

Follow up Survey on the Present Condition of the Rana Plaza Survivors and Kin



Unfinished Duties..

April 22, 2015 > ActionAid Bangladesh

1.1. Background

Almost two years have passed since the horrific Rana Plaza collapse in Savar, Dhaka which left the survivors and the dependants of the deceased in utter misery. In this period, numerous efforts have been taken by the government, international and national corporate, apex bodies, non-government organizations. These initiatives range from mitigation measures such as rehabilitation, re-integration of survivors and preventive such as amendment of the Labor Law, treaties for factory inspection etc. However even after two years, 5,000 people including injured workers and families of the deceased have received only 40 percent of the due to them and there is only enough in the pot to ensure they get 70 percent¹.

Rana Plaza collapse was the single worst tragedy in the global history of apparel industry the whole world witnessed in April, 2013 at Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh². This massive collapse killed more than 1135 garments workers and left more than 2438 workers who were rescued alive in physical and psychological trauma and thus in miserable condition³. This massive death-toll rekindled the concern about need for national labour regulations and private social auditing schemes and broader accountability framework for relevant duty bearers to ensure that the workers engaged in apparel and other industries have basic level of safety and work conditions⁴.

¹ The Guardian, 20 February 2015

² Rivoli, 2015

³ Joint Task Force Report/ ISPR / DC, Dhaka,/ DRRO/UNO, Savar. (Source: *The Independent*, Tuesday, 14 May 2013).

⁴ Locke, 2013 in Lund-Thomsen and Lindgreen, 2014

Although the big apparel brands made huge profits in the last 20 years, they failed to ensure that the factories of their supply chains maintain safety standards, have minimum work condition and respect workers rights. The Rana Plaza disaster brought attention of global consumers, trade unions and human rights organizations on the fragile accountability mechanism of global supply chain which has undermined the safety and rights of the garments workers.

In response to this tragic incident, ActionAid Bangladesh (AAB) worked with the survivors and the family members of the deceased workers from the very beginning. AAB conducted a rapid need assessment followed by another comprehensive assessment on rehabilitation and reintegration of the victims in 2013. The outcomes of the surveys draw attention of national and international communities about compensation of the victims. In 2014, AAB conducted a follow up survey to assess their status and needs and shared with relevant stakeholders.

The current survey shows that the physical health of 70.6 percent of the survivors surveyed have somewhat healed, although 59.1 percent of those surveyed continue to live in trauma. Recurring health problems have impeded more than half the surveyed population from joining the workforce. After two years, the health condition- both physical and psychosocial- directly relates to the livelihood situation of this group effects their well-being. The survey shows that a significant portion of survivors as well families of deceased face difficulties in meeting their daily needs. In addition to this, the financial compensation- also linked to their livelihoods- is still not yet fully realized.

Given that the challenges still remain after two years, AAB commissioned another follow-up survey in 2015 with the following objectives:

- a) To assess the present psychological and physical health condition of the survivors
- b) To assess the present livelihood status of the survivors and kin of the deceased
- c) Reality check on the status of compensation and
- d) To identify the gaps in realizing the services.

1.2 Scope and limitation

The survey is a reflection of the status of the individuals in the database of survivors and families of deceased prepared during the needs assessment survey conducted six months after the Rana Plaza collapse. Therefore the percentage referred here is that of the respondents reached and not of the total number of survivors or families of deceased. The survey is limited to social, economic and physical aspects of vulnerability. In 2015 survey the concern over justice is incorporated.

Hence the info on psychological condition and medical status are based on the perception of the respondents. Besides info on compensation and services received are based on the acknowledgement by the respondents. The survey did not address on the information of missing claimed

1.3 Methodology

In the first six month a broad database were developed as an outcome of a comprehensive survey where 2297 victims were covered. This database comprised of survivors and the family members of the deceased. This compiled database is used as a basis of panel survey conducted in 2014 and 2015. In the current survey 1414 survivors and 794 family members were surveyed. In the present survey all of the respondents were interviewed over phone. The phone interviews were conducted during March13-25, 2015.

A semi-structured questionnaire was prepared for the survivors and a separate set of questionnaire for the family members of the deceased. On accumulation of information data entry helped to create a broad database enabling the surveyors to prepare and compare with previous database. Additionally expert opinion was sought to stretch the information and secondary data (content) have been analyzed for validation.

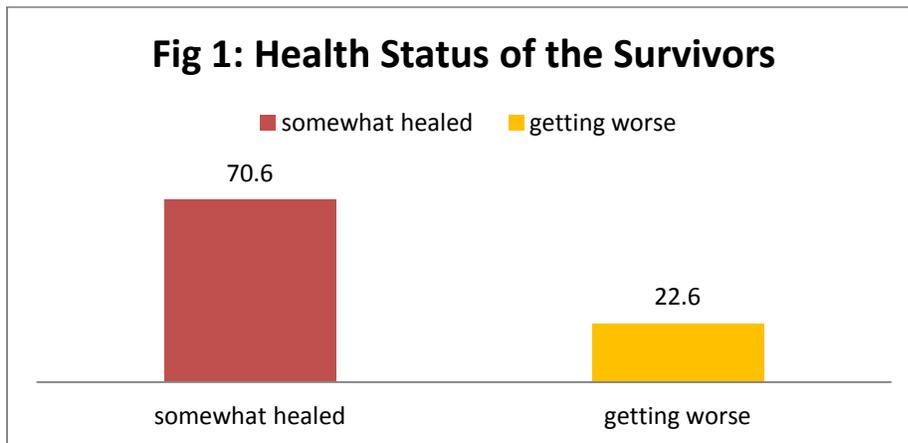
2. Demographic Information: Age-Sex-Marital Status

Most of the survivors are women. Out of the 1414 survivors, 499 males and 915 females were surveyed. Majority of the survivors (respondents) are young, 66.7 percent are aged between 19-28 years and 27.2 percent are between 28 and 38 years. Of them 68.6 percent are married, 22.1 percent are single, 3.6 percent are widowed and 2.8 percent each are divorced and separated. Out of this, 56 women are currently pregnant.

2.1 Health Status

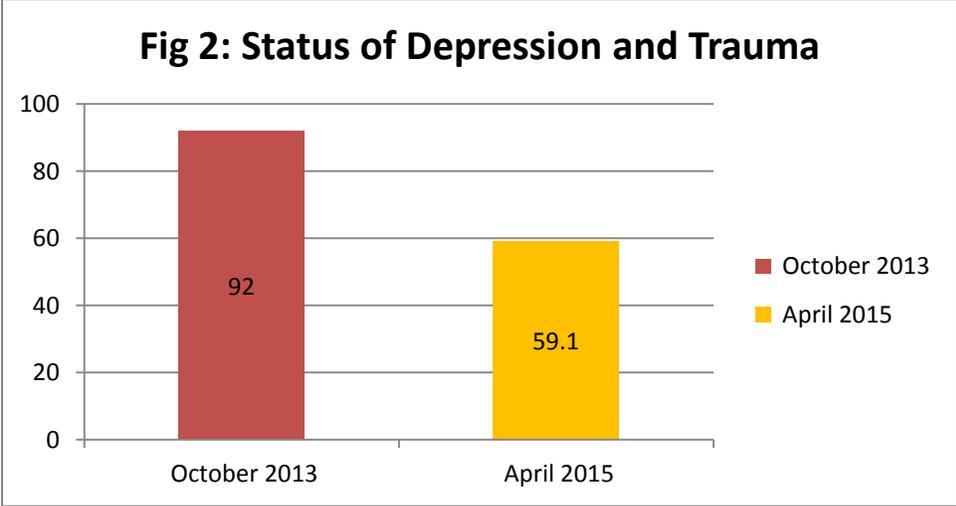
2.1.1 Physical and Psychosocial Health

The survey shows that a significant population sustained recurring long-term injuries. Of the 1414 survivors surveyed, 70.6 percent people responded that they are somewhat healed, while an alarming 22.6 percent reported that their condition is getting worse. In comparison to the survey conducted in April 2014, 9 percent had reported that their condition was getting worse and 1.5 percent was at serious risk. In the current survey those whose condition is deteriorating listed headache, difficulty in walking, back pain, inability to lift heavy things, eye problems as some of the major problems. It is noteworthy that even after two years of the tragic incident, 41.7 percent of the surveyed people responded that they still face difficulties in daily activities of living such as bathing, feeding oneself, dressing etc.



The current survey shows that 61.2 percent of the people still need to visit the doctor, clinic or NGO run facility in contrast to previous year's figure of 76.2 percent for availing major follow up treatments like: diagnosis (55.5 percent) prescription for medication (42.5 percent) and physiotherapy (27 percent). On an average each person spends approximately BDT 1600 per month on treatment/ medicine.

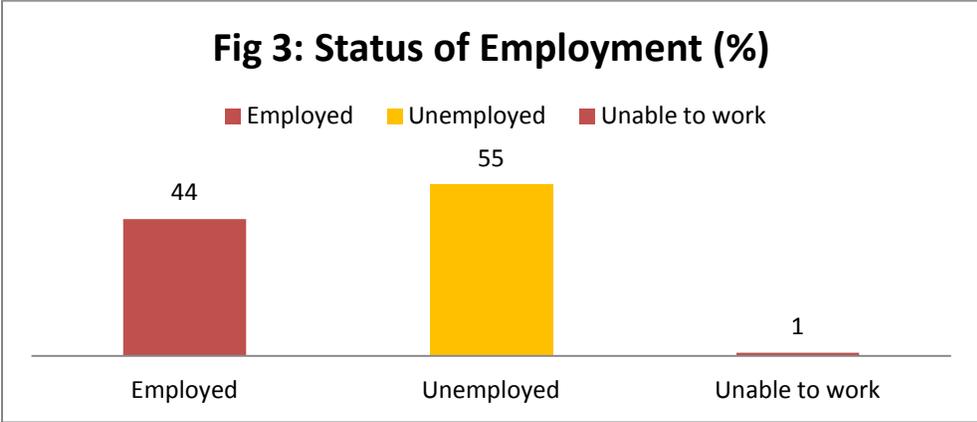
In terms of psychosocial health, 59.1 percent of those surveyed are still suffering from chronic depression and trauma, 34.2 percent have somewhat healed and only 6.6 percent have recovered fully. This is particularly alarming as such a large portion is still living with depression and trauma. This suggests that physical wounds may have healed in the two years, but the trauma and shock from the incident is harder to recover from. As per survey 11.4 percent of the people visiting clinics and/ or NGO facilities to take psychosocial therapy.



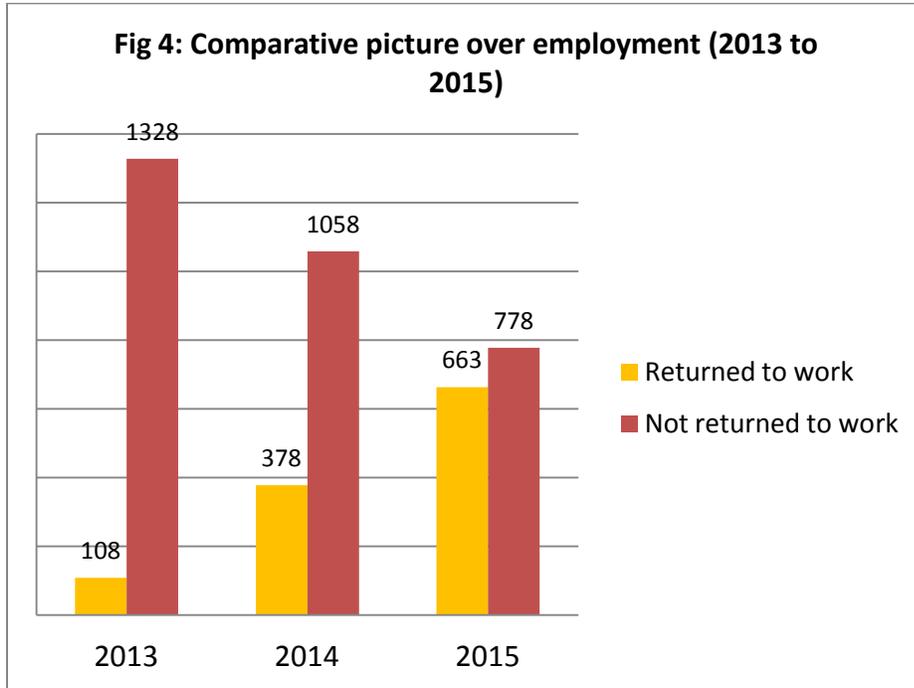
The physical and psychosocial condition also impedes survivors from returning to work. The current survey shows that 732 people cited physical and mental weakness as primary reasons of unemployment. The following section describes in more details the livelihoods situation.

2.2 Livelihood Status

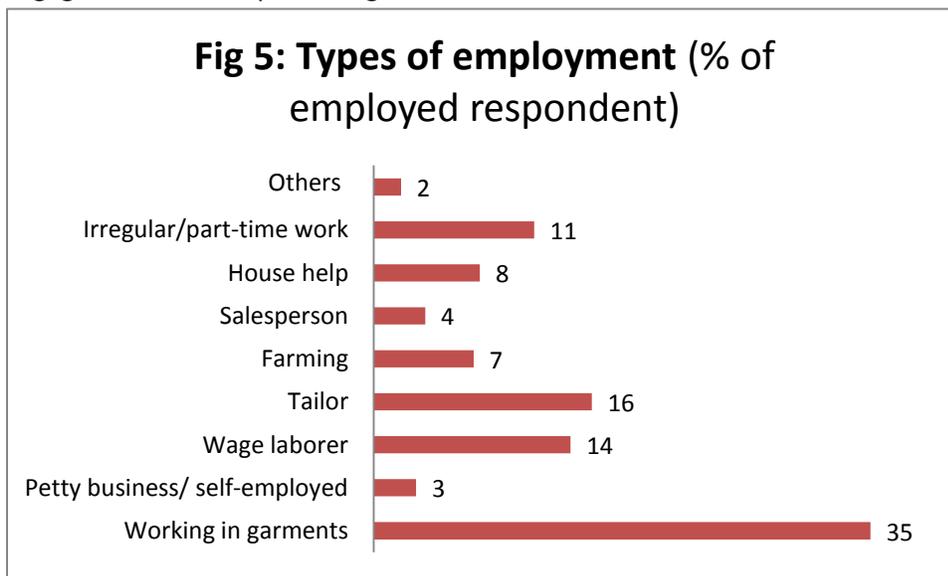
With regard to the current job status, this study found that 55 percent survivors are unemployed, while 44 percent survivors got engaged in various types of wage and self-employment, and only 0.6 percent survivors claimed that they cannot work.



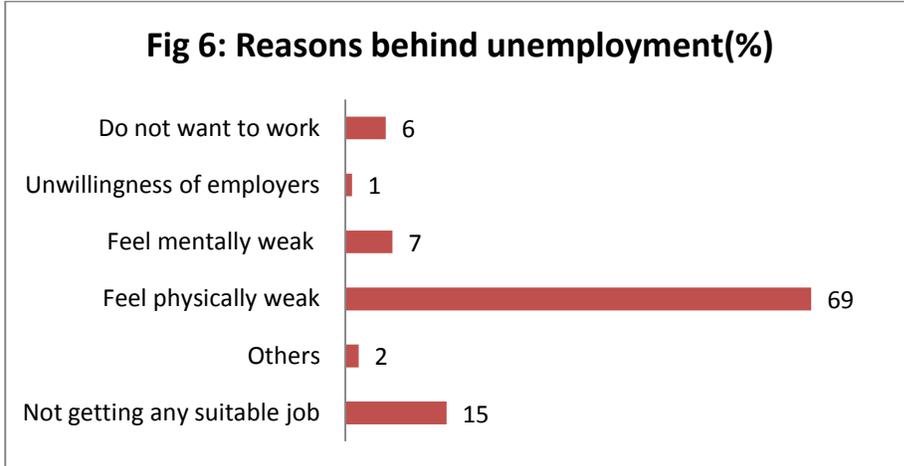
Among the currently employed respondents, 35 percent are working in garments sector, 11 percent are involved in petty business/ self-employed while 16 percent are working as tailor. Additionally, 11 percent are doing irregular/part time job, 14 percent are engaged in wage labor and 8 percent are working as house help.



Aside from these, survivors are engaged in other types of income generating activities such as farming, grocery shop, salesperson, auto rickshaw driver, mobile phone repairing work etc. The Rana Plaza collapse has not only resulted in loss of livelihood for many workers, but has also compelled many to seek employment in other sectors. A case in example is the 2.2 percent of the employed who are engaged in house-help and wage labor.

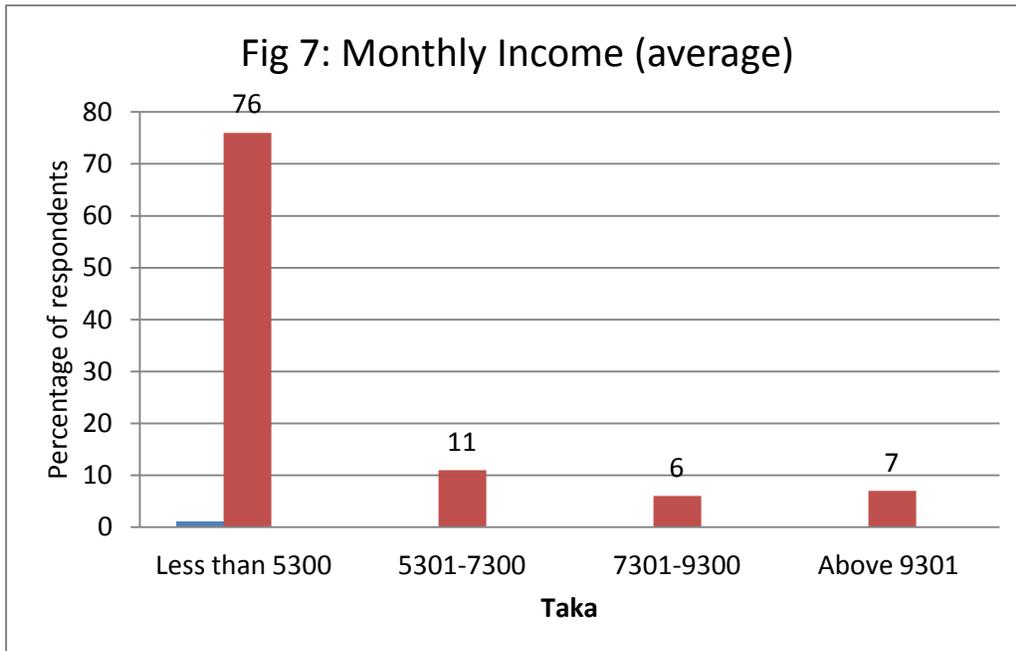


Those who are unemployed (55 percent) said that physical weakness (69 percent) and mental weakness (7 percent) were the main reasons of absence from employment. Lack of suitable jobs (15 percent) and unwillingness of the employers to engage people with disability (1 percent) are also some other major concerns.



2.3 Survivors’ Income from Employment/ Petty Business

According to the survey, the personal income for 1076 survivors (76 percent) is less than 5300 BDT from employment/ petty businesses. For 11 percent the personal income is between 5300 and 7300, 6 percent with income between 7301 and 9300 and only 7 percent has income more than 9301.



The table below shows details about income from other sources such as FDR, Bond etc. It is a dismal picture with over 90 percent earning less than 500 BDT from each of these sources.

2.4 Survivor's income from others sources

Table 1: Survivors Income from Other Sources

Income range (Taka)	Number and percentage of survivors		Number and percentage of survivors		Number and percentage of survivors	
	(FDR)		(Bond)		(Other sources)	
	Number survivors	Percentage	Number survivors	Percentage	Number survivors	Percentage
Less than 500	1337	94.55	1404	99.29	1408	99.58
501-1000	46	3.25	6	0.23	1	0.07
1001-1500	13	0.92	2	0.14	0	0.00
1501-2000	10	0.71	1	0.07	4	0.28
2001-2500	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
2500 above	8	0.57	1	0.07	1	0.07

The study shows that the average number of dependant family member is 2 persons for 1414 survivors' family. The table below shows the number and percentage of respondents who have dependent family members.

Table 2: Number of dependant family members

Number of dependant family members	Number of respondents	Percentage
1-2	563	39.82
3-4	236	16.69
5 plus	413	29.21
No dependent	202	14.29
Total	1414	100%

In most of the cases the workers at Rana Plaza factories were the sole bread winners of their families. Once the disaster occurred it destroyed the livelihood options of the workers and kins of the deceased. Even after two years of the incident 70.9 percent survivors could not regain the capacity to get back into the workforce. While 29 percent could manage to support their families/ dependants in limited capacity, it is a clear indication that an accident like this has put not only the individual but the entire family of that individual at risk in the longer-run and caused suffering from the loss of income and pushed the family to further hardship.

Table 3: Survivor's provided financial assistance to dependant family member during last 10 months.

	Number of survivors	Percentage
Yes	411	29.1

No	1,003	70.9
Total	1,414	100.0

Table 5: Monthly expenditure pattern of survivors

Head of Expenses	BDT Average
House-rent	2,924
Food	5,354
Medical care	1,704
Education/ child care	1,571
Others	1,908
Total Expenditure	9,510

It was found in the survey that 1408 (99.57 percent) survivors' total average expenditure was BDT 9510 per month. The above table shows that most of the (1401) survivor's family spent on food item while 1065 – almost one-third of the total surveyed population- survivor's family spent on medical care. The total average expenditure on food item was BDT 5354 and for the medical care it was BDT 1704. Besides, 960 survivor's family spent for education of their children (child care) while 836 survivor's expenditure was for house-rent purpose. The total average expenditure for house rent was BDT 2924 and for education it was BDT 1704.

Table 6: Monthly expenditure pattern of family of the deceased

Head of Expenses	Average expenditure: BDT
House-rent	2,974
Food	5,391
Medical care/Health	1,286
Education/ child care	1,820
Betel field	1,500
Electricity bill	400
Clothing	1,400
Household goods	1,500
Care for elderly	7,000
Financial support to other members of the family	1,500
Agricultural expense	5,367
Livestock	2,500
Bank	3,000
Loan repay	2,500

The above table shows that most (793) of the family of deceased spent on food item while 560 family of deceased spent on education/child care purpose. The total average expenditure on food item was BDT 5,391 and for the education, it was BDT 1820. Besides, 490 deceased's family spent for medical care

while 318 families' of deceased expenditure was for house-rent purpose. The total average expenditure for house rent was BDT 2974 and for medical it was BDT 1286. The survey study also found few number of deceased family spent for agricultural purpose, to repay bank and others loan, for livestock etc.

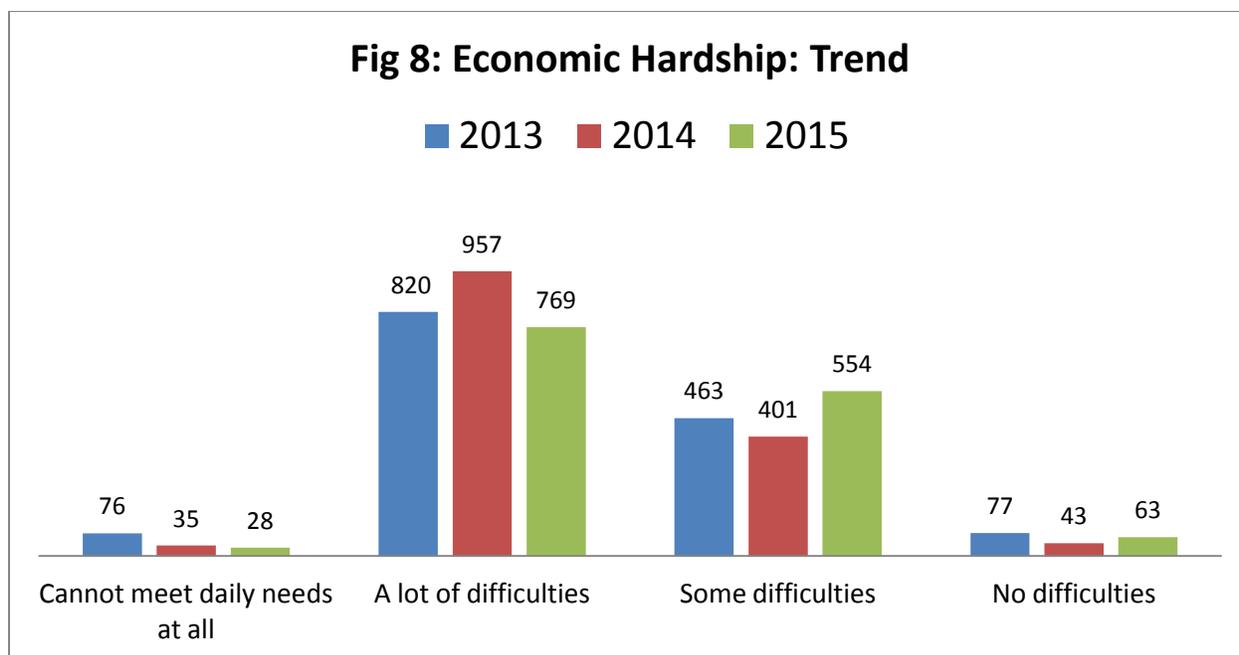
2.5 Economic Hardship

With regards to meeting daily needs, a total of 1174 respondents (53.17percent) including 769 survivors and 405 families of the deceased person out of total 2208 respondents were found to have been in severe difficult situation in meeting daily needs, 892 (40.40percent) in somewhat difficult situation while 51 (2.31percent) are not being able to meet their daily needs at all.

Table 7: Number of families of survivor and deceased having difficulties meeting its daily need

Difficulties	Number of survivors	Number of deceased families	Total HHs
Cannot meet daily needs at all	28 (2.0)	23(2.9percent)	51 (2.31percent)
A lot of difficulties	769 (54.4)	405(51percent)	1174 (53.17percent)
Some difficulties	554(39.2)	338(42.6)	892 (40.40percent)
No difficulties	63(4.5)	28(3.5)	91 (4.12percent)
Total	1,414	794	2,208

It is evident from the above table that the proportion of households of both survivors and deceased person at each level of difficulty are close, thus showing their similar level of hurdle to meet their daily needs in the aftermath of disaster.



While comparing with three years data (from 2013 to 2015), it is revealed that the trend of economic hardship is declining in most of the scales, however the pace is very slow.

2.6 Types of support needed for survivors and kin of deceased to offset difficulties

In response to what types of support needs, the survey shows that 1,092 (80.8 percent) survivors respondents require financial aid to initiate a small business, 552 (40.9 percent) sought help in investing in family agriculture/ poultry/ fish culture and 289 (21.4percent) wanted help in investing in family business. 262 survivors (19.4 percent) have mentioned for seeking help in finding a suitable job in other sector, 194 (14.4percent) cited support for taking loan from Bank for investment in small business and 100 (7.4 percent) wanted help in getting vocational training. It is also noticeable that only 88 (6.5percent) wanted help for getting job in the garments sector while. Moreover, 81 (6 percent) expressed their need for getting entrepreneurship development training. Apart from the these needs, the study also shows that small number of survivors also sought different types of support which includes support for accessing the market to sale products, financial aid, buying land, cow, auto rickshaw/CNG, grocery shop, sewing machine, education expense of children, house, rickshaw, free treatment, loan repay, treatment expense, vehicle rent, money for marriage, tailor shop, bank deposits, inventory for shop, clothing, food, Psychological treatment, Education expense, Money for marriage of daughter, solar panel, Photocopy machine, Money to build paddy storehouse, Cloth store, Studio, Press, Poultry farm, Tea stall.

In response to what types of support needs, the survey shows that once again large majority of 616 (80.4percent) families of deceased require financial aid to initiate a small business, 320 (41.8percent) sought help in investing in family agriculture/ poultry/ fish culture and 137 (17.9percent) wanted help in investing in family business. 99 families (12.9 percent) have mentioned support for taking loan from Bank for investment in small business, 97 (12.7percent) cited help in finding a suitable job in other sector and 49 (6.4percent) wanted support for accessing the market to sell products. Moreover, 26 (3.4percent) expressed their need for financial aid, 23 (3percent) sought for help in finding a suitable job

in the garments, 20 (2.6percent) wanted support for auto rickshaw/money for auto rickshaw, and support for getting vocational training, livestock as well as entrepreneurship development training demanded by 1.8percent deceased families. Apart from the these needs, the study also shows that small number of survivor respondents also sought different types of support which includes support for education expense, land for home, sewing machine, CNG, house, cash for marriage of family, money to lease land, tailor shop, job for sister, sending brother abroad for ensuring family income.

2.3 Compensation and bulk financial support

2.3.1 Current scenario on compensation

Along with the government, non-government and private institutions, hundreds of voluntary groups, individuals have extended cooperation to help the Rana Plaza victims in the emergency period. This natural response from all parts of the society indicates the charity/voluntary contribution of people from humanitarian perspective. Soon, it urged for institutional arrangements to address the vulnerability of the affected people and ensure their due entitlements. In the last one and half years, different bodies and mechanisms have been set up to ensure compensation for the affected people. A coordinated institutional effort has been made to ensure the best use of resources. The payment of award from the 'Rana Plaza Donors Trust Fund' has been following a coordination system recognizing the direct payments to beneficiaries from PM's Fund and Primark under the coordinated scheme. Previously, a high level committee formed on an honorable High Court order on August 29, 2013 indicated in their recommendations that the victims who have already received a certain sum from the Prime Minister's Fund will receive the balance of their respective package. It seems that the coordination attempt of Trust Fund may have a connection with that proceeding.

Since its establishment, several payments have been made by the 'Rana Plaza Donors Trust Fund' to award the survivors and the families of the deceased workers, maintaining a certain claims process and award calculation methodology. On 22nd April 2014, total 2,340 claimants were provided with and advance payment⁵ of BDT 50,000. Since that date a further 655 claims have been received and verified; and BDT 50,000 paid to the beneficiaries. In the following months, several payments of awards were disbursed among the claimants. As of April 20th, 2015 The Rana Plaza Coordination Committee pays out BDT 76 crore (USD 9.84 million) to the injured and the family members of deceased and missing workers of rana plaza building collapse⁶. These payments were initially based on a list provided by IndustriAll and Primark. Besides, direct payments to beneficiaries under the coordinated scheme are expected to be recognised at US\$ 8,780,857 (Primark plus direct cash support from PMs Relief Fund). The second payment of 30 percent of each awarded amount, totaling approximately US\$4 million is the next step of the Trust Fund with its available balance. The current total of the Rana Plaza Donors Trust Fund is now available for awards to around US\$ 21.5 million and the amount currently estimated for all beneficiaries

⁵ Rana Plaza Claims Administration (RPCA). Rana Plaza Claims update: September 15 2014.

<http://www.ranaplaza-arrangement.org/news/rana-plaza-claims-update-september-15-2014>

⁶ Rana Plaza Claims Administration (RPCA), Accessed on April 21, 2015; accessed at <http://www.ranaplaza-arrangement.org/news/the-rana-plaza-coordination-committee-pays-out-almost-10-million-usd>

is US \$ 30 million.⁷ According to Rana Plaza Donor Trust Fund still USD 8.5 million is required to pay the remaining award.

Meanwhile Primark⁸ claimed that they have paid long-term compensation and support services to the workers and families who were working in the New Wave Bottoms factory that produced garments for Primark, equivalent to \$11 million. Primark made an additional \$1.0 million payment to the Rana Plaza Donors Trust Fund.

Earlier, Tk. 127 crore (Tk 1270 million) was donated to the PMs Fund⁹ from various sources. As of April 9, 2015, PM’s Relief Fund provided BDT 22,93,58,720/- to Rana Plaza workers and families in cash and kind out of BDT 127 crore.¹⁰

Last year BGMEA reported that the association of garments owners have provided at total of Tk 14.508 crore (Tk 145.08 million) equivalent to US\$ 1.86 million in the form of treatment expenses, salary and other allowances, donation to Prime Minister’s Relief Fund (Tk 20 million), support to pregnant survivors, rescue and rehabilitation activities (BGMEA, 2014). Just after the incident Primark initially provided short-term financial support to around 3639 victims of Rana Plaza equivalent to nine months salary (Taka 45,000).¹¹

After two years of the incident, the collection of remaining amount seems to be a challenge to ‘Rana Plaza Donors Trust Fund’. Although one of the leading retailers, Benetton, has recently agreed to contribute to Rana Plaza Donor Trust Fund¹², the timeline and the amount of contribution is still unclear. **The question remains – when will the remaining fund arrive and how long people have to wait for the compensation**

Box 1: Donors who have publicly declared their donation to the Rana Plaza Trust Fund¹³	
Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice	H&M Conscious Foundation
Auchan (US \$ 1,500,000)	Inditex
Bonmarché	Kappa Deutschland (US \$50,000)
BRAC USA (US \$ 2,205,000), including donations from:	Kik (US \$ 1,000,000)
	Loblaw (US \$ 3,370,620)

⁷ Rana Plaza Arrangement. Accessed on April 11, 2015; accessed at (<http://www.ranaplaza-arrangement.org/fund/donors>)

⁸ Primark website, accessed on April 11, 2015; accessed at <http://www.primark-bangladesh.com/our-work-in-summary/>

⁹ The Dhaka Tribune, published on April 14, 2014, accessed at <http://www.dhakatribune.com/business/2014/apr/14/families-53-rana-plaza-victims-receive-pm-fund-assistance-tomorrow#sthash.NzSxusHw.dpuf>

¹⁰ Press Wing of PM’s Office, April 9, 2015

¹¹ ibid

¹² The guardian, Published on February 20, 2015, accessed at (<http://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/feb/20/benetton-agrees-contribute-rana-plaza-compensation-fund>)

¹³

Asda	LPP S.A.
Gap Foundation	Mango
The Children's Place	Mascot
VF Foundation	Matalan
Walmart	N Brown Group
Walmart Foundation	Premier Clothing
C&A Foundation (US \$ 690,000)	Primark (US \$ 1,000,000)
Camaïeu	Trade Union Congress/TUC (€ 20,000)
Debenhams	the Fair Design Committee of UCU's student association (€ 1,277.32)
El Corte Inglés	Zebra Fashion
Everlane	
G. Güldenpfennig GmbH (US \$ 600,000)	

2.3.2 Financial support acknowledged by the survivors and families of the deceased

The 2013 survey attempted to reveal the scenario of salary and employment benefits which was more broadly captured in the Follow-up Survey of 2014. The 2015 Survey has also attempted to investigate the delivery of financial support and compensation to the affected people.

Following the incident, the respondents acknowledged that they have received various amounts of financial support from different sources. They received financial support from Rana Plaza Donor Trust Fund, PRIMARK (through mobile money transfer 'BKash') and other Fashion Brands, PM's Relief Fund and BGMEA. Apart from these, they also acknowledged financial assistance from individual sources, corporate, development agencies and other private institutions in different times after the incident.

Most of the survivors have claimed that the cash support that they have received during last 10 months is not enough to meet their basic needs. 355 (72.6 percent) respondents have such claims. On the other hand, 87 (17.8 percent) have reported that the financial help has moderately contributed to meet their needs.

381 (73 percent) family members of the deceased workers have also said that the cash support merely contributes to their basic needs. 121 (23percent) families of the deceased have reported that the financial help has moderately contributed to their needs.

The respondents reported to have received financial support mainly from the Rana Plaza Donor Trust Fund in the last 10 months. Among the 1414 survivors, only 489 have acknowledged financial support during this time. From this source, the average amount received by the respondents is BDT 54,478, where the minimum amount is BDT 40,000 BDT and maximum is 1,60,000 BDT. Among the family members of 794 deceased 521 families have acknowledged financial support. The average amount received by the respondents from the Rana Plaza Donor Trust Fund is 75,373 BDT, where the minimum amount is 2,000 and maximum is 1,53,000. Therefore, the majority of the payments disbursed by the Trust Fund were received by the families of the deceased. Since this Follow-up Survey focuses on the

last 10 months, the picture of financial support/compensation from other sources like PRIMARK, PM's Fund, BGMEA etc. are not reflected in this survey.

As revealed in the previous Follow-up Survey in 2014, survivors acknowledged that BGMEA has provided 5.5 percent to the total cash support to the victims surveyed, reaching 467 out of the 1436 survivors surveyed. Majority of the cash support (54.4 percent of total cash support) to the concerned survivors came from international fashion houses, brands or buyers including Primark while short term cash support has been given through mobile phones-based cash transfer facility (Bikas). The other major contributors are the Prime Minister's Fund (17.2percent of the total cash support) and the cash support from individual contributions (15.1percent). As acknowledged, total of Tk.11, 79, 97,680 was distributed among 1400 survivors which implies that each person on an average received Tk. 84,284.06.

This Follow-up Survey also observed the pattern of expenditure of the survivors, particularly with the money they received as financial support from different sources. The investigation gives a mixed picture in this regard. About one-third (32.3 percent) survivors who have received financial support in the last 10 months have paid back outstanding loan/ debt with the money and 31.7percent have spent the money for food/daily meal. Particularly noteworthy is 20 percent have spent the money for treatment and 18 percent for medicine. 11 percent survivors have paid back outstanding house rent with the money they received. Among others, the survivors have spent the money for other essential needs like baby food/supplement, children's education cost, household essentials (clothing, utensils etc), parental care etc. While most of the survivors met their daily needs with the financial support received, 141 (29 percent) have invested the money in business installation, entrepreneurship and business development. Some of them have bought rickshaw/auto rickshaw, computer, cattle, sewing machine, water pump etc while others have invested in agricultural farming, poultry farming and fish cultivation. A number of survivors have freed leased land, leased fresh parcel of land with this amount. It is encouraging that 49 (10percent) respondents have deposited the money in bank and cooperative society. Besides, 71 (14.5percent) survivors have bought land with the money.

On the other hand, most of the family members of the deceased have met their essential needs with the financial support they have received in the last 10 months. 29.3 percent family members of deceased spent the money for food/daily meal while 27.8 percent have paid back outstanding loan/debt. The other expenditure patterns are almost same to the survivors. Although there are examples that the family members of deceased have invested the money in business installation and development, their number is insignificant. The survey found that 102 (20 percent) of the surveyed families have deposited the money in bank and 107 (21 percent) have bought land with the amount.

The comparative analysis of the expenditure pattern of the survivors and the family members of deceased workers in 2013, 2014 and 2015 surveys identifies a little but significant change which has a livelihood implication. Although most of the money being spent to meet the essential needs of the respondents, a part of it is also being invested for alternative source of income. It implies that these affected people are trying to fight back with the financial support/compensation to secure further living.

2.3.3 Other types of support acknowledged by survivors

When asked if they had received any training in the last 10 months, only 24.8 percent of the survivors responded that they received any training. Major types of training included running grocery shops (33.7 percent), setting small/ medium business and sewing (about 24 percent each) and livestock rearing (7.4 percent). Of the 350 people who responded that they received any training in the last 10 months, 38.3 percent received the training from CRP, 30.9 percent from BRAC and 14.3 percent from Torongo. However it is to be noted that only about half (48.3 percent) responded that the trainings have helped them secure employment. It may be inferred that these trainings may have been considered useful only for those who received financial support in addition to the training.

When asked if survivors received any psychosocial counselling in the last 10 months, only 30.3 percent responded that they received such counselling. Most people received these counselling from CRP and Savar Gonoshasthyo Hospital (41.4 and 26.2 percent respectively). It is interesting to note that respondents listed 28 organizations which provided psychosocial counselling with one or two survivors receiving counselling from these organizations.

In terms of other medical support, in the last 10 months 48.4 percent of the survivors responded that they received any medical support. A large majority (74.7 percent) received medicine and other major reasons are diagnosis (49.3 percent) and physiotherapy (22 percent). Findings also show that even after a year of the accident, 0.6 percent people got support in terms of assistive device and 3.4 percent received surgical support. This resonates with findings of earlier section on the status of the survivors' physical and psychosocial health which show that a large majority are still suffering from wounds and trauma. Most responded that they received medical support from Gonshantha Hospital and CRP (46.1 and 43.9 percent respectively).

3. Response to the tragedy

Given the grave concerns around building safety, two international treaties were signed. Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh is an independent agreement which includes independent safety inspections at factories and public reporting of the results of these inspections. The Accord is a legally binding agreement. It has been signed by over 190 apparel corporations from 19 plus countries in Europe, North America, Asia and Australia; two global trade unions, IndustriALL and UNI; and numerous Bangladeshi unions. Clean Clothes Campaign, Workers' Rights Consortium, International Labor Rights Forum and Maquila Solidarity Network are NGO witnesses to the Accord. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) acts as the independent chair. Where safety issues are identified, retailers commit to ensuring that repairs are carried out, that sufficient funds are made available to do so, and that workers at these factories continue to be paid a salary.

Alliance for Bangladesh workers safety is a group of North American apparel companies and retailers and brands have joined together to develop and launch the Bangladesh Worker Safety Initiative, a binding, five-year undertaking that will be transparent, results-oriented, measurable and verifiable with the intent of improving safety in Bangladeshi ready-made garment (RMG) factories. Alliance members represent the overwhelming majority of North American imports of RMG from Bangladesh, produced at more than 500 factories.

Supporting associations include: American Apparel & Footwear Association, BRAC, Canadian Apparel Federation, National Retail Federation, Retail Council of Canada, Retail Industry Leaders Association, and United States Association of Importers of Textiles & Apparel. In addition, Li & Fung, a major Hong Kong-based sourcing company which does business with many members of the Alliance, will serve in an advisory capacity.

The current statuses of these two treaties are

- Accord achieved its goal to have 1500 factories inspected by the end of September 2014
- Of the 175 primarily European brands and retailers who committed to join Accord, 172 global brands and retailers from Europe, North America, Asia, and Australia are signatories to the Accord; 26 US and Canadian companies joined, the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety. Both initiatives are bringing companies together in an unprecedented collaboration to address common challenges of worker safety in the Bangladesh garment sector following the Rana Plaza factory collapse in Bangladesh.
- Accord's inspections have identified more than **80,000** safety hazards. In **33 factories**, safety issues are so serious that the Accord and the Alliance have recommended that production be suspended because of the risk to workers. This is a sobering reflection of the state of factory safety in Bangladesh.

Inspections are an important first step in making factories and workers safe, but they are not enough. Two years after Rana Plaza, there are two major unanswered questions pertaining to factory safety in Bangladesh: 1) how big is the total universe of factories and facilities producing for the export market, and 2) how will factories actually be fixed?

There is no authoritative figure for the number of factories producing for the export market. Between them, the Accord and the Alliance have acknowledged responsibility for about 1,800 factories. But Bangladesh have more than 5 thousand factories enlisted to BGMEA.

Another concern is the essential role of indirect sourcing – subcontracting with limited control, visibility, or oversight – in meeting demand for high volumes of low cost garments. Indirect sourcing is not necessarily a bad practice, but keeping it in the shadows is and makes hundreds of thousands of workers less safe in Bangladesh.

While the Accord and the Alliance both have textual commitments to inspect subcontracting facilities, there is little evidence that this is happening in practice. Factories that fall outside these two initiatives are the responsibility of the government, which lacks the capacity to inspect – much less fix – unsafe factories.

The challenge remains on how to fund factory upgrades or relocation. Accord and Alliance inspections have identified thousands of deficiencies in the factories that fall within their inspection programs. But to date, none of the major brands or retailers has made a public commitment to fund the upgrades and repairs that are needed¹⁴. But who pays for repairs remains unclear. The Alliance estimates an average cost of \$250,000 per factory. That's more than \$400m for Accord and Alliance factories alone. No company member of the Accord or the Alliance has made a public commitment to pay these costs. Although the International Finance Corporation (IFC) has approved a \$10m Global Trade Supplier Finance programme to help factory owners pay for repairs, the IFC demands loan guarantees by western brands and retailers, which only a single company, VF Corp, has yet agreed to meet.

¹⁴ <http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2014/oct/20/inspections>

4. Way forward

As we approach the second anniversary, it is imperative that we pause to reflect on the efforts taken by the multiple stakeholders in terms of rehabilitation, reintegration and strengthening institutional mechanisms. We need to ask if all these efforts equate to justice for the suffering and hardship that the survivors and families of the deceased continue to face. While the spontaneous emergency response is commendable and the efforts taken by the governments, international buyers, apex bodies, non-governmental organizations is a step towards ensuring workers' rights and safety- but the crucial factor of unrealized financial compensation continues to be of grave concern.

When survivors' were asked if they got justice (in terms of the medical, rehabilitation, compensation efforts taken) for the pain and sufferings from the building collapse, 89.4 percent responded that they did not get the justice. When asked what could be done to ensure justice, 85.3 percent survivors listed ensuring full financial compensation as their first option that would bring justice for their sufferings. As second choice, 46.9 percent responded that ensuring punishment to the building owner would bring justice. The figure below shows the responses when survivors were asked from a choice of five responses what are the three options that they feel would bring them justice.

Box 2: Judicial Process

- Eight lawsuits were filed over the incident at lower court and High Court. Besides at the labour court additional eight cases were also filed (charged over death due to negligence, violation of building code etc.)
- The owner of the collapsed building Sohel Rana has been accused for mass killing due to negligence and violation of building code .
- A total of 21 people have been arrested over the collapse. Of them, 8 have secured bail from the High Court.*
- So far charge sheet is yet to be placed. Chief Judicial Magistrate granted five more weeks to file the report after the IO/ ASP sought an extension on April 15th.¹⁵
- High Court denied bail to Aminul Islam, owner of Phantom Apparels Ltd. However granted bail to two other accused in the same case (charge of committing corruption in establishing the RMG factory in commercial building).¹⁶
- Earlier the appellate division of the Supreme Court on January 15th, 2015 upheld the High Court order that granted bail to the engineer of Savar municipality, in the Rana Plaza collapse case.

In the case of families of deceased, the scenario is almost the same. As first option 82.8 percent respondents said that ensuring financial compensation would bring justice for their loss. It is interesting to note that as second choice, 52.7 percent of the people said punishment to duty-bearers would bring justice for their loss. The figure below shows the responses when survivors were asked from a choice of five responses what are the three options that they feel would bring them justice.

¹⁵ bdnews24.com: April 15, 2015, 16:41:37.0 BdST

¹⁶ The Daily Star: March 29, 2015

From both these groups, it is evident that ensuring financial compensation which is directly linked with livelihood is the main concern. For survivors, the loss of livelihood, recurring health injuries and prolonged mental trauma which hinders them to return to work, the compensation undoubtedly gives them a sense of security. In case of the families of the deceased, financial compensation can relieve the economic stress they have to suffer, especially in the cases where the deceased was the sole earning member of the family.

When asked what could be done to ensure that incidents like this can be avoided, 56.8 percent survivors and 63.1 percent families of deceased said that regular inspection by regulatory authorities is required; 42.1 percent survivors and 28.5 families of the deceased said that specific laws to ensure compliance of buyers and factory owners is required, while 20.8 percents survivors and 20.8 percent families of deceased said that the presence of effective trade unions at factory level could play a role in avoiding incidents such as these. The similarity in the pattern of responses and the ground reality points to the need to strengthen the regulatory mechanisms and open up the discussion on how to bring all concerned stakeholders under a single accountability framework.

With regard to the above, treaties such as Accord and Alliance Bangladesh entrusted with factory inspection, though commendable, are not without challenges. Crucial questions of the scope of inspection, outcome of inspection and most importantly who pays for the renovation/ recommendation of the treaties. Sustainability of such treaties is also questionable.

The survey findings highlight another key challenge, that of the unrealized compensation. As mentioned in earlier section, the coordinated mechanism of providing compensation has made significant progress, but even after two years, one third of the total fund is yet to be collected and disbursed.

Based on the survey findings and the ground reality, we propose the following recommendations:

- Completion of compensation disbursement- even after two years, the disbursement is yet to be completed. As seen from the survey, there is a major gap between income and expenditure and the loss of livelihood has further pushed this group to vulnerability.
- Further health & livelihood support to the survivors is required to resume normal life and work.
- A high level multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism including GO, NGO, Trade Union, Brand, Manufacturer and Development Partner should be in place to oversee the national labour regulations and compliance auditing. To make treaties such as Accord and Alliance Bangladesh sustainable, they could work together with the government of Bangladesh. This would also strengthen the capacity of the designated government department
- A social dialogue for broader accountability framework for the global fashion brands need to be in place to ensure workers safety and basic rights. This framework would ensure accountability of major stakeholder throughout the value chain. In the absence of any specific law/ framework the scope for monitoring the compliance is limited. This framework may be in the form of an association with the government, international buyers, factory owners,

trader unions and civil society organizations who could work together to promote compliance to international standards.
