

Workers' Voice

Press Release

September 2013

The *Workers' Voice Project* investigates the complexity of Bangladesh's RMG industry from the perspective of the workers. The first project report reflects the results of a large scale survey based on individual face-to-face interviews with over 1,200 Bangladeshi garment workers.

Workers' Voice is a true multi-stakeholder project. The partners are the **AWAJ Foundation**, a Bangladeshi NGO dedicated to the fight for workers' rights, **AMRF Society**, a local think-tank and watchdog of Bangladesh's labor issues, and **Consulting Service International Ltd.**, a Hong Kong based CSR consultancy with many years of experience in the global apparel business.

The *Workers' Voice Project* is open-ended and the survey will be continued. A database will be established that will allow tracking the historical development of the industry. Reports will be published on a regular basis.

The results of the survey indicate that labor relations in the RMG sector are characterized by a deep-rooted antagonism between workers on the one side and managers and industry owners on the other side. The status of labor relations prevents the transformation of Bangladesh's most important sector into a mature and truly professional industry. RMG workers are currently working and living under unacceptable conditions that endanger their health and safety, their social upwards mobility as well as the development of the country.

Managers and industry owners need to recognize the value and rights of their workers. They need to shift their perspective from that of a trader to that of a professional manufacturing entrepreneur. Workers need to recognize their constructive role as acting agents within a thriving industry. We must increase efforts in education and capacity building of both workers and management and establish a constructive dialogue, including participatory structures, in factories.

The role of the RMG industry must be understood in a greater context of Bangladesh's development. The RMG sector, situated at the center of a rapid urbanization process, has the potential to significantly boost Bangladesh's overall socio-economic development. In order to realize this potential, it is crucial to improve industrial labor relations.

