

Social Sustainability: Understanding Social Standards Implementation Failures in Bangladesh RMG Industry

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Abstract

Bangladesh tells the world a remarkable story of progress and the eradication of poverty. Bangladesh, one of the poorest countries when it was founded in 1971, was classified as lower-middle status in 2015. It is projected to be separated from the LDC list (United Nation's Least Developed Countries) by 2026. Using the worldwide poverty threshold of Taka 141 (\$1.90) per day, the rate of poverty declined from 43.5% in 1991 to 14.3% in 2016 (Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) exchange rate 2011). Moreover, the results of human development increased in numerous dimensions, and the expansion of industrial sectors was necessary to achieve this.

The concept of social sustainability was created to achieve global growth. At the regional and national levels, policymakers have elaborated on this concept. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has grown relevant in scholarly research over the last few decades, as indicated by a rising number of articles and journals dedicated to the subject. Business, government, and civic society are all concerned about supply chain sustainability. The availability of low-cost labour and low-cost manufacturing makes developing countries appealing to outsourcing destinations. As a result, Bangladesh is quickly becoming a prominent role in the global garment supply chain. Bangladesh's readymade garment (RMG) industry, which exports to the EU and the United States, is a significant source of revenue. The 2013 collapse of Rana Plaza in Bangladesh, which killed 1,134 employees in the readymade garment (RMG) industry, brought global attention to the issue of worker safety and social responsibility in the supply chains of significant garment retailers in Bangladesh.

It exposed worker safety and other social issues at RMG companies, demonstrating that traditional, top-down remedies to these issues, such as corporate codes of conduct and labour law revisions in Bangladesh, had minimal effect. Unfortunately, the collapse would not have made international headlines if the catastrophe had not harmed these companies. However, because of this correlation, the accident has become grist for the ongoing discussion about globalization. Many North American and European human rights and labour campaigners believe that Western-based companies purchasing overseas clothing should

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be held accountable for this calamity. Stakeholders and social organizations are increasingly pressuring manufacturers to embrace all three sustainability characteristics. Though businesses have begun incorporating economic and environmental (green) indicators into their operations, social sustainability has yet to gain traction.

Within the RMG supply chains, there is a significant gap between aims, pledges, practice, and outcomes regarding social responsibility regulation.

This research evaluates the social responsibility practices of RMG industry supply firms in developing nations, using Bangladesh as an example. While social responsibility performances, in theory, could be used by firms (Retailers and suppliers) to demonstrate the legitimacy of their operations to stakeholders, these performances could be used in practice to gain a competitive advantage and market share.

This paper investigates the Bangladesh RMG industry in two steps: first, it examines the overall social responsibility practices of retailers and RMG firms. Furthermore, it analyzes why and how vital global social norms that are applied in the apparel business frequently don't get put into practice.

Keywords: slow, design, discourse, re-definition, women.

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