ALLIANCE FOR BANGLADESH WORKER SAFETY ENGAGES UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS TO CONDUCT INDEPENDENT IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF SAFETY TRAININGS

The Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety announced today that it has contracted with the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston to conduct an independent assessment of the Alliance basic fire safety training for garment factory workers in Bangladesh. The project team will be led by Dr. Hasanat Alamgir, a University of Texas (UT) School of Public Health associate professor of occupational health at the Program in Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences. The team will conduct a research study to yield valid and reliable results, collect data through randomized surveys and focus groups from workers, and ultimately deliver a detailed report on the effectiveness of the Alliance worker training. This report will help identify areas of improvement as the Alliance training programs continue and expand in the coming years.

Dr. Alamgir is an expert in occupational epidemiology and intervention evaluation, with a background in assessing workplace hazards, health and safety. In February 2014, Dr. Alamgir advised on the design and implementation of the Alliance baseline survey, which engaged 3,200 randomly selected workers from 28 representative Alliance factories to identify gaps in worker knowledge of fire safety practices and develop baseline indicators. This initial survey demonstrated the urgent need for basic fire safety training, with results showing that only 39 percent of workers could correctly identify what to do in case of emergency and only two percent could identify five common fire hazards.

On September 17, 2014, Dr. Alamgir presented before the U.S. Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) on a panel including researchers and labor representatives from Bangladesh to inform the BPC’s independent review of the Alliance. “You can’t have improvements in factory safety without educating and empowering workers,” Dr. Alamgir said at the event, chaired by former U.S. Senators George Mitchell and Olympia Snowe. As part of the UT assessment, Dr. Alamgir will also collaborate with and mentor a team of faculty and graduate students at Dhaka University to build local capacity for impact assessment research.

Conducting academically rigorous and scientifically valid research is critical to understanding safety training effectiveness. This includes how well workers process and retain provided information, which aspects of the training achieve the greatest impact, which delivery methods are most effective and where follow-up training may be required. By engaging UT, the Alliance aims to assess the impact of its own worker training program and to help establish best practices in factory worker safety training that can be used across manufacturing industries in Bangladesh and beyond.

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About The Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety

The Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety was founded by a group of North American apparel companies, retailers and brands who joined together to develop and launch the Bangladesh Worker Safety Initiative, a binding, five-year undertaking that is transparent, results-oriented, measurable and verifiable with the intent of improving safety in Bangladeshi ready-made garment (RMG) factories. The Alliance provides global apparel companies and retailers the unprecedented opportunity to come together and put forward concrete solutions to issues that impact apparel and retail industries worldwide. More information about the Alliance can be found at www.bangladeshworkersafety.org.