



Terms of Reference (ToR)

Research on the Impacts of Environmental Degradation on RMG Workers and the Community in Bangladesh

1. Summary

This 'Terms of Reference' details working modalities of a research on Environmental Impacts on RMG Workers and the Community in Bangladesh. Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies - BILS is the implementing partner of this research. This research constitutes an essential part of a partnering project between BILS and Clean Cloth Campaign (CCC) titled 'Fabric of Fairness: Upholding workers' rights in the garment industry', in which 'Clean Cloth Campaign (CCC)' is the main funding partner.

2. Problem statement

While the RMG sector is vital to Bangladesh's economy, its environmental impact is expanding. Industrial pollution including water and air pollution, untreated chemical wastes and disposal, and improper waste management not only harm the environment, but also impact negatively workers and communities around industrial sites. Among others respiratory disorders, skin diseases, and waterborne diseases are common from these which has a clear implication on quality of life.

Bangladesh agreed at the Glasgow Climate Summit to cut carbon emissions by 22% by 2030. Bangladesh's RMG business is a prime target for this. The clothing industry now has around 235 LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified green factories. These factories claim to have significantly decreased their energy and water usage by improving efficiency and adopting sustainable practices. Unfortunately, workers and their legislative representatives trade unions have not been included in these procedures. Almost no LEED-certified factories have established trade unions.

Workers in general, and especially trade unions, lack the necessary information, skills, and resources to include environmental and climate rights concerns into their political priority agenda. They lack the understanding and information to anticipate the current and future harmful influence on the environment, which is also connected to their profession. Most crucially, the genuine voice and expectations of workers are lacking in the policy formulation and implementation processes.

This research aims to identify and record the environmental risks and respective health and safety implications on workers and community life resulting from the RMG industrial activities. This is expected to help to make evidence-based suggestions for change, as well as to bring about accountability and environmental justice in the clothing industry.

3. Overall Objective

To assess, identify, and document the environmental concerns associated with the RMG production processes and respective implications on workers and their

families in both workplace and community with particular emphasis on health causes and well-being.

More specifically, this research wants to explore the following:

- To identify the environmental concerns associated with the RMG production processes
- To identify the environmental vulnerabilities of the RMG workers both at the workplace and in the community.
- To analyse the status of health vulnerabilities and safety and security of the RMG workers in the workplace and in the community, particularly associated with environmental causes.
- To assess the strength and readiness of the TUs to deal with environmental concerns associated with the RMG production processes and respective vulnerabilities of workers both inside the factories and in the community.
- To develop a comprehensive set of recommendations to act on by the TUs to effectively address environmental issues in the RMG industry from policy to enterprise level.

4. Expected Outputs

Research output shall consist of an edited detailed report including the following;

- Identification and analysis of the current status of environmental issues associated with the RMG production processes;
- Identification, and analysis of the environmental vulnerabilities of the RMG workers inside factory;
- Identification, and analysis of the environmental vulnerabilities of the RMG workers at community;
- Identification, and analysis of the health vulnerability and safety and security of the RMG workers associated with the environmental causes;
- Identification of policy gaps;
- Comprehensive set of recommendations for trade unions to address climate justice and environmental rights of workers in the country's RMG sector.

5. Scope of Work

- Mapping of high-impact environmental zones across major RMG industrial areas.
- Field assessments in selected communities near RMG clusters
- Interviews and FGDs with RMG workers, trade union leaders, local residents, health professionals, and environmental experts.
- Consultation with employers, brand representatives, local government, and environmental regulatory bodies.
- Review of environmental audit reports (if accessible), CSR initiatives, ETP (Effluent Treatment Plant) implementation records.

- Analysis of secondary data (existing environmental reports, health records, media documentation, academic literature).
- Triangulation of findings from various sources for accuracy and depth.
- Report writing and presentation

6. Methodology:

Considering the nature, it is expected that this research employs qualitative research approaches and respective tools and techniques. Data needs to be collected both from primary and secondary sources.

Please note that this is only an indicative methodology. Lead/principal consultant is requested to develop a detailed methodology plan and a complete research plan and agree with the project authority the same before conducting the research.

7. Key Sources and Peoples to be Consulted

Primary sources:

RMG Workers, Workers Representatives, Trade Union leadership, Women and Youth Leadership from National trade union centers, Employers (BEF, BGMEA, BKMEA, individual employer), Department of Environment, Ministry of Labour & Employment, DIFE, Community and society, Labour Rights Organisations, BILS and Clean Cloth Campaign (CCC), Experts/Academics, Journalists, Labour lawyers.

Secondary Sources:

Both electronic and non-electronic published and non-published books, research reports, articles, policy briefs, journals, newspapers, policies and laws, and Conventions and Recommendations.

8. Audience of Research Report

- Workers
- TUs
- NGO/CSO
- Related Government Institutions
- Employers
- International and National Policy Makers
- Labour rights Organizations (LROs)
- BILS- Clean Cloth Campaign (CCC)
- Academics/Experts
- Development agencies and Institutions
- Foreign embassies

9. Style and Length of Report

The lead consultant needs to prepare and submit both an electronic version and signed hard copy. The document should be very precise, and must answer each specific objective and research question. The main body of the study report shall be plus/minus

a 40-45 pages document including a 4-5 pages executive summary. The executive summary is expected to develop in the form of a briefing paper for the purpose of dissemination immediately among the audiences. Necessary supplementary information (if any) like transcripts of consultations and interviews (if required) and references are to be attached as annexes.

10. Timeline

Starting from 1 August 2025, and ends on 31 December 2025.

11. Ethics and Risks

The annual report must avoid any kind of plagiarism and provide due acknowledgement to the sources. Objectiveness is the key to mitigate the risks where researchers have to be strategic and analytic in arguments but not biased.

12. Documentation:

- Checklists, and interview notes should be submitted, signed and dated by the consultant or other interviewer (if needed).
- The final report must provide endnote references for all specific facts and statistics used. The report must also include a bibliography of the major references used.
- Primary sources must be used wherever possible over secondary sources. For example, the Consultant should reference a statistic to its original report, not where it is cited second hand by a newspaper or website.

13. General Terms & Conditions:

- Any document, information or data entrusted to or produced by in connection with this assignment, shall be strictly confidential. After completion of this assignment only BILS shall be eligible to use them. However, in case of any emerging need to use it or any part of it by any academics or other users, prior informing and written endorsement from BILS is mandatory. The copyright of the final product will be endowed with the BILS.
- In the event of any emerging priorities and needs, concerned authority at BILS shall enjoy all authority to reschedule the operational framework of this research assignment.
- BILS 's Finance section shall follow the country's legal framework to deduct VAT & Tax as per requirements.

Submission Deadline: 20 July 2025