

Endline Evaluation Report of Workers' Empowerment and Advocacy in the RMG Sector (WEARS) Project of BLAST

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Acronyms and Definitions

ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
BGMEA	Bangladesh Garments Manufacturer Exporters Association
BKMEA	Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturer Exporters Association
BLAST	Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust
CBA	Collective Bargaining Agreement
CBSG	Capacity Building Service Group
DIFE	Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments
EPB	Export Promotion Bureau
FY	Fiscal Year
HED	Honourary Executive Director
HC	High Court
LFA	Logical Framework Analysis
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non- Government Organization
PM	Project Manager
Q&A	Question and Answer
RMG	Ready Made Garments
RTI	Rights to Information
SHG	Self Help Group
SJ	Sromik Jigyasha
ToR	Terms of Reference
TU	Trade Union
WEARS	Workers' Empowerment and Advocacy in the RMG Sectors
WWA	Workers Welfare Association

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Finally, while acknowledging the valuable inputs of all the above, the evaluating consultant stands by the conclusions reached during the evaluation process and believes them to be a sound response to the information and evidence available. However, the consultant also recognizes that the findings and recommendations, including any errors and omissions contained within this report are its own.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ready-made Garment industry is the largest industrial sector of the economy in Bangladesh that employs over 4 million workers, mostly women from lower economic strata and migrated from the rural areas, the largest in the organised sector which comprises nearly 4,500 factories of various sizes. Workers' rights and entitlement have remained as major issues since the inception of the industry which is pretty much piggy bagging on low-cost paradigm though visible improvements are noticed especially the aftermath of major industrial catastrophes like Tazreen fire and the Rana Plaza building collapse that had shaken the entire world. Still much remains to be done to ensure the basic and fundamental rights of the worker, especially the women workers. The WEAR project has been conceptualized and designed in the above context and aims to empower workers and the members of workers' rights organisations, in particular women, to increase their voice and raise concerns and demands with the employers and public authorities to seek legal protection, and thereby increasing access to justice with respect to working conditions in RMG factories.

The project is being supported by C&A Foundation Netherlands and implemented by BLAST. WEAR project has completed a two-year phase (phase one) and already begun implementation of the second phase. The evaluation has been commissioned to assess efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of phase I as well as capture key learning and propose recommendations to bolster the design and implementation of phase II of the project which shares the same goal and strategy. The endline evaluation adopted a combination of quantitative and qualitative investigation methodologies to ascertain and assess the project outcome along with the results achieved. Data and information have been collected in May 2019 from all four project sites that include Tajgaon, Tongi-Gazipur, Ashulia, and Chattogram. WEAR project has envisaged four specific outcomes and the evaluation has tried to provide findings and assessments against each outcome.

The first outcome of the project was "Increased participation of women workers in leadership roles who are assisting their co-workers to know about worker rights and entitlements and to make claims". Towards this, the project has helped form 8 SHG at the community with significant RMG workers, two in each of the four locations. These SHGs have 80 workers, 61 of them are women. About 25 sectoral Trade union members are supporting the activities of SHG members. Inclusion of TU as project implementation partner works as strategic input as in many cases. Project inputs helped bridge those gaps and enable TU to function their routines more effectively.

The endline evaluation findings survey suggests that an increased level of awareness among the RMG workers on key rights and entitlements. Around 72% of beneficiaries reported improved understanding and knowledge on basic rights and entitlements and many have reported passing on important information to their fellow workers that included maternity Leave (60%), minimum wage 42%, appointment letter, and ID card 46%, earned leave 27%.

The project has used various communication materials. The evaluation found that overall only 24.7% of beneficiaries could recall any message that was disseminated which would pose serious concern on the effectiveness of the communication strategy. The project may adopt interactive communication especially drama which is proven to be far more effective to reach out to less educated segments.

The WEAR project has developed a “bilingual mobile application - app” to provide legal information and clarification and also to lodge complain, connecting to legal service providers and engaging with an interactive helpline. So far, only a limited number of beneficiaries have used the application (8% - 10%). While looking at the effectiveness of the mobile apps, we must not overlook the fact that most workers still use feature phone, though use of SMART phone is on the rise in Bangladesh, 12% annually. The SJ apps has huge potential to assist garment workers to realize their rights at the workplace. There are cases where workers used the apps as a bargaining tool with the factory management.

The second outcome of the project was - “Recommendations for law and policy amendment and oversight mechanisms concerning rights and entitlements of workers”. The project has put forward five specific policy recommendations on worker’s rights issues that include Compensation for workplace injury/death; Extension of paid Maternity leave from 4 to 6 months; HC Guidelines to deal sexual harassment; Freedom of association; and Inclusion of ADR in the labour court.

Law Ministry has actively considering ADR to take it to Parliamentary standing committee and then endorsing it. Factory owners are now aware of High Court guidelines on sexual harassment at the workplace and supportive in establishing sexual harassment committees at the factory level. However, there some limitations to the policy advocacy strategy. Important stakeholders like factory owners, apex bodies such as BGMEA and BKMEA have not been adequately consulted. Without their support, government endorsement and subsequent implementation of the ADR process will be difficult. Therefore, the project should work actively with BGMEA, BKMEA, and individual factory owners.

The majority of the respondents had actually acknowledged improvements in some of the key working conditions. Most significant of them are a reduction of sexual harassment at the workplace, separate toilet for male and female, improving fire safety systems, installation of First Aids, drinking water and so on. Factory-level improvements by themselves are significant though changes have so far affected a relatively smaller number of factories, 15 out of 136 targeted factories, just achieved the project target.

Outcome three was related to the increased capacity among members of SHGs and TUs to raise issues and negotiate with employers/state enforcement bodies. The WEARS project has provided various training and capacity building actions that have provided them with the information as well as tools to claim legitimate rights ensured under various laws of the country. These efforts proved to be useful as the engagement of SHG members were found to be much higher than others. This indicates the importance of leadership to raise voice and assert claims for workers’ rights.

Noticeable improvements have been seen TU memberships though little has been achieved in creating rights champions at the factory level. SHG groups are highly dependent on the project inputs for routine activities like meetings, group work and so on. This level of high dependence on the project poses serious questions on the motivation and the capacity of the SHG members let alone its future sustainability.

Outcome four of the project was “Improved access to and enforcement of legal rights and entitlement for workers through formal and informal justice system within project areas”. Toward this, the project provided legal aid services include advisory services, litigation, mediation, referral, and other support services, and the workers have gratefully

acknowledged it. The project has provided legal aid support to 1,733 workers, mostly women which is 55% of the service requests. This is quite significant. Only 7% of the cases were settled through mediation with the factory management.

The project is very much consistent with BLAST's mission and core competencies. Therefore, WEAR project's strategies and action plans found to be very responsive. Phase I of the project has established the fundamental structure where organized SHG members are beginning to transfer knowledge as well as roles to other co-workers and contributing to improve working conditions particularly protecting sexual harassment to women workers. The second phase of the project will be able to leverage this foundation to gain a multiplier effect.

Now, the WEAR project has experienced a few limitations which should be addressed in phase II. The following are some of the more important issues that need attention.

The project training and capacity building are one shot in nature and lack adequate follow up which affects group sustainability. Therefore, the review team recommends providing refreshers training particularly on leadership, CBA and organising issues.

SHG is consist of 10 members with one person leading the group. The roles and responsibilities of the members of the group have not been clarified. Every body's job is one body's job. The project should prepare a portfolio for the SHG members and specify their specific role and train them accordingly.

It is understood that the project will update the SJ app to make it user-friendly. The project should explore SJ apps for feature phone users. In addition, the project should make campaigns to popularize the app among the workers. Furthermore, we suggest that a communications strategy can be developed to disseminate info about the mobile app more widely. This can include using social media; adding info to TV scrolling; radio shows; SMS marketing; circulating leaflets; putting stickers on transport used by workers, providing posters in the work place and working in community.

Inclusion of trade union and their federations in the project implementation is a strategic move. The project needs to identify factories that have functional TU and orient those TU members on ADR processes so that they can apply and replicate.

Awareness session on rights and entitlements issues is of single shot, and is not enough for an individual to fully learn about their rights and remedies. Multiple sessions are needed with the same groups of workers.

WEAR project has a good management team with sound technical knowledge. However, the project plan (LFA) is quite cumbersome and thus quite difficult to track project activities, outputs, and outcomes that need an update. Project management also needs to improve planning and monitoring practices.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Ready-Made Garments (RMG) sector is a leading manufacturing industry in the world that has been growing constantly during the last two decades. Today, the garments sector represents the 83% of the Bangladesh's exports. According to the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) data released on May 2019, during the July-January period of FY 2018-19, Bangladesh earned \$24.17 billion, up from \$21.32 billion during the same period in the previous fiscal year (FY 2017-18). These numbers describe the RMG sector as the most important manufacturing industry in Bangladesh.

The RMG industry employs the largest numbers of workers in the organized sector in Bangladesh. Presently, about four million workers are employed in about 4,500 RMG factories of different sizes. Primarily, cheap labour attracts international brands to Bangladeshi factories to produce their products for the European and US markets.

Despite impressive growth of the garment industries in Bangladesh, working conditions in these factories cannot be described with the same positive note. Much of the wealth created by the garment industries have been used for further expansion of the industry and also, it created a new wealthy class in the country. Indeed, little has been done to share the new-found wealth to improve the lives of the workers who render hard work at these factories to create the wealth. The wage level remains low despite increased worker productivity. The situation is worsened further due to inadequate mechanisms for the protection of workers' rights and to save them from abuses. Workers' are yet to organise adequately to raise their voices against the odds inflicted on them and protest through workers' unions, which are either non-existent or have very limited authority and action programmes.

The industry has gone through various industrial disasters that inflicted casualties of various scales. However, the Tazreen Factory fire and the Rana Plaza building collapse are the two most serious incidents that have shaken the entire garment industry worldwide and brought concerns with ensuring workers' safety and working condition at the forefront for the sustainable development of the garment industry.

The majority (over 80%) of RMG sector workers are women, who play a significant social role in their families and communities. However, the attention so far given to empower women remains inadequate given the continuing predominance of men at the management level, in state regulatory bodies, as well as trade unions. With some exceptions, women's voices are least heard on these issues. Women's rights organisations that have a powerful presence in Bangladesh civil society, have been relatively less engaged, with few exceptions, on the issue of securing women workers' rights.

In this backdrop, the WEARS project was conceptualized by BLAST with the direct support of C&A Foundation Netherlands. The project aimed at empowering workers and members of workers' rights organisations, in particular women, to increase their voice and raise concerns and demands with the employers and public authorities to seek legal protection, thereby increasing access to justice with respect to working conditions in RMG factories. Toward achieving that end, the WEARS project has adopted the following strategies:

- Strengthening workers', in particular women workers', knowledge and negotiation skills in factory level Trade Union (TUs) to raise concerns around improved working conditions with employers and state bodies.
- Establishing self-help groups (SHGs) to deliver frontline legal aid services.
- Providing advice, training and legal representation to plant level trade union members and individual workers so that they can seek legal redress.

The evaluation, therefore, intended to distill the learnings from project implementation into recommendations for the current phase of the project.

1.2 Purpose and Scope of the Endline Evaluation

The endline evaluation of Phase-I was undertaken when Phase-- II of the project is already in operation. Therefore, the endline situation of the project (Phase I) will be considered as the benchmark status for Phase II.

The endline evaluation followed the principles of equity, accountability and sustainability, documented learnings and tried to contribute to informed decision-making for phase- II of the project and to replicate best practices. The specific objectives of the endline evaluation are listed below but not limited to:

- Identifying and understanding which strategies and activities contributed most in achieving the project's intended results and which were not effective;
- Assessing the project's efficiency and cost effectiveness;
- Identifying next steps to sustain activities towards achieving the goal of empowering poor working women and establishing their rights in the RMG sector
- Creating a benchmark status of the current phase of the project to make a reference point for future M&E and learning.

1.3 Methodology

The endline evaluation adopted a combination of quantitative and qualitative investigation methodologies to ascertain and assess the project outcomes along with the results achieved. A range of participatory research methodologies were followed to obtain both quantitative as well as qualitative data, which were then used for analysis and drawing conclusions. Data and information have been collected from all four project sites that include Tajgaon, Ashulia, Tongi-Gazipur, and Chattogram.

Inception activities of the endline evaluation commenced immediately after contract-signing. BLAST provided relevant desk review materials to the consultants. Senior consultants of the evaluation team visited a number of project locations and held discussions with a cross-section of project stakeholders including workers, SHG members, TU leaders, and factory management. The following matrix present the methods adopted during the course of endline evaluation:

Matrix-1: Methods and activities	
Methods	Activities conducted
Quantitative approach	In-person interview with 400 workers through a structured questionnaire using digital technology. The respondents included SHG members, participants of project who supported various trainings, awareness sessions and legal aid camps, and potential beneficiaries of Phase II project. This activity also included awareness sessions and legal aid camps.

Matrix-1: Methods and activities	
Methods	Activities conducted
	Analysis of project outputs that include quantitative achievements against project targets using project MIS and documentations/records.
Qualitative approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fifteen in-depth Key Informant Interviews (KIIs, semi structured nature) with the project management, Union level leaders, Lawyers and Compliance Officers of RMG factories. Four FGDs with different project participant groups (SHG members, and Workers)
Quantitative and qualitative approach	Review of relevant project documentation including project proposal, project progress reports, success stories, reporting formats, and meeting minutes.
Triangulation	Assembling findings of individual interviews, KIIs, FGDs, desk review outcomes and discussion meeting notes for cross verification and making comparative analysis to draw conclusions.

1.3.1 Sampling

The evaluation survey used a statistically valid sampling approach and proportional stratification for various categories of respondents. The following formula was used with 5% level of significance for finite population, to determine an adequate sample size of 400 workers.

$$n' = \frac{[NZ^2P(1-P)]}{d^2(N-1)+Z^2P(1-P)} \times D$$

The following matrix presents the proportional distribution of samples across the different categories of respondents and project sites.

Table-1: Extent of the study						
A		Tejgaon	Tongi-Gazipur	Ashulia	Chattogram	Total
A1	Number of workers interviewed					
	Beneficiaries – Total	75	75	75	75	300
	▪ Beneficiaries – Female	70	42	50	65	227
	▪ Beneficiaries – Male	5	33	25	10	73
	SHG Members-Total	7	7	7	7	28
	▪ SHG members-Female	7	6	5	5	23
	▪ SHG members-Male	0	1	2	2	5
	Potential Beneficiaries – Total	25	25	25	25	100
	▪ Potential Beneficiaries – Female	19	21	21	23	84
	▪ Potential Beneficiaries - Male	6	4	4	2	16
A2	Workers from number of factories	22	50	32	32	136
A3	Workers' reach (number of workers in those factories)	3,81,600	4,25,085	7,34,250	2,13,721	17,54,656

1.3.2 Data analysis

The primary data collection was done between 9 and 28 April 2019. Afterwards, CBSG cleaned the data set following logical sequence and generated basic descriptive tables such

as frequency tables, data ranges, and most importantly triangulated data collected from different sources.

1.3.3 Limitations

The main challenge was to access workers and get their quality time for interviews. The evaluation team worked on weekly holidays and employed a large number of enumerators to collect data in a short time.

Another limitation was that baseline data could not be considered for analysis due to non-availability of baseline database. The evaluation team also used recall data collection method (respondents recalled the situation of two years back) for some of the variables to measure changes taken place over the project period.

1.4 Report Structure

The report is presented in four parts as follows:

Part 1 is the introductory section covering the basic background, brief terms of reference of the endline evaluation and the methodology adopted.

Part 2 summarizes overall components drawn upon the findings from primary and secondary data analysis and discussions with a variety of project stakeholders during the evaluation period. This section identifies the gaps and determines the key areas where the project has not achieved its intended results and seeks to explain why.

Part 3 examines the project implementation process and management. Answers are sought to an examination of management coordination, staff capacity, and systems, planning, monitoring and learning functions.

Part 4 draws together findings as conclusions and recommendations. These are then expected to contribute to the future planning and further development of WEARS project.

While summary findings appear in the text, some supporting information is provided in the annex. These annexes draw together more data and analysis upon which the conclusions and recommendations of the endline evaluation are based.

EVALUATION FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

2.1 A Holistic Overview of the WEARS Project

In order to review the strategic importance of the WEARS project that aims at improving working conditions in RMG sector and empowering women workers, the evaluation team gathered information from various sources to see if the project was relevant for the intended beneficiaries in the current context.

The findings of the investigations suggest that the project has successfully reached out to the target beneficiaries and meets some of their most compelling needs to improve their working conditions.

The project has built a solid foundation for the second phase to kick off. There is now opportunity to build on the experiences of phase-I, to focus on increasing awareness concerning activities on workers' rights in the RMG sector, and to support worker's organisation and collaboration among TUs and civil society groups. On the other hand, the project can now augment its effort for engagement at the government and industry levels on workplace reforms, given the Bangladesh government's commitments to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (in particular, Goals 8 and 16, on ensuring decent work for all, and on guaranteeing peace, justice and strong institutions, respectively).

The outcomes of the project were to make SHG members understand issues pertaining to worker's rights (short-term), and to then replicate and disseminate information and knowledge to fellow workers (medium term). Finally, in the end, SHG members along with their fellow workers were to raise issues and claim their rights as described in the project result chains.

Through the WEARS project, BLAST strives to increase engagement of female workers within the RMG sector, equip them with knowledge and information about their rights, legal remedies and available services, and to enable them to participate in work rights activities with the support of women's' and rights organisations. The project also advocates for the enforcement of existing laws and facilitates access to existing information and legal services for workers. Bangladesh law permits workers in RMG factories to organise at the workplace through factory level Trade Unions (TUs). The project equips SHG members with a range of skills that include legal and workers' rights, negotiation techniques, knowledge on establishing a collective bargaining agreement (CBA), protection from sexual harassment and right to information applications, among others. The project has also developed a mobile app as an aide to improve access to information and build awareness among RMG workers. The project played an important role here.

The RMG sector has experienced significant changes in the recent past and therefore, it now focuses on improved legal framework and institutional mechanisms for protection and accountability. These include the enactment of progressive law and policy reforms for worker organisation, and the establishment of new safety inspection regimes. although the law provided improved opportunities for workplace consultation and worker organisation, which are key to systemic improvement to workplace conditions in factories, the scope and opportunities for Trade Union activities remained largely under-utilized in the RMG factories. The national legal services organisation now (post Rana Plaza) provides legal aid to the workers. However, there is virtually no outreach measures to enhance

access to these legal services, nor any focus on women workers. The project acted as a catalytic agent in transforming the way legal aid is dispensed to the workers, by providing information and services including outreach in the community, and enabled workers to demand legal remedies based on their improved legal knowledge and understanding.

The implementation of the WEARS project started with SHG formation in a densely populated residential community of RMG workers. Paralegal workers of BLAST along with local TU activists listed workers and selected 10 SHG members, based on pre-set selection criteria.

The Inclusion of TUs as project implementation partner works as a strategic input, as in many cases TUs are unable to their intended role due to the lack of knowledge on legal rights and remedies, and access to services. Project inputs helped to bridge those gaps and enable TUs to perform their routines more effectively.

The evaluation team endorses the design of the project as a logical intervention strategy to strengthen workers', and in particular, women workers' knowledge, and negotiation skills of the factory level Trade Unions (TUs) to raise concerns around improved working conditions with the employers and state bodies. Thus, its strategy to establish SHGs at the community level, deliver legal or other advice and provide advice, training and offer legal representation to the plant level trade union members and to individual workers worked quite well, and helped women workers seek legal remedies and redress needs.

2.2 Outcome Specific Review

This section provides outcome specific analysis of the major accomplishments and gaps of the WEARS project. The evaluation team has also drawn conclusion and made suggestions wherever necessary.

2.2.1 Outcome one

The WEARS project intended to increase participation of women in leadership roles particularly in SHG and TUs and to enhance their understanding of workers' rights in general and particularly women workers' rights. Imparting understanding and skills among the SHG women workers on how to claim rights and enable workers to do the same, are important elements of outcome one. Progress in this area may be validated by the increased frequency of case reporting and claims being made for rights and entitlements.

Matrix-1: Fact: Achievements against targets for outcome-1			
SL	Indicator	Target	Achievement
OC1.1	Number of members of SHGs and TUs, lawyers, paralegals and other relevant bodies have access to information through a mobile app developed under the project (gender disaggregated data)	50 members (40 women and 10 men) of SHGs and TUs, lawyers, paralegals and other relevant bodies have access to information through the mobile app developed under the project by September 2017	429 members of SHGs and TUs, lawyers, paralegals and other relevant bodies had access to information through the mobile app developed under the project by September 2018. We found a total of 429 online users, out of whom 157 are registered users (33 women, 124 men) and 272

Matrix-1: Fact: Achievements against targets for outcome-1			
SL	Indicator	Target	Achievement
			are non-registered users and have access to information through the Sromik Jigyasha mobile app
OC1.2	Number of women members of the SHGs who are efficient and self-sufficient in the provision of legal information and knowledge sharing on legal rights and remedies.	60% women members of SHGs are self-sufficient in the provision of legal information and knowledge on legal rights and remedies by December 2018	Among 61 women members 24 were found to have acquired knowledge about relevant legal information, rights and remedies which is 50% achievement against the target
OC1.3	Number of women leading the effort to improve working conditions	41 women (16 from SHGs and 25 from TUs) leading efforts to improve working conditions by December 2018	22 women (15 from SHGs and 7 from TUs) are leading efforts to improve the working conditions
OC1.4	Number of workers who are able to raise issues and claim their rights and entitlements (disaggregated by gender)	500 workers (400 women and 100 men) able to raise issues of concern and claim their rights and entitlements, by December 2018	1775 workers (1420 women, 355 men) were able to raise issues of concern and claim their rights and entitlements, by December 2018, which was 355% achievement against the target
Output against outcome-1			
OP1.1	Developing awareness/ IEC materials (i.e. posters, leaflets, brochures, booklets, stickers, mobile app and flip chart) on sexual harassment in the workplace and the legal remedies available	Posters, leaflets, brochures, booklets and stickers designed and printed	12000 stickers, 5000 leaflets, 2000 brochures, 2000 Posters printed and used in Legal aid camps, sessions and meetings
		Flip chart developed	50 Flip charts developed and used to conduct awareness sessions
		One mobile app developed	"Sromik Jigyasha" mobile app has been developed and is operating well
		Training on the mobile app given to 50 people	75 participants were oriented on the app. Among them 42 participants (16 women and 26 men) were from TU members.
OP1.2	Identifying members of TUs currently operating in selected RMG factories	25 TUs identified within the working area	25 sectorial Trade Union Federations were identified within the working areas in 2017

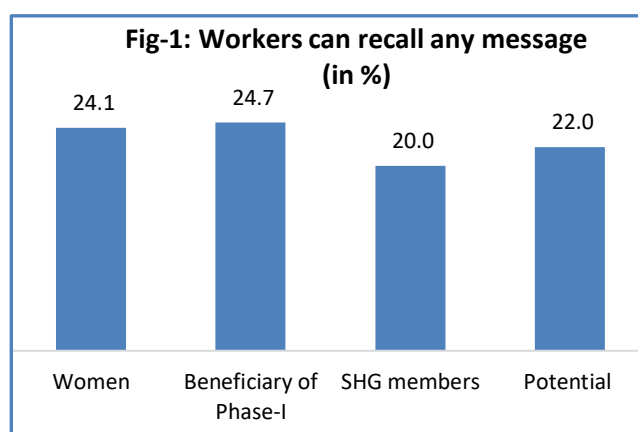
Matrix-1: Fact: Achievements against targets for outcome-1			
SL	Indicator	Target	Achievement
OP1.3	Setting up Self-Help Groups in areas where RMG workers live	8 SHGs formed, comprising a total of 64 women workers	8 SHGs formed with 61 women workers and 19 men workers in the 1st year of the project
OP1.4	Connecting frontline legal information and advice services through mobile and one-stop legal aid clinics in the factory areas	16 mobile weekend/evening sessions and one-stop legal aid clinic sessions held in factory clusters	A total of 16 legal aid camps were held during the entire project period
OP1.5	Conducting legal awareness sessions to increase knowledge and capacity of garment workers, especially women, on the rights and entitlements of women workers, through SHGs in areas where workers live	48 awareness sessions conducted through SHGs	49 awareness sessions conducted with the RMG workers in project areas. The workers learned about their rights and responsibilities as set out in the Bangladesh Labour Act and they were also oriented on the process of negotiating and claiming their rights as well, just as introduced with the Sromik Jigyasha mobile app. IEC materials were used in the awareness sessions.

Analysis:

Communication materials

To increase awareness of workers on legal rights and remedies, the project printed and distributed posters (2,000), leaflets (5,000), stickers (12,000) and brochures (2,000) among the workers in four project locations. Besides, these communication materials were used to conduct awareness training sessions, facilitate legal aid camps and so on.

The evaluation team attempted to assess the effectiveness of these communication materials, and found that overall, 30% of workers could recall at least one message. The rate was found to be higher for the project beneficiaries (25%), while it was found to be only 22% among the potential beneficiaries of Phase II of the project. This may be considered to be the baseline for the current phase. Marginal increase in awareness as a result of project intervention is seemingly quite low, only 10%.



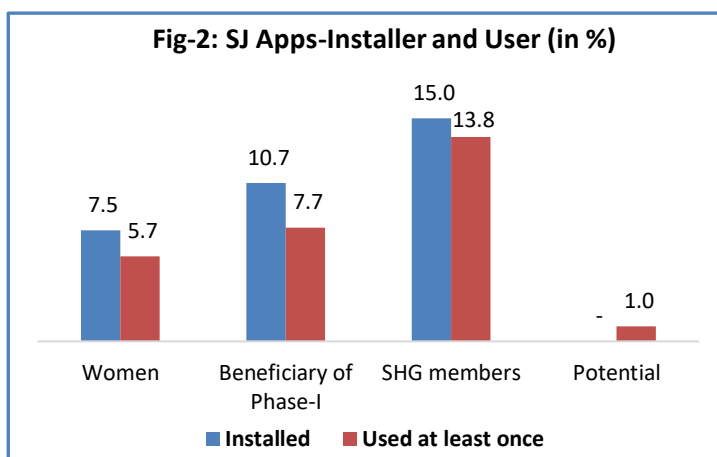
Given the target number of beneficiaries (about 50,000), the adequacy and appropriateness of those materials as well as that of the delivery channel need thorough scrutiny by a content developer and/or communication specialist, especially for the second phase of the project. **The evaluation team found that overall only 24.67% of the beneficiaries of Phase I could recall any message that was disseminated through poster, leaflet, brochure, and so on.**

Among the **alternative communication approaches**, a significant number of FGD and KII participants suggested interactive activities like folk song, street drama and mass media campaign. The interactive communication, especially drama, is far more effective than all other means, especially when the communication is targeted to the less educated segment of the society.

Sromik Jigyasha (SJ) mobile app

The SJ app is a bilingual one that offers digital access to legal information and provides scope for interaction, application/complain lodging, connecting to legal service providers and engaging with an interactive helpline. However, the app was made available to potential users through the Google Play Store, and the number of downloads was between 100- 500 by December 2018.

Project report suggests that a total of 429 persons including SHG and TU members, lawyers and paralegals, and members of other relevant bodies had accessed the SJ App for information. About one third of them (124) were registered users while the rest are non-registered. To popularize the app, the project had oriented 75 persons (against the target of 50) including TU members, staff lawyers, both men and women workers on how to install and use the app. Our investigation reveals that overall only 8% of the interviewed workers had installed the App while it was estimated at 11% for phase one beneficiaries. The number was found to be little higher (15%) among the SHG members. The proportion of workers that used the SJ app at least once was found obviously lower compared to the proportion of people had installed. The evaluation team also attempted to analyse the situation by project locations. It was found that most users were from Tejgaon, Dhaka, followed by Gazipur and Chattogram.



While looking at the effectiveness of the mobile app, we must not overlook the fact that most workers still use feature phones, though use of SMART phones is on the rise in Bangladesh 12% annually. A significant number of workers reported during interviews and FGD sessions that the app was not user friendly and often got malfunctioned during use. The SJ app has huge potential to assist garment workers to realize their rights at the work place. There are cases where workers used the app as a bargaining tool with the factory management. In some cases, workers used the app to seek legal remedy, using its resource

materials. These incidences may be small, but nonetheless show the huge potential it can have on worker rights movements.

The evaluation team is aware that the project will make an updated version of the SJ app to popularize it further and make it more user friendly. However, the project should explore and make arrangements so that a feature phone can also be used. The evaluation team suggests that the project makes a launching event and publicises it by inviting celebrities and other key stakeholders including BGMEA and high government officials.

Empowering women workers

The project facilitated establishing a total of eight SHGs, two in each of the four locations.

With little delay at the beginning, the project successfully selected 80 workers, of which 61 were women, within just the first year of the project. Alongside, this it has identified 25 sectoral Trade union members to support the activities of SHG members.

Table-2: No. of workers engaged with the specific activities				
Activities	Overall	Women	Beneficiary of Phase I	SHG members
CBA agent	3	2	3	5
Ever Raised any issue on workers right	10	8	14	4
Ever claimed Rights and Entitlements	12	16	21	11
Shared Legal information	24	28	21	15

Rights and legal knowledge

As part of legal aid support and providing frontline legal information, the project organised 16 mobile and one-stop legal aid clinics at factory areas. On average, these camps had mobilized 100-300 workers for various forms of legal support. The SHG members conducted 49 awareness sessions in their respective communities, six sessions per group in two years. Findings of the evaluation survey suggest increased levels of awareness of the workers on their key rights and entitlements. **A significant proportion of the beneficiaries (51%-72%) reported that they now had improved understanding and knowledge on their basic rights and entitlements and that they could pass on this information to the fellow workers** and made them understand about their rights too. These included beneficiaries had transferable knowledge on maternity leave (60%); minimum wage (42%); appointment letter and ID card (46%); and earned leave (27%).

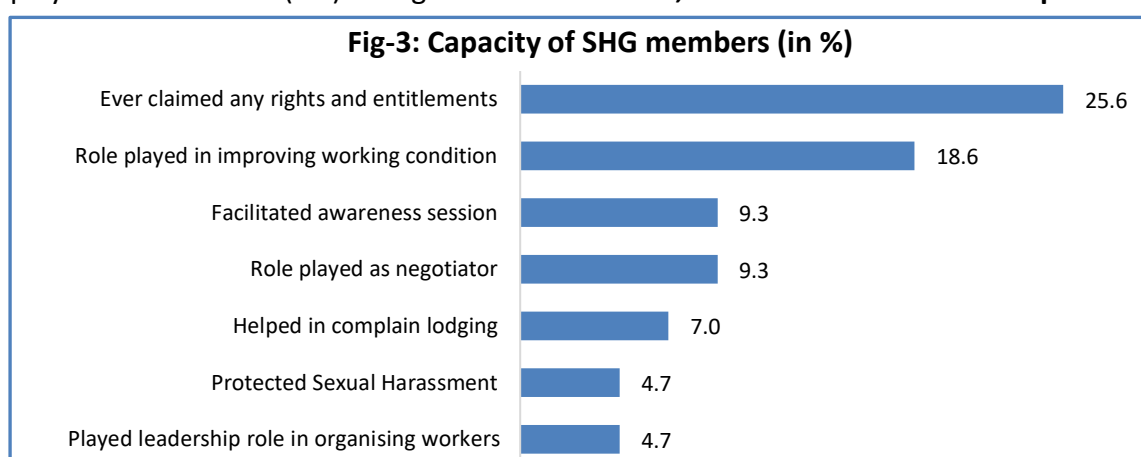
Capacity of SHG members

The project provided a number of training sessions to SHG members and TU leaders on various issues, although these sessions were mainly one-shot with no follow ups. Besides, a good number of SHG members discontinued during the implementation period. Hence, many SHG members could not benefited from the training and they could not contribute to the project as envisioned.

SHG members were selected based on pre-defined criteria that included among others, leadership quality, acceptability in the community, and capacity to organise. Current SHG structure consists of 10 members with one group leader. There is no portfolio of responsibilities for group members except the group leader. SHG groups are mainly driven by project activities and thus, are highly dependent on project inputs. All SHG meetings,

planning and actions are currently supported by the project. This high level of dependence on the project poses serious questions on the motivation and the capacity of the SHG members in sustaining projects benefits in the long run.

The evaluation study strove to ascertain the effect of capacity building and raising awareness on the active behaviour of garment workers, particularly to realise their workplace rights and entitlements. The graph below suggests that the project capacity building has made a positive impact on the realization of workers' rights. 25% of the respondents have voiced their rights to the management which was the most significant change in the project and has set the foundation for subsequent improvements in the future. Many (about 18%) have also supported fellow workers in seeking their rights or played an active role (9%) in negotiations. **However, involvement in a leadership role was**



reported by only 5% of the respondents which is a concern at this moment and needs more attention in the ongoing project. This is possibly one of the main factors that is holding back adequate workers' organization at the factory level even though individual activism have shown quite an improvement.

Factory level engagements

The WEARS project envisages empowering factory workers that would engage them in various actions leading towards attainment of rights and entitlements. Various training and capacity building actions have provided them with information as well as tools to claim rights ensured under various laws of the country.

The evaluation study tried to gauge workers' engagement in 10 particular areas (mentioned in the table below) using various categories of respondents namely women workers, Phase I project beneficiaries, SHG members as well as potential beneficiaries of Phase II, which may help set baseline value for the current phase.

The following matrix provides the result of the evaluation study. Engagement of SHG members was found to be much higher than all other category of respondents. This indicates the importance of leadership to raise voice and assert claims for workers' rights. If we compare a potential beneficiary (like control group in research sense) with a Phase I beneficiary, some improvements can be seen that are directly attributable to project actions, though differences remain largely minimal (absolute difference between average number of phase one and potential beneficiaries of phase II, participate in the following actions)

Table-3: Percent of workers engaged in various types of empowerment actions					
Type of actions	Overall	Women	Beneficiary of Phase I	SHG members	Potential beneficiary of Phase II
CBA agent	1	1	2	7	0
Raised Workers' Rights Issue	4	4	5	5	0
Claimed Rights and Entitlements	12	12	11	18	15
RTI Application Process	3	3	4	7	0
Shared Legal information	7	6	8	20	1
Improving working condition	17	18	19	13	8
Leadership in Organising workers	4	4	5	3	0
Plant level TU members	9	6	12	15	0
Assisted in Complaining	5	4	6	5	2
Protected Sexual Harassment	5	6	6	3	2

Among the 10 prospective areas of engagement, noticeable improvements have been seen in TU membership and improving working conditions. Legal information is largely shared with fellow / co-workers by the SHG members while no significant differences were found as to who were more pro-active in claiming rights as rights champions were seemingly present in equal proportions in very possible worker group, with the exception of the proportion for SHG members, which was found to be little higher than others. **Therefore, the project has achieved very little in creating rights champions at the factory level.**

2.2.2 Outcome two

Outcome two of the project endeavors to create an enabling environment to forward recommendations for policy amendment, strengthening oversight mechanisms related to rights and entitlements of workers towards new/existing collective bargaining agreements, and for securing the attention of relevant authorities.

Matrix-2: Fact: Achievements against targets for outcome-2			
SL	Indicator	Target	Achievement
OC2.1	Number of collective bargaining agreements (CBAs)	Four issues identified for collective bargaining agreements by December 2017	25 issues were identified for collective bargaining agreements
OC2.2	Number of policy recommendations on workers' rights issues put forward by the TUs and SHGs to relevant authorities	At least three (3) policy recommendations on workers' rights issues were put forward by the TUs and SHGs by December 2018	5 policy recommendations were identified by TUs and SHGs and sent to the Ministry of Labour and Employment through a written memorandum
OC2.3	Number of workers directly benefiting from improving working conditions	2500 workers directly benefitting from improved working conditions as a result of collective bargaining agreements and subsequent policy	22,820 workers directly benefited from improved working conditions (women 15,821; men 6,999)

Matrix-2: Fact: Achievements against targets for outcome-2			
SL	Indicator	Target	Achievement
	(Gender-disaggregated data)	recommendations by December 2018	
Output against outcome-2			
OP2.1	Networking meeting with TUs, NGOs, Owners and Panel Lawyers in Dhaka and Chattogram	120 participants from TUs, NGOs, Owners and Panel Lawyers attended in 16 meetings	352 participants (104 women, 248 men) from TUs, NGOs, factory Owners and Panel Lawyers attended 15 meetings during the entire project period
OP2.2	Conduct two issue-raising meetings by December 2017 with selected TUs and women's groups to identify and develop effective demand raising strategies with employers and relevant state bodies	70 persons from SHGs and TUs attended two issue raising meetings	A total of 85 (54 women and 31 men) workers attended the 2 different issue raising meeting held in Dhaka and Chattogram in 2017. They raised a number of issues of concern with respect to maternity leave and benefit, workplace safety, protection against sexual harassment, signature on blank papers, overtime count and payment, discrimination in wages and leave
OP2.3	Conduct TWO advocacy meetings with relevant stakeholders by March 2018	80 persons among the relevant stakeholders attended the two advocacy meetings	100 persons (22 women, 78 men) among the relevant stakeholders attended the 2 advocacy meetings
OP2.4	National level workshop on workers' rights issue	60 persons from amongst policy makers, media actors, TUs, SHGs, and business associations attended the national level workshop	100 persons (43 women, 57 men) attended the national level workshop held on 22 November 2018 at the CIRDAP Auditorium, Dhaka focusing on compensation for workplace injuries and deaths
OP2.5	Regular consultation and sharing among BLAST's legal and advocacy teams on legal issues for	8 internal consultation and sharing meetings held with project staff	8 internal sharing meetings held during the project period

Matrix-2: Fact: Achievements against targets for outcome-2			
SL	Indicator	Target	Achievement
	framing reform proposals		

Analysis:

The project has conducted a number of inter-related activities with the stakeholders. This included identifying workers' issues, and making policy recommendations to improve working conditions in their workplace. The project has conducted advocacy meetings and workshops with policy level official. Besides, regular consultation meetings were organised by BLAST Legal Aid team.

Policy recommendation issues

- Compensation for workplace injury/death
- Extension of paid maternity leave from 4 to 6 months
- HC Guidelines to deal with sexual harassment
- Freedom of association
- Inclusion of ADR in the labour court

Table-4: Areas of Change

Area of Changes	Women Respondents	Phase I Beneficiary	Potential Beneficiary
RTI application process	10	10	1
CBA process	8	11	1
Negotiations	17	20	2
Discharge	26	29	3
TU rights	19	23	4
Casual Leave	26	32	6
Termination	35	36	8
Earned leave	31	34	9
Resignation	37	41	10
Minimum wage	47	52	15
Sexual harassment	44	47	15
Compensation	42	42	15
Sick leave	41	43	16
OT rate	45	48	18
OT rules	45	49	20
Festival paid leave	46	47	21
Appointment & ID	51	54	24
Public paid holidays	58	60	26
Maternity leave	69	67	42

During the project period BLAST has framed five policy recommendations and presented them to the Ministry of Labour and Employment. These recommendations were identified through two consultation meetings with the RMG workers and (especially) SHG & TU members and the identified recommendations were fine-tuned through advocacy meeting, Round Table discussion and a national level consultation workshop in November 2018.

Factory owners are now aware of High Court guidelines on sexual harassment at the

workplace, and most of them are supportive to establishing Sexual Harassment Complaint Committees at the factory level.

One of the limitations of the advocacy work is the inadequate participation of factory owners and their apex bodies such as BGMEA, BKMEA in advocacy and networking meetings. Without their active participation and role, any significant change in factory conditions is impossible. There needs to be a balance between pull and push factors in bringing in a sustainable change. Worker awareness can play an important role to this end, but that are not sufficient. Therefore, the project should work actively to bring key stakeholders especially BGMEA, BKMEA and individual factory workers into the advocacy processes. On the other hand, significant individual factory level improvements need to be showcased for sectoral advocacy processes. Participation of factory owners is particularly important for changes to manifest at the factory level.

The outcome of the project advocacy initiatives along with those of ongoing government endeavors to improve legal compliance at the factory level can be noticed in the following matrix which clearly shows a positive legal regime at the participating/ targeted factories.

This table is drawn from the evaluation survey. Potential beneficiary data may be considered as control group (also as baseline for the Phase II), while Phase I data shows the project effect. Significant improvement can be noticed in almost all areas of legal compliance especially in some of the critical compliance areas such as minimum wage, appointments, sexual harassment, leave, and remuneration issues. CBA is a contentious but very critical issue in the RMG sector but no significant change has been noticed. Likewise, RTI potentials could not be explored at the desired level. Phase II of the project should give more focus on these issues in terms providing hands on training on RTI application and follow-ups processes in getting the intended information.

2.2.3 Outcome three

This outcome was to increase capacity of SHG and TU members, in particular women, so that they can raise issues and negotiate with the RMG owners and their Apex bodies and the State apparatus in order to improve workplace conditions.

Matrix-3: Fact: Achievements against targets for outcome-3			
SL	Indicator	Target	Achievement
OC3.1	Number of factories with improved working conditions	15 factories with improved working conditions by December 2018	15 factories with improved working conditions
OC3.2	Number and types of changes made in the factories	Three changes (on the Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy, compensation, maternity leave made in the	25 type of changes were made in 15 factories. Some of the improvement areas are- timely payment of salary, increments on salary, protection from sexual harassment, securing maternity leave and benefit, ID

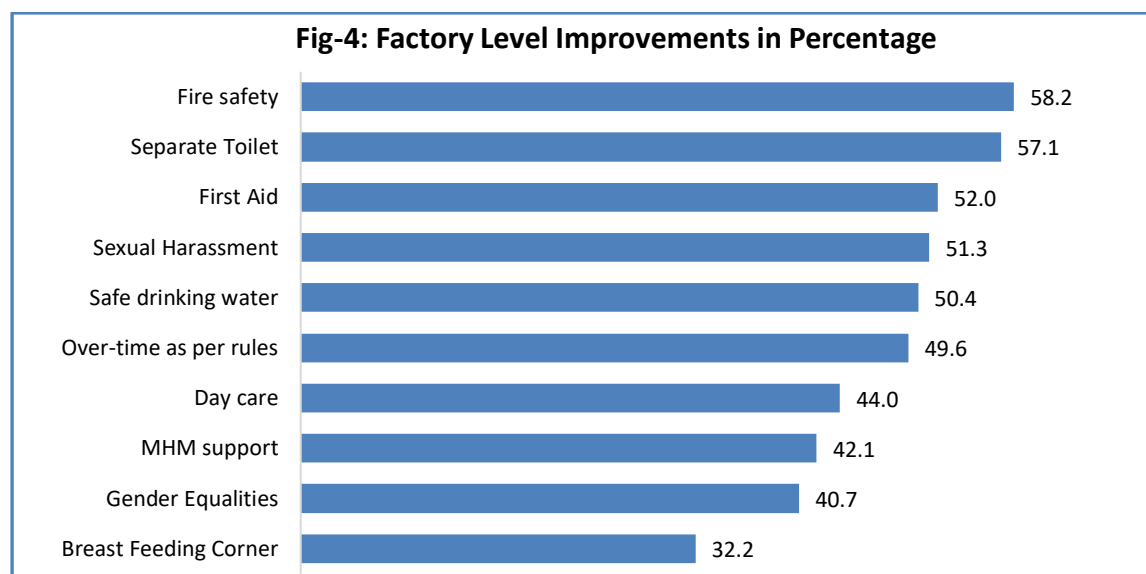
Matrix-3: Fact: Achievements against targets for outcome-3			
SL	Indicator	Target	Achievement
		factories by December 2018	cards and appointment letter for all workers, questioning unlawful termination, increasing tiffin allowance, securing supply of safe drinking water for workers, securing festival allowance and so on.
OC3.3	Number of members from SHGs, TUs and paralegals that are able to deal with issues related to sexual harassment and workers' rights through RTI applications	50 members from SHGs, TUs and paralegals are able to deal with issues related to sexual harassment and workers' rights through RTI	47 members from SHG, TU, paralegals and staff lawyers (24 members of SHGs, 16 members of Trade Unions, 5 paralegal and 2 staff lawyers) received RTI training and they are able to deal with issues related to sexual harassment and workers' rights using RTI applications.
Output against Outcome-3			
OP3.1	Providing training to members of the selected TUs and self-help groups on sexual harassment, negotiation skills and workers' rights	50 persons from SHGs, TUs and amongst paralegals received training on sexual harassment, negotiation skills and workers' rights	50 persons (25 women, 25 men) from SHGs and TUs received training on negotiation and workers' rights including protection of sexual harassment at workplace, right to information act and using the mobile app
OP3.2	Conducting Paralegal Training with selected members of TUs SHGs and paralegals	50 persons from SGHs, TUs and paralegals received paralegal training	73 persons (42women, 31 men) received the paralegal training. Among them 32 members were from SHG, 34 from TUs and 7 from paralegals. The trained SHG members shared their training learnings with their community through the awareness sessions.
OP3.3	Organising Training/Workshop on use of RTI for paralegals, staff lawyers, and members of the selected TUs, and self-help groups	50 persons from staff lawyers, paralegals, SHGs and TUs received training on RTI	47 persons from staff lawyers, paralegals, SHGs and TUs received training on RTI. 24 SHG members, 16 TU members, 5 paralegals and 2 staff lawyers attended the trainings
OP3.4	Training for staff lawyers and panel lawyers on sexual harassment and gender	60 staff and panel lawyers received training on sexual harassment	64 (23 women, 41 men) staff and panel lawyers received training on Sexual Harassment and Gender from 4 training sessions (2 in 1 st year and 2 in 2 nd year) arranged in Dhaka, and Chattogram

Analysis

The project categorically strove to protect workers from sexual harassment and also provided knowledge and skill to enable workers to address or respond to sexual harassment complaints. In 2017, the project provided training to 25 Lawyers **on sexual harassment among other areas.**

The evaluation survey attempted to assess the condition of the garment factories where the respondents work. In fact, the evaluation specifically asked the respondent's for their opinions on the state of garment factories in relation to pre-project condition. This allows to make for a comparison on the effect of the project on working condition at the factory level.

Interestingly, none of the respondents had complained of any deterioration of working conditions. Instead the majority of the respondents had actually acknowledged improvements in repec of key working conditions (mentioned in the chart below) while others had maintained that the situation remained unchanged or as before. The following graph depicts the respondents' opinions on the improved working conditions. According to the workers' opinions, the most significant improvements at the working conditions were in the following areas: separate toilet for male and female, improvements in fire safety systems, installation of First Aid, drinking water and so on.



Although WEARS project does not have any factory level intervention, improvements have

The project set an example of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) at Clifton Group Industries:

One worker lodged a case against the management on an issue of rights and entitlement. Both the factory management and the workers wanted to take the matter to court. But the WEARS project convinced both the parties for a “Shalish (Alternative Dispute Resolution)” to settle the matter outside of court. The resolution that came out through the ADR processes was accepted by both the parties, who then and settled the issue amicably in a win-win resolution. Mr. Mirza Jahangir Alam (HR Manager) said, “we used to harbor very negative attitude towards the labour laws but the ADR process that took place in our factory has changed our views. It helped to make both parties to win. Five workers of Clifton group working as SHG members collectively negotiated their concerns regarding factory working condition and development.

been found at the factory level. This is attributable to project advocacy and networking activities. The project has tried to raise and promote pertinent issues towards improving factory level working conditions. Specific changes have been noticed at 15 factories (5 from Chattogram and 10 from Dhaka) that may specifically be attributed to the project advocacy efforts.

Factory level improvements by themselves are significant. The project made improvements of working condition in targeted 15 factories.

The project facilitated capacity building sessions for 36 factory inspectors from 22 districts. During the orientation, the Inspector General of DIFE had specifically instructed the inspectors to examine the establishment of factory level Safety Committees and Sexual Harassment Complaint Committee during their factory visit/inspection. The event was a milestone for the WEARS project which contributed to changes in the factory environment and working conditions for the workers.

The minimum compensation amount for workplace deaths and injuries was increased during the project period, by amendment of the Labour Act in September 2018. According to the amendment, a worker’s family will receive a minimum of 200,000 BDT as a compensation for work place deaths whereas the previous amount was 100,000 BDT. Similarly, compensation has been increased to 250,000 BDT from the initial minimum amount of 125,000 BDT for injuries that result in permanent disability.

2.2.4 Outcome four

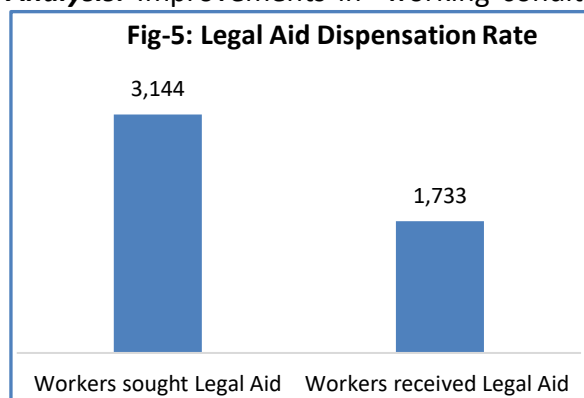
Creating improved access to and enforcement of legal rights and entitlements for workers through the formal and informal justice system in the project area. The working condition at factory level has been found to be improved.

Matrix-4: Achievements against targets for outcome-4			
SL	Indicator	Target	Achievement
OC4.1	Number of workers that have access to justice and legal aid support through	At least 2,000 workers (1800 women and 200 men) have access to justice through legal	3,144 workers (1910 women 1234 men) obtained access to

Matrix-4: Achievements against targets for outcome-4			
SL	Indicator	Target	Achievement
	advice, referral, mediation and litigation (gender disaggregated data)	aid support provided under the project by December 2018	justice through legal aid support provided under the project by December 2018. The achievement is 157% (against target) in terms of workers' coverage.
OC4.2	Percentage increase in complaints regarding RMG sector workers' rights by SHG and TU members.	20% increase in complaints regarding RMG sector workers' rights by SHG and TU members by December 2018	In 2017, 751 complaints/ applications for legal aid were received. The same figure for 2018 is 982 complaints/ applications received regarding RMG sector workers' rights issues i.e., it has increased by 31% by December 2018.
Output against Outcome-4			
OP4.1	Providing legal services – information, advice, referral, and, where required, mediation and litigation to resolve labour disputes	1000 legal advice provided to workers	legal advice provided to 1334 workers (782 women, 552 men), 133% achievement against target
		150 litigations conducted in the Labour Courts	212 litigation cases were conducted for RMG workers (59 women and 153 men) in Labour and other Courts which is 141% of the target
		100 mediation services provided to workers	127 instances (35 women, 92 men) of mediation services provided to workers which is 124% of total target
		50 cases referred to relevant institutions, mostly to women clients	During the entire project, BLAST referred 60 RMG workers (35 women and 25 men) against target

Matrix-4: Achievements against targets for outcome-4			
SL	Indicator	Target	Achievement
		Two Public Interest Litigation (PIL) cases filed/conducted	No PIL case was filed during the project period

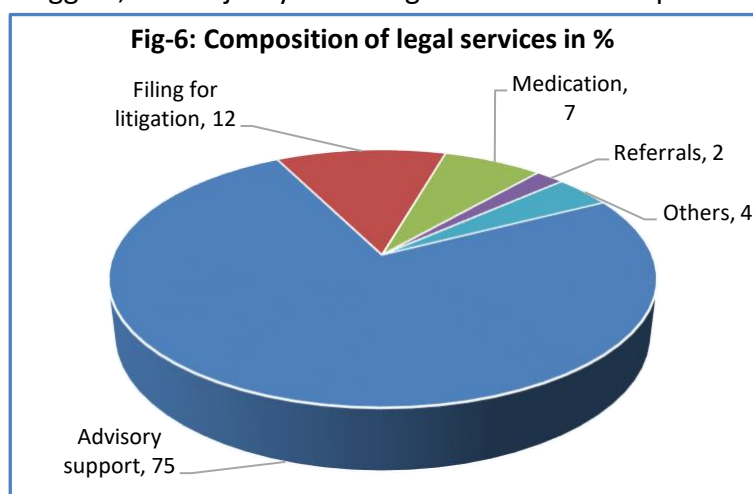
Analysis: Improvements in working conditions have directly impacted 22,820 workers



who are working in these factories, of whom 15,821 are female workers and 6,999 male workers. Still, during phase 1, the project provided legal support and/or created provision to access legal service for 3,144 workers, of whom 60% were female. The project has provided to individuals in 1,733 cases various degrees of legal aid service. In other words, 55% of service

requests related to legal aid support were addressed. By any standard, this is an impressive achievement.

Legal aid services include advisory services, litigation, mediation, referral and other support services. As the figures suggest, the majority of the legal aid services are provided in the form of advice. Workers who have received legal aid services acknowledged the benefits of legal advice. 7% of issues were settled through mediation with the factory management, something both the management and the concerned workers expressed high satisfaction



with for its win-win solution approach. However, 12% of legal aid services were support to litigation in the form of documentation and filing. In 2% of cases support was provided in the form of referral to national level service agencies such as legal aid service and law enforcing agencies.

One of the activities of this outcome was filing public interest litigation. The project could file any such during phase I project period.

INTERNAL GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND SYSTEMS

3.1 Project Management

Organisationally, BLAST follows its vision, mission, objectives and methodology in implementation which are in congruence with each other. It currently runs multiple projects and the organisation is structured by sectors. Staff provision of donor supported projects fits into the ongoing structure of BLAST. The Honorary Executive Director oversees the project from the top while two Deputy Directors (Programme and Advocacy) are involved in day-to-day supervision of the project implementation. At the project level, the Project Manager, under the supervision of the management team, is responsible for overall coordination and running day-to-day implementation and operational matters.

Management and coordination rely on the strategic overview and direction by the senior management (Honorary Executive Director, CLA, Deputy Directors- Programs, M&E and Legal) Information is routinely made available to them through monthly meetings, activity completion reports, sharing meetings and field visit reports. Such meeting creates opportunities for cross learning, monitoring and decision-making.

Financial management of BLAST is done in congruence with the Financial Policy of the organization, and national laws. The accounting records and statements are audited regularly though independent external audit firms that reflects a financial transparency.

3.2 Planning and Monitoring

The WEARS project LFA provides the main basis for planning and monitoring. While the project activities, targets and indicators are mostly provided in clear quantitative and qualitative terms, there remains complexity in establishing linear relations among activity, output and outcome, especially in the form of causality. The concept of KPI is commendable to regularly track project progress overtime.

A balance among these processes is imperative to ensure timely implementation and sound impact. BLAST has systems managed by its Monitoring Cell/Dept. The Cell has some experienced professionals and monitors data collection through FGD and key informants' interviews. Whilst the evaluation team appreciates these efforts, they need further intensity in terms of frequency and coverage to inform project management about the project progress status on a regular basis.

BLAST needs to pay attention to regularly collecting information on result level, which may include both qualitative and quantitative elements. As BLAST's work is less service oriented and more on gender, legal and workers' rights, qualitative information at the result level is key to monitoring and evaluation of the project effectiveness as well as efficiency. The baseline survey database was not available and we were told that the baseline survey firm did not submit the survey database. This could be termed as a lost opportunity- an area in which the project could be better informed in terms of achievement.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Overall Assessment

4.1.1 Introduction

This section analyzes/synthesizes data and information, and draws conclusions of the findings generated from different methods applied in accomplishing the assignment. More specifically, the performance of the WEARS project of Phase I, including achievements vis-à-vis the trends and movements, is critically analyzed here. Then conclusions are made and when necessary, keeping into considerations of, but not limited to:

- Endline Evaluation and Objective
- Achievements with reference to outputs and outcomes
- Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Impact and Sustainability

This section provides an assessment of the project's movement towards achieving outcomes and contribution to the project goal. Over the last two years, BLAST has built a substantive constituency amongst garments workers. Systematic work of the WEARS project over the last two years has enabled it to earn a lot of good will among women workers, TU and SGH members and other key stakeholders in project areas and nationally.

The activities implemented around the outcome were pertinent as the evaluation observed increased understanding among SHG members of and fellow workers' ability to claim rights.

The exploitative situation of women in general, and in particular, women garments workers, and the need for SHG's leadership role, justify strong relevance of the project. Together with awareness raising tools and techniques and the launching of a workers' friendly mobile app, the project itself had a distinctive program-approach to empowering women through different strategies but under one broad and general objective.

Capacitating workers and policy advocacy activities, on the other hand, helped project management in collective bargaining agreements between workers and factory owners. The project has identified and promoted some 25 issues on worker's rights and many of them have been successful to improve working conditions and sensitize policy makers and sectoral stakeholders.

Preparing lawyers to deal with sexual and gender sensitive issues, another strategic initiative, proved to be instrumental in providing knowledge and skills to enable workers in protecting from sexual harassment in factories.

Based on the findings of various methods, observations and formal and informal discussions with the stakeholders, the evaluation made conclusions, in some cases, added value judgments on the project strategies and action plans. It should be mentioned however, that the judgments and conclusions made, have been the result of participatory processes where project staff as well as stakeholders were actively involved.

4.1.2 Relevance

The extent to which a development intervention conforms to the needs and priorities of the target groups and how urgent the interventions are, from the point of view of the target group, are related to 'relevance'. The endline evaluation has found that the project activities are highly relevant to increasing the knowledge and understanding of the RMG workers on their rights and entitlements; improving workplace and working conditions of the workers;

and creating a provision of much needed legal aid support for the victim workers. The other relevant issues are -

- The project was implemented in RMG concentrated areas (Dhaka and Chattogram) in Bangladesh.
- Establishing professional relationship with DIFE and management
- Community based approach, this is due to unwritten restriction of factory owners to allow NGOs and external agencies to interact with workers
- Inclusion of local trade union leaders in program implementation.
- Special emphasis is increasingly given to women workers; women are now encouraged to shoulder leadership and other responsibilities in organizing workers and CBA activities

4.1.3 Efficiency

Efficiency is related to the extent to which the costs of interventions can be justified by their results, taking alternatives into account. Efficiency also is defined as optimal resource use vis-à-vis outputs of the project. It has been found by the evaluation team that the WEARS management has requisite experience and capacity to execute the project activities at the community level. Most of the paralegal staff were found efficient except one paralegal staff who has just joined the team in Chattogram area. The BLAST management has developed capacity of the project staff and beneficiaries through imparting regular training, knowledge, information and opportunities for skill development. The evaluation team has experienced that the level of commitment of the staff and project ownership of the project participants/beneficiaries are remarkable.

The project has used financial resource prudently – the ratio of resource allocation for programme compared to management expenses is over 75%.

4.1.4 Effectiveness

Effectiveness relates to the extent to which development interventions have achieved their objectives. The evaluation team has witnessed the progresses in development projects in bringing about changes that influenced the working conditions of the workers. Most activities have been implemented in line with the project document. The following is a review of these reports and actual observation that elucidate the effectiveness of the project components. With very few exceptions, SHG members are selected based on pre-set selection criteria.

- SHG members have started to transfer their knowledge to fellow workers in the community. With few exceptions such as drop-out and stringent employment conditions of SHG members, 60% of women SHG members are now self-sufficient with respect to the provision of legal information and knowledge on legal rights and remedies.
- A total of 1,775 (against target of 500) workers have been able to raise their issues and claim their entitlements.
- A total of 41 members were at the forefront to lead efforts towards improving working conditions.
- Four collective bargaining agreements were made while 25 issues were identified
- At least three policy recommendations were made and those are being pursued at the appropriate levels
- A total of 3,208 workers had opportunity to avail legal aid support
- The mobile app is being popularized, though downloads were not as high as expected at the beginning.

The project is now in its second phase where SHG members are transferring their knowledge as well as roles to other co-workers, improving working conditions in general, and in particular, protecting sexual harassment of women workers. Thus the multiplier effect of the project is beginning to take effect and will extend its reach to several times as many workers. Women workers are now building their confidence and increasing their capacities to bargain and raise their voice.

4.1.5 Impact

Impact considers the intended and unintended effects of the intervention on people, institutions and the physical environment. On the basis of these factors, it is found that the workers are now more engaged with different committees such as safety and sexual harassment protection committee, and are more knowledgeable on the issues affecting their lives and working conditions. Major impacts and changes have been observed as follows:

- Beneficiary workers in general, and women workers, in particular, were initially very skeptical and unaware about their rights and entitlements; however, they can now easily talk to/communicate with owners and management articulately, something that was nearly inconceivable a few years ago.
- Workers have started claiming and establishing rights such as maternity benefits, paid leave, protection from sexual harassment. They can now lodge complaints if rights are violated, which was impossible before.
- Women workers are taking the lead in CBA agreements. Such capacity strengthening has also increased their participation in decision-making both at the group level and in the family .
- SHG members can now facilitate training sessions, protect fellow workers from sexual harassment, and bargain with management referring to, and showing results from labour laws clauses in their smartphones using the SJ app.

The above-listed impacts and changes in the lives of the workers and their working conditions at the factory level have started taking place as expected in the project design.

4.1.6 Sustainability

The WEARS project places a strong emphasis on ‘sustainability i.e. continuation of the activities under the project without any significant external support. In short, the prime aim of the WEARS is to empower women in particular and workers in general, so that they can eventually perform the function of SHGs and facilitate workers’ empowerment process. In that, when WEARS/BLAST will withdraw, the SHGs will take over. With limited external support, the SHGs are expected to function.

Sustainability is also a complex and intricate issue and involves critical analysis. It appears that WEARS is advancing forward towards improving worker – owner relations through the signing of CBAs and forming and strengthening SHGs, particularly in terms of institutional mandate and capacity to transfer and replicate knowledge.

As part of the project intervention approach that espouses ‘total sustainability’ at the community-level, these types of ‘qualitative’ changes need to be prioritized, all the way from designing, through implementing development interventions, so that in the end, it would be worthwhile to develop an exit plan. The team has experienced that the SHG members are still not meeting one another, apart from during project events. More time is needed to prepare SHG members to unite and take further steps to form their “own institution”. The team put forward the following factors to consider.

- SHG does not have any portfolio, and there should be provision for periodical meetings based on a plan of action.
- The project has no provision for a refreshers' training. Capacity building of SH groups through training is important for sustainability, and therefore, the review team recommended providing refreshers training particularly on leadership, CBAs and organising workers at a greater frequency. However, while designing such courses the project may reassess the needs of the RMG workers.

4.2 Overall Recommendations

The Evaluation team finds that BLAST is an appropriate legal aid and service organization that strives to make much needed legal-aid accessible to the RMG workers. The good work of the WEARS project should not only continue, but be scaled further to empower poor women workers in particular, with access to legal aid services, and also RMG workers in general. While the Evaluation team appreciates the quality and good work of WEARS project and vouches for its continuation and scale-up, it does not want to miss out the opportunity to delineate areas that BLAST can work on and increase its coverage, intensity, and impact. The following section provides a number of overall and specific recommendations.

BLAST needs incremental support from the respective donors' communities and may cut back gradually, allowing for the phase-out and long-term organizational plan to be implemented.

SGH members are instrumental, and potentially, the main vehicle and for realizing the project goals. The evaluation team observed that there is a lack of interaction among the SHG members (evidence) in terms of their understanding, capacities, and coordination. We, would recommend therefore, that -

- SHG s should develop a functional structure – they should have a portfolio and a plurality of roles among them, instead of a homogeneous one. SHG should have an institutional structure so that SHG remains even after C&A withdraws support.
- SHGs should have a monthly/quarterly plan of action around the project activities, and such a plan should be adaptive in nature, so that emerging issues can be incorporated. Besides, they must meet once a fortnight and at a later stage, once in a month for at least an hour or so. The agenda of such a meeting could be - review of the implementation status of planned activities or for sharing, emerging workers' and pertinent issues. Initially, paralegal workers can facilitate the meeting and then gradually SGH members themselves will organize and conduct the meetings.
- The provision of capacity building for the SHG members looks limited. It remains one-shot with no provision for follow-up and/or refreshers courses. Moreover, the attrition rate among the SHG members is also high, and as a result, a good number of SHG members could not be engaged in capacity building interventions. Some of the important training that needs to be included in the capacity building interventions are organisation management, gender and equity.
- The introduction of a Mobile App was considered as an innovative, digital solution to access information for the workers. We would recommend that a team from the developers' team learn the needs of, and discuss directly with, the workers. Furthermore, we suggest that a communications strategy can be developed to disseminate info about the mobile app more widely. This can include using social media; adding info to TV scrolling; radio shows; SMS marketing; circulating leaflets; putting stickers on transport used by workers, providing posters in the work place and working in community.

The project conducted a number of advocacies (such as round-table and workshops) to the labour court for recognizing ADR in order to prompt amicable solutions to disputes between workers and owners. To this end, the project brought the attention of policy level people of Ministry of Law through its advocacy events. The evaluation team recommends that such efforts should continue.

Awareness session on rights and entitlements issues is of single shot, and is not enough for an individual to fully learn about their rights and remedies. Multiple sessions are needed with the same groups of workers.