



FOUR MILLION THREADS

Educator's Guide

“Imagine leaving your lifelong home for a one-room flat in a city with a husband you barely know. You work beside 5,000 others in a factory, sewing 180 zippers on 180 sweaters each day. You’re the first woman in your family ever to earn a paycheck, but it’s barely enough to survive.”

A Film by Jackie Hurwitz

Four Million Threads

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About Four Million Threads

nfb.ca/film/four_million_threads

“Imagine leaving your lifelong home for a one-room flat in a city with a husband you barely know. You work beside 5,000 others in a factory, sewing 180 zippers on 180 sweaters each day. You're the first woman in your family ever to earn a paycheck, but it's barely enough to survive.” Welcome to Monira's world, and that of countless other women in Bangladesh's booming garment trade—a complex world full of difficult choices and competing values. It's a brand-new world made possible by Western consumers, each time we purchase clothes from a major retailer. And it's the world you're invited to explore in *Four Million Threads*.

Four Million Threads delves into the rapidly increasing garment trade in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in three accessible sections. The first part of the documentary examines the gendered dynamics of the industry and its influencing changes for women, men and family life. This section presents the tensions of a growing women's workforce in Bangladesh: while women are increasingly becoming financially independent and visible in Bangladesh's public life, in the streets and in the workforce, they continue to make less than men and face more and more difficult working conditions. The second section of the documentary looks at the influence of managers and factory owners in Bangladesh's garment industry. Asking who they are and what their motivations might be, we meet Ehsan Khan, who owns the factory Monira is employed at. The third and final section of

the film investigates the overall system operating behind the scenes. Through a close examination of the Rana Plaza factory collapse in 2013, where over 1,130 workers were killed and 3,000 were injured, we learn about the potentially unsafe working conditions of Monira and her colleagues.

Recommended Age Level

Four Million Threads is suitable for students aged 12 and up. It is recommended that educators preview *Four Million Threads* prior to showing it to students.

Pedagogical Outcomes

In viewing this short and accessible documentary and consulting one or many activities or resources in this guide, students will learn about the growing garment industry in Bangladesh. They will identify three main themes in their encounters and activities: (1) the gender inequalities associated with the working conditions of female garment workers in Bangladesh; (2) the inequalities in the industry supply chain between factory owners and managers, garment workers and powerful clothing brands in the Global North, and themselves, as clothing producers; and (3) the unsafe working conditions and unfair labour realities of garment workers in Bangladesh. Resources are provided in this guide for you, as educators, to share additional information and research with your students. The following activities encourage students to consider and reflect upon their roles in the global industrial supply chain.

Recommended Subject Areas

- Social Science
- Geography and Global Studies
- History
- Media Studies
- Labour Studies
- Family and Health Studies
- Ethics
- Political Science
- Democracy and Globalization
- Gender Studies
- Politics
- Economics
- Journalism

Key Themes and Topics for Discussion

Who profits from factory garment labour?

Did you know it would take the average Sri Lankan sportswear worker 14,000 years to earn the Nike CEO's annual pay?

In the fiscal year 2014, the clothing company Zara netted \$19.7 billion. Its founder, Amancio Ortega, is the second-richest person in the world, with a net worth of US\$74.6 billion. H&M recorded US\$20.2 billion in sales in 2014. Meanwhile, a Bangladeshi garment worker who makes the clothes while working in hazardous conditions often earns less than \$2 a day.

(Source and further reading: [Trades Union Congress](#))

Poverty Wages

“Workers are still forced to work 14–16 hours a day, six days a week, face routine abuse in the workplace, and all for poverty wages that aren't enough to pay rent in a slum or provide three meals a day.” – *Thulsi Narayanasamy, Senior International Programs Officer at [War on Want](#), a social-justice advocacy group that fights global poverty*

It is unquestionable that Bangladeshi workers make poverty wages. *Four Million Threads* calculates that it would take a worker almost six hours to earn enough money to buy a dozen eggs and enough rice to feed her family for the day. These calculations are based on whether a worker makes minimum wage; however, most do not.

Garment-factory wages in Bangladesh are the lowest in the world. According to a recent study by the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS), the current monthly minimum pay in Bangladesh is about 5,300 taka, equalling around CDN\$88.69 [or: \$83.23 as of July 9]. This wage was set after months of protests and labour actions by workers. The existing minimum wages hardly meet the increasing living costs in the country. A recent study by BILS found that workers need at least CDN\$131 a month to cover bare necessities. “There are a lot of workers who are struggling to survive, a huge number,” says Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed, an analyst with the group.

(Sources and further reading: [Financial Post](#) and [International Labour Organization study](#))

Health and Safety

A report titled “Fatal Fashion” (2013), released by the Clean Clothes Campaign, described worksites in the Bangladesh garment industry as “death traps.” Concerns include: poorly constructed buildings with weak foundations, absence of proper fire exits, missing safety systems, no safety training, and the role managers play in restricting access to safe exits (i.e., locking doors) to control workers and delay exit to avoid loss of production.

The Rana Plaza tragedy remains one of the worst industrial disasters in history. Over 1,130 people died and over 3,000 were injured. The disaster could have been avoided if health and safety measures had been followed. Businesses on the first floor of the building were closed and evacuated after cracks were discovered on the walls. But garment workers were ordered to continue working.

The deceased and injured workers in the Rana Plaza tragedy were producing clothes for North American and European labels such as Benetton (Italy), The Children's Place (U.S.A.), Joe Fresh (Loblaws, Canada) and Mango (Spain). This tragedy and others that preceded it, like the Tazreen factory fire (117 deaths) in Dhaka, underscored the need for a coordinated effort to address fire and building safety in the Bangladesh garment industry.

In 2013, two agreements were signed by over 150 companies: [The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh](#) (European-dominated) and the [Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety](#) (American- and Canadian-dominated). These agreements outline protocols to ensure worker safety through inspections and renovations. However, critics point out that the number of factories addressed by these programs is less than 2,000, while the total base of factories and facilities producing for the export garment sector is likely between 5,000 and 6,000. The worst conditions are largely in sites that fall outside the parameters of these agreements.

(Sources and further reading: [Stern Center for Business and Human Rights](#))

Unions – Freedom of Association

Working conditions in the Bangladesh garment industry are dismal. Along with poverty wages, workers face grueling hours of usually 12–16 hours a day, six days a week. Harassment and intimidation from management as a strategy to speed up production is common, and worksites have been declared unsafe “death traps.” Organizing with trade unions remains a fundamental and first step to ensure safety for workers in the garment industry. However, workers who attempt to organize unions are routinely fired and harassed.

Union leaders are also routinely and categorically harassed, intimidated, fired or, in extreme cases, murdered. Only 120 of the 3,000 to 5,000 factories in Bangladesh have a registered trade union, and most of them have only been set up in the wake of the Rana Plaza collapse. In 2015, the Bangladesh government rejected 73 percent of union registration applications, according to data compiled by Solidarity Center staff in Dhaka, the capital.

(Sources and further reading: [The Bangladesh Accord](#) and [Solidarity Center](#))

Women – Gender Discrimination

There are 4 million formally employed workers in the Bangladesh garment industry; 80 percent of this workforce is made up of women. These women are the backbone of an

industry that reported \$25.49 billion dollars' worth of exports in the 2014–15 financial year.

These women are occupying new positions of status in society as they enter the workforce. Garment factory jobs are the only formal-sector jobs available to rural young women in Bangladesh, who are often married off at a very young age. Over 40 percent of girls in Bangladesh are married by their 15th birthday. In addition to their work in the factory, women are also responsible for unpaid domestic work at home, including cooking, cleaning and childcare.

Women in Bangladesh quite often encounter more obstacles than men in workplaces, and are treated unequally in their terms and conditions of employment. Bangladesh women garment workers make 20 percent less than their male counterparts and are often physically and sexually harassed. Women face additional barriers to find a voice within the trade unions due to gender discrimination and patriarchal attitudes. Their rate of unionization is much smaller than that of male counterparts.

(Sources and further reading: Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association ([BGMEA](#)), [UNICEF](#), and [Solidarity Center](#))

True Cost

A 2012 survey commissioned by World Vision and conducted by Ipsos–Reid found that 79 percent of Canadians want to “make an effort to ensure they know how and where things they purchase are made.” According to a 2011 report by the consulting firm O’Rourke Group Partners, a generic \$14 polo shirt sold in Canada and made in Bangladesh actually costs a retailer only \$5.67. To get prices that low, workers see just 12 cents a shirt, or two percent of the wholesale cost.

For that \$14 shirt, the factory owners can expect to earn 58 cents, almost five times a worker’s wage. Agents who help retailers find factories to make their wares also get a cut, and it costs about \$1 per shirt to cover shipping and duties. Fabric and trimmings make up the largest costs—65 percent of the wholesale price.

(Source and further reading: [Maclean’s Magazine](#))

Glossary

Capitalism

Capitalism is an economic system in which resources and means of production are privately owned and prices, production and the distribution of goods are determined mainly by competition in a free market. In a capitalist system, the primary economic motive is profit, not necessarily the needs and rights of people. Alternate economic systems include socialism and communism.

Dhaka

Dhaka is the capital and largest city of Bangladesh. It is one of the world's most populated cities, with a population of 15.4 million people, and an increasing garment-industry industrial economy.

(Source: [Demographia World Urban Areas, 12th Annual Edition: April 2016](#))

Fast Fashion

A term that describes cheap and chic clothes that track an accelerated path from the runway to retail outlets like H&M, Forever 21 or Zara. Two elements to the success of Fast Fashion are: (1) price and (2) a continuous supply of trendy clothes, viewed as “temporary treasures.” The leader of the fast-fashion industry is Zara, owned by the Inditex textile company. In 2004, the company inaugurated its 2,000th store. By 2010, the company was up to 5,000 stores, and in the fiscal year 2014, Zara netted \$19.7 billion. Its founder is Spain's wealthiest man. Rival H&M recorded USD\$20.2 billion in sales in 2014. These profits are made possible by the Bangladeshi garment worker, who makes the clothes, endures long working hours in hazardous conditions and earns less than \$2 a day. (Source: [Forbes](#))

Garment Boom

A term to describe the explosive growth of the garment industry in Bangladesh. According to the International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)), in 1990, garment exports accounted for five percent of Bangladesh's GDP. Today, garments represent more than 80 percent of the country's export economy. As global demand for cheap clothing skyrockets, Bangladesh continues to maintain its position as the world's second-largest exporter, mainly due to its low labour costs. Bangladesh ranked last in minimum wages for factory workers in 2010, according to World Bank data.

Gender Discrimination

The majority of garment workers are women. They have skills that garment employers need. However, women are employed rather than men because they can be paid less than men due to ongoing inequitable payment expectations between genders.

Global Supply Chain

A global supply chain is made up of connected organizations, resources and processes aligned to deliver products and services to the end customer. In the garment industry, this involves many stages and sites around the world.

Indirect Sourcing

Indirect sourcing is the routine practice of subcontracting, often through purchasing agents, and in a manner that is not transparent to buyers or regulators. It has become an essential feature of the garment sector in Bangladesh as a means to increase margins and boost production capacity while keeping costs low.

Informal Workers

This term refers to workers who do not work in a defined workplace or for a known employer, and often work without an employment contract. Many garment workers do not work in factories. They may work at home or at a small sweatshop site. Informal

workers tend to be paid less and work in sites that are unregistered and difficult to monitor. They do not have a work contract that sets hours of work or wages. Instead, they are paid by the amount of pieces they finish. Informal workers are not covered under the country's employment laws, such as minimum-wage or child-labour laws.

Hartal

Hartal is a term in many South Asian languages for strike action. It refers to mass protests that often involve a total shutdown of workplaces, offices, shops and courts of law as forms of civil disobedience. In addition to being a general strike, it involves the voluntary closing of schools and places of business.

RMG – Ready-Made Garment

Ready-made garments are mass-produced finished textile products from the clothing industry. In Bangladesh, the RMG sector is the biggest earner of foreign currency, representing more than 80 percent of the country's export economy. As of 2018, Bangladesh is the world's second-largest clothing producer after China. (Source: [World Bank: "Bangladesh Overview"](#))

Garment-Industry Supply Chain in Bangladesh

The Path of Your Clothes:

1. Brand designs new clothing item.
2. Brand contracts with a sourcing firm to make the garments.
3. Sourcing firm finds factories that can produce the garments.
4. Factories accept orders that exceed their production capacity and send work to subcontractors.
5. Factories acquire raw materials from abroad. Bangladesh imports almost all its yarn for clothes.
6. Factories send finished garments by road to Chittagong, Bangladesh's primary seaport.
7. Garments arrive in stores.

There are more than 5,000 garment factories in Bangladesh, many of them unofficial and essentially off-the-grid.

The garment supply chain is riddled with a maze of relationships. For example, the retailer H&M works with 166 different factories in Bangladesh. Global brands rely on a system of "indirect sourcing" to secure their products. This means subcontracting orders to suppliers down the production food chain. This keeps costs low, boosts production capacity and makes sustainable economic and labour responsibility hard to pin down to a specific partner or actor in the chain. A significant portion of the supply chain in Bangladesh is composed of factories that have no direct relationship with the brands. Subcontracting factories are often smaller and under less oversight. Thus, inspections and audits remain insufficient, and in some cases are useless, without full knowledge of which factory or factories are producing the clothes.

Canadian Context

Canadians faced a gruesome reality when they saw images of the Joe Fresh label amidst the rubble and bodies of the Rana Plaza disaster. Joe Fresh garments made at Rana Plaza were manufactured by subcontractors. Loblaws, the parent company of Joe Fresh, is the only Canadian company to sign onto the Fire and Building Safety Accord in Bangladesh. Over 200 global brands have signed the Accord to improve industry conditions. The Accord is a legally binding agreement between global unions, Bangladeshi unions, brands and retailers. The Accord sets a process and timetable for inspecting factory sites and overseeing safety renovations.

Arguably, there is a major oversight in the Accord, as the agreement applies to the larger factories but does not control the smaller subcontractors who form the spine of the garment industry in Bangladesh. In a 2014 report by the Stern School of Business at New York University, a researcher states: “Several factory owners described the largest factory groups as featuring several ‘showcase’ factories with higher safety and production standards as the face of the group to foreign buyers, while maintaining additional, less compliant facilities as the productive engine of their operations.”

A group of other Canadian brands, including the Canadian Tire Corporation and the Hudson’s Bay Company, have joined American companies to sign onto the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety, a separate agreement from the Accord. The Alliance has been criticized for not being legally binding, being company-driven and lacking input from unions and NGOs, and for misrepresenting the path of progress. A 2015 report entitled “Dangerous Delays,” from a consortium of NGOs, criticizes the Alliance for its approach to reporting safety progress, arguing that it “legitimately raises the question whether the Alliance is prioritizing the protection of its member brands’ reputations over the protection of workers.” This report also found that more than 10,000 workers at Hudson Bay Company factories lacked approved fire exits.

Canada–Bangladesh Trade

It is important to remember that Canada remains highly implicated in the Bangladeshi garment-factory market and industry. Canada engages in an active and growing trading relationship with Bangladesh. Bangladesh has enjoyed duty-free market access to Canada since 2003 through Canada’s Least Developed Country Tariff (LDCT) program. For the 2013–14 fiscal year, Bangladesh’s exports to Canada totalled \$1.1 billion; 96 percent of these exports are clothing items. The 2018 Canadian High Commissioner, Benoît-Pierre Laramée, projects Canada will be a key garment export destination for Bangladesh by achieving a \$50 billion overseas sales target by the end of 2021.

Sources and further reading:

[The Conference Board of Canada](#)
[“Dangerous Delays” Report](#)
[GarmentsTech](#)

(2014 report, [Stern School of Business, NYU](#))

Classroom Activities

Activity #1 – Tag

Recommended allotted time: 30–45 minutes

Materials needed: World map, pen, Post-it notes

Ask students to pair up and check the labels on their clothes, write the brand name and country of manufacture on Post-it notes and pin them to the world map. If the class is large, ask students to check their labels and shout out the countries/brands and post them on the map.

Discussion questions for further discussion:

- In what parts of the world are most of the brands located?
- In comparison, what parts of the world are most of their clothes made in?
- What is the significance of these countries for brand identification versus clothing manufacturing?
- What do the manufacturing countries have in common? Think specifically about histories, economies and their governments.
- The map gives us a picture of a global production system. What rules and conditions have to be in place for a global production system like this to work?

Activity #2 – True Costs

Recommended allotted time: 30–45 minutes

Materials needed: Handout – Infographic from: [Maclean's Magazine, "What Does That \\$14 Shirt Really Cost?"](#)

If a store in Canada sells a T-shirt for \$14, how much does the worker get paid? First, ask students to guess answers. Then, reveal that a garment worker will make approximately 12 cents per T-shirt. Distribute the handout for your students to examine more closely and follow this up with a discussion.

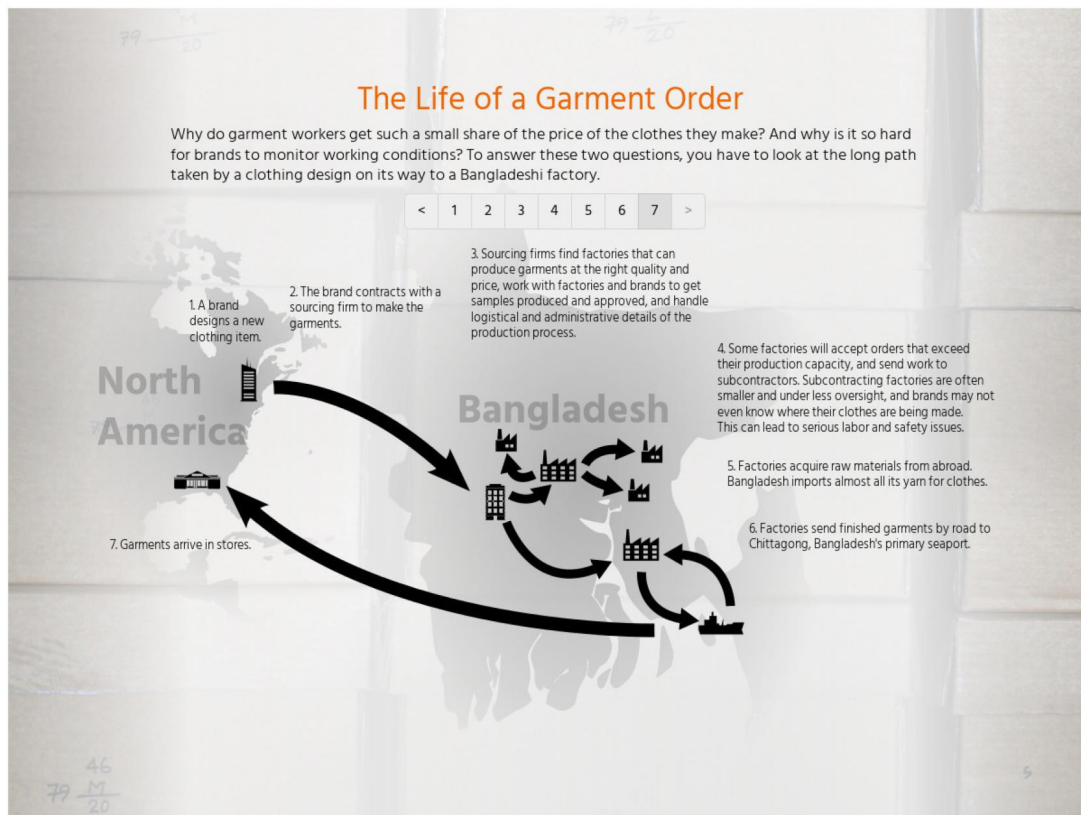
According to a 2011 report by the consulting firm O'Rourke Group Partners, a generic \$14 polo shirt sold in Canada and made in Bangladesh actually costs a retailer only \$5.67. In order for prices to remain this low, workers see just 12 cents per T-shirt, or two percent of the wholesale cost.

What if we doubled the worker's wage—what would be the new price of the item? If the wage of Bangladeshi workers were doubled and all other costs remained the same, what would be the new store price?

Answer: The new store price is \$14.12, an increase of 12 cents.

Calculation: Of the original \$14 store price, \$0.12 goes to the worker. \$13.88 goes to other costs and profits. To double the worker's wage, we add another \$0.12 to the price. $\$14 + \$0.12 = \$14.12$.

Use the map in *Four Million Threads*, "The Life of a Garment Order," to track the path of production of the \$14 T-shirt. See page 17 for larger map.



Discussion questions for follow-up:

- Is 12 cents a fair price? What do you think a worker should get paid?
- What is the difference between fixed and flexible costs? What cost is the most flexible?
- What surprises you about the journey mapped out in "The Life of a Garment Order"?
- Who is profiting the most from this global supply chain?
- How disposable is this T-shirt? Where will it end up?

Activity #3 – Labour Force Role Play

Recommended allotted time: 50 minutes

This role-playing activity draws out different perspectives and positions in the garment industry. There are two parts to this activity. If time is short, you can choose to complete Part One only.

Role Play – Part One:

Divide students into small groups representing these roles:

- Monira
- Ehsan, the Company Director in training
- Consumer
- Brand representative

If there are 20 participants, there will be 5 Moniras, 5 Ehsans, etc. If there are leftover participants, make them Moniras. In their groups, ask students to answer these questions:

- What do I like about my role in the garment industry in Bangladesh? How is the current situation working well for me?
- What do I not like about my role in the garment industry in Bangladesh? How is the current situation not working well for me?

Their answers should be recorded on paper in two separate columns. Allot 15 minutes for this brainstorm.

As a whole class, ask each group to share their reflections. Pay attention to points of agreement and disagreement. Discuss the bigger picture that is created by identifying when there are commonalities, differences and tensions between the different groups. Allot 10 minutes for this discussion.

Role Play – Part Two:

Present the following scenario to your students:

Workers have been organizing to demand better wages and working conditions. There is an upcoming meeting where there will be a vote on whether or not to form a union at the factory site. You will each come to the union meeting to argue for or against the vote. This is an unlikely scenario in the “real world,” as consumers do not participate in these votes, but expand the stage of reality for the purpose of this activity.

Break out into the same groups as in Part One:

- Monira
- Ehsan, the Company Director in training
- Consumer
- Brand representative

Ask each group to discuss their position and supporting arguments. Also ask the group to come up with answers to the following questions (allot 10 minutes for this brainstorm):

- Why do you support or not support the union vote?
- How will the vote’s outcome impact you?
- What will you do if you lose your position?

Bring the class together to discuss the vote. Have each group present their position and supporting arguments. Allot 15 minutes for this group discussion. Make sure to wrap up the activity by asking students to summarize their experiences. You can ask students to journal their summaries for a homework or follow-up assignment.

Activity #4 – Under Pressure

Recommended allotted time: 1 hour

Materials needed:

Handout #1: [“Dangerous Delays,” 2016 Report](#)

Handout #2: [Guardian Article](#)

Handout #3: [198 Methods of Non-Violent Action](#)

See additional resources on pages 15 and 16 of this guide.

1) Highlight the following information from the handouts with your students:

- A 2016 report concluded that the Bangladeshi factories that make clothes for some of the biggest names in retail have so far failed to implement key renovations: “Three and a half years after the catastrophic Rana Plaza building collapse, major apparel brands and retailers that are part of the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety—including Gap Inc., Target, VF Corporation, Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC), and Walmart—are failing to fulfill their commitments to make their supplier factories safe, leaving hundreds of thousands of workers at risk.” (“Dangerous Delays,” report compiled by the International Labour Rights Forum, the Worker Rights Consortium, the Clean Clothes Campaign and the Maquila Solidarity Network)
- The report found that of the 107 factories labelled as being “on track” by the Alliance, 99 were still falling behind in one or more safety categories. Other findings from the report:
 - 62 percent still lack viable fire exits;
 - 62 percent do not have a properly functioning fire alarm system;
 - 47 percent have major, uncorrected structural problems.
- Scott Nova, Executive Director of the Worker Rights Consortium, said two main factors were contributing to the lack of progress: retailers were not putting enough pressure on factory owners to make improvements, and they were not contributing enough money to help the factory owners make the repairs. The average cost of implementing the promised safety renovations is between \$400,000 and \$500,000.
- “What motivated Walmart and Target to do the right thing is public embarrassment. We are three and a half years on [from Rana Plaza], and they assume memories are fading,” said Nova.

2) Ask your students:

- What role can we as consumers and Canadian citizens play in changing the labour and safety conditions for garment workers in Bangladesh?
- 3) Brainstorm actions in relation to the central discussion question and chart them for all of your students to see.
 - 4) Break into small groups of 3–4 and ask your students to pick one action from the list of actions in the handout or from the ones you’ve brainstormed as a class. Take the time to conduct online research on types of similar actions. Allot 25 minutes for each small group to build an action plan with clear goals, timelines and materials needed.
 - 5) Ask each small group to present to the whole class their chosen action plan. Discuss the strengths, practicalities and possible impact of proposed actions as a class.

Activity #5 – Working Women

This activity can be done in small groups or as a whole class. The allotted time is flexible.

Workers like Monira face a reality that most women in the global workplace face: gender discrimination. List the ways that Monira’s work-life has been negatively impacted because she is a woman. Some examples that may come up:

- Unequal wages
- Denial of promotion
- Pregnancy tests
- Gender-based harassment at work
- Unpaid labour (domestic work at home)

Questions for further discussion:

- Globally, the majority of garment workers in the formal and informal sector are women. Why is this a feminized workforce?
- How have working women changed the economy and culture in Bangladesh?

Additional Resources

Handouts Mentioned

Facts on the Global Garment Industry

cleanclothes.org/resources/publications/factsheets/general-factsheet-garment-industry-february-2015.pdf

“Dangerous Delays” Report

cleanclothes.org/resources/publications/dangerous-delays-on-worker-safety

Global Garment Industry Fact Sheet

cleanclothes.org/resources/publications/factsheets/general-factsheet-garment-industry-february-2015.pdf

Guardian Article on Dangerous Delays

theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/21/bangladesh-garment-factories-safety-alliance-rana-plaza-report

“What Does That \$14 Shirt Really Cost?”

macleans.ca/economy/business/what-does-that-14-shirt-really-cost

198 Methods of Non-Violent Action

aeinstein.org/nonviolentaction/198-methods-of-nonviolent-action

Additional Online Links

Unions:

industriall-union.org/action-on-bangladesh

solidaritycenter.org/?s=bangladesh

ilo.org/dhaka/lang--en/index.htm

NGOs:

awaj.info

laborrights.org/about

Agreements Post-Rana Plaza Collapse:

bangladeshaccord.org

bangladeshworkersafety.org

ranaplaza-arrangement.org/mou

Campaigns:

asia.floorwage.org

cleanclothes.org

maquilasolidarity.org/en

labourbehindthelabel.org

greenpeace.org/international/Global/international/briefings/toxics/2016/Fact-Sheet-Timeout-for-fast-fashion.pdf

Online Game:

playfair2012.org.uk/game

Apps:

“Planet Money Makes a T-shirt”

apps.npr.org/tshirt/#/title

Additional Media

“Fast Fashion” on *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*

youtube.com/watch?v=VdLf4fihP78

Deadly Fashion Web Series

aftenposten.no/webtv/#!/kategori/10514/sweatshop-deadly-fashion

Made in Bangladesh (25 min) Al Jazeera Documentary

video.aljazeera.com/channels/eng/videos/made-in-bangladesh/4090174486001;jsessionid=1EBDC189B18103D232508DE1EE7DA8F5

Made in Bangladesh (45 min 11 sec) CBC *Fifth Estate* Documentary

cbc.ca/fifth/episodes/2013-2014/made-in-bangladesh

Behind the Thread Podcast

behindthethread.net

Writing Credits

Min Sook Lee has directed numerous critically acclaimed feature documentaries. She is an Assistant Professor at OCAD University. Her area of research and practice focuses on the critical intersections of art and social change in labour, border politics, migration and social-justice movements.

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The Life of a Garment Order

Why do garment workers get such a small share of the price of the clothes they make? And why is it so hard for brands to monitor working conditions? To answer these two questions, you have to look at the long path taken by a clothing design on its way to a Bangladeshi factory.



1. A brand designs a new clothing item.

2. The brand contracts with a sourcing firm to make the garments.

3. Sourcing firms find factories that can produce garments at the right quality and price, work with factories and brands to get samples produced and approved, and handle logistical and administrative details of the production process.

4. Some factories will accept orders that exceed their production capacity, and send work to subcontractors. Subcontracting factories are often smaller and under less oversight, and brands may not even know where their clothes are being made. This can lead to serious labor and safety issues.

5. Factories acquire raw materials from abroad. Bangladesh imports almost all its yarn for clothes. Factories send finished garments by road to Chittagong, Bangladesh's primary seaport.

7. Garments arrive in stores.

