

Orientation Meeting held on Green Social Dialogue by Trade Unions in RMG Industry



Governments and employers have already begun to take steps to address the effects of climate change, but there is no room for lagging behind in effectively including workers and their legislative representative trade unions in the process. Rather, it is necessary to immediately include the trade union in the policy making and policy implementation to deal with the damage as per the commitment given by the Bangladesh government at the international level to ensure social dialogue and sustainable development through the tripartite mechanism. The speakers said this at the opening ceremony of a programme titled “Green Social Dialogue of Trade Unions in the Garment Industry of Bangladesh” organized by the initiative of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS in cooperation with German-based organization GIZ, at a local hotel in the capital today, 17 September 2023. The main objective of this program under implementation in the Gazipur-Tongi area is to empower women and youth trade union workers to raise awareness of environmental and social standards of

garment workers beyond workplace, so that they can play a leading role in raising awareness about climate change in the local community. Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Labour and Employment Md. Mujibul Haque, MP, was present as the chief guest in this event organized under the chairmanship of BILS Vice Chairman Md. Mojibur Rahman Bhuiyan. The event was attended by climate experts, researchers and media representatives, including leaders from SKOP and National Trade Union Federations.

Underscoring recent research data, if the temperature in Bangladesh rises by 1.5 degrees Celsius, the number of workers in the labour supply chain will decrease by 16 percent in the next decade, the speakers said; research-based data should be generated for the victims and presented immediately at the policy-making level. Speakers insisted on a one per cent climate levy from the garment industry, saying the money could be used to create a climate resilience fund that would benefit workers.



Also, by emphasizing on productivity risk insurance, the speakers demanded to include the issue of environmental protection in the next election manifesto. Urging the trade union to be united in the establishment of green dialogue, the speakers said that all the dialogues that are being held at the international level on carbon emissions should be implemented effectively. The speakers said that the programme can play a vital role in bringing the issues related to the environmental and social rights of workers to the political priority agenda and increasing the capacity of trade unions in developing leadership in this field.

BILS Executive Council Secretary Abul Kalam Azad and Sakil Akhtar Chowdhury, President of Jatiya Sramik Federation Kamrul Ahsan, General Secretary of Bangladesh Jatiya Sramik Jote Badal Khan, Joint Coordinator of Garment Workers Employers Unity Council (G-SKOP) Naimul Ahsan Jewel and Md Nurul Amin, General Secretary of Industrial Bangladesh Council Kutubuddin Ahmed, General Secretary of Bangladesh Free Trade Union Congress Pulak Ranjan Dhar, President of Bangladesh Jatiya Sramik Federation Shamim Ara, General Secretary of Bangladesh Sramik Federation AAM Faiz Hossain, General Secretary of Samajtantrik Sramik Front Ahsan Habib Bulbul, Jatiya Sramik League Secretary of

trade union coordination Feroz Hossain, BILS Director Nazma Yesmin and Project Coordinator Md Yousuf Al Mamun, GIZ Senior Advisor Sarwat Ahmed and Advisor Stephen Siegle, International Climate Finance Expert M Zakir Hossain Khan, Islamic Foundation Deputy Director Anwar Kabir, Gazipur Journalist Union President Ataur Rahman spoke at the event among others.

Publication of Research Report on the Rights of Women Tea Workers

Analyzing the rights situation of tea workers in Bangladesh, it has been found that overall the actual labour rights situation is unsatisfactory compared to existing legal standards for tea workers, employment opportunities in tea plantations are very limited and jobs are not secured, 95 percent of tea workers work as permanent and five percent as temporary workers, 97 percent women workers have no



appointment card, 87 percent workers have no identity card, 10 percent women workers do not know what is identity card, 100 percent workers said they have no service book in tea plantation, 49 percent workers said they do 1 to 2 hours overtime for income. Bangladesh Institute of Labour

Studies-BILS has announced the results of the study titled 'Rights of Women Workers engaged in the Tea sector and their existing situation of Decent Work' in an event organized on September 12, 2023 at the Dhaka Reporters Unity in the capital. This research was recently completed under the project named "Empowering Women Workers at Tea Industry in Bangladesh" conducted by BILS with the support of OXFAM in Bangladesh aiming to improve the quality of life of the Tea Workers group, implementing Decent Wages in tea plantations and improving the skills of Tea Workers. The purpose of the research was to identify the overall rights situation of women Tea Workers in Bangladesh, analyze the working conditions and socio-economic status of women workers in tea plantations, assess the knowledge and skills of union leaders of valley and panchayat committees and consult national level leaders about the status of women tea plantation workers.

BILS Vice Chairman Md. Mojibur Rahman Bhuiyan presided over the programme and BILS Advisory Council Member Naimul Ahsan Jewel spoke among trade union leaders. BILS Director Kohinoor Mahmood delivered the opening speech and Shahajadi Begum, Feminist Leadership and Partnership Specialist of OXFAM in Bangladesh, delivered the welcome speech. Shahazadi Begum Deputy Director Monirul Islam presented the research report.

Speakers said that where more than 50 percent of the workers are women, there is no sexual harassment prevention committee for women workers. The issue of land rights for tea plantation workers is also not clear. The government has given tea garden land to grow tea but it has been

found that other crops are also grown there. Apart from this, no proper initiative to send the children of tea workers to school can be noticed. Journalists from various media were present at the event.

Seminar on BILS Research to Analyze Effectiveness



Analyzing the activities of the committee to prevent sexual harassment in garment factories and making recommendations to improve the activities, presenting the results of the research conducted by Bills on behalf of Gender Platform Bangladesh with the aim of taking up future advocacy activities with all concerned parties, a seminar for the purpose of making recommendations was held on September 11, 2023, at a local hotel in Topkhana of the capital. Senior officials of various government ministries, business leaders, trade unions and leaders of Gender Platform Bangladesh were present at the seminar.

Research has shown that most factories do not have a specific number of members of the sexual harassment prevention committee. The choice of members to be included in the committee is generally the preference of the owners. Apart from this, there is no standard operating system for managing this committee.



However, various programmes have been taken up by the committee on its' own initiative in some factories. The main recommendations that came out in the research report were to create standard operating system for the management of the committee, repeal the controversial parts of the labour rules, provide proper training for the committee members and specify the number of committee members.

Shamsunnahar Bhuiyan, MP, Member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Labour and Employment, was the chief guest at the report presentation programme organized under the chairmanship of BILS Advisory Council Member Shah Mohd Abu Zafar. Md Taufiqul Arif, Additional Secretary of Ministry of Labour and Employment and Advocate Salma Ali, President of Bangladesh Women Lawyers Association spoke as special guests. Among others, BILS Vice Chairman Amirul Haque Amin, G-SKOP Joint Coordinator Naimul Ahsan Jewel, Bangladesh Employers Federation Vice President Tahmid Ahmed and Senior Legal Officer Habibur Rahman, BKMEA Joint Secretary Farzana Sharmin, BGMEA Senior Assistant Secretary Navila Al Mona, National Human Rights Commission Bangladesh Deputy Director Sushmita Paik, ILO Gender

Specialist Shammin Sultana, Bangladesh Labour Foundation Executive Director AKM Ashrafuddin, Awaz Foundation Executive Director Najma Akhtar, Bangladesh National Workers Federation President Shamim Ara, Labour Rights Journalists Forum General Secretary Ataur Rahman including trade unions civil society leaders and media representatives also spoke. Jagannath University Associate Professor Mostafiz Ahmed presented the research report and the programme was conducted by BILS Director Nazma Yesmin.

A networking meeting was held with youth and women trade union leaders of Gazipur and Tongi at Bandhan Community Center in Tongi on October 5, 2023 under the initiative of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS and in cooperation with GIZ.

Networking meeting of the Green Social Dialogue Development

Shamsunnahar Bhuiyan MP, Member of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Labour and Employment spoke



as the chief guest in this event organized under the chairmanship of Sramik-



Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) Joint Coordinator Md. Nurul Amin. BILS Director Nazma Yesmin delivered welcome speech on the occasion. BILS Project Coordinator

and Deputy Director Md Yousuf Al Mamun presented the project introduction in power point. Among others, President of Gazipur Journalists' Union – Aatur Rahman, President of Tongi Press Club Sheikh Muhammad Shahidullah, General Secretary of Gazipur Journalists' Union – MA Salam Shanto, former General Secretary of Gazipur Press Club – Md. Moniruzzaman and youth and women's trade union leaders from various areas spoke.

In her speech, the chief guest said that by developing the capacity of garment workers in setting social and environmental standards, they should develop their leadership in this regard so that they can make the people of the society aware of it. At the same time, she pointed out that the national level trade unions also have the responsibility to raise the issue of social and environmental standards of workers at the policy-making level. In the event, the initiative was taken to form a network in Gazipur and Tongi and work as a team in three groups among all those present in the initial action plan.

Rally and procession on World Decent Work Day

Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS in collaboration with GIZ organized a labour Shamsunnahar Bhuiyan MP, Member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Labour and Employment spoke as the chief guest. Local councilor Rakhi Sarkar spoke as special guest. Apart from this, Gazipur Journalist Union President Aatur Rahman, BILS Director Nazma Yesmin, Deputy Director and Project Coordinator Yousuf Al-Mamun and local trade union leaders belonging to SKOP and G-SKOP also spoke. Local leaders, journalists and BILS officials were present in the event.

The chief guest mentioned in her speech that awareness should be strengthened at the national level as well as at the grass root level to deal with the crisis of climate change. She said that it is the responsibility



of every person to keep the environment clean and tidy. From industrial factories to residential waste, all the mismanagement that is generated needs to be tackled in an integrated manner. In this regard, she emphasized that the trade union should take a leading role in creating awareness among the local people. She said that it is not possible for the government alone to



deal with this crisis unless there is a change in people's mentality and awareness. She stressed the importance of making each person aware as well as making others aware of the crisis of environment and climate change. The workers' rally went round various important places in the city.

Consultation Meeting to Advocate Fishing Sector Workers' Rights

Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS organised a series of consultation meeting was held on advocating fishing sector workers' rights with National Trade Union Center (NTUC) leadership in July and August 2023.

Consultation Meeting- 1: (July 6, 2023)

A half-day consultation meeting was organized by BILS on Forming a National Forum to Advocate Fishing Sector Workers' Rights by the support of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) on July 6, 2023, at Asia Hotel and Resorts, Topkhana Road, Dhaka. Shah Muhammad Abu Zafar, President,



Open Discussion and Experience Sharing about Fishing Sector

Bangladesh Labour Federation, presided over the event, and Naimul Ahsan Jewel, General Secretary, Bangladesh Jatiyo Sramik Jote, acted as a moderator. Leadership from Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) and BILS associated national trade union federations joined the consultation meeting.

In the opening session, Nazma Yesmin, Director of BILS thanked leaders from SKOP and BILS associated national trade union federations on behalf of BILS-FES cooperation for participating and shared the objectives of the meeting. The Chair gave a welcome speech and inaugurated the event. Amirul Haque Amin, Vice Chairman of BILS, and Abdul Kader Howlader, Joint Coordinator of SKOP, delivered brief remarks and emphasized the urgency of such a forum or network to work for fishing sector workers' rights. Director of BILS then presented context of fishing sector & BILS-FES initiatives to provide an overview of labour rights issues in the fishing sector in order to spark discussion. She presented on the conditions of workers' rights, status of unions, national and international legal and policy frameworks pertinent to the fishing sector in Bangladesh.



Following the first segment, the leadership of the trade unions participated in an open discussion and experience sharing session on the issues that are currently affecting the fishing sector. Leaders of Trade Union Federations affiliated with SKOP and BILS, including Abdul Kader Hawladar, Chowdhury Ashiqul Alam, Mesbah Uddin Ahmed, Saifuzzaman Badsha, Shamim Ara, Quamrul Ahsan, Ahsan Habib Bulbul, Badol Khan, Nurul Amin, Md. Alauddin Mia, Md. Shahidullah Badal discussed the rights situation of the fishing sector workers and the challenges they usually experiences. Abdul Kader Hawladar, Joint Coordinator, SKOP expressed that defining and including all workers in the labour law is one of the major challenges since there are many categories of workers in this sector. Workers in the processing industry, for instance, perform their jobs in hazardous conditions and are frequently disregarded. Ahsan Habib Bulbul, General Secretary, Samajtantrik Sramik Front, also expressed similar concerns and mentioned the incomplete database and problems with distribution during the off-season. He recommended that before taking different initiatives, the first task must be bringing the workers into the existing system. Saifuzzaman Badsha, President, Jatiya Sramik Jote Bangladesh, brought up the challenges experienced by trade unions in this sector. The Unions' capacity must be

enhanced to successfully work for the rights of the fishing workers. The General Secretary of Jatiya Sramik Jote, Nurul Amin, spoke about his experiences with *Dadon* and asserted that it is imperative that workers be liberated from such a custom. He also shared his experience in Barguna district, where the marginalization of fishing workers is common.

The discussants also brought up the issues of overfishing, loss of species and natural resources, and environmental degradation. In their opinion, there is no scope to separate these challenges from the rights of the fishing workers and both should be handled with equal significance.

In the open discussion, all leaders acknowledged the significance of such a platform and unanimously agreed to form a forum to advocate for fishing sector



worker's rights. Shakil Akhter Chowdhury, General Secretary, Bangladesh Labour Federation recorded the recommendations discussed in the consultation meeting and shared among the participants.

The recommendations are following-

1. Selected suitable representatives from each federation (SKOP and BILS associated NTUCs) should/will be the member of the forum.
2. A convener and two joint coordinators from the representatives will be elected.



3. After forming a forum, a Terms of Reference (ToR) must be developed on the basis of what future initiatives will be taken.
4. An initiative need to be taken to formulate a policy to protect workers' rights in this sector.
5. A concrete work plan should be developed with specific objectives for relevant stakeholders who will take necessary initiatives to implement them.
6. The forum shall meet and create an outline of the activity plan.
7. Arrange meetings with the stakeholders from fisheries sector to engage them with this initiative.
8. The forum should form district-level/regional committees.
9. Collaborate with relevant ministries and departments to protect the rights of fishing sector workers.
10. Create awareness at all levels, especially among those affiliated with the fishing sector.
11. Movement to set National Minimum Wage

12. Ensure financial protection for the fishing workers to liberate them from Dadon.

13. Advocate for and support in creating a complete database of the workers.

The discussants decided to nominate representatives from each federation to be members of the forum. In the next meeting, the structure of the forum will be finalized.

Consultation Meeting- 2: (July 13, 2023)

BILS organized a half-day consultation meeting on the Formation a National Forum to Advocate Fishing Sector Workers' Rights on July 13, 2023, at BILS Seminar Hall, Dhanmondi, Dhaka. Shah Muhammad Abu Zafar, President, Bangladesh Labour Federation, presided over the event, and Naimul Ahsan Jewel, General Secretary, Bangladesh Jatiyo Sramik Jote, acted as the moderator. Leadership from Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) and BILS Associated National Trade Union Federations joined the consultation meeting.



Following the presentation, the leadership of the trade unions participated in an open discussion to finalize the structure of the forum and the outline of the constitution. Leaders of Trade Union Federations affiliated with SKOP and BILS, including S M Zakir Hossain, Shamim Ara, Ahsan Habib Bulbul, Badol Khan, Nurul Amin,

Shakil Akhter Chowdhury, and AAM Foyez



Hossain participated in the discussion. They formed a central committee with a Convener and Two Joint Coordinators and a Committee for constitution development with a Convener and two members. The discussants revised the draft of the constitution that BILS had presented and decided on the forum's next steps. The major decisions of the meeting -

1. The Forum will have fourteen members: twelve are from SKOP and two are from BILS-associated National Trade Union Federations.
2. The Forum would have a Convener and two Joint coordinators. Two of the members of the central committee will be from SKOP and one from BILS associated National Trade Union Federations. Others will be general members.
3. The Constitution Development Committee would meet to draft the constitution and distribute it to all members for review.
4. Another meeting is proposed on August 6, 2023 where the constitution will be finalized in presence of all members and an action plan will be formulated. The central committee will finalize the schedule of the event.



5. BILS will serve as the secretariat and facilitate the development of the constitution by coordinating meetings, follow-up, and monitoring. FES will provide support to organize the events.

Consultation Meeting- 3: (August 27, 2023)

Another half-day consultation meeting on Forming a National Forum to Advocate Fishing Sector Workers' Rights organized by BILS was held on August 27, 2023, at BILS Seminar Hall, Dhanmondi, Dhaka. The meeting was proposed by the forum on July 13, 2023 to finalize the constitution. The event was chaired by Naimul Ahsan Jewel, General Secretary, Bangladesh Jatiyo Sramik Jote and moderated by Shakil Akter Chowdhury, General Secretary, Bangladesh Labour Federation. Leadership from Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) and BILS Associated National Trade Union Federations joined the consultation meeting. Two consecutive meetings were held on the event day- The constitution development sub-committee meeting and Forum meeting. In the sub-committee meeting, Shakil Akter Chowdhury, General Secretary, Bangladesh Labour Federation, Ahsan Habib Bulbul, General Secretary,

Socialist Labour Front, and Badal Khan, General Secretary, Bangladesh Jatiya Sramik Jote discussed about the possible changes in the constitution. Pulak Ranjan

Dhar, Secretary, Bangladesh Free Trade Union Congress, also joined the sub-



committee meeting and took part in the discussion. The outcome of the sub-committee meeting was summarized by Ahsan Habib Bulbul. Following the presentation, the leadership of the trade unions participated in an open discussion to modify the structure of the forum and content of the finalized version of the constitution by the sub-committee. The major decisions of the meeting -

1. The forum will be consisted of Fourteen SKOP and BILS-affiliated Trade Union Federations.
2. Fourteen nominated members from the Trade Union Federations will act as the main executive committee. The convener and joint conveners decided in the previous meeting will steer the committee.
3. The forum would have an Advisory committee of 7 members. Each Federation will nominate a representative. The main executive committee will select the members in forum's next meeting. One member will be selected as the convener of the committee.
4. Any entity keen to be a general member of the forum has to make an application to the convener of the forum. They will be provided membership if deems eligible.

5. The forum executive committee will create sub-committees to execute the activities.

After the finalization of the forum constitution, the members discussed the planned activities. Finally, Naimul Ahsan Jewel said a few words on behalf of the new committee and wished the success of the forum.

Training with the Valley Level Union Leadership

The Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS organised a series of training programs for national and valley-level trade union leadership on collective bargaining and negotiation in July, August, and September 2023.

Training- 1: (July 25, 2023)

BILS has been implementing project interventions since 2014 on labour issues in Tea Sector with the support of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES). As part of the BILS-



FES cooperation and the project titled "Accelerate TU Role to Strengthen

Institutional Mechanism to Ensure Workers' Rights in Bangladesh", BILS organized a day-long training with the Valley level Union



Leadership on Collective Bargaining & Negotiation on July 25, 2023, at Fatickchory Valley office, Fatickchory, Chattogram. The event was presided over by Niranjana Nath, President of the Chattogram Valley Committee, and facilitated by Pahari Bhattacharjee, Senior Officer of the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies. Jatan Karmaker, General Secretary of the Chattogram Valley Committee, also made a significant contribution to the event. Union representatives from the Gardens under Chattogram Valley joined the training.

The objective of the training was to capacitate valley-level leaders for their effective participation in the collective bargaining process and their active role in the effective implementation of Labour Law.

The participants actively participated in group work, role playing exercises, question and answer, and feedback and evaluation sessions.

Pahari Bhattacharjee began the workshop by outlining the history of the tea sector workers and their contribution to the economy.

The workshop covered in detail the trade union rights profile of tea workers, social security benefits status, latest wage rates,

existing working environment, occupational health and safety of workers, etc. He also discussed with the participants the existing laws and rules relevant to the rights of the workers, and the participants also brought up specific questions on the problems they encountered.

Training- 2: (August 7, 2023)

BILS organized a day-long training with the Valley-level Union Leadership on Collective Bargaining and Negotiation with the support of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) on August 7, 2023, at Phulbari Tea Garden, Kamalganj, Moulvi Bazar, Sylhet. The event was presided over by Dhana Bauri, President of the Manu Dalai Valley Committee, and facilitated by Shakil Akter Chowdhury, Secretary of the BILS Executive Committee. Rambhajan Koiri, Executive Advisor of the Bangladesh Tea Worker's Union, enriched the event with his presence and different activities. Union representatives from the Gardens under Manu Dalai Valley joined the training.

Four sessions made up the day-long training workshop: 1. Contemporary issues and the Union; 2. Negotiation and Collective Bargaining; 3. Workers' issues



and laws to mitigate them; and 4. Collective Bargaining and Negotiation Exercise to Improve Labour Rights Conditions for Tea

Garden Workers. The facilitator employed different techniques to engage the participants throughout the program. The participants actively participated in group work, role playing exercises, question and



answer, and feedback and evaluation sessions. Shakil Akter Chowdhury began the workshop by discussing the Tea Sector Workers' contribution to the economy and the current labour rights conditions. The workshop covered in detail the trade union rights profile of tea workers, social security benefits status, latest wage rates, existing working environment, occupational health and safety of workers, etc. He also discussed with the participants the existing laws and rules relevant to the rights of the workers, and the participants also brought up specific questions on the problems they encountered.

Training- 3: (August 8, 2023)

BILS organized a day-long training with the Valley level Union Leadership on Collective Bargaining & Negotiation on August 08, 2023, at Varaura Tea Garden, Sreemangal, Moulvi Bazar, Sylhet. The event was presided over by Bijoy Hazra, President of the Balishira Valley Committee, and facilitated by Shakil Akter Chowdhury, Secretary of BILS Executive Committee. Pankaj Kand, Vice President of the Bangladesh Tea Worker's Union, enriched the event with his presence and various activities. Union representatives from the Gardens under Balishira Valley joined the training.

The objective of the workshop was to capacitate valley-level leadership for their effective participation in the collective bargaining process and play an active role in the effective implementation of labor law. The daylong training workshop was divided into four sessions: 1. Contemporary issues and Unions; 2. Negotiation and Collective Bargaining; 3. Workers' issues and laws to mitigate them; and 4. Collective Bargaining and Negotiation exercises to improve the labour rights conditions of Tea Garden Workers. Throughout the workshop, the





facilitator employed various activities to engage the participants. The participants actively participated in group work, role playing exercises, question and answer, and feedback and evaluation sessions. Shakil Akter Chowdhury began the workshop by discussing the Tea Sector Workers' contribution to the economy and the current labour rights conditions. The workshop covered in detail the trade union rights profile of tea workers, social security benefits status, latest wage rates, existing working environment, occupational health and safety of workers, etc. He also discussed with the participants the existing laws and rules relevant to the rights of the workers, and the participants also brought up specific questions on the problems they encountered.

In the group activity the workers identified issues including- Decent Wages, Housing, Healthcare, Maternity Leave, Overtime, Clean Water and Sanitation, Electricity, and Compensation. They prioritized the issues to be negotiated through discussion and prepared arguments for a mock meeting. The participants

identified gaps regarding etiquette and methods in the negotiation process.

Finally, the Vice President of the Bangladesh Tea Workers' Union, who has been directly involved in the negotiation process, gave the participants some insightful advice and shared some of his invaluable experiences with them. Then the president of the Balishira Valley Committee kept his concluding remark. He had proposed that the BILS and FES update the prior publication on Tea Garden Worker's Rights with the most recent information and redistribute it. He hoped that BILS and FES would continue their interventions because they are crucial to preparing the next generation of leaders to defend the rights of the working class.

Workshop with the National TU Federation Leadership

A workshop with National Trade Union Federation leadership was held on 21 September 2023 in Asia Hotel & Resort aiming to develop a trade union position paper regarding the promoting and improving the rights and decent work of the women workers in the tea garden sector in Bangladesh. Md. Habibur Rahman Siraj, Chairman, BILS presided over the program while Abul Kalam Azad, Secretary, BILS





moderated. The senior leadership of each national federation of BILS associates, women leadership of the BILS executive committee, and cha Shramik union leadership were present in the workshop. At the beginning of the program, the chair welcomed participants and mentioned that you will be developing a trade union position paper and hopefully in the near future national trade union organizations raising their voices to ensure the rights and decent work of the women tea garden workers on the base of the developed position paper. He requested leadership in advance for their hard work and devotion during the development of the position paper. After that, the moderator explained the need for the TU position paper for the rights and decent work of the women tea garden workers in Bangladesh. Afterward, Monirul Kobir, Project coordinator of the EWCSA project presented a short presentation on the status of rights and decent work of the women tea garden workers in Bangladesh. Besides, also presented the objectives of the Trade union position of the presentation. After the presentation, Jesmin Akhter, Vice President of Bangladesh Cha Shramik Union, and Sanjoy Goswami, Organizer Secretary of Bangladesh Cha Shramik Union, and General Secretary of Longla Valley Committee expressed their comments and opinions on the presentation. They said that tea garden workers especially women tea garden workers are the most deprived and vulnerable rather than the presented description. We are a different community and we cannot adapt to others, they mentioned. The Cha Shramik union

leadership expects the national trade union leadership support to establish their rights and entitlement. Then, Aurongajeb Akond, Assistant Professor, criminology and police science department, Moulana Vashani University describes the objectives and modalities of his session. He divided the participants into 4 groups and provided 4 activity sheets. The leadership did the group exercise on the following topics-

Group 1: Recruitment and Service conditions, Job security, capacity building and promotion, government supervision & monitoring

Group 2: Occupational health & safety, leave, rest & recreation, harassment & exploitation

Group 3: Trade union, social dialogue, women leadership development

Group 4: wage and social protestation

After the group exercise, the moderator said, hoped the developed actions by the group exercise would enhance to promotion and establish rights and decent work of the women workers. The moderator mentioned that after furnishing the draft position paper by the resource person on the basis of the



group work, the leadership will sit again for the finalization. Then, the chair said, our leadership did lots of good work and I am sure the suggestions and proposed actions could support our women tea garden workers to enhance their capacity, knowledge, rights, and decent work conditions. The chair gave thanks to the leadership, BILS colleagues, cha shrank union leadership, and resource person for their presence and hard work and closed the program.

Orientation meeting with the Local Area Stakeholders

The Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS organised a series of consultation meeting with the local area stakeholders on the rights and decent work situation of the women tea garden workers in Bangladesh in August 2023.

Consultation Meeting- 1: (August 5, 2023)

A local-level stakeholders' consultation



meeting was held on August 5, 2023, at Zilla Parishad Dhakbangla Auditorium to orient the local potential stakeholders on the rights and decent work situation of the women tea garden workers in Bangladesh. Bijoy Hazra, President, Balishira Valley presided over the meeting. Besides, Debendra Baraik, General Secretary, Balishira Valley, Boishishtha Tati, Executive President, Poresh kalindi, Finance Secretary of Bangladesh Cha Sramik Union, Md. Mahmudur Rahman and Md. Kamal Hossein from the Bangladesh Tea Estate Staff Association, Popy Rani Dey, Assistant Inspector General of DIFE, Sreemangal, Mitali Datte, Upazila Vice-chairman, Sreemangle, Rambhajon Koiri, former executive advisor of cha Sramik union and chairman(acting), Komolganj Upazila, Shimul Tarafdar, Sreemangal corresponded of Daily Prothom Alo and many others potential leadership were present in the meeting.

At the start of the meeting, Bijoy Hazra welcomed participants in the meeting. He said BILS has been doing good work for the tea garden workers for many years and I think this situation analysis discloses actual women workers' rights and decent work conditions. He requested to start the meeting. Afterward, Monirul Kobir, Project Coordinator of the BILS EWCSA project started the introductory speech and then presented the situation analysis report on the rights and decent work of the women workers in the tea garden sector in Bangladesh. Mr. Kobir mentioned that the rights and decent work situation of the women workers are not

satisfactory and the labour standard is ignored by the employers and the government side. He also presented the Employment security, job status, appointment letter, identity card, service book, attendance register, wages, and benefits status, working hours and overtime, occupational health and safety, leave and rest, other vital services and facilities, promotion and training, maternity protection condition of the women workers in the tea garden sector. The monitoring and supervision mechanism of the government is very dissatisfactory in the tea garden sector, he mentioned during his presentation. Besides he pointed out that the decent work conditions of the tea garden workers are very poor. Layoff practices and the right to freedom of association in the tea garden sector are below standard than the national - international labour standard measuring indicators. Child laboring conditions, discrimination of wages, and facilities for

women workers are clearly visible in the tea garden sector, Mr. Kobir mentioned in his presentation.

After the presentation, Bijoy Hazra, chair of the program requested the participants to start their discussion on the basis of the presentation. Poresh Kalindi, finance secretary revealed the discussion. He said, it seems too good but I have some observations. Firstly, the report blamed the Bangladesh Cha Sramik Union leadership for some conditions of the tea garden workers, especially women tea garden workers but we are not liable. In some cases, government and in some cases, employers are liable for the worker's deprivations, he mentioned. The Valley Committee and Panchayet Committee are also part of the union, he said. Mr. Kalindi requested BILS to have more discussions with the union leaders in the tea garden sector. Parvez Koiri, Project Coordinator, of Breaking the Silence said the presentation describes elaborately the women's tea garden workers' rights and decent work conditions. Hope it will be more useful in the implementation of the project interventions with the tea garden workers. Pankaj Ghosh, Project Manager of Idea a local NGO said that employers treated the workers as a slaver in the tea garden sector. Employers did not sit with the workers for harmonious industrial relations in the garden and were even reluctant to maintain many laws which ensured the worker's rights and decent work, he mentioned. The sample size was small and could be increased if there was any opportunity, he also mentioned during the discussion. Md. Mahmudur Rahman, Education, Research, and Cultural Secretary of Bangladesh Tea Estate Staff Association said I am very happy to attend the event and hope will welcome to the future events of the BILS. The report was very significant for enhancing the rights and decent work conditions of the women workers in the tea garden sector in Bangladesh, he desired. Md. Kamal

Hossain, secretary, Balishira North of Tea Estate Staff Association said, the situation was corrected and significant but it will be more efficient if the garden quantity would be more than the survey. He said, the managers of the garden did not permit the development activities by the NGO or even the local government. He emphasized increasing the awareness level of the panchayat committee, valley committee leadership, and women workers in the tea garden sector and their sibling's education. Mitali Datte, Upazila women's vice chairman, Sreemangal said absolutely the report was right. We have no easy access to the garden if even we take any development initiatives like deep well water, and sanitation for the workers. The employers did not have permission to implement the development initiatives. The garden authority harassed the tea garden women workers, she mentioned. She emphasized the proactive role of women workers in raising awareness and capacity-building in the tea garden sector. Poli Rani Dey, Assistant Inspector General of DIFE Sreemangal said DIFE tried to do some tasks to ensure the rights and decent work in the tea garden sector in Sreemangal but it was not enough and needed more. There is no alternative to education, we need to create educated mothers in the tea garden sector whatever they spoke loudly during exploitation and harassment, she mentioned. She also mentioned training is a very useful method for enhancing the capacity of the women tea garden workers and emphasized disseminating the maternity protection issue among the women workers in the tea garden sector. She claimed, that in Sreemangal DIFE has been working to ensure appointment letters for the workers in the tea garden sector, and some of the garden authorities provided appointment letters and she preceded the Zerin Tea Garden. She gave thanks to BILS for such a good initiative and promised to work together in the future with the BILS for tea garden sector women workers.

Consultation Meeting- 2: (August 6, 2023)

Another stakeholder's consultation meeting took place on August 6, 2023, in Heed, Bangladesh, aiming to disseminate the research findings on the rights and decent



work conditions of the women tea garden workers. Besides, increasing the rights and decent work conditions of the women tea garden workers through engaging the relevant stakeholders was a significant objective of the meeting. Dhana Bawri, President of Monodholi Valley presided over the meeting while Nirmol Das Painka was moderator. Md. Mominkhan, Project Coordinator, Usas, Komolganj, Suma Biswas, representative of Simantik a local NGO, Salauddin Shuvo, Journalist, Daily Observer, Nripen pal, General Secretary (acting), Bangladesh Cha Shramik Union, Pankaj A. Kondo, Vice President, Bangladesh Cha Sramik Union, Bilkis Begum, Women Vice Chairman, Komolganj, Rambhojon Koiri, Chairman(acting), Komolganj Upazila, prominent leaders and former executive advisor of Bangladesh Cha Shramik Union, Imon Debnath and Montaz Sidiqi from Bangladesh Tea Estate Staff Association and many others potential leadership from different panchayat committee were present in the stakeholder's consultation meeting.

At the beginning of the program, Dhana Bawri, chair of the program congratulated the participants and said I was honored as a chair, and gave thanks to BILS for organizing this program. I think we have learned a lot about rights and decent work conditions and I request the participants to recommend enhancing the mechanism of rights and decent work situations through engaging the stakeholders. Then he requested Monirul Kobir to start his presentation.

Mr. Kobir delivered the Employment security, job status, appointment letter, identity card, service book, attendance register, wages, and benefits status, working hours and overtime, occupational health and safety, leave and rest, other vital services and facilities, promotion and training, maternity protection of the women workers in the tea garden sector. The monitoring and supervision mechanism of the government is very dissatisfactory in the tea garden sector, he mentioned during his presentation. Besides he pointed out that the decent work conditions of the tea garden workers are very poor. Employment status, recruitment style, layoff practices, and right to freedom of association in the tea garden sector are below standard than the national -international labour standard measuring indicators. Child laboring conditions, discrimination of wages, and facilities for women workers are clearly visible in the tea garden sector, mentioned in the presentation.

After the end of the presentation, the participants delivered their opinions on the presentation one by one. The chair of the program took space to deliver his opinion first and he said there is no decent work in our gardens, and we pass our life in miserable conditions. We did not get anything through our 19 days wage movement. We have no rights, he mentioned. Salauddin Shuvo, Journalist, Daily Observer said addiction and violence

against women are very common scenarios in the tea gardens. We should create mass opinions against drugs and alcohol and of course, the tea garden workers should raise their voices against alcohol at the garden level. Nripen Pal, General Secretary (Acting) of Bangladesh cha Shramik Union said Bangladesh cha satra somaj has been working strongly on early marriage and violence against women. He mentioned union is not only liable for promoting the worker's rights and decent work in the garden. He mentioned, that in some cases, BILS mentioned one person's statement, it's not fair, and needed to include more voices for the all-over acceptancy. Mr. Nripen Pal, congratulated BILS for the research but said that keep in mind that wrong information will create problems for the way forward. We should go forward through our coordinated afford, he mentioned. Pankaj A. Kond, vice president of Bangladesh cha Shramik Union said, that the relationship between BILS and Bangladesh cha Shramik Union is so long and hopes we will go so far as to ensure the rights and decent work for the tea garden workers in Bangladesh. He requested to increase the sample size of the survey, if possible. Md. Momin khan, Project Coordinator, Usas, Komolganj said that I have been working for many years in the tea garden and I think the research report information is quite good and some situations are worse than the report. He suggested that BILS could organize more capacity-building training and vast awareness-raising sessions for the tea garden workers, especially for women workers. Imon Debnath from the Bangladesh Tea Estate Staff Association said, that Capacity building training for the women workers will be a very useful method for protecting rights and establishing decent work in the tea garden sector. Bilkis Begum, Women Vice Chairman, Komolganj said, I am a citizen of this area, but the first time I knew the overall situation of the women tea garden workers. I gladly give thanks to BILS for inviting me and for their fantastic work.

There are many women are participated in this event, I think it's one of the indicators of our moving forward; we created the women leadership. Women have been deprived



and exploited since the ancient period and now we are thinking about our reproductive health and the decent work of the women workers; it is our achievement, she mentioned. She expected to work together to ensure rights, workplace safety, and violence against women with BILS.

Rambhojon Koiri, prominent union leader and upazila chairman (acting), Komolgonaj delivered a detailed on presentation. He mentioned, that our union is clasped in the political battle but our union leadership has no connection with the current parliament member. He mentioned, there is a provision for imposed clause 6 (kha) that any executive member of the union, valley committee, or panchayat committee can defend him/herself. He mentioned that in India, the government provides land ownership to workers. We can also want land ownership in the condition of no transferable opportunity. Employers trying to operate the management of the gardens



by like themselves. In the present context, the bipartite treaty has fallen into threat. He is grateful to BILS for the wonderful tasks

and expects it will continue for the tea garden workers' interests. He also requested to media person to publish the tea garden workers' news regularly. After the discussion, the chair of the program said, I am very happy for your presence in the meeting, and requested to keep in mind that the union is not the only actor to ensure the rights and decent work, government, employers CSO is also responsible. He requested that stakeholders work together for a decent environment in the tea garden sector. After that, the chair closed the event with his gratitude to all participants.

Health Camp for Sick Workers and their Family

Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS organised a series of health camps to provide medical treatment facilities to sick workers and their family members, which were held in August and September 2023.

Health Camp-1: (August 31, 2023)

BILS organised a health camp to provide medical treatment to sick workers and their family members that was held on August 31, 2023, at Roufabad, Baizid I/A, Chattogram.

BILS Secretary General and Executive Director eminent trade union leader Nazrul Islam Khan, as chief guest inaugurated the health camp while BILS vice-chairman eminent trade union leader and BMSF General Secretary Mujibur Rahaman Bhuiyan was the special guest on this occasion.

A total number of 113 workers and their family members were provided with medical treatment facilities during the day-long health camp. Of them 39 were male and 74 were females. 2 doctors, 1 doctor of medicine and a gynecologist provided the treatment facility. Earlier the patients were examined with their blood pressure, weight and sugar-test.

BILS LRSC CC Committee chairman labour leader A M Nazimuddin presided over the inaugural session of the health camp.

During this session BILS Secretary General and Executive director eminent trade union leader Nazrul Islam Khan, as chief guest, in his speech said, getting treatment facility of any worker is a basic human right. Our workers are playing a pivotal role to keep our economic growth well and they are playing key role in our national development. But it is sad to say that workers are often being deprived from their basic human rights and also from the rights and entitlements as worker. Providing health care facilities is the responsibility of the state as well as of employers-he said. We cannot deny it. He further said that, we have to ensure workplace safety and pro-worker working environment. During the day-long health camp at Roufabad, Baizid



I/A, local trade union leaders and BILS Team members took part in voluntary activities like bring the sick workers to the camp venue, providing them medical treatment and medicines, food and giving

them advisory support regarding their health issues.

BILS vice-chairman eminent trade union leader and BMSF president Mujibur Rahaman Bhuiyan expected that such initiatives will help grass-root level workers a lot.

BILS-LRSC CC Committee Member-Secretary and eminent trade union leader JSL Central Vice-President Md. Safar Ali, as chief guest inaugurated the health camp while other local TU leaders were also present.



Health Camp-2: (September 15, 2023)

BILS organised a health camp for provide medical treatment facilities to sick workers and their family members which has been held on September 15, 2023, at Rangipara, Halishahar, Chattogram.

BILS-LRSC CC Committee Chairman and eminent trade union leader BJSD Chattogram president A M Nazimuddin, as chief guest, inaugurated the day-long health camp while other local TU leaders were also present.

A total number of 110 workers and their family members were provided with medical treatment facilities during the day-long health camp.

Of them 40 were male and 70 were females. 2 doctors-1 of medicine and another a gynecologist provided the overall treatment facility. Earlier, the patients were examined with their blood pressure, weight and sugar-test by a group of volunteers.

Health Camp-3: (September 29, 2023)

A health camp organised by BILS for provide medical treatment facilities to the sick workers and their family members which has been held on September 29, 2023, at Kalurghat BISIC I/A, Chattogram.

A total number of 100 workers and their family members were provided with medical treatment facilities during the day-long health camp.

Of them 30 were male and 70 were females. 2 doctors-1 of medicine and another a gynecologist provided the overall treatment facility.

During the day-long health camp at Kalurghat BISIC I/A, Chattogram local trade union leaders and BILS team members took part in numerous voluntary activities like bring the sick workers to the camp venue, providing them medical treatment and medicines, food and giving them advisory support regarding their health issues.

Other trade union leaders present during the health camp said accidents, injuries and sickness is very common in our workplaces. We have to ensure a secure and better working environment for the workers. They hope that the employers will



come forward to take pro-worker initiatives regarding the occupational health and safety of the workers.

BILS health camp initiative was praised by local trade unions and social leadership.

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