Bangladesh went into lockdown on 26 March. The Covid-19 pandemic showed that the government of Bangladesh must strengthen the country’s resilience to future shocks by investing in an efficient Universal Social Protection system, including free access to healthcare and income protection provisions. Furthermore, the government of Bangladesh must shift resources from the National Development Plan to activate a Covid-19 Emergency Support Fund for all socially vulnerable people and workers, including those in the informal economy, as well as micro-industries.

This far, the government of Bangladesh’s current response plan has consisted in an extensive preventive information and awareness campaign; the opening of nine testing centres across the country; the provision of financial incentives as wage support for workers in export-oriented industries; and the distribution of limited-scale free food packages for informal workers, socially vulnerable and low-income groups across the country, who lost their work because of the pandemic.

ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

The government of Bangladesh has integrated the SDGs in its 7th Five-Year National Development Plan. The General Economics Division (GED) under the Ministry of Planning (MoP) is coordinating the implementation of Agenda 2030. In addition, an SDG Coordinator has been appointed in the office of the Prime Minister.

Some attempts at ensuring transparency are being made by the government of Bangladesh as access to information on the implementation of SDGs is open to all and some publications on SDG progress are available to citizens and civil society groups. However, trade unions state that the reporting mechanisms are not fully adequate and that not all information is made available.

While some consultations on SDG implementation are held, trade unions are only consulted on the implementation of SDG 8 and financing for the SDGs, and only to a limited extent. Trade unions and workers representatives have not been effectively involved by the government as a social partner in a dialogue on the implementation of SDGs at national level. While some trade unions’ inputs have been taken up by the government, the progress of implementation leaves much to be desired.

Trade unions report that the government of Bangladesh has developed an SDG Financing Plan funded by internal resources, ODA from international donors and the private sector.
TRADE UNION ASKS TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

The government of Bangladesh needs to put in place policies and measures in order to tackle the economic and social shocks resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. Today more than ever the SDGs show the way in building a sustainable and inclusive economy and society.

Trade unions call on the government of Bangladesh to ensure urgent action to cope with the pandemic crisis in line with the SDGs, including:

- A detailed impact and needs assessment analysis at different industrial sectors, especially to agriculture sector production to ensure national food security and prevention of famine as result from the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Establishing an Emergency Fund for Covid-19 response with appropriate resources and accountability mechanisms at different levels to grant free access to healthcare, as well as, income support for working people and their families.
- Develop a two year national economic and social recovery plan from the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Ensure better industrial relations at national and sector level, through a functioning National Tripartite Consultation platform and a possible national agreement.
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- Establishing an Emergency Fund for Covid-19 response with appropriate resources and accountability mechanisms at different levels to grant free access to healthcare, as well as, income support for working people and their families.
- Develop a two year national economic and social recovery plan from the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Ensure better industrial relations at national and sector level, through a functioning National Tripartite Consultation platform and a possible national agreement between government- employer and trade unions during the pandemic period.
- Trade Unions in Bangladesh welcome the Global action to support the garment industry which sees employer and worker organisations along with leading brands, retailers endorse a call for action and commit to work with governments and financial institutions to mobilise sufficient funding to enable manufacturers to ensure business continuity including the payment of wages, as well as income-support and job-retention schemes to address the impact of the crisis.

Jatio Sramik League (JSL)  Bangladesh Labour Federation (BLF)  Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal (BJSD)  Bangladesh Mukto Sramik Federation (BMSF)  Bangladesh Sanjukta Sramik Federation (BSSF)  Bangladesh Free Trade Union Congress (BFTUC)

dce@ituc-csi.org  www.ituc-csi.org/development-cooperation  Twitter: @TUDCN_rscd  Facebook: /TUDCN.RSCD  www.ituc-csi.org/2030Agenda