Occupational Safety and Health Risks for Female Workers Engaged in Shrimp Processing Industry in Bangladesh

Mohammad Nuruzzaman
Research Fellow, Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka Bangladesh

2016 GAF6 August Bangkok, Thailand
Introduction

- Shrimp industry plays and important role in the economy including employing good number of women after the garment sector.
- Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) issue became ‘talk of the town’ recently.
- International buyers and consumers are worried about the OSH status of shrimp workers.
- Shrimp export is facing a dwindling trend and now 7th in position from 2nd in 2009.
Objectives

- To give an overview of OSH status in relation to female workers across the shrimp processing industry
- To give an account of OSH risky area affecting female workers
- To recommend ways to improve the OSH situation across the shrimp processing sector in Bangladesh
Trend of Bangladesh Shrimp production, export and earning, 2006 - 2015
Major Export Sectors with income in million US$, Bangladesh, 2015-16

- Ready made garments, 28094.1, 88%
- Leather & Leather goods, 1160.9, 3%
- Jute & June goods, 919.5, 3%
- Home Textile, 753, 2%
- Agri-products, 596, 2%
- Shrimp & Frozen Foods, 535.8, 2%
Role in the Economy

Distribution of export earning (in Cr BDT) from shrimp and other fish & fisheries products, 2014-15

- Shrimp: 3915.519, 85%
- White fish: 453.692, 10%
- Crab: 4.194, 0%
- Shrimp shell: 5.68, 0%
- Eel: 196.39, 4%
- Dry fish: 62.259, 1%
Methods of OSH risk assessment

- Several OSH Risk Assessment workshops organized in 2014 for the 1st time for the industry with help of BFFEA and projects
- Technical officials e.g. Plant Engineers, Factory Manager, Machine operators, Boiler operators and Electricians from the running factories were invited
- Participatory identification of ‘Hazards’ and ‘Risks’ across the processing factories
- Developed need-based training materials using ILO OSH Guidelines taking help from local resource persons
- Interviewed over 500 workers from 45 shrimp factories investigating OSH risks at their workplaces
Status of OSH risks across shrimp processing

- Emerged after serious fire incitements and building collapse in garment industry
- There was no such initiative before to assess OSH risks in shrimp industry
- Fire safety and building across the shrimp industry is believe to be safer
- It is believe that there risks of electrical safety, mechanical, chemical and occupational health risks
Some observations

- Building safety is risk free, production is done in 1st floor
- Fire safety generally riskless but for stores for packaging materials and fuels & lubricants found risky
- Electrical safety is weak, low quality cables and fittings, poor maintenance, lack of qualified electricians and there are incidents of accidents
Some observations

- Mechanical safety, noise and vibration around machines found uncared
- Gas (NH₃) and Chemical safety found under risk
- Workers health and occupational safety are much neglected
- Supply and use of PPE was not up to the mark
- Women access to OSH training were limited
OSH and the Women
OSH and the Women
OSH and the Women
Worker injured

Store (Fire safety)
Recommendations for remedy

- Strict compliance of Factory Rules
- Adequate supply and use of necessary PPE
- Regular Fire drill and safety training for the workers
- Assigning a qualified ‘Safety Officer’ in each factory
- Strict following of SOP for all machines including periodic maintenance
- Use of Fryon as refrigerant instead of NH₃ gas
Recommendations for remedy

- Formation of ‘Safety Committee’ at each factory and its appropriate functioning as per law
- Regular compliance inspection by government Factory Inspectors, Fire Brigade & Civil Defense officials
- Workers health care to be done as per Labor Laws (Trained Nurse for 150+ workers and MBBS Doctors for 300+ workers)
Conclusions

- Training and awareness does not work unless the employers are ready to pay the additional cost of compliance.

- The industry should own their workforce keeping them safe, healthy and skilled for better business and stay competitive.

- Addressing OSH issues need long term support but both UNIDO and ILO have closed their support only after one and a half year working on OSH in shrimp industry.

- Further research and supports are necessary to work on gender focused OSH matters at the shrimp processing workplaces in Bangladesh.
Acknowledgment

The authors express sincere gratitude and acknowledgement to the BEST –BFQ Project UNIDO and ILO Shrimp Project in Bangladesh that allowed him to work and do the study across the shrimp processing industry.

Special thanks to GAF6 organizers for the travel grant for attending the conference at Bangkok, Thailand.
Thank you