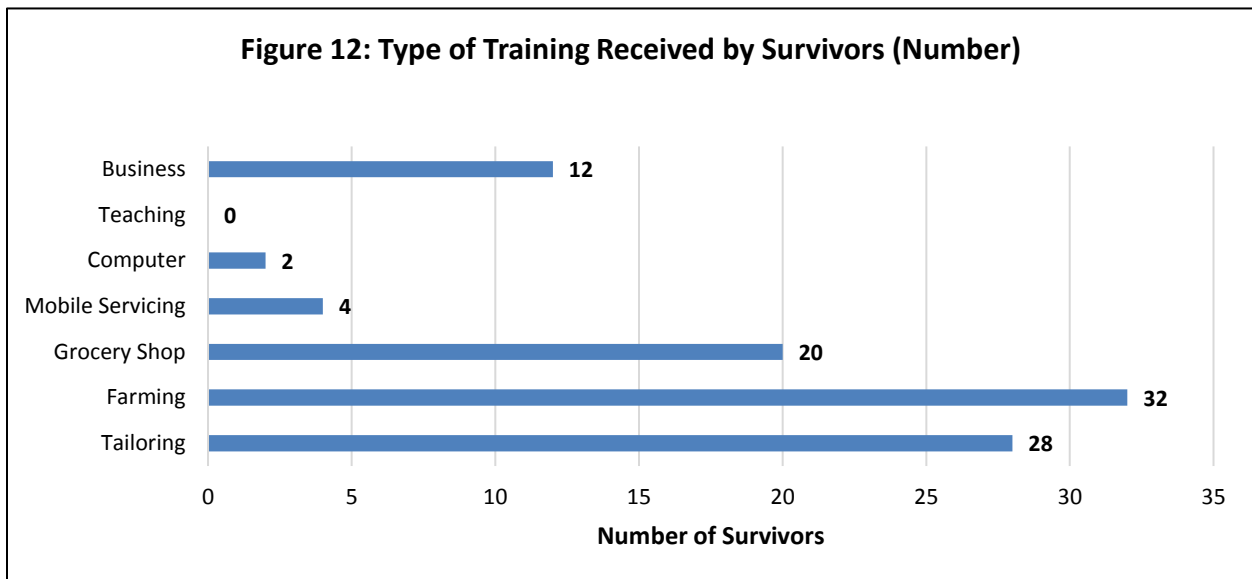
From figure 11 we can see that the savings pattern is almost opposite for the two groups. This may be because the compensation received was comparatively ‘less’ for survivors (those with no amputations and major injuries) compared to the families of deceased. As a result survivors had to use the money to repay debts and have had to rely on it for regular expenditure when they are out work or are unable to work.

“After my divorce from my husband, I live with my daughter. I run a small business and what I earn is used for my daughter’s education and running the household and sometimes I invest in my business if there is anything extra. At the end of the day I really have no scope to save for the future.” - Fatema Begum, a Rana Plaza Survivor

2.7 Support Received

The survey found 97 survivors received different kinds of training from various stakeholders such as BRAC, CRP, ActionAid Bangladesh and Gonoshastho Kendra among others in the last ten months. Interestingly no respondent refers to similar services from government or private training providers.

Among those who received training, thirty-two people received training on farming, 28 people on tailoring and 20 people on running grocery shop (figure 12). Other types of trainings included basic computing, mobile servicing and setting up business. This indicates that participants are provided long-term training for income generation.



Among those who received training, 80.4 percent acknowledged that the training helped

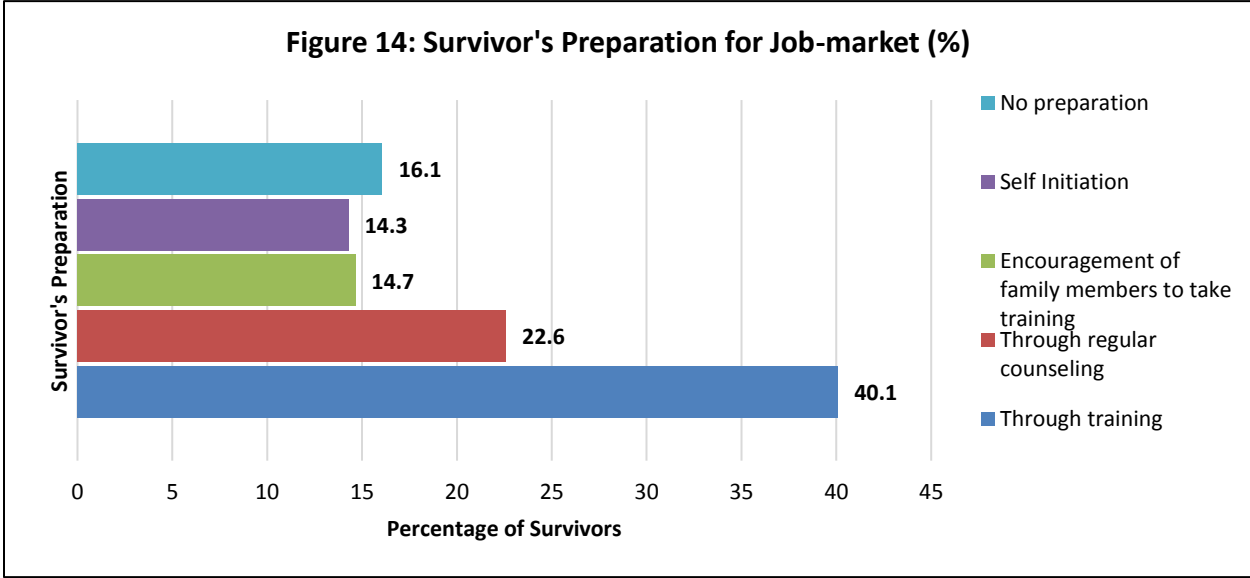
them to get a new job or run a business (figure 13). Among those who considered the trainings to be ineffective, mentioned absence of seed money/ adequate resources to apply the training as the main reason for being so.

Apart from trainings, 121 survivors received psychosocial counseling and 115 people received health support in the last ten months. BRAC, CRP, ActionAid Bangladesh and Gonoshastho Kendra were among others who provided the counseling. Majority (24.3 percent) received the health support from CRP with Gonoshastho (23.5 percent) and BRAC (18.3 percent) and Action Aid Bangladesh (5.2 percent) being other prominent organizations providing the support.

When the families of deceased were asked if they received any support other than financial support, 570 people said they did not receive anything else in the last year. In the absence of a major earner of the family it is likely that the family faces certain difficulties. The question we may ask is if financial support is enough for the families of deceased.

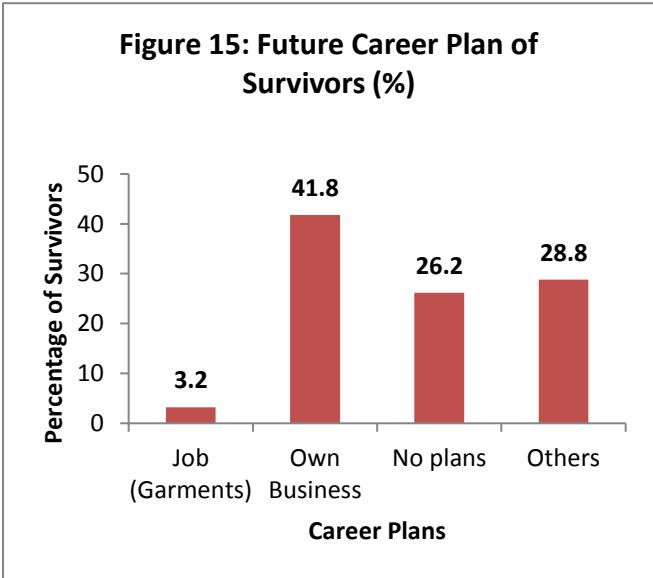
2.8 Future and Career Plan

When asked how they prepared themselves for the job-market (figure 14), 40.1 percent survivors



prepared themselves though training, 22.6 percent through regular counseling, and 14.7 through their own interest and motivation. As regards the career plan, of the 595 respondents who are currently unemployed, 42.6 percent (figure 15) of the respondents intend to get involved/expand in small business in the future. Only 3.2 percent of the respondents have plans to work in garment factory, while 29.8 percent intend to work in other sectors and 26.1 percent have no specific career plan at present.

The families of deceased were asked what their plan is regarding the children of the deceased family members that they are responsible for. On a positive note 44.5 percent said they will continue the child’s education.



Section B: Major Reforms: Status and Challenges

In the last four years, the RMG industry has witnessed numerous changes that shaped its current form. The collapse of Rana Plaza prompted immediate response from all concerned stakeholders. These responses ranged from rehabilitation to mitigation measures. The following section discusses the major responses, the current status and the challenges of these reforms.

3.1 The Compensation Arrangement

The establishment of the 'Rana Plaza Donors Trust Fund' in January 2014 was the result of numerous spontaneous and sporadic initiatives in the absence of legal provisions that was realistic, reasonable and adequate to address the needs. The Donors Trust Fund set a target of raising US \$ 30 million to compensate all survivors and families of deceased. It received voluntary donations from donors from around the world and collected funds from external sources, mainly the foreign buyers and brands that represent the European retailers. A multi-stakeholder body 'Rana Plaza Coordination Committee' (RPCC) stepped in to fill the role to provide a coordinated mechanism by adopting the "Rana Plaza Arrangement" and establishing the 'Rana Plaza Claims Administration' to facilitate the entire claims process. International Labour Organization (ILO) played a key role in the entire process as a neutral chair of the Coordination Committee.

The Donors Trust Fund made the payment in line with the country's banking system and recognized the direct payments made under the Prime Minister's Fund and Primark. Following a series of campaigns to raise funds and extensive negotiations, after a year and half, on 8th June 2015, the Rana Plaza Coordination Committee announced that sufficient funds had been collected to complete payments under the Rana Plaza arrangement.

The RPCC was the final authority in settling key questions such as 'structure' and 'standard' of compensation and the roles of the stakeholders to ensure that pertaining to the compensation mechanism. As per the Arrangement, each beneficiary received payments based on their individual circumstances and needs. Each claim was independently assessed and calculated, based on a formula developed by actuarial experts. The assessment considered both financial and medical needs, both of which were covered in the final award.¹ The Trust Fund took into cognizance of the proceedings of the high level committee formed on honorable High Court order which put forward a set of recommendations² around the compensation structure, classifying the amount for those of the dead and missing workers, the permanently disabled ones, those who have lost one limb, workers needing long-term treatment and the traumatized survivors. It also indicated that the victims who had already received a certain sum from the Prime Minister's Fund would receive the balance of their respective package. The

¹ Rana Plaza Arrangement. Accessed on April 16, 2017 (<http://www.ranaplaza-arrangement.org/>)

² The Daily Star, January 29, 2014. Accessed on January 2, 2015 (<http://www.thedailystar.net/business/rana-plaza-funds-get-closer-8878>)

closure of the RPCA may be considered as an indicator of success in terms of completing the compensation disbursement.

The compensation mechanism in question is not beyond criticism. As the High Court's decision on the compensation issue is yet to be resolved, some argue that the payment made so far is monetary support and not compensation in real terms. Additionally the long-drawn out process of raising funds and then disbursing took more than two years leaving the effectiveness in question. Even after almost four years, the challenge persists as to how a compensation mechanism such as this may be incorporated into the national legal framework towards long-term social security of the workers. Moreover, enactment of an international instrument to hold the corporations accountable is a pressing agenda.

3.2 Amendment to the Labour Law 2006

The amendment of the Labour Law is considered by most as a key advancement with regards to issues of workers' rights and safety and is the most immediate response to the collapse of Rana Plaza. In July 2013, The National Parliament passed the Bangladesh Labour Law (Amendment) bill 2013. The amendment is a reflection of the Government's obligation to fully respect the fundamental rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining and to address the critical need to bolster occupational safety and health.

On 15th September 2015, the government issued rules of the amended labour law 2013. Some of the key issues in the rules published pertained to the clarification in the workers' welfare fund, outsourcing workers and provision of factory lay-off, certification of the age of a worker and competence for work among others. The rules state that 0.03 percent from all exports would be deposited in the workers' welfare fund and any contract firm that works as an outsourcing company and wants to supply workers to a factory will need to apply to the inspector general of factories with the required documents, according to the rules³. It also states that the factory owners will have to provide appointment letters to the workers within 15 days of completion of probation. In case a factory declares lay-off, the owners will have to send a notice to the factory inspectors, mentioning the number of laid-off workers.

The guideline for managing the worker's welfare fund is yet to be finalized⁴. From July 2015 to August 2016 more than 2 crore BDT has been deposited in the welfare funds as the government started deducting 0.03 percent of export receipts from exporter's accounts directly.

Since the Labour Law amendment the RMG sector witnessed a sudden increase in the number of trade unions. Currently there are 562⁵ registered trade unions in the RMG sector with 430 trade unions being registered between 2013 and 2016. The registration has somewhat slowed in the last year or so compared to 2013 and 2014 and warrants a closer look at to why this is so.

³ Aaman, A. R, Jabin, N and Haque, S. 2016. Three years Post Rana Plaza: Changes in the RMG sector, ActionAid Bangladesh. Dhaka

⁴ Guideline for workers' welfare funds on cards, The Daily Star, August 24, 2016, Accessed on 16 April, 2017

⁵DOL

Major Criticisms of the Amendment

Sections 12, S.13, S.23 (3) and S.4 of the amended law have no clear definition of the terms ‘closure of institution’ and ‘misconduct of worker.’ There is a potential danger of this being abused by employers or owners as workers may be dismissed on grounds of misconduct for participating in strikes or procession. The amendment retained the provision of 30% membership for forming new unions, which practically negates the idea of free trade unionism (Chowdhury, Hasan Tarique: 2013).

Since 1968, there was a provision for workers to get 5% share of profit of the company. Through amendment of Section: 232(3) and 233 of the law, this provision was abolished permanently. The amended labour law does not provide any provision to allow 6 months maternity benefit for the female workers. In the amended law, there is a lack of consistency with ILO conventions 29, 87, 98, 105, accountability framework for inspectors and sufficient compensations.

3.3 Setting New Minimum Wage Structure for Garment Workers

Over the last two decades, the minimum wage was revised several times, the most recent one being in 2013. Post Rana Plaza, the workers demanded for a minimum wage of 8000 BDT (approximately 100 USD) as opposed to the then prevailing minimum wage of 3000 BDT (approximately 38 USD). The new minimum wage proposed by the Official Wage Board which became operational in November 2013 was set at 5300 BDT for entry-level workers as anything beyond this would increase the cost of production significantly⁶. This is still about 33 percent less than what is demanded by the workers and less than half of independent estimates of living wage. The question of how workers may be ensured a fair share in a multi-billion dollar industry remains a challenge.

Reform and Reality

In order to understand the changes experienced by the workers we conducted a focused group discussion with workers from five factories. Despite positive changes such as maternity benefits, training on fire drill and emergency evacuation, medical facilities within the premises and an open main gate for easy evacuation, workers continue to face challenges. When asked about safety committees, the respondents said they were not aware of safety committees in their factories and nor are there any trade unions. Workers from one factory claimed that they received 4000 BDT per month as opposed to the approved entry-level minimum wage of 5300 BDT. Those interviewed mentioned that they do not get salary slips and the practice of signing on multiple salary sheets is prevalent. Additionally, factories where these workers work, profit sharing is absent.

⁶ Aaman, A. R, Jabin, N and Haque, S. 2016. Three years Post Rana Plaza: Changes in the RMG sector, ActionAid Bangladesh. Dhaka

3.4 Workplace Safety Measures

The most visible changes took place in terms of structural and electrical safety with national and international stakeholders acting promptly. Government agencies, including a high powered committee headed by the Minister for Textiles and Jute undertook the responsibility of the inspecting factories for safety and security. Trade bodies such as Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) also committed to inspecting physical conditions of the factory buildings. The US Department of Labor’s International Labor Affairs committed 2.5 million USD to improve the safety standards of factories. JICA committed to redirecting a further 12 million USD from its SME funds for improving the conditions of the apparel industries. Besides, the European Union, Bangladesh Government and ILO issued the Global Sustainability Compact to promote improved labour standards, the structural integrity of buildings and occupational safety and health, and responsible business conduct in the RMG and knitwear industry in Bangladesh.⁷

Figure 16: Major Milestones in Inspections

2013	2015	2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•IndustriALL, UNI Global and 189 European international brands and retailers signed the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh•26 North American retailers and brands launched the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety•National Tripartite Plan of Action (NTPA) was re-launched•Accord, the Alliance and the government's own National Tripartite Plan of Action- agreed on common standards for plant inspections in the country	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Accord, Alliance and national Initiative completed initial inspection of 3780 factories	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Alliance : 40 factories completed all CAP•Accord: 7 factories completed all CAP

The ready response with regards to workplace safety measures is commendable. There are certain concerns around the initiatives particularly the progress around remediation measures has been slow (figure 16) particularly those inspected under the national initiative. When asked, DIFE responded that there were some practical challenges. A key challenge was that the newly formed department had no engineers within their organogram and thus the inspection related to structural integrity of the CAP had to be halted. Very recently, more than fifteen engineers were hired to rectify this situation and an additional 50 engineers will be hired in the coming months to continue with the inspections. While Accord and Alliance are responsible for factories that contribute to nearly 70 percent of export, the remaining

⁷ ibid

factories that export and produce for the local market fall under the scope of inspection of the national initiative. These factories are in most cases in rented property and thus remediation action in the CAP does not progress as planned.

Further, there is no clear indication on how the structural deficiencies identified would be financed or whose responsibility is it to ensure that the safety measures are undertaken and the timeframe to complete these. A recent study undertaken on remediation showed that of the 33 factories surveyed, the average cost of remediation is 4.9 crore BDT⁸. Shortage of funds was cited as a major challenge by smaller and even some relatively larger factories (in terms of revenue) to implement the remediation. Although there was some commitment for soft loans for remediation action, these are still not feasible for small factories. Accord and Alliance inspections have identified thousands of deficiencies in the factories that fall within their inspection programs. Although some brands committed to fund the upgrades and repairs that are needed, the authenticity of the information is unconfirmed.

Inspection has resulted in the permanent closure of some factories and this further pushes the workers to a vulnerable state where job security is a big question.

3.5 Occupational Safety and Health

Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) was prioritized in the amendment of the Labour Act and the formulation of the National Occupational Safety and Health Policy, 2013 is mentionable.

The department of inspection for factories and establishment is given the responsibilities to inspect safety and health conditions of workplaces and conduct on-the-spot inspections. However, after more than a year of the formulation of the rules, this inspection is yet to be operationalized. There is no available data on the current scenario of safety committees. DIFE is in the process of operationalizing the checklist on safety committees and also expects that factories would pro-actively disclose and update the information through an application on a web based interface. The quality of the safety committee would be a key issue in the future.

Provisions within the Labour (Amendment) 2013

- **Creation of safety committees in factories with more than 50 workers**
- **Establishment of workplace Health centres with over 50000 workers**
- **Safety welfare officers in workplaces with more than 500 employees**
- **Compensation for work-related deaths to provide after two years in employment workplaces of over 500 employers are required to arrange for and cover the cost of treatment of occupational diseases**

⁸ Remediation costs a factory Tk. 4.9 crore: Survey, The Daily Star, February 26, 2017, Accessed on 16, April 2017

The work on capacity building of the mid-level management, supervisors and workers on occupational health and safety is in progress. ILO trained 114 master-trainers who are now providing training to mid-level managers and supervisors of 400 factories, with the aim to train up to 8000 workers. At the same time DIFE and BGMEA are involved in capacity building around occupational health and safety issues at the inspector and factory level respectively.

3.6 Employee Injury Protection and Rehabilitation Scheme

A tragedy of this magnitude prompted the need for a national social protection scheme as a safeguards mechanism for the future⁹. The International Labour Organization initiated the process and as a first step engaged the government, employers and workers organization to agree on the need for one. A feasibility study undertaken in 2015 showed that it is affordable and may be adapted in the national legal context without major changes. A more comprehensive Establishment Survey started that will give data on accident rate, construction, retail and services; and a proposal for the scheme will be put forward by 2021. The dialogue with stakeholders will continue to identify how of the proposed scheme will draw on from ILO's Employee Injury Benefits convention. The current proposal is based on the premise that the cost will be borne by employers and may be 1 percent of the minimum wage per employee per month. The concern expressed by human rights activists is that the scheme or any insurance mechanism must ensure that employers are responsible for paying compensation and this should be shifted to the insurance company.

3.7 Long-term Health Support for Survivors

Government and non-government stakeholders came forward with a long-term health support mechanism. A separate Trust formed with remaining funds of the RPCC was formed to provide long-term medical support to Rana Plaza survivors who are less seriously injured (disability 1-9 percent). Starting with an initial fund of 700,000 USD, more stakeholders may be added over the years if funding is available. GonoShastho Kendra started providing health support under this scheme since January 2017. For the 110 seriously injured, a separate project has been initiated by BRAC with an initial funding of 1.2 million USD to provide long-term health support.

⁹ ILO Newsletter, Issue 5- September 2016

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

Although all stakeholders concerned responded to the Rana Plaza tragedy with due importance, after four years the implementation of some of the reforms and monitoring the same is an issue. On the brink of the fourth year of Rana Plaza collapse, through this report we tried to critically analyse the status of the reforms and we find ourselves asking how these can be monitored to keep the momentum of 2-3 years ago.

After four years of the tragedy, the scenario of the Bangladesh RMG sector continues to change. With an ambitious target of reaching 50 billion USD to mark the 50th year of the country's independence, now more than ever, there is a need to sustain the developments, shape the RMG sector towards a safer, responsive and accountable sector. Development efforts and responsible partnership of stakeholders is still important to address the challenges.

From the panel survey, the socio-economic reintegration shows an upward trend. Though a large number of survivors have opted for self-employment, people continue to re-join the garments sector. The physical and psychosocial recovery also shows an upward trend, though it cannot be ignored that many survivors suffer from recurring injuries that does not allow them to fully lead a life like it was before the tragedy.

While the compensation issue has been resolved to a large extent, the long-drawn out process undermines the usefulness of the support. The factory inspection poses multiple challenges. Can the buyer driven initiatives complete all remediation action within the stipulated time-frame and if not then what happens to those factories; would the government have the capacity to continue the inspection and monitor the ones already declared 'safe'; whose responsibility is it to upgrade the safety requirements, the timeframe for these upgrades and how would they be financed; and finally what happens to the workers who lose their jobs due to factory shut-downs resulting from safety deficiencies. Between 2013 and 2015 there was a dramatic increase in the number of trade unions registered and the pace has slowed in the last year or so. The concern here is if this is a reflection on how these trade unions are perceived in terms of increasing workers' collective bargaining power.

The incorporation of the agenda to promote decent work within the Sustainable Development Goals is an indicator for this issue to get prominence in the development discourse. The government of Bangladesh has completed the commendable task of aligning the SDGs with the 7th Five Year Plan and some building blocks are already in place to take the agenda forward.

Keeping the above in mind, this report proposes the following recommendations:

- Strengthening the designated government departments and ministries to continue to inspect and streamline the process by ensuring greater coordination among the department of inspection of factories and establishment, department of environment, city development authorities and other relevant authorities to provide permits for setting up factories.
- Creation of a safety fund to invest in factory and work place safety in RMG and allied industries.

- Reducing the gaps in Bangladesh labour policy and labour law to make it more worker-friendly.
- Development of a compensation mechanism at national and global level that clarifies the assessment criteria and reflects the prevailing socio-economic reality at the sourcing countries.
- Ensuring the 'true spirit' of 'freedom of association' prevails by adequately empowering the trade unions to collectively bargain for their rights.

In conclusion, we reaffirm the need to continue the social dialogue for broader accountability framework for the global fashion brands that should to be in place to ensure workers safety and basic rights. This framework would ensure accountability of major stakeholder throughout the value chain. In the absence of any specific law/ framework the scope for monitoring the compliance is limited. This framework may be in the form of an association with the government, international buyers, factory owners, trader unions and civil society organizations who could work together to promote compliance to international standards.

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