

Working towards stronger labour rights in Bangladesh



The International Labour Organization (ILO) works in Bangladesh to support compliance with, as well as the understanding and implementation of, international labour standards. A primary objective is to achieve greater compliance with the ILO conventions on freedom of association and the right to collectively bargain. Collaboration takes place through legislative and policy initiatives as well as technical assistance projects.

Legislation and policy

ILO works with its partners in Bangladesh to promote compliance with international labour standards by helping address shortcomings in legislation and through policy advice. Although legal provisions exist to uphold fundamental principles and to protect rights at work, their implementation and enforcement remain challenging.

Raising awareness of labour rights

Many workers lack basic knowledge of their rights and obligations under the Bangladesh Labour Act. Training is helping both employers and workers gain better understanding and skills. Meanwhile, outreach activities such as radio talk shows, drama and song performances, posters, brochures and other materials aimed at workers in the RMG, shrimp and leather industries also help raise awareness.

Women workers' rights and gender equality

To promote equality between women and men, particularly in the RMG sector, ILO has trained female union leaders and organizers. They are expected to pass on their skills to female union members at workplace level to increase their participation and active involvement in the unions and to help voice women-related concerns.

Strengthening trade unions

ILO in collaboration with the National Coordination Committee for Workers Education (NCCWE) and the IndustriALL Bangladesh Council (IBC) is providing technical assistance for trade union organizations to improve the capacity of workers to organize. The programme aims at creating an enabling environment for worker organizations and collective bargaining at factory level.

Fighting anti-union discrimination

The Directorate of Labour (DoL) has launched on-line systems with ILO support for the registration of trade unions and case management related to unfair labour practices. The online systems provide more transparency and accountability to the union registration process. Training is helping DoL officials and union members better understand what constitutes discrimination. Standard operating procedures to deal with discrimination are also being developed.

Strengthening the labour inspectorate

The Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) plays a vital role in promoting and protecting workers rights as well as the prevention of disputes through its advisory role. ILO provides technical support and equipment to DIFE to strengthen the capacity of its staff and systems.

Dispute prevention and resolution

Resolution of disputes is an important pillar of a sound labour relations system. ILO supported the government to establish a hotline for receiving complaints as well as cases of disputes. The capacity of workers and employers is also being enhanced to engage in social dialogue as well as to make effective use of arbitration, dispute prevention and resolution mechanisms.



Building workplace cooperation

Healthy workplace labour relations have a direct effect on improved wages, working conditions and improved productivity. ILO is putting emphasis on building skills such as team work and negotiation techniques at all levels in collaboration with workers and employers organizations to help bring about better workplace cooperation.

Reinforcing Industrial Relations Institutes

To ensure the sustainability of social dialogue, collective bargaining and workplace cooperation, ILO is upgrading the premises and equipment of the Industrial Relations Institute (IRI) as well as the training curricula and capacity of trainers. The IRI will be an important vehicle for delivering rights training for social partners.

ILO's workers' rights initiatives are supported by:

