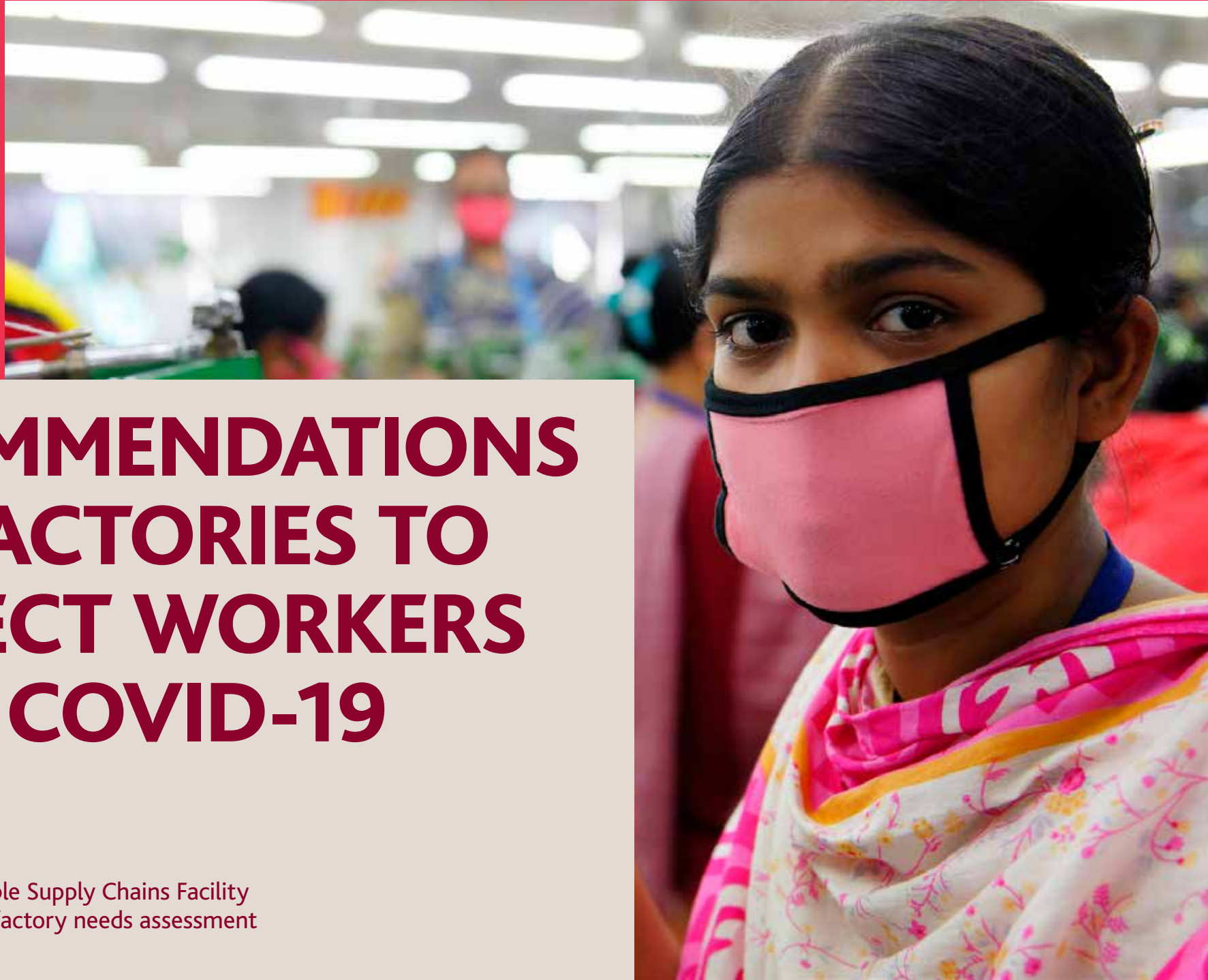




Ethical
Trading
Initiative

For workers' rights. For better business.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FACTORIES TO PROTECT WORKERS FROM COVID-19

Source: FCDO/Vulnerable Supply Chains Facility
COVID-19 Bangladesh factory needs assessment

PROJECT BACKGROUND

An investment in workplace OHS is paramount for responsible business, and safe workplaces play a critical role in keeping workers safe from the current COVID-19 Pandemic while also acting as a conduit for cascading information and raising awareness among workers, their families, and communities.

The Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) has partnered with 7 corporate members – Primark, New Look, M&S, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Dimensions and Arco – to quickly and effectively address the risks related to a safe return to work in RMG factories following the closure in Spring 2020. The initiative started its activities at the end of August and will run until July 2021.

Together with suppliers, the project hopes to establish a more resilient garment sector that collaborates to increase OHS practices which remain viable during crises such as the COVID-19 Pandemic.



Anticipated project achievements

30,000

workers across 20 factories receiving tablet-based OHS awareness raising training using a digital training solution provided by Quizrr.



Six factories supported to increase capacity and protective measures in their facilities to ensure safety and security at work, and fourteen additional factories linked to technical assistance services.



At least

700

factory managers able to demonstrate increased OHS knowledge on how to take effective measures preventing the spread of COVID-19.



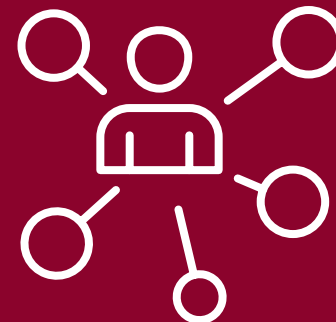
Responsible businesses supported to build on these experiences and scale these new approaches to better prepare for, and manage, future shocks and pandemics.



Workers experiencing a safer working environment and will reduce their risk of contracting the virus.



Expert Support Network communicating best practice and lessons learnt to brands, which can be replicated and adopted in their supply chain.



“The study is based on data collected from a total of 450 respondents, out of which 390 workers were included”

To identify the production units most in need of support and to inform the forthcoming intervention design, a team of researchers from the Dhaka-based consultancy firm Innovision carried out an assessment of OHS gaps and needs including training and capacity building in relation to protecting workers from COVID-19 in 20 factories at the end of October 2020.

The study is based on data collected from a total of 450 respondents, out of which 390 workers were included as a statistically representative sample from the 20 targeted factories using random sampling with a 60/40 female to male ratio.

Additionally, 2 supervisors and one line-manager from each of the 20 factories were purposely selected to be part of the Knowledge, Attitude and Practices survey while 20 Focus Group Discussions with 6 to 8 participants were organized with the workers for data triangulation.

The findings are limited to the 20 factories targeted by the intervention in the Dhaka-region and the study therefore cannot be generalised at the industry and country-level. Nevertheless, due to the similar traits existing among RMG suppliers in Bangladesh, findings from this study can be useful to understand the common impact of Covid-19 on production units within the garments sector in the country.



WHAT DID THEY FIND?

The researchers reported high scores among workers for COVID-safe practices;

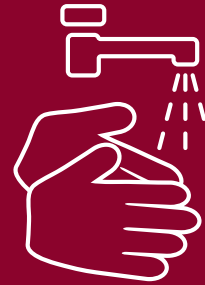
A majority of the male and female workers are aware of how to reduce the risk of illness from COVID-19 including correct handwashing techniques (86%), the importance of wearing masks (98%) and of adequate social distancing (91%). This was also confirmed by supervisors.

The workers also state they would seek medical help in case of feeling unwell or having a fever and 77% of them would inform the employer and stay at home.

A majority (88%) mention that the factory posts awareness posters on COVID-19 including information related to health services and that awareness raising activities on how to maintain personal hygiene at home has also been organized by the factory management.

Supervisors interviewed mention that all wash stations are equipped with soap and sanitizer, which the researchers confirmed following their site visits in all but one factory.

Nearly everyone taking part in the survey is satisfied with the factory management's current safety and security measures.



86%

of workers are aware of correct handwashing techniques

98%

of workers are aware of the importance of wearing masks



91%

of workers are aware of adequate social distancing



77%

of workers would stay home if they felt unwell



However, awareness does not necessarily confirm knowledge and understanding;

Though workers maintain social distancing within the factory premises, which has also been confirmed by supervisors in interviews, nearly two-thirds of the interviewed do not believe distancing is as important outside of work

In many cases, workers know why they use masks and other PPEs, but they lack the knowledge of how it protects them.

While all workers state they would seek healthcare in case of illness and many of them would inform their employer and stay at home, almost half of the respondents state they would take fever reducing medicine to finish their shift. Most workers do not feel the need to get tested for COVID-19 even when they have symptoms.

Although all workers from the 20 factories mention that they use wash facilities at the factory gate, observations could only confirm the existence of such facilities in 17 of the factories surveyed.

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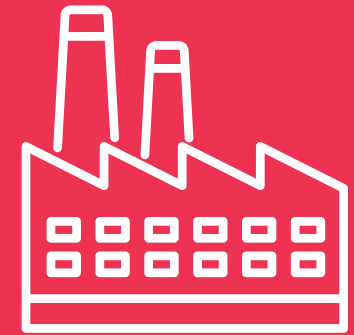
As indicated by these findings, there is not a straightforward correlation between behavior and knowledge within the factories. There seem to be varying reasons for this, including obeying instructions within the premises but separating the workplace and the hazards therein from life in the community, where a different social order exists.

However, as COVID-19 makes no such distinction it is important that behavior is supported by an understanding of why we are told to act in a certain way. A key recommendation from the needs assessment is therefore for the project to emphasize the rationale behind wearing masks and maintaining hygiene and social distancing.

Some other important findings noted by the assessment includes that although factories are supplying masks to the workers, several workers mentioned in the Focus Group Discussions that the number of masks distributed far from covers existing needs. As a result, the workers have had to procure additional masks themselves, further increasing personal costs at an already financially stressful time.

Additionally, while observations confirmed that two-thirds of the visited factories have a quarantine area for suspected COVID-19 cases, further investigation is required to identify whether the quarantine area is functioning properly.

“...obeying instructions within the premises but separating the workplace and the hazards therein from life in the community”



WHAT ARE THE MOST URGENT PRIORITIES?

Ensure adequate disinfection upon entry

Factories should be enabled to assess whether disinfection is being done at the entrance according to proper safety standards and put corrective measures in place when required.

Facilities for suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases

Enhance the capacity of existing factory health facilities (that by law should exist in all RMG production units with a workforce of 300+ workers) by providing training and logistical support to health staff to respond to suspected COVID-19 cases and ensure that workers are aware of the existing services.

Capacitate Health and Safety Committee members

Empower and build the knowledge of H&S Committee members to proactively monitor the COVID-19 response in factories and report to the elected worker representatives and factory management.

Enhance the capacity of existing factory health facilities in all RMG production units with a workforce of

300+

“Empower and build the knowledge of H&S Committee members to proactively monitor the COVID-19 response in factories”



WHAT MUST FACTORIES DO TO PROTECT WORKERS?

Continue to raise awareness of COVID-19, including safety measures at factory as well as community level

Ensure all workers and staff continue to be trained

Use all available forms of communication – banners, posters, and the factory PA system – to spread awareness



Build capacity and provide specialist COVID-19 training to Health and Safety Committees

Continue to provide paid leave to workers recovering from COVID-19 and create special provision for expecting mothers

Continue to provide isolation facilities for workers

Create provisions for factory-sponsored COVID-19 testing

Continue regular communication with worker representatives and ensure proper monitoring procedures are in place

Install hand washing facilities ensuring there is at least a 3 ft gap between each station

Provide workers with PPE (masks, goggles, ear cover, nasal spray) and monitor its correct use

Implement a clear policy for the correct use of PPE by all workers

Introduce a shift system for start and finish times to avoid crowding

Install and conduct infrastructural safety checks

Assess possibility for improving free air flow within the workspace

Look into the possibility of initiating a partnership with telemedicine service providers

Introduce a shift system for start and finish times to avoid crowding



This project is funded by the Vulnerable Supply Chains Facility (VSCF), a rapid COVID-19 response fund set up by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), and managed by Mott MacDonald Ltd. The Facility has partnered with 20 UK and international retailers and brands, supporting over 100 suppliers across Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Myanmar, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. It will provide economic, social, and health benefits to around 1 million women and men direct and indirectly.

To find out more about the FCDO Vulnerable Supply Chains Facility COVID-19 Bangladesh factory intervention, please go to www.ethicaltrade.org/programmes/fcdo-vulnerable-supply-chain-facility

For more information on ETI's digital OHS awareness training with Quizrr, go to www.quizrr.se/partners/quizrr-eti-osh-training-program or scan the QR code



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