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Government of the People Republic of Bangladesh
Ministry of Labour and Employment
International Organization Section-4
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Subject: Minutes of the 1st meeting of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) on "Improving Working Conditions in the Ready-Made Garment Sector– RMGP (Phase -2)"

The 1st meeting of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) on "Improving Working Conditions in the Ready-Made Garment Sector – RMGP (Phase II)" was held on 24 September 2019 at 11.00 a.m. in the Conference Room of the Ministry of Labour and Employment. The meeting was chaired by the Honorable Secretary. The list of participants is annexed (Annex-1).

2. After welcoming note and self-introduction of the participants the Chair requested the Member Secretary of the PSC project to proceed as per agenda. He informed that the first phase of the ILO RMG project ran from 2013 to June 2017 as a response to the Tazreen and Rana plaza incidents and this is the second phase of the project. He requested Programme Officer from ILO Dhaka Country Office to provide an introductory brief of the project, focusing on the transition from phase I to phase II. In his introduction, the Program Officer mentioned that the first phase of the project focused on building and fire safety assessments; labour inspection reforms; awareness on occupational safety and health (OSH); rehabilitation and skills training for Rana Plaza survivors and the launch of Better Work Bangladesh project (a partnership between the ILO and the International Finance Corporation – IFC). To build on the achievements of the first phase, the project entered into its second phase in July 2017, funded by the same donors as the initial phase – the Netherlands, UK and Canada. After this overview, the Member Secretary requested the Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) of the project to present the project update.

3. The CTA presented the progress of the project in detail referring to a PowerPoint presentation (Annexure 2.) The presentation included sections on the project design, its results framework, the partners of the project, key achievements made by the project from July 2017 till September 2019, the budget and financial delivery of the project and a list of challenges and opportunities for the effective implementation of the project. While explaining the mandate of the project, the CTA illustrated that the project has been designed to help improve industrial safety and working conditions in the ready-made garments (RMG) sector of Bangladesh and seeks to empower workers of the RMG sector and other industries to identify and report OSH risks. At the same time the initiative helps foster business competitiveness and assist the Government of Bangladesh and the industry in its pursuit to achieve a 50 billion USD RMG export earnings by 2021.

4. During discussion, in response to the question by the representatives from Bangladesh Employers' Federation – BEF, NCCWE and BKMEA regarding insufficient budget for Strategic Areas 2, 3 and 4 and their proposal to revise the budget ensuring increased allocation for those three areas, the Operations and Programme Support Specialist of the project mentioned that the project is not in a position to revise the standard costs that ILO incurs for all its projects (2% for projects above a certain threshold and 13% for project support costs/income.) There are also additional costs associated with specialist support which the project regularly deploy

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particularly for large and complex projects like this from the Decent Work Team based in Delhi, regional office based in Bangkok and ILO headquarters. However the team will take an initiative to consult with the ministry and find out alternate ways to adjust the allocations between budget lines. She also noted here that ILO is working on mobilizing further resources for the project which can be potentially increase allocations to the SAs in discussion.

5. Regarding the Industrial Safety Framework, the Chair and the members of the committee agreed to exclude discussions related to the RMG Sustainability Council (RSC) under the project as the concept of RSC is not matured yet. It requires discussion among the constituents in larger forum for consensus and agreement.

6. The BEF representative cautioned about the gender mainstreaming areas of the project specifically the issues surrounding violence and harassment against women and men because of the sensitive nature of the subject. To this, the operation manager of the project explained the rationale for and intention of the Gender Road Map prepared for the DIFE and how it is expected to mainstream gender into DIFE's policy and practice through eight short, medium and long term strategic directions.

6. On the project's initiative under Strategic Area 3, the representative of BEF emphasized on the importance of DIFE's involvement in not only monitoring the functions of the enterprise based Safety Committees but also their active role in building the capacity of the committees to function according to the national law. He further inquired about the project's plan to engage with the employers and workers organization towards building an OSH culture in the industry. Representative of NCCWE suggested that under the programme's OSH initiatives, more emphasis should be given on training and awareness of workers. In response the Programme Manager of Better Work Bangladesh (BWB) informed about the enterprise facing services that BWB provides to its member factories in order to empower their Safety Committees and the Participation Committees. Programme Officer – Monitoring & Evaluation of the project added that the project work plan includes specific interventions which will be undertaken in the year 2020 focusing on building the capacity of the employers and workers organizations as well as the factory workers to improve their knowledge and practice on OSH. When the representative of ERD raised a question over direct trainings provided to the main beneficiaries i.e. RMG workers under either phases of the project, she informed the committee that under the OSH component of the project, 8,038 mid-level managers & supervisors, 800,000 RMG workers and 2,700 trade union members have already received training on OSH during the project's first phase. In the next year, the project is going to provide advance OSH training to select members of the Safety Committees and Trade Unions.

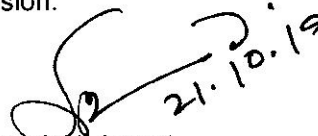
7. Taking the current progress of the project into account, the Member Secretary encouraged the project to accelerate the rate of implementation specifically in the areas of percentage of CAPs remediated, numbers of factories receiving information on access to remediation, publication of the Labour Inspection Annual Report and drafting of the National Plan of Action. He also added that PSC should meet within the next three months (in early January 2020) to see the extent to which the project has met its milestones set for the end of December 2019. As the presentation included data updated until July 2019 on remediation and OSH, Mr Maurice Brooks, the Workplace Safety Specialist of the project responded with more current data on those indicators demonstrating that the project is on track in achieving the milestones set for the year and also identified areas where results have exceeded expected targets such

as progress of sharing information on remediation finance – 84% of the active 691 NI factories have received remediation funding information from the project against a target of 60% for Dec-19. In explaining the low percentage reported by RCC on remediation of Corrective Action Plan (CAP) items, he reminded the committee on the process of remediation and that when calculating progress, factories closed as a result of the remediation process should be considered as progress. Thus, while in the 691 active factories, 35% of total 12,545 CAPs are remediated, the progress of overall remediation will be increased to 65% when the 598 closed factories are considered as 'fully' remediated. Mr Brooks added that the Remediation Tracking Module (RTM) of LIMA is an example of being able to track progress, noting that to date 762 factory profiles and 561 CAP Verification Reports are uploaded on RTM.

8. Decisions: After detail discussion, the following decisions were taken:

- a) The project will take initiative to consult with the ministry and find out alternate ways to adjust the allocations between budget lines and make effort on mobilizing further resources for the project which can be potentially increase allocations to the SAs in discussion
- b) PSC will restrain from further discussion on the RSC.
- c) The project will make an effort to achieve the milestones set for December 2019 on time.
- d) The next meeting of the PSC will take place in early January 2020 so that the project can update the committee on its progress.

Since there was no other issue for discussion, the Chair thanked the members of committee for their presence and active participation in the discussion.


21.10.19

(K M Ali Azam)
Secretary

Ministry of Labour and Employment
and
Chairperson of the PSC