



“Assessing and Addressing the Impact of Trade on Employment” Project launched in Bangladesh in January 2010

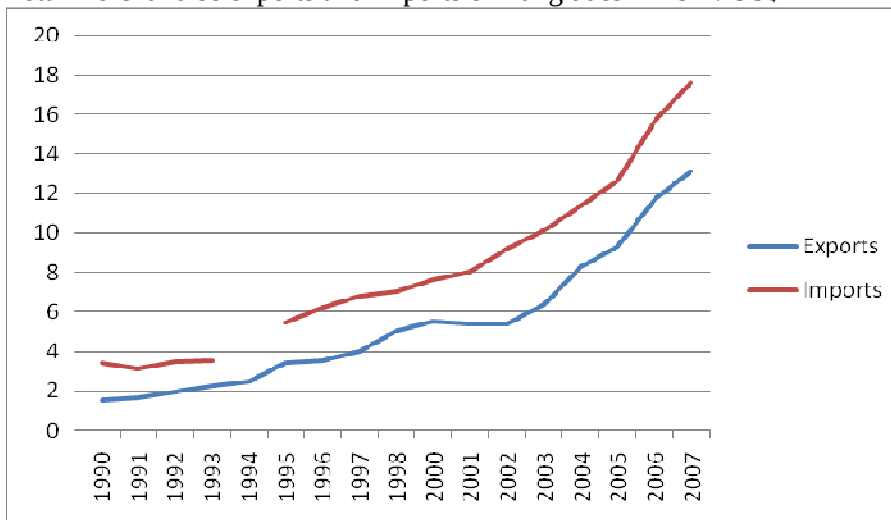
Bangladesh had been selected as one of the four pilot countries in the project “Assessing and Addressing the Impact of Trade on Employment” that is financed by the European Union.



Photo: ILO office in Dhaka

During a scoping visit to Bangladesh from 24 January to 5 February 2010 the project was presented and discussed in several meetings with Ministries, social partners and other governmental and non-governmental organizations. The interest in the project was very high and the project seems to be timely given the sharp increase of trade but remaining high un- and underemployment as well as widespread low working conditions.

Total merchandise exports and imports of Bangladesh in bill. US\$



Source: UN Comtrade through UNCTAD/World Bank WITS

The purpose of the scoping visit was to assess the specific needs with respect to the impact of trade on employment, to conduct a needs assessment for the training, to assess the political commitment of the relevant government ministries to implement the conclusions and recommendations as well as to check the availability of data for the studies. Another important aspect was the recruitment of the National Project Coordinator.

Overview of institutions that were visited

Ministries and	Planning Commission
Gov. Organization	Ministry of Commerce
	Ministry of Industry, NPO
	Ministry of Labour
	Central Bank
	Export Promotion Bureau
Trade Unions	NCCWE
Employers	Bangl. Employers Federation, BEF
	Mutual Trust Bank
Organizations	DFID
	USAID
	World Bank
	GTZ
	IFC
Donor	European Union
Researcher	Dr. Rizwanul Islam
Institutes	BIDS
	CPD
	BILS
	Bangladesh Enterprise Institute
Statistics	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics BBS
ILO office Dhaka	Regular discussions and meetings

Exports are very concentrated with readymade garment and knitwear accounting for 75 per cent. Wages are very low and low-skilled labour is an abundant factor whereas skilled labour is scarce and productivity is low. Trade unionism in Bangladesh is low with unionized employees currently accounting for about 3.3 per cent of the total workforce. The National Coordination Committee for Workers Education (NCCWE) which is a platform of 14 major national trade union federations requested a specific training on trade and employment. The training will be followed by a tripartite training organized by ILO's International Training Center where government officials and social partners will not only participate but will be actively involved through own contributions. Regarding the analytical and research activities in Bangladesh, the country studies can build on some existing work and due to the high quality of research institutes in Bangladesh an international consultant does not seem to be necessary. The interest in the policy working group was high and it is currently explored which specific format would best ensure achievement of the project objectives.

Future activities in Bangladesh comprise

- Establishment of a Policy Working Group
- Organization of a non-technical and a technical training for government officials and social partners.
- Conducting country studies assessing the effects of trade on employment.
- Drafting, publishing and disseminating country reports on the effects of trade on employment.
- Organization of a national seminar to discuss the findings and identify priorities with policy makers, social partners, local ILO staff, EC services and donors.

- Formulation of policies, strategies and programmes to facilitate implementation (depending on priorities identified at seminar) and support employment creation.
- Drafting of synthesis reports.

ILO Office in Bangladesh
House No.12, Road No.12
Dhanmondi Residential Area, Dhaka 1209
Bangladesh
DHAKA@ilo.org

Chief Technical Advisor
ETE project, Employment Sector
ILO, 1211 Geneva 22
Switzerland
peters@ilo.org