Applied Political Economy Analysis on Labor Conditions in the Ready Made Garment Industry

BANGLADESH POLITICAL ECONOMY SPECIALIST

Scope of Work

I.   BACKGROUND

The U.S. government – including the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), and the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) have supported international labor-related programs in Bangladesh for decades, with programming focused on increasing workers' ability to organize and advocate for their interests and industry compliance with international labor standards. In 2008, USAID conducted a set of assessments of the labor sector in Bangladesh, culminating in the 2008 report "The Labor Sector and U.S. Foreign Assistance Goals: Bangladesh Labor Sector Assessment". This report informed USAID's current labor activity, the Global Labor Program in Bangladesh (2011-2016), implemented by the Solidarity Center.

Following the fire at Tazreen Fashion in November 2012 and the collapse of the Rana Plaza building in April 2013, the US Government has redoubled its efforts to improve factory safety, labor conditions, and workers' rights in Bangladesh. The International Labor Organization, the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety, the Bangladesh Accord for Fire and Building Safety, and numerous bilateral donors have initiated programs to protect workers. USAID's efforts focus on improving labor conditions by strengthening the capacity of independent workers' organizations in Bangladesh's readymade garment, shrimp, and fish export sectors. USAID believes that workers are their own best advocates, and that sustainable improvements in the labor sector will require the involvement of workers in every aspect of reforming the labor sector.

Bangladesh has made considerable progress on fire and building safety remediation efforts since 2013. Immediately, after privileges under the United States' Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) were revoked in 2013, the Government of Bangladesh allowed a number of new unions to be registered, indicating a commitment to upholding international labor standards. In 2015, however, Human Rights Watch published a report citing numerous examples of union busting.

In late 2016, Bangladesh experienced labor unrest in Ashulia, and its RMG industry once again grabbed international headlines. Recent signing of a tripartite agreement to resolve grievances stemming from December's labor unrest and the establishment of a permanent tripartite council may reflect improvements in industrial relations.

USAID's Applied Political Economy Analysis
Political Economy Analysis is an approach to better explaining why things happen in a given development context, through improving understandings of underlying power dynamics and relationships. Within USAID the methodology seeks to support the development of approaches at different stages of the program cycle, including strategy development, project/activity design, or implementation. The goal is to engage in PEA not as a theoretical exercise, but as part of a broader effort to advance Thinking and Working Politically (TWP) and adaptive programming within USAID programs. The PEA study will build on the findings of the USAID Labor Assessment 2014 report and other pertinent research.

Purpose and Objective
The purpose of this study is to better understand challenges associated with empowering workers within the RMG industry and to develop specific recommendations to improve related USAID programming efforts. The mission seeks a local expert/researcher to provide expertise on the political economy of Bangladesh's ready-made garment (RMG) industry, stakeholders, relevant legislation and potential programming activities. This Statement of Work (SOW) outlines the role of the local expert/researcher in the study, which will utilize USAID's Applied Political Economy Analysis (PEA) methodology.

Key factors we want to analyze include: the interests and motivations of key stakeholder groups, willingness to participate in social dialogue, impact of international and domestic pressure, and the ability of the government, workers, and industry to come together through a tripartite process to find mutually acceptable outcomes. This analysis will influence the design and implementation of current and future labor activities.

Core and Supporting Questions
Through the Political Economy Analysis, the team consisting of two US and one Bangladeshi national will identify core questions and sub-questions to guide the research. Initial questions are listed here, but are anticipated to be refined, and finalized, in the course of the pre-PEA workshop. Data collection activities derive from these questions.

Core questions:
- *What are the challenges and opportunities associated with the ability of workers within the RMG industry to represent themselves and advance their interests?*
- *What approaches offer the best prospects for advancing constructive, sustainable industrial relationships that represent workers' interests?*

Supporting Questions (provisional and illustrative):
- *What are the main challenges to creating an environment where RMG workers can constructively engage in dialogue with management in Bangladesh today? What helps to understand/explain these challenges?*
- *What are the implications of the above for whether and how USAID can support the formation of independent workers' organizations?*
- *What are the main challenges to improving the ability of workers to represent themselves and advance their interests? What factors explain these challenges?*
- *Who are the critical stakeholders who can affect or impede change? What are their concerns/interests? To what incentives might they respond?*

Key Roles and responsibilities/Timeline
- <u>Local/Bangladeshi PEA Expert Advisor:</u> Will contribute to a team that, together, will produce the report and recommendations. The Expert Advisor will be expected to undertake a literature review, lead data collection and synthesis, and draft a final report and presentation of key findings.

Other Team Roles
- <u>Lead Research Coordinator(s) (Mission):</u> Coordinate research team and participate in research activities through the study period. Review and approve all data collection, stakeholder analysis, and interview guides, tools and materials; analyze data, focal group meetings and coordinate drafting of final report or other outputs.
- <u>USAID/Washington PEA Lead (DCHA DRG):</u> Lead PEA training, participate in applied PEA research, analyze data, draft findings and recommendations
- <u>PEA Expert Advisor (PEA Fellow):</u> Help facilitate PEA training, participate in applied PEA research, analyze data, draft findings and recommendations
- <u>Researchers (Mission Economist, Mission Democracy and Governance Staff):</u> Responsible for assisting with literature review, stakeholder analysis, arranging and conducting interviews, and finalizing reports and other outputs.
- <u>Translators:</u> One or two as needed to support research teams. Translators should be familiar with the terminology used in the garment industry.

II.   TASKS

Initial Planning and Stakeholder Mapping
The USAID/Dhaka mission will begin the process of identifying stakeholders, setting up initial meetings and collecting relevant documents. The Bangladesh Political Economy Specialist will supplement and

expand these efforts using his/her knowledge and contacts.

- **Task 1: Literature review** – draft a 5-10 page literature review consisting of academic research, donor reports, media review related to the core knowledge question stated above (Due April 1)
- **Task 2: Assist in arranging stakeholder interviews**: contribute to updating meeting schedule with interviews with relevant stakeholders in the areas of labor law, labor organizations, labor institutions, and labor markets from government agencies, labor organizations, industry, local and international NGOs and key donors engaged in work on the political economic aspects of the RMG sector (Due April 4 and as needed throughout assignment)
- **Task 3: Draft and update interview guides:** draft and help refine sets of questions to be used in conversations with individuals, based on stakeholder type. (Due April 4)

Training, Field Research and Reporting
- **Task 4: Participate in PEA training and interviews (April 2-14):** During training, participate with team in refining both project and interview questions. During field research, participate in meetings and iteratively help update interview guide. Consult with and advise team as fieldwork progresses on relevant issues and developments, including advice on areas / sites to visit outside Dhaka.
- **Task 5: Prepare meeting notes:** (half to full page per meeting) on key points made during each meeting attended by the Bangladesh PEA Specialist. (Due April 13)
- **Task 6: Analyze and present**: Synthesize interview notes, identify key observations, and propose conclusions and recommendations as part of drafting final report and presentation to Mission. (Due May 31).

III.   DELIVERABLES

1. Literature review
2. Mapping of the relevant stakeholders/interview candidates; Scheduling and coordination of interviews and focus groups
3. Interview guide, to be submitted by April 5
4. Synthesize and analyze interview notes
5. Out-brief presentation, due April 13
6. Final report (format to be determined).

IV.   LEVEL OF EFFORT

Total LOE for this assignment is **25 days,** beginning on/around March 29 and ending on/around May 31, 2017. The researcher is expected to be available to work six-day weeks, <u>inclusive of Saturday while the Washington based PEA experts will be in Dhaka.</u> The LOE for this assignment is broken down as follows:

- **3 days** to produce a literature review and contribute to meeting schedule and interview guides (tasks 1-2)
- **11 days** to provide in-country administrative, logistical, and technical support to assessment team, and to draft out-brief (tasks 3-5)
- **11 days** to conduct additional research (if needed and approved in writing by the Deputy Director of the Democracy and Governance Office) and provide final feedback on the PEA, (task 6).

V.   COORDINATION

The consultant shall receive administrative guidance from USAID/Bangladesh Program Management Specialist, Emelda Mullick and Deputy Director, Slavica Radosevic, Deputy Director, Democracy and Governance Office.

It is expected that the work of the Local PEA Specialist will be completed in a maximum of twenty five days. The exact dates will be determined during the first week of the assignment. No work is to take place after this date without the written consent from the Deputy Director, Democracy and Governance Office.

VI.   QUALIFICATIONS AND SKILLS

• Master's degree in Social Science, Political Science, Economics, International Development or other closely related fields, or equivalent experience. Academic or other professional experience in the field of labor rights, Bangladesh labor law, and/or economics of the RMG industry is preferred.
• Demonstrated technical research competency, leadership, and administrative skills and experience conducting research political economy and related fields
• Minimum eight years of research, survey and assessment experience in political economy or related fields
• Significant work experience coordinating with diverse stakeholders in the RMG industry, i.e. relevant ministries, NGOs, INGOs, donor community, academics and labor leaders preferred.
• Proven experience in report writing, editing, drafting external communication, preparing power point presentations and translation.
• Demonstrated ability to work under pressure with rigorous timelines and deliverables and to track work in progress.
• Proven leadership, inter-personal, cross-cultural skills, attention to details, and ability to build and motivate diverse stakeholders.
• Demonstrated ability to work as part of a team and meet deadlines consistently.
• Demonstrated ability to respond on short notice and plan and execute several activities at once.
• Knowledge and experience of working in an USAID assessment is preferred but not required.
• Excellent communication skills and command of written and spoken English; fluent in Bengali.
• Proficiency in Microsoft Office suite, including Word, Excel, Power point applications.