



## Impact of Fast Fashion in Bangladesh: An Analysis of the Role of the UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to determine the role of the UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion in overcoming the impact of fast fashion in Bangladesh. A qualitative research method was applied in this study. Qualitative research is research that focuses on observing occurrences as well as the substance of the meaning of these phenomena. The strength of words and sentences used in research delivery has a large influence on the analysis and insight of qualitative research; the focus of qualitative research is on the process and meaning of the results. According to the findings of this study, fast fashion has a social impact on the people of Bangladesh in addition to an environmental impact. Furthermore, this research demonstrates that the role of the UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion is inextricably linked to the aim of its founding.

**Keywords:** *NGO; Fast Fashion; Bangladesh*

### **Introduction**

The UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion is an initiative created by the UN and allied organizations to promote projects and policies that change the course of fashion, reduce negative environmental and social impacts, and transform fashion into a driver for improving the world's ecosystem and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The alliance also serves as a communication and collaboration platform for a number of UN agencies working to make fashion more sustainable, including Blue Fashion, an initiative to use sustainable marine materials and protect arable land launched by FAO of the United Nations; Ethical Fashion Initiative, which encourages artisans from developing countries launched by the International Trade Centre; and governments are compelled to encourage sustainable manufacturing (Nijman, 2019). The primary reason for founding this alliance is to encourage collaboration, information transparency, and outreach in the fight against fast fashion.

Fast fashion is connected with disposable consumption models and disposable apparel of poor quality. The Cambridge English Dictionary describes fast fashion as "clothing that is created and sold cheaply so that individuals can purchase new apparel frequently"(Cambridge Dictionary, 2019). By accelerating the rate at which new collections are designed and produced, and by making clothes inexpensive and of low quality, fast fashion creates clothes that do not require repair because they are

discarded before they wear out, are uneconomical because new clothes are so inexpensive, and are discarded quickly (Roos et al., 2019). The advent of fast fashion increased the number of fashion seasons from two per year to as many as fifty to one hundred micro seasons (Drew & Yehounme, 2017). Previously, shopping was viewed as an event that needed people to save money and only buy specific clothes that they had wanted for a long time; now, fast fashion has transformed shopping into a sort of entertainment where customers find it easy to buy new garments. To keep up with the rapid growth of fashion and discard clothes that are deemed out of date, a culture of discarding has developed (F, 2020). More than 80 billion new garments are purchased annually, which is four times more than twenty years ago (The University of Queensland, n.d.). Statistics indicate that in the United Kingdom, 10 billion euros worth of clothes is purchased but never worn (Halliday, 2018), and in the United States, the typical person yearly discards more than 15 million tons of apparel (LeBlanc, 2020).

However, the rise of fast fashion has a detrimental effect on the environment. One cotton shirt uses roughly 700 gallons of water, while a pair of pants uses 2,000 gallons. The fashion business contributes around 5% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions through the production, distribution, and disposal of clothing. The industry generates 2.1 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> annually, which is more than the combined emissions of the shipping and aviation industries (Herrmann, 2017; WEF, 2021). By 2030, the UNFCCC predicts that manufacturing emissions will have increased by almost 60% (Earth.Org, 2021). One such country is India, where more than 1 million tons of textiles are discarded annually, the majority of which originate from domestic sources and account for about 3% of all household trash by weight. India's third-largest source of urban solid waste is textile waste (Lopes, 2021). A lack of attention to the social impact of the supply chain and the continuing focus on creating inexpensive garments have led to disasters like the Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh in 2013 and other tragedies. An estimated 1,132 people were murdered and more than 2,500 others were wounded when the structure containing five textile factories collapsed. There have been no fewer than 109 accidents since the incident. Among them were around 35 events at textile factories, in which 491 workers were hurt and 27 workers lost their lives (ILO, 2013).

The Covid-19 pandemic has created new difficulties for the fast fashion sector as well. A #payup campaign to hold the brand accountable for what occurred emerged after it was revealed in March 2020 that numerous major brands failed to pay employees after producing clothing worth 40 billion dollars. In the end, major brands like Zara and GAP paid about 15 million dollars (Goodwin, 2021). The disaster's presence and the resulting violence brought attention to the subpar working conditions Bangladeshi garment industry employees endure. Low salaries in comparison to other nations, a high proportion of children and women workers, a hazardous workplace environment that encourages incidences of work-related accidents and fatalities, and the growth of diseases related to the workplace. The majority of factories do not adhere to the criteria set forth in building and construction rules, which frequently results in building collapses and fatal fire events.

Bangladesh, the world's second-largest producer of apparel, is also impacted by the fast fashion sector, which places a premium on high production quantities at low costs. While this does increase revenues for fast fashion businesses, it has a detrimental effect on Bangladeshi garment workers who are exploited and under pressure to match supplier demand. Fast fashion has an effect on the environment in addition to being socially problematic. Fast fashion's low cost has disastrous environmental effects on Bangladesh. Garment factories utilize hazardous dyes and chemicals that are dumped into local rivers and poison the water supply in order to create clothes fast and cheaply. This leads to water pollution and an increase in disease among Bangladeshis (Bynum, 2021).

The increase in waste water from harmful synthetic dyes used in the process of dyeing clothing is what leads to water pollution. The Buriganga River near Shyampur, Dhaka, has the lowest Water Quality Index (WQI) rating when water is tested from several river locations, with pH levels in the water being 7.6, 6.7, and 8.5 in the pre-monsoon, monsoon, and post-monsoon periods, respectively, against a normal

level of 7 (UNB, 2022). One of Bangladesh's biggest rivers, the Buriganga River traverses both the west and the east of the Dhaka area. The Buriganga River is regarded as the lifeblood of the city of Dhaka since it is used by locals for drinking, bathing, irrigation, and industrial uses. Additionally, it was discovered in 2020 that water samples from the Buriganga river had chromium and cadmium concentrations that were more than six times the World Health Organization's maximum guidelines (AFP, 2022). The Buriganga River's high pollution levels have a negative influence on people's health in addition to the ecosystem.

Bangladesh has seen a greater impact from fast fashion than wealthy nations like China, which also happens to be the nation with the largest garment industry. Fast fashion has a significant impact on the environment, where chemicals used in the garment production process contaminate river water pollution, and on society, where workers' immunity is not given enough consideration. As the largest garment producing developing nation, this industry has significant negative social and environmental effects. Of these problems, then the author formulates research questions about How the role of UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion in addressing the impact of fast fashion in Bangladesh?

### ***Literature Review***

The role of the UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion in addressing the effects of fast fashion in Bangladesh is a topic worthy of study because its existence is believed to be capable of promoting and assisting the development of a policy aimed at reducing the effects of fast fashion, particularly in Bangladesh. The study of the role of NGOs is a study that has been done by many people, some studies on the role of NGOs have different focus between one another. First, the study focuses on explaining that NGOs have adequately equipped themselves and emerge enthusiastically in providing services such as assistance to the blind, disabled and disadvantaged and assisting the government in maternal and child health care, including family planning programs. This study also also discussed the National Population Policy (NPP) 2000 and National Health Policy (NHP) 2002 which stated that there should be greater involvement of NGOs in implementing various health and family welfare programs in the country (Loganathan & Narendiran, 2016). Second, is a study with focus on the role of a coastal NGO called Speed Trust in realizing resilience in dealing with climate change in coastal areas; namely the District of Kalapara under the Regency of Patuakhali (Hasan et al., 2018). Third, is a research with a focus on the role of NGOs in promoting women's empowerment through direct livelihood facilities (Gupta, 2021).

Aside from the studies mentioned above, there are other studies that talk about the role of NGOs. Lewis (2006) mentioned that there are three roles played by NGOs, namely implementer, catalyst, and partner. Implementers or executors are involved in resource mobilization to supply goods and services as part of their own NGO, government, or donor organization programs. This includes programs and projects created by NGOs to provide services to the community (health care, credit, agricultural extension, legal advice, or emergency assistance), as well as the growth of 'contracts,' in which NGOs are engaged by governments or donors to perform specific tasks in exchange for payment. NGO catalysts encourage, enable, or contribute to organizational or human transformation. These include grassroots organization and group formation (and the development of "social capital"), empowerment approaches to development, lobbying and advocacy work, innovation in which NGOs aim to influence policy processes, and campaign activity. Partner or partner roles include the increasing tendency for NGOs to collaborate with governments, donors, and the commercial sector on joint initiatives, as well as complex connections amongst NGOs, such as "capacity building." NGOs must establish meaningful partnerships to minimize dependence, discretionary cooperation, and destination changes (Lewis, 2006).

The delivery of goods and services is typically required for implementation by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Carroll (1992) adds that the provision of services is likely the most immediate and visible function for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) because their mission is to provide

commodities and services that are requested, needed, or not available. An NGO can work to provide services to its clients through its own program, it can be "contracted" by the government to carry out tasks that were previously performed by the state, or it can be hired by donors to carry out tasks as part of a project framework. All of these options fall under the category of "service delivery" (Carroll, 1992).

The key strategic option (or counterweight) for many development NGOs, according to Korten (1987), is "output sellers versus development catalysts." This section discusses what it means for NGOs to serve as development catalysts (D. Korten, 1987). Many NGOs that work in the field of development begin at the local level and mention "empowerment" of their clients or recipients. The term "empowerment" has many diverse meanings, ranging from "radical transformation," which describes how many NGOs have applied Freire's ideas on education, to "self-improvement," which is used in countries like the United States. The term "empowerment" is still employed in many different contexts, even though the latter is not particularly significant to NGOs. According to Rowlands (1995), the concept of "empowerment" has roots in a number of contexts, including Western counseling, Gandhianism, and the work of Freire. He added that "empowerment" is always viewed as a process that entails understanding how power works in one's life, acquiring the knowledge and abilities to exert more control, exercising that control without impinging on the rights of others, and encouraging the empowerment of others in society. According to this perspective, the process entails transitioning from comprehension to action and from individual action to group action (Jo Rowlands, 1995).

Friedmann (1992) views NGOs as a tool of linking local activity to structural and national changes. This gave rise to an additional crucial NGO role as a catalyst, advocacy (Friedmann, 1992). In the mid-1990s, it was widely acknowledged that lobbying was an essential NGO activity for supporting sustainable development (Covey, 1995). NGOs are beginning to regard lobbying as a means to expand their efficacy and influence, as well as a possible "scaling-up" strategy. Because advocacy targets the causes of poverty rather than its symptoms and takes NGOs away from direct implementation in the South and toward involvement with power structures based closer to home, Korten (1990) considers advocacy to be a mature and maturing NGO activity, especially for NGOs. Jenkins, writing from a US non-profit perspective, defines policy advocacy as any attempt to convince any institutional elite to act in the group's best interests (D. C. Korten, 1990).

The final function of NGOs is as partners. The concept of "partnership" is growing in popularity among policymakers and practitioners in international development. The recent UK government white paper on development regularly discusses partnerships between nations, donors, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and businesses, but does not provide a definition and is unclear as to what form such partnerships can take (DFID, 1971). In the 1990s, the majority of partnership interest in development circles centered on linking the activities of government agencies and NGOs on development initiatives (Farrington et al., 1993). According to Brown and Ashman (1996), cultural, power, resource, and viewpoint hurdles must be overcome for government and NGO cooperation to be successful (Brown & Ashman, 1996). In general, partnerships are viewed as a way to promote institutional sustainability, boost beneficiary participation, and make more efficient use of limited resources. The term "partnership" can also be used to indicate a mutually agreed-upon collaboration between two or more agencies collaborating on a development project; in this case, the partners are government agencies, NGOs, donors, and farmers (Lewis, 2006).

## ***Research Methods***

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research approach, and the method for gathering data is a literature review of the relevant books, journals, theses, dissertations, internet articles, news stories, and other types of literature. The purpose of this study is to examine how Bangladesh might combat the effects of rapid fashion by utilizing the UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion. Because the research's data

are by their very nature qualitative, the technique employed for data analysis is qualitative analysis. the qualitative method is a research technique that yields descriptive information from the observed actors in the form of written or spoken words.

## ***Discussion and Results***

### **History of Textile Production and Ready Made Garment (RMG) Industry in Bangladesh**

West Pakistanis dominated the textile sector from 1947 to 1971. Bengali businessmen in the area established their own hemp and textile mills during this time, in the 1960s. However, after separating from West Pakistan, Bangladesh lost access to funding and technological know-how (Ramamurti & Vernon, 1991). When Bangladesh gained its independence in 1971, it embraced export-oriented industrialization (EOI), concentrating on the textile and apparel industries, particularly the RMG sector. Jute and tea were the two main export products at the time. However, the hemp industry's contribution to the nation's economy has gotten worse due to the ongoing risk of floods, declining hemp fiber prices, and a sharp reduction in global demand (Paul & Steven, 2008).

The Bangladesh Industrial Company Order (Nationalization), passed in 1972 by the country's new Sheikh Mujibur Rahman-led government, included the acquisition of privately owned textile manufacturers and the creation of a State-Owned Enterprise (BUMN) known as the Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation (BTMC). State ownership of businesses is seen to be one of the reason why Bangladesh's industry has grown very slowly or not at all throughout the years. After the fiscal year 1975–1976, BTMC's output, spinning mills, and financial performance never recovered to their pre–1971 levels how (Ramamurti & Vernon, 1991). A significant number of assets, notably jute and textile mills, were privatized and given back to their original owners in 1982 as part of the New Policy Industry (NPI) (Momen, 2007). All former owners of Bangladeshi textile mills received the same conditions in order to streamline the transaction: the government gave them their original shares in exchange for the extra shares required to reach at least a 51 percent majority, at the same price they were compensated with ten years earlier. Ten months after the government decided to denationalize the textile industry, in April 1983, 22 factories had been handed back to their original owners, leaving 37 to be operated by the government. Thus, by the middle of 1983, private companies owned 40% of the spinners and 45% of the looms in Bangladesh's modern textile industry how (Ramamurti & Vernon, 1991). After the independence war, Bangladesh kept concentrating on the agriculture industry. There were only nine garment production facilities focused on exports even in 1978. 10,000 men's shirts worth 13 million French francs were sold by a Bangladeshi company to a company in Paris as its first export that year. The Bangladeshi government has also started to recognize the potential for the textile industry to grow (Ullah, 2014).

In the late 1970s, the RMG business in Bangladesh was launched by Riaz Garments Ltd as a small non-traditional export sector. At that time, there were just nine garment industries that exported domestically. The three main industries at the time were Riaz Garments, Jewel Garments and Paris Garments. Riaz Garments is the most prominent and oldest industry of its period. At that time, Mohammad Reaz Uddin who is the owner of Riaz Garments started his business with various sewing shops under the name Riaz shop, which in 1973 the name changed to Riaz Garments and in 1978 the company started exporting one million shirts in the South Korean Company named Olanda. Apart from Riaz Garments, there is Desh Garments which is another pioneer in the RMG business in Bangladesh. In 1979, Desh Garments worked with a South Korean company, Daewoo and sent 130 personnel to Korea for training (Rahman et al., 2017). Until 1980, jute and hemp goods known as Bangladeshi gold fibres, were the major export sector in Bangladesh accounting for more than half of the country's overall export revenues. However, when exports in the RMG sector began to rise, it overtook exports of jute and hemp after the 80s so that since then the RMG industry has dominated Bangladesh's export sector. In 1980, Youngones Corporation from South Korea and Trexim Ltd from Bangladesh teamed to develop up a

clothes factory called Youngones Bangladesh where in December, they exported their first product to Sweden (Islam et al., 2021).

In the mid-80s, Anisur Rahman Sinha created an apparel manufacturing called Opex. The company soon continued to grow and employ 45,000 individuals in the next 10 years. Many others including Anisul Huq, AK Azad, Mostafa Golam Quddus and Qutbuddin Ahmed also ventured into the garment sector during the Opex operations. Many of such companies are currently leading the apparel sector. The majority of enterprises have also grown their company beyond the RMG industry. The RMG industry is rising rapidly because to low salaries, government policy backing, and the hard work of entrepreneurs. Therefore, Bangladesh did not stop even though the quota system terminated in 2005 (Karmokar, 2021).

One of the industries in Bangladesh with the quickest growth after the 1990s is the RMG sector (Zaman, 2021). Small tailoring shops that catered to home demand predominated the RMG trade in the 1970s as a microbusiness industry (Rasel et al., 2020). Popular seamstresses who are experienced and knowledgeable about sewing may cut and sew textiles to fit the sizes and measurements of their clients. Reaz Garment, one of these tailoring businesses, started making a lot of woven shirts for export. In 1978, the business sent 10,000 woven shirts from Bangladesh to France (Yunus & Yamagata, 2012; Zaman, 2021).

Desh Garments Ltd, which was the first company to be entirely export-oriented and was created in 1979, was the one who set the genuine milestone. The business was founded as a joint venture with Daewoo of South Korea, and it quickly rose to the position of being the largest and most advanced single garment production facility in the subcontinent (Yunus & Yamagata, 2012). When collaborating with the Bangladeshi business Desh Garments, this South Korean company also played a significant role by supplying training and equipment (Kabeer & Mahmud, 2004). Although early technology transfer from South Korea was said to have contributed to the RMG sector's initial success, it was decided that this one-time knowledge transfer was insufficient to account for the sector's subsequent continuing growth. According to a study, the high profitability of the garment industry as a result of the initial infusion of human capital attracted highly educated entrepreneurs to the industry and facilitated the expansion and steady growth of firms through the ongoing participation of competent foreign-trained and skilled entrepreneurs and human resources (Mottaleb & Sonobe, 2011).

Bangladesh was given quota-free status by the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA), which attracted foreign investors and resulted in the construction of several foreign-owned joint ventures or garment manufacturing facilities in the early 1980s (Akter, 2020; Alam et al., 2017; Zaman, 2021). As equity joint-venture clothing firms, Youngone-Bangladesh (49 percent) and Treximb Ltd (51 percent) were founded in 1980. In comparison to the volume of exports, the number of factories has increased dramatically since that time. As a result, over the past three decades, the number of factories in the RMG business has multiplied greatly. The ready-to-wear garment (RMG) industry has contributed significantly to Bangladesh's economic growth and has long served as the foundation of the nation's international trade, employing up to 4 million people and making up 14% of Bangladesh's GDP.

After almost 19 years, the MFA quota system was abolished in 2005. RMG exports from Bangladesh increased at an average annual rate of 19% between 1990 and 2005 before they were stopped (Akter, 2020; Alam et al., 2017). From 2005 through 2019, the average growth rate was 21% once the quota system was abolished. Additionally, the Generalized System of Preference (GSP) permits Bangladesh to export RMG products duty-free to the European Union (EU), but RMG exports to all other nations are subject to a 12.5% tax (Bhattacharya & Rahman, 2000; Islam et al., 2021). The RMG sector was primarily responsible for the GDP growth of -7.9% in 2017-2018 and 8.2% in 2018-2019, which helped to lower the poverty rate to 21.8% in 2018 and improve a number of social indicators (ADB, 2021; Statista, 2022).

RMG exports climbed from roughly 78.15% of total exports in 2011 to 83% in 2020 during the course of a decade. RMG exports to Bangladesh will account for about 81.16% of all exports by 2021. Although it was down from the year before, it was up from 2012, when RMG exports made up about 78.55% of all exports from Bangladesh (Statista, 2022). Bangladesh has been the second-largest RMG exporter since 2010—with the exception of 2020 (Hall, 2021). The Government of Bangladesh claims that this sector's growth will decrease in 2020 as a result of COVID-19's negative effects on global export demand, which caused an 8.98% drop in worldwide exports that year. Bangladesh's economy was also severely impacted by the pandemic, with exports falling by 16.23% to 12.18% of GDP and real GDP growth falling to 3.51% in FY20 from 8.15% in FY19 (Bangladesh Bank, 2022). Due to the pandemic's negative consequences, Bangladesh fell out of second place in 2021 to Vietnam and moved up to third (Hall, 2021). Bangladesh has a lot of issues, while being one of the nations with the biggest number of garment exporters in the RMG sector. Environmental harm brought on by chemicals used in the production of clothing materials is the main issue the RMG sector is currently confronting.

### **Analysis of the Role of the UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion in Addressing the Impact of Fast Fashion in Bangladesh**

The UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion is an initiative of UN agencies and allied organizations formed to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals through coordinated action in the fashion sector, including ILO, EFI, UNDP, UNECE, UNGC, UNEP, UNFCCC, UNIDO, UN Global Impact, Connect4Climate, and the UN Office for Partnerships, who all work together to promote and implement changes in the industry's norms. The Alliance actively promotes the goals on which it bases its operations, namely Encouraging Active Collaboration (through collaborative initiatives such as outreach, research, and the creation of new norms for SDG awareness, the alliance drives progress), Knowledge Sharing (promotes the efficient sharing of ideas by ensuring that procedures, data, and activities are transparent through knowledge platforms), and Increasing Harmonization and Strengthening Synergies (working to harmonise and strengthen synergies between the SDGs and other global initiatives) (Targeting the business sector, governments, NGOs, and other key stakeholders to achieve outreach and advocacy with a unified UN voice.) (UN Fashion Alliance, 2021).

Increasing Harmonization and Strengthening Synergies entails working to strengthen synergies between current projects with the government, donor organizations, or other NGOs in accordance with one of the tasks of the NGO, namely as an implementer. IFC's Advisory Partnership for Cleaner Textile (PaCT), a comprehensive initiative that supports the adoption of Cleaner Production (CP) techniques throughout the whole textile value chain, including spinning, weaving, wet processing, and garment mills. The initiative also collaborates closely with businesses, technology providers, trade groups, financial institutions, and the government to improve the long-term competitiveness of the textile industry in Bangladesh by bringing about systemic and advantageous environmental changes. PaCT focuses on minimizing the negative effects of Bangladeshi textile industry's resource consumption and environmental impact. In order to solve environmental and sustainability challenges associated to the growth of the textile industry, PaCT is the first curriculum to combine a number of cutting-edge innovations. These can range from low- or no-cost adjustments to management and housekeeping procedures, through process changes to significant investments like new machinery. PaCT helps more than 338 factories reduce their use of pure water by 25 million m<sup>3</sup>/year and their wastewater output by 21.08 million m<sup>3</sup>/year. These factories now prevent the emission of up to 489,796 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere each year and save 2.5 million MWh of energy, which is equal to removing 98,000 automobiles from the road. Manufacturers are further assisted in recovering chemicals like salt and caustic soda by operating cost reductions. The Bangladeshi government is offering low-cost funding for resource efficiency in the textile industry through the \$200 million Green Transformation Fund, which was established with the assistance of the PaCT organization. Because the issues facing the industry were becoming more complicated, this program was extended to the second phase (PaCT II), where the competitiveness of the textile sector became the program's focus (PaCT, n.d.).

Following numerous significant incidents in garment factories, ILO Bangladesh also introduced the "Improving Working Conditions in the Ready-Made Garment Sector in Bangladesh (RMGP Programme)" program in September 2013. To maintain Bangladesh's competitiveness in the garment and other sectors, this program helps to improve safe and decent working conditions. The National Tripartite Action Plan, which was created in close cooperation with the Government of Bangladesh, employers' organizations, and workers' organizations, is being supported in its initial phase by the program. The second phase of the initiative was initiated in July 2017 to continue the process of enhancing work safety in the RMG sector (ILO, 2017). A six-year, \$24.5 million program financed by DFID, Canada, and the Netherlands called the ILO Program on Improving Working Conditions in the Bangladesh Ready-to-Wear Garment Sector Phase II (2017-2023) aims to raise safety and working conditions in the industry. Through the support of the Remediation Coordination Cell (RCC), this program offers technical assistance to the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) to monitor improvements in safety non-compliance in manufacturing structures (ILO, 2017)

The definition of one of an NGO's roles, which is a catalyst, fits with Knowledge Sharing and Outreach and Advocacy. In October 2021, the ILO organized in Geneva a Meeting of Experts on Safety and Health in Textiles, Clothing, Leather, and Footwear to examine and establish a code of practice on safety and health in the textile, clothing, leather, and footwear industries. The meeting included seven experts nominated by the Government, eight experts and their advisors appointed by the Employers' group, and seven experts appointed by the Working Group of the Governing Body. Based on international labor standards and other sectoral recommendations, the code gives thorough and actionable guidance on how to eliminate, mitigate, and manage all significant hazards and risks. This encompasses chemical substances, physical and ergonomic dangers, tools, machinery, and equipment, as well as building and fire safety. This code is intended for the use of all public and private sector individuals who have obligations, responsibilities, duties, and rights related safety and health in the textile, garment, leather, and footwear industries. The Code acknowledges that an efficient Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) system involves the commitment and consultation of competent authorities, brands and customers, suppliers, employers, workers' representatives, and suppliers. The parties must work together constructively to ensure the goals of this code are met. The textile, garment, leather, and footwear industries have reached a key milestone with the acceptance of this ILO Code of Conduct (ILO, 2022a).

. The ILO and the Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD) hosted the Industrial Safety Forum (ISF) in Dhaka in May 2022. The ISF brings together Bangladesh's national safety regulators, policymakers, academics, employers, workers' representatives, civil society members, and development partners to explore the establishment of a national industrial safety framework. The ISF is being held because infrastructural and institutional preparation for industrial safety in this country are still in their infancy. Particularly, building safety, occupational safety and health, and environmental sustainability remain peripheral to most industrial sectors' essential activity. ISF aspires to motivate and involve essential stakeholders to construct a sustainable and transparent industrial safety framework, which will serve as the basis for assuring worker safety in all Bangladeshi industries. ISF provides a forum for discussion, engagement, and collaboration to promote workplace safety and health in all sectors of Bangladesh's economy. The ISF hosted two technical sessions titled "The Role of Public Institutions in Developing Industrial Safety Frameworks" and "The Role of Employers in Implementing Occupational Safety and Health Regulations in Industry" (ILO, 2022b).

In addition, UN Women and Fast Retailing Co., Ltd., the parent company of global garment retailer UNIQLO Japan, have formed a global collaboration to promote women's rights and empowerment in the apparel sector. Under the parameters of the new agreement, Fast Retailing and UN Women will engage to achieve empowerment for all women and girls and a safe and secure workplace. This agreement aims to collaboratively develop a program for female garment factory workers in Asia, the company's major manufacturing base, with an investment of USD 1.6 million (roughly 170 million) over two years from Fast Retailing (2019–2021). In addition to management training programs, partnerships to



encourage diversity in business also include (UN Women, 2019). The two-year joint project focuses on three areas: promoting women's career advancement by providing leadership training to mid-career women workers; preparing women for the coming effects of automation by providing learning opportunities for interested workers to acquire new skills; and raising awareness about the importance of gender equality among men, as they occupy the majority of managerial positions despite the fact that women make up approximately 80 percent of the labor force (Elven, 2019).

The UN Environment Program (UNEP), with financial support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and assistance from the Basel & Stockholm Regional Convention Center for Southeast Asia and the Natural Resources Defense Council, developed a program to reduce the use and release of chemicals of concern in the textiles industry. The initiative provides SME and manufacturer support and tools to enhance their awareness and management of hazardous chemicals. The five-year program from 2022 to 2027 will be implemented not only in Bangladesh, but also in Indonesia, Vietnam, and Pakistan to align public policies in the textile sector with international best practices, such as supply chain transparency, investment for chemical management and green innovation, and occupational health and safety, and to create the necessary enabling environment to remove PFAS and other chemicals of concern. This project will help stakeholders understand forthcoming worldwide required standards and how a proactive strategy might help them avoid adverse economic effects. This will teach children that addressing environmental implications when making decisions can have lasting benefits (UNEP, 2022).

Encouraging Active Collaboration is one of the objectives of the UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion. By collaborating on projects like outreach, research, and the development of new standards for SDG awareness, the alliance advances its goals. This fits the criteria of one of the roles played by NGOs, which is that of partners or collaborations.

The UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion works together and forms alliances with the government, donors, brand partners, and other NGOs to fulfill its mandate. The UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion oversees the following coalitions, which work together to lessen the negative effects of rapid fashion in Bangladesh (UN Fashion Alliance, 2021; UN Women, 2019):

1. The Advisory Partnership for Cleaner Textile (PaCT) program was started by IFC. Several brand partners, including Levi Strauss & Co., VF Corporation, Gap, Jeanologia, Omera Solar, Tesco, and Puma, work together on this campaign.
2. The Government, donor organizations, trade unions, employees, brand and retail entrepreneurs, manufacturers, vendors, garment factories, and 43 brand partners are all partners in the Better Work Program, a Flagship Program created by the ILO and IFC. This initiative aims to achieve the 7 SDGs, including SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, and 12.
3. Improving Working Conditions In The RMG Sector In Bangladesh is an initiative started by the ILO. The Department for International Development (formerly known as the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), the Government of the Netherlands, and the Government of Canada are some of the partners in this program. This initiative aims to achieve SDG 8.
4. The Regional Asia Textile Initiative was established by UNEP as a planned project. The OECD and ILO are two UN organizations that work on this project in conjunction with other partners like BCRC-SCRC Indonesia, Vietnam Center for Cleaner Production, Vietnam Center for Creativity and Sustainability Study and Consultancy, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, Vietnam, Certification, and volunteer organizations. This project is aimed at achieving SDGs 3, 6, and 12.
5. The parent company of the Japanese multinational apparel retailer UNIQLO, Fast Retailing Co., Ltd., and UN Women collaborated on an effort called the Global Partnership to Champion Women's Rights and Empowerment in the Apparel Industry. This collaboration aims to achieve SDG 5.

## Conclusion

Fast fashion is a method to the design, creation, and marketing of clothing that emphasizes making the latest fashion trends accessible to consumers rapidly and affordably. Fast fashion entails inadequate salaries and poor working conditions for garment workers and Bangladeshi people. For many, this phrase connotes stylish clothing at low rates. Fast mode is demand based. The industry must produce clothing at a rapid rate so that retailers are stocked before a trend disappears. Bangladesh is home to more than 8,000 garment manufacturers and is the second largest garment producer after China. The demand for Bangladeshi goods in the United States and Europe continues to rise, resulting in lower pay, more hazardous working conditions, and negative environmental effects. The UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion is an initiative formed by the UN and allied organizations, including ILO, EFI, UNDP, UNECE, UNGC, UNEP, UNFCCC, UNIDO, UN Global Impact, Connect4Climate, and the UN Office for Partnerships, to promote projects and policies that change the trajectory of fashion, reduce negative environmental and social impacts, and transform fashion into a driver for improving the world's ecosystem and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This research seeks to determine the role of the United Nations Alliance for Sustainable Fashion in combating the effects of rapid fashion in Bangladesh.

From the results of the study, it can be concluded that that negative environmental consequences also influence social impacts. Many companies dispose environmental trash from the garment production process into the rivers that sustain the Bangladeshi population. The chemicals used in the garment manufacturing process, particularly in the dyeing process, are dangerous and can harm the health of riverside people. This research also shows that members of the United Nations Alliance for Sustainable Fashion have contributed to the formation of a variety of movements in Bangladesh aimed at reducing the impacts of fast fashion. The United Nations Alliance for Sustainable Fashion can fulfill the role of NGOs, notably in advocacy, such as the application of OSH rules of conduct in the field of Textiles, Apparel, Leather and Footwear. This is to ensure that Rana Plaza would never happen again. Additionally, the UN Alliance plays a role in empowerment, as seen in the global partnership between UN Women and Fast Retailing Co., Ltd., which aims to jointly develop programs for women workers in Asian garment factories. This partnership fights for women's rights and empowerment in the apparel industry. From the following conclusions, it is suggested that NGOs play a larger role in environmental challenges, particularly those affecting Bangladesh's textile sector, one of which is enhanced by developing a coherent idea and course of action. NGOs must also continue to develop their roles by actively participating in the formulation of policies, offering employees education and training, advocating for or encouraging reform of the textile industry sector, and maintaining a focus on the welfare, safety, and interests of workers.

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