

***Gender Balance in the EPZ:
A Socio-Economic Study
of
Dhaka Export Processing Zone in Bangladesh***

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I Introduction*

1.1 Background of the Study

Employment creation and investment in the export-oriented industries is an important objective of the industrial policy of Bangladesh. An export processing is one of the instruments used for attracting investment, mainly foreign direct investment and to provide employment. EPZ has been a part of a larger set of instruments and policy measures in Bangladesh. Appropriate location are important, with transport and utilities and services. Successful EPZ 's are usually within an hours drive of both a major international airport and a major port. Zones located in backward regions with the intention of accelerating their development are likely to yield poor returns.

Within the package of export-promotion measures targeted to attract foreign investment, EPZ was one of the instruments used. BEPZA Act. XXXVI (1980), which was subsequently amended by Ordinance XLIX (1984) and Ordinance LII (1986) and Act XXII of 1994, provides the legal framework of creating of EPZs. These set out the objective of the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones (BEPZA) authority. These objectives were:

- (a) to foster and generate economic development of Bangladesh by encouraging and promoting foreign investments in a zone;
- (b) to diversify the sources of foreign exchange earnings by increasing export of Bangladesh through a zone;
- (c) to encourage and foster the establishment and development of industries and commercial enterprises in a zone in order to widen and strengthen the economic base of Bangladesh;

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(d) to generate productive employment opportunity and to upgrade labour and management skills through acquisition of advanced technology.

The clause (c) and (d) were added in 1986. There are two EPZ currently operating in Chittagong and Dhaka, which were set up in 1983 and 1993 respectively.

The above suggests that in Bangladesh, as the economy became successful in its outward-oriented strategy through the back-to-back letter of credit and bonded warehouse facilities, the importance of EPZ shifted to widen the economic base and transfer management skill through acquisition of advance technology. It also envisaged a package of management, technology and marketing skills and international connections. The benefits of EPZ would therefore include foreign exchange earnings, employment, income, and spill over effects like training skills of local employed, learning and imitation by local firms, effect on migration, effect on poverty, and growing interest in the economy by foreign investors, and backward linkages. Moreover, control of pollution and disposal of hazardous industrial wastes are generally easier and cheaper in a well-managed industrial estate.

There are hardly a handful of surveys on EPZ. BIDS conducted studies in 1994 and 1996 at the enterprise levels. But these studies did not focus on Dhaka EPZ. Findings of Chittagong EPZ suggests that 70 percent of the workers are women and there is a positive association between the degree of foreign participation and female share of employment. Another recent study in 1998 on health condition of garment workers have compared the condition of garment factories inside and outside Dhaka EPZ. The study noted that garment factories located in Dhaka EPZ had better facilities and working condition than those located outside EPZ. Hence, there is a lack of a comprehensive study on EPZ workers. This study attempts to fill in this gap by conducting a comprehensive survey of the workers in the factories located within Dhaka EPZ, including garment and non-garment factories.

1.2 Data Source and Methodology of the Study

This study is based on primary data from a survey of Dhaka EPZ. The survey was conducted in the Dhaka EPZ during June to October 2000. A list of factories was obtained from BEPZA, which provided information on products and employment. There were forty-eight firms in operation in Dhaka EPZ during the survey. An attempt was made to cover a mixture of garment and non-garment factories located in the EPZ. A total of 24 firms were surveyed: 13 from garment industry and 11 from non-garment industry. The garment industry included factories producing caps, knitwear and readymade garment¹. The industries which had linkage with the rest of the economy were factories producing accessories such as hangers, zippers and padding and textile such as dyeing and printing and weaving. Hence these industries were also included in the study. The non-garment industry were composed of shoe factories, electronic factory, textile (weaving and dyeing and printing) factories, and garment accessories factories².

A random sample method was used to select these factories. Moreover, the choice was also based on ethical consideration. All the firms were visited and the purpose of the survey was explained. Some of the firms did not allow the survey without written permission of BEPZA. These firms were excluded. Due to limited time, the coverage had to be limited. From each factory an attempt was made to interview twenty workers. The male and female proportion was based on the male/female ratio of employment in that factory. If there was no female, then ten to twenty male workers were interviewed. The management was asked to select workers randomly, representing all levels. The interview was conducted within the factory premise. But care was taken to conduct the interview in a separate room so that there was no interference from the management. As the management chose the workers, so there could be some selection bias. The number of workers interviewed was 71 male and 179 female in the garment industry and 159 male and 48 female in the non-garment industry. Hence, a total of 230 male workers and 227 female workers were interviewed. A structured questionnaire was administered for the survey and four investigators conducted the survey.

¹ Henceforth, these will be referred to as garment industry.

² Henceforth, these will be referred to as non-garment industry.

It was very difficult to get access to the workers in the factory. At first contact was made with the BEPZA authorities and they agreed to give permission for the survey. But unfortunately just prior to this survey, another survey and auditing was conducted by SGS with permission from BEPZA. Many of the entrepreneurs did not want to participate in that survey and so BEZPA authorities had problem with them. Hence, it became very difficult to conduct the survey without written permission from BEPZA. Contacts were directly made with the factory management and several visits had to be made to convince them to allow us to do the survey. This delayed the survey by a month.

1.3 Structure of the Study

The study has been organised as follows: section *two* analyses the characteristics of the workers in terms of their age, marital status, education, migratory status and family background. Section *three* deals with economic impact in terms of employment and working condition. The social impact in terms of empowerment is dealt with in section *four*, where access to the labour market, decision-making role, mobility, domestic conflicts and consciousness about health is discussed. Finally, in section *five* the cost of wage employment in terms of lack of social transformation, lack of freedom of association and violence ensuing wage employment are discussed.

II Characteristics of the Workers

It is important to know whether the workers characteristics differ greatly among those working in the garment industry and those in non-garment industry. Table 2.1 suggests that the garment factories are female intensive while the non-garment industries are male intensive. The textile industries, such as dyeing and printing and weaving industry have 100 percent male workers as there is shifting duty. This is because there is a legal provision that women cannot work after 8pm. This policy is fully enforced inside Dhaka EPZ and so women cannot do night work.

2.1 Worker's Age

The survey data (Table 2.1) shows that child labour law is strictly being enforced in the EPZ. In the survey only one worker working in a garment factory reported that she was 14 years of age. During the survey it was noted that a number of factories have sign post which says that child labour is not employed.

The average age of the workers was lower for female than male in case of both garment and non-garment industry: female workers were found to be about three years younger than their male counterpart. But, both for men and women, the average age was higher in the non-garment than the garment industry by about one-year. The age gap between male and female workers was quite similar in the garment and non-garment industry. In the garment industry about 32 percent of women are of age 19 years or less, while the proportion in the non-garment industry is only 17 percent. Hence, the non-garment industry demands a much older female workforce than the garment industry. Garment industry employ a younger workforce, as the employers prefer young women due to their nimble fingers.

2.2 Worker's Marital Status

The survey findings suggest that there is no difference in the marital status of male workers in the garment and non-garment industry: about 50 percent were unmarried. But in case of female workers it was observed that 45 percent were unmarried in the garment industry while the proportion was 50 percent in the non-garment industry. Moreover, the

proportion of currently married was higher in the garment (49 percent) than the non-garment (42 percent) industry (Table 2.1). The garment industry prefers currently married workers, as they do not change jobs. Most of these women did not have children. Those who had children had someone to look after their children at home or left them in their village home. So childcare responsibility and household chores was not a problem for doing overtime work by those who were currently married. Moreover in the garment industry, maternity leave has become a norm and so female married workers preferred to come back after childbirth and work for the same factory.

2.3 Worker's Education

All jobs in the EPZ require some level of education. The employer during recruitment ensures this. The workers reported that lately, the minimum level of education for seeking employment in the EPZ is set at Class VIII. The survey result suggests that there is much difference in the education level for both men and women in the garment and non-garment industry. Garment industry demands a much lower level of education than non-garment industry. About 85 percent of men in the garment industry had above primary level education. This proportion was 96 percent for non-garment industry. Only 62 percent of women in the garment industry had such education, but the proportion was much higher in the non-garment: 83 percent (Table 2.1). This is because men are demanded for skilled job in both garment and non-garment industry. The high education level of women in the non-garment is mainly due to high education demanded in the electronic industry. In this survey, this factory had almost all the workers with college level education or above. The average years of schooling for women was found to be 7 years for garment and 9 years for non-garment workers. This suggest that wage employment in the export oriented industries acts as an incentive for female to be educated, as women with more than primary level education had greater chance to be absorbed in the EPZ than those who have education up to primary or less.

2.4 Worker's Migratory Status

Migrant workers dominate the export-oriented industry in the EPZ. About 72 percent of women workers were migrant. Male migration was less in garment industry (68 percent)

than non-garment (80 percent) industry. Of those who had migrated, about 50 percent men and women in the garment industry and 70 percent men and 80 percent women in non-garment industry (Table 2.2) migrated with information about seeking job at the EPZ. Table 2.2 further shows that men usually migrate single, while 60 percent of women migrated either with family or with someone else. Hence, migration is used as a strategy to diversify income. Networking among family members, relatives, friends, neighbors and acquaintances from the same district plays an important role for both men and women workers in order to cope with urban living. Table 2.3 shows that most of the migration took place after 1993, i.e. when the Dhaka EPZ was established. Most of the migrants were recent migrants during the last five years. Migration is taking place mainly from eight districts namely: Dhaka, Gazipur, Manikgonj, Mymensingh, Narshigdi, Tangail, Barisal and Pabna (Table 2.4).

2.5 Worker's Family Background

Table 2.5 shows that a substantial number of female workers are head of their household: 13 percent in the garment and 25 percent in the non-garment industry. Most of the female workers are spouse, daughters or sister. Hence, they are mostly living with their family or with their sister's family. In Bangladesh, education is positively correlated with household income. Hence, the education of the household head has been taken as the proxy for household status. Table 2.5 further suggests that the workers in the EPZ are not coming from the poorest of the poor families as majority of the workers comes from family whose household head had education above primary level. In terms of average level of education, the female workers come from a lower status than their male counterpart. Relatively, the workers in the garment industry come from a lower household status than that of the non-garment workers. Moreover, about 8-10 percent of the female workers had non-earning head of the household, and in such cases her entire family were mostly dependent on her income. About 6-7 percent of these workers had household head who were unemployed /old/retired. The occupation of the household head were mainly service (70 percent) and informal sector.

Table 2.1
Characteristics of the workers

(Column percentage)

Age group	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
10-14	-	0.6	-	-
15-19	5.6	31.3	6.9	16.7
20-24	56.3	49.2	34.6	54.2
25-29	23.9	11.7	34.0	22.9
30-34	9.9	6.1	15.7	2.1
35-39	2.8	1.1	6.3	2.1
40-65	1.4	-	2.5	2.1
Average age	24.6	21.6	26.1	22.7
Age at marriage	23.6	17.2	23.5	19.3
Marital Status				
Unmarried	49.3	45.3	51.6	50.0
Currently Married	50.7	49.2	48.4	41.7
Widow	-	-	-	2.1
Divorced	-	1.1	-	4.2
Separated	-	4.5	-	2.1
Education				
Illiterate	-	4.5	-	-
Can sign	-	3.9	-	-
Up to Class V	15.5	29.6	3.8	16.7
Class VI to X	25.4	39.7	35.8	22.9
Class XI to XII	40.8	13.4	34.0	22.9
HSC & Above	18.3	8.9	26.4	37.5
Average education	9	7	10	9
Total No.	71	179	159	48

Table 2.2
Type of migration

(Column percentage)

Criteria	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Type of migration				
Single	66.7	38.1	81.9	40.0
With family	25.0	46.0	10.2	31.4
Brother/Sister	4.2	10.3	1.6	20.0
Relative	4.2	3.2	3.9	5.7
Neighbor/Friend	-	1.6	1.6	2.9
Others	-	0.8	0.8	-
Had job information	52.1	54.0	69.3	80.0
Total No.	48	126	127	35
Origin				
Rural	67.6	70.4	79.9	72.9
Urban	32.4	29.6	20.1	27.1
Total No.	71	179	159	48

Table 2.3
Year of migration

(Column percentage)

Year	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Up to 1992	7.0	14.9	5.5	2.1
1993	5.6	4.5	3.8	6.3
1994	5.6	5.0	6.9	2.1
1995	7.0	6.1	9.4	6.3
1996	12.7	9.5	14.5	8.3
1997	15.5	11.7	15.1	18.8
1998	9.9	10.6	8.8	4.2
1999	2.8	6.1	9.4	10.4
2000	1.4	2.2	6.3	14.6
Non-migrant	32.4	29.6	20.1	27.1
Total No.	71	179	159	48

Table 2.4
District of origin

(Column percentage)

Name of district	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Comilla	-	-	3.8	2.1
Noakhali	-	-	3.8	-
Dhaka	28.2	29.1	16.4	20.8
Faridpur	4.2	1.1	-	-
Gazipur	4.2	7.8	11.9	20.8
Jamalpur	2.8	2.2	-	-
Kishorgonj	1.4	2.2	-	-
Manikgorj	8.5	8.9	5.7	2.1
Mymensingh	1.4	2.8	1.9	8.3
Narsingdi	1.4	2.8	3.8	4.2
Sherpur	-	-	2.5	2.1
Tangail	9.9	7.8	9.4	4.2
Khulna	2.8	2.2	-	-
Barisal	4.2	2.8	5.0	4.2
Bogra	-	-	8.8	2.1
Pabna	1.4	2.8	1.9	2.1
Other districts	29.6	27.5	25.1	27.0
Total No.	71	179	159	48

Table 2.5
Relationship with the household head

(Column percentage)

Criteria	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Relationship with head				
Household head	57.7	13.4	77.4	25.0
Spouse	1.4	37.4	0.6	33.3
Son/Daughter	32.4	25.1	11.3	20.8
Brother/Sister	2.8	11.2	3.8	14.6
Brother/Sister-in-law	1.4	3.9	0.6	4.2
Son/Daughter-in-law	-	3.4	-	-
Room mate	1.4	0.6	5.0	-
Nephew	1.4	3.9	-	2.1
Others	1.4	1.1	1.3	-
Occupation of the household head				
Earners	91.6	89.9	97.5	91.6
Service	67.6	59.8	87.4	77.1
Informal Sector	24.0	30.1	10.1	14.5
Agriculture	12.7	5.6	4.4	2.1
Small business	7.0	12.8	3.1	10.4
Transport	-	4.5	0.6	-
Others	4.3	7.2	2.0	2.0
Non-earners	8.4	10.1	2.5	8.4
Unemployed	2.8	3.9	0.6	4.2
House wife	4.2	3.4	0.6	2.1
Old/retired	1.4	2.8	1.3	2.1
Education of household head				
Illiterate	11.3	18.4	3.1	4.2
Up to class V	16.9	15.1	5.0	12.5
Class VI – X	18.3	26.8	30.2	20.8
Class XI – XII	26.8	18.4	32.7	22.9
HSC & Above	26.8	21.2	28.9	39.6
Average education	7.9	6.5	9.8	9.0
Average age	36.3	30.1	30.4	27.6
Total No.	71	179	159	48

III Economic Impact: Employment and Working Condition

This section will analyse the economic impact of EPZ on employment and working condition. There are two government instructions of 1989: BEPZA instruction No. I and II. Instruction No. I deal with the terms and conditions of employment of workers and officers working in the EPZ, while instruction No. II deals with fixing minimum wages and other benefits of the workers. This section will analyse job mobility, mode of recruitment as well as these instructions

3.1. Job Mobility

3.1.1 Sex Segregation in Occupation

In the EPZ men and women have different jobs. Tasks are allocated on the basis of sex. Women are mostly concentrated in low skilled jobs in which wages are low. Also prospect for upward mobility is low. Moreover, the garment industry is female intensive and the non-garment industry is male intensive. The female share of employment was found be to 72 percent in the garment industry and 23 percent in the non-garment industry. Table 3.1 shows that about 60-70 percent of men and women were employed as operators or helpers in both garment and non-garment industry. During the survey it was noted that over the years, the garment industry has reduced the number of helpers required. Men dominate the highly skilled jobs like the supervisors. But women were preferred as quality controller in both garment and non-garment industry, as they are efficient in checking the products. Quality control is strictly enforced to reduce rejects. Some firms punish the workers by giving red card or making them stand on a chair in front of their row. This insults the worker for making mistakes in their work, and has been an effective way to reduce rejects.

Within the garment industry, women are over represented in sewing and finishing sections while they are under represented in the cutting section. But during the survey it was noted that over time sex segregation has narrowed down. Once the cutting section was fully manned by men but now women are also being employed in the cutting section. In the sewing section the most remunerative jobs was that of the line chief followed by the supervisor, while in the finishing section the highest position was that of a quality

chief, who is the chief of the quality controllers. Women in some factories are holding all these position but no women was found to be the production manager and factory manager.

Sex bias was also noted in the non-garment industry. The textile industry, mainly dyeing and printing, employed only men. There was only one woman employed in a weaving factory. Hence, the expansion of these industries will create jobs for men only. Moreover, as these industries are mainly computerized, and so they demand labour with at least higher secondary level education. It was mentioned earlier that women were not employed in these factories, as they cannot do night shift. Even in the electronic industry there was sex segregation as some tasks were specifically for women. In the accessories factories, no woman was found to be employed in the hanger factory. Hence, beside garment industry, jobs for women are very limited. Their other options are the shoe industry and electronics industry. The above suggests that female labour market is highly segmented by jobs and by type of industry. Hence, there is a need to find the barriers to entry.

Table 3.1 further shows that about 80 percent of the workers perceive their job as skilled job. Only a few think themselves to be unskilled workers. The average length of total service was almost the same for men and women in the garment industry: 56 months. But in the non-garment industry, men had more experience on the job (67 months) on average than women (44 months). But the average stay in the present factory was found to be slightly more for women than men in the garment industry. The reverse was true for the non-garment industry.

3.1.2 Horizontal Mobility

Change in Job Status

Table 3.2 shows that about one-third of female workers and two-third of male workers were employed prior to their employment in the EPZ. Comparing the present job status with their earlier job, one may note further from Table 3.2 that insecurity of temporary jobs was one of the factors for seeking employment in the garment industry in the EPZ.

Most of them were previously employed in garment industry outside the EPZ. Hence, EPZ has provided more permanent jobs to these garment workers. For those working in non-garment industry such improvement was noted for male workers but not for female workers.

Reason for Leaving Last Job

For those who had changed jobs, explicit reasons for changing job were sought. The main reason cited were very low wages followed by lay off/dismissal and excessive duty (Table 3.3). Low wages was more of a problem for the female garment workers than their male counterpart. On the other hand, the male garment workers faced a higher proportion of dismissal than their female counterpart. Female workers also changed job when the distance from their residence was long. But men in the non-garment industry changed their job in order to improve their wages and other benefits.

3.2 Mode of Recruitment

There are multiple sources of information for vacancy announcement. The most popular mode of information is relative/friends and neighbours. The enterprises ask the workers to bring their friends and relatives to fill up a vacancy. This is due to the belief that the worker will not leave the factory if they have friends and relatives. Also it is easier to control the worker. More than 60 percent of the workers had information about vacancy through this mode and the incidence is higher for female than male. Advertisements for vacant positions are posted on a notice board outside the EPZ gate. About one-third of the workers in the garment industry also searched job on their own and respond to gate advertisement. This incidence was much lower for the non-garment workers. A small number of workers (10 percent) have sought job through introduction by another factory worker (Table 3.4).

3.3 Terms and Condition of Employment³

The EPZ does not allow trade union. But there are other labour relation mechanisms. It was mentioned earlier that there are two government instructions of 1989: BEPZA instruction No. I and II. Instruction No. I deal with the terms and conditions of employment of workers and officers working in the EPZ, while instruction No. II deals with fixing minimum wages and other benefits of the workers. There is also an Industrial Relations Department to handle grievances, settle dispute and carry out labour inspection.

3.3.1 Appointment Letter

BEPZA instruction I outline that an appointment letter, mentioning the terms and conditions of service, nature of work and pay and other relevant matters shall be given to the employee concerned on his/her appointment, except in case of casual labour. Table 3.5 suggests that more men than women had appointment letter. The proportions were 63 percent and 73 percent for men in the garment and non-garment industry, while for women these proportions were 57 percent. Hence about one- third of the labour force are treated as casual labour as they do not have appointment letter. In the absence of the appointment letter, the workers would not get non-wage benefits. But, in all cases the workers had to give a written application for the post mentioning their age, marital status, education and experience.

3.3.2 Leave Provisions

Casual and Sick Leave

Leave is considered as a privilege and it cannot be claimed as a matter of right. The manager has the discretion to refuse leave. Leave beyond the sanctioned period can be treated as “misconduct”. A worker is entitled to casual leave for 10 days and fourteen days of sick leave on half-average wage in a year. If a worker works on a “day off” i.e. Friday or a holiday, then a substitute day off will be given on another day.

³ The provisions in this section have been compiled from BEPZA instruction No.1, A new horizon for investors and Labour and Industrial Relations.

The survey findings (Table 3.5) suggest that, only 50-60 percent of the workers had knowledge about casual leave, and only one-third of the workers said that it was implemented. However, the provision of sick leave is completely absent in the EPZ. Leave application has to be made to seek prior permission for casual leave. Very often they are not sanctioned. The main problem is when a worker is absent due to his/her illness. In all the factories surveyed, this sort of leave is marked absent. For one day absent, one day's basic salary is deducted and where attendance bonus is paid the whole bonus is deducted. The lack of implementation of sick leave provision is one of the main problems in the EPZ. During the survey it was noted that in some firms workers were working on Fridays. They were given overtime money but not a substitute day off. Some workers complained that during peak time they have to work all days of the week for a month or two. They would rather prefer to work 8-7pm on weekdays with Friday off, throughout the year.

Maternity Benefit

A female employee who has completed a minimum of ten months service shall be entitled, on application, to maternity leave with pay for six weeks before or six weeks after the confinement. This benefit may be granted only twice over her service period. The second maternity is admissible only after a period of three years after availing the first one. Relatively more women than men had knowledge about this provision, and a higher proportion of garment workers than non-garment workers had such knowledge. About two-third of the female workers in the garment industry and half of the non-garment workers reported that this provision was implemented in their factory (Table 3.5). Hence, maternity leave is implemented more in the garment industry than the non-garment industry. During the maternity leave the workers gets her basic salary only.

Earned Leave

An employee is entitled to one-day leave for each 22 days of work done by the worker. This can accumulate up to 30 days and the workers can encash such leave. Some workers reported that this provision is implemented in the EPZ

Festival Leaves

A workers is allowed festival holiday for 10 days. If they work on any festival holiday, then either two days holidays or given wages in lieu of the holiday. During the survey it was noted that the Industry Relation office takes measures to implement this provision.

3.3.3 Social Welfare and Security

Provident Fund

Provident fund contribution is at the rate of 8.33 percent of basic pay. Recently, this has been introduced in the Dhaka EPZ. About one-third of the worker reported that deductions are made for their contribution to provident fund (Table 3.6). But most of them were not sure whether they would get back their money, especially if they change factories within the EPZ.

Rest Room/Canteen

In every company, there shall be suitable rest room/canteen where employees can take rest or eat their meals. The survey findings suggest that most of the factories did not have rest room. But most of the workers in the garment industry and two-third of the non-garment workers said that there was a lunchroom (Table 3.6). Those who reported that there was no lunchroom usually had their lunch outside in the courtyard. In some cases there were tin shed for lunch but they were not adequate to accommodate all workers.

Health and Sanitary Requirements

Employers are required to ensure that workplace (both office and factory) are adequately lit and sufficiently ventilated. There shall be adequate number of toilets and washing facilities. During the survey it was noted that these provision was followed in all the factories.

Termination

For termination of the services of a permanent/temporary employee by the employer, an employer shall give 120 days notice in the case of a permanent employee and 60 days notice in the case of a temporary employee. Provided that pay for 120 days or 60 days as the case may be, shall be paid in lieu of such notice. Moreover, the worker would be

given the rate of one month's pay for every completed year of service or for any part thereof in excess of 6 months, in addition to any other benefits to which he/she may be entitled to under the terms of employment. About 90 percent of the workers knew this provision but only 20 percent men and 30 percent women reported that it was implemented (Table 3.5).

Injury Compensation

The relevant law of the country shall apply in regard to payment of compensation for injury sustained while on duty. Almost all the workers had knowledge about this provision, but only half of the respondents reported that it is implemented. The incidence of injury was found to be higher for men (24-30 percent) than women (8-10 percent). Of those who reported injury, about 40 -50 percent did not get factory treatment or compensation in the garment industry, but in the non-garment industry, this was reported by about 30 percent of them (Table 3.7). The nature of injury was injury due to fire in the factory, finger/hand cutting, pain and needle prick in case of garment industry. In the non-garment industry the nature of injury was mainly hand/finger cutting.

Resignation

A permanent employee shall be required to give one month's notice, should he/she wishes to resign from the service of the company. An employee, who resigns from the service of the company but fails to give the required notice, shall, in lieu of such notice, pay the company a sum equivalent to one month's pay. It was noted that workers usually do not give prior notice before leaving a factory.

Discipline

If an employee is found guilty of misconduct, after due inquiry proceedings, the employer may impose on him suitable penalties including dismissal from service in appropriate cases.

Discharge

An employee may be discharged from service for reason of physical or mental incapacity or continued ill health or such other reasons not amounting to misconduct. Such an employee having completed one year of continued service if so discharged, shall be paid compensation by the employer at the rate of one month's pay for every completed year of service or for any part thereof in excess of six months. During the survey it was noted that the workers did not understand this provision very well.

3.4 Wages and Other Benefits

3.4.1 Minimum Wage

The employer sets the wages in the EPZ. It was mentioned earlier that BEPZA Instruction No. II, 1989, deals with fixing minimum wages and other benefits of the workers. In the instruction, minimum wages are set for different types of labour according to their length of services, and vary across different types of industry namely, garment industry, electronic industry, terry towel industry, and textile industry. These instructions are also followed for other industries.

It may be noted here that the wages are fixed in dollars, and then using the exchange rate prevailing on a given day, are converted to Taka. It was noted during the survey that only a handful of firm uses the prevailing exchange rate on a given date, most did so on January, 1st. This deprives the worker to a large extent, as Taka has been depreciating recently. Moreover, after the probationary period, the workers are supposed to be given a BEPZA card. But often the worker had to wait a longer period to get the card. This is because the factory owners have to pay Tk.35 for each BEPZA card. So they delay the process till they are sure that the worker will stay with them. However, all workers have an identity number.

Table I and Table 3.8 shows the minimum wages set by BEPZA⁴ for different levels of workers. This has been compiled from the different rates given in Instruction II of

⁴ The exchange rate used was \$1=Tk. 50. Similar rate was the rate given to the workers at the time of the survey.

Table I
Minimum Wages Applicable to the EPZ Workers

Apprentice/Trainee	US\$22.00	approx. Tk. 1100
Unskilled	US\$35.00	approx. Tk.1750
	US\$38.00	approx. Tk.1900
Semi-skilled	US\$45.00	approx. Tk.2250
	US\$50.00	approx. Tk.2500
Skilled	US\$58.00	approx. Tk.2900
	US\$63.00	approx. Tk.3150

Source: Compiled from BEPZA instruction II, 1989.

BEPZA. The minimum wage is Tk. 1100 (\$ 22). Excluding payment for overtime but including bonuses, Table 3.8 shows the distribution of workers by monthly salary categories. More women than men earn less than the minimum wage set for the apprentice in both garment and non-garment industry. Moreover, more of non-garment⁵ workers than garment workers get below the minimum wage set for the apprentice. About 8 percent of the female workers and 3 percent of the male workers in the garment industry get below the minimum wage set for apprentice, while in the non-garment industry, 17 percent of female workers and 7 percent of the male workers do so. In the garment industry, a higher proportion of women (67 percent) than men (61 percent) earn below the minimum wage set for semi-skilled worker (Tk. 2250). But in the non-garment industry, 62 percent of men and women earn so. Moreover, a higher proportion of men (26 percent) and women (19 percent) in the non- garment industry earn above the minimum wage set for the skilled workers (Tk. 2900) than that of the garment industry, where 18 percent of men and 7 percent of women earn so.

However, if overtime payments are included, then 4 percent men and 12 percent women in the non-garment earn below the minimum wage set for the apprentice. But in the garment industry, all men earn above this level and only 3 percent women fall in this

category (Table 3.8). Moreover, about 40 percent men and 25 percent women in garment and non-garment industry earns above the minimum wage set for the skilled workers. Hence, overtime improves their earning and has become an integral part of their wages. The average monthly take-home income was found to be slightly higher in the non-garment industry (Tk. 2902 for men and Tk.2526 for women), than the garment industry, where men earned Tk. 2885 and women earned Tk. 2499 respectively. Wage discrimination also exists in the EPZ. It has been estimated that women earned only 87 percent of men's wage in both garment and non-garment industry. But employers do not recognize this discrimination and this wage difference were justified as due to difference in productivity between men and women. Moreover, overtime forms about 20 percent of the monthly salary of female workers, but it was slightly higher for male garment workers (24 percent), and lower for male non-garment workers (17 percent) (Table 3.9).

It was noted earlier that operators were the main employment categories, and Table 3.9 shows that in this job category women earn less than their male counterpart. Even controlling for the different technology in the garment and non-garment industry, the table shows that as operators, women earn only 87 percent of male wage. For helpers, supervisors and quality controllers, there was no gender difference in salary in garment industry, whereas, female salary was much lower in non-garment industry for helpers and quality controllers. There were few female supervisors in non-garment industry, but they were paid higher than their male counterpart.

Table 3.10 show that the average number of hours worked by men and women were quite similar in the garment industry: 9.5 and 9.3 hours respectively. But in the non-garment industry, men worked more hours (9.8 hours) than women (8.5 hours). The table further shows that about 10-20 percent of the workers works 8 hours a day in the garment industry, while 50-60 percent of the workers in non-garment industry do so. In a factory, weekly working hours is 48 hours and women are not allowed on the night shift.

⁵ This is mainly because the some factories were having lean period during the survey and so the workers were not working overtime. Moreover, when the factories remain closed temporarily, the workers received only their basic salary.

Work in excess of the above-mentioned working hours is paid at overtime rates, which is twice the basic salary. About 60 percent women and 80 percent men knew how the overtime rate was calculated, but only half reported that it was implemented (Table 3.5). The calculation of basic salary in the EPZ factories was not very clear. Most of the factories followed a thumb rule of 60 percent of salary. But this is much lower than the norm in most of the garment industry outside the EPZ. The rule they follow and which reputed buyers accept is the following:

Basic = monthly salary minus Tk 150 (medical allowance), divided by 1.3, as house rent is 30 percent of basic. The employers and employees in Dhaka EPZ felt that BEPZA authorities should include explicit instruction regarding calculation of basic salary and overtime rates in their instruction manual.

3.4.2 Non-Wage benefits

BEPZA instruction II also provides for non-wage benefits in the EPZ such as:

Festival Bonus

Every employee having completed a minimum of six months continuous service shall be entitled to two months festival bonus in a year, which is equivalent to two months basic pay. In practice it was observed that the workers get festival bonus mostly after working continuously for a year.

Attendance Bonus

Attendance bonus, if any, will continue to be paid. Attendance bonus has almost become a norm in most of the garment factories (Table 3.11). Attendance bonus had a positive impact on absenteeism rate, which has drastically reduced. Contrary to the expectation, Table 3.12 shows that absenteeism rate for women are lower than that of men. The proportion of workers who has taken at least one day leave in the previous month was 30 percent for men and 28 percent for women in the garment industry, while it was 33 percent and 32 percent respectively. This is mainly because if leave is taken even for a day, the total attendance bonus is deducted as well as basic salary of one day. The reason for taking leave reported by men and women was mainly own sickness. Men also took

leave to go to the village, while women also had to take leave when other family members were sick.

Transport Facilities

It is stated in the instruction that the existing transport facilities, if any, will continue as before. The most secured mode of transport is the factory bus. This is also the preferred option by the workers because they can be certain about the bus timing and so waiting time is less. Moreover, if they are late because of traffic congestion, the workers are not penalized. But the main problem is when there is an accident. Moreover, having factory bus ensure that the worker arrives at the factory on time, especially in the morning. The finding of the survey suggests that most of the garment factories have factory bus but most of the non-garment factories do not provide this facility.

Moreover, more women than men avail factory bus in the garment industry: 72 percent and 55 percent respectively. But in the non-garment industry only 8 percent men and 13 percent women avail this facility (Table 3.6 and Table 3.13). In the local transport there is no special bus for women. So, the female workers prefer factory bus because mostly women travel in factory bus. Most of the male workers in the non-garment industry walk to work, while female worker either walk or travel by rickshaw. On average it takes about one hour and fifteen minutes to commute to work from home. This is also reflected in their expenditure pattern where a non-garment female worker spends 6 percent of her income while her male counterpart spends only 4 percent (Table 4.5). All workers demanded that transport facilities needs to be provided for all workers.

Canteen Facilities

There is a provision that canteen facilities or food if any will continue to be provided. Most of the firms had lunchroom and many provided lunches. The rates per plate varied from Tk.14 to Tk.18 per plate. Workers also complained of poor quality of food in some factories. Most of the workers preferred to have lunch allowance rather than lunch at the factory. So, many factories that were earlier providing lunch have switched to lunch allowance. In the garment industry, about 60 percent men and 70 percent women reported

that the employer provide lunch in their factory or give lunch allowance, but in the non-garment industry this proportion was only 45 and 30 percent respectively (Table 3.6).

Yearly Wage Increment

Each worker should receive a minimum of 10 percent increase over his gross wages. Most of the workers reported that this was not properly implemented. Moreover as the salary are adjusted for the exchange rate usually on January1 in most factories, the amount of increment was not clear to the worker.

Table 3.1
Nature of work

(Column percentage)

Criteria	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Present occupation				
Helper	19.7	16.2	20.8	20.8
Operator	56.3	55.3	52.2	39.6
Supervisor	4.2	3.9	5.0	2.1
Quality controller	5.6	13.4	3.1	22.9
Issue man/ girl	5.6	6.1	1.3	2.1
Others	8.5	5.0	17.6	12.5
Skill level				
Skilled	80.3	84.9	84.3	68.8
Semi-skilled	18.3	9.5	12.6	18.8
Unskilled	1.4	5.6	3.1	12.5
Length of total service (months)				
Lo to 6	1.4	2.8	4.4	14.6
7 – 12	2.8	5.6	3.1	16.7
13 – 24	8.5	6.1	9.4	8.3
25 – 48	32.4	38.5	32.1	20.8
49 – 72	31.0	20.1	20.8	25.0
73 – 96	14.1	15.6	11.9	6.3
97 +	9.9	11.2	18.2	8.3
Average length of total service	56.8	55.5	66.8	44.2
Average length of present job	23.5	30.9	30.0	21.7
Total No.	71	179	159	48

Table 3.2
Change in job status

(Column percentage)

Job Status	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Previous job				
Permanent	40.0	28.1	29.3	41.2
Temporary	46.7	64.1	43.4	47.1
Contract	4.4	4.7	10.1	5.9
Probationary	-	1.6	1.0	-
NA	8.9	-	16.2	5.9
Don't	-	1.6		
Present job				
Permanent	66.7	64.1	45.5	41.2
Temporary	26.7	31.3	44.4	47.1
Contract	2.2	-	-	-
Probationary	-	-	1.0	-
Don't know	4.4	4.7	9.1	11.8
Total No.	45	64	99	17
Previously Working	63.4	35.8	62.3	35.4
Previously Non-working	36.6	64.2	37.7	64.6
Total No.	71	179	159	48

Table 3.3
Reason for leaving last job prior to EPZ

(Column percentage)

Criteria	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Lay off/dismissal	20.0	4.8	20.2	17.6
Wages not paid timely	8.9	17.5	4.0	11.8
Very low wages	37.8	54.0	45.5	23.5
Long distance from residence	8.9	12.7	2.0	11.8
Abusive behavior of the management/fellow worker	2.2	9.5	4.0	5.9
Illness	-	1.6	1.0	-
Overtime not given timely	-	4.8	1.0	-
Night duty	4.4	6.3	1.0	-
Marriage	-	3.2	-	-
Family migration/ financial problem	4.4	4.8	2.0	11.8
Ensure duty	13.3	11.1	7.1	-
No arrangement for transportation	6.7	6.3	2.0	-
Rules were not good	6.7	3.2	4.0	-
For promotion	4.4	4.8	2.0	11.8
Came away from home	8.9	6.3	3.0	-
Hope for more salary/facilities	6.7	3.2	12.1	5.9
Temporary service	2.2	-	2.0	-
Expensive in the city	-	-	2.0	-
Business loss	4.4	-	3.0	-
Others	-	1.6	6.1	5.9
Total No.	45	64	99	17

Note: Multiple answer

Table 3.4
Mode of recruitment

(Column percentage)

Mode	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Newspaper Advertisement	5.6	1.1	5.0	6.3
Other advertisement	23.9	18.4	13.2	6.3
Through employer	4.2	3.4	1.9	4.2
Relatives/Friends	40.8	36.9	51.6	35.4
Neighbour	9.9	20.1	9.4	33.3
Self inquiry	5.6	8.9	5.0	2.1
Factory worker	9.9	10.1	11.9	8.3
Spouse	-	1.1	-	-
Others	-	1.7	2.5	4.2
Total No.	71	179	159	48

Note: Multiple answer

Table 3.5
Labour laws: knowledge and implementation

(Column percentage)

Criteria	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Appointment letter				
Yes	63.4	57.5	64.2	56.3
No	36.6	42.5	35.8	43.8
Knowledge about labour laws				
Employer has right to terminate	87.3	77.7	87.4	87.5
Factory workers are not required to more	70.4	64.2	76.7	62.5
A women is entitled to 12 weeks paid maternity leave	90.1	95.5	76.1	85.4
Ten days casual leave	54.9	48.6	64.2	56.3
Fourteen days annual leave	76.1	77.1	79.9	72.9
One day weekly holiday	100.0	99.4	99.4	100.0
Women can work from 7am-8pm	78.9	76.5	78.6	85.4
Minimum wage legislation	52.1	33.0	42.1	31.3
No trade union inside the EPZ	67.6	55.9	80.5	79.2
Injury compensation	88.7	92.7	91.2	83.3
Overtime payment is twice the Basic	77.5	63.7	83.6	60.4
Implementation of labour laws				
Do you get 3 months benefit if terminated	21.1	30.2	22.0	33.3
Do you work 48 hours a week	26.8	39.1	44.7	33.3
Do you get such maternity benefits	50.7	67.6	23.9	47.9
Do you get Ten days casual leave	31.0	29.6	33.3	39.6
Do you get Fourteen days annual leave	60.6	57.0	63.5	56.3
Do you get one day weekly holiday	80.3	81.6	78.6	77.1
Women can work from 7am-8pm	36.6	52.0	35.8	54.2
Do you get minimum wage legislation	38.0	35.8	48.4	39.6
Any trade union in your factory	25.4	28.5	30.2	43.8
Do you get injury compensation	54.9	60.9	50.3	52.1
Overtime payment is twice the Basic	46.5	48.6	54.1	31.3
Total No.	71	179	159	48

**Table 3.6
Job Facilities**

(Column percentage)

Job Facility	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Transport				
Employer provide	59.2	65.4	6.9	14.6
Subsidies cost	15.5	20.7	9.4	12.5
Own arrangement	25.4	14.0	83.6	72.9
Lunch				
Employer provide	22.5	39.7	27.0	10.4
Subsidies cost	36.6	27.9	18.9	18.8
Own arrangement	40.8	32.4	54.1	70.8
Accommodation				
Employer provide	-	0.6	6.3	-
Subsidies cost	2.8	0.6	1.3	2.1
Own arrangement	62.0	69.8	74.8	66.7
Own House	29.6	24.0	16.4	25.0
Rent Free	5.6	5.0	1.3	6.3
Rest Room				
Yes	8.5	20.7	5.7	29.2
Lunch Room				
Yes	78.9	93.3	69.8	66.7
Eid Bonus				
Yes	92.3	88.2	86.5	80.9
Provident Fund				
Yes	15.7	33.8	57.7	36.2
Total No.	71	179	159	48

**Table 3.7
Victim of industrial accident**

(Column percentage)

Criteria	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Had accident				
Yes	23.9	10.0	28.9	8.3
No	76.1	90.0	71.1	91.7
Total	71	179	159	48
Had compensation				
Yes	31.3	6.3	31.8	100.0
No	43.8	50.0	29.5	-
Company treatment	25.0	43.8	38.6	-
Type of accident				
Needle prick	17.6	29.4	6.7	-
Cut finger	29.4	11.8	53.3	50.0
Cut hand	11.8	29.4	17.8	-
Burn hand	-	11.8	4.4	-
Pain	11.8	11.8	4.4	-
Hurt in the eye	5.9	-	6.7	-
Catch fire in the factory	23.5	5.9	-	-
Others	-	-	6.7	50.0
Total Injured	17	18	45	4

Table 3.8
Minimum wage Last month

(Column percentage)

Wage	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Monthly salary + Bonus				
Lo – 1099	2.8	8.4	6.9	16.7
1100 – 1749	31.0	27.4	17.0	22.9
1750 – 1899	12.7	8.9	10.1	8.3
1900 – 2249	14.1	21.8	27.7	14.6
2250 – 2499	11.3	14.0	6.9	10.4
2500 – 2899	9.9	12.3	5.7	8.3
2900 – 3149	8.5	2.2	6.3	10.4
3100+	9.9	5.0	19.5	8.3
Average	2200	1997	2396	2010
Monthly salary + Bonus + Overtime				
Lo – 1099	-	2.8	4.4	12.5
1100 – 1749	14.1	10.6	10.1	25.0
1750 – 1899	7.0	3.9	9.4	2.1
1900 – 2249	9.9	20.7	23.3	20.8
2250 – 2499	8.5	13.4	5.7	8.3
2500 – 2899	19.7	21.2	6.9	6.3
2900 – 3149	15.5	11.2	7.5	4.2
3100+	25.4	16.2	32.7	20.8
Average	2885	2499	2902	2526
Total No.	71	179	159	48

Table 3.9
Average monthly total income

(Average Tk. per month)

Occupation	Male			Female			F/M*100
	Monthly Salary and bonus	Overtime	Total Income	Monthly Salary and bonus	Overtime	Total Income	
Garment							
Helper	1493	246	1739	1393	334	1727	99.3
Operator	2392	688	3080	2146	512	2658	86.2
Supervisor	2966	1534	4500	3221	1343	4564	101.4
Quality controller	1445	727	2172	1829	361	2190	100.8
Issue man/ women	2284	1038	3322	2003	623	2626	79.0
Others	2642	1000	3642	1806	489	2295	63.0
Average	2200	685	2885	1997	502	2499	86.2
Share of total income	76.3	23.7	100.0	79.9	20.1	100.0	
Non-garment							
Helper	1685	216	1901	1492	18	1510	79.1
Operator	2404	544	2948	2052	537	2589	87.8
Supervisor	2529	1031	3360	4200	100	4300	127.9
Quality controller	3038	1420	4458	1954	642	2596	58.2
Issue man/ women	2263	55	2318	2500	-	2500	107.8
Others	3067	512	3579	2395	1208	3603	100.7
Average	2396	506	2902	2010	516	2526	87.0
Share of total income	82.6	17.4	100.0	79.6	20.4	100.0	

Table 3.10
Last month work hour

(Column percentage)

Work hour	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Lo-7.99	18.3	12.8	3.1	2.1
8.00	8.5	21.2	45.3	66.7
8+	73.2	65.9	51.6	31.3
Of which				
8.01-10	21.1	23.5	16.4	20.8
10.01-12	40.8	32.4	22.0	10.4
12.01-14	9.9	10.1	6.9	-
14.01-16	-	-	5.0	-
16.01+	1.4	-	1.3	-
Average hour	9.5	9.4	9.8	8.5
Total No.	71	179	159	48

Table 3.11
Type of bonus received

(Column percentage)

Bonus type	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Attendance	71.7	77.9	42.4	61.5
Production	11.3	10.6	-	-
Lunch	35.8	26.0	37.9	23.1
Female	1.9	4.8	-	-
Night	5.7	-	1.5	-
Conveyance	11.3	22.1	21.2	30.8
Others	9.4	7.7	9.1	7.7
Total	71	179	159	48

Note: Multiple answer

Table 3.12
Leave taken during last month

(Column percentage)

Leave	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Availed leave	29.6	27.9	32.7	31.3
Did not avail leave	70.4	72.1	67.3	68.8
Reason for taken leave				
Own sickness	52.4	54.0	31.4	64.3
Household work	4.8	2.0	9.8	14.3
Visit to village	23.8	12.0	29.4	-
Family member sick	9.5	22.0	5.9	7.1
Own marriage	-	2.0	2.0	-
Death of relative	4.8	-	-	-
Others	9.5	12.0	21.6	14.3
Total	21	50	52	15

Note: Multiple answer

Table 3.13
Mode of Transport

(Column percentage)

Mode	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Own transport	2.8	2.3	-	-
Office transport	54.9	71.6	7.6	12.8
Public bus	18.3	6.3	22.8	25.5
Rickshaw	18.3	16.5	33.5	44.7
Walking	18.3	18.8	64.6	46.8
Tempo/maxi	4.2	1.7	12.7	10.6
Others	1.4	1.1	4.4	8.5
Commuting time (minute)	74	68	71	83
Total	71	179	159	48

Note: Multiple answer

IV. Social Impact: Empowerment

Various indicators of empowerment have been used to analyse the social impact of EPZ on the workers. Empowerment has been measured in terms of access to the labour market, decision-making role, mobility, domestic conflicts, and consciousness about health. These are the “functioning achievement” of the worker as a result to wage employment in the EPZ.

4.1 Access to the Labour Market

An important effect of EPZ has been employment creation for both men and women. Women are concentrated in garment industry, while men are concentrated in non-garment industry. In most cases, EPZ has provided first time employment and hence an opportunity to earn wages. The EPZ is not providing job to those who were unemployed, but is providing full time employment to those who were not in the labour force.

About 64 percent of women in the garment and non-garment industry had their first job at the EPZ. This proportion for men was 37 percent. Most of the women in the non-garment industry (46 percent) were students prior to joining the EPZ (Table 4.1). On the other hand women in the garment industry who were not employed were mostly doing (27 percent) household work. Fewer women in the non-garment (19 percent) were doing household chores prior to their employment in the EPZ.

More importantly, jobs at EPZ are not displacing agricultural jobs or domestic services. But for men there has been a displacement of male workers from other sectors of the economy to the EPZ. The finding also suggests that in terms of the job experience the garment workers had previous job experience in other garment factories outside the EPZ. About 38 percent men and 32 percent women had such experience. On the other hand, men in the non-garment industry had experience in textile and other industry, while women had shoe factory experience.

The estimated poverty line for urban household is at TK.11, 905 (per capita annually) or Tk. 992 (per capita monthly). Those who earn below this level are identified as

moderately poor. The threshold income for those in extreme poverty was estimated to be Tk. 8164 per capita per year or TK. 680.30 per capita per month. Those with per capita below this are identified as hard core poor. Table 4.2 shows that more women than men earn less than the poverty line, and more of non-garment workers than garment workers do the same. About 3.4 percent of women and 1.4 percent of men in the garment industry earn below Tk 992 per month as salary and bonuses. But a higher proportion of men and women earn below the poverty level in non-garment industry: 3.8 percent of men and 4.2 percent of women do so. But still this is much lower than the recent estimate of urban poverty, which shows that 19 percent of the households in Dhaka city live below absolute poverty line⁶. Hence, it suggests that export oriented industries in the EPZ not only generated employment opportunities but also stopped them from sliding to the poverty level.

Earlier it was noted that women's entry in export oriented industries also results in low wages that are considered to be necessary for being competitive in the world market. This forces poor women to take up these jobs in order to survive and their low wages also keeps them in a low wage trap. Hence, women in export oriented industries have not really overcome poverty. On the other hand also due to ideology, those who are better off as a result from employment may suffer socially and psychologically from it. Hence, the relationship between factory work and poverty and ideology is more complex in case of Bangladesh.

4.2 Decision Making Role

A number of different indicators have been used to measure decision-making role. The first negotiation a worker has to make within the household is his/her decision to work. Once they start to work, they have to find a place of residence and make contribution to the household living standard. Then they have to decide on who will control their income. Besides spending income they also take part in household decision making such as daily shopping, visit to doctors, children's schooling and practicing family planning. Moreover, they are also contributing to household savings.

⁶ See Hossain, Afsar and Bose 1999.

4.2.1. Decision to Work

The first negotiation at the household level the worker had to make was to decide to work in the EPZ. Own decision of the worker has been the most prevalent in taking up a job at the EPZ. About 40 percent of garment workers and 50 percent of non-garment workers reported this. In case of some male workers, father's decision also played a major role than that of other members of the family. But in case of female workers, husband, parents and brother/sister have also played a major role. Hence, there has been a changing mindset regarding female employment. About one-third of the workers have been influenced to seek a job at the EPZ by their neighbors/friends/relatives (Table 4.3).

Moreover, the study findings suggests that it is the women themselves who decided and choose to work in the export factories, and that they do so even in the absence of obvious family economic need (Table 4.4). Very often it was the desire to give money to the parents that they sought employment in the EPZ, regardless of their family's approval or economic need.

Table 4.4 suggests that a combination of factors affected their decision to take up a job at the EPZ. But on the whole, for both men and women, the pull factors played a more important role than the push factors. The main push factors differed by gender: while economic crises were common for both men and women, but family need was an important factor for women. On the other hand for men, lack of job/ unemployment was the major factor. Other factors that were important for women were could not go to the in-laws house lack of job/unemployment, and to be self-reliant. Some men and women expressed that they had to take up job at the EPZ as father/husband died or for continuing education of the children/brother/sister. The main attraction of jobs at the EPZ was better facilities/more facilities, regular salary/ high salary and good environment.

Group discussion suggests that more importantly, it was her own sense of responsibility, which brought her to the EPZ. Daughters tend to be closer to their parents than sons. They spend more time at home, and share in consumption of durable goods. Female

workers feared that their independent income is likely to cease after they get married, and would make it difficult for their parents to survive. During the survey it was noted that, for those women who have continued to work after marriage, cash contribution to their own and husband's family continued.

4.2.2 New Forms of Living Arrangements

It was earlier noted that most of the workers are migrants. Once the workers come to Savar, they have to find a place to stay. Table 4.5 shows that about two-third of the workers had a relative at EPZ. About one-third had close relatives, such as sister/brother and spouse. Usually the relatives arrange for a place to stay. These workers were mainly living in nuclear families or joint families before coming to the EPZ. But now the mode of living arrangement has changed: only 40 percent live in nuclear families, and 15-20 in joint families. About one-third of the workers are now living in split families, i.e. some of the family members live in rural areas. While men mostly live in mess, but women share rooms with sister/brother, or live in relative house (Table 4.6). The existing social conditions do not expect women to live alone. But jobs at the EPZ have empowered these culture bound women to live alone. About 7 percent women in the garment industry and 17 percent in the non-garment industry either live alone or live in a mess⁷. Hence, about 20 percent of female garment workers and 38 percent of female non-garment worker are living in new form of messing.

4.2.3 Contributor to the Household Living Standard

Women's involvement in wage employment is crucial to break the vicious circle of poverty. They also use their income to meet the household needs. It is quite evident from Table 4.7 that women withhold less income than men for their personal spending: men keep about 1.5 time more money than their female counterpart. While women spent only 7 percent of their income for personal spending, the proportion for men was 9 percent. Most of the income is spent on food, house rent, remittance and transport. On an average,

⁷ These are women who shared rooms and rent with female workers. This system is called "messing" and had traditionally been practised by men but with the emergence of the EPZ, this form of residential arrangement had broken the traditional norm of women residing with a male guardian. In fact in Savar, the workers living in split families are mostly living in mess.

a garment worker contributes about 8.5 percent of their income as house rent, while the proportion is 12 percent for non-garment workers.

It was observed that the ability to work in the EPZ has provided women workers with personal autonomy and independence, which are radical departures from the lives of women in traditional society. Table 4.7 shows that the female workers spend the same proportion of their income on house rent but a smaller proportion on food than their male counterparts. Most workers felt that when they earn their own living, they do not have to depend on others for food and clothing. This was the most significant social change mentioned by the workers.

4.2.4. Financial Autonomy

A primary earner was defined as the person earning the highest income in the household. About 60-70 percent of men and 40-45 percent of women workers were found to be the primary earner of the family. Moreover, 60-65 percent of the female workers had full/joint control over their income (Table 4.8). This is a significant change in a traditional society, where cultural norms precluded women to have financial autonomy. About 15 percent of women workers were still tradition bound and had to hand over their income to their husband. The incidence of handing over men's income to their wife was found to be very low. Very often it was noted that the wives did not question their husband's spending pattern. This was done to avoid conflicts.

4.2.5 Household Decisions

Employment in the EPZ has also given the workers a role in household decisions. Table 4.9 shows that most of the workers have learnt to take their own decision at the family level after joining EPZ. More than 50 percent women did not take their own decision before joining the EPZ. This proportion has reduced to 25 percent.

Daily shopping is usually done by men, but Table 4.9 shows that about 40 percent of this decision regarding daily food items are joint decision. Hence, at least women are having a say in daily shopping. About 43 percent of women workers in the garment industry and

30 percent in the non-garment industry have no say in daily shopping. In case of health care, more than 50 percent men take their own decision, while only 30-40 percent women do so. Joint decision is more prevalent among women workers than their male counterpart. Ever married women have more say in children's schooling than men. But family planning decision is mostly joint decisions.

4.2.6 Contribution as Savers

Another indicator of empowerment is that these workers have developed a saving habit, even though they have low income. Not only were the propensities to save quite high for women, but also they saved a higher absolute amount than their male counterpart. This is a significant change considering that most workers originate from rural areas.

The saving propensity of male garment workers was almost double of that of non-garment workers: 9 percent and 5.6 percent (Table 4.5). But such variation was not observed in case of female workers. The savings are not necessarily done in the bank as only about one-third of the workers had bank account. Most of these bank accounts were operated only to make deposits in saving schemes like APS/DSP. Since taking up employment, these workers have also made investment in land, jewelry, and furniture. A large proportion of their savings is also spent on clothing (Table 4.10).

4.3 Mobility

Mobility is another indicator of empowerment. This indicators shows whether women can move around on their own in certain pre-defined locations. This has been compared with what they used to do before they started to work. The implication of rural urban mobility will also be touched upon.

Table 4.11 shows that physical mobility of the workers has increased and they have acquired new social roles. Before joining the EPZ only 17 percent of women in the garment industry went to the market, and this has now increased to 34 percent. This was also observed for women in the non-garment industry where 31 percent went to the market before joining EPZ and now this proportion increased to 52 percent. But going to

the market is still a male activity. Some married women workers reported that even if there was no food in the house, she was not allowed to go to the market to buy food. Some of the unmarried girls did their own grocery but some had “brothers” in the neighborhood who did the grocery for them.

Going out alone is still a male privilege. Prior to entering the EPZ, only 27 percent women in the garment industry and 44 percent of those in the non-garment industry could go out alone. After entering the EPZ these proportion rose to 34 percent and 52 percent respectively. Table 4.11 further shows that not only have they learnt to go out alone but now 60-75 percent of women could also buy on their own. This shows that women have gained confidence and are gradually developing themselves to adjust to the urban working life. This is an important change given that these workers mostly originated from rural areas where they had a protected life. Hence, work in the EPZ has increased mobility of the workers.

Those who felt that workers are not physically mobile after seeking wage employment meant that most of their commuting was limited to work and home, so the workers did not have the time to go out even if they had the freedom to do so. Friday was the only holiday. They did their washing and cleaning, and watched a movie on the TV with the family and neighbors. Going to the movies has also become very rare due to satellite TV channels. Visit to friends and relatives were also found to be very limited.

As mentioned earlier, due to the advent of the export oriented industries in the EPZ, migration of men and women from rural areas had been a central element of livelihood for many households. This had far-reaching implication in terms of women’s changes in life style in Bangladesh as mentioned above. It was observed that there was also solidarity in their group living. The growth of the EPZ has provided many families with income from renting out rooms to these migrant workers. Another important change due to migration has been that rural households are becoming dependent on these workers income. Not only is there one mouth less to feed in the rural households from where they have migrated, but also these workers are remitting money: about 10 percent of their

monthly income are remitted by garment workers. There was no gender difference in case of garment industry, but not so in case of non-garment industry. Only 6 percent of the women's income was remitted, whereas, for men the proportion was 16 percent (Table 4.5).

4.4 Domestic Conflicts

Domestic violence is another indicator often used for measuring empowerment. This is usually seen as a direct expression of patriarchal power in the household. But very often there is a reluctance to talk to strangers about domestic violence. Hence, our study is likely to underestimate the incidence of domestic violence. Of the currently married female workers, the incidence of threat to divorce was found to be 3 percent for the garment workers, while physical assault was reported by only 5 percent (Table 4.12). None of the non-garment female workers reported such violence. On the other hand, a small number of male non-garment workers reported threat to divorce and physical assault. It may be noted that as the non-garment workers are more educated than the garment workers they would shy away from reporting such incidence. Hence, we find that the female non-garment workers also refrained from reporting verbal abuse. This confirms that more educated ones tend to hide violence even when they are subjected to violence. In another household survey of the female garment workers of Dhaka EPZ conducted by the author, both men and women commonly reported verbal abuse. Women also reported that they were beaten and faced abuse with bad language more than men. Hence large-scale questionnaire survey is therefore not a good way of capturing domestic violence.

But it is also true that due to women's greater participation in the public domain through employment in the EPZ, domestic violence would become public knowledge and hence would be shameful. Moreover, it was also noted from discussion with the workers that violence tended to reduce as these women were significantly contributing to their household income. They also said that due to long hours at work, they did not have time to quarrel.

4.5 Health Consciousness

The workers in the EPZ have become health conscious. This is evident from the findings in Table 4.13 which suggests that a large proportion (about 50 percent) of the workers did not suffer from any illness during the month prior to the survey. This reflects that workers can now afford to buy better food and better treatment, which has a positive impact on their health. It is also a reflection of congenial working condition and better access to doctors⁸. They spend about 3-4 percent of their monthly income on health (Table 4.5). Their consciousness about health is also apparent in their willingness to pay 2.5 percent of their salary as premium for availing health insurance. About 70 percent of the workers reported such willingness.

The incidence of illness for garment workers was higher than that of the non-garment workers. Moreover, contrary to the expectation, a higher proportion of men than women reported illness in both garment and non-garment industry. The incidence of work related illness was high for headache, followed by chest pain. Of the seasonal illnesses, the incidence was high for cold/cough and fever, while gastric was the most common water borne diseases reported by the workers.

More women than men suffered from headache and fever in the garment industry, while more men than women suffered from eye trouble, cold/cough, pain, gastric and urinary infection. On the contrary, in the non-garment industry, more women than men suffered from eye trouble and headache, cold/cough and fever and more men than women suffered from pain, and all water borne and other diseases. Women in the non-garment did not

⁸ There is a hospital inside the EPZ where treatment is free for the workers, but the factory owners have to pay a charge in US dollars per month: for 1-100 workers=\$100; 101-250=\$125; 251-500= \$200; 501-1000=\$250; 1001-1500=\$350; 1501-2000=\$400; 2001 and above=\$500. The hospital primarily provides first aid to the workers. But it is alleged that same medicine is provided for a number of illness. Both the workers and the employers felt that there is a need to improve the quality of hospital services and drugs.

suffer from water borne or other diseases. Headache seems to be the worst illness reported by the workers. This may result from long hours of work, lack of leave facilities and lack of sleep. The difference in the incidence of illness among the garment and non-garment workers, may be due to the difference in their level of education and household income.

Table 4.1
Previous occupation

(Column percentage)

Occupation	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
RMG	38.0	32.4	4.4	-
Agriculture	1.4	-	5.7	-
Labourer	1.4	0.6	3.8	-
Domestic servant	-	-	0.6	-
Other industry	8.5	-	14.5	6.3
Business	4.2	-	6.3	-
Teaching	1.4	1.1	1.9	4.2
Tailoring	2.8	1.7	0.6	2.1
Textile	-	-	14.5	-
Shoe factory	1.4	-	4.4	20.8
Others	4.2	-	5.7	2.1
Unemployed	-	1.1	3.8	-
Not in the labour force	36.6	63.1	33.9	64.6
Students	31.0	36.3	30.8	45.8
Household chores	5.6	26.8	3.1	18.8
Total No.	71	179	159	48

Table 4.2
Poverty Line

(Column percentage)

Poverty Group	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Lo – 680	-	0.6	1.9	-
681 – 991	1.4	2.8	1.9	4.2
992 – 1300	8.5	12.3	6.9	27.1
1301 – 1600	14.1	13.4	11.3	6.3
1601+	76.1	70.9	78.0	62.5
Average	2200	1997	2396	2010
Total No.	71	179	159	48

Table 4.3
Decision to seek job at EPZ

(Column percentage)

Criteria	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Own decision	36.6	37.4	47.2	47.9
Neighbor/Friends	14.1	20.1	10.7	14.6
Husband	1.4	8.4	0.6	6.3
Father	9.9	5.6	5.0	4.2
Brother	8.5	5.0	8.2	6.3
Relative	18.3	13.4	21.4	14.6
Mother	5.6	7.3	3.8	2.1
Sister	4.2	6.7	-	2.1
Others	5.6	1.7	5.7	2.1
Total No.	71	179	159	48

Note: Multiple answer

Table 4.4
Reason for taking job at EPZ

(Column percentage)

Reason of job	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Push factors (Total Response)	56	176	122	46
Due to family need	15.5	34.1	13.2	33.3
Economic crisis	18.3	24.0	13.2	14.6
Eldest in the family	-	0.6	0.6	4.2
For education of children/brother/sister	5.6	7.8	0.6	4.2
Could not go to in laws house	-	-	-	8.3
No opportunity for education	1.4	0.6	2.5	4.2
Husband/father died	4.2	2.8	1.3	6.3
Lack of job/Unemployed	22.5	8.4	30.2	8.3
Previous job was not good	2.8	0.6	-	-
Neighbours work in EPZ	2.8	2.8	2.5	2.1
To be self reliant	4.2	12.8	3.8	6.3
Factory Lay off	1.4	-	5.0	-
River erosion	-	0.6	0.6	-
No male member in the family	-	-	-	2.1
For own education expense	-	0.6	0.6	-
Did not want to study	-	2.2	2.5	2.1
Can marry on your own choice	-	0.6	-	-
Pull factors (Total Response)	228	540	514	146
Regular salary/more salary	22.5	18.4	22.0	8.3
More facilities(Lunch/Medical etc)	28.2	22.3	24.5	2.1
Better rules	8.5	10.6	12.6	6.3
For promotion	1.4	2.8	2.5	8.3
Good environment	14.1	16.8	10.1	14.6
Nearer to the house	19.7	5.6	6.3	-
Easy to get job	4.2	3.4	6.9	14.6
Relative in the factory	1.4	0.6	6.3	8.3
Foreign company	-	-	10.7	-
Govt./Weekly holiday	-	3.4	-	-
Fixed duty time	2.8	3.9	-	-
No night duty	-	2.2	-	-
Total No.	71	179	159	48

Note: Multiple answer

Table 4.5
Relative at the Factory

(Column percentage)

Relative	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Husband/Wife	18.3	14.0	13.3	16.7
Father	1.4	1.1	-	-
Mother	1.4	1.7	-	-
Brother	18.3	5.6	12.7	10.4
Sister	8.5	24.6	5.1	18.8
Other relative	22.5	26.8	33.5	29.2
None	36.6	35.2	42.4	33.3
Total	71	179	159	48

Note: Multiple answer

Table 4.6
Place of Residence

(Column percentage)

Living arrangement	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Nuclear family	45.1	48.0	33.3	41.7
Joint family	26.8	24.0	9.4	18.8
Relative/Sister house	1.4	7.3	0.6	2.1
Paying guest	-	0.6	-	-
Factory quarter	-	-	6.3	-
New type of messing	26.7	20.1	50.3	37.6
Hostel/mess	14.1	5.0	35.2	10.4
Live alone	4.2	1.7	8.8	6.3
Live with brother/sister/mother	8.4	13.4	6.3	20.9
Total No.	71	179	159	48

Table 4.7
Expenditure pattern

Expenditure head	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Tk. per month				
• house rent	242	210	338	285
• food	1070	586	1126	759
• education	95	86	42	29
• health	101	95	98	57
• transport	123	83	125	152
• pocket money	281	181	245	184
• remittance	280	242	444	141
• savings	262	286	158	329
• others	431	730	243	497
Total income	2885	2499	2902	2526
Share of income				(Col. percentage)
• house rent	8.3	8.4	11.6	11.3
• food	37.0	23.4	38.9	30.0
• education	3.3	3.4	1.4	1.1
• health	3.5	3.8	3.4	2.3
• transport	4.3	3.3	4.3	6.0
• pocket money	9.7	7.2	8.5	7.3
• remittance	9.7	9.7	15.3	5.6
• savings	9.0	11.4	5.4	13.0
• others	14.9	29.2	11.2	23.4
Total income	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 4.8
Control over income

(Column percentage)

Who use your income	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Self	49.3	38.5	84.3	58.3
Jointly	25.4	21.2	8.2	6.3
Husband	4.2	15.1	0.6	14.6
Father	12.7	15.1	4.4	8.3
Father-in-law	-	2.2	-	-
Brother	1.4	1.7	1.9	-
Mother	5.6	5.0	0.6	6.3
Mother-in-law	-	0.6	-	-
Sister	1.4	0.6	-	4.2
Son	-	-	-	2.1
Have Bank account	26.8	30.2	21.4	37.5
Primary earner	67.6	43.0	56.6	37.5
Total No.	71	179	159	48

Table 4.9
Household decision

(Column percentage)

Household decision making	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Own decision before joining				
Yes	62.0	28.5	67.3	45.8
No	31.0	67.0	30.2	52.1
Sometimes	7.0	4.5	2.5	2.1
Own decision after joining				
Yes	78.9	67.0	92.5	68.8
No	14.1	25.7	5.7	25.0
Sometimes	7.0	7.3	1.9	6.3
Daily shopping				
Self	29.6	14.5	42.1	22.9
Jointly	39.4	32.4	45.3	41.7
Spouse	5.6	17.9	3.7	8.4
Parents	21.1	25.1	6.9	20.9
Others	4.3	10.1	2.0	6.1
Health care				
Self	50.7	27.9	67.3	39.6
Jointly	36.6	48.6	29.6	41.7
Spouse	-	2.2	-	2.1
Parents	12.7	17.3	2.6	14.6
Total No.	71	179	159	48
Children's schooling (Ever married with children)				
Self	11.1	38.1	11.5	66.7
Jointly	55.6	45.2	73.1	33.3
Spouse	-	4.8	15.4	-
Father-in-law	22.2	11.9	-	-
Others	11.1			
Total No.	9	42	26	3
Family Planning (Ever married)				
Self	19.4	8.0	9.0	5.3
Jointly	80.6	83.0	88.1	89.5
Spouse	-	8.0	1.5	5.3
No response	-	-	-	-
Total No.	36	98	77	24

Table 4.10
Pattern of investment since employment in EPZ

(Taka)

Type of invest	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Ornament	1217	5215	1088	4342
Clothing	3278	3679	3911	3727
Radio/Tape recorder	511	332	348	266
Television	746	1070	632	1287
Watch	210	197	172	167
Land	4309	3882	1635	5062
Furniture	1138	1596	1922	2118
Fan	105	183	259	303
Savings	152	1806	279	1233
House build/repair	-	458	352	187
Others	429	514	54	260
Total No.	71	179	159	48

Table 4.11
Take decision on your own

(Column percentage)

Criteria	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Decision before joining				
Go outside alone				
Yes	81.7	26.8	91.2	43.8
No	14.1	72.1	8.2	52.1
Sometimes	4.2	1.1	0.6	4.2
Could buy on your own				
Yes	70.4	26.3	74.8	43.8
No	18.3	70.4	20.8	50.0
Sometimes	11.3	3.4	4.4	6.3
Went to market				
Yes	67.6	17.3	73.6	31.3
No	22.5	76.5	10.1	60.4
Sometimes	9.9	6.1	16.4	8.3
Decision After joining				
Go out side alone				
Yes	88.7	60.3	95.0	70.8
No	7.0	37.4	3.1	27.1
Sometimes	4.2	2.2	1.9	2.1
Could buy on your own				
Yes	81.7	62.0	96.2	75.0
No	8.5	29.1	3.8	14.6
Sometimes	9.9	8.9	-	10.4
Went to market				
Yes	64.8	33.5	86.2	52.1
No	16.9	54.2	3.8	35.4
Sometimes	18.3	12.3	10.1	12.5
Total No.	71	179	159	48

Table 4.12
Family Conflict (Currently married)

(Column percentage)

Conflict	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Divorced				
Yes	-	4.5	1.3	-
No	88.9	94.3	94.8	100.0
NA	11.1	1.1	3.9	-
Assault				
Yes	-	9.1	1.3	-
No	88.9	89.8	94.8	100.0
NA	11.1	1.1	3.9	-
Verbal Abuse				
Yes	8.3	12.5	11.7	-
No	80.6	86.4	83.1	100.0
NA	11.1	1.1	5.2	-
Total No.	36	88	77	20

Table 4.13
Incidence of Illness

(Column percentage)

Diseases	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Work related				
Eye trouble	7.0	5.6	5.1	6.3
Ear pain	-	0.6	1.3	-
Headache	21.1	24.0	13.9	33.3
Pain in leg/hand/back	4.2	1.7	5.0	-
Chest pain	8.5	6.1	8.9	2.1
Urinary infection	4.2	1.7	2.5	-
Weakness/ill health	-	2.2	1.9	2.1
Seasonal				
Fever	7.0	7.8	3.8	4.2
Cold/cough	9.9	6.1	4.4	12.5
Water borne				
Diarrhoea/dysentery	1.4	-	0.6	-
Jaundice	1.4	-	1.3	-
Less appetite	4.2	4.5	1.9	-
Stomach Pain	-	2.8	0.6	-
Gastric	12.7	8.9	7.6	-
Other Disease				
Sexual disease	-	-	0.6	-
Skin disease/Allergy	1.4	1.1	3.1	-
Burning sensation on hand/foot	-	0.6	0.6	-
Tooth pain	-	0.6	1.3	-
Others	-	1.1	3.8	2.1
No Illness	46.5	48.0	53.8	56.3
2.5% premium of salary				
Yes	71.8	69.8	72.3	66.7
No	28.2	30.2	27.7	33.3
Total No.	71	179	159	48

Note: Multiple answer

V. Cost of Wage Employment

This section will analyse the cost of wage employment in terms of lack of social transformation, lack of freedom of association and violence ensuing wage employment. These are some of the cost, which the worker in the EPZ has to bear.

5.1 Lack of Social Transformation

To what extent employment in the EPZ are challenging certain societal norms and tradition needs to be ascertained. Time use data would show whether women have a double day, whether there is gender difference in leisure time etc. For married women, it is important to know who takes care of her child while she is at work, and who does the cooking. Other social changes are whether employment in the EPZ has changed her status in the household and whether her relationship with her husband had improved or not. For unmarried women whether her marriage prospect increased is another aspect of enquiry.

5.1.1 No Changes in Gender Roles

The employment of women in the EPZ has not changed much the social division of labour in the household. This is evident from the time use data, which show that women's reproductive work in the household has not reduced. Table 5.1 suggests that men and women workers spend similar amount of time in their wage employment in the EPZ and in sleeping . But on an average a female worker spends about 2.6 hours in cooking and household chores, while a male worker spend 1.0 hour in the garment industry. On the other hand in the non-garment industry women spend 3.0 hours and men spend 1.5 hours for such activities. Hence, work in the EPZ has increased hours of paid work for women without reducing their time spent in cooking and household chores. This has also reduced the leisure time of the female workers. The female garment workers had almost one hour less of leisure time than male garment workers: 1.7 hours and 2.6 hour of leisure time respectively. But the difference for non-garment workers was lower: 2.2 hours for men and 1.9 hours for women.

Table 5.1 further shows the time spent by spouse of currently married workers.

Interestingly, the table shows that on an average the spouse of a male workers does paid

work for 4-5 hours while the spouse of a female workers does so for 9-10 hours. Hence the wives can do the household chores. The spouse of female garment workers spends about 1.2 hours for cooking and household chores, while those in non-garment do so for 0.8 hours.

Table 5.2 shows that after joining the EPZ, the proportion of men and women who never did cooking for the household fell slightly. Also there has been a slight fall in the proportion of women who regularly did cooking for the household, while the converse is true for men.. About 14 percent men and 43 percent women in the garment industry does cooking regularly. These proportion for non-garment were 26 percent and 46 percent respectively. The table further shows that men usually use part-time maids to do the cooking, but women workers hardly do so. More than half of the unmarried has their mother/ sister/sister-in-law to do the cooking. Hence due to increase in employment of young women in export oriented industries the burden of cooking has increased for other female members of the household, especially the older generation.

However, this type of time use data fails to take account of “overlapping activities” i.e. performing more than one task at a time. The incidence of overlapping activities or multi-tasking is very common in Bangladesh, especially for women. Moreover when women undertake paid work, they often have to perform two or more tasks with greater intensity. One task, which is commonly undertaken with household work, is childcare. So, the time spent on childcare was found to be low. Moreover, 47 percent of ever married women in the garment industry and 71 percent in the non-garment industry did not have children, and 16 percent women in the garment and 8 percent in the non-garment industry had left their child in the village home. Surprisingly, a small number also leave their children alone at home (Table 5.3), while the rest had someone to look after their children.

The above suggests that the sexual division of labour which designates reproductive work as female task has not changed. It has been taken for granted that women can stretch their time. But breaking points will be reached which will have cost not only for women themselves, but also for the society as well. Rigidity in the social division of labour in

social reproduction in circumstances in which women are undertaking more employment may jeopardize standards of child care, health and family welfare. This may happen to the ever-married women who have to spend time for cooking after returning from work.

5.1.2 Low Social Prestige

Industrial work is still a taboo. In many cases the women workers reported that in her village, they did not know that she worked in a factory. In the villages, factory work is not considered to be good for women, as women should work within the precinct of the household.

It is important to know whether the workers faced any barriers before joining the EPZ. More women in the garment industry faced barriers than the non-garment workers. About 74 percent of women in the garment industry and 84 percent in the non-garment industry did not face any objections in joining the EPZ (Table 5.4). During the survey, information was also collected on the worker's own perception about their work, as well as what she/he thinks neighbour's and relative's perceptions to be. Table 5.5 shows that about 80 percent of the workers felt that work in the EPZ have raised their status to themselves, and 70 percent said the same in case of their own family. But for 20 percent of the female workers their work has reduced their status to their relatives and neighbours. The fact that the society still looks down on women's employment in the factories is also evident from Table 5.6 which shows that 16 percent of the unmarried girls felt that after their employment in the factory, their possibility of marriage has decreased. Also for married women, about 9 percent of women working in the garment industry and none working in the non-garment industry said that their relationship with husband has deteriorated after seeking factory work. Moreover, Table 5.5 further shows that social status to husband and in-laws has declined for a small number of currently married women workers. Hence, husband and in-laws are increasingly accepting wage employment for women.

5.2 Lack of Freedom of Association

The right to form association is a basic human right of a worker. Bangladesh has ratified the ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Rights to Organize Convention, 1948 (No. 87) and the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). Moreover the right has been protected in Bangladesh by the Industrial Relation Ordinance XXII of 1969. Hence, at the national level the workers right to organize is recognised. Only in the EPZ this right is denied, where this is stated as one of the incentive for investing in Bangladesh. This is a violation of all the laws mentioned above. This is because the trade union in Bangladesh is politicised and it is feared that foreign investment in the EPZ will be hampered if trade union is allowed to operate within the EPZ. Recently, the USA has been insisting on the introduction of trade union in the EPZ in Bangladesh. On the other hand, the Korean and Japanese have threatened to withdraw their investment if this is done. Hence, The issue is important both nationally and internationally. It has become a question of trade off between workers right and employment versus investment in the EPZ.

In this survey an attempt has been made to ascertain whether the workers want or not to have trade union in their factory. Moreover, the reason for doing so was also investigated into through open-ended question where the workers could give at best two reasons.

The survey findings suggest that there is a demand for trade union in the Dhaka EPZ. In the garment industry, 69 percent men and 45 percent women wanted to have trade union in their factory. The proportion in the non-garment industry was much higher: 84 percent for men and 69 percent for women. Relatively, the female garment workers are more unwilling to have trade union in their factory. It may be noted that because of lower level of education and age of the female garment workers, they know little about the mechanisms of the labour market and trade unions (Table 5.7).

Of those who supported trade union, only a small proportion of workers could not cite reason for supporting trade union. The most cited reasons were that they can place their rights and claims, and they can get better facilities. But the non-garment male workers also said that having trade union would reduce termination of workers and also labour

laws would be implemented. However, most of those who did not support trade union, could not give a reason, as they did not understand what trade union could do for them. In the garment industry about 37 percent of male workers and 43 percent of female workers said so. But in the non-garment industry only 36 percent of the female worker fell in this category. The most cited reason for not supporting trade union was that they did not want to go into hassles, and that there would be unrest/ indiscipline in the factory. The non-garment male workers also cited reasons like workers do not benefit from forming trade union.

The policy of allowing trade union outside EPZ and not allowing inside EPZ is discriminatory. The Government has decided to introduce workers welfare committees and a labour relation's tribunal in the EPZ. The structure and activities of the proposed committees and tribunal are yet to be determined. But this can at best be a interim solution and has to be phased out in 3-5 years time and replaced by trade union. In that case strike may be prohibited so that production is not hampered. There is also a need to educate the workers about workers right and about trade union activities. As the workers are educated this could be easily done through distribution of leaflets and group meetings. Moreover as they live in concentrated areas, such awareness meeting could take place at a venue near their place of residence rather than the workplace.

Although most of the firms have very good working condition but Table 5.8 suggests that the non-wage benefits are not uniform across firms. This is because it is not mandatory to give attendance bonus, transport/transport allowance and lunch/lunch allowance, as mentioned earlier. Most of these are absent in the non-garment factories and hence 80 percent men and 66 percent women reported that there were problems in the non-garment industry. Some of the general problems mentioned by both the garment and non-garment workers were: no increment, no transport/conveyance allowance, leave not available when required, too much work/target to be fulfilled and low wages. Earlier it was mentioned that method of calculation of basic salary and overtime are not given in the BEPZA instruction. As most of the benefits depend on basic it is important to have a uniform method of calculating basic salary.

Some problem were more specifically mentioned by the male workers such as no promotion/permanent job, work place is very hot, and no job security. Further male non-garment workers complained that they had less overtime, no weekly holiday, and no allowance/low bonus. The BEPZA authorities should be able to solve most of these problems.

5.3 Violence Ensuing Wage Employment

The creation of wage employment also makes the workers more vulnerable to violence. The workers may become victims of violence at (a) work place, (b) in the street during commuting from place of work or (c) at the place of residence. As the garment workers are younger and less educated than the non-garments workers, they are more likely to become victim of violence.

In this survey, information was collected from the workers regarding harassment ranging from demeaning remarks to physical assaults. It is quite likely that especially female workers would underreport these sorts of violence. But as these workers were also asked about these incidences in case of their colleagues, we would expect that the reporting would be higher in case of their colleagues. Table 5.8 shows that more than two-third of the workers reported no violence for themselves, but this proportion was only one-third for their colleagues.

Victims of Violence at Work Place

As the survey was conducted inside the factory premise, it is likely that less of work place violence would be reported. The female workers reported that the male workers always look for an opportunity to have an affair and send love letters. This bothered especially the unmarried female workers. The survey findings suggest that at the workplace the most common violence is verbal abuse using bad language. All workers reported such incidents. Other than verbal abuse, the workers suffer from fear of dismissal: more female garment workers suffer from this than their male counterpart, but the reverse was true for the non-garment workers. Beating in the factory was found to be

minimal, but it is another form of violence within the factory, which was reported more by men than women and found to be higher among the non-garment male workers. As expected, all incidence of violence was reported to be higher in case of their colleagues especially in case of beating in the factory and fear of dismissal of the female garment workers. None of the workers reported rape in their own case but in case of their colleagues, the highest reporting (about 4 percent) was done by the male garment workers.

Victims of Violence in the Street

Streets are unsafe for women than men. About 15 percent of the workers either got afraid in the street or were attacked by *mastan* (muggers). Such incidence was reported by almost 50 percent of the workers in case of their colleagues. Although most of the garment workers travel by bus, but still they have to walk from the main road to their house. Many reported that when they return late, either their father or brother comes to the main road to escort them home. Those who walk to work would in addition have to face harassment by street boys. Interestingly, only 2 percent of female garment workers reported harassed by street boys, and none reported rape in the street. But they were not shy in reporting these in case of their colleague: about 14 percent reported harassed in the street in case of their colleague. The highest reporting of incidence of rape in the street in case of colleague was 6.1 percent, reported by female garment workers. There were also reports of kidnapping women from the street and returning her after a few days. Local touts who get drunk mostly did these. Men also face harassment by police. Hence, travelling in-group have provided the workers with some security, but as the streets are not well lighted such incidence occur when they return home after dark.

Victims of Violence at the Place of Residence

These workers mostly live in a locality where there are many workers who work in the EPZ and hence they usually feel quite safe. Their close network gives them the protection and are not afraid of being evacuated from their residence. Most the workers of the same factory live close by rather than those coming from the same village. Three types of residence were noted: those who live with their families usually are locals, but their

houses are quite off the road. They however were most secured at home. For those who were migrants, some were renting rooms from low middle class families, while others lived in colonies. In a middle class family, usually in one compound there were about 4-10 rooms, which are let out to these workers. Those living with families were more secured than those living in colonies. Table 5.8 suggests that 20 percent of the workers were afraid of theft in their house and this proportion was 40 percent in case of their colleagues. This is mostly true for the migrants who do not have anyone at home to keep vigilance.

Table 5.1
Time use

(Hours per day)

Criteria	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Sleeping	7.3	7.1	6.9	7.2
Household chores	0.7	1.3	0.9	1.5
Child care	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1
Cooking	0.3	1.3	0.6	1.5
Paid work	9.7	9.5	9.8	8.5
Leisure	2.6	1.7	2.2	1.9
Carrying water	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.2
Travel time	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.4
Others	1.8	1.4	1.8	1.7
Total No.	71	179	159	48
Spouse (Currently married)				
Sleeping	7.7	7.3	7.2	7.7
Household chores	3.0	0.8	3.1	0.7
Child care	1.5	0.2	2.0	0.2
Cooking	2.4	0.4	2.5	0.1
Paid work	4.7	10.3	4.2	9.5
Leisure	2.0	2.1	1.9	2.9
Carrying water	0.7	0.2	0.8	0.1
Travel time	0.7	1.1	0.4	0.6
Others	1.2	1.4	1.9	2.1
Total No.	29	70	48	14

Table 5.2
Before and after joining EPZ

(Column percentage)

Criteria	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Did cooking				
Before joining				
Yes	11.3	54.2	18.9	52.1
No	81.7	24.6	69.2	22.9
Sometimes	7.0	21.2	11.9	25.0
After joining				
Yes	14.1	43.0	26.4	45.8
No	70.4	17.9	42.8	16.7
Sometimes	15.5	39.1	30.8	37.5
Person doing cooking in the household				
Self	14.1	43.0	26.4	45.8
Wife	35.2	-	28.3	-
Mother	31.0	26.8	11.3	22.9
Maid servant	14.1	1.1	22.6	6.3
Mother-in-law	1.4	7.3	0.6	-
Sister-in-law	5.6	5.0	1.3	8.3
Sister	4.2	9.5	2.5	8.3
Husband	1.4	5.0	-	6.3
Father	-	0.6	-	-
Room mate	1.4	0.6	6.3	2.1
Others	1.4	7.8	1.9	4.2
Total	71	179	159	48

Note: Multiple answer

Table 5.3
Person looking after children (ever-married)

(Column percentage)

Who looking	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
No child	55.6	46.9	48.1	70.8
Children stay in the village	8.3	16.3	11.7	8.3
None	-	5.1	-	8.3
Spouse	27.8	1.0	35.1	-
Father	-	1.0	-	-
Father-in-law	5.6	11.2	5.2	4.2
Sister	2.8	3.1	-	4.2
Servant	2.8	2.0	2.6	4.2
Another wife of husband	-	1.0	-	-
Mother	-	4.1	-	4.2
Mother-in-law	5.6	8.2	2.6	-
Others	-	5.1	-	-
Total	36	98	77	24

Note: Multiple answer

Table 5.4
Social barriers

(Column percentage)

Criteria	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
None	93.0	73.6	90.6	83.3
People talk badly	1.4	18.0	0.6	10.4
Women get spoiled	-	9.6	-	
Night works spoil girls	-	4.5	0.6	-
Husband opposed	-	3.4	-	-
Should continue education	7.0	5.6	3.1	2.1
Father/mother opposed	2.8	5.6	5.7	6.3
Father-in-law/mother-in-law opposed	-	0.6	-	-
Relative opposed	1.4	1.7	0.6	4.2
young child	-	0.6	0.6	-
Others	-	0.6	1.3	-
Total No.	71	179	159	48

Note: Multiple answer

Table 5.5
Status of social dignity after joining EPZ

(Column percentage)

Social Status	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Own				
Increase	80.3	85.5	82.4	77.1
Decrease	4.2	6.1	5.7	8.3
Unchanged	15.5	7.3	11.3	14.6
Don't know	-	1.1	0.6	-
Own family				
Increase	78.9	69.3	78.0	70.8
Decrease	1.4	7.8	6.9	10.4
Unchanged	19.7	21.8	14.5	18.8
Don't know	-	1.1	0.6	-
Relative				
Increase	71.8	52.5	77.4	62.5
Decrease	4.2	19.0	5.7	18.8
Unchanged	22.5	23.5	15.7	14.6
Don't know	1.4	5.0	1.3	4.2
Neighbor				
Increase	63.4	56.4	75.5	64.6
Decrease	5.6	17.3	5.0	18.8
Unchanged	21.1	14.5	15.1	12.5
Don't know	9.9	11.7	4.4	4.2
Total No.	71	179	159	48
Husband (Currently married)				
Increase	83.3	76.1	83.1	60.0
Decrease	-	4.5	2.6	10.0
Unchanged	13.9	17.0	13.0	30.0
Don't know	-	2.3	-	-
NA	2.8	-	1.3	-
Father/mother-in-law (Currently married)				
Increase	61.1	54.5	70.1	80.0
Decrease	5.6	15.9	2.6	10.0
Unchanged	16.7	18.2	18.2	10.0
Don't know	11.1	11.4	7.8	-
NA	5.6	-	1.3	-
Total No.	36	88	77	20

Table 5.6
Change in status by marital status

(Column percentage)

Criteria	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
For Unmarried				
After employment possibility of marriage				
Increase	51.4	58.0	46.3	33.3
Decrease	2.9	16.0	4.9	16.7
Unchanged	45.7	25.9	48.8	50.0
Total	35	81	82	24
For currently married				
Relation with husband after joining EPZ				
Increase	63.9	64.8	68.8	55.0
Decrease	2.8	9.1	1.3	-
Unchanged	22.2	19.3	26.0	45.0
NA	11.1	6.8	3.9	-
Total	36	88	77	20

Table 5.7
Do you want to have trade union

(Column percentage)

Criteria	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Want to have trade union				
Yes	69.0	44.7	83.6	68.8
No	31.0	55.3	16.4	31.3
Total	71	179	159	48
Reason for having trade union				
Trade union can solve our problem	8.2	27.5	8.3	12.1
We can place our rights & claims	36.7	27.5	34.1	36.4
Rules & regulation will be better	6.1	7.5	13.6	9.1
Can not terminate	14.3	5.0	17.4	-
Don't know	4.1	16.3	1.5	9.1
Unity grows	16.3	6.3	4.5	18.2
Salary will increase	6.1	8.8	9.8	3.0
Facilities will be more	22.4	21.3	20.5	21.2
System/order will back	-	-	-	3.0
Work load will be less	-	1.3	0.8	-
Eight hours of work	2.0	-	2.3	-
We can protest against injustice	6.1	2.5	2.3	3.0
Labour laws will be implemented	10.2	3.8	25.8	12.1
Job will be permanent	6.1	-	8.3	-
Others	-	1.3	5.3	-
Total	49	80	132	33
Reason for not having trade union				
Do not understand/Don't know	36.4	42.9	-	35.7
Don't like botheration	27.3	27.5	21.4	28.6
No need	9.1	13.2	7.1	14.3
No time	4.5	1.1	-	-
Fear to loosing job	4.5	2.2	28.6	7.1
Labours do not benefits	-	4.4	14.3	7.1
Working environment will be hampered	18.2	11.0	28.6	-
Leader enjoy all benefits	4.5	2.2	21.4	-
Problem is solved by management	13.6	3.3	-	-
Management dose not like it	-	1.1	7.1	-
No unity	-	1.1	7.1	7.1
Trade union Politicised	9.1	1.1	-	-
Others	-	1.1	-	-
Total	22	99	27	15

Note: Multiple answer

Table 5.8
Problems at EPZ

(Column percentage)

Disadvantage of EPZ work	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
No problem at all	46.4	58.4	21.4	33.3
No increment /specific date of increment	13.0	6.7	5.7	14.6
No transportation/conveyance	13.0	3.9	25.2	29.2
Leave not available when required	8.7	10.1	9.4	2.1
Too much work/target to be fulfilled	7.2	9.0	15.0	16.7
Low wages	4.3	1.1	13.2	6.3
Less remuneration/no work evaluation	4.3	1.1	3.8	12.5
No eating place	2.9	1.1	1.3	-
Low quality of food	2.9	3.4	1.9	-
No arrangement for lunch/lunch allowance	2.9	2.8	15.1	20.8
Use abusive language/assault	1.4	5.6	3.8	-
Perform work in standing position/change place	1.4	2.8	1.3	-
Punished for mistakes	1.4	3.4	-	-
No promotion/ permanent job	1.4	-	2.5	2.1
Work place very hot	4.3	-	15.1	-
Absent if leave is taken	2.9	-	3.1	6.3
No job security	1.4	-	1.9	-
Less overtime	-	-	2.5	2.1
No weekly holiday	-	-	3.1	-
Overtime payment	-	-	0.6	4.2
No allowances/low bonus	-	-	13.8	-
Don't want shift work	-	-	1.3	-
Others	7.2	5.6	8.7	6.3
Total	71	179	159	48

Note: Multiple answer

Table 5.9
Violence ensuing wage employment

(Column percentage)

Violence	RMG		Non-RMG	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Self				
No violence	70.4	60.9	53.5	75.0
Factory				
Beaten in factory	1.4	0.6	6.9	-
Fear of dismissal	5.6	12.8	14.5	10.4
Raped in the factory	-	-	-	-
Street				
Kidnapping	-	0.6	0.6	-
Attacked by mastan	5.6	3.9	2.5	2.1
Got afraid in the street	11.3	12.3	9.4	10.4
Harassed in the street	-	1.7	-	-
Raped in the street	-	-	-	-
Acid throwing	-	-	-	-
Harassed by police	1.4	0.6	3.1	-
Residence				
Fear of theft	21.1	20.7	27.7	12.5
Got afraid in the residence	-	2.2	5.0	2.1
Fear of evacuation	-	0.6	2.5	-
Influence of locality	-	-	0.6	-
Colleague				
No violence	45.1	36.9	34.0	41.7
Factory				
Beaten in factory	7.0	14.5	14.5	2.1
Fear of dismiss	11.3	24.0	22.6	12.5
Raped in the factory	4.2	0.6	1.3	2.1
Street				
Kidnapping	-	1.7	3.1	2.1
Attacked by mastan	29.6	22.9	17.6	22.9
Got afraid in the street	25.4	36.3	27.0	31.3
Harassed in the street	14.1	14.0	13.2	14.6
Raped in the street	5.6	6.1	3.8	4.2
Acid throwing	-	1.1	-	-
Harassed by police	8.5	0.6	3.8	-
Residence				
Fear of theft	32.4	43.0	39.6	47.9
Got afraid in the residence	5.6	15.6	14.5	14.6
Fear of evacuation	4.2	0.6	4.4	-
Influence of locality	-	0.6	1.9	-
None	-	-	-	-
Total	71	179	159	48

VI Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings in this paper suggests that employment in the EPZ has definitely provided men and women with employment in good working condition. It has also empowered women, increased their mobility and expanded their individual choice. Women's access to income-earning opportunities had many implications for their position in intra-household relationships. But this they have achieved at the cost of lack of freedom of association, lack of social transformation and increased risk of harassment. Hence the process is complex, and there is both decomposition and recomposition of women's subordination through employment in the EPZ. It is important to emphasize that those who are working in the EPZ, are the first generation of women wage workers. They did not have a 'role model' to follow as they have not seen an older generation of women working in such jobs. The improvement in the worker's well-being will be sustained in future if proper policy supports are extended to factories in EPZ and its workers as discussed below:

Phasing out of MFA

The main challenge which lies ahead is that the Agreement on Textile made under the auspices of the Uruguay Round of trade agreements stipulates phasing out of MFA by the year 2005. Many entrepreneurs and workers in the EPZ were not aware what lies ahead beyond 2005. Hence, it is very important that awareness measures are undertaken which may include the following:

- ***Setting up backward linkages***

A major threat is the phasing of MFA by the year 2005, when quotas will be eliminated. The development of the textile industry is imperative in view of the impending changes of quota free environment. Although Bangladesh offers excellent incentive for foreign investment, still they are not coming in a big way for investment in the textile sector. The extension of Dhaka EPZ may be only for textile industry, but water treatment plant must be ensured.

- *Seeking preferential access*

But elimination of quotas under MFA would not necessarily reduce garment exports, if new measures like preferential access, labour standards and eco-labeling are undertaken . Bangladesh as a Least Developed Country (LDC) is already trying for duty-free access of its products to the markets of developed countries. In the first World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial conference held in Singapore in December 1996, this has been incorporated in para 14 of the declaration⁹.

- *Diversifying into new and higher value products*

In order to remain competitive after 2005, there is a urgent need to diversity into new and higher value products which are not covered by the ATC. Also there is a need to diversity into other products like leather goods, electronics and IT.

- *Diversifying into newer markets*

Bangladesh need to diversity its exports to Japan and middle-east countries. Japan imports high value added products. But there is a market in the middle-east: namely the Hajj market where each Hajjis buy ‘tupi’s’, rubber sandles, towels for ahram, beads and prayer mats. This market could be captured through the regional cooperation like OIC. Also duty free access should be sought under other regional cooperation such as SAARC.

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Bangladesh has set an unique example by developing a safety net programme for the child labour. A similar programme could be developed for those workers who are producing the products listed in the ATC. Hence, BEPZA must ensure that all workers working more than six months have a BEPZA card .

⁹ See BGMEA newsletter December 1997.

Overcoming threat to linking labour standards with trade

There is international pressure to link labour standard with international trade. This will not adversely affect the future of the factories in the EPZ as they have good working condition. However, the following measure may be taken to overcome this threat:

- *Compliance with SA 8000*

Another recent threat is that beyond 2005, garment factories will also have to comply with SA 8000. BGMEA will shortly undertake a programme for SA 8000 compliance by all its members. This could easily be implemented in the EPZ.

- *Implementing labour laws*

The survey findings showed that the labour laws are implemented to a large extent in the EPZ. But still the working conditions of the workers would improve if the Labour Law Reform Report 1994 is approved and enforced. These changes include: appointment letter to be made compulsory; maternity leave to be provided for two surviving children; workers need to give 60 day's notice to leave jobs; working hours for women will be from 6 am to 10 pm; provision for a one-day weekly leave; equal wage to be paid to men and women for equal work; fine for not paying the minimum wage; group of establishment at the same location can form one union; unions cannot be affiliated with political parties; and trade union to provide training on labour laws. The survey findings showed that much of these provision are implemented in the EPZ through the BEPZA instructions.

There are some provisions, which are not implemented fully in the EPZ. The provision of sick leave was not implemented in the EPZ. This was one of the main complain of the workers and hence deserves immediate attention. Moreover, appointment letters are not provided to all workers. This needs to be implemented too.

Providing maternity leave may be linked with trade in future. It was noted in the survey findings that maternity leave are given in most garment factories but not in non-garment

factories. Although laws for providing such leave exists, but the ILO convention on maternity leave has not been signed by Bangladesh yet. Bangladesh will create a unique example if a tax-at-source or payment per worker (as done for the hospital services) from the exporters could be used for paying maternity leave to the female workers in the EPZ .

An increase in the minimum wage of EPZ workers is needed on both equity and efficiency ground. The findings of the study suggests that overtime has become an integral part of their earnings and it forms about 20 percent. Hence, wages could be increased by 20 percent so that all workers earn above the minimum wage set by BEPZA. The calculation of basic salary and overtime payment needs to be incorporated in BEPZA instruction on an urgent basis as most non-wage benefits are based on basic salary.

- *Provide uniform non-wage benefits*

Although attention has been given to transport in the garment factories in the EPZ, but the non-garment factories are still lagging behind. This will provide safe and secure travelling to and from factories. Also not all factories were found to provide lunch or lunch allowance. Non-wage benefits were found to be more in the garment factories than non-garment factories. BEPZA therefore needs to make mandatory all the non-wage benefits for all factories.

- *Improving health care facilities*

As mentioned in the paper, there is a hospital at the EPZ where the factories make monthly contributions. The hospital mainly provides first aid to the workers. Both the workers and employers felt that there was a need to improve the quality of hospital services and drugs.

- *Providing banking facilities at the EPZ*

Although rural women have access to banking through micro credit, the workers in the EPZ does not have access to this facility. The paper suggests that in the EPZ saving as well as the proportion of workers having bank accounts is quite high. Hence, it is important to provide banking at the factory site at least once a week. This will also make workers feel secured on their pay day, when mugging usually takes place.

- *Allow Trade union at the EPZ*

It is usually said that women workers do not unionise. But the findings of the survey shows that majority of men and women want to have trade union in their enterprise. Workers at the EPZ must have their fundamental rights to collective bargaining. Within the EPZ strike is banned. This provision may remain.

VI Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings in this paper suggests that employment in the EPZ has definitely provided men and women with employment in good working condition. It has also empowered women, increased their mobility and expanded their individual choice. Women's access to income-earning opportunities had many implications for their position in intra-household relationships. But this they have achieved at the cost of lack of freedom of association, lack of social transformation and increased risk of harassment. Hence the process is complex, and there is both decomposition and recomposition of women's subordination through employment in the EPZ. It is important to emphasize that those who are working in the EPZ, are the first generation of women wage workers. They did not have a 'role model' to follow as they have not seen an older generation of women working in such jobs. The improvement in the worker's well-being will be sustained in future if proper policy supports are extended to factories in EPZ and its workers as discussed below:

Phasing out of MFA

The main challenge which lies ahead is that the Agreement on Textile made under the auspices of the Uruguay Round of trade agreements stipulates phasing out of MFA by the year 2005. Many entrepreneurs and workers in the EPZ were not aware what lies ahead beyond 2005. Hence, it is very important that awareness measures are undertaken which may include the following:

- *Setting up backward linkages*

A major threat is the phasing of MFA by the year 2005, when quotas will be eliminated. The development of the textile industry is imperative in view of the impending changes

of quota free environment. Although Bangladesh offers excellent incentive for foreign investment, still they are not coming in a big way for investment in the textile sector. The extension of Dhaka EPZ may be kept only for textile industry, but water treatment plant must be ensured.

- *Seeking preferential access*

But elimination of quotas under MFA would not necessarily reduce garment exports, if new measures like preferential access, labour standards and eco-labeling are undertaken . Bangladesh as a Least Developed Country (LDC) is already trying for duty-free access of its products to the markets of developed countries. In the first World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial conference held in Singapore in December 1996, this has been incorporated in para 14 of the declaration¹⁰.

- *Diversifying into new and higher value products*

In order to remain competitive after 2005, there is a urgent need to diversity into new and higher value products which are not covered by the ATC. Also there is a need to diversity into other products like leather goods, electronics and IT.

- *Diversifying into newer markets*

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