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BIOGRAPHY

Farhtheeba Rahat Khan is a development professional with experience backed-up by private sector interventions and development sector working realities and challenges. As the lead of 'Private Sector Health project', Ms Khan undertook studies and worked on the policy front with ministry of health its directorates for formulation of policy framework, guidelines and accreditation systems in the health training, and emphasized on avenues for women employment in the health sector. Currently, Ms Khan is the team leader for the 'Working with Women-2' project implemented by SNV where she is facilitating interventions in garment factories, to ensure health and well-being in a sustainable manner.

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ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS OF READYMADE GARMENT WORKERS

Bangladesh garment sector is predominated by women comprising 85% of 4 million workforce. Mental distress affects their work life, productivity leading to a poor work-life. The normal day of women worker starts at 4am, cook's food in the common kitchen available for 4-5 families, goes to work at 7am, and has a longer work day till 7pm, then is back to take care of her family and goes to bed between 10-11pm. She has no time of her own, a victim of violence and abuse both in the factory and work, no one to share her pain. Factory management do not realize the fact when psychosocial challenges and issues go unaddressed, it impacts workers' effectiveness in the work place. The pilot intervention by SNV with 600 workers evidenced how introducing psychosocial counsellors at workplace affected the situation in factories. Welfare officers, who are the first contact point for workers in factory, were trained by certified psychologists and counsellors, and these trained para-counsellors were institutionalized inside factory. In words of the counsellor "within 2 months of introduction and program awareness, 3 women came with anxiety and one of them had 4 sessions with the counsellor for mental relief, 3 women reported work stress and took 3 separate counselling sessions, others include conflict with supervisor, family conflict, financial crisis, relationship issue and the resulted anxiety". On success of this intervention, SNV is now moving towards Workers Wellbeing Management Course for developing counsellors for the ready-made garment sector to address worker psychological issues.