

Executive Summary¹

Assessment Report of the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Rana Plaza Victims

Study commissioned by
ActionAid Bangladesh

act:onaid

Background

Bangladesh witnessed reportedly its worst man-made industrial disaster on the 24 April 2013. The eight-storey commercial building, Rana Plaza, which housed five ready-made garment factories, a commercial bank and a market, collapsed in the early hours in Savar, Dhaka leaving a large number of garment workers, mostly women, trapped under the rubble. The collapse focused the world's attention on Bangladesh's garment industry which contributes to 13 per cent of GDP², adds value to 78 per cent of total exports³ and employs more than 3.6 million workers⁴.

At the end of three-week rescue operation on 14 May 2013, the government reported that 2438 workers had been rescued alive⁵. Of these, 17 died later in medical facilities⁶, increasing the total deaths to 1133. Eight hundred and thirty six bodies were handed over to the relatives, while 301 unidentified bodies were buried in Jurain graveyard⁷. DNA tests were conducted on the unidentified bodies for cross-matching.

Different organizations conducted rapid assessments following the incident and produced various datasets, information and lists of the survivors, the deceased and missing workers. The Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), the main group representing the garment factory owners, had not developed a comprehensive list of survivors and deceased at the time of this survey.

Following the disaster, government, non-government organisations and other institutions immediately helped the rescue operation. Gradually other support and services were provided, ranging from cash support, medical treatment to health and livelihood rehabilitation. However, as the reintegration and rehabilitation needs of the survivors and the families of the deceased are diverse, it is difficult to plan a comprehensive support and service package for those affected. Neither has there been any database or mapping of the range of institutional services and support that are already provided or planned to be provided.

¹ Sattar, B. Reefat and Aaman, A. R. *et. al.* 'Assessment Report on Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Rana Plaza Victims', ActionAid Bangladesh, Dhaka, 2013

² Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA): 2012

³ *ibid*

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ Disaster Management Information Centre, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief: Situation Report on Building Collapse at Savar, Dhaka. Transmission Date: April 24 to May 14, 2013. The total number includes Reshma who was rescued live on the 17th day of the operation.

⁶ Department of Disaster Management, Report on damage caused due to collapse of Rana Plaza. Date: Undisclosed, Recieved email from DDM to ActionAid Bangladesh on Sep 16, 2013

⁷ *ibid*

Study objectives

ActionAid Bangladesh conducted this survey:

Objective 1: To assess the needs of the Rana Plaza victims in order to develop a reintegration and rehabilitation programme to respond to their current and future needs.

Objective 2: To identify the active partners in the rehabilitation and reintegration programme through a comprehensive mapping.

Methodology, scope and limitations

The survey was carried out using a compiled database based on information from different organizations who conducted assessments and surveys immediately after the disaster. A total of 2297 people were surveyed of which 1509 were survivors of the collapse and 788 were family members of those that died.

Both field and phone surveys were conducted to gather data. The field survey took place between 18 July - 5 August 2013 while phone surveys continued after that to validate and cross-check some of the findings. No sampling was done, rather a census approach was followed to reach as many of the survivors and families of the deceased as possible given that many had left the area after the incident or moved to their home villages. A semi-structured questionnaire was used.

The survey was mainly concentrated in Savar and Dhaka for both face-to-face and phone interviews, but attempts were also made to gather information over the phone from those who had already left Savar. Those survivors who were undergoing treatment in medical facilities were surveyed face-to-face or over the phone, whichever was deemed suitable. Of the 2297 survivors and family members surveyed, 1897 were interviewed over phone and 400 through face-to-face interviews.

This survey is limited. It is not a list of the total casualties of the Rana Plaza disaster but a reflection of the potential needs of the 2297 victims who were reached through survey. Therefore the percentages illustrated here only refer to those of the respondents.

The survey could not reach all the victims and families by phone because several numbers were found to be switched-off, changed or incorrect. The short duration of the study compared to the scope and range of information, and the fact it took place during Ramadan and the rainy season when many people were away also greatly affected the data collection.

Based on the study objectives, the survey had a two-pronged approach, a questionnaire survey of the victims and a mapping of the institutions that provided support to the victims.

The questionnaire survey covered the following areas;

- Demographic and socio-economic status
- Physical and mental state of the survivors
- Social and economic vulnerability
- Medical and livelihood needs
- Services received
- Future concerns and plans

The institutional mapping used another questionnaire that was sent to 50 institutions which had provided active support or services during and after the disaster as identified through partner organizations, networks and media reports. Forty-four organisations responded to the survey, comprising of eight government agencies, one industry association, two trade unions or federations, 11 International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), 19 national NGOs, two social and cultural organizations, and one media organisation.

Demographic and socio-economic status

Of the 2297 people surveyed, 1509 were survivors of the Rana Plaza collapse and the remaining 788 were families of the deceased, with a split of 62 per cent women and 38 per cent men between the respondents. Sixty-one per cent of the survivors and deceased workers in the survey were aged between 19 - 28 years. Fifteen per cent of the survivors had completed secondary school education and 12 survivors had never been to the school. Of the survivors and workers that died 57 per cent (1302 out of 2297) were married, three per cent were widow or widower, four per cent divorced and three per cent separated.

Most of the respondents worked at one of the five garment factories – New Wave Bottoms (348 respondents), New Wave Style (649), Phantom Apparels (319), Phantom Tac (122) and Ether Tex (253) with eight respondents working elsewhere in the building. The rest of the respondents were family members of the deceased who could not identify the employer. Almost half of the workers (44.7%) were found to be employed as operators in sewing sections and about 348 workers (15%) had an average gross wage of less than BDT 5000 per month (US\$64) which includes overtime and basic wage.

From the survey most were migrant workers who came from 62 out of the 64 districts in Bangladesh. The highest numbers of respondents migrated from four districts: Gaibandha (187) followed by Rangpur (132), Rajbari (126) and Naogaon (105). Local inhabitants from Dhaka (140) and Manikganj (180) also make up a significant proportion. Of those that died the highest numbers are reported to be from Dhaka (60), Manikganj (59), Gaibandha (52), Rajbari (53), and Rangpur (50).

Physical and mental state of the survivors

Ninety-nine per cent (1498) of the survivors reported they had injuries with 611 (41%) reporting they were severely wounded. Six types of functional disability were assessed based on the survivor's perception. A quarter of those with injuries (373) reported difficulty in walking or climbing while 184 (12%) reported difficulty in caring for themselves, 141 (9%) had problems concentrating, 89 (6%) in seeing, 61 (4%) in hearing and 60 (4%) in communicating. Seventy-nine respondents (2.63%) had to undergo amputation. The physical condition of 127 of the survivors is getting worse while 29 report to be at serious risk. Ninety-two per cent (1386) of the survivors reported that they are deeply traumatised with over half have difficulty sleeping and almost the same number suffering from depression.

Social and economic vulnerability

Of the 1509 survivors in the survey 92 per cent are not currently working and have no regular income with 63 per cent citing physical injury as the reason for not going back to work. The survey shows that seven survivors are living in extreme poverty, earning less than BDT 3000 per month or US \$ 1.25 per day.

Almost half (48%) of the survivors and families of the deceased report that they have debts. Ninety-two per cent (2102) say that they have no savings while 27 per cent (615) have no other breadwinner in the family. Among the total respondents 83 per cent have dependent family members and seven per cent (162) have family members with disabilities. Almost half (49%) have children under 18 years of age. Fifteen children of the deceased are at potential risk of not having proper parental care.

Medical and livelihood needs

Fifty-seven per cent (1309) of the respondents have severe difficulty meeting their daily needs. Eighty per cent say that they are short of food. This was followed by the need to pay outstanding loans, house rent and other bills. Almost a fifth expressed the need for training to start a small business, with poultry and handicraft topping the demand for training needs. Ninety-three per cent asked for cash support. Over a third of the survivors (34%) asked for medical therapy or support to cope with their injuries, while many survivors asked for medicine (364) or support to reduce pain (262). Over 16 per cent asked for nutritious

food. Fifty-nine per cent (1360) of respondents wanted to start a small business with support from others with 35 per cent planning a grocery shop and about 10 per cent a boutique business.

Entitlement, compensation and services received by the respondents

Eighty-one per cent (1857) of the survivors and families of the deceased received the salary due for April 2013, under the supervision of Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA). But 94 per cent of the respondents reported that they did not get any legal benefits from their employers since April, including sick pay or compensation. Ninety-five per cent reported that they had received short-term or one-off support from various institutions ranging from cash support for meeting daily needs, clinical treatment, psycho-social support, or a medical device to assist them. A total of 440 respondents – 91 survivors and 349 families of the deceased - claimed that they did not get the due salary of April 2013.

No respondents received any compensation from the international brands based on International Labour Organisation convention (ILO 121) on employment injury benefits⁸. The estimated long-term compensation for Rana Plaza will be more than USD 74 million⁹. It is to be noted that the Geneva-based negotiations on compensation for the victims had not yet been endorsed by many international brands and retailers. So far, only nine brands that sourced clothes from the Rana Plaza have joined in the negotiation talks: Bon Marché, Camaieu, El Corte Ingles, Kik, Loblaw, Mascot, Matalan, Primark and Store Twenty One¹⁰. Twenty other companies, all of whom were invited, failed to show up at the last negotiation meeting held on 12 September 2013: Adler, Auchan, Benetton, C&A, Carrefour, Cato Corp, The Children's Place, Dressbarn, Essenza, FTA International, Gueldenpfennig, Iconix Brand, Inditex, JC Penney, Kids Fashion Group, LPP, Mango, Manifattura Corona, NKD, Premier Clothing, PWT Group, Texman and Walmart¹¹.

Institutional Services

Twenty-four out of the 44 institutions surveyed were involved in the rescue operation. Nineteen institutions provided heavy and light rescue equipment and fire-fighting tools or materials to assist the rescue. Twenty-four provided food and water to the rescue workers along with victims and their family members and relatives, who had travelled from distant villages upon hearing about the disaster.

In the emergency phase, 14 institutions provided cash support. The government of Bangladesh, particularly the Prime Minister's Relief and Welfare Fund is the biggest financial contributor with Bangladeshi Taka (BDT) 175.4 million or US\$2.19 million¹². The Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) said that they have provided BDT 55 million (US\$687,500) so far, out of which BDT 20 million was provided to the Prime Minister's Relief and Welfare Fund. BGMEA also said that they ensured payment of salary and allowances to the workers of the five factories within 15 days of the incident and provided the lion-share of surgical and treatment costs (BDT 35 million or US\$437,500). Primark, one of the brands that sourced from Rana Plaza, provided BDT 15,000 (US\$190) to each victim, covering a total of 3300 survivors and family members through the mobile banking system, BKash.

As well as the Dhaka and Savar hospitals and clinics, 18 other institutions provided medical treatment and support, eight provided psychosocial support, five provided psychotherapy, five provided assistive devices, two provided maternal healthcare and five institutions provided childcare support. Five institutions provided rehabilitation support through job placement of the survivors. Other initiatives include vocational training (94 survivors by one institution), experience-sharing and training for 90 rescue workers by two institutions while three institutions provided legal aid to the victims to help them claim their entitlements, compensation and legal action against the perpetrators.

⁸ IndustriAll, <http://www.industriall-union.org/bangladesh-workers-must-continue-to-wait-for-full-compensation>. The formula sets out clear guidelines for payment to families of dead and injured workers and takes into account loss of earnings, pain and suffering, and also medical costs, funeral costs and other important family expenses.

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² Daily Financial Express, Sep 11, 2013

Thirteen institutions conducted studies or surveys to assess the needs of the victims. Many institutions developed databases on the survivors, deceased and missing workers. A number of meetings, consultations and workshops have been held to strengthen and accelerate the rehabilitation process. A consortium was formed in Savar to support survivors with disabilities with their rehabilitation.

With regards to future plans, 11 institutions plan to provide livelihood support to a total of 3515 people. Twelve institutions are planning for the rehabilitation of 4398 people, nine institutions for training of 1735 people, six institutions for support for 330 children and three for maternal health care to 52 women. In addition, five institutions plan to provide financial support and three plan to provide legal aid to the victims.

Sixteen institutions plan to lobby government, the BGMEA, factory authorities, buyers and other duty bearers to advocate for ensuring (a) due payments and compensation for the victims and the families of the deceased workers, (b) workplace safety and compliance in the garment industry, (c) job placement of the survivors for their rehabilitation, (d) promoting accessibility of people with disability in factories and (e) ensuring artificial limbs for survivors. Fourteen institutions are planning to raise money to work for the rehabilitation and reintegration of the Rana Plaza victims. Twenty six institutions are planning to collaborate and coordinate on the rehabilitation and reintegration of the survivors.

Way forward

The survey reveals that the survivors are in urgent need of medical and livelihood support for their rehabilitation and reintegration as most of them have not yet been able to return to their regular work. Extended support from the government, factory owners and associations, leading international brands and civil society organisations will be necessary to help all those affected. Appropriate compensation and its modalities needs to be determined in consensus with all parties concerned and in line with International Labour Organisation convention on workplace injuries (ILO Convention 121). Detailed information about the missing and unidentified victims is still inadequate and requires further investigation. The DNA matching report should therefore be widely circulated.

To address the above concerns a coordinated effort led by the Government of Bangladesh is essential. A coordination cell has already been established in Savar for the rehabilitation and reintegration of the survivors, led by National Skill Development Council (NSDC) under the Ministry of Labour and Employment. This needs to be reinforced by the various initiatives undertaken by the government, owners associations, UN systems, bi-lateral agencies, NGOs and civil society organizations around rehabilitation, compensation and workplace safety. A mode of partnership among the national and international actors needs to be in place to reduce the pain and suffering of the Rana Plaza victims.