DOMESTIC WORKERS AND SOCIAL PROTECTION IN DHAKA, BANGLADESH

This fact sheet provides results from a survey completed in Dhaka in 2019 with 100 domestic workers.

 RESPONSES TO COVID-19

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Bangladesh implemented the Gratuitous Relief (GR) programme to provide humanitarian assistance in the form of food, cash transfers, and baby food. Between March and June 2020, nearly 75 million beneficiaries were reached via the GR. However, many domestic workers remained excluded from this relief.

 POLICY CONTEXT

Bangladesh Labour Act 2008 explicitly excludes domestic workers. Since 2015 there has been technical recognition of their status as workers through the Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy (2015), which states that the government shall take the initiative to ensure the access of domestic workers to the Bangladesh Labour Welfare Foundation Fund.

The fund established under the Bangladesh Labour Welfare Foundation Act, 2006, provides financial support to disabled and sick workers, a survivor benefit, a contribution to life insurance and education scholarships for children of eligible workers. However, this policy is without legal backing or implementation and domestic workers in fact have little income security or protection from risks.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>LONGER-TERM RISKS TO INCOME SECURITY</th>
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<td>BDT8,000 (USD94) / month</td>
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<td>MINIMUM WAGE - READYMADE GARMENT SECTOR</td>
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<td>- BDT3,000 (USD35)=</td>
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<td>BDT5,000 (USD59) / month [40-hour work week]</td>
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<td>TYPICAL DOMESTIC WORKER WAGE</td>
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80% of domestic workers surveyed earned less than BDT8,000 (USD94).

- 70% work missed due to illness or accident in the last 12 months
- 72% due to an injury/illness resulting from their work
- 78% missed work as a result
- 34% missed two or more weeks
- 60% received no payment for time off

- 10% reported missing work due to care responsibilities including maternity leave, child care and care for a sick person
- 50% reported leaving children with a family member whilst at work
- 25% had taken children to work with them

Care responsibilities

Occupational safety and health

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Ensure the inclusion of domestic workers in the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006, so that the Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy, 2015 has legal backing.

**Access to Social Protection**
- **90%** visited a health care facility in the last 12 months
- **38%** went to a public hospital or clinic
- **21%** went to a private hospital
- **23%** went to a pharmacy

**Access to Healthcare**
- **90%** visited a health care facility in the last 12 months
- **34%** paid BDT4,000 (USD47) or more on tests during last health care visit
- **38%** lost part of income
- **35%** did not lose income
- **70%** took time off to access health care
- **85%** delayed a health care visit
- **38%** went to a public hospital or clinic
- **21%** went to a private hospital
- **23%** went to a pharmacy

**Access to Paid Maternity Leave**
- **0%** reported access to maternity benefit
- **11%** have access to maternity leave
- **0%** reported access to maternity benefit

**Access to Old Age Pension**
- **96%** do not have access

**Cost of Healthcare Access**
- **BDT1,250 (USD14.7)** typical weekly salary
- Healthcare costs more than salary
- **BDT1,655 (USD19.5)** typical direct cost of one healthcare visit
- +2.6 hours = BDT67 (USD0.80) time to access health care as lost wages

**Recommendations**

**Short term**
- Provide cash assistance to domestic workers impacted by the COVID-19 crisis through the Labour Welfare Fund

**Medium term**
- Relax eligibility requirements for applications to the Labour Welfare Fund
- Increase benefit amounts

**Long term**
- Include domestic workers in existing national social protection programmes operating under the Ministry of Social Welfare
- Introduce a universal pension scheme nationally