

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Ministry of Labour and Employment
International Organization Section-1
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Subject: Minutes of the 4th meeting of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) of the “Promoting Social Dialogue and Harmonious Industrial Relations in Bangladesh Ready-Made Garment Industry (SDIR) Project”

The 4th meeting of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) of the “Promoting Social Dialogue and Harmonious Industrial Relations in Bangladesh Ready-Made Garment Industry (SDIR) Project” was held on 21st June 2021 via zoom app. Mr. K.M. Abdus Salam, Hon'ble Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) chaired the meeting.

2. The meeting started with the welcome note from the Chair. Being requested by the Chair, the Additional Secretary (IO), Ministry of Labour and Employment presented the agenda of the meeting. Thereafter chair proposed for adoption of the minutes of the 3rd PAC meeting if no modifications were required. After unanimous adoption of the minutes, SDIR Project representative was requested to present the implementation status of the last meeting's decision. It was found that some of the decisions were yet to be implemented which are: (1) IBC and NCCWE will provide the list of unionized factories and share with the BGMEA and BKMEA to finalize it, (2) A summary track sheet of the cases handled by Workers Resource Centre (WRC) paralegals will be shared with PAC and RMG TCC for the information of the committees. Moreover, list of those 27 paralegals will also be shared with TCC, PAC and PCC, and (3) the WRC Board of Trustees will develop a sustainability plan and share with PAC and PCC accordingly. It was decided to follow-up the decisions which were not implemented.

3. Presentation and Discussions

3.1 With permission of Chair, the CTA of SDIR project shared a presentation on the progress of the project until May 2021. Following the presentation, the BGMEA representative raised that the project achieved more than hundred percent of its non-unionized factory target but is still lagging with the unionized factory target. He asked why the workers' representative failed to provide adequate unionized factories. The IBC representative responded that many of the workers at factories are facing challenges to form trade unions, due to the complex administrative processes for the registration of a trade union. He added that in existing unionized factories trade unions' voice is not strong enough. For these reasons it was a challenge to provide the adequate number of unionized factories to the project. However, the IBC representatives mentioned about the positive impact of the project including its training activities and highlighted the need for continuation of the project.

3.2 The representative of Ministry of Commerce asked about the projects' approach to overcome shortcomings. The CTA of the project mentioned that regarding the unionized factory target the project was in constant communication with Workers Resource Centre (WRC) about alternative modalities to receive remaining unionized factories. Regarding RMG-TCC meeting, the project highlighted the need for MoLE to take necessary action to initiate regular RMG-TCC meetings. In terms of the limitation of current legal framework of conciliation, the project was hoping for upcoming labour law review. During the discussion the BGMEA representative thanked the SDIR project for the significant achievements made by the project amid all challenges. He emphasised that the project should extend and continue its

activities beyond 410 factories. In response to a question posed by the Joint Secretary (IO) of MOLE it was mentioned that the targets of unionized and non-unionized factories were reduced. The Chair wanted to know about evaluation of the project. To respond to him it was mentioned that a mid-term evaluation was conducted by ILO. The SDIR project wished to share the mid-term evaluation report with MoLE. In response to a question of Senior Assistant Secretary (IO) it was mentioned that the project was to be completed by June, 2021 however, the development partners agreed for time extension of the project up to 31 December 2022. It was informed that revision of the project was already initiated and a draft of the RTPP was shared with MOLE.

3.3 The Director General, DoL highlighted that officials from DoL is working very closely with SDIR project. He pointed out that there are legislative limitations that hinders DoL's functions and added that a better coordinated approach between DoL and DIFE is very much required. The Chair mentioned that amendment of law is a continuous and long-term process so nothing should be pending for amendment.

3.4 The Inspector General, DIFE mentioned that there are no coordination gaps between DIFE and DoL officials. However there may be some little gaps in the filed level. He expected that in future those small gaps will be minimized by informing and enaging DIFE officials in the project for better coordination and outcome.

4. Miscellaneous: The Additional Secretary (Development) of MOLE mentioned that in many instances it was difficult to get required information from the project. The Joint Secretary of Legislative and Parliamentary Affair Division requested to ensure providing meeting documents well ahead of time. The Chair mentioned that that there was a big communication gap between MoLE, PAC, PCC and the project. He directed to ensure better coordination among all stakeholders to make the project successful.

5. Upon discussion, following decisions were taken:

- 1) IBC and NCCWE will provide the list of unionized factories and share with the BGMEA and BKMEA to finalize it,
- 2) A summary track sheet of the cases handled by WRC paralegals will be shared with PAC and RMG TCC for the information of the committees.
- 3) WRC will share the list of paralegals with TCC, PAC, PCC, BGMEA and BKMEA.
- 4) The WRC Board of Trustees will develop a sustainability plan and share with PAC and PCC accordingly.
- 5) The ILO will formally share the mid-term evaluation report of the project with MoLE.
- 6) The meeting decided to extend the project up to 31 December 2022.
- 7) Based on MOLE's review the ILO will submit final version of the RTPP for its approval.
- 8) The ILO will share the updated work plan with the implementing partners of the project.
- 9) To ensure better coordination the SDIR project will submit quarterly progress report to Additional Secretary (IO) of MoLE, NPC of the project.
- 10) The project will inform and closely work with DIFE officials for better coordination and outcome.

The meeting concluded with vote of thanks from the Chair.

(K M Abdus Salam)
Secretary
Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE)
And Chairperson of the PAC