# A Case Study on Universal Pension Scheme: Scope and Challenges for Women to Participate in the Scheme

Support for effective and
inclusive Trade Unions in Bangladesh

Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS
বাংলাদেশ ইনস্টিটিউট অব লেবার স্টাডিজ-বিল্‌স

# A Case Study on Universal Pension Scheme: Scope and Challenges for Women to Participate in the Scheme

BANGLADESH INSTITUTE OF LABOUR STUDIES - BILS

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# Disclaimer

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# ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| BILS | Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies |
| BLA | Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 |
| BOAI | Basic Old-age Insurance |
| CSO | Community Service Organization |
| DA | Dearness Allowance |
| DB | Defined Benefit |
| DC | Defined Contribution |
| DIFE | Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments |
| DoL | Department of Labour |
| EPIS | Employees' Pension Insurance System |
| GoB | Government of Bangladesh |
| IRDA | Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority |
| KWSP | Kumpulan Wang Simpanan Pekerja |
| LIC | Life Insurance Company |
| LFS | Laboor Force Survey |
| MoLE | Ministry of Labour and Employment |
| MoSW | Ministry of Social Welfare |
| NDC | Notional Defined Contribution |
| NGO | Non-government Organization |
| NPS | National Pension System |
| NRP | New Rural Pension |
| NTUC | National Trade Union Centre |
| PEP | Public Employee Pension |
| PHC | Population and Housing Census |
| RMGs | Ready-Made-Garments |
| TU | Trade Union |
| UPS | Universal Pension Scheme |
| UPSMA | Universal Pension Scheme Management Act, 2023 |
| URP | Urban Resident Pension |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was an endeavour to explore the existing real status of low-paid women workers involved in both formal and informal sectors, such as RMG workers, kindergarten school teachers, salesgirls, and domestic workers from the Dhaka City Corporation area. To ensure adequate representation and to mitigate non-sampling errors, the researcher has increased the survey sample to a total of 400. This includes 200 low-paid women workers from the formal sector and 200 from the informal sector. In the formal sector, the study considers 25 ready-made garment (RMG) workers and 25 kindergarten teachers from Dhaka North City Corporation (Uttara), as well as 25 RMG workers and 25 kindergarten teachers from Dhaka South City Corporation (Jatrabari, Demra, Motijheel, Sutrapur, Lalbag). In the informal sector, the research includes 25 domestic workers and 25 sales girls from Dhaka East (Gulshan, Badda, Sobujbag) and 25 domestic workers and 25 sales girls from Dhaka West (Mirpur, Pallabi, Mohammadpur).

This study aimed to explore the scopes and challenges faced by women workers, especially in low-paying jobs, in accessing and benefiting from the Universal Pension Scheme (UPS). More specifically, this research uncovered the following specific objectives: to engage trade unions in a thorough review of the universal pension scheme to determine the scope, challenges, and way forward particularly for low-paying women to include in the scheme; to assess the awareness level among women workers regarding the UPS in Bangladesh; to identify the socio-economic barriers preventing women from enrolling in and benefiting from the UPS; to analyze the impact of cultural, legal, and institutional factors on women's participation in the scheme; to measure the trade unions' preparedness, challenges, and demands to address the social security of the low-paid women workers; The research was carried out based on the following areas of questions:

1) What are the well-rated women workers' friendly pension schemes in overseas countries with similar socio-economic realities? 2) What are the scopes and challenges for working women to be included in the UPS in Bangladesh? How do the women workers, especially those who are low-paid, perceive the UPS? What are the positive aspects? What are the negative aspects? What is the current level of understanding of women workers, especially low-paid women workers, regarding the UPS? Are they willing to participate? What restricts them from participating? 3) What is the real status of inclusion of women workers especially those who are low-paid into the scheme? Which scheme is preferred most and why? What have been the driving forces to be included in the scheme? What are the barriers that deserve to be taken care of? 4) What are the major challenges for women workers especially for low-paid women workers to be included in the UPS? Any structural and institutional issues? Any economic issues? Any issues related to work and wages? Any social issues? Any cultural issues? Any religious issues? 5) How do the trade unions perceive the UPS for women workers, especially for those who are low-paid? What is the level of understanding and knowledge of the trade unions (Basic/federation level/top level) on the UPS? Are they willing to act on UPS? If yes, why and how? What are the barriers/challenges for trade unions? What are their major demands? 6) What are the way

Introduction and Methodology forward? What should be the structure? What should be the processes? What should be the legal status? What should be the role of the right-holder stakeholders? What should be the role of the trade unions? What should be the role of the employers? What should be the role of the government? What should be the role of the CSO/NGO?

The findings of the study revealed that in RMG sector the lowest 3% of workers are below 18 years old whereas the highest 41% of workers belong to the age group 18-25 years. In Kindergarten, 24% of workers belong to the age group 18-25 and 45-55 years. This study also found that the lowest 11% of domestic workers belong to the age group 18-25 years, the highest 51% of domestic workers belong to the age group 35-45 years and the lowest 16% of sales girls are below 18 years old, whereas 34% sales girls belong to the age group 18-25 years. It was also seen that in RMG sector about 58% have completed their primary level of education and only 2% of workers have graduated. Among the kindergarten teachers, the highest 81% have completed graduation and 18.7% have completed higher secondary level. In the case of domestic workers, about 66.3% are illiterate, while only 3.3% have completed their secondary level of education, 31% of sales girls have completed a higher secondary level of education and only 4% have graduated and 20% are illiterate.

It is also found that in RMG sector, the highest 74% of workers were working as temporary basis, and 20% were as permanent basis. On the other hand, 90.2% of kindergarten school teachers were working as temporary basis and 5.4 % were as permanent teachers; 83.9% of domestic workers were as temporary basis and 16.1% were as permanent workers; 59% of sales workers were as temporary basis and 41% were working as permanent worker. This study also shows that only a few workers were working as permanent workers while the most were working temporarily. They were lack of job security.

About 55% of RMG workers receive monthly salaries ranging from 5001 to 10000 taka per month. On the other hand, the majority about 61% of kindergarten school teachers get a salary of up to 5000 taka, while the majority about 72% of domestic workers' monthly salary ranges from 5001 to 10000 taka, and the maximum 42% of sales girls salary ranges from 5001 to 10000 taka per month. Additionally, only 4% of RMG workers and 2% of kindergarten school teachers get salary ranges from 15001 to 20000 taka monthly, and notably, the domestic workers and the sales girls are not attaining this salary level. Whereas the majority 69% of RMG workers, 63% of kindergarten workers, 72% of domestic workers, and 84% of sales girls are unable to save money for their future security. Only 31% of RMG workers, 37% of kindergarten workers, 28% of domestic workers, and 16% of sales girls can save money for their future. Among them the condition of sales girls is deplorable. Moreover, 57% of RMG workers mentioned UPS is necessary for their old age security, while 43.5% of kindergarten school teachers, 38.5% of domestic workers, and 29.3% of sales girls shared the same theme. On the other side, 65.7% of sales girls mentioned that it is necessary for securing their own livelihoods and 58.2% of domestic workers, 20% of RMG workers, and 10.9% of kindergarten school teachers shared the same theme. Among the kindergarten school teachers 22.8% shared it is needed for their self-reliance and another 22.8% shared its necessary for their future self-employment.

This research also found some disadvantages associated with universal pension schemes.

Where 52.7% of domestic workers mentioned that they have less job security, so they fear that if they lose their jobs, then how they will maintain the pension scheme, and 42.0% of RMG workers, 25.3% of sales girls, and 15.2% of kindergarten school teachers shared the same theme. On the other side, 66.3% of kindergarten school teachers mentioned that it is uncertain about continuing their premium as their income is low, and 19.8% of domestic workers, 20% of RMG workers, and 27.3% of sales girls shared the same issue. Importantly, 41.4% of sales girls mentioned their anxiety about financial loss, and 25% of RMG workers, 24.2% of domestic workers, and 13% of kindergarten school teachers shared the same issue.

Among the female workers who expressed their interest in participating in the pension scheme, RMG workers, kindergarten teachers, domestic workers, and sales girls are 81.6%, 82.6%, 83.0%, and 93.9%, respectively. It is also found that 18.4% of RMG workers, 17.4% of kindergarten teachers, 17.0% of domestic workers, and 6.1% of sales girls have no interest in participating in any pension scheme.

The study also expressed that among the respondents, about 62.0% of RMG workers, 68.5% of kindergarten teachers, 98.0% of sales girls, and all the domestic workers do not have any knowledge about trade unions. Only 38.0% of RMG workers, 31.5% of kindergarten school teachers, and 2.0% of sales girls have a minimum level of knowledge about trade unions. According to the findings, the workers who answered a maximum of about 91.0% of RMG workers, 97.8% kindergarten school teachers, 99.0% sales girls, and almost all the domestic workers are not members of trade unions or any welfare association. Only 9% of RMG workers, 2.2% of kindergarten school teachers, and 1.0% of sales girls are members of trade unions or any welfare association. It is also found that only 3.0% of RMG workers are members of trade unions, and 2.0% are members of welfare associations. Only 2% of kindergarten school teachers are members of welfare associations and 1% of sales girls are members of different associations whereas domestic workers are not found in any union or association. Study again found that workers who are not members of trade unions mentioned some reasons behind their non-participation in trade unions. About 86.81% of RMG workers, 91.12% of kindergarten school teachers, 53.53% of sales girls, and almost 80.22% of domestic workers mentioned that at their workplace trade union is absent, while 12.09% of RMG workers, 4.44% of kindergarten school teachers, 19.78% domestic workers and 46.46% sales girls do not have the interest to participate in a trade union.

The findings represented that TUs can play a significant role in the implementation of a universal pension scheme. About 55.4% RMG workers, 82.93% kindergarten school teachers, 50.0% domestic workers, and 11.11% sales girls' opinion was that trade union can create awareness about the pension scheme among workers, while 26.8% RMG workers, 9.75% kindergarten school teachers, 26.1% domestic workers and 5.56% sales girls mentioned that trade union can bargain with employers so that the workers can be benefitted in case of increasing salary and maintaining the pension system.

Two different sets of challenges/barriers have been particularly identified that restrict proper and effective participation of women workers in the Universal Pension Scheme, such as 1) challenges/barriers with the existing structures and procedures, and 2) women-centric socio-cultural issues.

Major Challenges:

- √ Since the pension scheme is contributory, there is a lack of interest in the participation of workers. In addition, the financial capacity of the workers is also a factor.
- √ The government did not have an effective exchange of views with the trade unions regarding the introduction of the pension scheme. The trade unions have not been involved in the implementation process either. No specific plan has been taken to address the difficulties that workers may face in joining the pension scheme, considering all the issues.
- √ There is no retirement age for informal workers; again, garment workers are no longer seen in employment when they reach the age of 40/45. These issues have not been taken into consideration in this scheme. There is no provision for joining this scheme after 50 years, due to which a significant number of workers in the country are not able to join this scheme.
- √ The workers have no clear idea about whether the money deposited by the workers before the age of 60 will be refunded or not.
- √ The workers were not consulted or consulted on whether the pension scheme was suitable for the workers.

Recommendations:

- √ Although the pension scheme is necessary for everyone, why is it not ensuring widespread participation in it? It needs to be investigated and analyzed, and government and private research institutions can come forward in this regard.
- √ Job security of the workers needs to be ensured. Their minimum wage needs to be increased.
- √ Government needs to conduct a responsible campaign mentioning the benefits of the pension scheme.
- √ Policymakers need to know the details about the pension scheme of the country. We also need to know about the schemes of our neighboring countries.
- √ It is necessary to find out how much monthly premium is reasonable for the workers, and this calculation needs to be done.

# SECTION-I

# INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

## Background

The latest Population and Housing Census, 2022 (PHC-2022) has recorded a sex ratio of 98 only, meaning Bangladesh now hass more women than men. More particularly, for every 100 women, there are only 98 men. The Labor Force Survey, 2022 (LFS-2022) estimated that Bangladesh has now 119 million working-age population. Of them, 60 million are women and 59 million are men. Of this total working-age population, only 73 million are estimated as active labor force, meaning engaged in an economic activity. Of this economically active labor force, inversely, only 35% are women and 65% are men. Differently, among the working age women labor force participation rate is estimated at only 43%, whereas for men it is 80%. In 1999-2000, women's labor force participation rate was only 24%. A second estimate counts that among the active labor force, 70.5 million are employed and only 2.5 million are unemployed. Of these employed labor force, 85% are employed in the informal economy meaning they lack basic social or legal protection or employment benefits. 97% of employed women are informally employed and for men this figure estimated 78% only. These are not all. Majority of women are employed in precarious and low-quality jobs. Even, among those 3% who are employed in the formal sector, a vast majority of them are paid only a meager wage, such as Ready-Made-Garments (RMGs) workers and teachers in the kinder garden jobs. It is indiscriminately reported that these workers most often fail to meet their basic necessities of living. For the informal sector workers like the domestic workers and sales girls, the situation is rather worse. Unlike in some other countries, there is no government redundancy pay-outs or a guarantee of long-term social security payments in Bangladesh for workers. When an economic shock hits, the only thing workers left to rely on is their fate. Although, there are some national scheduled structures like the Bangladesh Labor Welfare Foundation for both formal and informal sector workers, availing aid from such structures is very onerous.

The Universal Pension Scheme introduced in Bangladesh only in 2023, is a vital governmental initiative in recent time, aimed at providing financial security to elderly citizens. The initiative is intended for all individuals above 18 years of age in the country, who will receive pension benefits for life upon reaching the age of 60. Initially, four pension schemes out of six – Pragati, Surokkha, Samata, and Prabash – have been launched while two others will be introduced later. However, one of the foremost challenges with these schemes is that they are all contributory schemes, either fully or partially. Now, the working women having least employment security, and who cannot meet basic needs and live below the poverty line, it is difficult for them to afford to even contribute partially for a long period of time to such schemes and to avail of benefits from these. The level of knowledge and understanding about universal pension schemes by these vulnerable women workers is also questionable. Thus, whether working women, particularly those engaged in low-paying jobs like domestic work or RMG or sales girls, who have little to no resources and are often illiterate can avail of such scheme is a matter to be investigated.

In the underlying circumstances of the above, this research has been thought of. The mainstay of this research is to make a deeper-cut analysis of the scope of low-paid women workers to be included in the Universal Pension Scheme-UPS introduced in Bangladesh and the challenges alongside the initiative for the working women (particularly the RMG workers, kinder garden school women teacher, domestic workers, and sales girls) to avail the scheme.

## Research Objectives

This research aimed to explore the scopes and challenges faced by women workers, especially in low-paying jobs, in accessing and benefiting from the Universal Pension Scheme. More specifically, this research uncovered the following specific objectives:

- To engage trade unions in a thorough review of the universal pension scheme to determine the scope, challenges, and way forward, especially for low-paying women, to include in the scheme.
- To assess the awareness level among women workers regarding the Universal Pension Scheme in Bangladesh.
- To identify the socio-economic barriers preventing women from enrolling in and benefiting from the Universal Pension Scheme.
- To analyze the impact of cultural, legal, and institutional factors on women's participation in the scheme.
- To measure the trade unions' preparedness, challenges, and demands to address the social security of the low-paid women workers.
- To develop a policy brief by following the research findings.
- To prepare a TU position paper by following the research findings.

## Research Questions

The research questions were followed as the basis for the survey of the study:

1) What are the good-rated women workers' friendly pension schemes in overseas countries with similar socio-economic realities? What are the ten (10) most important women-workers friendly features? What about the supportive legal frameworks?

2) Comparative to the identified ten features, what about the analysis of the different schemes included in the UPS in Bangladesh? What about the analyses on supportive legal frameworks?

3) What are the scopes and opportunities for working women to be included in the UPS in Bangladesh? What is the best scheme for working women and how? What is the best scheme for low-paid women workers and how? What are the comparative advantages?

4) How the women workers especially those who are low-paid, perceive the UPS? What are the positive aspects? What are the negative aspects? What is the current level of understanding of women workers especially low-paid women workers on the UPS? Are they willing to participate? What restricts them from participating?

5) What is the real status of inclusion of women workers especially those who are low-paid into the scheme? Which scheme is preferred most and why? What have been the driving forces to be included in the scheme? What are the barriers that deserve to be taken care of?

6) What are the major challenges for women workers especially for low-paid women workers to be included in the UPS? Any structural and institutional issues? Any economic issues? Any issues related to work and wages? Any social issues? Any cultural issues? Any religious issues?

7) How do the trade unions perceive the UPS for women workers, especially for those who are low-paid? What is the level of understanding and knowledge of the trade unions (Basic/federation level/top level) on the UPS? Are they willing to act on UPS? If yes, why and how? What are the barriers/challenges for trade unions? What are their major demands?

8) What are the way forward? What should be the structure? What should be the processes? What should be the legal status? What should be the role of the right-holder stakeholders? What role for trade unions? What role for employers? What role of government? What role for CSO/NGO?

## Methodologies of the Study

This study employs a blend of quantitative and qualitative research methods, along with various associated tools and techniques. Data is gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The research encompasses the Dhaka City Corporation area, focusing on women workers from both formal and informal sectors. In the formal sector, the study examines 25 ready-made garment (RMG) workers and 25 kindergarten teachers from Dhaka North (Uttara), as well as 25 RMG workers and 25 kindergarten teachers from Dhaka South (Jatrabari, Demra, Motijheel, Sutrapur, Lalbag). In the informal sector, the research includes 25 domestic workers and 25 sales girls from Dhaka East (Gulshan, Badda, Sobujbag) and 25 domestic workers and 25 sales girls from Dhaka West (Mirpur, Pallabi, Mohammadpur).

Along with the researchers, 4 post-graduate level interns, and 4 young trade unionists were deployed as data enumerators who surveyed clusters in a base working area for collecting data. A structured questionnaire consisting of dichotomous, polychotomous, multiple response, Likert scale, and some open-ended variables were used for data collection in the survey.

To ensure adequate representation and to mitigate non-sampling errors, the researcher has increased the survey sample to a total of 400. This includes 200 low-paid women workers from the formal sector and 200 from the informal sector. Data collection was facilitated through a structured questionnaire and checklist, supplemented by desk-based reviews and interviews with experts, interviews with GOV, consultations with the TUs, interviews with CSO/NGO, interviews with employers, surveys, consultation with TUs, and case studies. For collecting in-depth information, the following research plan was followed-

## Table: Qualitative Research Plan

| SL | Method | No | Participants |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | Employers Interview | 4 | 1 employer from each 4 sectors |
| B | Interview with CSO/NGO & Expert | 4 | 2 NGO/CSO and 2 Experts |
| C | Interview with Government | 3 | MOL, MOW, MOSW |
| D | Consultation | 3 | 1 with plant level union leaders<br>1 with federation leaders, and<br>1 with NTUC leaders |
| E | Case Study Collection | 4 | One from each of the 4 sub-sectors |
| F | Desk-based review | 1 | Secondary literature |

The enumerators interviewed four employers one from each of the four sectors, 4 interviews were conducted with CSO and NGO officials along with experts of similar areas, 3 Interviews were held with Government officials of MoL, MoW and MoSW, 2 consultation meetings were held with federation leaders, and with NTUC leaders, 4 case studies where one from each of the 4 sub-sectors respondents were done, and all relevant literature were reviewed for more detail information of the study.

Research Design

Having interfacing research questions with planned methodology, the following research design is considered:

## Table: Research Design

| Research Questions | What data to be collected | Proposed Methods | Tools/ Techniques |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1) What are the good-rated women workers friendly pension schemes in overseas countries with similar socio-economic reality? What are the ten (10) most important women-workers friendly features? What about the supportive legal frameworks? | - Good model<br>- 10 best features<br>- Supportive legal & administrative framework<br>- Decent employers-contributory universal pension schemes | ▪ Desk-based review<br>▪ Interview with experts | ▪ Pre-developed Checklist<br>▪ Pre-developed Guidelines |

| Research Questions | What data to be collected | Proposed Methods | Tools/ Techniques |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2) Comparative to the identified ten features, what about the analysis of the different schemes included in the UPS in Bangladesh? What about the analysis of supportive legal frameworks? | - Different schemes and features in Bangladesh<br>- Comparative strengths and weakness<br>- Supportive legal framework | ▪ Desk -based review<br>▪ Interview with experts<br>▪ Interview with GOV | ▪ Pre - developed Checklist<br>▪ Pre - developed Guidelines |
| 3) What are the scopes and opportunities for working women to be included in the UPS in Bangladesh? What is the best scheme for them and how? What is the best scheme for low paid working women and how? What are the comparative advantages? | - Scope/ opportunities for inclusion<br>- Best scheme for women workers<br>- Best scheme for low paid women | ▪ Desk -based review<br>▪ Consultation with the TUs<br>▪ Interview with CSO/NGO<br>▪ Interview with employers<br>▪ Interview with experts | ▪ Pre - developed Checklists<br>▪ Pre - developed Guidelines |
| 4) What are the major challenges for women workers and especially for low paid women workers to be included into the UPS? Any structural and institutional issues? Any economic issues? Any issues related with work and wages? Any social issues? Any cultural issues? Any religious issues? | - Challenges<br>- Issue of contribution/ non-contribution<br>- Structural/ institutional issue<br>- Economic issue<br>- Job security related<br>- Wage related<br>- Social issue<br>- Cultural issue<br>- Religious issue | ▪ Survey<br>▪ Interview with employers<br>▪ Consultation with TUs<br>▪ Interview with CSO/ Expert<br>▪ Desk -based review | ▪ Questionnair e<br>▪ Pre - developed Checklists<br>▪ Pre - developed Guidelines |

| Research Questions | What data to be collected | Proposed Methods | Tools/ Techniques |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5) How the women workers especially those who are low-paid perceive UPS? What are the positive aspects? What are the negative aspects? What is the current level of understanding of the women workers especially low-paid women workers on the UPS? Are they willi ng to participate? What restricts them from participating? | - Perception of women workers on UPS<br>- Understanding<br>- Willingness/Unwillingnes s<br>- Barriers | ▪ Survey<br>▪ Desk -based review<br>▪ Interview with employers<br>▪ Consultation with TUs<br>▪ Interview with NGO/CSO<br>▪ Case study | ▪ Questionnaire<br>▪ Pre - developed Checklist<br>▪ Pre - developed Guidelines |
| 6) What is the real status of inclusion of women workers especially those who are low-paid into the scheme? Which scheme is preferred most and why? What have been the driving forces to be included in the scheme? What are the barriers worth taking care of? | - Status of participation<br>- Preferred scheme and reasons<br>- Driving forces<br>- Barriers/Challenges | ▪ Survey<br>▪ Interview with employers<br>▪ Consultation with TUs<br>▪ Interview with CSO/ Expert<br>▪ Desk -based review | ▪ Questionnaire<br>▪ Pre - developed Checklist<br>▪ Pre - developed Guidelines |

| Research Questions | What data to be collected | Proposed Methods | Tools/ Techniques |
|---|---|---|---|
| 7) How do the trade unions perceive the UPS for women workers, especially for those who are low-paid? What is the level of understanding and knowledge of the trade unions (Basic/federation level/top level) on the UPS? Are they willing to act on UPS? If yes, why and how? What are the barriers/challenges for trade unions? What are their major demands? | - TU perception<br>- TU's level of understanding<br>- Rationale for engagement<br>- Barriers/challenges for TUs<br>- TU Demands | ▪ Consultation with TUs<br>▪ Interview with employers<br>▪ Interview with GOV | ▪ Pre-developed Checklist<br>▪ Pre-developed Guidelines |
| 8) What are the ways forward? What should be the structure? What should be the processes? What should be the legal status? What should be the role for the right holder stakeholders? What role for trade unions? What role for employers? What role for the government? What role for CSO/NGO? | - Most suitable structure<br>- Desired processes<br>- Who shall pay<br>- Acceptable legal framework<br>- Role for workers<br>- Role for TUs<br>- Role for employers<br>- Role for Government<br>- Role for CSO/NGO | ▪ Survey<br>▪ Consultation with TU<br>▪ Interview with Employers<br>▪ Interview with GOV<br>▪ Interview with CSO/Expert | ▪ Questionnaire<br>▪ Pre-developed Checklist<br>▪ Pre-developed Guidelines |

## Ethical Consideration

- √ The research team has governed this research as per Helsinki Protocol that "research should be carried out only if the potential benefits of a study outweigh any potential harms".
- √ Confidentiality of the respondents, information and data sources were firmly maintained.
- √ COVID-19 protocols were necessarily followed during data collection.
- √ Research report has avoided all kinds of plagiarism and provided with due acknowledgement to sources.

## Quality Control Mechanism

- √ Lead researcher along with his teammates has designed and developed relevant schedules, checklists and guidelines for the study.
- √ Data enumerators and research assistant were properly trained and oriented on survey checklists and schedule.
- √ Research assistant, and concerned project staff regularly visited and monitored the entire data collection and quality control process.

## Research Management Plan

The study has been carried out by following the below management protocol:

| Phases | Conceptualization and Inception ⇨ | Research and Analysis ⇨ | Reporting, feedback and Validation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Core Activities | Identification of Issues and finalization of methodology and research tools and develop and agree work plan and budget | Quantitative data collection<br>Qualitative Data Collection<br>Data Analysis; Draft Report preparing | Input taking for finalization |
| Output | Inception report<br>Research tools drafted | Draft Report | Final report |

# SECTION-II

## Universal Pension Scheme (UPS): A Conceptual Understanding

Universal Pension Scheme worldwide accumulates many technical components, terms, and definitions. This initiative was taken to fruitfully assess the Universal Pension Scheme (UPS) and to identify the probable scopes and gaps relevant to women workers who are low-paid. In this part of the report, the core endeavors were to make a precise listing and defining of all core concepts commonly used in the UPSs. The research team has widely reviewed the relevant literature with a view to gain detail and in-depth understanding about the contextual scenario of the study undertaken.

There are Dimensions of Pension Systems seen
Horizontal dimension: guarantee a minimum level of adequacy for everyone. This is the logic at the heart of the idea of a social protection floor set out by ILO Recommendation No. 202.

Vertical dimension: minimum income replacement relative to previous earnings. ILO Convention No. 102 defines a minimum replacement rate of 40 percent of the reference wage, while the ILO's Invalidity, Old-Age and Survivors' Benefits Convention, 1967 (No. 128) defines a minimum of 45 percent. Horizontal equity requires that individuals in similar circumstances be treated similarly, whereas vertical equity requires treating individuals according to their needs (McDaniel and Repetti, 1993).

Elements of Pensions Schemes: Need to understand According to a study of BILS and Modiaal FNV entitled "Universal Pension Scheme in Bangladesh: Exploration of Potential Scopes for RMG Worker's Greater Inclusion" conducted by Md. Manirul Islam, Deputy Director, BILS, there are so many allied concepts necessary to know relevant to pension scheme:

- Contributory: monthly financial contribution for a specified duration determines pension benefits. Contribution can either be voluntary or mandatory. Contributory pension schemes can be financed in different ways.

- Fully funded: means that the target level of assets or reserves at a point in time aims to cover the value of pension liabilities determined at that same point.

- Partial funding: means that at any point in time, the pension scheme must have a minimum level of reserves – generally defined by law.

- Pay-as-you-go (PAYG): is an arrangement under which benefits are paid out of current scheme revenue and no pre-funding is made in respect of future benefit obligations. Individuals from each generation donate a portion of their current salary to a pension fund.

Non-contributory/Tax-financed: General/universal pension benefit for all. Pensions are financed from general government revenues popularly referred to as "tax-financed". More particularly, collecting general tax and payroll taxes make up the pension fund. No direct contribution or subsidy is required. All citizens and/or residents above a certain age are guaranteed a minimum pension. Brunei, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam have adopted this. Residency/citizenship determines eligibility. Non-contributory pension schemes come in three main forms.

- Universal pensions: provide a benefit to all older people over a defined age, solely on the basis of citizenship and/or residency.
- Means-tested: targeted to those with a defined, limited set of resources (in terms of income and/or assets).
- Pensions-tested: eligibility (and/or the benefit level received) is influenced by whether an individual receives other pension income. A tapered pension test is one in which the amount of non-contributory benefits received is reduced gradually according to the level of contributory pension.

Defined benefit: pension benefits are defined and fixed based on the calculation of a formula and typically depend on the number of years of contributory service and the insurable earnings.

Defined-contribution: Monthly contribution amount is prior defined. Contributions are saved or invested in an account that typically belongs to the individual (although group defined-contribution schemes exist).

Notional defined-contribution: operate on a similar principal to defined contribution plans. Members have individual defined contribution (DC) accounts. Upon retirement, the notional money in the member's account is transformed into a life annuity using an annuity.

Beveridge-an pension scheme: Provides a subsistence support to the pensioners. The UK and the USA, have Beveridge-an social security systems.

Bismarckian: Provides generous support without any additional arrangements. Germany, Italy and France have Bismarckian social security systems.

Universal points system: Several OECD nations employ a points system. Contributions are used to buy points, and at retirement, the pension is equal to the total of accumulated pension points multiplied by the point value. Points may be allocated for each child and for career breaks (related to unemployment, maternity leave, sickness, disability, etc.), and for specific situations such as long careers, hazardous work, handicaps, etc. (Boulhol, H. 2020).

Occupational Pension Schemes: the contributions paid by the employer and worker.
Social pensions: A noncontributory, flat pension can ensure that all citizens, regardless of earnings or occupation, have an income in old age. Noncontributory pensions are helpful to women and to workers in the informal sector. For people in low-income, informal jobs, noncontributory pensions are better than anything else.

Gender sensitivity consideration in pension schemes: Women’s age-specific labor force participation rates differ from those of men. Women in general live longer. Job security, contribution periods, and pay levels are different.

# SECTION-III

## Fundamental Procedure of Universal Pension Scheme: Bangladesh Perspective

In Bangladesh, public sector employees covering a small portion of the population receive pension benefits whereas the private sector employees are only entitled to a Contributory Provident Fund, in which they enjoy a one-time gratuity as a retirement benefit, but with no monthly pension (BSS news March 20, 2024). To bring the country's growing elderly population under a social security system, a Universal Pension Scheme (UPS) was introduced in the country very recently. National parliament passed the Universal Pension Management Bill-2022 on January 24 and the UPS officially started operation on 17 August 2023. Primarily four (4) schemes are introduced such as 1) Progoti, 2) Somota, 3) Probash, and 4) Surokkha. In March 2024, the government of Bangladesh announced another two new pension schemes such as 1) Prattay, and 2) Shebok, declared to be effective respectively from 1st July 2024 and 1st July 2025. The following table enlists the basic features of the initial four pension schemes found in the study report of BILS and Modiaal FNV entitled "Universal Pension Scheme in Bangladesh: Exploration of Potential Scopes for RMG Worker's Greater Inclusion" conducted by Md. Manirul Islam, Deputy Director, BILS:

Table: Basic Features from Bangladesh's UPS

| Criteria | PROGOTI | SUROKKHA | SAMATA | PROBASH |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Eligibility | Private employee | Informal sector workers | Impoverished | Expatriates, stay & working abroad |
| Age bar | 18 – 50 years | 18 – 50 years | 18 – 50 years | 18 – 50 years |
| Age-bar: special consideration | For 50+ age 10 years uninterrupted deposit | For 50+ age 10 years uninterrupted deposit | For 50+ age 10 years uninterrupted deposit | For 50+ age 10 years uninterrupted deposit |
| Income category | All income category | All income category | >60,000 a year | All income category |
| Registration | Online | Online | Online | Online |
| Who can assist | Employer | Union Digital Center | Union Digital Center | Union Digital Center |
| Documents required | NID | NID | NID, No annual income certificate | NID or Passport |
| Contribution limit a month | Min: BDT 2000<br>Max: BDT10000 | Min: BDT1000<br>Max: BDT5000 | Min: BDT 1000<br>Max: BDT 1000 | Min: BDT 2000<br>Max: BDT 10000 |
| Contribution options | a) Employee alone<br>b) Employer 50% & Employee 50% | Pensioner alone | Pensioner 500t & Gov 500t | Pensioner alone |

| Criteria | PROGOTI | SUROKKHA | SAMATA | PROBASH |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Contribution Years | Min: 10 years<br>Max: 42 Years | Min: 10 years<br>Max: 42 Years | Min: 10 years<br>Max: 42 years | Min: 10 years<br>Max: 42 Years |
| Where to deposit | Designated bank of the National Pension Authority. Deposited into the employee's pension account. | Bank card, Online banking, Mobile financial services, Sonali, Agrana, City, & BRAC bank | Bank card, Online banking, Mobile financial services, Sonali, Agrana, City, & BRAC bank | Debit card, credit card, exchange houses, banking channel in foreign currency |
| Tax exemption | a) tax rebate against contribution<br>b) tax-free pension | a) tax rebate against contribution<br>b) tax-free pension | a) tax rebate against contribution<br>b) tax-free pension | a) tax rebate against contribution<br>b) tax-free pension |
| Withdrawal/Loan | | 50% of deposit for treatment, house building & repair & child marriage | | |
| Loan refund | | 24 installments along with fee | | |
| If dies before pensionable age | Deposition & profit return to nominee | Deposition & profit return to nominee | Deposition & profit return to nominee | Deposition & profit return to nominee |
| Defined benefit (Monthly) | Min: 3,060t<br>Max: 344,655t | Min: 1,530t<br>Max: 172,327t | Min: 1530t<br>Max: 34465t | Min: 3060t<br>Max: 344655t |
| Pension receiving means | Automatic to bank account through Electronic Fund Transfer | Automatic to bank account or mobile banking account | Automatic to bank account or mobile banking account | Automatic to bank account or mobile banking account |
| Years of Pension | 1) After 60, lifetime<br>2) If dies early, nominees shall get pension up to pensioner 75 years | 1) After 60, lifetime<br>2) If dies early, nominees shall get pension up to pensioner 75 years | 1) After 60, lifetime<br>2) If dies early, nominees shall get pension up to pensioner 75 years | 1) After 60, lifetime<br>2) If dies early, nominees shall get pension up to pensioner 75 years |

Eligibility:
Progoti scheme: Is specially designed for private sector employees. Employees working in a private organization or the owner of that organization can participate in this scheme. Both individual and institutional participation are allowed.

Surokkha scheme: Only informal sector workers like farmers, rickshaw pullers, laborers, blacksmiths, potters, fishers, and weavers can participate in this scheme.

Samata scheme: Is for impoverished people. Low-income people living below the poverty line, who currently earn a maximum of Tk 60,000 a year, can participate in the Samata scheme.

Probash scheme: Is for expatriates. Bangladeshi citizens working or living abroad can participate in this scheme.

Prattay scheme: Officers/employees of all self-governed, autonomous, state-owned, statutory/ homogeneous organizations who shall join onward July 1, 2024, or who have a minimum of ten years of service remaining can join in the newly declared Prattay scheme. Participation and eligibility for the newly declared Shebok Scheme are yet undecided.

Figure: Four schemes: Defined contributions and benefits

**Progoti**

| Monthly Contribution Rate | BDT 2,000 | BDT 3,000 | BDT 5,000 | BDT 10,000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total deposit tenure (in years) | Probable Monthly Pension (BDT) | Probable Monthly Pension (BDT) | Probable Monthly Pension (BDT) | Probable Monthly Pension (BDT) |
| 42 | 68,391 | 1,03,396 | 1,72,327 | 3,44,655 |
| 40 | 58,400 | 87,601 | 1,46,001 | 2,92,002 |
| 35 | 38,374 | 57,561 | 95,935 | 1,91,870 |
| 30 | 24,932 | 37,398 | 62,330 | 1,24,660 |
| 25 | 15,910 | 23,864 | 39,774 | 79,548 |
| 20 | 9,854 | 14,780 | 24,634 | 49,268 |
| 15 | 5,789 | 8,683 | 14,472 | 28,944 |
| 10 | 3,060 | 4,591 | 7,651 | 15,302 |

**Probash**

| Monthly Contribution Rate | BDT 2,000 | BDT 5,000 | BDT 7,500 | BDT 10,000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total deposit tenure (in years) | Probable Monthly Pension (BDT) | Probable Monthly Pension (BDT) | Probable Monthly Pension (BDT) | Probable Monthly Pension (BDT) |
| 42 | 68,931 | 1,72,327 | 2,58,491 | 3,44,655 |
| 40 | 58,400 | 1,46,001 | 2,19,001 | 2,92,002 |
| 35 | 38,374 | 95,935 | 1,43,902 | 1,91,870 |
| 30 | 24,932 | 62,330 | 93,495 | 1,24,660 |
| 25 | 15,910 | 39,774 | 59,661 | 79,548 |
| 20 | 9,854 | 24,634 | 36,951 | 49,268 |
| 15 | 5,789 | 14,472 | 21,708 | 28,944 |
| 10 | 3,060 | 7,651 | 11,477 | 15,302 |

**Surokkha**

| Monthly Contribution Rate | BDT 1,000 | BDT 2,000 | BDT 3,000 | BDT 5,000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total deposit tenure (in years) | Probable Monthly Pension (BDT) | Probable Monthly Pension (BDT) | Probable Monthly Pension (BDT) | Probable Monthly Pension (BDT) |
| 42 | 34,465 | 68,931 | 1,03,396 | 1,72,327 |
| 40 | 29,200 | 58,400 | 87,601 | 1,46,001 |
| 35 | 19,187 | 38,374 | 57,561 | 95,935 |
| 30 | 12,466 | 24,932 | 37,398 | 62,330 |
| 25 | 7,955 | 15,910 | 23,864 | 39,774 |
| 20 | 4,927 | 9,854 | 14,780 | 24,634 |
| 15 | 2,894 | 5,789 | 8,683 | 14,472 |
| 10 | 1,530 | 3,060 | 4,591 | 7,651 |

**Samata**

| Monthly Contribution Rate | BDT 1,000 (BDT 500 by Contributor + BDT 500 as Government contribution 500) |
|---|---|
| Total deposit tenure (in years) | Probable Monthly Pension (BDT) |
| 42 | 34,465 |
| 40 | 29,200 |
| 35 | 19,187 |
| 30 | 12,466 |
| 25 | 7,955 |
| 20 | 4,927 |
| 15 | 2,894 |
| 10 | 1,530 |

Source: National Pension Authority

Age-bar: All are defined contributory pension schemes as well as have defined fixed benefits. All citizens including expatriate Bangladeshis aged between 18 and 50 on the basis of a defined contribution, qualify for a defined benefit. Citizens aged over 50 years, on condition to pay a defined contribution of premium uninterrupted for the next 10 years, too are eligible for participation. Paying a defined contribution of premium for at least 10 years is a must.

Surrender other Social Security program benefits: Persons covered under any other Social Security Programs, on condition to surrender the benefit of the concerned program before participating, shall be eligible to join the pension scheme applicable to them (Rules 4(3)).

Registration: Any person can easily enroll in the automatic registration process. The national pension authority manages and supervises the registration website (www.upension.gov.bd). To register it is a must to complete the online application using the form prescribed by the authority. Having registration processes completed, the pensioner is automatically assigned a pension ID and password. The pensioner can anytime log in and view the accounts summary including deposited amounts and dividends received in the pension account.

Contribution: Contribution can be made on a monthly, quarterly, annual, or advance basis. Paying a defined contribution of premium for at least 10 years is a must. If the contributory dies before contributing at least 10 years, the nominee will receive the deposited amount and the earned interest.

Special consideration on contribution: Private sector employees, if participating institutionally under the Progoti scheme, the concerned enterprise shall cover half of the monthly contribution. More specifically, when participating institutionally, the institution shall pay 50% of the contribution, and the employee the remaining 50%. In such a case, it will be the enterprise's responsibility to deposit monthly contributions for both employees and institutions. For citizens below the minimum income threshold, registered under the Samata scheme, the government will cover half of the monthly contribution which is BDT 500 as a grant.

Delayed payment: If the pensioner fails to deposit a pension premium by the due date, he/she is allowed to pay the premium in the next month, without paying a penalty. For further delay, subject to the payment of a late fee at a rate of 1% per day, the account shall remain active. (Section 14.d.i and Rule 5.(4)). Late fees shall add to the pensioner account.

Payment method: A centralized electronic and automated online system has been created to maintain all transactions. A couple of scheduled banks and post offices act as front offices to collect premiums. Except for Probash scheme, monthly deposits for other schemes can be made directly at designated bank counters, or through mobile financial services, online banking, auto debit from a bank account, or using a debit/credit card. Probash scheme participants can make monthly deposits using credit card/debit card, online banking gateway in foreign currency, or from the bank account to which they send remittances in Bangladesh.

Tax rebate and exemption: All contributory premiums and pension benefits shall enjoy tax-exemption status. Contribution money is supposed to be invested in safer and less risky sources like treasury bonds.

Withdraw/Loan: Only the contributing informal sector pensioner can withdraw a maximum of 50% of the deposited money as a loan. The loan amount is to be repaid alongside the fixed fee.

Change/Alteration: Anyone can change the pension scheme, the contribution amount, and the nominee at any time. However, the pensioner ID will remain the same.

Pension Payment: After completing 60 years, the pensioner will start reaping the benefit. Monthly pension benefits shall be transferred automatically into the pensioner's bank account through Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT). The pensioner will get a pension benefit for a lifetime i.e. till death. If he/she dies before the age of 75, the nominee will get a monthly pension for up to 75 years of the deceased.

Authority/Administration: A 5-member National Pension Authority and a 15-member board of directors have been formed. These authorities have been made institutionally responsible for performing all management and operational works for the Universal Pension Scheme.

| Laws and Regulations Governing the UPS |
| --- |
| On 31 January 2023: passed the "Universal Pension Management Act, 2023.<br>On 02 April 2023: notification issued for the "Establishment of National Pension Authority".<br>On 18 May 2023: notification issued for constituting the Pension Board of Directors.<br>On 18 May 2023: promulgated the regulations relating to the tenure and conditions of service of the Executive Chairman and members of the National Pension Authority.<br>On 13 August 2023: promulgated the Universal Pension Scheme Rules, 2023.<br>On 13 March 2024: amendments to the UPS Rules were promulgated.<br>On 03 July 2024: issued the UPS Fund (Investment & Protection) Rules, 2024.<br>On 07 August 2024: issued amendments to the Universal Pension Scheme Rules . |

# SECTION-IV

## Standards and Practices of Pension Schemes: A Global Overview

As the working population is increasing in Asian countries likewise Bangladesh so, the implication of strong pension systems has become necessary for their economic security. Many countries face different challenges which arise from diverse economic conditions, different cultural contexts, and demographic factors. This literature review focuses on different study findings related to pension schemes in some Asian countries, focusing on design and related features.

A study found that in India, on January 1, 2004, the National Pension System (NPS) was introduced which was designed to ensure earnings for all citizens after retirement which also aims to develop the practice of saving for people after their retirement (National Pension System - Retirement Plan for All| National Portal of India, n.d.). There are two tiers of this pension system: Tier-I and Tier-II. All Government employees who started service on or after January 1, 2004, for contributions to Tier-I are compulsory (in the initial phase armed forces personnel were excluded) where a government employee has to contribute 10% of their basic salary along with Dearness Allowance (DA) and equally Government will match this contribution. On the other hand, those who are not Government employees do not have matching contributions from the Government. Conversely, Tier II is a matter of the choice of the Government employees, not compulsory. One can exit Tier-I of the Scheme when he/she is 60 years old. Upon exit, to ensure an annuity for the lifetime of the employee and their dependent parents or spouse, the allocation of 40% of their pension wealth to purchase an annuity from a Life Insurance Company-LIC regulated by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) is compulsory for them. The rest of the pension wealth will be funded as a lump sum. Government employees withdraw from the scheme before reaching 60 years of age, the compulsory annuitization obligation rises to 80% of the pension wealth (https://pensionersportal.gov.in/, n.d.).

In a study, Fang and Feng (2018) found that China's public pension system is moving towards universal coverage, featuring four distinct programs that were designed to serve the entire eligible population. The first two programs cater to employed individuals in both firms and the government sector, while the latter two are aimed at non-employed persons in rural and urban settings. In 2014, the Urban Resident Pension (URP) and the New Rural Pension (NRP) were unified into a cohesive Resident Pension system by the State Council. Basic Old-age Insurance (BOAI) was made the standardized program for all employees of the urban sector by incorporating the Public Employee Pension (PEP) into the Basic Old-age Insurance (BOAI) in 2015. BOAI is structured for employees who are in profit-driven enterprises, containing a compulsory scheme that requires employers to add 20% of wages. The retirement eligibility age is 60 for male workers, 55 for female white-collar workers, and 50 for female blue-collar workers. Offering an average pension replacement ratio of 80-90% of pre-retirement earnings, PEP is explicitly intended for civil servants and personnel in non-profit governmental organizations, and the retirement age was established for women at 55 and men at 60. Both NRP and URP are voluntary programs. With contributions allocated to personal accounts, these two are financed through government support. Benefits involve a basic pension and a pension derived from the individual account and persons with a 15-year contribution history are qualified for a basic pension upon getting 60 years old (Fang & Feng, 2018).

Hussein, n.d. in his study found that in Malaysia, the Employee's Provident Fund, also known as Kumpulan Wang Simpanan Pekerja (KWSP) is the primary retirement savings scheme for the private sector which was established in 1951 and it is among the oldest provident funds in the world. With a minimum contribution rate of 11% for employees and 12% for employers for those earning over RM 5,000 monthly, this fund requires contributions from both employees and employers. At the age of 50 members are allowed for partial withdrawals and full withdrawals at 55 but until the member reaches 60, compulsory contributions made after the age of 55 are retained. Dividends on savings are distributed until the age of 100 and contributions can be made until the age of 80. Moreover, along with lifelong survivorship benefits and subsidized healthcare, the public service pension system (funded through general taxation) offers civil service retirees benefits amounting to 60% of their final salary. Within this system, at present, there are 743,000 pension beneficiaries. The Pensions Ordinance of 1951 replaced the earlier legislation governing the Federated Malay States. It was subsequently succeeded by the Pensions Act of 1980. Through the years, several changes have been made, including changes to the mandatory retirement age, lump sum gratuity, cash compensation for unused leave, and pension adjustments in 1980. The important components of the recent scheme contain a monthly service pension, a lump sum gratuity payment, financial compensation for unused leave, and a disability pension for civil servants incapacitated while accomplishing duties, with a maximum benefit reaching 50% of the final salary received (Hussein, n.d.).

Another study found that in Japan all registered residents 20 to 59 years old are mandatory to contribute in the National Pension system. Based on individual status this system is divided into three categories where upon entering Japan, individuals are classified as Category I insured persons until they qualify for either Category II or III status. Besides, foreign nationals with certain visas, for example, those for medical purposes or long-term tourism, are disallowed for coverage and cannot register as Category I or III insured persons. All registered residents aged 20 to 59 who do not meet the criteria for Category II or III are included in category I insured persons which consist of self-employed individuals, students, and those involved in agriculture, forestry, or fishing. Excluding individuals aged 70 and above who are eligible for pensions due to old age or retirement, those who are enrolled in the Employees' Pension Insurance System-EPIS or Mutual Aid Associations are included in category II insured persons. One must live in Japan to be eligible for Category III. The monthly contribution for the National Pension is set at ¥16,980 for the fiscal year 2024. If it fulfills legal criteria or income is below a designated threshold one may apply for exemptions. For this fiscal year 2024, the exemption categories and their parallel contribution per month amounts include full exemption, three-quarters exemption (¥4,250), half exemption (¥8,490), and one-quarter exemption (¥12,740). Furthermore, periods of full exemption before March 2009 are credited as one-third of the duration for which full contributions were made (National Pension System, 2024).

In many countries, including Australia, Chile, and Hong Kong SAR, pension systems are established by the government but are directed by private organizations. Choosing from a range of private pension fund managers, contributors in these pension schemes have the flexibility. The pension systems in China, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore are categorized as either defined contribution (DC) or notional defined contribution, whereas those in Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam fall under the defined benefit (DB) category. Usually, DC systems are funded, while DB systems are not. China's pension framework includes a DB element along with components that consist of DC and notional DC plans. In the Philippines, there is a minimum pension that offers further benefits for retired persons with low earnings (Park, 2014).

A well-developed pension system creates income security to the people under its coverage, a source of funds for developing sustainability of the economy, enabling available fund for the capital market. 186 countries provide at least one pension scheme to their elderly citizens in the form of periodic cash benefits (ILO, 2017). A variety of contributory and non-contributory schemes is being followed worldwide. A majority of countries have adopted either only contributory pension schemes or a mix of contributory and non-contributory means-tested pension schemes. Some countries have explored the possibility of expansion of contributory social pensions financed through payroll taxes. Some nations have financed pensions using government revenues. Most countries have a three-tiered pension system - the first tier is a basic scheme for the poor funded by the government; the second tier is for those who are employed and the third-tier pension is voluntary and designed for those with higher incomes who wish to invest more and earn higher pension income in their old age.

In this section of the report, based on an extensive literature review, we have analysed in detail the global standards and practices particularly relating to the pension systems.

Global legal standards

Initially we reviewed the global legal frameworks particularly related to pension systems and set the global legal standards in this. Particularly, ILO's multi-pillar pension model and the World Bank's five pillars model we found have set most appropriate legal standards regarding incorporation of private sector employers in the pension system. The following findings are found from the study report of BILS and Modiaal FNV entitled "Universal Pension Scheme in Bangladesh: Exploration of Potential Scopes for RMG Worker's Greater Inclusion" conducted by Md. Manirul Islam, Deputy Director, BILS:

Table: Global Legal Standards

| Legal documents | UPS -related standard -setting |
|---|---|
| SDG 1.3, SDG 3.8, SDG 5.4, SDG 8.5 and SDG 10.4. | SDG target 1.3 emphasizes the creation of a comprehensive social protection system based on the principle of universality. |
| The UN General Assembly Resolution 24/20 (Agenda Item 3), adopted by the Human Rights Council (2013) | Calls upon states to promote and ensure the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for older persons. |
| Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and cultural Rights 1966. | Recognized social security in old age as a basic human right. Article 22 of the UDHR reads, "Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security". Article 25 states that everyone has a right to necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of old age which is beyond his/her control. |
| ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), | Defines "basic income security, at least at a nationally defined minimum level, for older persons" as one of four social security guarantees comprising the social protection floor (ILO 2012). |
| ILO Multi -Pillar Pension Model (ILO, 2018) | Have proposed following principles for designing and reforming pension systems:<br>Principle 1: Universality<br>Principle 2: Social solidarity and collective financing<br>Principle 3: Adequacy and predictability of benefits<br>Principle 4: Overall and primary responsibility of the state<br>Principle 5: Non-discrimination, gender equality and responsiveness to special needs<br>Principle 6: Financial, fiscal and economic sustainability<br>Principle 7: Transparent and sound financial management and administration<br>Principle 8: Involvement of social partners and consultations with other stakeholders |
| World Bank | World Bank has prescribed a Five Pillar Pension Model<br>Zero pillar : a noncontributory zero pillar aims to provide all the elderly with a minimal level of protection;<br>First pillar: a mandatory contribution based on earnings aims to replace some portion of lifetime preretirement income;<br>Second pillar: a mandatory savings account with a defined contribution plan;<br>Third pillar: a voluntary savings, employer-sponsored benefit, a defined benefit, or a defined contribution<br>Fourth pillar: nonfinancial support such as health care or housing. |

We have studied in-depth quite a large number of pension schemes and systems currently in practice in different countries and regions. The following findings are accumulated from the study report of BILS and Modiaal FNV entitled "Universal Pension Scheme in Bangladesh: Exploration of Potential Scopes for RMG Worker's Greater Inclusion" conducted by Md. Manirul Islam, Deputy Director, BILS:

Table: Standards and Practices in Different Countries

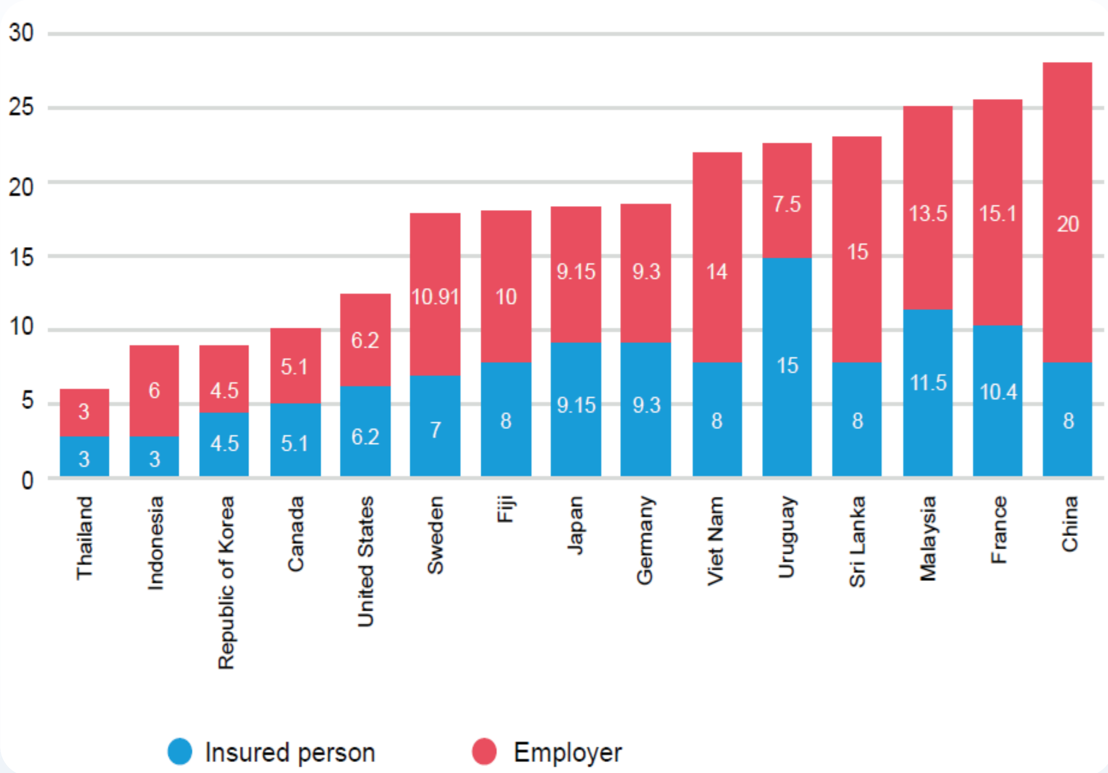
| Elements | Available design alternatives |
|---|---|
| Different types of pension systems | - Contributory pension scheme (Brazil, Uganda, Thailand)<br>- Mandatory contributory (Turkey, Uruguay -Domestic worker, Portugal, Brazil, Ghana )<br>- Voluntary contributory (where individuals can choose to contribute more, Brazil, Ghana, Rwanda )<br>- Non-contributory/tax-financed/Government sponsored pension (Netherland, Thailand, Canada, Japan, South Africa and Australia, USA, China )<br>- Pay As You Go ( Sweden/Pakistan)<br>- Notionally defined contribution: depends on contributions (China, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore )<br>- Subsidized pension (Korea, Austria, Finland, Germany )<br>- Includes some basic services like health and education<br>- Multi-pillar pension scheme: Tunisia has as many as 10 different pension schemes for different groups<br>- Three pillar pension scheme (Netherland, Korea, India)<br>- Integrated pension scheme<br>- Mandatory/compulsory enrollment (Egypt)<br>- Recovery-conditioned pensions work (the pensioner is required to return part or all of it out of other income receives during the pension-taking years (Sweden)<br>- Social assistance pensions: non-contributory old age pension (Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Canada, Iceland, Denmark)<br>- Universal (Canada, Russia) |
| Contribution options | - Defined contribution : China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore<br>- Employees directly make contributions<br>- Employers make social security contributions<br>- Government make social security contributions (Japan, Greece)<br>- Employers and employees combinedly make pension contributions (Ghana, Uganda, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Malaysia)<br>- Employees, employers and government combinedly make social security contributions (Morocco, Kuwait, Thailand)<br>- Flexible contribution (Denmark)<br>- Lower contribution with comparable benefits (Poland)<br>- Tax-financed contribution through general taxation<br>- Contribution payment start from a later date (Greece) |

| Elements | Available design alternatives |
|---|---|
| Investment consideration Funded/unfunded contributions | - Funded: invested by the government/organization/private enterprise to get the market rate of return.<br>- Unfunded: contributions/taxes are converted straight into benefits<br>(Pay as you go) |
| Scope of coverage | - Universal: All, residence/nationality requirements (New Zealand, Mauritius, Namibia, Botswana, Bolivia, Nepal, Samoa and Brunei.]<br>- Only employees are covered<br>- Sector-specific schemes<br>- Spouses/families of the insured are covered<br>- Cover only self -employed/informal sector workers |
| Eligibility | - Those pass a means -test<br>- Contribution requirement. Comparatively lower contribution requirement for women.<br>- Earning requirement<br>- Older than a certain age<br>- Specific years of contribution<br>- Specific age for contribution<br>- Continuous employment<br>- Employment with break (Uruguay)<br>- Residence -based (Norway, Netherland) |
| Incentives/ opportunities | - Tax break on occupational and private pension<br>- Tax relief<br>- Subsidies to saving<br>- Allow labour mobility (Uruguay)<br>- Loan facilities are available from a period ( Rwanda, Singapore).<br>- Withdrawals (entire or partial) are allowed from a period. |

| Elements | Available design alternatives |
|---|---|
| Benefits/returns | - Defined benefit: depends on earnings (Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam, Portugal )<br>- Defined contribution: depends on contributions ( China, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore )<br>- Contributions: depends on wages, prices and/or sustainability of the scheme<br>- Benefits adjusted for periods of unemployment, sickness, or leave<br>- Supplements for dependents<br>- Non-cash benefits alongside basic pension like healthcare (OECD countries<br>- Flat rate pension (Netherland)<br>- A guaranteed minimum pension<br>- Pension levels are automatically adjusted for changes in the cost of living or wage inflation<br>- Minimum pension levels determination relates to the poverty line, |
| Constraints common in different countries | - Budget constraint<br>- Lack of institutional set up<br>- Lack of data<br>- Social factors<br>- Absence of reliable and accurate records of individual income<br>- Lack of administrative capacity<br>- Corruption<br>- Only a few taxpayers |
| Miscellaneous good practices | - Pension level increases when someone has a spouse or children under the age of 18 (Austria).<br>- In Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, the state covers any possible deficit of the pension system through a tax payers fund.<br>- State 'Buffer funds' available in many countries to make up any shortfall (Jordan, Egypt, 1/3rd of the GDP)<br>- In many countries, the public pension fund is a major source of financing government debt.<br>- Self-assessment of income: In Greece, Poland, Portugal and Spain, low income groups are allowed to self-assess their income.<br>- In Poland, some low earner groups pay substantially lower contributions than employees but are offered comparable pension benefits.<br>- The Greek government supports two-thirds of total pension finance for the self-employed groups.<br>- Surplus wealth produced by Norwegian petroleum is used by that nation to fund future pension liabilities. |

Our review finds that among others, both employers and employees' contribution in a contributory scheme particularly in the private sector is a massive practice worldwide. Employer's contribution in majority countries having such a practice is reviewed higher than employee's contribution. Out of 15 countries, data available from literature, in 8 countries employers pay more often two/three times higher in the pension fund than employees (see figure below).

Figure: Contribution rates for pensions, selected country, latest year




Source: OECD (2019)

# SECTION-V

# Findings of the Study

## Discussions of the Major Findings

### Socio-demographic Attributes of the Respondents

### Age-wise Category of the Respondents

In RMG sector it was found that the maximum workers about 58% have completed their primary level of education and only 2% workers are graduated. Among the kindergarten teachers the maximum 81% have completed graduation and 18.7% have completed higher secondary level. In case of domestic workers, the maximum workers 66.3% are illiterate, while only 3.3% have completed their secondary level of education. In case of sales girls, the maximum workers 31% have completed higher secondary level of education and only 4% are graduated and 20% are illiterate.

Table 1: Age of the Respondents

| Age Group | Respondents | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | RMG Workers | | Kindergarten School Teachers | | Domestic Workers | | Sales Girls | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Below 18 | 3 | 3.0 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 16 | 16.0 |
| 18-25 | 41 | 41.0 | 24 | 24.0 | 11 | 11.0 | 34 | 34.0 |
| 25-35 | 37 | 37.0 | 15 | 15.0 | 26 | 26.0 | 28 | 28.0 |
| 35-45 | 19 | 19.0 | 37 | 37.0 | 51 | 51.0 | 22 | 22.0 |
| 45-55 | 0 | 0.00 | 24 | 24.0 | 12 | 12.0 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Total | 100 | 100.0 | 100 | 100.0 | 100 | 100.0 | 100 | 100.0 |

In RMG sector the lowest 3% workers are below 18 years old and the maximum 41% workers belong to the age group 18-25 years. Where in Kindergarten 24% workers belong to the age group 18-25 and 45-55 years. Study also found that the lowest 11% domestic workers belong to the age group 18-25 years, where maximum 51% domestic workers belong to the age group 35-45 years and the lowest 16% sales girls are below 18 years old, where 34% sales girls belong to the age group 18-25 years.

## Educational Status of the Respondents

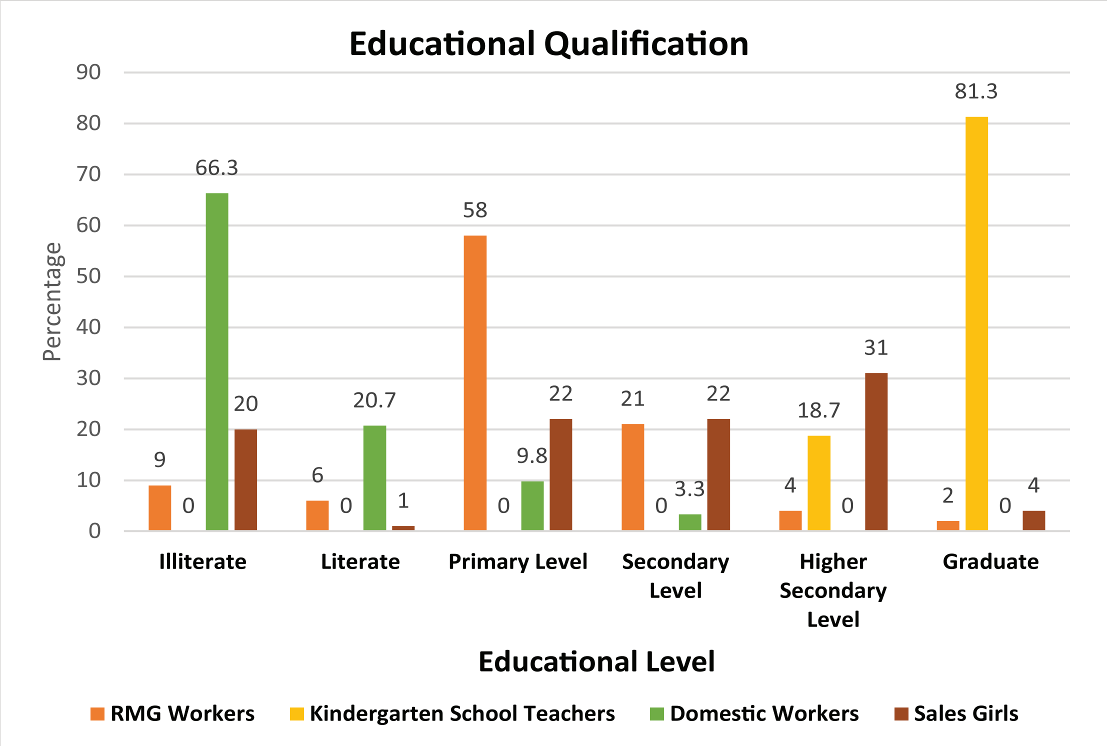



Figure 1: Educational Qualifications of the Workers

## Working Conditions of the Respondents

### Work Experience of the Respondents

Table 2: Work Experience of the Respondents

| Working Experience | Category of Respondents | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | RMG Workers | | Kindergarten School Teachers | | Domestic Workers | | Sales Girls | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| 0-5 | 71 | 74.7 | 69 | 69.0 | 37 | 44.6 | 53 | 53.0 |
| 5-10 | 16 | 16.8 | 21 | 21.0 | 14 | 16.9 | 47 | 47.0 |
| 10-15 | 7 | 7.4 | 6 | 6.0 | 18 | 21.7 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 15-20 | 1 | 1.1 | 4 | 4.0 | 14 | 16.9 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Total | 95 | 100.0 | 100 | 100.0 | 83 | 100.0 | 100 | 100.0 |

In RMG sector it is found that the maximum about 74.4% workers possess work experience between 0-5 years. This similar tendency is observed among kindergarten teachers, domestic workers, and sales girls, who largely fall within the same group of 0 to 5 years work experience. Then the second majority of workers fall in the group of 5 to 10 work experience where 16.8%, 21%, 16.9% and 47% are RMG workers, kindergarten workers, domestic workers and sales girls respectfully.

### Types of Appointment of the Workers

Table 3: Appointment Types of the Respondents

| Appointment Types | Respondents | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | RMG Workers | | Kindergarten School Teachers | | Domestic Workers | | Sales Girls | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Temporary | 74 | 74.0 | 83 | 90.2 | 78 | 83.9 | 59 | 59 |
| Permanent | 20 | 20.0 | 5 | 5.4 | 15 | 16.1 | 41 | 41 |
| Permanent Piece Rate | 3 | 3.0 | 4 | 4.3 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Temporary Piece Rate | 3 | 3.0 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Total | 100 | 100.0 | 92 | 100.0 | 93 | 100.0 | 100 | 100.0 |

In RMG sector it is found that the maximum about 74% workers work as a temporary basis, only 20% are working as a permanent basis. On the other hand, 90.2% kindergarten school teachers are working as temporary basis and 5.4 % are working as permanent teacher; 83.9% domestic workers are working as temporary basis and 16.1% are working as permanent worker; 59% sales workers are working as temporary basis and 41% are working as permanent worker. Study shows that only a few workers are working as permanent workers while the maximum workers are working as temporary basis. They are lack of job security.

## Status of Salary of the Respondents

Table 4: Monthly Salary of the Respondents

| Salary | Respondents | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | RMG Workers | | Kindergarten School Teachers | | Domestic Workers | | Sales Girls | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| 0-5000 | 2 | 2.0 | 61 | 61.0 | 28 | 28.0 | 29 | 29.0 |
| 5001-10000 | 55 | 55.0 | 36 | 36.0 | 72 | 72.0 | 42 | 42.0 |
| 10001-15000 | 39 | 39.0 | 1 | 1.0 | 0 | 0.00 | 29 | 29.0 |
| 15001-20000 | 4 | 4.0 | 2 | 2.0 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Total | 100 | 100.0 | 100 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100 | 100.0 |

It is found that the maximum workers about 55% of RMG workers receive monthly salaries ranging from 5001 to 10000 taka per month. On the other hand, the majority about 61% of kindergarten school teachers get a salary of up to 5000 takas, while the majority about 72% of domestic workers' monthly salary ranges from 5001 to 10000 taka, and the maximum 42% of sales girls salary ranges from 5001 to 10000 taka per month. Additionally, only 4% of RMG workers and 2% of kindergarten school teachers get a salary from 15001 to 20000 taka monthly, and notably, the domestic workers and the sales girls are not attaining this salary level.

## Status of Savings

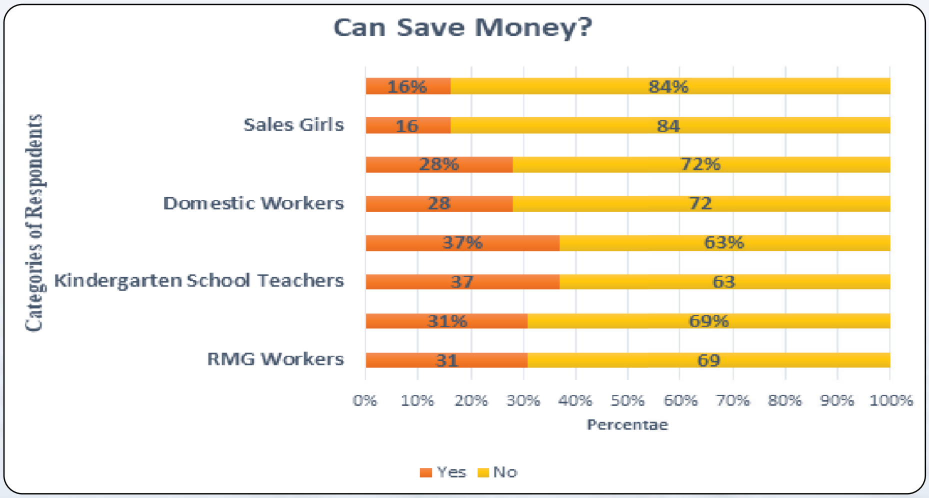



Figure 2: Workers Ability of Saving Money after Expenditure

This research found that the majority 69% of RMG workers, 63% of kindergarten workers, 72% of domestic workers, and 84% of sales girls are unable to save money for their future security. Only 31% of RMG workers, 37% of kindergarten workers, 28% of domestic workers, and 16% of sales girls can save money for their future. Among them the condition of sales girls is deplorable.

## Status of the Amount of Savings

Table 5: Amount of Savings of the Respondents

| Savings | Respondents | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | RMG Workers | | Kindergarten School Teachers | | Domestic Workers | | Sales Girls | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| 0-500 | 11 | 35.5 | 13 | 43.3 | 23 | 65.7 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 501-1000 | 11 | 35.5 | 11 | 36.7 | 6 | 17.1 | 16 | 94.12 |
| 1001-1500 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 1501-2000 | 6 | 19.4 | 4 | 13.3 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 2001-2500 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 6.7 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 2501-3000 | 2 | 6.5 | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 8.6 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 3001-3500 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 3501-4000 | 1 | 3.2 | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 8.6 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 4001 and above | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 1 | 5.88 |
| Total | 31 | 100.0 | 30 | 100.0 | 35 | 100.0 | 17 | 100.0 |

Among the workers capable of saving money, about 35.5% of RMG workers, 43.3% of kindergarten school teachers, and 65.7% of domestic workers can save money between 0 to 500 taka monthly. Maximum RMG workers about 35.5% can save money up to 500 taka and 501 to 1000 taka per month. On the other hand, maximum kindergarten school teachers about 43.3% can save only taka 0 to 500. Similarly, the maximum number of domestic workers about 65.7% can save only up to 500 taka. But maximum sales girls about 94.12% can save only taka 501 to 1000. Only a few workers can save above this range, which increases their anxiety about future financial security.

This research also finds that all of the garments workers and sales girls (100%) responded that they must need to save their money for future. But 11.5% kindergarten school teacher and 20.9% domestic workers responded that they need not to save money while a majority 88.5% kindergarten school teacher and 79.1% domestic workers responded that they must need to save money for their maintenance in future. It indicates that almost all of the workers need to save money for their future maintenance.

## Possibility of Pension Facility in Job

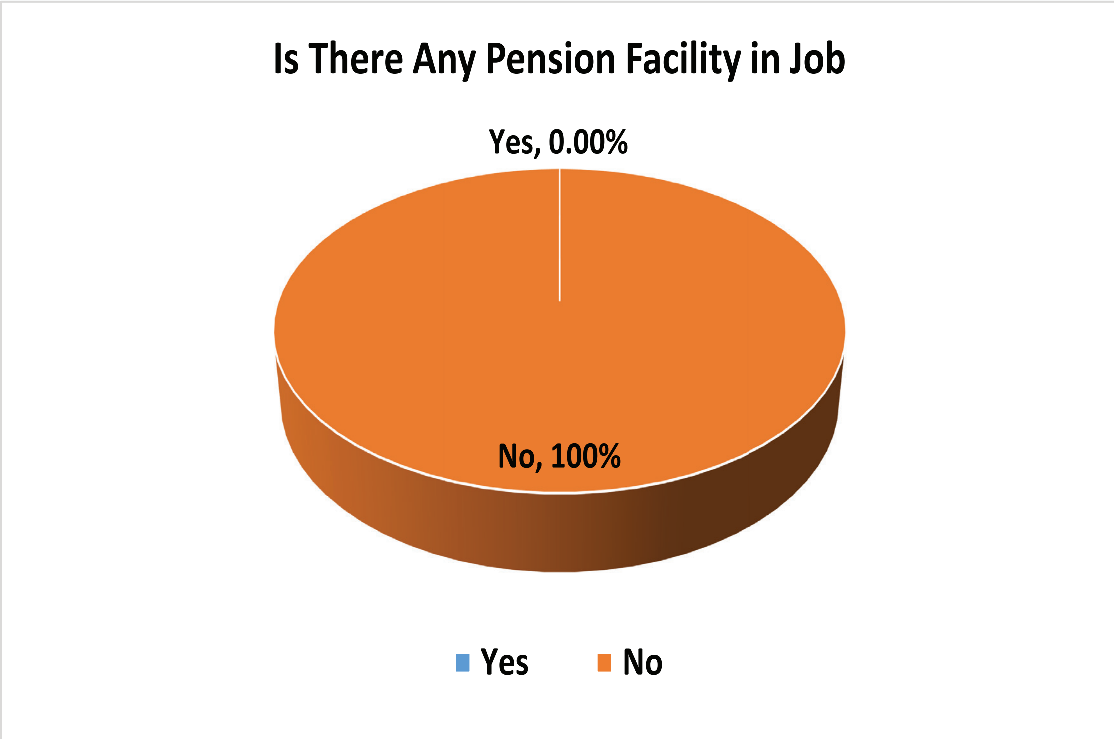



Figure 3: Availability of Pension System in Job

It is found that almost all of the workers (100%) in four sectors indicated that there is no pension facility available in their jobs, which raises extensive distress for them. If this facility exists, it will ensure the workers to guarantee a stable future.

### Awareness Level of Pension Scheme

This research finds that only 31% of RMG workers, 44.3% of kindergarten school teachers, 6.6% of domestic workers, and 2% of sales girls are aware of the universal pension scheme. Among these four sectors, the percentage of kindergarten teachers with an understanding of the scheme is the highest. It is concerning that a significant majority 98% of sales girls, 93.4% of domestic workers, 69% of RMG workers, and 55.7% of kindergarten school teachers do not have any knowledge about the pension scheme, which indicates the need to be aware of them universal pension scheme.

**Table 6: Sources of Getting Knowledge about Pension Scheme**

| Sources | Respondents | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | RMG Workers | | Kindergarten School Teachers | | Domestic Workers | | Sales Girls | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| **Radio/TV** | 3 | 9.7 | 14 | 28.6 | 1 | 14.29 | 1 | 25 |
| **Facebook** | 19 | 61.3 | 13 | 26.5 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| **Person** | 5 | 16.1 | 16 | 32.7 | 6 | 85.71 | 1 | 25 |
| **Trade Union** | 0 | 0.00 | 1 | 2.0 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| **Office Personnel** | 1 | 3.2 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 1 | 25 |
| **Friends/Colleagues** | 3 | 9.7 | 5.0 | 10.2 | 0 | 0.00 | 1 | 25 |
| **Total** | 31 | 100.0 | 49.0 | 100.0 | 7 | 100 | 4 | 100 |

It is also found that among the workers who know about universal pension scheme about 61.3% RMG workers have come to learn about universal pension scheme from Facebook, while 32.7% kindergarten school teachers and 85.71% domestic workers know about this from other individuals. Additionally, 25% sales girls know about this from radio/television, another 25% from other people, 25% from official personnel and the remaining 25% from friends/colleagues.

## Capability to Contribute to a Pension Scheme

Figure 7: Number of Workers Capable to Contribute to Pension Scheme or Not

| Capability to Contribute | Respondents | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | RMG Workers | | Kindergarten School Teachers | | Domestic Workers | | Sales Girls | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Yes | 41 | 41.0 | 35 | 38.0 | 57 | 62.6 | 4 | 4.0 |
| No | 59 | 59.0 | 57 | 62.0 | 34 | 37.4 | 95 | 96.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100.0 | 92 | 100.0 | 91 | 100.0 | 99 | 100.0 |

The research found that 41% of RMG workers, 38% of kindergarten school teachers, 62% of domestic workers, and 4% of sales girls are capable of contributing to the pension scheme. In contrast, 59% of RMG workers, 62% of kindergarten school teachers, 37.4% of domestic workers, and 96% of sales girls are not capable of contributing to the pension scheme. This is a matter of great concern because lacking ability to contribute to the scheme poses difficulty for them to participate in the universal pension scheme.

### Expectation to Someone to Pay Monthly Installment

Table 8: Expectation of Someone to Pay Monthly Installment

| Expectation from Whom | Respondents | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | RMG Workers | | Kindergarten School Teachers | | Domestic Workers | | Sales Girls | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Employer | 20 | 23.3 | 8 | 9.2 | 0 | 0.00 | 4 | 4.1 |
| Government | 20 | 23.3 | 16 | 18.4 | 64 | 95.5 | 79 | 81.4 |
| Increasing Salary | 46 | 53.5 | 59 | 67.8 | 3 | 4.5 | 14 | 14.4 |
| Others | 0 | 0.00 | 4 | 4.6 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| **Total** | 86 | 100.0 | 87 | 100.0 | 67 | 100.0 | 97 | 100.0 |

Among the workers who want to participate in the universal pension scheme but are unable to afford it, in that case, 23.3% of RMG workers prefer the employer and another 23.3% of RMG workers prefer the government to pay the monthly installments of the pension scheme. 18.4% of kindergarten school teachers, 95.5% of domestic workers, and 81.4% of sales girls expect the government to pay their installments, while 53.5% of RMG workers, 67.8% of kindergarten school teachers, 4.5% of domestic workers and 14.4% sales girls expect to increase their salary so that they will be able to maintain their installment by themselves.

### Advantages, Disadvantages of Pension Scheme and Reliance on Pension Scheme

Table 9: Advantages, Disadvantages of Pension Scheme and Reliance on Pension Scheme

| Categories | Respondents | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | RMG Workers | | Kindergarten School Teachers | | Domestic Workers | | Sales Girls | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| **Advantages of Pension Scheme** | | | | | | | | |
| Old Age Security | 57 | 57.0 | 40 | 43.5 | 35 | 38.5 | 29 | 29.3 |
| Securing Own Livelihoods | 20 | 20.0 | 10 | 10.9 | 53 | 58.2 | 65 | 65.7 |
| Self-reliance | 16 | 16.0 | 21 | 22.8 | 3 | 3.3 | 1 | 1.0 |
| Future Self-Employment | 7 | 7.0 | 21 | 22.8 | 0 | 0.00 | 4 | 4.0 |
| **Total** | 100 | 100.0 | 92 | 100.0 | 91 | 100.0 | 99 | 100.0 |

| Disadvantages of Pension Scheme | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Less Job Security | 42 | 42.0 | 14 | 15.2 | 48 | 52.7 | 25 | 25.3 |
| Uncertainty to continue premium | 20 | 20.0 | 61 | 66.3 | 18 | 19.8 | 27 | 27.3 |
| Fear to financial loss | 25 | 25.0 | 12 | 13.0 | 22 | 24.2 | 41 | 41.4 |
| Others | 13 | 13.3 | 5 | 5.4 | 3 | 3.3 | 6 | 6.1 |
| **Total** | 100 | 100.0 | 92 | 100.0 | 91 | 100.0 | 99 | 100.0 |
| **Reliance on Pension Scheme** | | | | | | | | |
| Totally Confident | 32 | 32.0 | 14 | 15.2 | 34 | 37.4 | 16 | 16.2 |
| Fairly Reliable | 60 | 60.0 | 76 | 82.6 | 32 | 35.2 | 35 | 35.4 |
| No Confidence | 8 | 8.0 | 2 | 2.2 | 25 | 27.5 | 48 | 48.5 |
| **Total** | 100 | 100.0 | 92 | 100.0 | 91 | 100.0 | 99 | 100.0 |

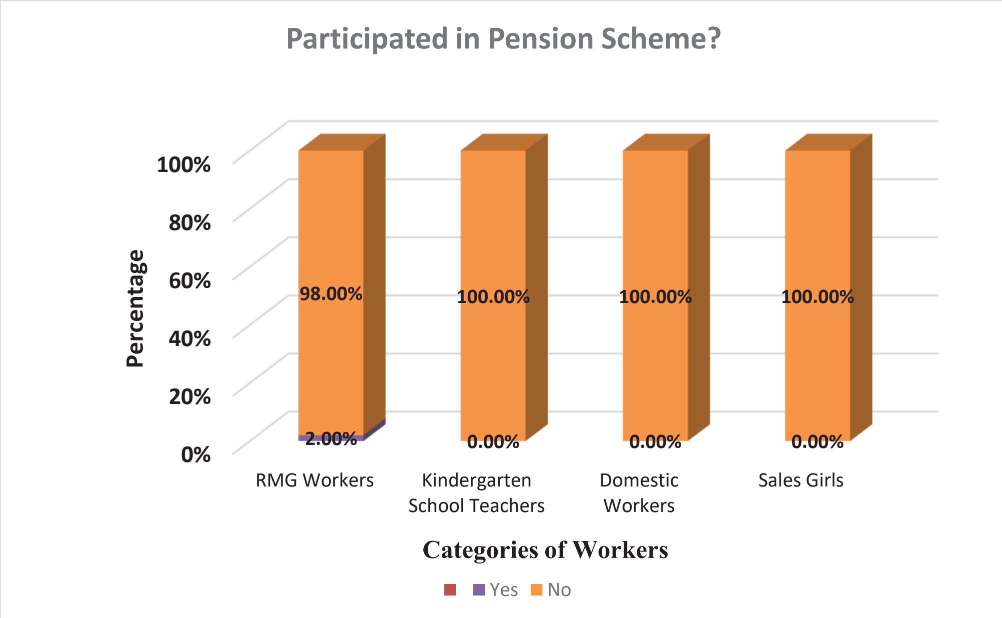
This research finds several benefits associated with universal pension scheme. Where 57% RMG workers mentioned it is necessary for their old age security, while 43.5% kindergarten school teachers, 38.5% domestic workers, 29.3% sales girls shared the same theme. On the other side, 65.7% sales girls mentioned that it is necessary for securing their own livelihoods and 58.2% domestic workers, 20% RMG workers, 10.9% kindergarten school teachers shared the same theme. Among the kindergarten school teachers 22.8% shared it is needed for their self-reliance and another 22.8% shared its necessity for their future self-employment.

This research also finds some disadvantages associated with universal pension scheme. Where 52.7% domestic workers mentioned that as they have less job security so that they have fear if they lose their job then how they would maintain the pension scheme and 42.0% RMG workers, 25.3% sales girls, 15.2% kindergarten school teachers shared the same theme. On the other side, 66.3% kindergarten school teachers mentioned that it is uncertain about continuing their premium as their income is low and 19.8% domestic workers, 20% RMG workers, 27.3% sales girls shared the same issue. Importantly, 41.4% sales girls mentioned about their anxiety to financial loss, and 25% RMG workers, 24.2% domestic workers and 13% kindergarten school teachers shared the similar issue.

In RMG sector 32.0% workers are found that they are totally confident about getting the pension in future if they participate in pension scheme and 37.4% domestic workers, 16.2% sales girls, 15.2% kindergarten school teachers are also quite confident about it. Additionally, 82.6% kindergarten school teachers, 60.0% RMG workers, 35.4% sales girls and 35.2% domestic workers are fairly reliable about getting pension in future. It is a matter of concern that 48.5% sales girls are found that they have no confidence about getting pension in future, while this percentage is low in other sectors, for example, 27.5% domestic workers, 8.0% RMG workers and 2.2% kindergarten school teachers mentioned the same issue.

## Participation in Pension Scheme

Figure 4: Do You Participate in Any Pension Scheme?




It is found that maximum workers answered that they did not participate in any pension scheme where among the workers who answered the percentage for kindergarten school teachers, domestic workers, sales girls are 100% and for RMG workers is 98.0%. Only 2.0% RMG workers are found who participated in any pension scheme.

## Interest to Participate in Pension Scheme

Table 10: Interested to Participate in Pension Scheme

| Interested to Participate | Category of Respondents | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | RMG Workers | | Kindergarten School Teachers | | Domestic Workers | | Sales Girls | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| **Yes** | 80 | 81.6 | 76 | 82.6 | 83 | 83.0 | 92 | 93.9 |
| **No** | 18 | 18.4 | 16 | 17.4 | 17 | 17.0 | 6 | 6.1 |
| **Total** | 98 | 100.0 | 92 | 100.0 | 100 | 100.0 | 98 | 100.0 |

Maximum workers are found that they are interested to participate in pension scheme where among the workers who answered the percentage for kindergarten school teachers, domestic workers, sales girls are 81.6%, 82.6%, 83.0%, 93.9% respectfully. It is also found that 18.4% RMG workers, 17.4% kindergarten school teachers, 17.0% domestic workers and 6.1% sales girls are found who have no interest to participate in any pension scheme.

### Barriers in Participating in Pension Scheme

It is found that 99% of RMG workers encounter no barriers to participating in pension schemes. Likewise, 92.0% of kindergarten school teachers, 98% domestic workers 97.0% sales girls also do not face any obstacles to participate in pension scheme.

### Reasons for Non Participation in Pension Scheme

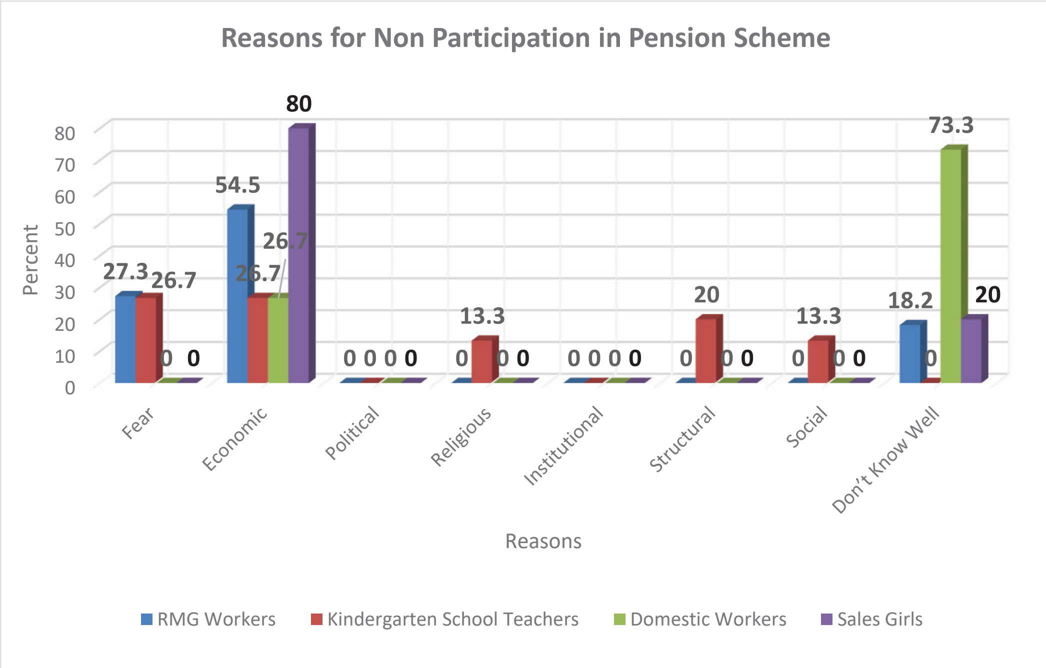



Figure 5: Reasons for Non-Participation in Pension Scheme

Researchers found that there are some reasons behind the non-participation of workers in pension schemes. 54.5% of RMG workers face economic problems to participate, 27.3% shared their fear and 18% shared that they do not know about the universal pension scheme well. Among the kindergarten school teachers 26.7% shared about economic problems, another 26.7% shared about fear, 13.3% mentioned religious causes, and another 13.3% mentioned about social causes. Among the domestic workers, 73.3% mentioned that they did not know about the pension scheme well and 26.7% mentioned economic causes, while 80.0% of sales girls shared about economic reasons and 20.0% shared that they did not know about the pension scheme well.

### Preference for the Payment Means of Premium

Workers prefer the means to pay their premium which will be easier for them. 47.5% of RMG workers prefer to pay through mobile phone, 35.6% prefer bank and 15.3% prefer arrangements at workplace. Preferences are almost similar to these four sectors of workers. 60.9% of kindergarten school teachers prefer to bank, 26.1% prefer mobile phone, 2.9% prefer post office and 10.1% prefer arrangements at the workplace. 67.31% of domestic workers prefer banks while 32.69% prefer mobile phones. Additionally, 77.9% of sales girls prefer mobile phones and 15.1% prefer banks.

### Preferable Pension System

Table 11: Preferable Pension System

| Pension System | Respondents | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | RMG Workers | | Kindergarten School Teachers | | Domestic Workers | | Sales Girls | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Equal Pension for All | 32 | 32.0 | 64 | 70.3 | 58 | 63.7 | 12 | 12.2 |
| Pension According to Job Status | 68 | 68.0 | 27 | 29.7 | 33 | 36.3 | 86 | 87.8 |
| **Total** | 100 | 100.0 | 91 | 100.0 | 91 | 100.0 | 98 | 100.0 |

This research finds that 68.0% of RMG workers prefer the distribution of pension according to their job status and 32.0% prefer equal pension for all. 70.3% of kindergarten school teachers prefer equal pension for all and 29.7% prefer according to their job status. 63.7% of domestic workers prefer equal pension for all and 36.6% prefer according to their job status. 12.2% sales girls prefer equal pension for all and 87.8% prefer according to their job status.

## Concern for Trade Union among the Workers

### Level of Awareness among Trade Union Leaders about UPS

Researchers find that among the workers who answered a maximum of about 62.0% RMG workers, 68.5% kindergarten school teachers, 98.0% sales girls, and all the domestic workers do not have any knowledge about trade unions. Only 38.0% of RMG workers, 31.5% of kindergarten school teachers, and 2.0% of sales girls have a minimum level of knowledge about trade unions.

### Membership of a Trade Union or Any Welfare Association

Researchers find that among the workers who answered a maximum of about 91.0% RMG workers, 97.8% kindergarten school teachers, 99.0% sales girls, and almost all the domestic workers are not members of trade unions or any welfare association. Only 9% of RMG workers, 2.2% of kindergarten school teachers, and 1.0% of sales girls are members of trade unions or any welfare association. It is also found that only 3.0% of RMG workers are members of trade unions, and 2.0% are members of welfare associations. Only 2% of kindergarten school teachers are members of welfare associations and 1% of sales girls are members of different associations whereas domestic workers are not found in any union or association.

Table 12: Membership of Trade Union & Welfare Association and Reasons behind Non-Participation in Trade Union

| Category of Workers | | Members of Trade Union & Welfare Association | Reasons for Non-Participation in Trade Union | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | No | **Absent of Trade Union at the Workplace** | **Not Interested** | **For Obstacles & Threat** |
| RMG Workers | Number | 91 | 79 | 11 | 1 |
| | % | 91.0 | 86.81 | 12.09 | 1.10 |
| Kindergarten School Teachers | Number | 90 | 82 | 4 | 4 |
| | % | 97.8 | 91.12 | 4.44 | 4.44 |
| Domestic Workers | Number | 91 | 73 | 18 | 0 |
| | % | 100.0% | 80.22 | 19.78 | 0.00 |
| Sales Girls | Number | 99.0 | 53 | 46 | 0 |
| | % | 99.0% | 53.53 | 46.46 | 0.00 |

## Reasons behind Non-Participation in Trade Union

The table above shows that the workers who are not members of trade unions mentioned some reasons behind their non-participation in trade unions. 86.81% of RMG workers, 91.12% of kindergarten school teachers, 53.53% of sales girls, and almost 80.22% of domestic workers mentioned that at the workplace trade union is absent, while 12.09% of RMG workers, 4.44% of kindergarten school teachers, 19.78% domestic workers and 46.46% sales girls do not have the interest to participate in a trade union.

## Interest to Participate in Trade Union

Table 13: Interest to Participate in Trade Union

| **Interested** | **Respondents** | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **RMG Workers** | | **Kindergarten School Teachers** | | **Domestic Workers** | | **Sales Girls** | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Yes | 58 | 58.0 | 35 | 38.0 | 64 | 70.3 | 7 | 7.1 |
| No | 42 | 42.0 | 57 | 62.0 | 27 | 29.7 | 91 | 92.9 |
| **Total** | 100 | 100.0 | 92 | 100.0 | 91 | 100.0 | 98 | 100.0 |

It is found that 58.0% of RMG workers, 38.0% of kindergarten school teachers, 70.3% of Domestic Workers, and 7.1% of sales girls have an interest in participating in trade unions. While a majority 92.9% of sales girls and 62.0% of kindergarten school teachers do not have an interest in participating in trade unions.

Among the workers who know about trade unions 65.0% of RMG workers answered that if they participate in a trade union they will be benefitted and their rights will be protected. 50.5% of kindergarten school teachers, 90.1% of domestic workers, and 10.1% sales girls shared a similar view. In contrast, 89.9% of domestic workers, 49.5% of kindergarten school teachers, and 35.0% of RMG workers do not think that if they participate in trade unions they will benefit and their rights will be protected. This shows a different view on the side of sales girls where only 9.9% of sales workers feel so.

### Necessity and Role of Trade Union in Implementing Universal Pension Scheme

Researchers found that 65.0% of RMG workers, 50.5% of kindergarten school teachers, 81.3% of domestic workers, and 9.1% sales girls consider the importance of having a trade union or worker representative in the management of pension schemes. While 90.9% of sales workers do not think so.

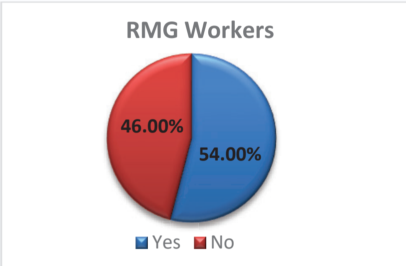



Figure 6: Is There Any Role of Trade Union in Implementing Universal Pension Scheme

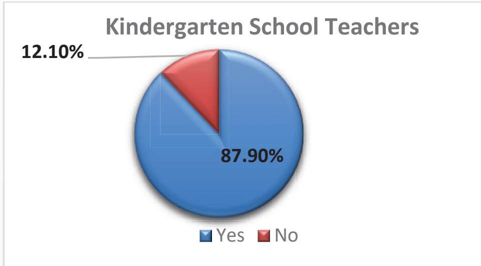



Figure 7: Is There Any Role of Trade Union in Implementing Universal Pension Scheme

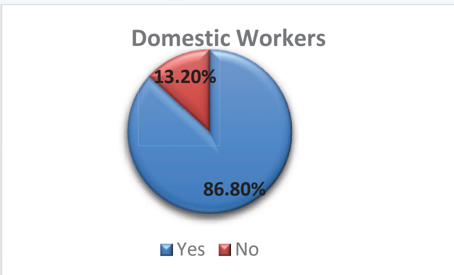



Figure 8: Is There Any Role of Trade Union in Implementing Universal Pension Scheme

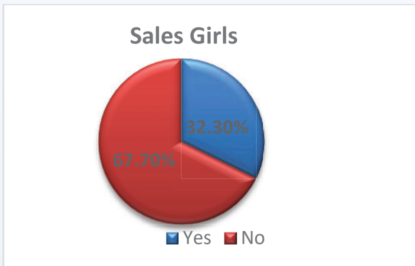



Figure 9: Is There Any Role of Trade Union in Implementing Universal Pension Scheme

These charts show that 54.0% of RMG workers, 87.9% of kindergarten school teachers, 86.8% of domestic workers, and 32.3% sales girls feel that trade unions play a significant role in the implementation of a universal pension scheme. While 67.7% of sales workers, 46.0% of RMG workers, 13.2% of domestic workers, and 12.1% of kindergarten school teachers do not think so.

## Role of Trade Union in Implementing Universal Pension Scheme

Table 14: Role of Trade Union in Implementing Universal Pension Scheme

| Role | Respondents | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | RMG Workers | | Kindergarten School Teachers | | Domestic Workers | | Sales Girls | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| To Aware Workers | 31 | 55.4 | 34 | 82.93 | 44 | 50.0 | 6 | 11.11 |
| Bargaining with Employers | 15 | 26.8 | 4 | 9.75 | 23 | 26.1 | 3 | 5.56 |
| Others | 10 | 17.9 | 3 | 7.32 | 21 | 23.9 | 45 | 83.33 |
| **Total** | 56 | 100.0 | 41 | 100.0 | 88 | 100.0 | 54 | 100.0 |

Trade unions can play a significant role in the implementation of a universal pension scheme. 55.4% RMG workers, 82.93% kindergarten school teachers, 50.0% domestic workers, and 11.11% sales girls' opinion that trade union can create awareness about the pension scheme among workers, while 26.8% RMG workers, 9.75% kindergarten school teachers, 26.1% domestic workers and 5.56% sales girls mentioned that trade union can bargain with employers so that the workers can be benefitted in case increasing salary and maintaining the pension system.

# SECTION-VI

## Feedback from the Key Respondents

The Research team has interviewed high officials of MoLE, DoL, DIFE, MoSW, CSO, and RMG female workers, Kindergarten Female Teachers, sales girls, and Female Domestic Workers, as well as Trade Union Representatives for in-depth and details information regarding the existing situation and range of capacity of the women workers of the concerned four sectors in the existing Universal Pension Scheme. Some of the findings are presented below as a sample basis:

**Key Informant Interview-01**

**Mr. Rajequzzaman Ratan**

President

Samajtantrik Sramik Front

**Challenges for the women workers to participate in the UPS:**

1. Since the pension scheme is contributory, there is a lack of interest in the participation of workers. In addition, the financial capacity of the workers is also a factor.
2. The government has not had an effective exchange of views with the trade unions regarding the introduction of the pension scheme. The trade unions have not been involved in the implementation process either. No specific plan has been taken to address the difficulties that workers may face in joining the pension scheme, considering all the issues.
3. There is no retirement age for informal workers; again, garment workers are no longer seen in employment when they reach the age of 40/45. These issues have not been taken into consideration in this scheme. There is no provision for joining this scheme after 50 years, due to which a significant number of workers in the country are not able to join this scheme.
4. The workers have no clear idea about whether the money deposited by the workers before the age of 60 will be refunded or not.
5. The workers were not consulted or consulted on whether the pension scheme is suitable for the workers.

**Recommendations:**

1. Although the pension scheme is necessary for everyone, why is it not ensuring widespread participation in it? It needs to be investigated and analyzed, and government and private research institutions can come forward in this regard.
2. The job security of the workers needs to be ensured. Their minimum wage needs to be increased.
3. The government needs to conduct a responsible campaign mentioning the benefits of the pension scheme.
4. Policymakers need to know the details about the pension scheme of the country. We also need to know about the schemes of our neighboring countries.
5. It is necessary to find out how much monthly premium is reasonable for the workers, and this calculation needs to be done.

### Key Informant Interview-02

**Mr. Abul Hossain**
Advisor
National Women Domestic Workers Union- NDWWU

**Challenges for the women workers to participate in the UPS:**

1. Since the amount and time limit for premium payments are fixed, there is less opportunity for low-income workers and irregular-income workers to participate in pension schemes.
2. There is a crisis of trust among workers in government schemes, especially those where participation is subject to payment.

**Recommendations:**

1. In order to introduce a pension scheme suitable for the reality of Bangladesh in the light of the social security schemes prevalent in various countries including Germany and India, it is necessary to adopt the experiences of those countries and review the schemes in detail.
2. It is necessary to identify the advantages and disadvantages that the government is facing while implementing the pension scheme and to make an assessment and evaluation of how to eliminate various difficulties or situations by utilizing the advantages and to prepare work management based on that.
3. Make the fixed amount and time for workers to deposit money, i.e. make the fixed amount and time flexible so that they can deposit any amount of money at any time.
4. To gain people's trust in the pension scheme, the government should undertake special programs including extensive publicity programs. Special publicity programs on this issue need to be broadcasted in government and private media.
5. Focusing on four sectors, take up a pilot program based on a set time frame by the three parties: government, employers, and workers.
6. Work jointly with trade unions. Take initiatives to include workers who are members of trade unions in the pension scheme.
7. Make the responsibility of paying premiums to all workers who work in the institutional sector on the employers. In that case, keep an index in the name of the workers, as a result of which there will be no problem in depositing premiums in the name of the said worker even if the owner changes.

### Key Informant Interview-03

**Sanjida Sultana**
Additional Executive Director
Working Women

**Current Perspective/Deficiency to participate in UPS:**

1. Poor farmers and workers could open a bank account with 10 taka earlier, but now they cannot.
2. Workers, especially garment workers, have problems with their national voter identity cards. Many of them have errors in their identity cards. Many workers use other people's identity cards to get jobs because they are blacklisted in the BGMEA database. But they cannot be included in any government scheme with faulty identity cards. For these reasons, they cannot open accounts in banks and cannot participate in any government social security or support service programs like the pension scheme.

3. Workers are cheated by becoming members of various types of associations. They also consider the pension scheme to be a kind of association. As a result, workers are uncertain about whether they will get their money back after depositing money in the pension scheme. In other words, they still do not have 100% trust in the pension scheme.
4. Workers do not have a clear idea about the pension scheme. There is no comprehensive public awareness program by the government to inform workers about the benefits of the pension scheme. Besides, the government has not taken any initiative to explain to them what the process of workers' participation in the pension scheme is like.
5. Since garment workers are not self-employed and their minimum wage is Tk 12,500/-, they have to participate in the pension scheme Pragati Scheme (for employees of private organizations). The reality is that garment owners will not want to pay any extra money for workers in the pension scheme.

**Recommendations:**

1. The opportunity for workers to participate in the pension scheme should be made easier. The process through which workers are currently participating should be simplified by removing the complications. It costs about 1200 taka to open a bank account; workers cannot afford this amount of money. Therefore, provisions should be made in banks so that poor workers can open a bank account for 10 (ten) taka or free of cost.
2. Special initiatives should be taken so that garment workers or workers in other sectors whose national identity cards are defective can easily participate in the pension scheme and benefit from the government's social security programs.
3. It is necessary to take a mass awareness program or a comprehensive awareness program for workers about the benefits of the pension scheme.
4. There should be a comprehensive plan from the government to increase the confidence of workers in the pension scheme. Government officials should visit them frequently to teach them the process of participating in the pension scheme. The government should play a supportive role.
5. The government should issue special instructions to ensure that garment owners pay pension scheme premiums for workers.

**Key Informant Interview-04**

**Masum Billah Khan**
Law Officer, DIFE
Ministry of Labour and Employment-MOLE

**Question- 1) Are there any women worker-friendly pension schemes in any countries (our neighboring countries or other countries) that have similar socio-economic conditions as Bangladesh? If so, what are they? What is the legal framework there?**

**Answer to Question No. 01**

Women worker-friendly pension schemes and social security programs in neighboring countries or other countries that have socio-economic conditions like Bangladesh have tried to overcome the challenges of establishing gender equality and establishing dignity in society for women. Women worker-friendly pension schemes in neighboring and other countries are given below:

**(a) India: Atal Pension Yojana**

Through this pension scheme launched by the government, an attempt has been made to include workers in the informal sector, especially women workers. An opportunity has been made for women to contribute according to their age and income. The government provides grants with a certain portion of the contributors.

Moreover, the government has introduced pension systems for women workers in various sectors at the provincial level, such as: In Kerala, a pension system is in place for agricultural workers and the cashew nut sector.

(Self-employed Women's Pension Scheme, Kerala Social Security Pension Scheme, Pension for Women in Welfare Boards).

**(b) Indonesia: Jaminan Hari Tua (JHT)- Elderly Savings Scheme, Kartu Parakerja**

The Indonesian Savings Program (ISPP)-Old Age Savings Program, which is a voluntary program, has been made more accessible to women by relaxing the conditions for contributions for female workers, increasing maternity and family benefits such as maternity leave, health care and benefits for surviving family members. It also provides opportunities for women in the informal sector to participate, and provides government contributions and subsidies.

**(c) Sri Lanka: The Sri Lankan Social Security Fund**

To ensure the economic independence of women in old age, efforts have been made to ensure pensions and other social security benefits for women and informal sector workers.

**(d) Nepal: National Pension Scheme for Women Workers**

This program has tried to include women workers in both formal and informal sectors. Self-employed women, home-based women workers and women employed in small SMEs

have been included. The contribution amount is borne by the employer, women workers and the government.

**Question- 2) If there are any features, you would consider pension schemes as women worker-friendly?**

**Answer to question no. 02:**

1. Since women workers work in large numbers in the informal sector, all workers in the informal sector (e.g. domestic workers, seasonal workers) should be included.

2. Providing subsidies for low-income women for a few years.

3. Providing the opportunity to increase or decrease the monthly/weekly/annual contribution amount in the scheme in line with income.

4. Pension scheme with special benefits for women in urban and rural areas where women workers predominate.

5. Involving grassroots women in the management of pension schemes (like Grameen Bank)

**Question- 3) What do you think are the opportunities for working women to be included in the universal pension scheme of Bangladesh?**

**Answer to question 03:**

1. This scheme has the opportunity to pay salaries to workers in the informal sector.

2. There are some opportunities to pay irregular contributions. Women's income can sometimes be limited.

3. The government should bear the equivalent amount of contributions of low-income disadvantaged women workers.

4. Single mothers, widows and abandoned women can enjoy a dignified and secure life by participating in this scheme.

**Question- 4) What are the main challenges for women workers, especially those who earn very low wages, in being included in the universal pension scheme? In this case, what structural or institutional issues, economic issues, job and wage issues, social issues, cultural issues or religious issues do you think are at work?**

**Answer to question 04:**

**1. Administrative or structural challenges:**

(a) There is no database at the national level.

(b) Service workers still find it complicated (sitting in the office for services, not knowing about digital issues, not knowing about the registration process).

**2. Economic challenges:**

(a) Low salaries and in most cases irregular income and due to the massive increase in living expenses, regular contributions are required.

(b) Many women do not want to go to banks, except for microfinance and banks, borrowing from moneylenders.

(c) Prioritizing meeting other financial needs of the family over saving.

**3. Social challenges:**

(a) Many women workers do not have the power to make decisions about the financial affairs of the family.

(b) People have not yet developed social trust in the insurance and pension system.

**4. Cultural Challenges:**

(a) Social security has not been a part of our country like in developed countries.

(b) Many people do not join due to religious reasons considering interest.

(c) They do not pay attention to economic matters as they are busy with housework and child rearing.

(d) Many women want to depend on their husbands.

**5. Regarding jobs and wages:**

(a) Lack of decent work in the informal sector.

(b) Wage inequality.

(c) Not including employers in pension schemes.

(d) Lack of incentives for low-income women.

**Question- 5) What can be done to make the universal pension scheme female-worker friendly? What should be the structure in this case? What process or method should be followed in this case? What kind of role do you think the government, employers, trade unions, NGOs and civil society organizations can play in this case?**

**Answer to question no. 5:**
1. Strengthen state financial support for small entrepreneurs, workers at the informal level, indigenous people, domestic workers and the institutional sector where the implementation of labor laws is very low.

2. Increase the formalization of women workers.

3. The state should consider social security as an investment in building an inclusive developed economy.

4. Include other social security with this scheme. (For example: maternity child support).

**Structural development in making women-friendly pension schemes:**
1. Create an app in Bengali with sufficient security so that women workers can easily manage their pension accounts or make a mobile-based arrangement.

2. There should be scope for increasing or decreasing the retirement age in the scheme.

3. There should be coordination and contribution of employers, government, and workers.

4. A single ministry is needed to provide employment opportunities to women workers and general workers through coordination of the Ministry of Labor and Employment, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Social Welfare.

5. There should be a representation of grassroots women in the formal and informal sectors in laws, policies, and management.

6. The amount of state subsidy in social security should be increased.

7. Make the pension scheme attractive by providing special discounts during maternity leave or during unemployment.

**Role of the government:**
Financial incentives, policy support, tax rebates to employers, strengthening the tripartite structure, institutionalization of the informal sector.

**Role of the employer:**
An inclusive workplace with the cooperation of the union, investment in social security, investment in productivity, considering manpower as valuation capital, and awareness of the employer organization.

**Trade union:**
Building trade unions, federation consensus for changing the national structure, mobilizing workers in the informal sector, and involving women workers in trade unions. Introducing gender equality-based schemes, and negotiating with the employer to encourage them by providing additional bonuses or benefits.

**Non-governmental development organizations:**
(NGOs) and NGOs can conduct research and policy advocacy with the government and international organizations, (ready-made garments, domestic workers, informal sector workers), can help the government in determining policy by inventing pilot projects and models. Can help maintain a fair environment by bringing workers and employers together.

**Question- 6) Please give your comments on whether women workers can be given financial assistance from the Workers' Welfare Fund to pay the premium of the pension scheme.**

**Answer to Question No. 6:**
As per Rule-4 (1)(d) of the Bangladesh Workers' Welfare Foundation Rules, 210, there is a provision to provide necessary assistance for the maternity welfare of women workers working in the informal sector. Following Chapter 15 of the Labor Act, so far about 470 companies have deposited money as dividends in this fund. Therefore, if all companies follow the provisions of this law, the issue of paying money to the pension scheme can now be considered.

**Transcript: Consultation Meeting with Trade Union Leaders-02**
**28 November 2024, BILS Seminar Hall**

**List of Participants**

| Serial No. | Name | Organization |
|---|---|---|
| 01. | Abdul Kader Hawlader | Bangladesh Jatiyo Jote |
| 02. | Md. Abul Kalam Azad | Bangladesh Jatiyotabado Shromik Dol |
| 03. | Shamim Ara | BJSF |
| 04. | Rofikul Islam Pothik | BSF |
| 05. | Nurul Amin | JSJ |
| 06. | Pulok Ronjon Dhor | BFTUC |
| 07. | Rajekujjaman Roton | Socialist Labor Front (SLF) |
| 08. | MD. Idris Ali | TUC |
| 09. | Nasrin Akter Dina | BILS |
| 10. | Noimul Ahsan Juel | BILS |

From the consultation meeting it was found that respondents expressed a significant lack of confidence among workers on the subject of saving money and added that there is a prevailing fear that the Government may not return their saving money.

Another participant added that if leader of the laborer suggested them to participate in pension scheme then the labor will be interested to participate but in the contrary, one trade union leader added that there is an opportunity to lose their saving money, which leads to refrain from participating in pension scheme. Some other responded that they also have lack of trust on trade union leaders. Trade union leaders should achieve trust of the workers.

Another participant responded that those husband and wife who are worked together or earned together are seemed to join the pension system. He further added that in the developed country government manage the pension for their residents from the tax that they pay to government.

Some other participants are expecting to have the pension system in digital system where they can see their saving money at any time they want.

They also added that as they have no job security they cannot maintain their family expenses well. So, how can they maintain the premium of their pension regularly in this situation?

Some other participants responded that as government of this country changes regularly so if one government who has taken this initiative changes over time then what will be the conditions of their money if the new government changes this system? Another participant added that workers think this policy is of government, they do not think that this is a state policy.

Another participant added that as this concept of universal pension is new for everyone leaders of trade unions are not well aware of it, as far as other workers. She further added that it should be well-informed, the government should be aware everyone about this universal pension scheme, its importance, benefits, etc.

Other participants expected to have an equal wage/salary system for all workers and to deduct premiums from their salary automatically.

They also expect to add information on the universal pension scheme in the textbook of students so that people will be aware of it as it is a new concept for all.

Another participant added that in our country so many people are unemployed. Domestic workers, rickshaw pullers, and sales girls are recruited part-time, so how they will manage money for premium?

One respondent stated the dependency level of women in daily life and it shows the barriers of women to participating in the universal pension scheme. He added that in our country women are dependent on their father or husband. They cannot keep money in their hand, they have to give their earning money to their father or husband due to the culture. It is also a burning question whether they have the right to invest money anywhere they can in their family.

There is also a probability that some women cannot be able to maintain their bank account due to ignorance. He also added that some women do not have any thoughts about their future. They believe in earning on a daily basis. As they do not have thoughts about their future so, how they will be interested in saving money for getting a pension in future? Lack of capacity leads them to think unnaturally. They will think for the future if they become capable of saving money after maintaining their all expenditure. He also added that the government should be aware them of its future. It would reduce their dependency on others in their old age life. He further added that out of emotion women sometimes expenses unnecessarily likely they buy gifts for their favorite one repeatedly. If they become conscious they can reduce their expenses and save some money to get a pension in the future.

He further added that workers lack of unique registration ID. The workers who are working in the readymade garment industry may work as domestic workers or sales girls or may work anywhere they can manage. As they have no continuity in work, nature, and location of work how they will be able to continue their premium in this unstable situation? They also fear that if they become sick and cannot go to work then it may become a system of paying as usual premium with a fine. They expect to have a system that if they lose their job or change their job then their money of premium will be deducted from their salary after getting the new job.

He again added that workers are also unaware of the contributory pension scheme. Actually who will contribute the partial money is out of their thought.

Again another important issue was raised that universal pension system is not mandatory for the workers of private sectors. So, workers who are interested are joining this pension system and the workers who are not interested are avoiding this pension system. He further suggested making compulsory joining in the universal pension scheme of private sector workers where there owner of the workers/industry will contribute some part of the premium from the side of workers.

Whether women workers can be provided financial assistance from the labor fund under the ministry of labor and employment to pay the premium of pension scheme or not. Besides, can the ministry of women and child affairs and the ministry of social welfare take any special financial assistance program for inclusion in pension schemes or payment of premiums for women workers in response to these two questions participants responded that the ministry of labor and employment, ministry of women and child affairs and the ministry of social welfare can take special financial assistance program for inclusion of women workers in pension schemes or payment of premiums. However, they found it will be quite difficult because there is no available data on the number of women workers working in the readymade garment industry or working as domestic workers, sales girls, and kindergarten teachers. On the other hand, male workers may raise questions to have these facilities for them also.

In response to question what kind of role do trade unions can play in this regard participants added that they can arrange a campaign, and awareness build-up program to make workers aware of this universal pension scheme to secure the future life of every woman worker. They also added that they can act as a pressure group for the government. They can suggest government make this policy worker-friendly and can suggest workers invest in this pension scheme. They can also work with NGOs to increase their activities and make people aware of this.

### Case Study-01

**Sumaiya Islam Dola**
Sales Girls in Shopping Mall
Demra, Dhaka South

The researcher conducted an interview with Sumaiya Islam Dola, who is a sales worker, aged 26 years old and employed at a shopping mall. She completed her Secondary School Certificate (S.S.C.) examination but did not continue her studies thereafter. She is a married woman. She lives in a family with her children, husband, and in-laws. She has to work long hours. She starts her work at 8:00 am and concludes at 6:00 pm. Unfortunately, she does not get her payment accordingly. She gets only 8000 taka per month. Her husband is also a sales worker and receives a similarly inadequate salary. She has to struggle a lot to save some money after her familial expenditure. Although she desires to save but becomes unable to do that because of the price hike and the maintenance of her family costs. She expressed her willingness that if she gets a higher salary in another job than the present one she will switch her job. She is particularly worried about her children's future. Her knowledge regarding the universal pension scheme is very limited and expressed skepticism about its reliability. She stated-

> *"I cannot trust the system of pension scheme. If I survive for 60 years then I will get the full money. But life is unpredictable, so, how can I be assured of receiving my money back? If the Government ensures that my children will definitely get back the money without facing any complexity, then I will consider participating in the universal pension scheme".*

She expected that if she added some money and the government added the same amount for her, only then she be interested in participating in the universal pension scheme. Additionally, she has expectations to her employer to increase her salary so that she can save money to engage in a universal pension scheme, which she views as a potential safeguard for her family's future. [Case study completed on 28 October, 2024.]

### Case Study-02

**Helena Akter**
Grasp Garments
Satarkul Road, Dhaka

The researcher interviewed Helena Akter, a 35-year-old employee, who works in the garments industry at Shatarkul. She completed her primary level education but did not continue her studies later. She resides with her family. She has been working in this industry for a decade as a non-permanent worker and there was also lacking a formal contract. She has no contract paper. She has to work long hours. She gets 16000 takas per month. She does overtime work to earn extra money. She could barely manage 4000 takas as her savings. She emphasized that everyone should save money for economic security in the future. Notably, there is no trade union or welfare committee and no system of pension at her workplace. She became familiar with the universal pension scheme through television. She has trust in this scheme. She stated that-

> *"Expenditure exceeds earnings. Employers do not increase salaries which makes it challenging for us to manage our familial expenses and in this situation, savings are beyond imagination. It would be advantageous for us to participate in the pension scheme if government take supportive measures".*

She additionally stated that if the employer were to raise her salary and ensure timely payment for overtime work, she would be able to participate in the pension scheme without difficulty.

### Case Study-03

**Tahia Tabassum**
Genius Islamic School
Uttara

Researcher conducted an interview with Tahia Tabassum, a 21-year-old employee, who works as assistant teacher in a kindergarten. She is a graduate. She was working here for three years. She is a permanent teacher here. She has a formal contract. She earns only 5000 taka per month. From this small amount of money, she tries to save for her future. She can rarely save 1000 taka monthly. She shared that, as a graduate student, her family members have great expectation on her. However, she finds it difficult to earn sufficient money due to the highly competitive job market in our country. Moreover, she become depressed anxiety as the cost of living continues to rise and she is worried about her future. The absence of a pension system in her current employment adds to her concerns. She knew about the universal pension scheme from her acquaintance and finds it is necessary for confirming her future financial security. This would provide her to support herself without depending on others. Eventually, she views it as a probable source of income in her old age period. She also added that as she is employed in the private sector, she has no job security. She stated-

> *"I am uncertain about my ability to maintain premium regularly. If I cannot continue contributing to the pension scheme, what will be about my savings? I have reliance on pension scheme in a moderate level. If my employer pay my premium then I will be able to participate in the pension scheme".*

### Case Study-04

**Hosneara Banu**
Domestic Worker
Mohammodour

An interview was conducted with Hosneara Banu. Her age is 45 years old. She is a domestic worker lives in Mohammodpur and works in three houses. She has to work continuously from dawn to dusk but does not get satisfactory payment for her labors. Her monthly income is only 8,000 taka, which is not sufficient for her requirements. She has completed her primary level of education. She lives with her family, where there is her husband and one son. Her daughters reside with their in-laws houses. Her husband is a rickshaw puller. He is suffering from leg problems, which prevents him from pulling a rickshaw more than three days a week. Her family is struggling to live from hand to mouth. She is suffering from mental distress. She had feelings for another individual who lacks a stable income so that her family made her bound to marry her present husband, believing it would improve her quality of life. She is uncertain whether her son will be able to support the family in the future. She knows about the pension scheme but she is unable to maintain this due to her poor financial situation. She stated-

> *"It is impossible for me to save money for such investments because I cannot manage my daily needs with this low income. If the government does something for us it will be better".*

Finally, she expected government intervention to improve her socio-economic conditions.

# SECTION-VII

# Major Challenges and Ways Forward for the Women Workers to Involve in UPS

### Challenges for Women Workers to Participate in UPS

Though there are some advancements, some challenges hinder the establishment of a universal pension system for employees. These are-

- Informal employment is responsible as a significant challenge. In Bangladesh, a large number of workers have to work without any formal contracts, which makes them to participate in a pension scheme as they have no job security. It is essential to develop strategies that will guarantee a comprehensive coverage of all informal workers.
- Women workers in the informal sector are unaware of the availability of pension schemes and, as a result, do not take advantage of them.
- A significant number of women workers have the lacking of financial learning which is necessary to make decisions about their pension savings and investment opportunities.
- For the aged people and a rapidly increasing number of people, these universal pension schemes are likely to face challenges due to the lack of financial sustainability.
- Administration and governance efficiency is important for the success of pension schemes. Factors such as corruption, disorganization, and a lack of transparency can weaken the systems, which will lessen the trust of beneficiaries.
- Since the amount and time limit for premium payments are fixed, there is less opportunity for low-income workers and irregular-income workers to participate in pension schemes.
- There is a crisis of trust among workers in government schemes, especially those where participation is subject to payment.
- Workers are cheated by becoming members of various types of associations. They also consider the pension scheme to be a kind of association. As a result, workers are uncertain about whether they will get their money back after depositing money in the pension scheme. In other words, they still do not have 100% trust in the pension scheme.
- Workers do not have a clear idea about the pension scheme. There is no comprehensive public awareness program by the government to inform workers about the benefits of the pension scheme. Besides, the government has not taken any initiative to explain to them what the process of workers' participation in the pension scheme is like.
- Since garment workers are not self-employed and their minimum wage is Tk 12,500/-, they have to participate in the pension scheme Pragati Scheme (for employees of private organizations). The reality is that garment owners will not want to pay any extra money for workers in the pension scheme.
- Since the pension scheme is contributory, there is a lack of interest in the participation of workers. In addition, the financial capacity of the workers is also a factor.
- The government has not had an effective exchange of views with the trade unions regarding the introduction of the pension scheme. The trade unions have not been involved in the implementation process either. No specific plan has been taken to address the difficulties that workers may face in joining the pension scheme, considering all the issues.

- There is no retirement age for informal workers; again, garment workers are no longer seen in employment when they reach the age of 40/45. These issues have not been taken into consideration in this scheme. There is no provision for joining this scheme after 50 years, due to which a significant number of workers in the country are not able to join this scheme.
- The workers have no clear idea about whether the money deposited by the workers before the age of 60 will be refunded or not.
- The workers were not consulted or consulted on whether the pension scheme was suitable for the workers.

### Ways Forward for Women Workers to Take Part in UPS

To be noted, these are based on the suggestions and opinions expressed by the different stakeholders in the interviews, meetings, consultations, and responses found from the field survey.

**Guaranteeing Trade Union Rights of Workers**

The right to organize is a constitutionally recognized fundamental right for workers. In addition, the right to 'Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining' of workers has been recognized in Conventions No. 87 and 98 of the International Labor Organization (ILO). As a member state of the ILO, Bangladesh is obligated to comply with the ILO's directives. That is, all workers in Bangladesh will be able to legally form and join trade unions and will have the opportunity to bargain collectively with the employer to ensure their rights and entitlements. However, of the four sectors in which research has been conducted on female workers of the ready-made garment industry, domestic workers, kindergarten workers, and sales workers, only garment workers are included in the Bangladesh Labor Act, 2006 and legally have trade union rights, while workers in the remaining three sectors are still deprived of trade union rights. As a result, trade unions in Bangladesh are unable to make workers in the three sectors mentioned above members. Due to this, the workers and employees of these three sectors are deprived of comprehensive protection in the labor field and the trade unions are not able to represent them at the policy level or with the owners in any way. Since the trade unions have no connection with the workers of the remaining three sectors except for the garments sector, they have no idea about trade union protection. To ensure the participation of all workers in the pension scheme, the workers must be given trade union rights so that the trade unions can work with the workers. Trade unions can play a role as a bridge for the positive and extensive participation of the workers in the pension scheme.

**Development of an effective tripartite system**

Although the board of directors proposed in the ‘Universal Pension Scheme Management Act, 2023 (UPSMA, 2023) to manage the pension scheme includes a representative from the owner side, there is no representation from the worker side, which is observed as a major deficiency in this law. To ensure the extensive participation of the workers in the pension scheme and to ensure the effective participation and representation of the garment workers, it is necessary to have a trade union representative on the board of directors. Then the trade unions will be able to highlight the advantages and disadvantages of widespread worker participation in the pension scheme at the policy level and contribute to the decision-making process. It is to be noted that the need for a tripartite system involving the government, employers, and workers is universally acknowledged in adopting and implementing any plan for workers. However, this process has not been followed in the pension scheme. If an effective tripartite system cannot be established, the workers will not have confidence in the pension scheme. The government needs to take appropriate steps after considering the matter seriously.

**Workers' wages and financial capacity**

Pension schemes are part of an economic activity. The success of pension schemes depends on the financial capacity of the workers. Of the four sectors covered by the research, only the government has a minimum wage announced for workers in the ready-made garment sector; for workers in the remaining three sectors, namely domestic workers, kindergarten workers, and salespeople, no minimum wage has been announced by the government to date. As workers in the institutional sector, garment workers receive a monthly minimum wage of 12,500/- taka. There is a difference in the wages of garment workers according to the grade. In addition, they earn some more by doing overtime duty. However domestic workers, kindergarten workers, and salespeople do not have any overtime. Overall, workers are deprived of receiving a living wage. As a result, it is very difficult for them to participate in any kind of savings activities to meet the minimum needs of living including their families. Since the pension scheme is a contributory scheme, it is very difficult for workers to participate in it. As a result, if the employers of the workers cannot be held responsible for paying the workers' premiums, the participation of workers in the pension scheme will not increase.

**Crisis of workers' confidence in participating in financial activities**

Until now, workers are generally involved in financial activities as members of NGO-based microfinance activities run by private enterprises and various local-based lending associations. In this case, workers are often victims of fraud, and sometimes the associations concerned run away with their deposited money. Overall, these activities, instead of being helpful to them, are making them more indebted and increasing the level of poverty. As a result, workers are apprehensive about getting their deposited money back in any kind of financial program where workers have to deposit money. On the other hand, workers are suffering from a lack of trust due to the lack of close communication and effective relationships between workers and the government, especially the government institutions and individuals related to the pension scheme. In order to ensure widespread participation of workers in the pension scheme, special initiatives must be taken by the government to remove the crisis of trust of workers.

**The complexity of workers' participation in the institutional process**

Workers need awareness and education to participate in the pension scheme. In reality, attending in person various government and private institutions related to the pension scheme, receiving services from the institutions, or completing various documents from the beginning to the end of the scheme is very difficult for workers.

**Structural development in making women-friendly pension schemes**

● Create an app in Bengali with sufficient security so that women workers can easily manage their pension accounts or make a mobile-based arrangement.

●There should be scope for increasing or decreasing the retirement age in the scheme.

●There should be coordination and contribution of employers, government, and workers.

● A single ministry is needed to provide employment opportunities to women workers and general workers through coordination of the Ministry of Labor and Employment, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Social Welfare.

●There should be a representation of grassroots women in the formal and informal sectors in laws, policies, and management.

●The amount of state subsidy in social security should be increased.

●Make the pension scheme attractive by providing special discounts during maternity leave or during unemployment.

**Role of the government**
Financial incentives, policy support, tax rebates to employers, strengthening the tripartite structure, and institutionalization of the informal sector.

**Role of the employer**

An inclusive workplace with the cooperation of the union, investment in social security, investment in productivity, considering manpower as valuation capital, and awareness of the employer organization.

**Trade union**

Building trade unions, federation consensus for changing the national structure, mobilizing workers in the informal sector, and involving women workers in trade unions. Introducing gender equality-based schemes, and negotiating with the employer to encourage them by providing additional bonuses or benefits.

**Non-governmental development organizations**
NGOs and CSOs can conduct research and policy advocacy with the government and international organizations, (ready-made garments, domestic workers, informal sector workers), and can help the government in determining policy by inventing pilot projects and models. They can also help maintain a fair environment by bringing workers and employers together.

- In addition, several measures can be implemented to establish a more inclusive and efficient pension system,
- A strong administrative system is necessary to effectively implement a universal pension scheme. It will manage all the problems, for example, extensive enrollment, payment distribution, and compliance, governance problems, bureaucratic delays, and lack of transparency etc. which may pose additional obstacles to the successful implementation.
- The government must take initiatives to boost financial literacy for women, particularly among the informal workers to increase participation in pension programs.
- Using technology, like mobile applications and online platforms responsible authorities have to make the process of participation in pension schemes easier which will lower the barriers for workers to secure their financial future.
- To ensure broader accessibility and enhanced service delivery partnerships between the government and the private sector are necessary.
- In response to demographic changes and economic conditions constant assessment and modification of pension schemes is necessary to keep the pension system applicable and effective.

# SECTION-VIII
# Conclusion

Universal Pension Scheme is planned to provide financial assistance to all citizens, which will promote a more equitable and sustainable social security system. The results of this research are important for policymakers and stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of pension initiatives. The pension scheme environment in Asian nations, particularly Bangladesh, presents multifaceted strategies and obstacles. Significant issues such as financial insecurity, and administrative inefficiencies will demand urgent intervention and creative solutions. Policymakers need to consider the integration of technology and progressive reforms. To confirm the wide-ranging participation of the workers in the universal pension scheme and to ensure the effective participation and representation of the garment workers in particular, it is necessary to have a trade union representative on the board of directors. Then the trade unions will be able to highlight the advantages and disadvantages of widespread worker participation in the pension scheme at the policy level and contribute to the decision-making process. It is to be noted that the need for a tripartite system involving the government, employers, and workers is universally acknowledged in adopting and implementing any plan for workers. However, this process has not been followed in the pension scheme. If an effective tripartite system cannot be established, the workers will not have confidence in the pension scheme. The government needs to take appropriate steps after considering the matter seriously.

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## ANNEXURE

## ANNEX-I

### Survey Questionnaire

**A Case Study on 'Universal Pension Scheme: Scope and Challenges for Women to Participate in the Scheme.'**

**Questionnaire**

[For research purposes only]

**Respondent's Consent**

Have the research objectives been explained?

□ Yes □ No

| |
|---|
| Identification No: ……………………………………..………. |
| Name of Workplace/Factory: …………………………. |
| Type of Workplace: □ Garments □ Kindergarten, □ Salesperson □ Housekeeping |
| Address of Workplace/Factory: ……………………… |
| Date of Interview Participation: ……………………. |
| Signature: …………………………… |

**1. Personal and Work-related Information**

1.1 Name (optional): ……………………………

1.2 Gender: □ Female

1.3 Age (Years): □ 1. >18 □ 2. 18-25 □ 3. 25-35 □ 4. 35-45 □ 5. 45-55 □ 55<

1.4 Educational Qualification: □ 1. Illiterate □ 2. Primary □ 3. Secondary □ 4. Higher Secondary □ 5. Graduate and above

1.5 Designation: ………………………………………

1.6 Current Work Experience: …………………. Years .............................. Months

1.7 Type of Employment: □ 1. Contractual □ 2. Temporary □ 3. Permanent □ 4. Permanent Piece Rate □ 5. Temporary Piece Rate

1.8 Are you a member of any trade union or association? □ 1. Yes □ 2. No

1.8.1 If you answered "Yes" to the above question, please tick the specific option below:
□ 1. Trade Union □ 2. Association □ 3. Other

1.8.2 If you are not a member of a trade union, why not?
□ No trade union in the workplace □ Not interested in becoming a member
□ There are obstacles and threats □ Other

1.9 Are you interested in joining a trade union? □ 1. Yes □ 2. No

1.10 Do you believe joining a trade union will help protect your rights and interests?
□ 1. Yes □ 2. No

**2. Socio-Economic Condition**

2.1 What is your monthly income from your workplace? ………………. Taka

2.2 Are you able to save money on a monthly basis? □ 1. Yes □ 2. No

2.3 If the answer is "Yes," how much do you save per month? ……………………. Taka

2.4 Do you believe it is necessary to save for future security? □ 1. Yes □ 2. No

2.5 How much money should you ideally save each month?
□ 1. Less than 500 Taka □ 2. 500-1000 Taka □ 3. More than 1000 Taka

2.6 Does your job offer any pension benefits? If yes, what are they and how do they work?

**3. Understanding of the Pension Scheme**

3.1 A universal pension scheme has been introduced to ensure that everyone receives a monthly pension at a certain age. Have you heard about it? □ 1. Yes □ 2. No

3.1.1 If the answer is "Yes," where or through whom did you hear about it?
□ 1. Radio/Television □ 2. Facebook □ 3. A person
□ 4. Trade Union □ 5. Office/Senior Officer □ 6. Friend/Colleague

3.2 How would you rate your understanding of the pension scheme at this moment?
□ 1. Adequate □ 2. Moderate □ 3. Minimal □ 4. Don’t know anything

3.3 If you have an understanding of the pension scheme, how did you gain this understanding?
□ 1. Radio/Television □ 2. Facebook □ 3. A person □ 4. Trade Union
□ 5. Office/Senior Officer □ 6. Friend/Colleague

3.4 Since what year has the pension scheme been implemented?
□ 1. 2022 □ 2. 2023 □ 3. 2024 □ 4. Don't know

3.5 Are you aware of all the pension schemes introduced in Bangladesh? □ 1. Yes □ 2. No

3.5.1 If the answer is "Yes," which ones do you know about?
□ 1. Probash □ 2. Progoti □ 3. Surokkha □ 4. Somota

3.6 At what age can one start receiving a pension from the savings in the pension scheme?
□ 1. 50 years □ 2. 60 years □ 3. 70 years □ 4. Don't know

3.7 What do you think are the advantages of the universal pension scheme for working people like you?

..........................................................................................................................................

3.8 What do you think are the disadvantages of the universal pension scheme for working people like you?

..........................................................................................................................................

3.9 Have you joined any pension scheme? □ 1. Yes □ 2. No

3.9.1 If the answer is "Yes," why did you join?

..........................................................................................................................................

3.9.2 Who helped you in joining the pension scheme?

..........................................................................................................................................

3.9.3 Did anyone oppose your joining the pension scheme? □ 1. Yes □ 2. No

3.9.4 If you faced opposition, why?
□ 1. Fear □ 2. Political reasons □ 3. Religious reasons □ 4. Other

3.10 If you are not part of a pension scheme, are you interested in joining one?
□ 1. Yes □ 2. No

3.10.1 If the answer is "Yes," why do you want to join?

..........................................................................................................................................

3.10.2 If you are interested, which pension scheme would you like to join?

..................................................................................................................................

3.10.3 Why did you choose or wish to participate in this particular scheme?

..................................................................................................................................

3.11 If your answer to question 3.10 is "No," why don't you want to participate in the pension scheme?
□ 1. Fear □ 2. Financial reasons □ 3. Political reasons □ 4. Religious reasons
□ 5. Structural/Institutional barriers □ 6. Procedural barriers □ 7. Other □ 8. Don't know enough

3.12 Do you have the ability to contribute to a pension scheme? □ 1. Yes □ 2. No

3.13 If you are unable to contribute but still want to join a pension scheme, who do you think should pay the monthly installment?
□ 1. Employer □ 2. Wages should be increased □ 3. Government □ 4. Other (specify)

3.14 If you contribute to a pension scheme, how confident are you about receiving a pension in the future?
□ 1. Fully confident □ 2. Somewhat confident □ 3. Not confident

3.15 What are your views on the necessity of pensions?

..................................................................................................................................

4. If you are included in the pension scheme, will it benefit you? □ 1. Yes □ 2. No

4.1 If the answer is "Yes," in what ways will it benefit you?

..................................................................................................................................

4.2 If the answer is "No," why will it not benefit you?

..................................................................................................................................

4.3 Do you think there should be a trade union/worker representative in the management of the pension fund? □ 1. Yes □ 2. No

4.4 How do you think the pension premiums/installments should be paid?
□ 1. Via mobile phone □ 2. By going to the bank □ 3. By going to the post office
□ 4. Arranged by the office □ 5. Other (Specify)

4.5 Do you face any obstacles or challenges in participating in the pension scheme?
□ 1. Yes □ 2. No

4.5.1 If "Yes," what type of challenges are they?
□ 1. Structural/Institutional problems □ 2. Economic problems □ 3. Job security issues
□ 4. Wage-related issues □ 5. Social issues □ 6. Cultural issues □ 7. Religious concerns

4.5.2 If so, please explain how these challenges affect your participation?

.........................................................................................................................................

4.6 What do you think should be done to ensure workers' participation in the pension scheme?

.........................................................................................................................................

4.7 Which method do you support: contributing monthly and receiving a pension after employment or not contributing and still receiving a pension after employment? Why?

.........................................................................................................................................

4.8 Should there be an equal pension for everyone, or should it depend on job status? Why?

.........................................................................................................................................

4.9 Is there a trade union in your workplace? □ 1. Yes □ 2. No

4.9.1 If there is a trade union, do they play any role in implementing the universal pension?
□ 1. Yes □ 2. No

4.9.2 If the answer is "Yes," what role do they play?
□ 1. Raising awareness among workers □. 2. Negotiating with the employer □ 3. Other

4.10 How do you evaluate the role of trade unions in implementing the universal pension scheme?
□ 1. Efficient □ 2. Don't know □ 3. Weak □ 4. Unwilling to play a role □ 5. Other
5. What specific role/responsibility should different stakeholders have in implementing a pension scheme for workers?

*Government: ..............................................................................................................

*Employers: ...................................................................................................................

*Trade Unions: ...............................................................................................................

*Other organizations (Brands/Buyers, NGOs, International Organizations, etc.): ...............

Thank you for staying with us by providing your valuable information and opinions.

## ANNEX-II

### Interview Checklist

**Title: A Case Study on 'Universal Pension Scheme-UPS: Scope and Challenges for Women to Participate in the Scheme'**

**Type of Respondent:** RMG Sector Employer

**Type of Workplace:** □ Garments □ Kindergarten, □ Salesperson □ Housekeeping

**Address of Workplace/Factory:** ………………………

**Date of Interview Participation:** …………………….

1) There is a pension scheme for women workers. How much are you aware of it?

2) What are the main challenges for women workers in getting covered by the universal pension scheme?

3) What can be done to make the universal pension scheme more women-friendly?

4) What kind of role can you play as an employer/owner? What kind of support can you provide?

5) What kind of role can other stakeholders, especially the government and other parties, play? What kind of support can they provide?

## ANNEX-III

### Interview Checklist

**Title: A Case Study on 'Universal Pension Scheme-UPS: Scope and Challenges for Women to Participate in the Scheme'**

**Type of Respondent: Employers/owners running kindergartens**

**Type of Workplace:** □ Garments □ Kindergarten, □ Salesperson □ Housekeeping

**Address of Workplace/Factory:** ………………………

**Date of Interview Participation:** …………………….

1) There is a pension scheme for women workers. How much are you aware of it?

2) What are the main challenges for women workers, especially those who earn very low wages, in getting covered by the universal pension scheme?

3) What can be done to make the universal pension scheme more women-friendly?

4) What kind of role can you play as an employer/owner? What kind of support can you provide?

5) What kind of responsibilities can other stakeholders, especially the government and other parties, play? What kind of support can you provide?

## ANNEX-IV

### Interview Checklist

**Title: A Case Study on 'Universal Pension Scheme-UPS: Scope and Challenges for Women to Participate in the Scheme'**

**Type of Respondent:** Female salesperson employer

**Type of Workplace:** □ Garments □ Kindergarten, □ Salesperson □ Housekeeping

**Address of Workplace/Factory:** ………………………

**Date of Interview Participation:** …………………….

1) There is a pension scheme for women workers. How much are you aware of it?

2) What are the main challenges for women workers, especially those who earn very low wages, in getting covered by the universal pension scheme?

3) What can be done to make the universal pension scheme women-friendly?

4) What kind of role can you play as an employer/owner? What kind of support can you provide?

5) What kind of responsibilities can other stakeholders, especially the government and other parties, play? What kind of support can you provide?

## ANNEX-V

### Interview Checklist

**Title: A Case Study on 'Universal Pension Scheme-UPS: Scope and Challenges for Women to Participate in the Scheme'**

**Type of Respondent:** Domestic Worker Employer

**Type of Workplace:** □ Garments □ Kindergarten, □ Salesperson □ Housekeeping

**Address of Workplace/Factory:** ………………………

**Date of Interview Participation:** …………………….

1) There is a pension scheme for women workers. How much are you aware of it?

2) What are the main challenges for women workers, especially those earning very low wages, in accessing the universal pension scheme?

3) What can be done to make the universal pension scheme more women-friendly?

4) What role can you play as an employer/owner? What support can you provide?

5) What role can other stakeholders, especially the government and other parties, play? What support can you provide?

ANNEX-VI

## Interview Checklist

**Title: A Case Study on 'Universal Pension Scheme-UPS: Scope and Challenges for Women to Participate in the Scheme'**

**Type of Respondent:** NGO Official

**Type of Workplace:** □ Garments □ Kindergarten, □ Salesperson □ Housekeeping

**Address of Workplace/Factory:** ………………………

**Date of Interview Participation:** …………………….

1) What do you think are the opportunities for women workers to be included in the universal pension scheme in Bangladesh?

2) What are the characteristics, if any, that would make pension schemes considered women worker friendly?

3) What legal obligations and structures do you think are necessary for women workers to be included in pension schemes?

4) What are the main challenges for women workers, especially those who earn very low wages, in being included in the universal pension scheme? What structural or institutional issues, economic issues, job and wage issues, social issues, cultural issues or religious issues or factors do you think are at work in this regard?

5) What can be done to make the universal pension scheme women worker friendly? What should be the structure in this regard? What should be the process or method in this regard? What kind of role do you think the government, employers, trade unions and NGOs can play in this regard?

## ANNEX-VII

### Interview Checklist

**Title: A Case Study on 'Universal Pension Scheme-UPS: Scope and Challenges for Women to Participate in the Scheme'**

**Type of Respondent:** CSO Official

**Type of Workplace:** □ Garments □ Kindergarten, □ Salesperson □ Housekeeping

**Address of Workplace/Factory:** ………………………

**Date of Interview Participation:** …………………….

1) What do you think are the opportunities for women workers to be included in the universal pension scheme in Bangladesh?

2) What are the characteristics, if any, that would make pension schemes considered women-friendly?

3) What legal obligations and structures do you think are necessary for women workers to be included in pension schemes?

4) What are the main challenges for women workers, especially those who earn very low wages, in being included in the universal pension scheme? What structural or institutional issues, economic issues, job and wage issues, social issues, cultural issues or religious issues do you think are at work in this regard?

5) What can be done to make the universal pension scheme women-friendly? What should be the structure in this regard? What should be the process or method in this regard? What kind of role do you think the government, employers, trade unions and civil society organizations can play in this regard?

# ANNEX-VIII

## Interview Checklist

**Title: A Case Study on 'Universal Pension Scheme-UPS: Scope and Challenges for Women to Participate in the Scheme'**

**Type of Respondent:** Expert of similar filed (Academician/Researcher)

**Type of Workplace:** □ Garments □ Kindergarten, □ Salesperson □ Housekeeping

**Address of Workplace/Factory:** ………………………

**Date of Interview Participation:** …………………….

1) Are there any women-friendly pension schemes in countries with similar socio-economic conditions as Bangladesh (our neighboring countries or other countries)? If so, what are they? What is the legal framework there?

2) What are the features, if any that would make you consider pension schemes to be women-friendly?

3) What opportunities do you think there are for working women to be included in the universal pension scheme in Bangladesh?

4) What are the main challenges for women workers, especially those who earn very low wages, in being included in the universal pension scheme? What structural or institutional issues, economic issues, job and wage-related issues, social issues, cultural issues or religious issues or issues do you think are at work in this regard?

5) What can be done to make the universal pension scheme women-friendly? What should the structure be like in this regard? What should be the process or procedure in this regard? What kind of role do you think the government, employers, trade unions, NGOs and civil society organizations can play in this regard?

## ANNEX-IX

### Interview Checklist

**Title: A Case Study on 'Universal Pension Scheme-UPS: Scope and Challenges for Women to Participate in the Scheme'**

**Type of Respondent:** Expert of similar field (Academician/Researcher)

**Type of Workplace:** □ Garments □ Kindergarten, □ Salesperson □ Housekeeping

**Address of Workplace/Factory:** ………………………

**Date of Interview Participation:** …………………….

1) Are there any women-friendly pension schemes in countries with similar socio-economic conditions as Bangladesh (in our neighboring countries or other countries)? If so, what kind are they? What kind of legal framework is there?

2) What are the features, if any, that would make you consider pension schemes to be women-friendly?

3) What opportunities do you think there are for working women to be included in the universal pension scheme in Bangladesh?

4) What are the main challenges for women workers, especially those who earn very low wages, in being included in the universal pension scheme? What structural or institutional issues, economic issues, job and wage issues, social issues, cultural issues or religious issues or issues do you think are at work in this regard?

5) What can be done to make the universal pension scheme women-friendly? What should the structure be like in this case? What process or approach should be followed in this regard? What role do you think the government, employers, trade unions, NGOs and civil society organizations can play in this regard?

## ANNEX-X

### Interview Checklist

**Title: A Case Study on 'Universal Pension Scheme-UPS: Scope and Challenges for Women to Participate in the Scheme'**

**Type of Respondent:** Expert of **Ministry of Labor and Employment**

**Type of Workplace:** □ Garments □ Kindergarten, □ Salesperson □ Housekeeping

**Address of Workplace/Factory:** ………………………

**Date of Interview Participation:** …………………….

1) Are there any women-friendly pension schemes in countries with similar socio-economic conditions as Bangladesh (our neighboring countries or other countries)? If so, what are they? What is the legal framework there?

2) What are the features, if any, that would make you consider pension schemes as women-friendly?

3) What opportunities do you think there are for working women to be included in the universal pension scheme in Bangladesh?

4) What are the main challenges for women workers, especially those who earn very low wages, in being included in the universal pension scheme? What structural or institutional issues, economic issues, job and wage-related issues, social issues, cultural issues or religious issues or issues do you think are working in this regard?

5) What can be done to make the universal pension scheme women-friendly? What should be the structure in this regard? What should be the process or procedure in this regard? What kind of role do you think the government, employers, trade unions, NGOs and civil society organizations can play in this regard?

6) Please give your comments on whether women workers can be given financial assistance from the Workers' Welfare Fund to pay the premium of the pension scheme.

## ANNEX-XI

### Interview Checklist

**Title: A Case Study on 'Universal Pension Scheme-UPS: Scope and Challenges for Women to Participate in the Scheme'**

**Type of Respondent:** Expert of **Ministry of Social Welfare**

**Type of Workplace:** □ Garments □ Kindergarten, □ Salesperson □ Housekeeping

**Address of Workplace/Factory:** ………………………

**Date of Interview Participation:** …………………….

1) Are there any women-friendly pension schemes in countries with similar socio-economic conditions as Bangladesh (our neighboring countries or other countries)? If so, what are they? What is the legal framework there?

2) What are the features, if any, that would make pension schemes women-friendly?

3) What opportunities do you think there are for working women to be included in the universal pension scheme in Bangladesh?

4) What are the main challenges for women workers, especially those who earn very low wages, in being included in the universal pension scheme? What structural or institutional issues, economic issues, job and wage-related issues, social issues, cultural issues or religious issues or issues do you think are working in this regard?

5) What can be done to make the universal pension scheme women-friendly? What should be the structure in this regard? What should be the process or procedure in this regard? What kind of role do you think the government, employers, trade unions, NGOs and civil society organizations can play in this regard?

6) Please give your comments on whether women workers can be given financial assistance from the Workers' Welfare Fund under the Ministry of Labor and Employment to pay the premium of the pension scheme.

7) Please give your comments on whether the Ministry of Social Welfare can take up any special financial assistance program for the inclusion of women workers in the pension scheme or payment of premium as part of expanding the social safety net for women workers.

## ANNEX-XII

### Interview Checklist

**Title: A Case Study on 'Universal Pension Scheme-UPS: Scope and Challenges for Women to Participate in the Scheme'**

**Type of Respondent:** Expert from Trade Union

**Type of Workplace:** □ Garments □ Kindergarten, □ Salesperson □ Housekeeping

**Address of Workplace/Factory:** ………………………

**Date of Interview Participation:** …………………….

1) Are there any women-friendly pension schemes in all countries (our neighboring countries or other countries) that have similar socio-economic conditions to Bangladesh? If so, what kind are they? What kind of legal framework is there?

2) If so, what are the features that would make pension schemes women-friendly?

3) What opportunities do you think there are for working women to be included in the universal pension scheme of Bangladesh?

4) To what extent do you think the universal pension scheme is necessary for women workers? If so, what are the reasons?

5) Do you think that any kind of activities should be conducted by the trade unions regarding the inclusion of women workers in the universal pension scheme? If so, what kind of activities could be carried out? What obstacles or challenges do trade unions face in conducting the activities? What demands or recommendations do you want to put forward to the government in this regard?

6) What are the main challenges for women workers, especially those who earn very low wages, in being included in the universal pension scheme? In this regard, what structural or institutional issues, economic issues, job and wage-related issues, social issues, cultural issues or religious issues or issues do you think are working?

7) What can be done to make the universal pension scheme female worker-friendly? What should the structure be like in this regard? What process or method should be followed in this regard? What kind of role do you think the government, employers, trade unions, NGOs and civil society organizations can play in this regard?

8) Please comment on whether women workers can be given financial assistance from the Workers' Welfare Fund under the Ministry of Labor and Employment to pay the premium of the pension scheme. Also, please comment on whether the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and the Ministry of Social Welfare can adopt any special financial assistance program for women workers regarding inclusion in the pension scheme or payment of premium.

## ANNEX - XIII

### Transcript: Consultation Meeting with Trade Union Leaders-01

**25 November, 2024, BILS Seminar Hall**

**List of Participants**

| Serial No. | Name | Organization |
|---|---|---|
| **01.** | Syeda Azizun Nahar | Vice President, Bangladesh Labor Federation |
| **02.** | Hosne Ara Begum | Member Seceratory, Bangladesh Jatiyo Shromik Federation |
| **03.** | Lutfun Nahar Lota | BJSD |
| **04.** | Khairul Mamun Mintu | Bangladesh Trade Union Center |
| **05.** | Abul Hossain | DWRN |
| **06.** | Roma Akter | BJSD |
| **07.** | Jessmin Begum | NGWF |
| **08.** | Promila Podder | JSL |
| **09.** | Mst. Moyna | JSL |
| **10.** | Md. Sahali Hossain (Sohel) | Hokarshli |
| **11.** | Mamtaj Begum | BJSD |
| **12.** | Nasrin Akter Dina | BILS |

√ From the consultation meeting it was seen that respondents raised about a significant lack of knowledge gap among female workers about the Universal Pension Scheme.

√ Regarding saving money some of the participants added that there is a certain fear among the workers even in the educated people that the Government may not return their saving money.

√ Another participant responded that those husband and wife who work together or earn together seem to join the pension system. He further added that in the developed country government manage the pension for their residents from the tax that they pay to government.

√ Another participant added that as this concept of universal pension is new for everyone so leaders of trade union are not well aware of it, far about other workers. She further added that it should be well informed, government should aware everyone about this universal pension scheme, its importance, benefit etc.

√ Another participant said that if leader of the laborer suggested them to participate in pension scheme then the labor will be interested to participate but in the contrary, one trade union leader added that there is an opportunity to lose their saving money, so I save money in this pension scheme. Some other responded that they also have lack of trust on trade union leaders. Trade union leaders should achieve trust of the workers.

√ They also expect to add the information of universal pension scheme in the text book of student so that people will be aware about it as it is a new concept of all.

√ Another participant added that in our country so many people are unemployed. Domestic workers, rickshaw pullers, sales girls are recruited for part time, so how they will manage money for premium.

√ In response to question what kind of role do trade unions can play in this regard participants added that they can arrange campaign, awareness build up program to make workers aware about this universal pension scheme to secure the future life of every women workers. They also added that they can act as a pressure group for government. They can suggest government to make this policy worker friendly and can suggest workers to invest in this pension scheme. They can also work with NGOs to increase their activities and make people aware about this.

## ANNEX - XIV

**Transcript: Consultation Meeting with Trade Union Leaders-02**
**28 November, 2024, BILS Seminar Hall**

**List of Participants**

| Serial No. | Name | Organization |
|---|---|---|
| **01.** | Abdul Kader Hawlader | Bangladesh Jatiyo Jote |
| **02.** | Md. Abul Kalam Azad | Bangladesh Jatiyotabado Shromik Dol |
| **03.** | Shamim Ara | BJSF |
| **04.** | Rofikul Islam Pothik | BSF |
| **05.** | Nurul Amin | JSJ |
| **06.** | Pulok Ronjon Dhor | BFTUC |
| **07.** | Rajekujjaman Roton | Socialist Labor Front (SLF) |
| **08.** | MD. Idris Ali | TUC |
| **09.** | Nasrin Akter Dina | BILS |
| **10.** | Noimul Ahsan Juel | BILS |

From the consultation meeting it was found that respondents expressed a significant lack of confidence among workers on the subject of saving money and added that there is a prevailing fear that the Government may not return their saving money.

Another participant added that if leader of the laborer suggested them to participate in pension scheme then the labor will be interested to participate but in the contrary, one trade union leader added that there is an opportunity to lose their saving money, which leads to refrain from participating in pension scheme. This pension scheme. Some other responded that they also have lack of trust on trade union leaders. Trade union leaders should achieve trust of the workers.

Another participant responded that those husband and wife who are worked together or earned together are seemed to join the pension system. He further added that in the developed country government manage the pension for their residents from the tax that they pay to government.

Some other participants are expecting to have the pension system in digital system where they can see their saving money at any time they want.
They also added that as they have no job security they cannot maintain their family expenses well. So, how can they maintain the premium of their pension regularly in this situation?

Some other participants responded that as government of this country changes on a regular basis so, if one government who has taken this initiatives changes over time then what will be the conditions of their money if the new government changes this system. Another participant added that workers are thinking this policy is of government, they are not thinking that this is a state policy.

Another participant added that as this concept of universal pension is new for everyone so leaders of trade union are not well aware of it, far about other workers. She further added that it should be well informed, government should aware everyone about this universal pension scheme, its importance, benefit etc.

Other participant expected to have equal wage/salary system for all workers and to deduct premium from their salary automatically.

They also expect to add the information of universal pension scheme in the text book of student so that people will be aware about it as it is a new concept of all.

Another participant added that in our country so many people are unemployed. Domestic workers, rickshaw pullers, sales girls are recruited for part time, so how they will manage money for premium.

One respondent state about the dependency level of women in daily life and it shows the barriers of women to participate in universal pension scheme. He added that in our country women are dependent on their father or husband. They cannot keep money in their hand, they have to give their earning money to their father or husband due the culture. It is also a burning question whether they have the right to invest money in any where they can in their family. There is also a probability that some women cannot be able to maintain their bank account due to ignorance. He also added that some women do not have any thoughts about their future. They believe to earn on daily basis. As they do not have thoughts about their future so, how they will be interested to save money for getting pension in future. Lack of capacity leads them to think unnaturally. They will think for future if they become capable to save money after maintaining their all expenditure. He also added that government should aware them about their future. It would reduce their dependency on others in their old age life. He further added that out of emotion women sometimes expenses unnecessarily likely they buy gifts for their favorite one repeatedly. If they become conscious they can reduce their expenses and save some money to get pension in future.

He further added that workers are lack of unique registration ID. The worker who are working in readymade garment industry may work as domestic worker or sales girl or may work in any where they can manage. As they have no continuity in work, nature and location of work so how they will be able to continue their premium in this unstable situation. They also have fear that if they become sick and cannot go for work then it may become as the system of paying as usual premium with fine. They expect to have a system that if they lose their job or change their job then their money of premium will deduct from their salary after getting the new job.

He again added that workers are also unaware about the contributory pension scheme. Actually who will contribute the partial money are out of their thought.

Again another important issue was raised that universal pension system is not mandatory for the workers of private sectors. So, workers who are interested are joining this pension system and the workers who are not interested are avoiding this pension system. He further suggested to make compulsory joining in the universal pension scheme of private sector workers where there owner of the workers / industry will contribute some part of premium from the side of workers.

Whether women workers can be provided financial assistance from the labor fund under the ministry of labor and employment to pay the premium of pension scheme or not. Besides, can the ministry of women and child affairs and the ministry of social welfare take any special financial assistance program for inclusion in pension schemes or payment of premiums for women workers in responses these two questions participants responded that ministry of labor and employment, ministry of women and child affairs and the ministry of social welfare can take special financial assistance program for inclusion of women workers in pension schemes or payment of premiums. But they found it will be quite difficult because there is no available data of the number of women workers working in readymade garment industry or working as domestic workers, sales girls and kindergarten teachers. On the other hand, male workers may raise question to have these facilities for them also.

In response to question what kind of role do trade unions can play in this regard participants added that they can arrange campaign, awareness build up program to make workers aware about this universal pension scheme to secure the future life of every women workers. They also added that they can act as a pressure group for government. They can suggest government to make this policy worker friendly and can suggest workers to invest in this pension scheme. They can also work with NGOs to increase their activities and make people aware about this.

ANNEX-XV

# FEEDBACK FROM KEY INFORMANTS

**Key Informant Interview-01**

**Mr. Rajequzzaman Ratan**
President
Samajtantrik Sramik Front

**Challenges for the women workers to participate in the UPS:**

1. Since the pension scheme is contributory, there is a lack of interest in the participation of workers. In addition, the financial capacity of the workers is also a factor.
2. The government has not had an effective exchange of views with the trade unions regarding the introduction of the pension scheme. The trade unions have not been involved in the implementation process either. No specific plan has been taken to address the difficulties that workers may face in joining the pension scheme, considering all the issues.
3. There is no retirement age for informal workers; again, garment workers are no longer seen in employment when they reach the age of 40/45. These issues have not been taken into consideration in this scheme. There is no provision for joining this scheme after 50 years, due to which a significant number of workers in the country are not able to join this scheme.
4. The workers have no clear idea about whether the money deposited by the workers before the age of 60 will be refunded or not.
5. The workers were not consulted or consulted on whether the pension scheme is suitable for the workers.

**Recommendations:**

1. Although the pension scheme is necessary for everyone, why is it not ensuring widespread participation in it? It needs to be investigated and analyzed, and government and private research institutions can come forward in this regard.
2. The job security of the workers needs to be ensured. Their minimum wage needs to be increased.
3. The government needs to conduct a responsible campaign mentioning the benefits of the pension scheme.
4. Policymakers need to know the details about the pension scheme of the country. We also need to know about the schemes of our neighboring countries.
5. It is necessary to find out how much monthly premium is reasonable for the workers, and this calculation needs to be done.

ANNEX-XVI

**Key Informant Interview-02**
**Mr. Abul Hossain**
Advisor
National Women Domestic Workers Union- NDWWU

**Challenges for the women workers to participate in the UPS:**

1. Since the amount and time limit for premium payments are fixed, there is less opportunity for low-income workers and irregular-income workers to participate in pension schemes.
2. There is a crisis of trust among workers in government schemes, especially those where participation is subject to payment.

**Recommendations:**

1. In order to introduce a pension scheme suitable for the reality of Bangladesh in the light of the social security schemes prevalent in various countries including Germany and India, it is necessary to adopt the experiences of those countries and review the schemes in detail.
2. It is necessary to identify the advantages and disadvantages that the government is facing while implementing the pension scheme and to make an assessment and evaluation of how to eliminate various difficulties or situations by utilizing the advantages and to prepare work management based on that.
3. Make the fixed amount and time for workers to deposit money, i.e. make the fixed amount and time flexible so that they can deposit any amount of money at any time.
4. To gain people's trust in the pension scheme, the government should undertake special programs including extensive publicity programs. Special publicity programs on this issue need to be broadcasted in government and private media.
5. Focusing on four sectors, take up a pilot program based on a set time frame by the three parties: government, employers, and workers.
6. Work jointly with trade unions. Take initiatives to include workers who are members of trade unions in the pension scheme.
7. Make the responsibility of paying premiums to all workers who work in the institutional sector on the employers. In that case, keep an index in the name of the workers, as a result of which there will be no problem in depositing premiums in the name of the said worker even if the owner changes.

ANNEX-XVII

**Key Informant Interview-03**
**Sanjida Sultana**
Additional Executive Director
Working Women

**Current Perspective/Deficiency to participate in UPS:**

1. Poor farmers and workers could open a bank account with 10 takas earlier, but now they cannot.
2. Workers, especially garment workers, have problems with their national voter identity cards. Many of them have errors in their identity cards. Many workers use other people's identity cards to get jobs because they are blacklisted in the BGMEA database. But they cannot be included in any government scheme with faulty identity cards. For these reasons, they cannot open accounts in banks and cannot participate in any government social security or support service programs like the pension scheme.
3. Workers are cheated by becoming members of various types of associations. They also consider the pension scheme to be a kind of association. As a result, workers are uncertain about whether they will get their money back after depositing money in the pension scheme. In other words, they still do not have 100% trust in the pension scheme.
4. Workers do not have a clear idea about the pension scheme. There is no comprehensive public awareness program by the government to inform workers about the benefits of the pension scheme. Besides, the government has not taken any initiative to explain to them what the process of workers' participation in the pension scheme is like.
5. Since garment workers are not self-employed and their minimum wage is Tk 12,500/-, they have to participate in the pension scheme Pragati Scheme (for employees of private organizations). The reality is that garment owners will not want to pay any extra money for workers in the pension scheme.

**Recommendations:**

1. The opportunity for workers to participate in the pension scheme should be made easier. The process through which workers are currently participating should be simplified by removing the complications. It costs about 1200 taka to open a bank account; workers cannot afford this amount of money. Therefore, provisions should be made in banks so that poor workers can open a bank account for 10 (ten) taka or free of cost.
2. Special initiatives should be taken so that garment workers or workers in other sectors whose national identity cards are defective can easily participate in the pension scheme and benefit from the government's social security programs.
3. It is necessary to take a mass awareness program or a comprehensive awareness program for workers about the benefits of the pension scheme.
4. There should be a comprehensive plan from the government to increase the confidence of workers in the pension scheme. Government officials should visit them frequently to teach them the process of participating in the pension scheme. The government should play a supportive role.
5. The government should issue special instructions to ensure that garment owners pay pension scheme premiums for workers.

ANNEX-XVIII

**Key Informant Interview-04**

**Masum Billah Khan**
Law Officer, DIFE
Ministry of Labour and Employment-MOLE

**Question- 1) Are there any women worker-friendly pension schemes in any countries (our neighboring countries or other countries) that have similar socio-economic conditions as Bangladesh? If so, what are they? What is the legal framework there?**

**Answer to Question No. 01**
Women worker-friendly pension schemes and social security programs in neighboring countries or other countries that have socio-economic conditions like Bangladesh have tried to overcome the challenges of establishing gender equality and establishing dignity in society for women. Women worker-friendly pension schemes in neighboring and other countries are given below:

**(a) India: Atal Pension Yojana**
Through this pension scheme launched by the government, an attempt has been made to include workers in the informal sector, especially women workers. An opportunity has been made for women to contribute according to their age and income. The government provides grants with a certain portion of the contributors.

Moreover, the government has introduced pension systems for women workers in various sectors at the provincial level, such as: In Kerala, a pension system is in place for agricultural workers and the cashew nut sector.

(Self-employed Women's Pension Scheme, Kerala Social Security Pension Scheme, Pension for Women in Welfare Boards).

**(b) Indonesia: Jaminan Hari Tua (JHT)- Elderly Savings Scheme, Kartu Parakerja**
The Indonesian Savings Program (ISPP)-Old Age Savings Program, which is a voluntary program, has been made more accessible to women by relaxing the conditions for contributions for female workers, increasing maternity and family benefits such as maternity leave, health care and benefits for surviving family members. It also provides opportunities for women in the informal sector to participate, and provides government contributions and subsidies.

**(c) Sri Lanka: The Sri Lankan Social Security Fund**
To ensure the economic independence of women in old age, efforts have been made to ensure pensions and other social security benefits for women and informal sector workers.

**(d) Nepal: National Pension Scheme for Women Workers**
This program has tried to include women workers in both formal and informal sectors. Self-employed women, home-based women workers and women employed in small SMEs have been included. The contribution amount is borne by the employer, women workers and the government.

**Question- 2) If there are any features, you would consider pension schemes as women worker-friendly?**

**Answer to question no. 02:**
1. Since women workers work in large numbers in the informal sector, all workers in the informal sector (e.g. domestic workers, seasonal workers) should be included.

2. Providing subsidies for low-income women for a few years.

3. Providing the opportunity to increase or decrease the monthly/weekly/annual contribution amount in the scheme in line with income.

4. Pension scheme with special benefits for women in urban and rural areas where women workers predominate.

5. Involving grassroots women in the management of pension schemes (like Grameen Bank)

**Question- 3) What do you think are the opportunities for working women to be included in the universal pension scheme of Bangladesh?**

**Answer to question 03:**
1. This scheme has the opportunity to pay salaries to workers in the informal sector.

2. There are some opportunities to pay irregular contributions. Women's income can sometimes be limited.

3. The government should bear the equivalent amount of contributions of low-income disadvantaged women workers.

4. Single mothers, widows and abandoned women can enjoy a dignified and secure life by participating in this scheme.

**Question- 4) What are the main challenges for women workers, especially those who earn very low wages, in being included in the universal pension scheme? In this case, what structural or institutional issues, economic issues, job and wage issues, social issues, cultural issues or religious issues do you think are at work?**

**Answer to question 04:**

**1. Administrative or structural challenges:**
(a) There is no database at the national level.
(b) Service workers still find it complicated (sitting in the office for services, not knowing about digital issues, not knowing about the registration process).

**2. Economic challenges:**
(a) Low salaries and in most cases irregular income and due to the massive increase in living expenses, regular contributions are required.

(b) Many women do not want to go to banks, except for microfinance and banks, borrowing from moneylenders.

(c) Prioritizing meeting other financial needs of the family over saving.

**3. Social challenges:**
(a) Many women workers do not have the power to make decisions about the financial affairs of the family.

(b) People have not yet developed social trust in the insurance and pension system.

**4. Cultural Challenges:**
(a) Social security has not been a part of our country like in developed countries.

(b) Many people do not join due to religious reasons considering interest.

(c) They do not pay attention to economic matters as they are busy with housework and child rearing.

(d) Many women want to depend on their husbands.

**5. Regarding jobs and wages:**
(a) Lack of decent work in the informal sector.

(b) Wage inequality.

(c) Not including employers in pension schemes.

(d) Lack of incentives for low-income women.

**Question- 5) What can be done to make the universal pension scheme female-worker friendly? What should be the structure in this case? What process or method should be followed in this case? What kind of role do you think the government, employers, trade unions, NGOs and civil society organizations can play in this case?**

**Answer to question no. 5:**
1. Strengthen state financial support for small entrepreneurs, workers at the informal level, indigenous people, domestic workers and the institutional sector where the implementation of labor laws is very low.

2. Increase the formalization of women workers.

3. The state should consider social security as an investment in building an inclusive developed economy.

4. Include other social security with this scheme. (For example: maternity child support).

**Structural development in making women-friendly pension schemes:**
1. Create an app in Bengali with sufficient security so that women workers can easily manage their pension accounts or make a mobile-based arrangement.

2. There should be scope for increasing or decreasing the retirement age in the scheme.

3. There should be coordination and contribution of employers, government and workers.

4. A single ministry is needed to provide employment opportunities to women workers and general workers through coordination of the Ministry of Labor and Employment, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Social Welfare.

5. There should be representation of grassroots women in the formal and informal sectors in laws, policies and management.

6. The amount of state subsidy in social security should be increased.

7. Make the pension scheme attractive by providing special discounts during maternity leave or during unemployment.

**Role of the government:**
Financial incentives, policy support, tax rebates to employers, strengthening the tripartite structure, institutionalization of the informal sector.

**Role of the employer:**
Inclusive workplace with the cooperation of the union, investment in social security, investment in productivity, considering manpower as valuation capital, awareness of the employer organization.

**Trade union:**
Building trade union, federation consensus for changing the national structure, mobilizing workers in the informal sector, involving women workers in trade unions. Introducing gender equality-based schemes, negotiating with the employer to encourage them by providing additional bonuses or benefits.

**Non-governmental development organizations:**
(NGOs) and NGOs can conduct research and policy advocacy with the government and international organizations, (ready-made garments, domestic workers, informal sector workers), can help the government in determining policy by inventing pilot projects and models. Can help maintain a fair environment by bringing workers and employers together.

**Question- 6) Please, give your comments on whether women workers can be given financial assistance from the Workers' Welfare Fund to pay the premium of the pension scheme.**

**Answer to Question No. 6:**
As per Rule-4 (1) (d) of the Bangladesh Workers' Welfare Foundation Rules, 210, there is a provision to provide necessary assistance for the maternity welfare of women workers working in the informal sector. Following Chapter 15 of the Labor Act, so far about 470 companies have deposited money as dividends in this fund. Therefore, if all companies follow the provisions of this law, the issue of paying money to the pension scheme can now be considered.

Support for effective and inclusive Trade Unions in Bangladesh

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