

Establishment of cooperative working relationship with the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments: Discussion meeting on opportunities and actions.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE LEATHER SECTOR IN BANGLADESH

Elaborated by: Solidar Suisse & OSHE Foundation
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Venue: DIFE Head Office, Paltan, Dhaka



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Introduction:

The leather sector is a vital part of Bangladesh's economy, though it faces ongoing challenges in meeting social and environmental compliance standards. In response, OSHE Foundation, in collaboration with Solidar Suisse and funded by the European Union, has launched a three-year project (March 2023 - February 2026) aimed at enhancing compliance and sustainability within this sector. To ensure effective implementation, OSHE has engaged the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) to establish a collaborative working group. This group will include DIFE representatives, particularly inspectors tasked with monitoring the leather sector, and officers from the OSH and Safety Unit. Together, they will develop and implement strategies to elevate the sector’s adherence to international standards.

The purpose of this meeting is to foster advocacy and collaboration with DIFE to enhance labor standards and compliance in Bangladesh’s leather industry. The event, organized by OSHE under the "Building a Sustainable Leather Sector in Bangladesh" project, aims to reinforce a participatory inspection system and increase employers’ commitment to improving working conditions, social compliance, and responsible business practices in the leather sector.

Discussion Conduction Methodology:

Mr. Alam Hossain, Head of program OSHE, presented a presentation and then the floor was opened to discuss. Mr. Motiur Rahman, Joint Inspector General of DIFE started to discuss the proposal of OSHE. He mentioned the scopes and challenges and some way forwards.

Participants:

8 members from DIFE joined the meeting. Among them 7 were male and 1 was female.

Objectives of the Workshop:

1. Develop a strategic plan to work a collaborative approach to achieve some base codes in relation to workers' rights (implication of minimum wage, formal working contract, overtime pay, maternity benefits, form and functioning Safety committee OSHE Committee functioning) of the project implemented in the leather sector of Bangladesh.
2. Introduce participatory inspection with introducing checklist at the tannery.
3. Explore the procedure to work with working committee
4. Discuss the needs of creating separate checklist for footwear and leather goods sector.
5. Mapping and identify the leather and footwear factory to work with them under the project.
6. Support to open targeted factory ID in LIMA software
7. Initiate to formulate a Gender Roadmap in the leather sector.
8. Develop a roadmap/guideline for ratification C-190
9. Develop a guideline to ratify ILO OSH Convention.

Proceedings of the Program:

Mr. Motiur Rahman, Joint Inspector General of DIFE, commenced the meeting with a welcome address, expressing appreciation to all attendees. He emphasized the importance of adhering to legal standards within the sector, noting a recurring issue with factory owners' reluctance to follow regulations and the negative impact this has on the industry. Mr. Alam Hossain said that the demand of the leather is very high from the European countries to other countries. If we can not meet the compliance then it will be very tough to save the leather sector. He said that OSHE wants to form a working committee collaboratively with DIFE for trying to ensure the labour rights.

Sharing the details about “Building a Sustainable Leather Sector in Bangladesh (BSLSB)”

Mr. Alam Hossain highlighted the substantial demand for Bangladeshi leather in European and other international markets, underscoring that failure to meet compliance standards could seriously jeopardize the sector's sustainability. He stated that OSHE aims to establish a collaborative working committee with DIFE to promote and protect labor rights within the industry.

During his presentation on the “Building a Sustainable Leather Sector in Bangladesh (BSLSB)” project, Mr. Alam provided an overview of the project, including its goals,



target areas, primary beneficiaries, outcomes, and the roles of donor, implementing, and co-implementing partners. He also outlined the objectives of the meeting, which focused on fostering partnerships to advance compliance and sustainability in the leather sector.

Recommendation from DIFE:

After completing the discussion Mr. Motiur Rahman shared his recommendation on some issues.

The recommendations are documented below:

- He asked to submit an informal letter mentioning the objectives and goals of the project and where DIFE can contribute.
- He said that DIFE will form a committee based on area. But he asked not to name this committee as Working Group rather than another name as there are some existing committees, named by Working Committee.
- He requested that OSHE prepare a document aligned with DIFE's existing safety committee guidelines.
- He asked to share the name of 35 factories of Savar and Gazipur which are enlisted for BSLSB project.
- He stated that DIFE already has a gender roadmap, he recommended forming an Action Planning Committee instead, focused on daycare access, removing women from hazardous tasks, eliminating gender discrimination etc.
- A documented set of mandatory steps for ratifying ILO Conventions 155 and 187 should be finalized and shared.
- He advised conducting a GAP analysis to assess needs for the ratification of C-190.
- He asked to make a discussion on the existing checklist for footwear and leather. Then he recommended revising and updating the existing footwear and leather checklist rather than creating a new one.
- Mr. Rahman proposed collaborating with the GOTAN project to introduce participatory inspection procedures and familiarize stakeholders with tannery industry checklists.
- He agreed with the proposal of opening ID in LIMA software and train the users on the uses of LIMA software after fixing a meeting and sorting the process.
- Future research on OSH (Occupational Safety and Health) was encouraged, with advocacy for identifying new occupational diseases for specific factory sectors.
- He suggested for advocacy on the occupational diseases to identify the new diseases and advocating for an individual sector in factory level rather than reinventing the list of occupational diseases.

Conclusion:

Mr. Alam expressed optimism about DIFE's collaboration on the next phase of the BSLSB project, extending thanks to all attendees for their participation in the meeting.