

ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS OF READYMADE GARMENT WORKERS

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Bangladesh garment sector is pre-dominated by women comprising 85% of 4 million workforces. Mental distress affects their work life, productivity leading to a poor work-life. The normal day of women worker starts at 4 am, cooks food in the common kitchen available for 4-5 families, goes to work at 7 am, and has a longer work day till 7 pm, then is back to take care of her family and goes to bed between 10-11 pm. She has no time of her own, a victim of violence and abuse both in the factory and work, no one to share her pain. Factory management don't realize the fact when psychosocial challenges and issues go unaddressed, it impacts workers' effectiveness in the work place. The pilot intervention by SNV with 600 workers evidenced how introducing psychosocial counsellor at workplace impacted the situation in factories. Welfare officers, who are the first contact point for workers in factory, were trained by certified psychologists and counsellors, and these trained para-counsellors were institutionalized inside factory. In words of the counsellor within two month of introduction and program awareness, three women came with anxiety and one of them had four sessions with the counsellor for mental relief, three women reported work stress and took three separate counselling sessions, others include conflict

with supervisor, family conflict, financial crisis, relationship issue and the resulted anxiety. On success of this intervention, SNV is now moving towards workers wellbeing management course for developing counsellors for the ready-made garment sector to address worker psychological issues.

Biography

Farhtheeba Rahat Khan is a development professional with experience backed-up by private sector interventions and development sector working realities and challenges. As the lead of private sector health project, she undertook studies and worked on the policy front with Ministry of Health its directorates for formulation of policy framework, guidelines and accreditation systems in the health training, and emphasized on avenues for women employment in the health sector. Currently, she is the Team Leader for 'Working with Women' project implemented by SNV where she is facilitating interventions in garment factories, to ensure health and well-being in a sustainable manner. Her research interests include: child psychology and how to induce effective childhood learning retaining the same framework; work life patterns affecting women's attitude and its impact on family and society and; measuring changes and its attribution to a single factor: the complexity around it and its authentication challenges.

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