Recent years have marked several tragic factory disasters in ready-made garment (RMG) sector, which together took the lives of more than 1,200 people.

That is why, leading North American apparel companies came together to form the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety. Alliance’s goal is to ensure that safe workplaces in Bangladesh become the rule, and not the exception, for all women and men employed in the Bangladesh RMG industry.

In November and December 2013, the Alliance conducted a worker survey to measure the knowledge, awareness, experience and perception of factory fire and building safety risks amongst Bangladesh RMG workers. This brief summary provides some of the key findings resulting from the survey.

There is a significant gap in workers’ knowledge on fire safety:
- 2% can correctly identify common fire hazards.
- 39% do not know how to react in case of an emergency.
- 34% know the basic components of fire.
- 32% say that if a fire alarm sounds, they would “wait and see”.

Workers do not feel empowered:
- 54% do not feel responsible for health and safety.
- 73% think that some fatal fire accidents cannot be prevented.
- 17% only would talk to their workers representatives about safety concerns.

Focus group discussions show worker committees are often inactive.

Workers do not receive sufficient training:
- 45% have never been trained on fire safety.
- 87% have done fire drills.
- However, focus group discussions show fire drills are often not properly executed.

The training workers received has not significantly improved their knowledge & awareness.
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Fire is a real risk in Bangladesh factories:
- 57% have witnessed accidents in their factories, of which 34% have witnessed fire incidents.
- 81 workers report that security guards frequently lock exits.

In focus group discussions workers reported that exits in the factories are often blocked.

This issue is most acute before shipping when cartoons are frequently left on stairs and in hallways.

There is less training for female workers and workers with low education:
- % of Workers Trained in Fire Safety
  - Education Level
    - High: 63%
    - Medium: 58%
    - Low: 51%

Young workers are more concerned for their safety than their adult colleagues.
- 32% of juvenile workers feel their job is unsafe.
- 15% of adult workers feel their job is unsafe.
- 49% of juvenile workers feel their job will negatively impact their health.
- 35% of adult workers feel their job will negatively impact their health.

The survey was conducted with a stratified random sample of 28 factories from an overall list of 625 factories and included a total of 3507 workers. An additional 101 workers participated in the focus group discussion.

The results presented in this report will guide the Alliance in the design and implementation of its training and assessment activities, and will serve as a baseline to which all future survey results will be compared. The Alliance will regularly repeat this survey in order to assess whether its initiatives create the desired impact.

For a complete version of the survey report, please visit the Alliance Website (www.bangladeshworkerssafety.org) or contact us at info@afbws.org.