



**Response to War on Want ‘No More Fashion Victims’ Campaign**

October 2015

The UK is playing a leading role in driving change in this critical industry. Despite the challenges, the garments sector in Bangladesh is having a positive social impact and supporting women to be more empowered by: providing them with opportunities to work outside the home, earn their own money, help support their families and have an alternative to early marriage. Our actions are focused on all the key areas where action is needed: improving building safety and working conditions; empowering workers; and urging buyers to take responsibility for their supply chain.

The Rana Plaza disaster demonstrated the need for a concerted effort by all stakeholders to address the challenges facing the garments industry in Bangladesh. The Accord (<https://bangladeshaccord.org/>) is a legally binding agreement whose signatories are mainly European apparel companies and retailers. American apparel companies and retailers, such as Gap, have mostly signed on to the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety (<http://www.bangladeshworkersafety.org/about/about-the-alliance>). The Alliance has developed and launched the Bangladesh Worker Safety Initiative; a five-year undertaking that will transparently and measurably improve the safety in Bangladeshi ready-made garment factories. Both the Accord and Alliance are independent agreements between unions and private companies, and so the British Government is not able to mandate companies to join however, we have encouraged UK companies to do so.

DFID has also used every opportunity to call on companies to contribute to the \$30 million Rana Plaza Trust Fund that provided compensation to the victims of the collapse. This fund was fully committed in May 2015, more than two years after the disaster. In part, as a result of DFID efforts, UK brands, have contributed significantly to the fund. A total of 8 UK donors, 7 of which were brands, contributed to the fund. Primark alone contributed \$7.3 million to the compensation fund, representing nearly 25% of the total funds required.

Last year, as a result of lobbying from major stakeholders including the UK, Bangladesh raised the minimum wage for the country’s garment workers by 77 percent to 5,300 taka (£42) per month. A Labour Survey of the Garments Sector, conducted by Democracy International and with DFID funding found that the average take home salary of the 1,500 workers from 150 factories who were surveyed was actually 7,341 taka (£58). This is in a context in which the average woman working in agriculture earns a daily wage of 191 taka (£1.51), which amounts to a monthly salary of 4,775 taka (£38). Garments work therefore provides a good opportunity to earn a competitive wage in Bangladesh.

We will continue to work in Bangladesh and internationally with the Accord and Alliance, the brands and retailers, as well as with the Government of Bangladesh, workers, manufacturers and other partners to build a healthy, safe and sustainable garment sector that benefits all.

**DESMOND SWAYNE**