

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Ministry of Labour and Employment

7th Implementation Status of National Action Plan (NAP) on the Labour Sector of
Bangladesh (2021-2026)

At the 9th session of the EU-Bangladesh Joint Economic Commission in October 2019, Bangladesh committed to implementing an Action Plan to uphold labour rights and workplace safety. Consequently, the National Action Plan (NAP) on the Labour Sector of Bangladesh (2021–2026) was developed in consultation with the EU and shared on 1 July 2021. The NAP outlines the government’s commitment to legal and administrative reforms and practical measures aimed at improving working conditions and protecting workers' well-being. Its specific objectives include:

- Aligning Labour Laws with International Labour Organization (ILO) standards.
- Eliminate child labour by 2025.
- Preventing violence, harassment, unfair labour practices, and anti-union activities.
- Promoting social dialogue.
- Enhancing trade union activities.
- Reducing the backlog of cases in labour courts.
- Streamlining complaint management systems.
- Increasing the number of labour inspectors to ensure the full functionality of the labour inspectorate.
- Ensuring workplace safety.
- Ratifying ILO instruments.

In line with the agreement with the European Union, the Ministry of Labour and Employment publishes the implementation status of the National Action Plan (NAP) biannually, in April and October. The NAP highlights the importance of engaging tripartite stakeholders and, the ILO and development partners for its implementation. To ensure effective execution, the Government of Bangladesh established a Tripartite Implementation and Monitoring Committee (TIMC) through a circular on 11 August 2021. The TIMC is responsible for monitoring progress on the time-bound actions outlined in the NAP and providing overall guidance. As of now, nine TIMC meetings have been held with the latest one held on 27 April 2025. The progress on National Action Plan (NAP):

Action 1 Bring Bangladesh labour laws in compliance with ILO standards on freedom of association and collective bargaining

Action 1.1 Amendment of Bangladesh Labour Rules (BLR), 2015

The Bangladesh Labour Rules, 2015 were amended and published via gazette notification on 1 September 2022 (S.R.O No.-284-Law/2022), incorporating recommendations from the ILO Committee of Experts.

Action 1.2 Amendment of the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 (as amended in 2018)

To align the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006, more in line with international labour standards, the Tripartite Law Review Committee (TLRC) reviewed the scope and finalized its recommendations in January 2024. Meanwhile, the ILO Labour Standards Department held an online meeting with the Ministry of Labour and Employment and the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs on 6 February 2024. The ILO’s Labour Standard Department suggested taking more time to incorporate additional recommendations that

were suggested by the Committee of Expert (CEACR). Subsequently, in May 2024, the ILO arranged three daylong workshops to explain the technicalities of the CEACR recommendations. The ILO's local and regional technical experts and all relevant officials of the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE), Department of Labour (DoL) and Department of Inspections for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) attended those workshops.

Based on the aforementioned background, a comprehensive matrix was prepared highlighting the recommendations by the CEACR. Subsequently, the Tripartite Law Review Committee (TLRC) convened eight sessions. Both employers and workers sides engaged in constructive debates in those sessions. While the CEACR recommendations on Convention 81, 87 and 98 were the main focus, the TLRC considered addressing some additional issues including the forced labour and sexual harassment at workplaces.

The TLRC agreed upon a substantial number of proposals, while several contentious issues were referred to the National Tripartite Consultative Council (NTCC) for further deliberation. Subsequently, the NTCC convened five consecutive meetings. These meetings helped resolving and reaching consensus on most debatable issues. As agreed in the NTCC, the responsibility of taking decisions on a few issues were conferred on to the government. Based on these developments, a draft has been prepared. The draft is awaiting to be forwarded to the Advisory Council in the Cabinet Division for further consultation and approval. Following the Advisory Council's review and approval, the amendment proposal will be sent to the Legislative Division for formal vetting. The promulgation of the ordinance for amending the BLA is anticipated to be completed before the next ILO Governing Body meeting in November 2025.

Action 1.3 Amendment of Bangladesh Labour Rules, 2015, after BLA amendment

Further amendments to the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015 (as amended in 2022) will be initiated after completion of the ongoing amendment of BLA 2006.

Action 1.4 Adoption of Export Processing Zone (EPZ) Labour Rules

The Bangladesh EPZ Labour Rules, 2022 were published via gazette notification on 4 October 2022 (S.R.O No.-295-Law/2022). Key provisions include:

- Safeguarding against discrimination and anti-Workers Welfare Association (WWA) activities, and upholding collective bargaining rights
- Formation of federations and employers' associations
- DIFE inspections within EPZs
- Prevention of misconduct, including sexual harassment and violence, against female workers.

Action 1.5 Amendment of Bangladesh EPZ Labour Act, 2019

A Tripartite Standing Committee is currently reviewing proposed amendments to the Bangladesh EPZ Labour Act, 2019. As of April 2025, the Committee has held three meetings.

On 30 January 2025, the Labour Law and Labour Standards Specialist from the ILO Decent Work Team for South Asia, along with the ILO Technical Officer in Dhaka, visited two industries in Adamjee EPZ. They held discussions with Workers Welfare Association (WWA) members and management on labour rights, existing worker benefits, WWA

formation, and collective bargaining. They also reviewed Charters of Demands and Collective Bargaining Agreements. BEPZA continues to collaborate closely with the ILO to enhance labour standards in EPZs.

Brining SEZs under Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006:

To bring SEZs under the Bangladesh Labour Act (BLA) 2006, the Section 34 of the BEZA Act was amended in November 2023. This amendment extends the BLA 2006 to SEZs, ensuring labour rights such as trade union formation, collective bargaining, and inspections by DIFE.

Action 2 Eliminate child labour in all its forms by 2025

Action 2.1 Regulatory and policy framework for the elimination of child labour

Bangladesh ratified the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) on 22 March 2022. Accordingly, the hazardous work list was expanded to include five sectors: fish drying, street-based informal work, brick or stone production, informal tailoring and garment production, and waste management. The revised list, covering 43 sectors, was published on 29 April 2022. Additionally, the National Plan of Action (NPA) for eliminating child labour (2021–2025) was revised and published on 12 December 2021, with the Bangla translation released in January 2024.

2.2 Strengthen investigations and increase the number of convictions for child labour

To strengthen child labour inspections, the number of labour inspectors is gradually increasing, as outlined in Section 7. DIFE conducts regular training; in the 2023-24 financial year, 28 training courses and 18 workshops were held. A Special Yearly Plan of Action, active since 2022, targets child labour in high-risk areas. As of March 2025, 593 child labour cases have been filed with the Labour Court, with 216 resolved.

The Ministry of Labour and Employment works with public authorities, NGOs, and civil society to combat child labour. Regular meetings of the National and Divisional Councils, along with District and Upazila Committees, monitor progress. As of March 2025, 12 meetings of the National Child Labour Welfare Council, 84 of the Divisional Councils, and 322 District Level Committees have been held.

2.3 Projects on (hazardous) child labour/child labour survey

2.3.1 Implementation of a Government funded project

The implementation of the government-funded project "Eradication of Hazardous Child Labour from Bangladesh (4th Phase)" was completed in June 2024. The initiative successfully removed 100,000 children from hazardous work, providing six months of non-formal education, four months of skill development training, and a monthly stipend of Taka 1,000 for ten months, paid via mobile banking. Additionally, each child received Taka 13,000 as seed money to start small businesses.

2.3.2 Conduct a child labour survey by Bangladesh

The National Child Labour Survey 2022, conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) with ILO support, was published in March 2024. The survey revealed a decrease in hazardous child labour, from 1.280 million (3.2%) in 2013 to 1.068 million (2.7%) in 2022. However, the total number of children aged 5-17 engaged in child labour slightly increased, from 1.698 million (4.3%) in 2013 to 1.776 million (4.4%) in 2022. This survey helped the government understand the trends of child labour and take appropriate measures accordingly.

2.3.3 Design and implement programmemes of action

A feasibility study for a new project to eliminate child labour across all sectors of the economy was completed in June 2023, with the findings shared during a workshop on 19 July 2023. Accordingly, the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) plans to implement the 'Elimination and Rehabilitation of Child Labour' project with an estimated budget of 1,000 crore BDT. The Development Project Proposal (DPP) has been prepared, and the administrative process for project approval is underway.

In January 2024, the International Labour Organization (ILO) launched a new project, "Advancing Decent Work in Bangladesh," which includes a component focused on reducing hazardous child labour. Additionally, other relevant ministries and departments are running supportive programmes to contribute to the elimination of child labour.

2.3.4 Enhance Child Labour Unit of MOLE

The Child Labour Unit of MOLE has been strengthened with additional manpower headed by a Deputy Secretary along with required support staff.

2.4 Awareness raising action and process

Awareness-raising activities are being conducted on a regular basis, with financial allocations made from the Ministry of Labour and Employment's (MoLE) regular revenue budget to support Divisional and District level committees in organizing meetings, seminars, and workshops. Between October 2023 and June 2024, eight workshops, supported by UNICEF, were held.

Action 3 Combat violence against workers, harassment, unfair labour practices and anti-union discrimination

Action 3.1 Preventive measures

3.1.1 Conduct regular training for awareness rising for responsible factory security staff, police and employers to prevent violence, harassment, unfair labour practices and anti-union acts

The Department of Labour (DOL), the Industrial Police, and the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) regularly conduct awareness-raising programmes for factory security staff, police, and employers to prevent violence, harassment, unfair labour practices, and anti-union activities.

From July 2020 to 31 March 2025, the DOL has trained 48,633 workers, management staff, and government officials through five-day "Workers' Education" and four-week "Industrial Relations" courses at its Industrial Relations Institutes (IRIs) and Labour Welfare Centres (LWCs), with nearly 40% of participants being female. Additionally, sensitization workshops were arranged for Industrial Police officials from Narayanganj, Gazipur, and Dhaka, focusing on the use of minimum force and respect for workers' rights during labour protests. From January to June 2024, the Industrial Police trained 868 of its personnel.

BEPZA also conducts training and awareness programmes for workers, employers, management, security staff, and the Industrial Police of Bangladesh. Between January 2024 and March 2025, a total of 13,721 participants received training on various topics, including the Bangladesh EPZ Labour Rules, 2022, unfair labour practices, decent work, anti-WWA discrimination, prevention of violence and harassment, social dialogue, workplace

cooperation, fire safety, and health and hygiene.

To promote decent work and safeguard labour rights in EPZs, BEPZA, in collaboration with ILO Better Work Bangladesh, has provided Training of Trainers (ToT) to 25 inspectors-comprising social and environmental inspectors, doctors, engineers, and IR officers. The training focused on workplace cooperation and communication, grievance handling at the factory level, collective bargaining, best industrial relations practices, and the promotion of occupational safety and health (OSH) management systems.

3.1.2 Develop and regularly update (online) databases to provide an overview of number and nature of training programmes as well as number of trainees among factory security staff, police, employers and workers

A database for training-related information has been developed and linked with the Department of Labour's website (<https://lw.orionisbd.com/certificate-database>). All Industrial Relations Institutes (IRIs) and Labour Welfare Centres (LWCs) regularly update this database with participant details, segregated by name, designation, factory, trade union, age, sex, and other relevant factors. Similarly, in March 2023, BEPZA established an online database (<https://www.bepza.gov.bd/training>) to record the information of the trainees segregated by name, designation, factory, WWA, age, sex etc. Simultaneously, the record of training is maintained manually.

3.1.3 Develop a compendium in Bangla language of all existing and relevant laws, rules and regulations (including the use of minimum force and applicable sanctions or penalties for any proven violation) in order to train and raise awareness among industrial police and relevant law enforcement agencies (LEAs)

On 1 December 2023, the Industrial Police published a compendium in Bangla, compiling all relevant laws, rules, and regulations regarding the use of minimum force, along with applicable sanctions and penalties for violations. This compendium aims to enhance the understanding of normative measures among the Industrial Police and law enforcement agencies.

3.1.4 Continue to train and provide clear instructions to the industrial police and relevant LEAs on the use of minimum force, respect of human rights and labour rights, including on trade union rights and civil liberties during labour protests

The Department of Labour's Industrial Relations Institutes (IRIs) in Gazipur, Khulna, and Chittagong conduct training sessions for industrial police officials on workers' rights in the workplace. Since January 2024 IRIs has conducted six training sessions for industrial police and other law enforcement agencies. The IRIs continue to offer training on labour law and human rights-related legislation.

The Department of Labour (DoL) has been sensitizing industrial police personnel through seminars on using minimum force and respecting workers' rights during labour protests. Industrial Police personnel from Dhaka, Gazipur, and Narayanganj regularly attend these seminars. In collaboration with the ILO's "Advancing Decent Work in Bangladesh" project, the DoL organizes training, workshops, seminars, and focus group discussions to improve the investigation and resolution of violence, harassment, unfair labour practices, and anti-union activities. From January 2021 to June 2024, the Industrial Police conducted 33072

hours of training, attended by 6863 male and 786 female members. Detailed curricula and other information are available at <https://iphq.police.gov.bd/training>.

Action 3.2 Investigation of violence and harassment against workers, anti-union discrimination and unfair labour practices

3.2.1 Continue to provide regular training and clear instructions (including monitoring of instructions) for all DOL staff handling complaints on how to comply with the SOPs on anti-union discrimination and unfair labour practices against workers

Regular training and guidance are being provided to Department of Labour (DoL) staff responsible for handling complaints of anti-union discrimination and unfair labour practices. Between May and August 2025, four rounds of three-day training sessions on the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for addressing these issues will be conducted for all DoL officials, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO).

3.2.2 Continue to provide regular information to all workers on their rights and to complain and access legal support in case those rights are violated/ abused

DoL officials regularly provide information on labour rights during general trade union meetings, including procedures for lodging complaints and legal avenues for redress in cases of violations. If an employer fails to comply with recommended remedial actions, a case may be filed with the Labour Court on behalf of the affected workers. Additionally, the DoL continues to conduct training for workers on complaints and remedial issues under the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for addressing unfair labour practices and anti-union discrimination.

3.2.3 Continue to sensitize managers/ employers, security staff on how they can support the investigations

The Department of Labour (DoL) provides training to factory security staff and managers/employers through its Industrial Relations Institutes (IRIs) and Labour Welfare Centres (LWCs), covering essential information on complaint management and investigations. The number of training programmes conducted by the IRIs and LWCs is detailed in Actions 4.2 and 3.1.1. The Industrial Police continues to engage with employers and factory management to sensitize security personnel on violence prevention and support investigations in cases of alleged violence and harassment. Data on these efforts can be found in Section 3.1.4.

3.2.4 Continue to provide regular training and clear instructions (including monitoring of instructions) for all personnel handling cases of alleged acts of violence and harassment against workers, including in cases of protests

The relevant ministries, including the Ministry of Labour and Employment, the Ministry of Home Affairs, and the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, oversee the activities of subordinate agencies in handling cases, including those involving alleged acts of violence and harassment against workers. The judiciary, prosecutorial services, and law enforcement agencies (LEAs) receive regular training to improve their capacity to efficiently manage these cases and complaints.

3.2.5 Rapid and thorough investigation of alleged cases of violence and harassment of the police against workers, including in cases of legal protests

Complaints related to anti-union discrimination are addressed according to a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) with a specified time frame. The Ministry of Home Affairs provides training to the industrial police and relevant Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) to raise awareness of issues related to violence and harassment against workers, ensuring

thorough investigations, including those arising from legal protests.

A CFA Case Monitoring Committee, established on 23 January 2023, identifies long-pending cases to expedite the provision of remedies. To date, the Committee has held five meetings. Additionally, the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs actively facilitates the expeditious resolution of pending cases.

Action 3.3 Ensure timely and dissuasive sanctions/convictions and related information

3.3.1 Review for possible upward revision of fines for employers for anti-union discrimination and unfair labour practices in the BLA

The Government of Bangladesh prioritizes implementing dissuasive measures against anti-union discrimination and unfair labour practices. Following extensive discussions within the Tripartite Consultative Council (TCC), a consensus was reached to amend Section 291(1) of the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006. The proposed amendment aims to increase fines by three times, underscoring a strong commitment to enhancing enforcement and promoting fair labour practices.

3.3.2 Compile and regularly update statistics on complaints received and of alleged incidents of violence and harassment, their follow-up including remedies for victims and sanctions/convictions imposed

All complaints regarding anti-union discrimination and unfair labour practices are addressed within the timeframe specified in the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). From January 2020 to 31 March 2025, a total of 101 complaints were submitted to the Department of Labour (DoL). Of these, 90 have been resolved: 88 were amicably settled, and 2 cases were filed in Labour Courts. Investigations are ongoing for the remaining 11 complaints. A comprehensive record of proceedings related to these cases is maintained in a publicly accessible database managed by the DoL, available at <http://103.48.18.197/en/antiunion>.

Action 3.4 Promoting Social Dialogue

3.4.1 Developing institutional mechanism and capacity building for national and sectoral Tripartite Consultative Councils (TCCs)

The self-assessments for the National Tripartite Consultative Council (NTCC) and the Ready-Made Garment Tripartite Consultative Council (RMG-TCC) has generated a report titled “Assessment of the Effectiveness and Inclusiveness of the National Tripartite Consultative Council (NTCC)”, along with recommendations and an “Action Plan to Enhance the Effectiveness and Inclusiveness of the National TCC.” The ILO Country Office is set to mobilize technical assistance to support the implementation of this Action Plan.

3.4.3 Develop and implement a roadmap on social partners’ awareness and capacity building for social dialogue and collective bargaining at all levels, including sectoral and national levels

The Department of Labour (DoL) has engaged in discussions with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to develop a Roadmap focused on enhancing awareness and capacity building among social partners regarding social dialogue and collective bargaining at all levels. This Roadmap is expected to include various activities, such as training sessions, workshops, focus group discussions, and information sessions. To support these objectives, the ILO has designed a comprehensive project. The DoL, partnering with the ILO, will organize a tripartite consultation on empowering social dialogue mechanisms In July 2025.

Action 4 Increase the success rate of application for registration (paper & online)

Action 4.1 Explore and implement ways of further simplifying the registration process through tripartite consultations

4.1.1 Overhaul the existing online Registration System

The digitization of the trade union registration process under the Department of Labour (DoL) was completed on 27 October 2021. This initiative was designed to provide direct registration facilities to workers. Recently, the registration process has been further simplified under the myGov Platform (<https://www.mygov.bd/>), which integrates a variety of government services. The necessary registration forms are now linked to this platform to enhance user-friendliness.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) in support of the Department of Labour (DoL) has started a comprehensive assessment of both the online and offline trade union registration systems this month (May 2025). The focus is on analyzing trade union rejections and filed applications (nothijat), and is expected to result in an action plan for upgrading the registration system.

On 13 January 2025, a constructive dialogue between the DoL and trade unions was facilitated with support from the ILO's "Advancing Decent Work in Bangladesh" project. This dialogue aimed to foster collaboration, address challenges in the trade union registration process, and promote a more transparent, efficient, and inclusive system. The discussions brought together key labour stakeholders to identify and propose reforms for a more efficient and inclusive trade union registration system. A key outcome of the dialogue was the development of a matrix of urgent challenges and a plan to jointly address them. Other key recommendations from the Dialogue were:

- simplify legal requirements.
- simplify registration procedures and requirements.
- upgrade DoL's online trade union registration system by consolidating related software.
- reinforce access to trade union registration information and status for greater transparency.

These efforts are geared towards creating a more inclusive, transparent, and efficient system for trade union registration in Bangladesh. From October 2021 to March 2025, a total of 1,753 applications were processed. Among these, 944 applications were registered as trade unions, 208 applications were rejected, and 601 applications were disposed of according to Section 182(2) of the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006. This section states that if any essential information is missing in an application, the Director General must notify the trade union within twelve days, and the union has fifteen days to respond. If no response is received within the stipulated time, the application is disposed of.

4.1.2 Establish a pre-application service at the Department of Labour (DOL)

The pre-application service desk, established in January 2021 at the Registrar of Trade Unions (RTU) under the Department of Labour (DoL), provides technical support to applicants using the online registration portal. From January 2021 to March 2025, it assisted 2,480 applicants, ensuring a more transparent and user-friendly registration process. A key recommendation from the 13 January 2025 dialogue was to extend digitization to cover all aspects of the trade union registration process, further enhancing efficiency, transparency,

and accessibility.

4.1.3 Continuing with the provision for offline registration system

The offline registration system remains operational alongside the online system. The Department of Labour (DoL) promotes online registration through awareness activities and support, resulting in an increase in trade union registrations from 60% in 2013 to 89.52% by March 2025. As of 31 March 2025, 9,664 trade unions have been registered, representing approximately 3.3 million members. In the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) sector, the number of trade unions has grown from 132 in January 2013 to 1,376 by 31 March 2025.

Action 4.2 Training workers and employers on Trade Union Registration Process

Training on the trade union registration process is regularly conducted by the Department of Labour (DoL) through its Industrial Relations Institutes (IRIs) and Labour Welfare Centers (LWCs). From July 2020 to March 2025, the DoL trained 48,633 individuals, including workers, employers, and government officials. In collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), the DoL will hold three day-long workshops on the online registration system from 13 to 15 May 2025 for DoL officials. Additionally, DoL registrars and officers from divisional and regional offices participate in regular in-house training programmes, which focus on efficient registration practices for both offline and online platforms.

Action 4.3 Publicly accessible online database on registration to be made fully operational and regularly updated

The publicly accessible online database for trade union registration has been operational since September 2021. Designated officials from the Department of Labour (DoL) are responsible for regularly updating the database, with training provided to ensure efficient management. Statistics on trade union applications- granted, filed (because no action can be taken for being non-responsive), and rejected- are consistently updated. Two tripartite consultative workshops were held to discuss the database's functionality, scope, and potential renovations, focusing on aligning it with the online registration system.

Action 5 Eliminate the backlog of cases at labour courts, including in the Dhaka Metropolitan Area

5.1 Take steps to make the three newly established Labour Courts fully functional

The three labour courts established in 2019 in Sylhet, Barishal and Rangpur have been made fully functional. Judges have been appointed, and representatives from both employers' and workers' groups have been nominated.

5.2 Establishment of new labour courts in Narayanganj, Gazipur, Cumilla and Faridpur districts

New labour courts have been established in Narayanganj, Gazipur, and Cumilla which are now fully operational. Although the proposed Labour Court in Faridpur was deemed unviable, a new Labour Court in Mymensingh is under development, despite not being part of the original Roadmap.

5.3 Deployment of one Additional Judge (Member) to the Labour Appellate Tribunal

On 31 August 2022, the Ministry of Public Administration approved the creation of an additional Judge (Member) position for the Labour Appellate Tribunal, along with the required support staff. The latest proposal for deploying the new Judge and recruiting three

support staff was sent to the Cabinet Division on 03 March 2025. It is expected that the proposal will be approved soon by the Committee of Secretaries for Administrative Reform.

5.4 Establish pilot processes to classify cases in consultation with the Judges of the Labour Courts with a view to addressing case backlogs

The ILO has launched the "Advancing Decent Work in Bangladesh" project, which focuses on improving the efficiency of judicial bodies in handling cases. This includes the development of an Online Case Management System and capacity-building initiatives for courts through additional training. A prototype version of online case management system in one or two labour courts will be introduced by December 2025. Also, to enhance court facilities, the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) has moved the Labour Courts from temporary spaces to permanent locations. This effort has significantly upgraded the court facilities.

5.5 Independent conciliation and arbitration system as a means of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

5.5.1 Establish a Conciliation and Arbitration Cell at DOL to provide secretariat service and monitor individual cases as need be

The Department of Labour (DoL) established a three-member Conciliation and Arbitration Cell on 29 September 2021 to provide secretariat services to both conciliators and the arbitration panel. From 2013 to March 2025, the DoL received 114 conciliation applications. Of these, 106 disputes were successfully resolved, 5 were discontinued, and 3 applications remain under consideration.

5.5.2 Develop an SOP for conciliation system through tripartite consultations

Following multiple tripartite consultation meetings and workshops held between 2021 and 2023 with ILO support, the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Conciliation was finalized by the National Tripartite Consultative Council (NTCC) on 2 February 2023. The Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) has notified the SOP on 16 July 2023. Industrial disputes are now being settled by conciliators in accordance with the timeframes and procedures outlined in the SOP.

5.5.3 Appointment of conciliators through gazette notification

On 10 March 2022, the MOLE, through a gazette notification, assigned 15 conciliators with a view to settling industrial disputes.

5.5.4 Develop an SOP for arbitration system through tripartite consultations

The Department of Labour has signed an implementation agreement with the ILO, which includes technical assistance in developing the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). The draft SOP was shared with the ILO, and their technical feedback was incorporated to enhance and finalize the document. A workshop focused on alternative dispute resolution processes, including the finalization of the SOP on arbitration, was held in January 2025. The draft SOP will soon be placed in the Tripartite Consultative Council (TCC).

5.5.5 Establish an arbitrators' panel

The "Guideline for Arbitrators in Industrial Dispute Settlement" was developed by the Department of Labour (DoL) in consultation with its field offices. The draft was shared with the ILO Country Office in Dhaka for feedback. The Ministry of Labour and Employment is currently reviewing the ILO's comments and technical inputs. Following approval, steps will be taken to appoint the panel of arbitrators.

5.5.6 Promote conciliation and arbitration system as ADR

To promote conciliation and arbitration in labour dispute resolution, the ILO's "Advancing Decent Work in Bangladesh" project convened an academic discussion titled "Exploring the Role of Conciliation and Arbitration in Resolving Labour Disputes in Bangladesh" with tripartite plus constituents on 13 May 2024. Participants agreed that while conciliation and arbitration are crucial, their effectiveness depends on systemic reforms, capacity building, and stronger enforcement. Strengthening these mechanisms would support a more stable industrial environment for both workers and employers.

Key recommendations came out from the discussion included establishing a monitoring body for pending trade union registrations, unfair labour practices (ULP), and anti-union discrimination (AUD); developing a digital case management system; amending the Bangladesh Labour Act (BLA) to permit arbitration for individual disputes; and appointing dedicated conciliators within the Department of Labour (DoL) for individual and industrial cases.

As part of the same project, the DoL conducts sensitization seminars, focus group discussions, and other initiatives to encourage out-of-court settlement of industrial disputes. On 1 December 2024, the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE), together with the social partners (NCCWE and BEF), signed a tripartite Joint Declaration reaffirming their commitment to building an improved and harmonious national industrial relations system. Signed in the presence of the ILO's Assistant Director-General, the declaration commits to overhauling the alternative dispute resolution framework and establishing well-resourced, capacitated mechanisms for conciliation and arbitration through legislative and institutional reforms, in line with international labour standards.

5.5.7 Provide information sessions on the conciliation and arbitration system to workers, employers and DOL officials

The Department of Labour (DoL), with support from the ILO, conducts information sessions and focus group discussions on conciliation and arbitration for trade union leaders, employers, and DoL officials.

Action 6: Set up an efficient system to follow-up complaints received through helpline

6.1 Continuation of the helpline (16357) under revenue budget of DIFE

The helpline, established in June 2020, remains operational, receiving ongoing complaints. A team of six Labour Inspectors manages this service. From July 2024 to March 2025, 5,170 complaints were filed, with 4,367 successfully settled. Currently, 803 complaints are under process. The Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) has been focusing on improving the remedy rate while ensuring the quality of redressals, which may require additional time.

6.2 Establishment of a complaint management cell to follow up the cases directly by the labour inspectors

A Monitoring and Evaluation Unit was established at the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) in September 2022, consisting of three Labour Inspectors and two additional officials to monitor complaint resolution progress.

6.3 Develop a database of the complaints covering relevant information

A comprehensive database for tracking complaints received via the helpline was established

in December 2021, integrating information from both online and offline sources. From July 2024 to March 2025, 6,715 complaints were received, with 6,426 submitted through the website, helpline, and emails, and 289 through offline methods. A total of 5,739 complaints have been resolved, with the remaining cases are being processed.

6.4 Organise regular training programme for all service personnel/officials receiving complaints via the helpline on SOP on grievance handling

Regular training sessions, including international opportunities, are organized for inspectors handling complaints. A three-day workshop on “Data Management System and Helpline” was held from March 5 to 7, 2024, with 23 participants. In the 2024-25 fiscal year, two additional trainings were conducted for 70 inspectors, focusing on the helpline and data management system to enhance their ability to follow up on cases directly.

6.5 Establishment of the Helpline for all workers in EPZs

On 28 March 2021, BEPZA launched the Helpline 16128 to strengthen the grievance redress system and ensure prompt services for workers across the eight EPZs. Operating 24/7, the helpline addresses issues related to wage arrears, provident funds, earned leave encashment, leave and holidays, as well as queries on plots and investments. As of March 2025, the helpline has received a total of 14,146 calls, of which 14,100 have been resolved, with the remaining 46 in the process of resolution.

Action 7 Provide for new labour inspectors and ensure full functionality of labour inspectorate

7.1 Filling vacant posts of Labour Inspectors by recruitment and promotion

Since the submission of the Roadmap, 159 labour inspectors have been recruited, and 21 staff members have been promoted to the position of Labour Inspector. The total approved posts for inspectors have increased from 575 to 724. Currently, 436 inspectors are actively working, up from 314 at the outset of the Roadmap.

A requisition for 122 inspectors has been submitted to the BPSC for recruitment through the 43rd Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) non-cadre process. Additionally, on August 24, 2023, 37 Assistant Inspector Generals (AIG) were promoted to Deputy Inspector General (DIG), and 5 Deputy Inspectors General (DIG) were promoted to Joint Inspector General (JIG). Moreover, in 2024 one Deputy Inspectors General (DIG) was promoted to Joint Inspector General (JIG) and in 2025 two Assistant Inspector General (AIG) were promoted to Deputy Inspector General (DIG).

To expedite the recruitment process, the Special Envoy to the Honourable Chief Adviser convened a special meeting with the relevant stakeholders, including the Ministry of Public Administration and the Public Service Commission (PSC). The key decisions taken on that meeting was to recruit 122 inspectors within next few weeks.

7.2 Creation of new posts and recruitment of Labour Inspectors

Since the submission of the Roadmap, 8 new Deputy Inspector General (DIG) offices have been established, along with the creation of 136 labour inspector posts and 13 new labour inspector positions at the National Occupational Health and Safety Training and Research Institute (NOHSTRI). Consequently, the sanctioned manpower of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) has increased to 1,129, including 724 inspector positions. Additionally, the newly established field offices of DIFE in eight districts are now operational.

7.3 Full application of Labour Inspection Management Application (LIMA) digitalized labour inspection system in 23 DIFE offices

The Labour Inspection Management Application (LIMA) system, implemented with support from the ILO and GIZ, is now operational in the district offices of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) for inspections, licensing, and related activities. In the Fiscal Year 2024-25 (from July 2024 to March 2025), a total of 33,488 inspections were conducted, 5,377 new licenses were issued, 23,570 licenses were renewed, and 1,883 layout plans were approved through the LIMA system.

7.4 Developing competencies of Labour Inspection staff through regular trainings and capacity building measures and creating more senior positions

To enhance the competencies of labour inspectors, regular training programmes are being conducted. In the Fiscal Year 2023-24 (July 2023 to June 2024), 906 officials participated in 28 training programmes, and 571 officials attended 18 workshops (with some inspectors attending multiple sessions). In the FY 2024-25 (July 2024 to March 2025), 686 officials have been trained in 21 programmes.

7.5 Promote an effective sector-specific labour inspection approach

In October 2024, nine priority sectors were identified, including readymade garments, tanneries, chemicals, plastics, rubber, jute, textiles, engineering workshops, automobiles, rice mills, brickfields, and cement industries, based on safety concerns, accident rates, and other relevant factors. The district offices of DIFE developed an annual Strategic Inspection Plan targeting 5 to 8 of these sectors. To enhance inspection efficiency, an internal tracking system was established to connect all DIFE offices for effective data compilation. From July 2023 to June 2024, 34,432 inspections were conducted as per the sector-specific plan. Additionally, a Legal Officer was recruited on December 28, 2023, to strengthen DIFE's legal unit, ensuring dissuasive penalties and follow-up on labour law violations.

7.6 Formulating DIFE inspection modalities for EPZs

The modality of Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) inspections in Export Processing Zones (EPZs) has been integrated into the EPZ Labour Rules, 2022. The Inspection Checklist, finalized in collaboration with DIFE, is now used for inspections within EPZs. By March 2025, DIFE had inspected 238 factories within these zones. From January 2024 to March 2025, the Inspectors of BEPZA as their regular work has conducted a total of 9,409 inspections in eight EPZs. The URL of the inspection checklist under which inspections are conducted is shown below:

Link-1: <https://www.bepza.gov.bd/content/labour-issues>

Link-2: <https://dife.portal.gov.bd/site/page/d60953be-00d2-4325-9637-f81d5a35f6e3>

7.7 Incorporating the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on Labour complaints and investigation in the BLA

The required provision has been proposed in the ongoing BLA, 2006 amendment process.

Action 8: Ensure proper work for the Remediation Coordination Cell (RCC) and transition to Industrial Safety Unit (ISU)/Ensuring close cooperation of the RCC/ISU

with the RMG Sustainability Council (RSC)

8.1 Remediation of factories under the national initiative for fire, electrical and structural safety

8.1.1 Complete development of a business plan outlining three categories of factories including timelines for remediation

The planning process was completed on 10 February 2021 by Remediation Coordination Cell (RCC), DIFE. Below are the category-wise factories under this initiative:

Category-1: Remediation of factories easily possible by factories owner considering their technical capacity- 173 Factories

Category-2: Remediation of factories possible- 346 factories

Category-3: Remediation of factories challenging- 1030 factories

8.1.2 Implement the business plan on remediation of factories

The business plan includes motivational seminars, design approvals, follow-ups, technical discussions with consulting firms, and an escalation process. As of September 2024, the Industrial Safety Unit has visited 173 Category-1 factories, issuing 72 initial Corrective Action Plan (CAP) certificates and cancellation letters for Utilisation of Declaration (UD) for 56 factories. Additionally, 55 factories have closed or relocated.

8.1.3 Continue to work on remediation of factories under category 2 and 3, including with support from relevant international development partners

Remediation in Categories 2 and 3 was completed in May 2023 with ILO support under the RMGP-Phase II project. The "Advancing Decent Work in Bangladesh" project entails establishing an Industrial Safety Framework, expanding the Industrial Safety Unit to priority sectors, and ensuring fire and chemical safety in logistics and storage. As of March 2025, the Industrial Safety Unit has visited 120 out of 295 factories in Categories 2 and 3. In total, 1,157 out of 1,549 factories across all categories have been closed or relocated.

8.2 Enhancing quality control and transparency of the RCC

8.2.1 Develop a quality assessment mechanism for remediation being monitored by RCC and apply it.

In 2022, the ILO completed the risk ranking of all National Initiative (NI) factories. Based on this ranking, the factories were categorized for the process of Utilization of Declaration (UD) cancellation and the escalation protocol.

8.2.2 Ensure full application of Remediation Tracking Module (RTM)

The Remediation Tracking Module (RTM) has been updated with ILO's technical support. Assessment reports and Corrective Action Plans (CAP) for 666 National Initiative (NI) factories have been uploaded. Under the "Advancing Decent Work in Bangladesh" project, further revised reports will be added to the RTM with continued ILO support.

8.3 Establishing a transition plan to graduate RCC to ISU

8.3.1 RCC to handover the remediation work to DIFE Safety Unit

This action was completed in December 2021. Upon the completion of the RMGP Phase I project, the Remediation Coordination Cell (RCC) handed over the remediation work to the DIFE Safety Unit in December 2021.

8.3.2 Post Creation and Deployment of Labour Inspectors for the ISU

The Government of Bangladesh has established a dedicated Industrial Safety Unit (ISU).

Currently, nine engineers from the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) are assigned to the ISU.

8.3.3 Upon establishment of ISU, DIFE Safety Unit to handover responsibility to ISU
It is completed. Please refer to Action 8.3.2.

8.3.4 Capacity building and training of DIFE's existing Engineers on building safety (fire, structure, electrical, chemical, boilers etc.)

The DIFE Safety Unit, consisting of 24 engineers, completed capacity-building training in two phases: the first phase ended on 28 November 2021, and the second in June 2022, involving 23 engineers. These engineers have received specialized master training on structural, fire, and electrical safety with ILO support.

DIFE has eight OSH team comprising Machinery Safety, Accident Prevention, Chemical Safety, Construction Safety, Ergonomics, Boiler and Pressure Vessel, Labour friendly Dialogue, Cranes and other lifting equipments. Each team has completed ToT training and provides training to DIFE inspectors and stakeholder through the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health Training and Research (NOSHTRI).

8.4 Development of a framework for coordination with RMG Sustainability Council

A Government Coordination Council (GCC) has been established under the Ministry of Commerce, chaired by the Additional Secretary (Export). The GCC includes representatives from MoLE, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Jute & Textile, Ministry of Industries, BEPZA, and BEZA.

A coordination framework between DIFE and the Ready-Made Garment Sustainability Council (RSC) was approved by the Ministry of Commerce on 20 October 2022. As of 11 December 2024, the GCC has convened eight meetings to enhance coordination. Four bilateral meetings between DIFE and RSC have been held to address remediation in factories.

Action 9 Ratify ILO Convention on minimum age and Forced Labour Protocol

9.1 Ratify Protocol of 2014 to ILO Convention on forced labour (P29)

Bangladesh ratified the Protocol of ILO Convention 29 on 20 January 2022, which officially entered into force on 20 January 2023.

9.2 Ratify ILO Convention 138 on minimum age (C138)

Bangladesh ratified the ILO Minimum Age Convention 138 on 22 March 2022, setting the minimum age for employment at 14. This ratification marks the achievement of a significant milestone, as Bangladesh has now ratified all eight ILO Fundamental Conventions.