TRUSTING PARTNERSHIPS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE TO ADDRESS GARMENT WORKERS’ HEALTH

A dedicated room equipped with a full time doctor, paramedics, and nurses. Women walking in to acquire primary medical treatment while the doctors invite them while a much widened smile filled with care. This isn’t a scenario of a multinational company’s corporate headquarter- this is a medical facility in a garment factory in Bangladesh.

The Read Made Garments (RMG) industry in Bangladesh has evolved ever since 2013. Whether due to the massive international pressure or the owners’ willingness, the scenario for workers have drastically changed in the complaint factories. The sector bounced back against all odds and bets.

Most of the BGMEA (Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association) member factories not only maintain compliance, but stretch their hands even further to help the workers have better facilities.

With an Inclusive Business (IB) based intervention in 20 factories to address Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) of female RMG workers, SNV Netherlands Development Organisation has been witnessing groundbreaking positive changes in the attitude of partner factories.

Working with Women project works to develop sustainable solutions to address SRHR of female RMG workers. In doing so, partnerships between factories and service providers have been initiated to take SRHR products and services available, affordable, and accessible for RMG workers. The project operates with 10 service providers and 20 factories and currently has 22000 plus workers within the service span.

Among a numerous needed criteria for a functional and effective partnership, trust is at the top of the list. Without forming a trusting relationship between relevant stakeholders- in this case, between factories and service providers- the effectivity of any partnership is bound of condense. And when it comes to trust from the factory end, Mr. Md Abdul Hye Siddiqe is incontestably a role model. He is the Assistant Compliance Manager of Rizvi Fashions Ltd.

While all compliant factories have employed doctors in the medical facility, Working with Women project’s intervention takes SRHR services and products at doorstep for the workers. A specialized doctor stations at the factory medical center to provide dedicated solution to address specific healthcare problems of the workers.

Why is Mr. Siddiqe such a role model? Because his trust for the service provider- IACIB- in Rizvi Fashion isn’t subject to a cross-check. Most factories would cross-check a prescribed leave from the service providing doctor with a factory employed doctor, while under his leadership, Rizvi Fashion would allow workers to visit nearby clinic, and even sick days!

When asked about the extra mile to trust, he said, “Doctors are doctors. Their employer agency should never determine or question the diagnosis. Most importantly, I have full confidence and trust in IACIB doctors and paramedics. After all, they are here to help us, help the workers have a better life blessed with better health. I believe that our trust in them with empower them even farther and help them take care of our workers better.”

His positive attitude towards the service provider is exactly what is needed for a more functioning, more effective partnership. Sustainable solution for better health of workers requires a multi-stakeholder approach and most importantly, a bucket full of trust for each other. Perhaps, it’s a matter of time until all factories tag with a service provider and they work together for a better today and future for the workers.

After all, Bangladesh’s RMG industry has only started flourishing to its most beautiful and responsible self!

Collected & Collaborated by: Asif Kamal, Communication Advisor, Working with Women Project