

ROUNDTABLE DIALOGUE ON CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS IN THE READY-MADE GARMENT (RMG) SECTOR



Acknowledgement

The International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) extends sincere thanks to all the participants who took part in the roundtable dialogue. This publication presents a summary of the dialogue. We are especially grateful to the Laudes Foundation, ICCCAD's project staff, and all participants for their valuable contributions. Special appreciation to Jannat Ara Shifa for her active support as rapporteur throughout the event.

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

The ready-made garment (RMG) sector is the cornerstone of Bangladesh's economy. The sector showed notable export growth in January-May 2025 for the European Union (EU) region. Nonetheless, the sector has been experiencing an alarming surge in heatwaves with soaring temperatures nearing 40°C during summers in the last few years (Textile Today, 2025). This year the temperature was recorded as 40.1°C and has been declared as the hottest year so far (The Business Standard, 2025). This extreme heat directly affects the health and productivity of the workers. As a result, it is leading to reduced export earnings (Dasgupta & Wheeler, 2023).



In response to these pressing concerns, the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) in collaboration with the Laudes Foundation is implementing a 3-years project on “Capacitating the Garment Industry Workers for a Greener Transition in Bangladesh.” This initiative will help to capacitate the garment workers on climate change adaptation and work in a collaborative manner with multi-stakeholders, mainly government bodies to strengthen workers' rights by exploring the nexus of labour rights, climate change and just transition within the ready-made garments (RMG) sector. ICCAD will also conduct a social dialogue to strengthen workers' voices in the negotiation of workers' rights, social protection, and insurance schemes.

ROUNDTABLE OVERVIEW

The second Roundtable Dialogue on ‘Climate Change Impacts in the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) Sector’ was convened on 10th of August 2025 at The Westin Dhaka, hosted by the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD). The event brought together representatives from government agencies, garment factory owners, buyers and brand representatives, . Building on the outcomes of the first dialogue, this session aimed to deepen the understanding of climate-related risks facing the RMG sector and explore collaborative pathways for a greener and more resilient transition. The discussions focused on the intersection of climate change, labor rights, and sustainable business practices, with particular attention to heat stress, shifting monsoon patterns, and extreme weather events.

Presentations from ICCCAD researchers showcased how climate change is impacting the RMG sector and its workforce, a business case for garment companies to provide adaptation measures to the workers and how small-medium sized enterprises can access the Green Climate Funds and other financing modalities through seeking technical support from the research institutions. qualitative research. The dialogue also had a question answer session and an interactive group activity. The dialogue reaffirmed the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement to develop targeted adaptation strategies, strengthen climate resilience, and maintain the sector’s competitiveness in global markets.





OPENING REMARK

Project Manager **Afsara Binte Mirza** inaugurated the session by welcoming the attendees. She outlined the objectives of the dialogue. She stressed the economic significance of the RMG sector, which remains the backbone of Bangladesh's export earnings. She emphasized the urgency of addressing climate vulnerabilities, as they threaten workers' welfare and production stability. She then introduced one of ICCCAD's ongoing initiatives: **Capacitating the Garment Industry Workers for a Greener Transition in Bangladesh**. She underlined that climate change is no longer a distant threat. It is now an active disruptor, with intensifying heatwaves and altered rainfall patterns affecting productivity, occupational health, and supply chain reliability.

Ms. Mirza drew on her experiences from recent field visits to factories. She noted that some facilities have adopted progressive measures, such as improved ventilation, hydration points, and shaded rest areas. Whereas many others lack even basic awareness of the climate hazards. She warned that without timely adaptation, the sector risks significant productivity losses. Which would result in a decline of export revenue and worsen worker vulnerabilities. She concluded by highlighting the day's agenda. That included case study presentations, interactive discussions, and collaborative sessions for advancing climate-smart solutions.



WELCOME REMARK

Following the opening, ICCAD's Managing Director, **Saqib Huq**, welcomed participants and provided context for ICCAD's engagement in the RMG sector. He emphasized that climate change is not only an environmental issue. It is also a business continuity and human rights concern. Adaptation efforts are often seen as the responsibility of the government. However, Mr. Huq stressed that private sector actors, particularly factory owners and brand partners, must be equally accountable and proactive. He pointed out that policy frameworks and financial instruments for green transition exist, but still the sector continues to face challenges in accessing and utilizing them effectively. This gap, he noted, undermines the potential benefits for both employers and workers. He then underscored ICCAD's role in bridging these divides. ICCAD convenes stakeholders, shares knowledge, and fosters collaborations that align business competitiveness with climate resilience.

Lastly, he encouraged the participants to maintain their engagement beyond this dialogue and reiterated that sustained cooperation and shared responsibility are essential to safeguarding the sector's future. He ended his speech by expressing hope that the event would generate actionable ideas and reinforce networks committed to building a just and climate-resilient RMG sector.



Impacts of Climate Change on the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) Sector

Maliha Momotaj Himu and **Nafia Saddaf**, both working as Research Officers at ICCCAD, presented on the impacts of climate change on Bangladesh's RMG industry. Ms. Himu underscored that in 2024, the country's export earnings reached USD 48 billion, with USD 38 billion generated from the RMG sector alone. This scenario modelling demonstrates that if effective climate adaptation measures are implemented, export earnings could rise by 21% by 2030 and 68% by 2050. She also noted that adaptation is not merely a defensive strategy to mitigate losses but an enabler of gaining competitive advantage. She then drew example of a case study from Cambodia.

Where investments in ventilation, cooling systems, and structured heat management plans significantly improved workers' health and productivity. She also mapped out potential funding avenues, including the **Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF)**, the **Green Climate Fund (GCF)**, and Civil Society Responsibility (CSR) allocations from global brands, calling for a strategic blend of public and private financing to ensure a sustained green transition.

Following this, **Nafia Saddaf** presented findings from field visits to **Shangu Tex Limited** and **DIP Knitwear Limited**. Both the factories have begun integrating climate-friendly conscious practices such as shaded cooling areas, saline distribution during heatwaves, rooftop gardening, rainwater harvesting, improved ventilation, and energy-efficient systems. She noted that both factories have also adopted gender inclusive measures, including day-care facilities, breastfeeding corners, worker participation committees, and regular capacity-building sessions.

However, Ms. Saddaf also highlighted persistent challenges, including budget constraints, limited access to green financing, and buyer-imposed timelines that fail to account for climate hazards. She emphasised the need for tailored solutions, stronger buyer engagement, and greater youth leadership in factory management to accelerate climate-smart innovation across the sector.



QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Following the presentation, the Q&A session reflected a strong appetite for practical, context-specific solutions. One garment company representative asked whether ICCCAD is researching how installing cooling facilities might increase moisture levels on production floors, which potentially can affect the garment quality. They also suggested to study the sustainability, cost, and usage patterns of such facilities. Another participant raised the example of investing in a costly dyeing machine that is able to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for years but recommended a comparative analysis to determine the long term cost analysis. Another comment highlighted the importance of including a dedicated segment on how government bodies can take an active role in climate change adaptation and in safeguarding labor rights within the RMG sector.

Limited funding support is available for SMEs to adopt climate adaptation measures.

A dedicated collaboration center led by BGMEA and BKMEA is needed to coordinate adaptation, share data, plan climate-friendly actions for RMG factories, and align policy advocacy.

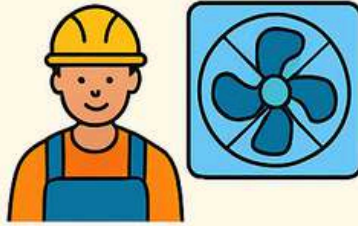
Knowledge gaps among government bodies and factory management hinder improvements in workers' conditions.





Climate Risks are Immediate

Heatwaves, erratic monsoons, and extreme weather are already disrupting production, harming worker health, and reducing export capacity



Adaptation Yields High Returns

Measures like improved ventilation, cooling zones, and rooftop gardening can boost productivity, cut absenteeism, and enhance worker retention



Finance is the Missing Link

SMEs face especially high barriers to accessing green financing due to complex requirements and low awareness



Information Gaps

Factories and government bodies lack the data needed to implement effective adaptation measures



Inclusion Drives Resilience

Factories with childcare, breastfeeding facilities, and worker committees are better equipped to sustain



Buyers Influence Outcomes

Procurement policies that embed climate standards and co-finance adaptation

Image depicting : Impacts of Climate Change on the RMG sector



*"Sick days
reduce our pay"*

*"Heat makes me
dizzy and tired"*

*"Women face
more burden"*

Few voices (from our FGD) of RMG workers on work-place climate risks

GROUP ACTIVITY: IDENTIFYING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR GREEN PRACTICES IN RMG SECTOR



The participants: an interactive blend of government stakeholders and garment industry personnel were divided into three groups. Each group was tasked with listing the socio-climatic sustainable initiatives currently being implemented in the RMG sector that contribute to adaptation or mitigation of climate change. They were also asked to identify the challenges hindering these initiatives and to suggest practical solutions for scaling them up.

FINDINGS FROM THE GROUP ACTIVITY

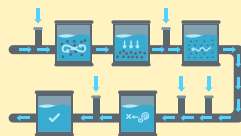
Sustainable Initiatives

Roof-top Gardening



Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change

The Zero-Liquid Discharge (ZLD) System ensures no untreated or partially treated wastewater enters the waterbodies



Challenges

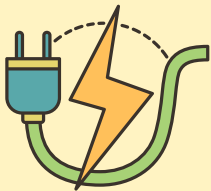
Adopting climate-friendly and sustainable practices requires a huge amount of cost needed for specialised loans and financial provisions contextualized for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to access.

Suggestions for Way Forward

Use a trigger nozzle to conserve water during production (for efficient water usage that prevents water wastage)



Monitoring of energy uses by the machine and factory



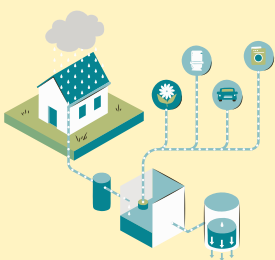
The Dyeing and Ironing system is run at Standard Temperature and Pressure (STP) to minimize energy consumption and resource wastage

Poor implementation and monitoring of the climate change and labor laws in the manufacturing sector by the ministries



Loans and subsidies should be made more accessible to SMEs wanting to implement green practices and technology to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

Rainwater Harvesting



Steam Chlorometer (ensures safe and properly treated steam or water) and Variable Frequency Device (optimizes motor-driven systems, saving energy and protecting equipment) is used

Regularly revise and update the climate-friendly technologies in the factories for adapting to the climatic impacts.

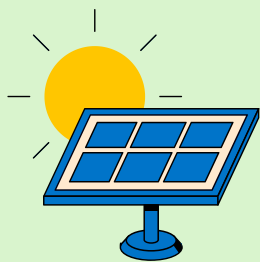


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Sustainable Initiatives

Torn pieces of fabric generated from sewing process is further recycled and used in production process

Solar Energy Usage



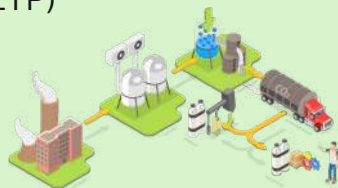
Gray Water generated from washing machines is treated and used for cooling purposes in machinery



Clear or plain polyethylene (plastic) that does not have ink, dyes, or printed labels on it are recycled by Giant Group Factories.

Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change

Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP)



These measures are in practice at the RMG factories of Epyllion, DBL, and Giant Group.



Suggestions for Way Forward

Conduct Energy and Sustainability Audits for SMEs to better identify areas needing energy saving and resource conservation

Capacity-building and adequate funding is needed for less compliant factories for meeting Environment and Social Governance (ESG) Requirements

Factory team-up to share training, waste treatment, energy-saving tools, or technology to lower costs, faster adoption of sustainable practices, and higher overall efficiency

Explore circular economy practices to maximize resource reuse and reduce wastage in the RMG sector



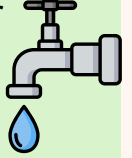
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SUSTAINABLE INITIATIVES

● Food Waste generated from Epyllion Group factories are used as compost in their gardens



● Push tap usage helps manage water flow better and hence, conserve water



● A mass boiler is used in the production process, which reduces ecological footprint with careful management by requiring fewer resources to operate



● Natural earthy colors in production lines is used to minimize chemical pollution from chemical paints



● Scholarship Opportunities for the worker's Children



● Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) is awarding establishments with sustainable practices.



These measures are in practice at the RMG factories of Epyllion, DBL, and Giant Group.

SUGGESTIONS FOR WAY FORWARD

Companies not adopting sustainable practices should face stricter laws and taxation

Government support is needed to align sustainable business practices in the RMG sector with the national and international standards

Educate buyers to support higher prices for sustainable garments.

Companies that follow environmental guidelines should be awarded and give social recognition

Group Discussions



GROUP ACTIVITY

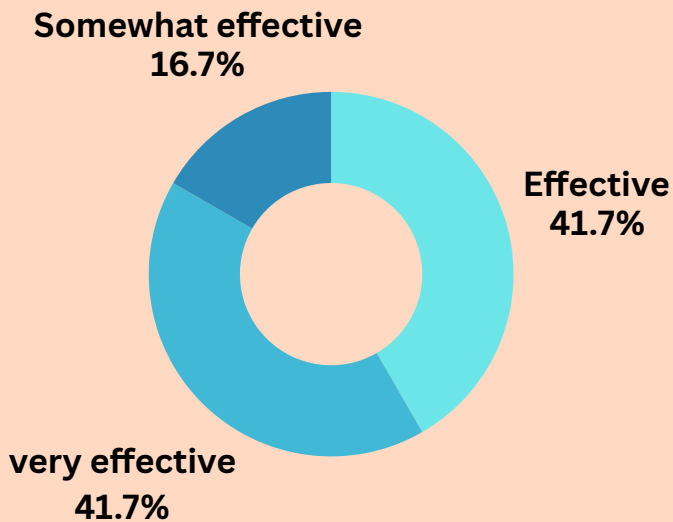
As ICCCAD currently comprises an interactive training module on climate change, labour rights, and their nexus for garment workers in the RMG sector, the activity was conducted to gather opinions on the effectiveness and uptake of the training module's contents. The rating was for effectiveness on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being least effective and 5 being most effective). The responses were then compiled and presented through both textual summaries and graphical representations for clarity and analysis.



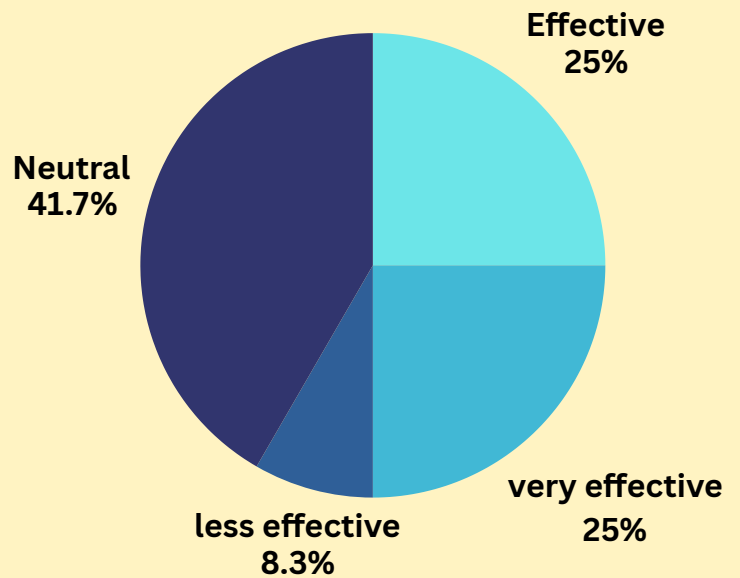
Theatre sessions proved highly effective, with 41.7% of participants rating them as "very effective" and an additional 41.7% rating them as "effective." Animation videos were the most successful, with 75% of respondents finding them "very effective." However, artwork received mixed feedback, with 41.7% remaining neutral, suggesting it may not resonate as strongly as other methods for the RMG worker. The climate change booklet was moderately effective, with equal proportions (33.3%) rating it as "very effective" and "effective." These findings highlighted the viewpoints of garment owners, government bodies, and brands on implementing the participatory approaches of training on climate change.

TRAINING MODULE CONTENT

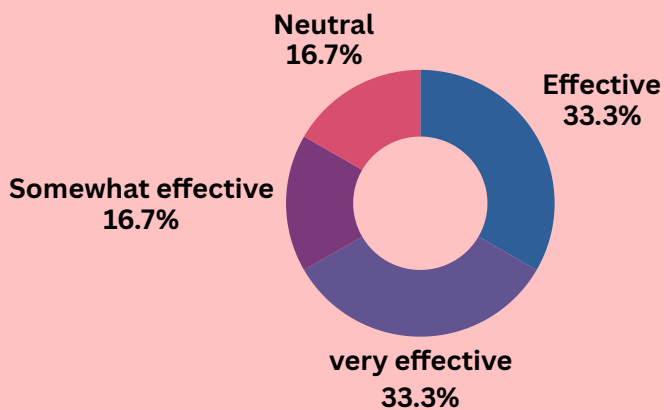
Theatre



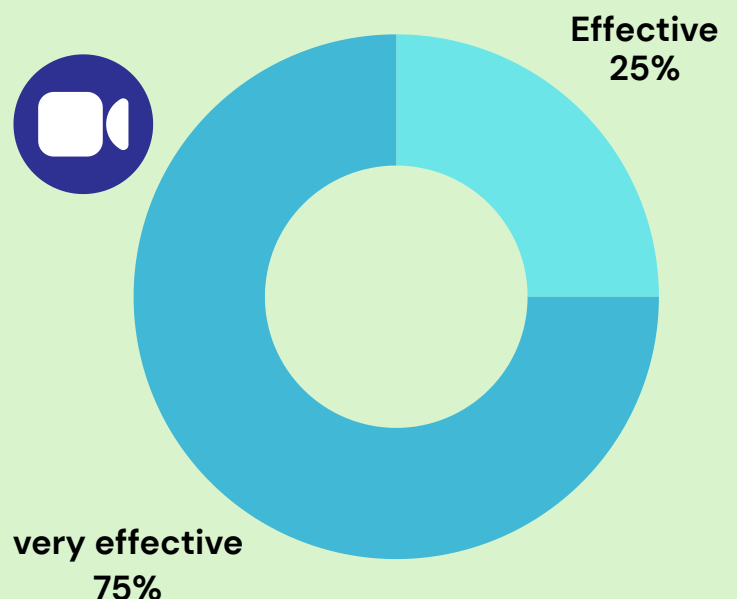
Artwork Session



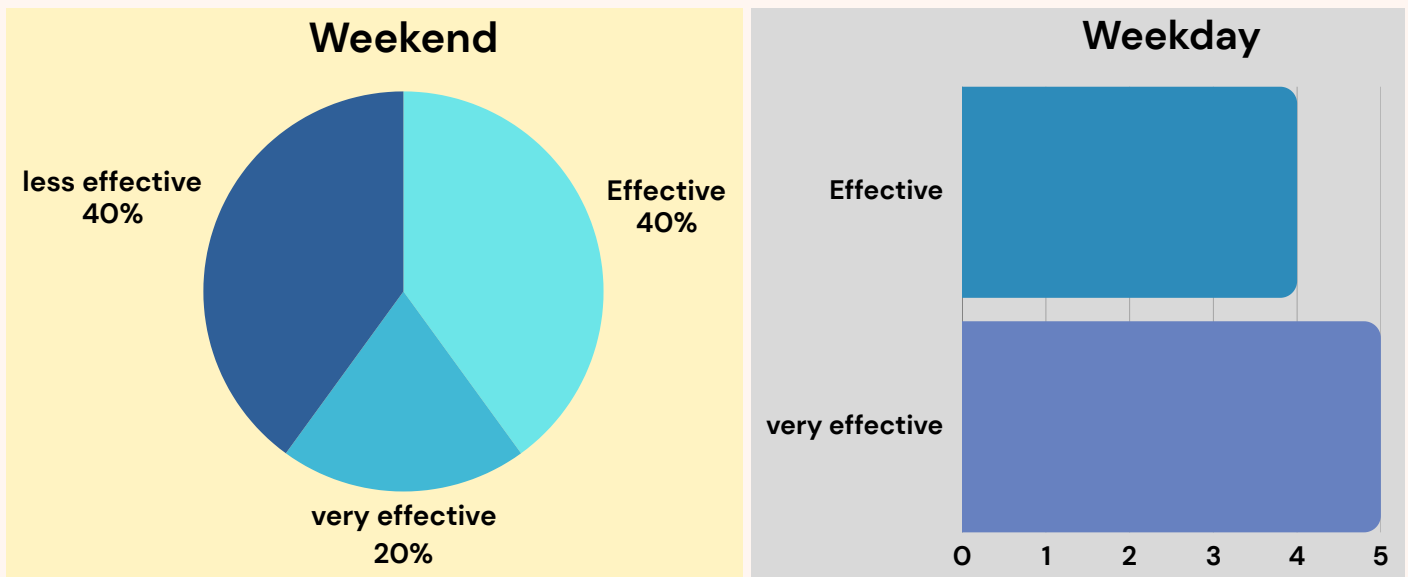
Climate Change Booklet



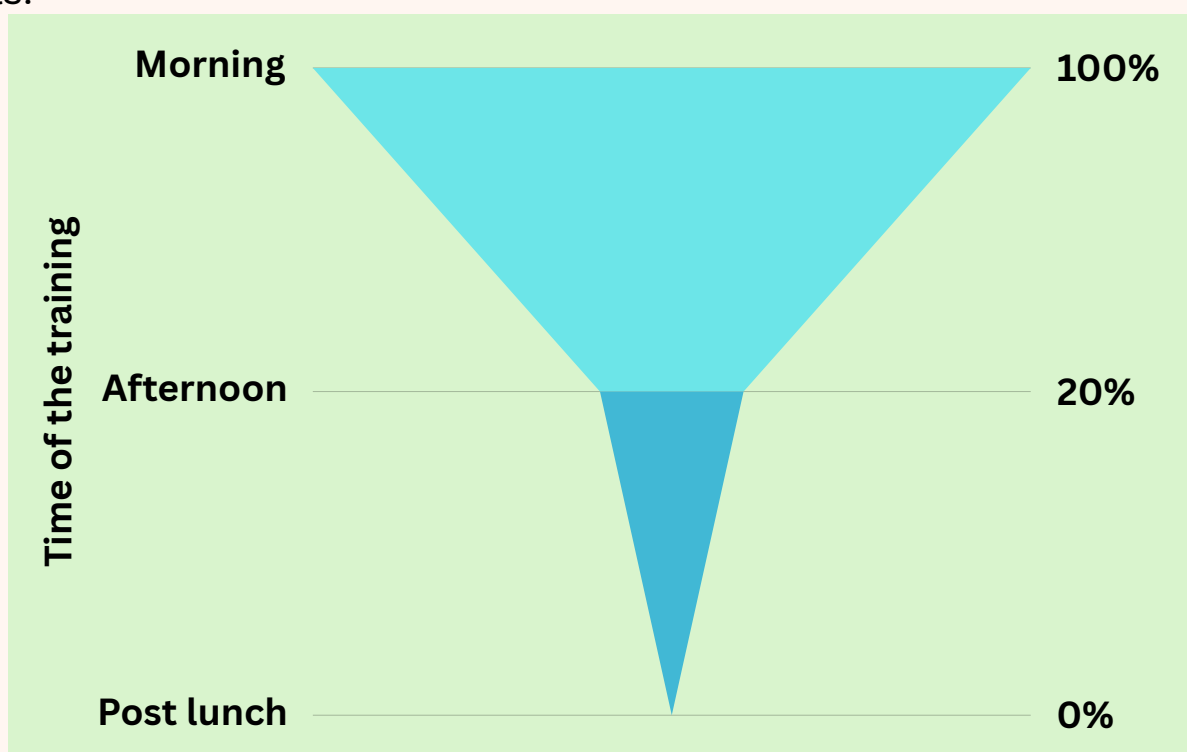
Animation Video



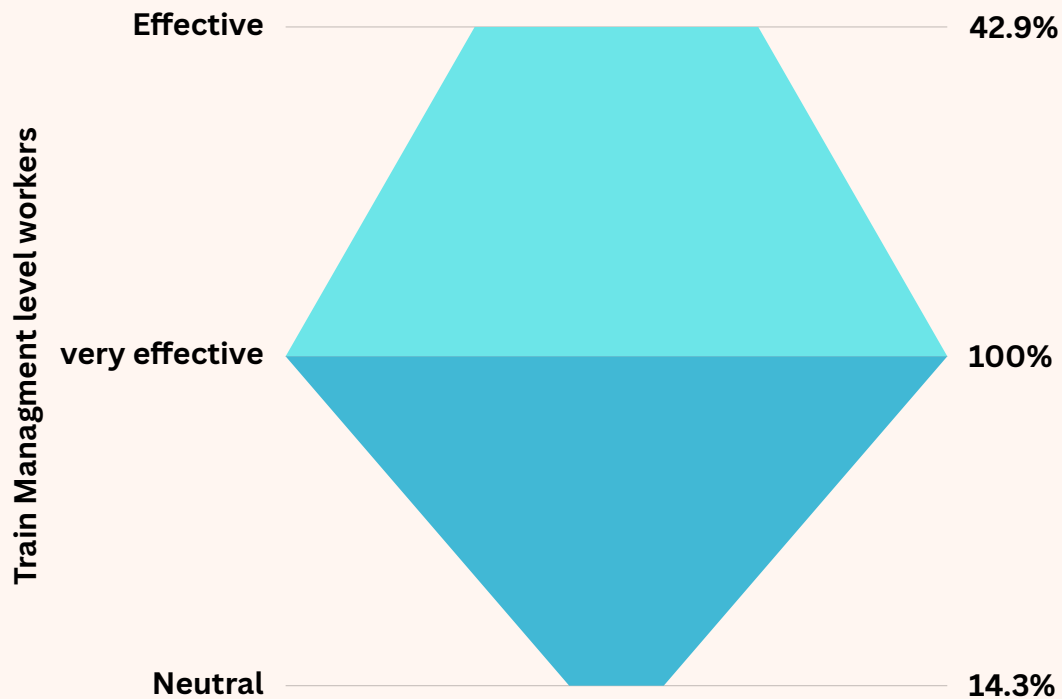
DAY OF THE TRAINING



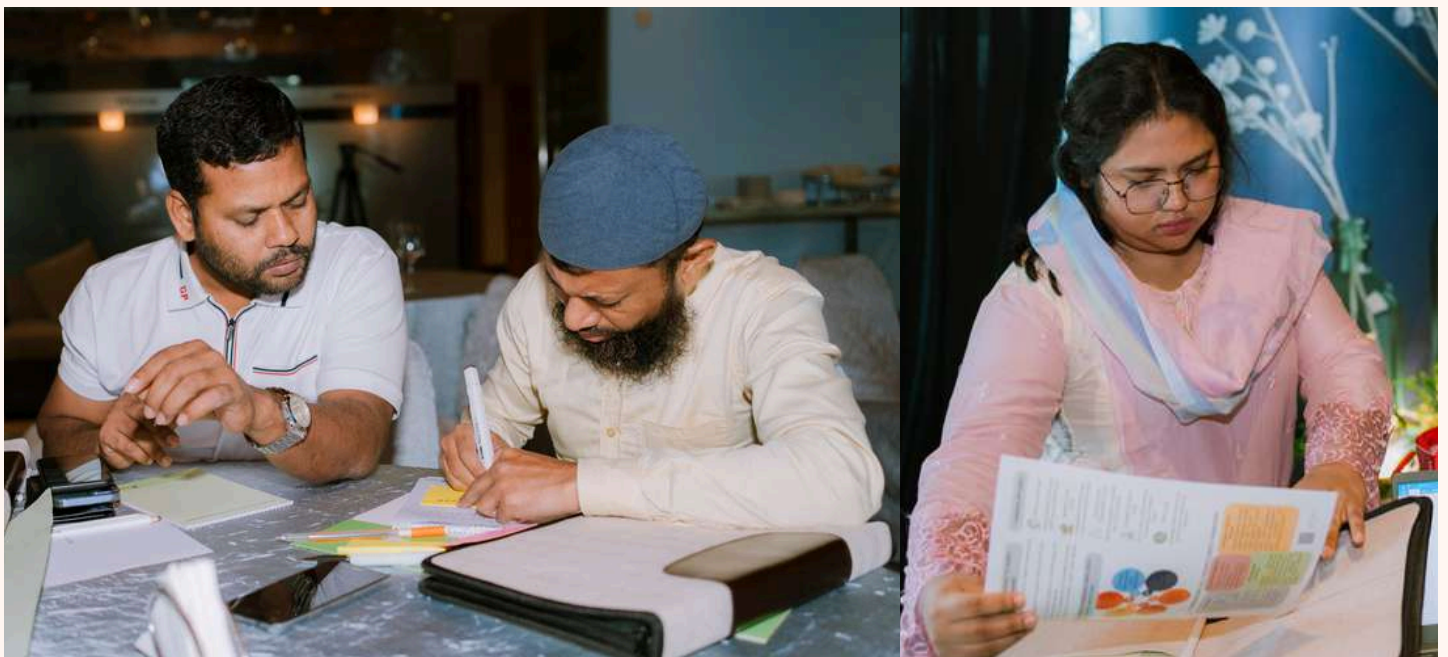
The timing of the training sessions: the participants suggested conducting sessions on weekdays, with 55.6% of participants rating them as "very effective" and 44.4% as "effective," compared to weekend sessions, which saw a split between "effective" (40%) and "less effective" (40%). Additionally, morning sessions were rated (100%) effective, while afternoon sessions saw lower engagement (20%). This suggests that scheduling training on weekdays during morning hours maximizes attendance and impact, aligning with workers' routines and energy levels.



TRAINING FOR WHOM?



The training is meant to be delivered to different levels of workers, and hence feedback was gathered for this too. For instance, participants expressed that it will be 100% effective to train the management level worker; while Participation/Safety Committee workers were rated 63.6% "very effective." The participants rated 90.9 of % training as effective for Floor managers and operators.



CONCLUSION

The discussions reaffirmed that rising temperatures, erratic monsoons, and extreme weather events are not just climate concerns but also economic and labor rights issues, directly impacting workers' health, productivity, and export stability. To ensure a sustainable future, a multistakeholder approach is essential.

Key takeaways from the dialogue highlighted the following:



1. Integrating climate-friendly initiatives: leading factories like DBL are implementing multiple initiatives to enhance sustainability and operational efficiency. These include the use of earth colors in production to minimize chemical impacts, the establishment of a recycling factory to reduce textile waste. DBL is also exploring circular economy practices to maximize resource reuse and reduce waste. In addition, there is an emphasis on community-based environmental initiatives to strengthen corporate social responsibility.



2. Providing Financial and Policy Support to SMEs in the RMG sector: Simplified access to funds and subsidies for implementing climate change adaptation and mitigation measures should be provided to SMEs is crucial to ensure to invest in green initiatives.



3. Mutual learning and knowledge exchange on the current green, sustainability, and social initiatives: Is required to happen within the different category of RMG factories at the local and national levels: Tier 1, 2 and 3 factories (compliant, non-compliant, green factories or factories wanting to transition to greener business practices) to learn from each other on how to plan, design, implement and monitor the greener initiatives and work collaboratively to tackle the challenges.



4. Stronger enforcement of policies: Stronger enforcement of policies is essential, with binding rules and legal provisions to ensure accountability across factories. Government support is needed to align industry practices with both national and international standards, while also linking regulatory frameworks with ongoing research initiatives. Addressing existing policy gaps and establishing clear lines of enforcement were identified as key priorities.



5. Collaboration between stakeholders: Institutions like the BGMEA, BKMEA, government agencies, buyers, and workers' representatives should work in a holistic manner to implement climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives by building each other's capacities in terms of accessing finance, knowledge, and technologies. Moreover, a cluster approach is being considered to promote collaboration and efficiency within industry hubs.

The dialogue concluded with a shared commitment to transform challenges into opportunities, ensuring Bangladesh's RMG sector remains competitive while safeguarding its workforce and environment. By integrating climate resilience into business models and fostering inclusive dialogue, the sector can pave the way for a sustainable and equitable future. By transforming these commitments into concrete measures, Bangladesh can pioneer a just transition in the Ready-made garment sector.



GLIMPSES FROM THE EVENT



Annex 1: Concept Note

Roundtable Dialogue on Climate Change Impacts in the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) Sector

 **10th August, 2025**

 **10:30 AM to 1:00 PM**

 **The Westin Dhaka, Gulshan,
Dhaka**



Laudes ———
Foundation

Dear Sir/Madam,

The International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) cordially invites you to the 'Roundtable Dialogue with ready-made garment companies on "climate change impacts in the ready-made garment (RMG) sector." This meeting will be held on the 10th of August 2025 (Sunday) from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM at the Westin Hotel, Dhaka.

This interactive roundtable dialogue aims to brainstorm the impact of climate change on RMG sector and the importance of capacitating the garment workers. The dialogue will also shed light on the current climate change adaptation initiatives by the garment companies and government bodies.

We look forward to meeting you at the event and engaging in meaningful discussions.

Best regards,
Saqib Huq,
Managing Director
International Center for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD).

Time	Agenda
10:00 AM to 10:30 AM	Registration and Morning Snacks
10:30 AM to 10:40 AM	Welcome Remarks by Saqib Huq, Managing Director of ICCCAD
10:40 AM to 11:00 AM	How is RMG sector being impacted by climate change?
11:00 AM to 11:15 AM	Good Practices and Climate Friendly Initiatives of Garment Factories in Bangladesh
11:15 AM to 1:00 PM	Dialogue and Interactive Group Work on 'current climate-friendly initiatives by garments and government bodies and the way forward
1:00 PM to 1:30 PM	Lunch and Group Photo

Group Activity questions

Group Activity 1

1. Make a list of the current climate/environment/social/sustainability initiatives.
2. Are the initiatives benefiting any adaptation or mitigation related to climate change?
3. What kinds of challenges, such as policy, technical, and financial, are you facing in implementing the initiative?
4. How can government bodies, brands, and buyers collaborate more effectively with factory owners to support and scale climate-friendly initiatives?

Activity 2

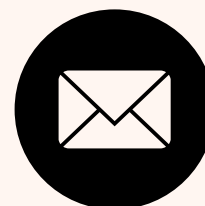
Collating the Interest levels for conducting capacity-building training on climate change within the RMG sector

- Instructions: ICCCAD is currently creating an interactive training course on climate change for the ready-made garment sector's workers which echoes with their realities of life. Please fill in this form and express your opinion on the content and modality of the training module.
- Modality: Individual for 10 minutes



Contact for more information:

**Project Info
Website**



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