

Dissemination Workshop
on
Baseline Survey
To Know the Extent and Severity of
Violence against Women in Selected Sectors

23 November, 2011

CIRDAP Auditorium, Chameli House, 17 Topkakhana Road, Dhaka

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Organized by

International Labour Organization &
Ministry of Labour and Employment, People's Republic of Bangladesh



Executive Summary

Ministry of Labour and Employment with supports from International Labour Organisation [ILO] has conducted a survey aiming to find out the extent and severity of violence against women in selected sectors like the Garment factories, EPZ factories, Tea industries, Shrimp processing factories including Dhaka Medical Hospital. The main objectives of the survey were:

- to capture the state of violence against women and girl workers at workplaces, particularly in (i) garments factories; (ii) tea processing factories, (iii) shrimp processing factories and in factories located in Export Processing Zones. In addition to the above sectors, the survey will also cover a public sector organization namely, Dhaka Medical College Hospital.
- to collect a base line which will be captured in a report which would be used to understand changes in the situation in future. The survey is expected to provide comprehensive and up-to-date information regarding violence against women and girl workers in selected work places. Moreover, it would help assessing impact of any program intending to mitigate or eliminate violence against women and girl workers in Bangladesh.

Participants attending the dissemination workshop from across different professional groups reiterated the importance of implementation of the existing laws and policies including reform of the implementation framework and formulating new policies in line with the findings drawn from the survey. They also urged for immediate execution of the ILO Code of Practice in different factories to ascertain that women and girl workers can be safe at workplace in the context of Bangladesh. The Inaugural Session of the dissemination workshop was attended by Mr. Shafique Alam Mehdi, Secretary of MoLE as Chief Guest. Also in attendance as Special Guests were Mr. Arthur Erken, UNFPA Representative in Bangladesh, Mr. Dileep Kumar Das, Joint Secretary of ERD and Co-Chair of PMC, UNJP-VAW, Mr. MD. Fazlul Hoque, President, Bangladesh Employers Federation (BEF), Mr. Zakir Hossain, Member Secretary of National Coordination Committee for Workers Education (NCCWE) who has emphasized on creating women friendly working place through reforms of the existing laws and policies and ensuring effective implementation of those in pace with the social transformation. They also argued that to reach the desired goal the government should set priority selecting the issues on short, medium and long term basis. The government has already shown insights and intention for required intervention in some cases resulting adoption of Sexual Harassment Elimination Policy and enactment of Domestic Violence [Protection & Prevention] Act 2010.

Mr. Gagan Rajbhandari, Deputy Director, ILO Office in Bangladesh welcomed the participants who pointed out that VaW has adverse impact at personal and social level and the sensitive information, which came out from the survey will be benchmark in formulating policies and framework to make the society free of such violence and promoting human rights and ensuring equity.

Prof. Abul Barkat, Ph.D, Team Leader of the Study & Chief Advisor (Hon.), HDRC presented the Key findings of the survey while Professor Ishrat Shamim, Department of Sociology and Professor Mahbuba Nasreen, Department of Sociology of Dhaka University made special critic on the findings where they agreed on the methodological soundness of the survey being conducted. Recommending that sexual violence/harassment complaint committee should be formed in all such factories both of them underscored the need for increased awareness among the workers about violence against women, related laws and policies, information on available services and care like legal, medical, psychological and economic services. The participants suggested that media should intensify the ongoing campaign to create public opinion preventing violence against women in general and in workplace in particular.

In the Plenary Session Ms. Onindita, CARE Bangladesh; Ms. Shamima Sultana, UNFPA; Dr. Julia Ahmed, Team Leader Cost of Violence against Women, CARE Bangladesh, Ms. Nai Enthona, Manager, JP-VAW and Mr. Imtiaz, Women and Gender Study, Dhaka University has given their comments and shared their ideas on the issue of violence against women at workplace. The participants however urged to strengthen the political commitment and joint efforts of all stakeholders to prevent and eliminate violence against women at workplace adopting means to ensure more sustainable and effective intervention mechanisms following the recommendation of the survey which among others include:

- The owners and managers should sit for immediate dialogue and find out way and put their commitment to create women friendly workplaces
- Long term pragmatic measures should be taken to change the social perspective and patriarchal attitude of the society.
- To ensure proper and rightful enforcement of the existing laws the laws enforcement agencies should be trained properly.
- To train the concerned stakeholders including the managers, supervisors, employees, trade unions etc about the adverse impact of violence against women and make them understand that this also hampers their profit.
- Intensify existing media campaign to create social awareness on violence against women in general and at workplace in particular.
- There is a need of ensuring that the employers are taken as partners in building awareness and capacity of the female workers on violence against women related issues. There is also a need of working out paid leave for the workers during any such training which should include
 - Concept and forms of violence against women
 - Existing laws and policies to address violence against women
 - Available support services for a survivors like legal, medical, psychological and other care
 - Detail contact and procedure of getting related services in particular delivered by NGOs
- Introduction of ILO Code of Practice in all the factories in the context of Bangladesh.
- To appoint female supervisor, security, payroll official who will be able to reduce incidence of violence against women at sectors in which women employees are in majority.
- Sexual Harassment Complaint Committee should be formed following the Guideline by the High Court and ensure proper monitoring of the performance of these committees.
- The employers/management also needs to be made aware, sensitized and motivated to identify, acknowledge the presence, workout ways and means to address violence against women at workplace.
- The employers and investors can be kept motivated by bringing in loss of productivity
- Bringing the issue of violence against women in code of conduct or compliance criterion for factories.
- Proper enforcement of existing legal provisions including making the medical and psychological services to the workers at large.
- Capacity building of all stakeholders for safer workplace for female workers



Abbreviation

BEPZA	- Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authorities
BEF	- Bangladesh Employers Federation
DMCH	- Dhaka Medical College Hospital
CIRDAP	- Center on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific
EPZ	- Export Processing Zone
ERD	- External Resources Division
HDRC	- Human Development Research Center
ILO	- International Labour Organisation
NCCWE	- National Coordination Committee for Workers Education
PMC	- Project management Committee
MoLE	- Ministry of Labour and Employment
LEA	- Law Enforcing Agencies
UNFPA	- United Nations Fund
UNJP	- United Nations Joint Program
VAW	- Violence against Women



Introduction and Background

“Violence against women persists in every country in the world as a pervasive violation of human rights and a major impediment to achieving gender equality. Such violence is unacceptable, whether perpetrated by the State and its agents or by family members or strangers, in the public or private sphere, in peacetime or in times of conflict. The Secretary - General has stated that as long as violence against women continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace. States have an obligation to protect women from violence, to hold perpetrators accountable and to provide justice and remedies to victims. Eliminating violence against women remains one of the most serious challenges of our time. The knowledge base and tools to prevent and eliminate violence against women developed over the past decade must be utilized more systematically and effectively to put a stop to all violence against women. This requires clear political will, outspoken, visible and unwavering commitment at the highest levels of leadership of the State and the resolve, advocacy and practical action of individuals and Communities.”

Among all the concerns about women that are constantly being contemplated by and from many sources now-a-days, ‘Violence against Women (VAW)’ holds the top most position. Workplace violence is an external violent act that happens on women who work in different workforces of any country. Much of the working women, experience various kinds of gender based violence including–verbal, physical, mental, and sexual harassment at their workplaces. Some women and girls workers find it difficult to keep going with their jobs because of sexual harassment at workplace. The most serious consequence is derived out of the sexual violence by which the working women face the brutal parts of their life, and even sometimes they result into death toll. Among the industrial sectors, the Garment factories, EPZ factories, Tea industries, Shrimp processing factories are some of the most violence prone sectors in Bangladesh. Moreover, Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) has been referred to be a violence prone area. Considering all these factors, ILO, Bangladesh have offered Human Development Research Centre to conduct a baseline study to find out the actual scenarios of VAW prevailing in Bangladesh in the abovementioned workforce sectors. Baseline survey work has been successfully completed and final report submitted by HDRC in October 2011. The main objectives of the survey were:

- to capture the state of violence against women and girl workers at workplaces, particularly in (i) garments factories; (ii) tea processing factories, (iii) shrimp processing factories and in factories located in Export Processing Zones. In addition to the above sectors, the survey will also cover a public sector organization namely, Dhaka Medical College Hospital.
- to collect a base line which will be captured in a report which would be used to understand changes in the situation in future. The survey is expected to provide comprehensive and up-to-date information regarding violence against women and girl workers in selected work places. Moreover, it would help assessing impact of any program intending to mitigate or eliminate violence against women and girl workers in Bangladesh.

Under UNJP-VAW, Ministry of Labour and Employment and ILO’s joint project “Promoting gender equality and preventing VAW at workplace” has organized the dissemination workshop on

the baseline survey findings on November 23, 2011 at CIRDAP Auditorium with a view to strengthen the political commitment and joint efforts of all stakeholders to prevent and eliminate violence against women at workplace; and identify the ways and means to ensure more sustainable and effective interventions this kind of workshop is really important for us.

The objectives of the dissemination workshop were:

- To disseminate and validate the baseline survey findings among the key relevant stakeholders
- To identify key strategies and measures to address VAW at workplace and promote gender equality
- To collect recommendations from the participants

The Inaugural Session of the dissemination workshop was attended by Mr. Shafique Alam Mehdi, Secretary of Ministry of Labour and Employment as Chief Guest. Also in attendance as Special Guests were Mr. Arthur Erken , UNFPA Representative, Mr. Dileep Kumar Das, Joint Secretary of ERD and Co-Chair of Project Management Committee, UNJP-VAW, Mr. MD. Fazlul Hoque, President, Bangladesh Employers Federation (BEF), Mr. Zakir Hossain , Member Secretary of National coordination committee for workers education (NCCWE). Mr. Gagan Rajbhandari, Deputy Director, ILO Office in Bangladesh welcomed the participants.

During the Working Session Prof. Abul Barkat, Ph.D, Team Leader of the Study & Chief Advisor (Hon.), HDRC presented the Key findings of the survey while Professor Ishrat Shamim, Department of Sociology and Professor Mahbuba Nasreen, Department of Sociology of Dhaka University made special critic on the findings as designated discussant.

In the Plenary Session Ms. Onindita, CARE Bangladesh; Ms. Shamima Sultana, UNFPA; Dr. Julia Ahmed, Team Leader Cost of Violence against Women, CARE Bangladesh, Ms. Marianne Berner, International Manager , JP-VAW and Mr. Imtiaz, Women and Gender Study, Dhaka University has given their comments and shared their ideas on the issue of violence against women at workplace.

All together about **65 participants** from UN agencies, different ministries, INGO/NGO, BEF and NCCWE took part in the workshop.

Mr. AKM Masud Ali, Executive Director, INCIDIN Bangladesh moderated the dissemination workshop which was divided into two sessions: The Inaugural Session and Working Session.

The Inaugural Session

Welcome Speech

Mr. Gagan Rajbhandari, Deputy Director, ILO Office in Bangladesh welcomed the participants in the dissemination workshop which was organised to discuss the findings of the Baseline Survey on the Extent and Severity of Violence against Women in Selected Sectors under the ILO's joint project with the Ministry of Labour and Employment "Promoting Gender Equality and Preventing Violence Against Women at Workplace". He informed that the project is a component of a bigger UN joint Programme, supported under Spanish MDG Fund and led by UNFPA.

Mentioning that violence against women is an issue of serious concern he said traditional values, social norms, individual attitudes, social taboos, lack of protective laws, inadequate penal provision for the perpetrators and lack of appropriate policies are some of the reasons that are causing violence, specially against women and girl workers. It not only affects the economic well

being of the families but also jeopardizes personal lives of the individuals particularly if they are women or girls he added. Talking about the evidences on violence against women reflected in different press reports and previous study findings he said that in Bangladesh a significant number of women and girls suffer from sexual and physical violence while at work. Pointing out that, most of it goes unreported due to various reasons while the victims suffer in silence he added in many cases, women and girl workers find it difficult to keep going with their jobs because of harassments in workplaces. The survey aimed at learning about the current situation in selected sectors, to begin with, in order to address the problem and to mitigate the agony that they go through every day he opined.

While recognizing the challenges inherent in carrying out such a survey due to the sensitivity of the information that is being sought, it was necessary to underscore the importance of carrying this out in a very truthful and sincere manner - since this will act as a bench mark from which to measure improvements and changes in the situation that may accrue from the current as well as future project interventions he stated. He highlighted the importance in stressing that the findings of the survey draw our attention to a serious issue requiring us to act to address the problem and expects that the discussions and the discourse will be of interest to policy and decision makers in the coming days.

Stating that “every person has the right to be treated with dignity and respect and to be free from all forms of harassment in the workplaces” he mentioned for the ILO, any form of Gender based violence or harassment against women, in particular the sexual harassment, is a serious violation of human rights and a clear form of gender discrimination which seriously undermines gender equality at the workplace.

Finally, he thanked the Ministry of Labour and Employment for their cooperation assistance, and guidance while conducting this study and to HDRC who carried out the survey. He urged all to take the workshop as an opportunity for all participants to provide valuable inputs and will certainly improve understanding of the subject in addressing violence at workplace effectively.

Mr. Arthur Erken, UNFPA Representative in Bangladesh

Addressing the participant Mr. Erken agreed the survey has rightly remarked "violence against women" as the top most among all the concerns about women's empowerment and gender equality. Mentioning that due to violence against women and girls our half of the population in Bangladesh can not contribute actively in the nation's development process which has adverse impact of the economic development and is one of the greatest barriers in achieving gender equality. Referring the survey findings that a large segment of the working women experience various forms of gender based violence at workplace including verbal physical, mental and sexual harassment he said such violence creates difficulties for many women and girl workers to continue their jobs which seriously hurts their dignity and self respect. The study revealed that industrial sectors, the garment factories, EPZ factories, tea industries, shrimp processing factories are some of the most violence prone sectors in Bangladesh but surprisingly one of that most reputed institution like Dhaka Medical College Hospital [DMCH] also was found where gender based violence is acute he added. Thanking ILO of undertaking such excellent initiative he mentioned that the data collected from the baseline survey would help to understand the future changes.

During his speech, highlighting some of the survey findings he mentioned 87% of the respondents have witnessed any form of violence against women in their workplace while more that one third have experienced violence in their own private live. These raised the questions like "where women are safe? Where can they go?" he opined. Pointing out that almost 80% of the respondents expressed that violence are not being reported or recorded neither at management of the organization concerned nor to the police and the victims have found their own way to cope and move forward he argued such reality is not acceptable.

He underscored the importance to engage the owners and managers to bring in a dialogue and find out way to create women friendly workplaces. We should not wait for the women to stand up and protest to take affirmative actions to create conducive environments for women to prosper , to feel safe and respected and felt valued he demanded. Mentioning that the are compliance criterion for owners to create safety, maintain working standards, minimum wages and prohibiting child labour he proposed to further the criteria for creating women friendly workplace free from any sorts of violence including sexual harassment. Maintaining such standards and violence free workplace will enhance the marketing capacity of Bangladeshi business across the globe he felt. Finally he shared that UN has been developing new programs under United Nations Development Assistance Framework [UNDAF] where these data will be useful to design new projects addressing violence against women.

Mr. Dileep Kumar Das, Joint Secretary of ERD and Co-Chair of Project Management Committee, UNJP-VAW

Speaking as the Special Guest Mr. Dileep Kumar Das said making disparity between boys and girls is a common feature in our social life and such discrimination starts in the family and surmounting the boundary of the family this outlook indulges not only gender base violence but also other conflicts in the society. So long term pragmatic measures should be taken to change the social perspective he suggested.

Urging the need for enacting new laws and ensuring their rightful enforcement to adopt the social transformation he mentioned taking the advantage of religious legitimacy, polygamy has become a widespread practice he said that such practice is paving the way and creating ground for violence against women. Women themselves should come forward to protect this inhuman custom and encouraged that every girl should have a firm determination not to marry any man who has another wife.

Underscoring the importance of information and data for adopting strategies and formulating policies to fight the crusade on violence against women he opined that information collected should be reliable and authentic. Unfavorable policies and legal framework, weak implementation of progressive laws and deep rooted social and individual attitude are the major causes that hindered the initiatives to reduce violence against women he observed.

Sharing vision of the Government of Bangladesh he said that government has taken various pro-poor programmes in order to improve women's domestic, social, legal, economical and political status. Government is endeavoring to ensure equity and justice by enforcing strict anti discriminatory legislation and making necessary amendments of the existing laws. He assured the participants that government is determined to ascertain the constitutional rights of women and thus to reduce violence against women. Government has put its best efforts in establishing linkages and networking with law enforcing authorities, local people, local administration and representatives to implement and execute the plans he added.

Stating the objectives of the joint program on violence against women supported by United Nations he said to stop sexual harassment at workplace the ILO Code of Practices should be adopted in the context of Bangladesh which required sensitization of all concerned stakeholders including the managers, supervisors, employees, trade unions etc. The program also aimed at creating greater awareness among female job seekers about their rights to a secure job environment at home and abroad including gathering knowledge and information about the extent and severity of violence against women in selected sectors. To obtain the objectives the program has adopted three fold strategies he shared. Firstly, to deal with the policy and legal framework of the country; secondly, to change the behaviours related to violence against women and thirdly, to create a mechanism for protecting and supporting the survivors of gender based violence which includes immediate care, relief and rehabilitation of the survivors. Regarding the survey he mentioned that huge information has been gathered in the survey report which is need to be scrutinized thoroughly to set the priority issues for short term, mid term and long term interventions.

In conclusion, he said we have good number of laws to resist criminals and bad elements from the society but crucial part is to execute those rules and regulations and extend necessary assistance to the common people when they are in extreme need. He reiterated the need for creating spaces and opportunities for women to maximize their capacity of protecting themselves from violence.

Mr. Zakir Hossain, Member Secretary of National Coordination Committee for Workers Education (NCCWE)

Addressing the guests and participants present in the workshop he said that women are being tortured in various ways across different classes of the society and emphasised that all stakeholders government, employers and workers should put their efforts together to reduce the vulnerabilities against women, which require enactment of specific laws and regulations and ensuring their strict enforcement. He shared that workshop, a seminar, dialogues especially the training programs conducted by NCCWE with technical support from ILO has been found very much useful. He further reiterated the need for united efforts of the Owners, Employers and the Workers Federation to reverse the situation. Talking about the workers engaged at domestic level, RMG sector, Tea industries etc. he mentioned that they are deprived of minimum wages and also face various forms of violence including sexual harassment and in cases they commit suicide or becomes victims of murder. Finally, he urged all concerned to unit and formulate strategies to improve the situation so that a congenial atmosphere can be created for women and girls worker.

MD. Fazlul Hoque, President, Bangladesh Employers Federation (BEF)

Thanking Professor Abul Barkat and the Research Team Mr. Hoque expressed his surprise saying that it's an eye opening research, which has brought a new dimension beyond general perception that percentage of violence against women is higher in Dhaka Medical College Hospital [DMCH] against those of the different factories or industries. He however proposed to look further to other such sensitive or sophisticated areas like DMCH where violence might be more dangerous than overly populated garment sector but still remain unreported. Mentioning that violence against women that exist in the society basically starts from the family which takes place among others due to poor economic condition of women. Mentioning that recent violence against Professor Ruman Monjur leading to blindness for the rest of her life by her husband further establish the fact that women are not safe at home not just because of poverty and reiterated the question, "Where are women safe?" Pointing out the survey findings that 87% of the workers believe that they were being harassed by any means but none of them went to anybody for complaining especially to the Law Enforcing Agencies [LEA] because according to him, if workers go to the Law Enforcing Agencies they will face another harassment in that place and they will be the victim again, which should be addressed. He shared that Bangladesh Employers Federation (BEF) has taken initiative to formulate a guideline on "Gender Equality" in the workplace not in term of employment but in terms of violence and all other things. He also informed that BEF in its own initiative is going to launch the "Guideline" very soon and will organize some workshops and trainings in different workplaces in the coming two years with a view to ensure equality at workplace in all respect. Finally, mentioning that the survey finding will be used as guideline in coming days he assured that BEF will put the best effort to mitigate violence and hope that in the short period of time visible change will take place in industries and other sectors they concerned.

Mr. Shafique Alam Mehdi, Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment

Speaking as Chief Guest Mr. Shafique Alam Mehdi urged that violence against women is very serious socio cultural economic problem in Bangladesh. Cause of such women sufferings are grievance of individuals and families which has far reaching and alarming consequences and impact in the society and in the development of Bangladesh. Two main causes have been identified as hampering progress towards reducing violence against women in Bangladesh. Firstly, unfavourable policy and legal framework with weak implementation of the progressive laws and secondly social and individual attitude and behaviour driven by traditional deep rooted patriarchal society of Bangladesh, which is common in day to day public and private life of every woman. Mentioning that some of the survey findings really need to address by all concerned for reducing

vulnerabilities of women he assured all out support from the Ministry of Labour and Employment[MoLE] in bringing positive changes in workplace following the survey recommendations. He hoped that through the joint efforts of all concerned women friendly workplace can be created, which will increase productivity of women contributing in the process of national development. He informed the participants that MoLE has taken some initiative to promote reproductive health rights, gender equality and women empowerment in the garment sector including promotion of reproductive health rights, gender equality and prevention of HIV/AIDS in tea plantation community in addition to preventing violence against women through promoting gender equality under which this study has been conducted. MoLE appreciates ILO's support and cooperation through various projects and programs, which also contribute to address violence against women at workplace he added. Mentioning that this program which is a part of ILO's recent work and mainstreaming gender equality agenda also contribute to promote gender equality and prevent violence against women at workplace he informed that one of the major output of the program is to adopt ILO Code of Practice to address violence against women in work place. He expressed his satisfaction saying that under this project all preparation has been completed to adopt ILO Code of Practice in our national context. He expressed his own and the ministry's firm commitment to have the recommendations adapted to the best possible extent in the socio-cultural context of Bangladesh. He however expressed his firmness that MoLE will have strong support from the employers and the Trade Union Organisations for proper and timely implementation. He also solicited technical assistance from ILO to go ahead with the unfinished task of ensuring that the recommendations of the baseline survey are addressed and ILO Code of Practice is implemented. Finally, he thanks all concerned for making the survey and the dissemination workshop a success with a high tone of commitment from the government.

Working Session

Professor Abul Barkat the Team Leader and Chief Adviser (Hon), HDRC

The working session starts with presentation of Professor Abul Barkat the Team Leader of the Survey and Chief Adviser (Hon), Human Development Research Center [HDRC] who thanks ILO and the MoLE, the members of the Survey team in particular to female workers of the selected industries like Garment Industries Dhaka and Chittagong city, EPZs factories in Dhaka, Chittagong and Iswardi, Tea industries in Moulvibazar and Rawzan & Fathikchhari upazillas under Chittagong district , Shrimp processing factories of Rupsa under Khulna district and of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). He further expressed his gratitude and thanks to BEPZA, Leaders of BGMEA, Bangladesh Tobacco Board, Bangladesh Frozen Food Exporters Association and some local NGOs. At the very onset of the presentation he expressed his optimism saying that violence against women and girls workers would possibly be reduced to a higher extent.

Reintegrating a comment made by Mr. Dileep Kumar Das, Joint Secretary of ERD that huge information has been collected he explained that the report contains 185 pages of which 140 pages are text with annexed tables and the entire data collection instrument including the terms of reference. In text of the report there are 96 figures, 30 tables, 9 boxes and 8 photographs showing the working condition of those female workers.

Explaining the sequence of his presentation he pointed out that very interesting questions have been raised regarding Dhaka Medical College Hospital [DMCH]. But more interesting would have been the tea garden where data shows severity of violence against women is the lowest among five entities which according to him is not realistic or reliable. Talking about the characteristics of the respondents he explained that in such survey characteristics of respondents are very important because knowledge and access to information of the educated respondents of DMCH is higher than that of the tea garden and factory workers who are least literate and least aware. Disagreeing the fact that in tea garden violence against women is least pronounced he pointed out that there is religious component interlinked with the fact and stated that 97% of the respondents in other sectors except DMCH are Muslim while only 3% are Hindus and in DMCH 12% is Hindus. In comparison in tea garden 82% are Hindus who are so marginalised that many of the forms of

violence against women are not being considered as violence at all and thus reporting of violence becomes lower, which should be very carefully interpreted he reminded.

While stating the objective of the study he mentioned that in most of the cases the research team faced difficulties to enter into the factories and thus they have interviewed all the workers at their residences in the evening and on week end. Stating the purpose of the survey conducted in DMCH and Shrimp processing factories he said that base line data were collected for understanding future changes as a comparator or benchmark. The purpose firstly, was also to understand what is the situation at present and secondly, to compare in future taking these data as baseline as part of impact study and designing other program interventions in future he mentioned.

Explaining the methodology of the survey he mentioned 2613 female workers [which is comparative large in size and well representative of the target population] from all the sectors were interviewed following a structured questionnaire as part of the quantitative analysis and Focus Group Discussion, Key Informant [Supervisors, Trade Union Leaders, NGOs working in the field of Violence against women] Interviews, verbal autopsy of ten victims workers [two from each sector] were conducted as part of qualitative analysis. During quantitative analysis the survey aimed to understand "what is the situation?" while in qualitative analysis the survey aimed to understand "why and how these violence takes place?" he added. The following are salient feature of the presentation:

Knowledge, Perception, and Attitude towards VAW

About Non-sexual VAW acts:

- ✓ 98% respondents from all five sectors reported verbal out-bursting or shouting as the most frequently occurring type of violence at workplace .
- ✓ The next frequently occurring VAW is verbal threat (reported by 33%). This type of violence is most frequent at DMCH, followed by garment and shrimp processing factories (reported by 57%, 37% and 34% respondents respectively).

Sexual VAW acts:

- ✓ Respondents in all five sectors reported a number of acts occurring around them are directly or indirectly sexual violence. They include touching, patting, pinching, verbal comment about physical appearance, verbal conduct of sexual nature, verbal jokes containing sexual nature, verbal request for sexual favor, any unsolicited physical contact including rape etc.
- ✓ Many of these acts are comparatively more pronounced in the shrimp processing and garment factories.

Source of Knowledge about VAW

- ✓ 87% respondents observed VAW at their own workplace, 57% heard about violence from female co-workers. One-fifth (20%) knew about VAW occurrences from female members of neighboring households.

Degree of VAW at workplace

Opinion about degree of VAW at their workplace	Garment	EPZ	Tea	Shrimp	DMCH	All
Very high	2.6	2.1	0.0	3.6	6.7	2.3
High	18.1	11.9	1.1	11.6	16.9	12.4
Medium	46.6	29.8	15.4	38.0	41.6	35.1
Low	22.3	31.1	24.1	20.1	23.6	24.7

Reasons behind VAW

- ✓ Women’s physical weakness and their helplessness to defend them from the perpetrator has been viewed by 76% respondents as the main reason of VAW at workplace.
- ✓ 60% respondents think that women are often victim of VAW because of their economic vulnerability.
- ✓ 7% think that women are seen as sex objects and that is why they are victim of VAW.

At workplace:

- ✓ As per 79% respondents, the victims of VAW incidences generally do not go for any complaint or remedy. They keep silence and take it for granted.
- ✓ According to 23% respondents, if anyone becomes victim of VAW at workplace, the usual practice is that she would not come to her job for few days.
- ✓ Another 23% respondents viewed that a victim gets unmindful in her work if she become victim of VAW.

Psychological and Social consequences:

- ✓ 72% reported that a victim of VAW becomes mentally insecure.
- ✓ 21% reported that the victim may become insecure even at home.
- ✓ 17% and 9% respectively opined that such incidences create mental gap with parents and husbands of married victims.
- ✓ Social exclusion of the victim takes place (viewed by 53% respondents).
- ✓ 23% respondents think that mental shock brought by the VAW may prompt a victim to commit suicide.

Consequences in family

Consequences	Respondent (%)
Because of leaving job a victim’s financial support to family weakens	57.7
Social stigma to victim’s family members compels them blame the victim	28.1
If the victim is unmarried/ about to marry, marriage/proposal gets barred/broken	22.4
Does not get support (mental and/or financial) from family members	18.5
Victim is abandoned by husband (if married)	17.0
Victim is divorced by husband (if married)	7.4

Knowledge about Policy, Guideline, Laws on VAW

- ✓ 46% respondents reported that there are policies, laws or guidelines to support VAW victims.
- ✓ One-fourth (25%) replied that there are no such policies, laws or guidelines.
- ✓ 29% have no idea about them.

Work Environment according to the Female Workers**Level of satisfaction with workplace:**

- ☐ Although most respondents mentioned about women’s vulnerability as well as being victim of VAW at workplace, when asked about their level of satisfaction with the workplace environment (considering VAW) the reporting pattern:
 - ✓ 47% ‘somewhat satisfied’ followed by 36% ‘satisfied’.
 - ✓ Only 10% less satisfied while 4% not satisfied at all.

Personal safety at workplace:

- ✓ 79% consider themselves safe about their personal security. 16% reported that they do not consider the workplace as secured.
- ✓ 92% of those who replied ‘not safe’ explained that there is chance of getting verbally abused/physically assaulted by the senior colleagues at their workplace.

- ✓ 39% mentioned about chance of getting verbally abused/physically assaulted by same level colleagues.
- ✓ 17% reported that sometimes they need to work with male colleagues with past record of VAW.

Suggestions and Recommendations

What a victim of VAW should do:

- ✓ Majority respondents emphasized on –
 - complaining to factory/organization authority for remedy
 - physical punishment of perpetrators
 - report to the police
- ✓ Emphasized on awareness building and solidarity of the women.
- ✓ Impart training on VAW.

Other stakeholders to stop VAW:

- ✓ Forwarded suggestions for other relevant persons/organizations and stakeholders such as:
 - male co-workers
 - trade union leaders.
 - NGOs
 - law and order authorities.
 - police department.
- ✓ Enforce existing policies and laws in the factories (as well as to abide by the rules by their male colleagues).
- ✓ Almost all respondents think that they need policies or Written rules at their factories to combat VAW. While preparing such policies/rules, female workers should be consulted.

Government to stop VAW:

Respondents demanded a number of actions by the government –

- ✓ Exemplary punishment to perpetrators including high compensation and imprisonment.
- ✓ Government should take legal action against the whole organization where VAW takes place
- ✓ Monitoring system :
 - deploy police/female police
 - send factory inspector/visitor to specifically see VAW situation
 - Authority be pressurized to create better work environment for women
- ✓ Make workers as well as authority aware of VAW at workplaces by arranging meeting/workshop:
 - every organization should arrange discussions on women rights
 - should provide training and conduct workshops for supervisors and managers.

Authority to stop VAW:

Respondents suggested the authority that they –

- ✓ Should initiate strict administrative rules as well as exemplary punishments to the perpetrators: such as firing from job, wage cut, demotion in the service and handing to the police.
- ✓ Owners should be conscious about VAW, managers should be honest, women workers should be seen equally like men.
- ✓ Perpetrators should be made aware of/motivated about consequences of VAW/meetings about VAW should be arranged by workplace managers.
- ✓ Workplace should be monitored/security guards can be appointed.
- ✓ Night duty for the female workers should be made safer (e.g. Shrimp processing factories).
- ✓ No woman should work alone at night (without another woman) (DMCH).

Other necessary initiatives to stop VAW:

Respondents suggested that –

- ✓ The female workers should be united and :
 - they should protest/make arrangements for meeting and procession about VAW.
 - women workers should not remain silent (breaking “culture of silence”).
 - make their voice loud whenever any violent acts happen.
- ✓ Men and women should be aware of VAW
- ✓ Organization should be made to protest against VAW:
 - point out the perpetrators by making their publicity through newspaper and TV
 - social movement to combat VAW from every place.
- ✓ Most important prerequisite is the larger public awareness.
- ✓ Economic empowerment of women needs to be addressed coupled with related training for indispensable skills.
- ✓ The ILO code of conduct at workplaces and the provision of ‘decent work environment’ should be integrated at every working sector by the workplace authorities.
- ✓ Training of workplace/factory authorities, police, judicial and law enforcement officers on gender sensitivity in VAW situation is essential.
- ✓ The terms of punishment of VAW perpetrators must be uncompromisingly ensured by the legislative departments.
- ✓ Provision of medical treatment and psychological counseling should be easily available in every case of physical VAW.
- ✓ More support service centers for victims of violence and their families should be in place.

- ✓ Representation of women in trade unions should be strengthened to address upward mobility, maternity benefits, sexual harassment and violence on them.
- ✓ Research into violence against women must be conducted more frequently with adequate funding in order to have standardized and longitudinal research findings.
- ✓ The obscurities of the cross-country and cross-study comparison of VAW situation must be dealt with full concentration to disclose experiences of VAW at workplace.
- ✓ Above all, the entire legislative framework to mitigate VAW in Bangladesh including ‘Penal Code 1860’, and ‘Nari O Shishu Nirjatan Daman (Amendment) Ain, 2003’ (Act No. XXX of 2003) must be implemented strongly.
- ✓ The ‘National Women Development Policy 2011’ must be modified, and the VAW mitigation processes need to be described there in details.

Immediately after the presentation Mr. Shafique Alam Mehdi, Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment and Chief Guest of the dissemination workshop commented that data gathered as an eye opener and being a government official he reiterated that it his duty and responsibility to get recommendations being implemented and he sought support and cooperation from all concerned especially the UN agencies to come forward and help the government in the process.

Professor Ishrat Shamim, Department of Sociology, University of Dhaka

Professor Ishrat Shamim noted that the whole approach of conducting the interviews outside the workplace is appreciable and effective adding that there are manifold barriers in reporting and ensuring safe environment for survivors or women in general to acknowledge and discuss on such a sensitive issue – which requires to be kept in mind. Sometimes, FGD also help to reveal sensitive issues and information she suggested. She also noted that culture of violence is a coping strategy for female victims at the backdrop of lack of supportive environment and at the face of stigmatization along with economic consequences, which is imposed upon women when there is no empowering and supporting environment and women remains at risk of further violence and stigmatization. Marking that socialization process also prepares women and girls to adopt such particular characteristics of coping with violence against women be it at home, community or at workplace. She has also stressed on longer time strategies so that detail dimensions are clearly

revealed to address this kind of sensitive issues. She underscored the need for looking deep into the reporting and mitigation structures and process prevailing at the workplace.

She recommended that there is a need of ensuring that the employers are taken as partners in building awareness and capacity of the female workers on violence against women related issues. There is also a need of working out paid leave for the workers during any such training (on what is violence against women, what are the laws and policies at hand to address violence against women, what are the sources of support for legal, medical, psychological and economic services and care) she proposed. She observed that recruiting Female Supervisor, security, payroll official can reduce incidence of violence against women at sectors in which women are in majority as employees. She underscored that Sexual Violence/Harassment Complaint Committee should be formed following the directives of the High Court and there should have intense monitoring mechanism to oversee the functions of those committees. She however urged for extensive media campaign to create social awareness on violence against women in general and at workplace in particular. Finally she said that the employers/management also needs to be made aware, sensitized and motivated to identify, acknowledge the presence and workout ways and means to address violence against women at workplace.

Professor Mahbuba Nasreen, Department of Sociology, University of Dhaka

Reminding the beginning of Joint Program on Violence against Women where all the nine UN agencies and eleven line ministries joint their hands together to combat violence against women Professor Mahbuba Nasreen has thanked ILO for leading some of dreams coming true. Expressing her satisfaction of seeing that an eminent researcher like Professor Barkat and his organisation conduct the survey she said we have high expectations that this will help to attract more attention than others. She mentioned that most of the queries like the comparative analysis based on the age, literacy, differences of workplace, marital status and satisfaction of job and pattern of occupation which has mostly addressed by the Team Leader himself. She said that lower reporting of violence against women at workplace is adequately explained by Professor Barkat, which should be more examined and the causes should be addressed properly. She suggested that analysis of some specific Case Studies could lead us to greater qualitative aspects to assess and explain the quantitative findings. Talking about the sampling framework of the survey, she pointed out that only 89 respondents were interviewed from Dhaka Medical College Hospital while 714 respondents were collected from EPZ factories, she said there is a challenge in comparing findings of different sectors while the size of the sample varies and enquired about the techniques of comparison between these statistics and suggested to incorporate some more respondents before finalizing the report if possible. Pointing out that 87% observed violence at their own workplace but if we look at the personal experience of violence at workplace that contradicts with each other which should be further examined she underscored. The issues of knowledge, attitude and practice including cultural diversity causing violence against women were well analyzed in the survey report she opined.

She however suggested not using the word "Victim" mentioning that women's movement in Bangladesh has been trying for a long time to have new word and finally decided to use the word "survivors" because the word "Victim" means women are vulnerable and vulnerable women can not resist themselves that connotation comes in front of us. Mentioning that we have number of achievements and landmark initiatives to fight violence against women in Bangladesh she said there are greater scope of reviewing existing literature on violence against women in general and specific to the selected sectors. Mentioning that there is a power relation linked with the personal level observation of violence which could yield more data or information through purposive sampling she suggested. Finally she has also mentioned that the survey as proxy provided us information about how the existing campaign on violence against women have trickled down to workers level because the findings do not reflect the NGOs or the Government to come forward as major sources of information. The study might strongly recommend enhancing existing campaign to reach up to the female workers she suggested.

Plenary Session

Ms. Onindita, CARE Bangladesh

Ms. Onindita mentioned that if we really want to understand the extent and severity of violence against women it is important to look beyond the formal sector because a large number of women workers are involved in informal sector. She however raised the question, "why informal sectors were not included in the survey?" Raising the question about the age limit she wanted to know whether the age limit was fixed at "19-24" or it came through random selection.

Ms. Shamima Sultana, UNFPA

Mentioning that as the recommendations will be implemented by the factory owners and they are the main agent to change the scenario Ms. Shamima Sultana suggested to bring them in such gathering or discussions and convincing them to adopt rules and regulations in line with the findings in their own factories. She questioned that who will be the user of this baseline survey and who will draw the actions based on these findings? Suggesting to finding out how violence against women reduce the productivity of women in line with the consequences, which has an economic value she however proposed to linking the findings in setting "Compliance Criterion" for the factories concerned so that they will be more responsive for taking prompt and effective actions. Mentioning that UNFPA has been working with DMCH and in Tea Garden of Moulvibazar and Sylhet for the last sixteen years in the area of reproductive health, reproductive rights, workers rights she however suggested to find out whether there is any secondary impact of the programs implemented by other actors as well.

Mentioning that UNFPA has also been working in the Garment Sector in the area of reproductive health, reproductive rights and workers rights initially and later on violence against women she shared they had been appraised that there were no violence incidences in the garment factories. They were reported that the authority had taken various initiative including collecting complaints and forming committees, which actually did not work and to step forward she hope this baseline findings will be of immense importance.

Dr. Julia Ahmed, Team Leader Cost of Violence against Women, CARE Bangladesh

Mentioning this study as turning point she said that how methodologies can be designed differently and data can be interpreted or compared different has become very clear from this survey. In this regard she mentioned that the survey has very uniquely interpreted the data collected from the DMCH and Tea Garden. Raising the question that "Is there any place where women is free of violence?" she informed that CARE Bangladesh has conducted two studies - one at family and individual level and the other at state level and the finding are being very much useful while conducting awareness session and dialogues at field level as well as for the donors. The study shows that due to violence we are loosing about 2.5 percent of the total GDP, which could alternately be used for education, health or other welfare purposes of the family of survivor. The findings have attracts the donors and policy makers to come forward and find out possible way out of the problem creating a violence free society. Domestic violence has been recognized by the society as private matter and while referring the findings at the community level meetings they have found some positive responses she added. Mentioning that a cost violence analysis toolkit has been developed which has been used successfully in different program areas to find out the cost and demanding compensation package under the Domestic Violence [Protection & Prevention] Act 2010. Recognizing that due to various intervention society has become aware about violence against women to some extent but such awareness are not being translated into strategies or actions for effective changes in the attitude of the society at large. In this regard all the concerned have evidences and tools where there is need for effective coordination to find out the common strategy to fight violence against women.

Ms. Marinne Berner, International Manager, JP-VAW

She thanked to the survey team for the nice presentation and other participants for their active and useful participation and comment on the report which was very interesting and useful to read. She

however said that the study findings have added a different dimension in the discourse and discussion of violence against women at workplace mentioning that understanding of a safe work place is very pertinent to the level of satisfaction of the women workers and the survey shows 83% women are to some what satisfied or satisfied and only 14% women mentioned that they are less satisfied or not satisfied at all. According to her this statistics is so pertinent while comparing to the fact that 3 in every 10 female workers around them become victim of violence at workplace. Expressing that she is very happy in her workplace even though she is totally exposed to violence against women and the discrepancy with the earlier statement that it is ok to be so much exposed to violence, so someone actually accepted his/her working place is ok because they have work. And if that is the understanding behind the argument then issue of having a happy good safe workplace perhaps completely different from what has been discussed so far she expressed.

Mr. Imtiaz, Women and Gender Study, Dhaka University

Mentioning that the survey is very comprehensive he however wanted to have more detail about the methodological soundness of survey. He mentioned that, when we collect data definitely, there should be caution that, why feminist research has evolved out of the criticism of objectivism, which is the basis of collecting data like this survey. He however wanted to know, how the issue of "feminist stemology" and "stand point" has been tackled while training the Data Collectors for collecting data like this. Terming the perpetrators perspective is very important to device any mechanism to address violence against women he however wanted to know whether it has been included or not during the survey.

Response from Professor Barkat-Team Leader of the Survey

- Responding to a question of Ms. Onindita, Professor Barkat said that definitely involving the workers engaged in informal sectors would yield more information but the study was specially designed to focus on the selected five sectors and about the age group he mentioned that it becomes randomly.
- Responding to queries of **Professor Ishrat Shamim and Professor Mahbuba Nasreen** about sample size, Professor Barkat said that the size of the sample does not matter in such studies and in case of homogeneity randomly selected any number yield same information in comparison to the greater number. About the time frame Professor Barkat agreed that if the study could be done for a longer period definitely more information could be gathered and analysed leading to more meaningful conclusion but it was not possible due to the time frame fixed by the donor. He urged that the development partners should be more concerned about allocating timeframe for such sensitive and comprehensive research. About the age of the respondents he said we have found 14 percent workers below the age 18, which existing laws do not support even the survey has also found workers of age 11. Informing that all the respondents were from workers level not from Managerial position he agreed that female workers did not want to disclose the issue of violence and they became more rigid while face sexual harassment he added. He shared that the survey did not find the Sexual Harassment Complaint Committees formed in any of the selected factories. Following the verdict this can be ensured in all the factoring that the Committee on Sexual Harassment has been formed but who is going to monitor their activities to ensure that these committees are functioning. About bringing all the stakeholders relevant to the five selected sectors he said that if we do the same there will have debate following agreement and disagreement but what next he enquired. He mentioned that to start the survey, they have followed the definition of Sexual Harassment at workplace by ILO in the Bangladesh context which was suggested by ILO so that the findings from different countries can be compared. Against the recommendation of engaging Female Supervisor, he said such changes will not bring major reforms unless the patriarchal attitude can not be rooted out from the society. He however suggested adopting strategies to change the Mindset, which is of utmost importance. He mentioned that they have developed a composite violence against women index where the highest score refers to worst situation.

Method of developing Index

- ✓ The degree of VAW in their own factory/workplace
- ✓ The degree of satisfaction with the environment of their factory/workplace in relation to VAW
- ✓ Perception about occurrence of VAW in every 10 female workers in their factory/workplace
- ✓ Own experience of VAW at their factory/workplace
- ✓ Degree of satisfaction about their personal safety while working at factory/workplace

After assigning value to each type of responses, percentage of respondents under each type of response has been multiplied by the respective assigned value.

Through summing up the total value, we have estimated the absolute score.

However, for better comparison among various indicators and developing an overall VAW score, we have converted the absolute scores (under different indicators) into an uniform standard score (scaled 0 to 100). The higher the score, the worse is the VAW situation.

- About report of various forms violence against women at personal life, he mentioned it becomes lower because female respondents do not want to disclose their personal experiences related to worst form of violence like rape and others. He also added that case study was conducted through verbal autopsy of ten survivors, which has been mentioned but they could not include all information thinking of the ethical point of view.
- Responding the questions raised by **Ms. Marianne Berner** Manager, UN -JPMO-VAW Professor Abul Barkat agreed that the findings coming out of the survey appears to be puzzling which has remedy if we can reverse that opinion of the 70 percent of the respondents who accepted violence against women as granted.
- Referring to queries made by **Ms. Shamima Sultana, UNFPA**, professor Barkat remind that she herself mentioned that UNFPA will be using the survey outcome for future program interventions. Responding to the query about the impact of violence against women on the productivity of women he said this is a big concern to address but there is no study in this regard. Disagreeing with the findings of the cost analysis study conducted by CARE Bangladesh he said we are still not able to find out the total number of victims of violence then any methodology followed by can not yield realistic statistics, which should be handled more carefully by experts, he warned. In this connection he mentioned of "Economics of Inadequate Sanitations in Bangladesh" released by World Bank, which estimated the cost equivalent to the 6.4 percent of the total GDP which prompted the policy makers to invest more resources for improve the condition of sanitation.
- About the data regarding Tea Garden and DMCH and its interpretation Prof. Barkat mentioned that it was a learning process for them that these data should be interpreted very carefully as it should not be granted as the real situation.
- Commenting that "Gender Equity and Voice Task Force of **HNPSP** is very weak" he said, "It is weak, It was weak and It will remain weak". It will remain weak unless and until there will have any serious working coordination among at highest level like Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health, Women and Violence against Women. Adding that there is no coordination among the donors at all which should be recognized and if all those actors can put their best coordinated efforts then only the situation may reverse. In this connection he mentioned that similarly there is no coordination in implementing the annual development programs. Mentioning that addressing violence

against women is not an issue of one single ministry, it's a national issue which should be seen as a national issue and accordingly it should be disseminated.

Recommendations

- The owners and managers should sit for immediate dialogue and find out way and put their commitment to create women friendly workplaces
- Long term pragmatic measures should be taken to change the social perspective and patriarchal attitude of the society.
- To ensure proper and rightful enforcement of the existing laws the laws enforcement agencies should be trained properly.
- To train the concerned stakeholders including the managers, supervisors, employees, trade unions etc about the adverse impact of violence against women and make them understand that this also hampers their profit.
- Intensify existing media campaign to create social awareness on violence against women in general and at workplace in particular.
- There is a need of ensuring that the employers are taken as partners in building awareness and capacity of the female workers on violence against women related issues. There is also a need of working out paid leave for the workers during any such training which should include
 - Concept and forms of violence against women
 - Existing laws and policies to address violence against women
 - Available support services for a survivors like legal, medical, psychological and other care
 - Detail contact and procedure of getting related services in particular delivered by NGOs
- Introduction of ILO Code of Practice in all the factories in the context of Bangladesh.
- To appoint female supervisor, security, payroll official who will be able to reduce incidence of violence against women at sectors in which women employees are in majority.
- Sexual Harassment Complaint Committee should be formed following the Guideline by the High Court and ensure proper monitoring of the performance of these committees.
- The employers/management also needs to be made aware, sensitized and motivated to identify, acknowledge the presence, workout ways and means to address violence against women at workplace.
- The employers and investors can be kept motivated by bringing in loss of productivity
- Bringing the issue of violence against women in code of conduct or compliance criterion for factories.
- Proper enforcement of existing legal provisions including making the medical and psychological services to the workers at large.
- Capacity building of all stakeholders for safer workplace for female workers

Way Forward

- Translating the recommendations and findings into interventions and awareness materials etc.
- In future cost of violence against women at workplace can be explored (toolkit of CARE can be utilized).
- The campaign focus for future needs to include be on change in mindset/behavior and practice - along with awareness.
- Effectiveness of existing interventions on violence against women with respect to female workers needs to be explored.
- Effective studies specially designed for female workers can be carried out which will sharpen out understanding and will help to take this initiative further.

Vote of Thanks

Ms. Selina Ahmed, National Program Officer, ILO

Ms. Selina Ahmed extends her heartfelt thank to all for beings present in the dissemination workshop and make it successful. She said that under the UN joint program on violence against women the survey was conducted and with tremendous expectations ILO has organised the dissemination so that they can bring all stake holders comments for its further improvement and they are glad that everybody, the concerned Government Officials , UN Agencies, Civil Society actors, NGOs and other responded. She also informed the participants that ILO has been conducting a situation analysis on female domestic workers and migrant workers, which will cover other sectors mentioned by the participants

She committed that ILO will remain in contact with related stakeholders in future to implement activities to bring expected results leading to a safe and violence free workplace for women and girl worker and they all will be in the same journey in future.