The Cost of Cheap Clothes: Globalization and Female Garment Labor in Bangladesh Dr. Lamia Karim



Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 23

- Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work, and to protection against unemployment.
- Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work
- Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family the existence worthy of human dignity...
- Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Bangladesh 2nd Largest Readymade Garment Industry

 Second Largest Readymade Garment after China

\$20 billion+ revenue stream for the government

Unregulated growth of the industry

Readymade Garment Workers in Bangladesh



Demographics

- 4 million workers in the ready-made garment
- Industry

- Poised to grow to 10 million workers in 8-10 years
- Women form 80% of the workforce
 - Ages 15-35, poor, rural migrants, low levels of literacy, lack of knowledge about health and nutrition

Work Conditions Before 2013

- \$30 base pay
- Workers fired for joining trade unions
- Death-trap factories
- Long work days 10-12 hours
- Workers locked inside the factory
- Lack of fire escapes, water sprinklers in factories, locked doors and windows
- Workers trapped inside factories during fires

The Cost of a Tee Shirt



US Retailers







Workers on Their Way to Work



Gap, Walmart, Joe Fresh



Bangladesh Factory Collapse April 24, 2013







17-Year-Old Woman With an Artificial Limb



Mothers with Pictures of their Missing Daughters



Mental Health



Garment Industries

Grew in the 1990s to 2000s

5,000 factories; many poorly regulated

Urban and peri-urban areas

 Factories owned by Chinese, Korean, Indian and Bangladeshis

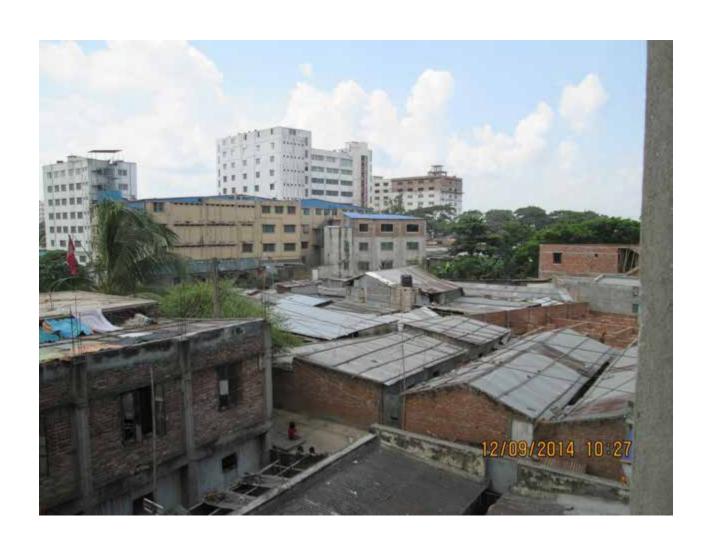
Workers' Demands

- Basic pay to \$100 a month
 - Raised to \$67
- On time payments
- Holiday Bonus
- Healthcare
- Housing
- Childcare
- Paid leave for illness

Factories in an Urban Area



Where Do they Live?



Agents not Victims

 These women are not victims; they are trying to craft new lives

 They have become victimized due to their poverty, exploitation by manufacturers and retailers, and an indifferent state

Read articles online; become an informed consumer



"Be the change you want to see in the world.

- Mahatma Gandhi