

## **ILO's Role in Fulfilling Garment Workers' Rights through the BWB II Program After the Rana Plaza Collapse**

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### **Abstract**

The collapse of the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh on April 24, 2013, was recorded as the worst industrial accident ever. This accident killed at least 1,132 and injured more than 2,500. This incident made the world aware of the poor working conditions in Bangladesh's garment industry sector. In addition, many workers do not even get their working rights, so there are actions or demonstrations carried out by workers, demanding their rights. The demonstration even received support from activists or outsiders???. Bangladesh is a developing country with the second largest textile exporter after China. Bangladesh's garment industry accounts for about 80 percent of the total revenue in the country's manufacturing sector. This study discusses the role of the International Labor Organizations (ILO) in fulfilling the rights of garment workers through the Better Work Bangladesh (BWB) program after the collapse of Rana Plaza. To explain this case, the author uses the role theory of international organizations by Kelly Kate S. Pease. According to Pease, state problems can be solved with the help of external parties by acting as problem solvers, collective art mechanisms, capacity builders, and aid providers. Research shows that the ILO has an effective role in fulfilling the rights of Bangladeshi garment workers through the Better Work Bangladesh Phase II Program, in creating better or more prosperous labor conditions by cooperating with several internal and external parties.

**Keywords:** Better Work Bangladesh (BWB), labor, garment, ILO

### **Abstrak**

*Runtuhnya gedung Rana Plaza di Bangladesh pada 24 April 2013, tercatat sebagai kecelakaan industri terburuk yang pernah ada. Kecelakaan ini menewaskan sedikitnya 1.132 dan lebih dari 2.500 lainnya terluka. Kejadian ini menyadarkan dunia terkait kondisi kerja yang buruk di sektor industri garmen Bangladesh. Selain itu, juga masih banyak buruh yang kurang bahkan tidak mendapatkan haknya dalam bekerja, sehingga mulai munculnya aksi atau demo yang dilakukan oleh para buruh dalam menuntut haknya dalam bekerja. Bahkan demo tersebut mendapatkan dukungan dari para aktivis atau pihak luar. Bangladesh sendiri merupakan negara berkembang dengan eksportir tekstil terbesar kedua setelah Tiongkok, di mana industri garmen menyumbang sekitar 80 persen dari total pendapatan di sektor manufaktur negara. Penelitian ini membahas tentang peran ILO dalam memenuhi hak buruh garmen melalui program Better Work Bangladesh (BWB) pasca runtuhnya Rana Plaza. Dalam menjelaskan kasus ini penulis menggunakan teori peran organisasi*

*internasional oleh Kelly Kate S. Pease. Menurut Pease, permasalahan negara dapat diatasi dengan bantuan pihak luar dengan berperan sebagai problem solving, collective art mechanism, capacity building, dan aid provider. Hasil riset menunjukkan bahwa ILO efektif berperan dalam memenuhi hak-hak para buruh garmen Bangladesh melalui Program Better Work Bangladesh Phase II, dalam menciptakan kondisi buruh yang lebih baik atau sejahtera dengan menggandeng beberapa pihak baik internal maupun eksternal.*

**Kata kunci:** *Better Work Bangladesh (BWB), buruh, garmen, ILO*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Bangladesh is a developing country where at first the country's economy only depended on the agricultural sector, but in fact, this dependence has not been able to handle the generally low standard of living in many areas. To overcome this imbalance, the government of Bangladesh adopted industrialization policies in the mid-20th century (Tinker & Husain, 2022). This policy was adopted in 1973 to develop the production of consumer goods as quickly as possible to avoid dependence on the import sector (Nasrullah, 2015). In addition, the establishment of factories is carried out to produce and export ready-made materials to reduce heavy exports of raw materials and be able to generate foreign exchange.

At the end of the 20th century precisely in 1980, the clothing industry in Bangladesh was booming, and by the beginning of the 21st century, the export value of garments, hosiery, and knitwear had far exceeded expectations. Therefore, it is not surprising that Bangladesh is the second largest textile exporter in the world after China (Jusuf, 2017). The development of the garment industry coincides with the start of many garment factories, which is good news for the people of Bangladesh because there will be many job vacancies for them. The rapid development in various industrial sectors, especially garment factories, has had an impact on improving

Bangladesh's economy as well as the welfare of citizens and the country.

Rana Plaza is an eight-story commercial building that is one of the largest industrial complexes in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The building can accommodate several shops, apartments, a bank, as well as five garment factories at once (Campaign, nd). The day before the tragedy of the Rana Plaza building collapse on April 23, 2013, a large structural crack was found in the building. Knowing this, some shops and banks located on the lower floors chose to immediately close and take a day off.

However, garment workers were still ordered to return to work the next day. As a result of management pressure, on Wednesday 24 April 2013 thousands of workers returned to work in their garment factory which was located at the top of the building with the condition of the building having many cracks, in just a matter of a few hours after working hours the entire building collapsed.

The Rana Plaza collapse incident killed 1,132 workers and injured more than 2,500 others. Many of them survived after being trapped under debris and machinery for hours or even days before they could be rescued, sometimes even amputating limbs (Clean Clothes Campaigns, n.d.). It was an unforgettable tragedy, but one that could have been avoided.

This tragedy became the worst industrial accident in the history of the

garment industry in the world (ILO, n.d.a). This made the world aware of the terrible working conditions faced by workers in Bangladesh's garment industry sector. Moreover, there are still many victims' families who have not received the compensation they should receive. Although demands have been filed by the families of the victims, there is still no responsible party. Even though at least 29 global brands were identified as doing business in the Rana Plaza building (Rahman & Yadlapalli, 2021).

Meanwhile, several other labor problems lie in the low wages where Bangladesh is listed as the lowest-paid laborer in the world, millions of people who work most of them, women and children, and residents are exposed to an unhealthy work environment every day. Thus the rate of work-related accidents and deaths is high, and many suffer from diseases due to a bad working environment (ILO, n.d.c). This is because most of the factories in Bangladesh do not meet the standards required by building and construction laws. Therefore, deaths due to fire incidents and building collapses are common (ILO, n.d.c).

Over time, unfortunate tragedies often occur, forcing thousands of Bangladeshi factory workers to simultaneously stage large-scale demonstrations against factory owners to be given severe punishment by the government or the state. Because basically, every human being has Human Rights (HAM) in various aspects, one of which is the aspect of workers, these rights include the right to fair, safe, and healthy working conditions, the right to job services, the right to fair and favorable wages, the right to - discrimination, as well as many other labor rights (Icelandic Human Rights

Centre, n.d.). Labor rights have also been recognized, regulated, and established policies or laws and regulations throughout the world, where these regulations have been adopted by international countries in building a healthy and right world of work.

On the other hand, the Rana Plaza tragedy itself is one of the tragedies of the collapse of the largest garment industrial complex in Bangladesh, where many accidents in the garment industry sector caused Bangladesh to experience a decline in the country's economy. This is because the garment industry accounts for around 80 percent of the total revenue in Bangladesh's manufacturing sector, with at least four million workers depending on the sector (DW, 2020). In addition, the garment industry is the main export industry that contributes the most foreign exchange earnings in Bangladesh (VOA, 2013). It was this tragedy that became the momentum for changes to be imposed on the Bangladeshi garment industry. This also drives the urgency for international parties, ranging from the government to international organizations, to improve it.

To improve the situation more substantively and ensure that workers get their rights to work, both in terms of health, treatment, finances, and better job security, and strive to realize workers' welfare, global and local stakeholders gathered to agree on a coordinated framework that has not yet been implemented. happened before. International Labor Organization (ILO) as an organization that focuses on the welfare of international workers, the ILO responds, acts, and implements international labor standard laws in Bangladesh to help find solutions to the

problems that occur. In fulfilling the rights of garment workers, the ILO partnered with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) as its partner to develop the Better Work program in Bangladesh.

*Better Work* is a program established to bring together various groups – governments, global brands, factory owners, and trade unions – to improve working conditions in the garment industry and make the sector more competitive (Better Work, n.d.b). This program has existed since 2007 after the success of the ILO Better Factories Cambodia Project. Better Work has spread to 12 developing countries including Bangladesh, namely Better Work Bangladesh (ILO, n.d.b). Better Work Bangladesh or BWB has two programs namely, BWB Phase I (2015-2018) and Phase II (2018-2021) where these programs are sustainable development or improvement programs. This research will focus on the role of the ILO as an international or external organization that helps address the problems of garment workers in Bangladesh.

Based on previous research, there has been no study specifically discussing the implementation of the Better Work program in Bangladesh to improve the conditions of garment workers under the ILO. The study of the role of the ILO in Bangladesh conducted by Permata (2020) shows that the role of the ILO can help improve labor conditions by focusing on implementing new regulations in garment factories so that the number of child laborers in Bangladesh decreases (Permata, 2020). Tambon's study (2015) shows that the ILO succeeded in bringing about some significant improvements, by amending

the Bangladesh Labor Law. The new regulation introduces new safety measures and organizes more effective advocacy for better labor conditions (Tambun & Pakpahan, 2015).

Based on the explanation above, this paper shows that international organizations care about helping improve problems that occur in a country. Therefore, the question that this paper seeks to answer is what is the role of the ILO in fulfilling the rights of garment workers through the BWB phase II program? To answer the following questions, the author uses the theory of the role of international organizations, in seeing how the ILO plays a role in dealing with problems that occur in Bangladesh.

### **Framework: The Role of International Organizations**

This study uses the theory of the role of international organizations. The definition of an international organization itself according to Clive Archer in his book *International Organizations*, is a formal and sustainable structure formed based on an agreement between members, both government and non-government, of two or more sovereign countries to pursue and achieve the common interests of its members (Archer, 2001). In achieving their goals, international organizations have an organizational structure. If these structures have carried out their functions, then the organization has carried out a certain role. In addition, through their actions, each member carries out several activities to achieve goals.

The role of international organizations can be described as individuals within the international community. As members of the

international community, international organizations must obey and comply with all mutually agreed rules. Kelly Kate S. Pease reveals that international organizations have a certain role in the international system that is adapted to the principles and nature of the international organization (Pease, 2000). International organizations play a role in various issues that become problems in a country such as environmental issues, health, security, human rights, and others.

Pease (2002) stated that every international organization has certain roles, which have been adapted to the nature and principles of the international organization itself. These roles include (1) problem-solving (assisting the state in solving problems collectively); (2) collective art mechanism (developing economic prosperity and global prosperity); (3) capacity building (increasing and developing their ability to deal with current problems); (4) common global market (become a forum and tool between countries in the global market as a unifier for the international community); and (5) aid providers (providing assistance to victims of natural disasters or refugees/victims of international politics). However, the ILO will only focus on four of the five roles that are appropriate to its action in this research.

First, problem-solving or an international organization can play a role in helping solve problems faced by a country collectively. International organizations here also accommodate countries that are members of an alliance in their organization. Together with other countries or international organizations, both are united in handling and preventing problems that

occur. Through cooperation between international organizations and countries, international organizations in problem-solving can play a role as important actors in solving a problem.

Second, collective art mechanisms or international organizations can play a role in providing incentives to help develop and advance economic prosperity and global welfare. As a collective art mechanism, international organizations can engage with all stakeholders and establish partnerships to promote policies or conditions, or regulations in incentive plans aimed at solving a problem.

Third, capacity building or this role includes the role carried out by international organizations regularly by improving and developing their capabilities in overcoming problems that are currently happening in a country. Increasing this role can be in the form of routinizing activities that have been made into one of the solutions for a better change and assisting the community in developing shared values and norms. Primarily, international organizations implement this role by developing and promoting social norms such as democratic values, human rights, political economy order, etc. (Pease, 2000). International organizations need cooperation that is useful in enhancing the right skills, attitudes, and knowledge, namely to know the ability in each field effectively. This is realized through capacity building aimed at stabilizing legal, economic, and social conditions.

Fourth, aid providers or international organizations play a role by assisting "victims of international politics". The categories of victims included in the victims of international politics are the poor, refugees, and people

who have experienced crises as a result of natural disasters, medical epidemics, accidents, and wars. When a country is deemed no longer able to deal with these problems or victims, international organizations emerge as external parties that try to assist the victims of this politics and seek long-term solutions that change conditions and can last a long time. The role of international organizations as aid providers is realized through the provision of foreign aid or foreign aid. John divides foreign aid into two categories, namely, humanitarian aid, the assistance provided as an emergency aid to prevent or alleviate the occurrence of a humanitarian crisis as a result of certain events such as a conflict or disaster in the form of clean water, food, medicine, health facilities, shelter, education, and non-food items (equipment) shower and blanket). Development aid is assistance provided to achieve long-term sustainable development in the economic, social, or political fields (John, 2009). In this study, international organizations as aid providers in the category of development aid can assist with a solution to problems that occur in a country.

### **Research Methods**

This research is a descriptive study using qualitative data analysis techniques. The Authors attempts to understand and explore issues related to the role of the ILO in improving the conditions of garment workers in Bangladesh. This paper seeks to find various backgrounds and efforts made by the ILO to play a role in helping Bangladesh improve the conditions of garment workers through the Better Work program.

Data collection techniques in this study used secondary data techniques. This technique is a collection of data sources that do not directly provide data to data collectors. Secondary data is usually obtained from data sourced from the internet, library research, media, official documents, and so on. The sources of information obtained are certainly related to the theme of the ILO's role in improving the conditions of workers in Bangladesh.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Conditions of Bangladeshi Garment Workers After the 2013 Rana Plaza Collapse**

In solving the problems of garment workers in Bangladesh after the tragedy of the Rana Plaza collapse which shocked the world, international organizations are here to assist in dealing with these problems. In this research, the ILO plays an important role in addressing labor issues in fulfilling labor rights in Bangladesh. The ILO is dedicated to focusing on improving a lot of workers in the world, by encouraging the creation of opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work that is free, fair, safe, and with dignity (ILO, nd).

The condition of garment workers in Bangladesh is of great concern, especially with the tragedy of the Rana Plaza collapse. Everything related to the garment industry has changed, especially for workers who have lost their jobs, with a total of around 357,000 workers (Rahman & Yadlapalli, 2021). From a macroeconomic perspective, the existence of a garment industry such as Rana Plaza (the largest garment industry complex in Dhaka) has indeed made Bangladesh look better, in terms of

economic and social growth. Meanwhile, implicitly various companies also have a social responsibility to the community in building society, the impact of which is increasing the quality level of education for workers, equality of women's rights, increasing productivity, and so on. However, the fact that in the field the impact is not reflected in what is seen on the surface. It turns out that many well-known large corporations do not have management that meets labor standards, moreover the government pays little attention to it (Labowitz, Sarah, & Baumann-Paully, 2014).

The problems experienced by garment workers in Bangladesh are related to their rights, namely regarding the welfare of workers such as low wages, poor health and safety factors, underage workers (children), and abusive treatment both physically and mentally (discrimination). , and there is no counseling for the community about the rights that they can receive. This condition has long been experienced by garment workers. Therefore, the ILO is considered a place where Bangladeshi garment workers feel protected. The ILO is working with the government of Bangladesh by providing accommodation for garment workers in Bangladesh as a tool to improve working conditions and awareness of workers about their rights in the garment industry. The cooperation carried out by the two and even multilateral is realized by the emergence of various programs to solve the problems of garment workers, such as the Better Work program.

### **The Role of the ILO as Problem Solving**

Its role as a problem solver can be seen from the ILO's role in renewing the

role of the Bangladesh government which pays little attention and shows significant results in dealing with the problem of fulfilling the rights of garment workers to create better conditions or welfare for workers. By looking at the lack of role of the Bangladeshi government, the ILO took the initiative to improve, enhance, develop, and create cooperation among countries that are members of an alliance in organizations, countries, as well as with other organizations both bilateral and multilateral that function in solving problems collectively. . The ILO considers that by becoming an important factor in improving and increasing cooperation with the parties concerned,

*Better Workin* Bangladesh or *Better Work Bangladesh (BWB)*, is a program that collaborates not only with the government but also with workers and employers to improve working conditions and increase the competitiveness of the country's garment industry. This program was launched in 2014 with a clear focus. The focus aims to help build a competitive garment industry that provides decent work for workers, good business for factories and brands, and economic development for the country (Better Work Bangladesh, n.d.a). In 2018-2021 BWB is carrying out its phase II program with a focus on three main targets namely, factory-level service, BWB as an influencer in the garment sector, and empowering women workers.

At the factory level service, the ILO develops, strengthens, and perfects services and training for 400 garment factories in 2021 on a mass scale in Bangladesh, which includes the objectives of phase II as a solution to the current problems (Better Work Bangladesh, 2019b). The ILO also

established a satellite office in Chittagong in 2020, which resulted in BWB being able to further expand its service offices and explore opportunities to initiate dialogue with the Export Processing Zone Authority. In addition, it is also trying to explore opportunities for expansion into other garment sectors, such as spinning, dyeing, and printing, as well as footwear and possibly leather. This is supported by the ILO engaging more closely with local manufacturing groups that control many garment factories in Bangladesh. At the group level, the ILO is developing strategies to increase the impact of social compliance in their factories, as well as supporting factories to develop skills and capacities to emulate the BWB approach in factory development.

In addition, the ILO is also working with another organization, namely UNICEF, in implementing the Mothers@Work initiative through the BWB phase II program with the target of empowering women workers, to promote breastfeeding and maternity rights for mothers who work as garment workers in 80 factories, an integral part of ensuring women's access to decent work and ensuring factories retain skilled employees while facilitating inclusive and sustainable growth (ILO, 2019). Realization of the initiative from Mothers @ Work several changes have been realized, namely, paid maternity leave, provision of childcare, flexible work regulations, health protection, medical benefits, job protection, and non-discrimination implemented in 103 factories, including more than 6,500 pregnant and lactating women and 12,000 children under two years of age.

Whereas on influencers in the garment sector, the ILO held a roundtable discussion that brought together

stakeholders in the garment sector to discuss key issues affecting the garment industry in Bangladesh and the future of the sector. With access to trading partners, BWB can encourage buyers to engage in constructive exchanges with factories, trade unions, and employers to resolve existing problems. The ILO is also developing a platform that enables factories to exchange best practices, in partnership with other stakeholders such as employers' associations.

### **The Role of the ILO in the Collective Art Mechanism**

The next role is the collective art mechanism. This role can be seen from the ILO's involvement in providing incentives to help develop economic prosperity and welfare for Bangladeshi garment workers. The incentive plan focuses on two of the three targets of the BWB phase II program namely, influencers in the garment sector and empowering women workers. The ILO with IFC's assistance in targeting influencers in the garment sector focuses on activities such as (Better Work Bangladesh, 2019b); (1) deepen cooperation with the government and garment partners of Bangladesh, to promote shared responsibility and support for decent labor conditions and fair wages, under the Bangladesh Sustainability Compact, (2) strengthen links between workers' organizations and existing trade unions in factories-BWB factories, (3) strengthen cooperation with employers and workers' organizations to improve labor conditions, promote transparency, freedom of association, collective bargaining and worker-management dialogue across sectors, and support their capacity building towards



monitoring and enforcement of compliance, (4) cooperate with other partners and work to promote annual reviews of minimum wages,

Right on September 22, 2015, an agreement between the EU and the Bangladesh government regarding the Sustainability Compact was formed, and this agreement was successful with the support of the ILO (ILO, 2015). The main objective in this regard is to promote continuous improvement in labor rights and factory safety in the ready-to-wear garment and knitwear industry in Bangladesh. The ILO's efforts in this regard are considered effective because they can encourage their trading partners to comply with the ILO's core rights (Vogt, 2017). The ILO also continues to maintain and strengthen its collaboration with all stakeholders in the garment sector as influencers in the garment sector in fulfilling workers' rights, one of which is regarding the minimum wage. The ILO's efforts in this regard resulted in the development of the BWB phase II program, in which the government of Bangladesh decided to increase the minimum wage for Bangladeshi garment workers by around 51 percent (Irawan, 2019).

Apart from that, acting as a collective art mechanism, the ILO also focuses on another target of the BWB phase II program, namely empowering women workers. In this regard, the ILO seeks to promote a good and fair work environment for all women workers, by ensuring that their voices are heard, combating sexual harassment and violence in the workplace, and promoting services for mothers in garment factories. The ILO is also leveraging its successful Gender Equality and Returns (GEAR) initiative, together with IFC, to train more

women to be inspectors. All workers have the right to equal or fair rights in working in all respects, both positions and wages (Boulton, 2006).

GEAR itself is a joint initiative between the ILO and IFC delivered as part of the BWB phase II training and advisory services launched in 2016 (Better Work Bangladesh, 2019a). GEAR aims to promote career advancement opportunities for women workers working in garment factories or RMGs, through capacity building in soft skills and technical skills so that they can advance to supervisory roles. GEAR helps companies improve working conditions for women workers, including promoting equal opportunities, and enhancing women workers' leadership skills, social and economic empowerment, and decision-making skills at both the household and company levels.

The ILO makes significant strides in advancing women's economic potential and increasing access to jobs and better opportunities for women every year (Better Work Bangladesh, n.d.b). As part of its efforts, GEAR provides training to all Bangladeshi garment workers, especially women. Such training includes soft skills training, technical skills (operators), supervisor trainees, etc. In addition, GEAR also provides consultation sessions for all garment workers, to select, promote and support labor talent at the company level. Through GEAR in BWB phase II, this effort brought results, the ILO showed that workers who had been promoted as supervisors experienced an average salary increase of 39 percent, and the percentage of female supervisors in garment factory workers also increased from 5 percent to 12 percent, factory efficiency increased by 5 percent, and

also garment productivity increased by 22 percent (Better Work Bangladesh, 2019a).

In September 2022, GEAR will have trained over 700 female operators in 80 factories with over 289,000 workers—nearly 6.7 percent of the industry’s workforce in Bangladesh. This is a big step. When factories were enrolled in GEAR, about 25 percent of factories enrolling did not have a single female supervisor. And then, on average, nearly 60 percent of the trainees are promoted to the level of supervisor within weeks of completing the program (IFC, 2019).

### **The Role of the ILO in Capacity Building**

The ILO’s next role is capacity building. This role includes activities carried out by the ILO regularly by improving and developing the capacity of the garment sector to address labor rights issues in Bangladesh. The increased role is realized in the form of routine activities.

Acting as capacity building, ILO focuses on factory-level service targets to provide a comprehensive range of services suitable for all workers, build internal capacity, convince more brands or other employers to enroll their suppliers in the BWB program, introduce increased agility and flexibility in its delivery according to the specific needs of factories, as well as exploring new service areas to develop the garment sector in Bangladesh.

In achieving its objectives, the ILO and IFC through BWB carry out the following activities such as (Better Work Bangladesh, n.d.c); (1) improve communication in the work environment, (2) maintain relations with the government of Bangladesh and

strengthen cooperation with other social partners, (3) engage closer to local entrepreneurs, (4) strengthen and enhance services for the garment workers, (5) continue to collaborate with partners in the fields of training, environmental compliance, and resource efficiency, and (6) promote a system of transparency in the garment factory sector.

In carrying out communication improvement activities, the ILO seeks to develop communication and produce materials regarding the benefits of the BWB program, which are then disseminated through mass media and social media channels, as well as conveyed to partners and other stakeholders. One of the contents of this material is to present better practices and stories of successful workers from garment factories who benefit from the services provided by the BWB program. (Better Work Bangladesh, 2019b). In addition, achieving its goals also requires the creation of a good cooperative relationship with partners and other stakeholders in the garment sector, one of which is BGMEA and BKMEA.

The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) is one of the largest trade associations in Bangladesh representing the garment industry or RMG. Since 1983, BGMEA has handled the industry which is the backbone of the Bangladeshi economy and has also dedicated itself to promoting and facilitating the garment industry through policy advocacy to the government, services to workers, ensuring labor rights, and social compliance in the garment sector (BGMEA, n.d.). BGMEA is working closely with local and international stakeholders, including

brands and development partners to pave the way for RMG development in Bangladesh. Currently, BGMEA has around 4000 registered garment factories. BGMEA's mission is to protect and promote the interests of the garment industry,

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) was founded in 1996, as a trade association to facilitate and advance the knitwear business (BKMEA, n.d.). BKMEA focuses on providing services to garment factories in Bangladesh to strengthen the process of continuous capacity building and ensure the quality of taste and demand for garments worldwide, to remain competitive in the international market. The ILO is strengthening its cooperation with several of its partners, namely, BGMEA and BKMEA through the BWB phase II program, to improve services for workers and also improve the system of garment factories that are not yet by labor standards either nationally or internationally.

Apart from that, in its role as capacity building the ILO also provides training such as; workplace communication training, training for trainers, life skills training (financial literacy, HIV and AIDS awareness, maternity protection, nutrition, and rights and responsibilities), productivity training, and readiness training to investigate possible accidents (Better Work Bangladesh, n.d.b). Apart from that, there is also an industrial seminar which contains training on the management system of a company by strengthening the factory system and using a systematic approach, boiler equipment safety training at the factory to reduce the risk of an explosion.

In this role, it can be seen that the ILO's efforts are effective in carrying out its role as capacity building in fulfilling the rights of garment workers in Bangladesh. This is evidenced by an increase in results, one of which is that 1,941 workers have succeeded in improving their skills at work, 205 managers and 191 supervisors have received more organized job desks, and have succeeded in providing services to 400 garment factories in 2021, which factories have managed to improve its quality (Better Work Bangladesh, n.d.b).

### **The Role of the ILO as an Aid Provider**

The next role of the ILO is as an aid provider or providing assistance that is manifested by the ILO in the form of foreign aid or foreign aid. On this issue, the foreign aid provided by the ILO is included in the category of development aid or assisting to achieve long-term sustainable development for the garment industry in Bangladesh (John, 2009). As development aid, ILO assistance took the form of developing the Better Work program in Bangladesh which was carried out from 2015-2018, then continued in phase II which was more focused on program development as long-term sustainable development assistance to create better labor conditions with more significant results in 2018-2021 (Better Work Bangladesh, 2019b).

After the collapse of Rana Plaza, the ILO, and several other national and international parties began to take initiatives to help such as forming an Alliance for Bangladeshi labor safety and an agreement on fire and building safety, in which they have focused their efforts on improving the quality of work safety since BWB phase I took place. The ILO

through Factory level-service also provides other assistance to achieve sustainable development and have a long-term impact on the garment industry. One of the assistance referred to is that it seeks to reduce audit duplication or data falsification that often occurs in Bangladeshi garment factories.

To overcome this, the ILO in the phase II BWB Program is also an observer in the Social and Labor Convergence Project or SLCP, in which this involvement is an effort to develop an Integrated Assessment Framework and reduce audit duplication (Better Work Bangladesh, 2019b). Social and Labor Convergence Program (SLCP) provides the tools to capture accurate data about working conditions in global supply chains (SLC, nd). The ILO and the SLCP work together not only to reduce audit duplication but also to facilitate data sharing across industries, as well as promote compliance with national laws and international standards (Better Work, n.d.a). By being an observer in SLCP, the ILO seeks to promote decent work, relying on BWB programs and avoiding duplication, cooperating on improvements and proactively engaging in policy issues at the national and industry levels (Posthuma & Rossi, 2017). In 2021, the BWB platform has been upgraded to allow factories to initiate data sharing via SLCP and enable self-assessment by filling out the BWB online platform.

Meanwhile, as the influencer in the garment sector, the ILO also collaborates with academic institutions to develop teaching modules on social compliance, to ensure the impact and sustainability of the BWB program going forward to reduce audit duplication (Better Work Bangladesh, 2019b). To achieve its goal,

the ILO will continue to monitor garment factories using extensive data from reports collected during factory visits to support and track compliance progress in reducing duplication of audits in garment factories in Bangladesh.

## **CONCLUSION**

The tragedy of the Rana Plaza collapse on April 23, 2013, which killed thousands of workers and resulted in thousands of others being injured, has caused labor problems in Bangladesh to increase. Previously, Bangladesh had experienced internal problems, namely, the large number of garment workers who took action (demonstrations) to demand their rights to work. On the other hand, the international community is starting to pay attention to Bangladesh, because the Rana Plaza tragedy has become the worst industrial accident that has ever happened and the actions of garment workers are increasingly widespread.

The ILO became one of the international organizations responding to the tragedy. The ILO responded by establishing good cooperation with partners and the government of Bangladesh, in overcoming the problems that occurred. The main problem that is in the spotlight in the international mirror is the problem of labor rights that have not been fulfilled. Fulfillment of labor rights itself is obligatory for every country or other stakeholders because labor rights are one of the rights included in human rights. Because in the international world, human rights problems are serious problems that need to be fixed quickly.

In improving the situation more substantively and ensuring that workers get their rights to work, both in terms of

health, treatment, finances, and better job security, and striving to realize workers' welfare, the ILO is working with IFC and government support to develop the Better Work program in Bangladesh or BWB. The program was set up to bring together various groups – governments, global brands, manufacturers, and trade unions – to improve working conditions in the garment industry and make the sector more competitive.

In this study, the ILO played a role as a problem-solving, collective art mechanism, capacity building, and aid provider to focus on achieving targets in the BWB Phase II program. The success of the three targets, states that the ILO is effective in bringing better conditions for Bangladeshi garment workers. The welfare of garment factory workers continues to increase, although not drastically. Improving factory service both in terms of working conditions and

the competitiveness of the establishment of hundreds of new garment factories by adhering to the BWB program, as well as the successful improvement of mass service to 400 factories is the achievement of factory-level service targets. In influencers in the garment sector, The ILO is leveraging its position of engaging with industry stakeholders to promote policies and a business environment that protects labor rights and supports the sustainable development of Bangladesh's garment sector. Meanwhile, empowering women workers, the ILO has a role in empowering women workers, promoting gender equality in the garment sector in terms of wages, and work positions, preventing sexual harassment and violence in the workplace, and promoting services for mothers in Bangladeshi garment factories.

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