

DBL Group's Integrated Approach to Integrate Climate Resilience in the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) Sector



Acknowledgement

The International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) extends sincere thanks to the DBL Group for providing the opportunity to conduct field visits at two of their manufacturing facilities—JKL-II, Sreepur, and Mawna Fashion, Mawna. These visits offered critical insights into factory operations, climate resilience practices, and worker experiences related to climate change which enabled to comprise this case study. Special appreciation is extended to the management and staff of JKL-II and Mawna Fashion for their cooperation in conducting the visits.

Authors: Nafia Saddaf, Afsara Binte Mirza, Mahzabeen Mahfuz, Maliha Momtaj Himu

Cite as: Saddaf, N., Mirza, A.B., Mahfuz, M., Himu, M.M (2025).A Case Study of Navigating the Just Transition: DBL Group's Integrated Approach to Climate Resilience in the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) Sector. Published by: The Just Transition Programme Team of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD). Website: www.icccad.net. Publishing Date: December 2025.

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Executive Summary



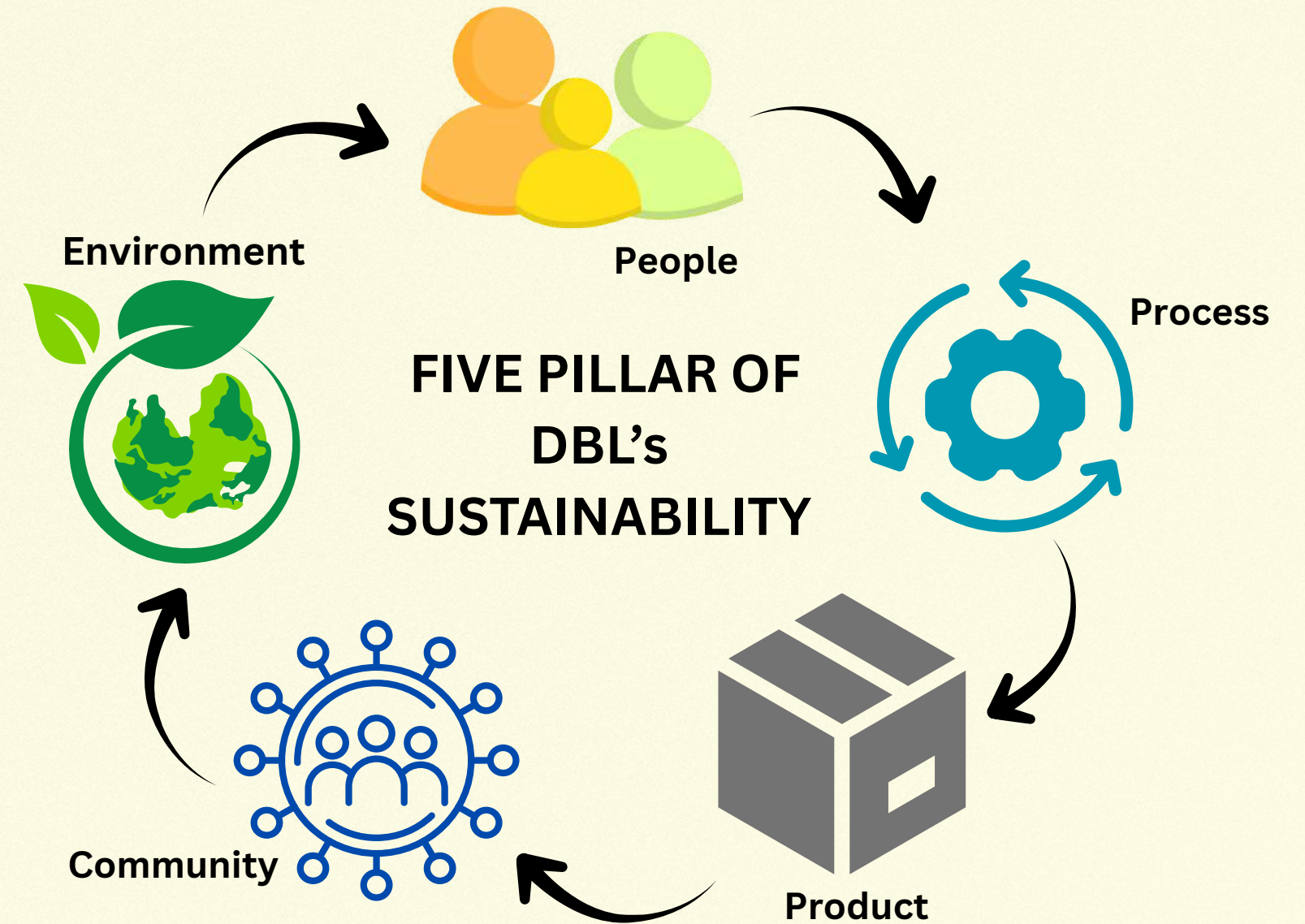
This case study examines DBL's adaptive and pioneering role in making the RMG sector green through enabling 'just transition' in Bangladesh. The case study highlights DBL's noteworthy sustainable efforts and programmes shaped for the well-being of the workers inside the factory premises: As part of ICCCAD's Just Transition research, the team conducted field visits to two DBL locations- JKL-II, Sreepur, and Mawna Fashion, Mawna.

Additionally, the case study analyzes the current operational gap and systemic bottlenecks for business practices and worker's wellbeing in the context of climate change adaptation.

About DBL Group

DBL Group is a leading family-owned conglomerate in Bangladesh, established in 1991 as Dulal Brothers Limited. Over the years, it has expanded into a diversified business group with operations across textiles, apparel, pharmaceuticals, ceramics, and more. The Group currently employs approximately 50,000+ workers across its various enterprises, reflecting its significant national footprint. DBL continues to position itself as a responsible, innovative, and sustainability-driven industry leader in Bangladesh and beyond.

DBL Group's comprehensive Five-Pillar Sustainability Strategy, known as Sustainability 5.0 strategy embodies a holistic approach, encompassing the pillars of People, Process, Product, Community, and Environment. Through innovative practices in energy efficiency, resource management, and green manufacturing across these five pillars, the Group has significantly reduced its environmental footprint while setting up new industry benchmarks.



DBL's alignment with global sustainability standards is further reinforced by its strategic integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into its operations. The company is also paving its roadmap for creating a greener economic ready-made garment (RMG) sector by incorporating sustainable business practices in its production cycle and improving the working conditions for the workers, amidst climate change.



DBL's enthusiasm for investing in sustainability and workers' well-being

The DBL Group has been working on implementing an integrated strategy to promote environmental stewardship, workers' well-being and promote business growth. This holistic approach has been proven to be beneficial for both the workforce and revenue generation. The advantage of DBL's integrated approaches are:



Reduced Operational Costs

Compliance with and exceeding brand requirements (e.g., for PUMA and H&M) secures international clients. Excellent workplace conditions also make DBL an employer of choice, helping to attract and retain skilled workers.



Risk Mitigation

Building climate-resilient operations future-proofs the business against increasing climate shocks and tightening environmental regulations. This reduces the risk of operational disruptions, rising compliance costs, and long-term financial exposure.



Increased Productivity

A comfortable thermal environment reduces heat stress, leading to higher concentration levels, a lower error rate, and an estimated increase in overall worker productivity.



Enhanced Reputation

Compliance with and exceeding brand requirements (e.g., for PUMA and H&M) secures international clients. Excellent workplace conditions also make DBL an employer of choice, helping to attract and retain skilled workers.



Enhanced Worker Well-Being and Lower Absenteeism

Proactive health measures reduce work-related illnesses and accidents, leading to fewer sick days and a more stable workforce.

DBL's Multifaceted Factory-level Interventions: A Benchmark for Climate Resilience and Improved Working Condition



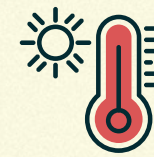
Energy and Greenhouse gas (GHG) Reduction

- **Solar Power:** Major investment in rooftop solar panels to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.
- **Energy Efficiency:** 100% LED lighting, strategic building design for daylight utilization, central power-off systems.
- **Innovative Boiler:** Use of "Exhaust Gas Boiler (EGB)" boiler systems that recycle heat and exhaust to generate steam, enhancing efficiency.



Water Management

- **Water Recycling:** Implementation of closed-loop water systems to minimize groundwater extraction and environmental impact.
- **Rainwater Harvesting:** Systems with a capacity of 22 lakh litres for non-potable uses.



Heat Stress Management

- **Cooling Technologies:** Use energy-efficient cooling pads, ventilation fans, and rooftop water sprinkling systems where feasible, specially during heatwaves.
- **Hydration Stations:** Provision of healthy alternatives like jaggery sherbet (gurer sharbat) and lime water, optimally prepared to prevent dehydration.



Worker Welfare and Inclusion

- Active inclusion and employment of **264 disabled workers**.
- **Facilities:** On-site daycare centers, discounted company shops (Bandhan Fair Price Shop), and ambulance services.
- **Medical Support:** On-site clinics with doctors and pharmacies providing free or discounted care, including treatment for any kind of medical emergency. Liaison with nearby hospitals for better and immediate treatment.



Factory and Community Level Challenges

Despite DBL's worker friendly initiatives, rising climate-related hazards are impacting workers' health and productivity; and provision of inadequate social services exacerbates their living standards in their residential communities. This phenomenon makes it difficult for the workers and reduces their climate adaptability. The inability of workers to get adequate sleep due to heat and power outages directly translates into reduced productivity and increased risk of error while working. While workers find the factory environment safer and better than where they reside, interviews revealed severe governance, funding and accountability challenges in at their residential premises.

National Grid Limitations: Factories like DBL cannot send unused solar energy back to the national grid due to existing issues, limiting the financial viability of increased renewable energy investments.

Local Governance Gaps: Critical issues like lack of accountability and regulation mechanisms for the landlords, severe water logging issues and lack of local leadership worsens living conditions of the workers.

Space Constraints for Green Infrastructure: Expanding on-site renewable energy installations, water treatment systems, or climate-adaptive infrastructure is limited by factory space availability and zoning regulations, especially in urban areas of Dhaka.



- **Heat Stress & Sleeplessness:** Power outages are a significant challenge outside the factory. Congested housing with no power- makes it difficult to sleep through the night due to the heat. Major issues include skin rashes due to heat and sleeplessness.
- **Housing & Landlord Unresponsiveness:** Landlords are unaware and reluctant to provide basic facilities, does not listen to complaints and in-act. Landlords are unwilling to invest in housing improvements.
- **Poor Water Quality & Sanitation:** Water tanks are often black (the cheapest option) which absorbs heat, making the water too hot sometimes. Water tanks are also sometimes mouldy and not cleaned regularly, compromising drinking water quality.
- **Security & Safety: Water logging** is a frequent problem in the communities where workers reside. The area is not always secure, forcing families to sleep with doors/windows shut, which worsens heat issues.
- **Health Concerns:** Skin issues are prevalent. There is an increase in mosquitos and insects.

Way forward: Proposed Solutions for Systemic Change

DBL officials suggest leveraging the company's influence to strengthen engagement and address the climate adaptation gap persisting at the community-level. DBL Group has set high standards for environmental compliance, energy efficiency, water stewardship, and workers' centric social programs. These achievements demonstrate how sustainability can drive productivity, reduce operational risks and create safer working environments. DBL's integrated approach provides a strong model for internal sustainability. With expanded efforts beyond factory walls, it can pioneer a sector-wide transformation that truly leaves no worker behind.

Strategy	Key Actions
 Direct Landlord Engagement	Organize meetings to convince landlords to collaborate on initiatives improving the living conditions. Better communication amongst the landlord and tenants can be helpful. Factory staff can advocate for better living conditions, ensuring issues are taken more seriously.
 Involve Local Government	Initiating social dialogue with landlords and local government representatives to raise awareness of climate challenges. The government needs to take initiatives regarding the power grid and impose regulations for landlords providing money receipts to tenants for payment of rent.
 Monitoring Mechanism	Establishing a local government-led monitoring mechanism on house rent, basic services, and living conditions to prevent exploitative practices and ensuring minimum standards for water, sanitation, and electricity is key.
 Housing Design	Buildings can be designed to stay cooler. Using lighter coloured water tanks instead of black can help to reduce heat absorption.



Glimpses from the factory visit

