2nd National Conference on SRHR at Workplace

ENSURING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS TO ATTAIN SDGS

The ‘2nd National Conference on Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights (SRHR) at Workplace’ showcased different forms of interventions, explored interactions, traced the pathways for change, and looked at the short, intermediate and long-term solutions which address the sexual and reproductive health needs and rights at workplace in light of the SDGs.

SNV Netherlands Development Organisation and Department of Population Sciences of the University of Dhaka, with funding support from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, successfully organised the 2nd National Conference on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights at Workplace on 17th September 2019, to raise awareness and collaborations among the stakeholders, at Nabab Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban, University of Dhaka. The conference was supported by the Better Work Bangladesh, and ACI’s Freedom Sanitary Napkin. The second national conference was aimed at increasing cooperation among different divisions in workplaces, particularly in the Ready-made garment (RMG) sector.

Ms Meher Afroz Chumki, MP, Chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Bangladesh Parliament attended the inaugural session as the Chief Guest; while Professor Dr. Md. Akhtaruzzaman, Honorable Vice-Chancellor, University of Dhaka inaugurated the conference. Amongst the others, His Excellency Mr. Harry Verweij, Ambassador, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Bangladesh attended as the Guest of Honor; Mr. Jason Belanger, Country Director, Bangladesh, SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, and Mr. Tuomo Poutiainen, Country Director, International Labour Organization (ILO), Bangladesh attended as Special Guests; Professor Dr. Mohammad Mainul Islam, Chairman, Department of Population Sciences, University of Dhaka Chaired the inaugural session.

CONFERENCE THEMES

FAMILY PLANNING AND PREGNANCY RELATED SERVICES AT WORKPLACE

Making family planning services and products accessible and affordable for garment workers;

INCLUSIVE BUSINESS IN RMG SECTORS

Efficient investment in workers’ health will improve productivity and sustainability of the factory;

MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH AT WORKPLACE

Rights-based Approach to SRHR; SRHR Laws and Policy Implementation at Workplace;

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE, MENTAL HEALTH AND SRHR

Strengthening linkages between SRHR and mental health at workplace.
Speakers of the inaugural session emphasized on creating enabling environments to empower people to realize their sexual and reproductive health and their human rights is an emerging challenge in Bangladesh.

The daylong conference hosted four parallel sessions to highlight and discuss the findings of research abstracts and best practices on four thematic areas including Family Planning and Pregnancy Related Services at Workplace, Inclusive Business in RMG Sectors, Neglected Issues of SRHR (GBV and HIV/AIDS), and Adolescent Engagement, Menstrual Health and Rights-based Approach at Workplace.

A total of 18 abstracts presented with oral and poster presentations in the sight of RMG leaders and buyers representative, activists, researchers, NGOs, development partners and academia who attended in the conference to discuss problems and solutions on SRHR issues at the workplace.

During the first session, discussants emphasized on the availability of the family planning services and commodities for garment workers and a better synchronization of government and non-government services. The following session stressed on the positive changes as a result of Inclusive Business initiatives in some of the ready-made garment factories. Last two sessions showcased the experience of female garments worker’s on sexual harassment and their perception regarding prevention, and the factors that affect menstrual health of women working in RMG sector.

In Bangladesh, the lack of fulfilment, protection and promotion of healthcare especially Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) is a significant factor that undermines human development and is particularly evident through health, social, political and other development indicators. The issue of SRHR at the workplace is too often sidelined from key policy debates though the quality of access to SRHR has a significant impact on the productivity and general health and well-being of workers, especially in the low-income settings and the profit-driven market dynamics. The conference brought multi-stakeholders to discuss problems and solutions impacting the lives of individuals, including women and their ability to exercise and access SRHR at the workplace. The conference ended up with a call to action for promoting SRHR education at all level including the workplace for breaking the social taboos and endorsing positive edges on SRHR.

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SRHR and health-related initiatives are still seen as ‘just doing good for workers’. And not as important contributors to business benefits. However, we have been able to create evidence that these initiatives are really benefiting your business’.

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His Excellency Mr. Harry Verweij
Ambassador, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

SRHR is a neglected issue in Bangladesh and now we have to change our mindset to work on the SRHR issues. We have to take serious initiative for the female RMG workers for their SRHR needs. Ensuring SRHR is important to attain SDGs’.

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Ms Meher Afroz Chumki, MP
Chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee Ministry of Women and Children Affairs

‘It is indeed a very important concern for a non-inclusive society like ours, SRHR is highly relevant to the women working in the RMG sector and similarly important to our students to learn and act on this’.

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Prof. Dr. Md. Akhtaruzzaman
Vice-Chancellor
University of Dhaka

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Inclusive Business could benefit both workers and the ready-made garment factories in Bangladesh while investing and ensuring SRHR at workplace