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Is the high-road strategy enough: vulnerability of the garment industry in Bangladesh

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Introduction

Since the 1980s, there has been a trend away from traditional work practices to innovative work practices. Scholars have used a variety of terms to define 'new innovative work'—such as 'high performance', 'best practice' and 'flexible work practices' (Kochan and Osterman 1994; Ichnioswki, Kochan, Levine, Olson and Strauss 1996). Kochan and Osterman (1994:45–77) in *The Mutual Gains Enterprise* argue that if we invest more in human resources and improve organisational practices, the outcome will be higher productivity. One of the traditional strategies of firms to increase their competitiveness is to lower the price of their products through holding down wages. Through this strategy they can gain productivity, but the living standard of most of the workforce is lowered. In contrast, the goal of a mutual gains enterprise is to follow the 'high-road' strategy, that is high productivity and high wages defined more generally by the authors as competitiveness at a high standard of living. The volume of the production will not only be increased, but quality, innovation, timely deliver and efficiency will also be affected (Kochan and Osterman 1994). The authors further add that the gains of improved productivity then will be distributed among the stakeholders and the job of stakeholders will be to reinvest in the human resources and therefore ensure improved standards of living for future generations.

Following the theory of Kochan and Osterman (1994), Rogovsky and Sims' (2002) study *Corporate Success Through People* established that the success of any corporation depends on a number of factors such as good employer behavior,¹ concerned social management in the work place, high quality workers, safe and secure working conditions, human resource development, freedom of association and other services for the workers. The scholars of corporate social responsibility argue that in principle if employees are treated well by the employer, employees will act in a way that is beneficial for the employer (Rogovsky and Sims 2002). Rogovsky and Sims (2002) present a number of case studies to support this approach; one of these is a Bangladeshi garment company, Bantai Industries Private Limited (P/L). They claim that Bantai Industries P/L has been successful in implementing social services for the workers in Bangladesh which has led to high profits for the company under the regime of global integration.²

This paper explores the concept of 'vulnerability' in the context of the Bangladesh garment industry. While a number of studies have been conducted in the area of the integration of the Bangladeshi garment industry into the global economy, these studies have tended to emphasise the development of this industry and its social and economic impact on the country and also the nature of competitiveness of the Bangladesh garment industry in the global market (Ahmad 2005;

Hoque 2004; Mlachila and Yang 2004; Siddiqi 2004; Spencer, Gereffi and Bair 2002; Quddus and Rashid 2000). These studies have failed to define the vulnerable conditions of different groups of people involved in the global garment industry in Bangladesh. This paper defines the concept of vulnerability from the experience of a Bangladeshi garment company's relation to global integration as well as examining the concept of vulnerability from the perspectives of the different actors who have been involved in the processes of globally integrating the Bangladeshi garment industry.

As a part of my doctoral dissertation, I also conducted a case study of Bantai Industries P/L in 2003–2004. This study shows how a Bangladeshi garment company has become vulnerable in the global market even after providing good practices in the work place.³ I argue on the basis of the case study that in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) sustainable growth for companies is not guaranteed in the global market even if they follow good practices in the workplace or what Kochan and Osterman (1994:45–7) referred to as 'mutual gains'. The conclusions reached in this paper then contrast with the views of Rogovsky and Sims (2002): garment companies in LDCs cannot only depend on the 'high-road' strategy to ensure their survival and profitability.

Bangladesh's garment industry

In the process of the internationalisation of production, many companies in developed countries have moved their manufacturing operations to developing countries to take advantage of cheap labour. In addition to cheap labour other factors encourage this move. Cox (1987) observes that poor countries have offered sites that have not imposed costs such as the expensive safeguarding against environmental degradation. In this way, transnational corporations determine the cheapest production costs and accordingly continuously relocate their production operations. This internationalisation and relocation of production is particularly dominant in the garment industry. More than any other industry, the internationalisation of garment manufacturing began earlier and has extended further (Spencer, Gereffi and Bair 2002:3–22). Firms have relocated their labour-intensive manufacturing operations from high-wage regions to low-cost production regions in industrialising nations to take advantage of cheap labour (Cox 1987:244–253).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Bangladesh's garment industry was well positioned to take advantage of an abundant supply of domestic cheap labour. Abundant cheap labour was a comparative advantage and an important tool in the development of the Bangladesh garment industry in this period. The introduction of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA)⁴ in 1973 is also considered by many as the key factor in Bangladesh gaining market

access to European and North American markets (Hoque 2004; Siddiqi 2004; Mlachila and Yang 2004; Quddus and Rashid 2000).

Although the MFA was a restrictive agreement, it worked as a blessing for most of the LDCs. For example, since the European Union did not impose quotas on LDCs, Bangladesh acquired an advantage over non-LDCs such as Korea and Hong Kong (CAFOD 1998). The quotas under the MFA guaranteed LDCs market access in the key markets. The garment industry in LDCs utilised the opportunity provided by the MFA, which has greatly contributed to the economy of Bangladesh as reflected in the following table.

As is evident in table one, there has been a significant growth in the export share of Bangladeshi garments since the late 1970s. The numbers employed also increased from 0.306 million in 1987–88 to 1.8 million in 2001–2002 and more than 3,000 firms operated in this industry by the year 2000 compared to the less than 100 which had existed in 1982–83 (Table 1). The export earnings from this sector also increased continuously from 1980 to 2004, apart from a temporary decline in 2001–2002. The fall in export growth from 15.19 percent in 2003–004 to 10.51 percent during the period July 2004–January 2005 period may have been due to the introduction of a new agreement, known as the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC), to phase out the MFA. Since this phasing out of the MFA

Table 1: Growth of the Bangladesh garment industry

Year	Employees (millions)	Number of firms	Export (US\$ million)	Growth Rate (Per cent)
1977-78	n.a.	9	n.a.	n.a.
1978-79	n.a.	22	0.04	n.a.
1982-83	n.a.	90	245.83	82.14
1987-88	0.306	751	335.50	49.11
1992-93	0.804	1695	1403.48	24.70
1997-98	1.50	2726	3781.94	26.07
2000-2001	1.60	3500	4859.83	11.74
2001-2002	1.80	3618 ^a	4583.75	-5.68
2003-2004	n.a.	n.a.	5686.09 ^a	15.76 ^b
July 2004-January 2005	n.a.	n.a.	-10.51 ^b	

Source: Export Promotion Bureau (2003); ^aMlachila and Yang (2004); ^bThe Daily Star (2005)

Note: n.a. not available

quota system in 2005 there have been enormous social and economic effects in LDCs such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, Vietnam and Cambodia.

Bantai Industries: adoption of the 'high-road' strategy

The case study of Bantai Industries illustrates the vulnerability of the garment industry in Bangladesh at these different stages of global integration. The following section briefly outlines the unique welfare programs introduced by Bantai Industries as part of its 'high-road' strategy.

Bantai Industries provides an excellent case study around which to explore the impacts of global integration on LDCs. Bantai was a Bangladeshi company that manufactured sportswear, caps, hats and sun visors at its factory in Kalyanpur, Dhaka. The company started its journey with a foreign partner in 1990.⁵ Bantai was not only economically successful for several years in the 1990s but the company was also a model employer, implementing and maintaining work practices which provided safe and healthy working conditions as well as worker career mobility and economic stability. Indeed, during the 1990s, Bantai was Bangladesh's best-known example of the possibilities of enlightened industrialisation in an LDC.

Bantai's goals can be ascertained from the following statements of the Managing Director of the company, Mr Rahman. Mr Rahman outlined the best-practice goals of the company as follows.⁶

Any effort that will empower the workers is best practice. Welfare is the vehicle; it's not the aim to me. Other factories may have medical or day care; they think it's their aim. But my objective is empowerment through all these programs. Other factories' aim is service delivery. But it has no achievement in the long run. Suppose you provide air conditioning in the factory, but when they return home husband[s] torture them. So what is the benefit of it? I want to make a workforce who can face exploitative force in society. (In discussion with the author 14 January 2004).

Thus, Bantai commenced business with the goal of empowering its workers, and subsequently implemented innovative work practices, including welfare programs in its factory. Mr Rahman's ideology continues to be that if the employees are treated well by their employer they are likely to be committed. Mr Rahman is of the view that employee-friendly management policies will produce a harmonious working relationship within a company. Clearly, then, Bantai Industries P/L is paradigmatic of what Rogovsky and Sims (2002:11–12) described as the 'high-road strategy.'

Bantai's welfare programs included a health project, a family planning advisory service, a crèche, an education centre for workers' children, a saving scheme, a fair-priced shop and entertainment programs. New recruits to Bantai were provided with a health card on which their detailed health history was recorded. In addition, a woman doctor from Dhaka Community Hospital was retained on contract by Bantai and visited the factory at a minimum of once

per week and provides any treatment, advice and guidance required by the workers. Basic awareness, advice and guidance about family planning were given to the workers of Bantai by a professional NGO called Concerned Women for Family Planning.⁷ Bantai also established day-care facilities within its factory premises, and in order to ensure that the workers send their children to school, Bantai ran a small school in the factory building.

Significantly, the MD of Bantai found that welfare programs had a positive impact on profitability. The MD claimed that staff-turnover rate of Bantai was one of the lowest until 2001 and the rate of absenteeism was less than for other factories (Paul-Majumder, a researcher justified this claim). The workers displayed a sense of full participation, ownership and unquestionable loyalty to the company. And since its formation, there had never been any strike, any unrest or agitation in the company. The MD of Bantai felt satisfied with the effectiveness of the various social programs.

You can find a difference between my garment workers and others. What we are trying to [get them to] understand that they can build up [their] own future from the position they have. They need to be confident, conscious about rights. That's why my garment workers do not give dowry.⁸⁸ Property or money given by a bride's family to a groom's family or vice versa as part of a marriage contract. The practice of giving or taking dowry can be found in the subcontinent particularly in villages.

On the surface, at least, it would appear that Bantai's exceptional project stands in validation of the core ideas developed by Kochan and Osterman (1994) in their theory of mutual gains enterprise.

Does 'high-road' ensure sustainable growth?

Kochan and Osterman (1994:45–77) have used the term 'mutual gains' to indicate when an employer provides enlightened working conditions in the workplace (good practice or a 'high-road' strategy). They strongly argue that the outcomes of implementing such an approach will have a positive impact on the company and obviously the company's employees.

Achieving and sustaining competitive advantage from human resources require the strong support of multiple stakeholders in an organisation. Employees must commit their energies to meeting the economic objectives of the enterprise. In return, owners (shareholders) must share the economic returns with employees and invest those returns in ways that promote the long-run economic security of the workforce (Kochan and Osterman 1994:46).

The question is whether this strategy can be adopted successfully by garment companies in LDCs where business is highly integrated into the global market. Other factors also play a key role in ensuring successful participation in the global market: global political economy, development of backward and forward linkages and trade liberalisation. The global political economy has played an important

role in shaping the Bangladesh garment industry (Quddus and Rashid 2000). For instance, pressures from the United States, a major market for the Bangladeshi garments, succeeded in 1994 in preventing the involvement of child labour in the garment factories located in Bangladesh. If a poor country like Bangladesh is provided with a favourable trade agreement, then development can be achieved (Quddus and Rashid 2000). The author continues that foreign aid is not the most effective tool for the economic growth of this country rather favourable treatment from the global market, in the form of trade measures such as the MFA, can ensure the economic and social development of this poor country.

Backward and forward linkages are also considered important for the future of the Bangladeshi garment industry (Siddiqi 2004). By 'backward linkages', Siddiqi meant the production of cotton, the establishment of spinning mills, the development of manufacturing in weaving and processing and also the improvement of Bangladesh's infrastructure which would increase the value adding of the products. By 'forward linkages' he was referring to the diversification of markets, the differentiation of products and emphasis placed on forming a favourable regional trade policy.

Importantly, regulations and policies from both the internal and external perspectives affected the growth and development of this industry in Bangladesh (Hoque 2004). The author reviewed international trade in textiles and clothing, trade and industrial policy in this sector, and the social and economic impact

of global trade liberalisation on the readymade garment industry in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh garment industry would face stiff competition from such countries as China, India, and Pakistan during the post-MFA regime and could only survive by restructuring its textile sector and by penetrating new markets such as Australia, Japan, and Russia (Hoque 2004).

From these studies it is evident that a high-road strategy may be a necessary tool to be competitive in the global market but that it is not sufficient. The machinations of the global political economy, as well as the importance of the backward and forward linkages, were considered to be a key factor in the regime of globalisation. Thus, even if a garment company such as Bantai provides enlightened working conditions in the industry, the company may remain vulnerable in the globalised economy. The next section demonstrates in detail the ways in which Bantai Industries has remained vulnerable, despite its enlightened approach.

Vulnerability of Bantai Industries

'Vulnerability', according to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2003), the term refers to the ability to be easily physically, emotionally, or mentally hurt, influenced or attacked. This means a state of being exposed to hurt or deprivation by an action taken in the society. It refers to the likelihood of adverse effects to an individual or a group of people or the entire society. The position of vulnerability can be

triggered by any human action such as a government policy, or natural action such as flood. The effects can be natural, social, political, economic, national or global. This means that the word 'vulnerability' covers a wide range of meanings and the use of the term differs from one context to another. The common feature of vulnerability is that an action has the potential for negative consequences and outcomes. In this paper, the concept of vulnerability is explained from the experience of the Bantai Industries' global integration and it is defined below from the perspective of the various actors involved in this global integration —the workers, the entrepreneurs and the unions.

How the workers are vulnerable

Bantai began its business with a Taiwanese partner and 350 workers in 1990. The Taiwanese partner was initially interested in doing business with its Bangladeshi partner in order to take advantage of the larger quotas available to Bangladesh as a LDC under the MFA. The business was at its peak between 1996 and 2000 with 460 workers in 2000. Bantai had started its journey with a mission of reciprocity between the workers and management. On one hand, the management offered welfare programs to empower the workers and on the other hand, the workers invested their energy and showed complete commitment for the sake of the profitability of the company. This cycle continued effectively for ten years until the Taiwanese partner left the company in 2001 because, no MFA after 2004 the Bangladesh garment industry would lose its market advantage.

The vulnerability of Bantai workers is evident from the decline in the number of workers in the company. Two-thirds of the employees lost their jobs by 2003 as the company could no longer retain them. Sometimes the workers had no work as there was no order from the buyers. This was what caused the workers to worry about their future. Although they received a salary every month, regardless of whether there was work or not, the workers did not want to receive money in this way. They wanted to work hard for Bantai and expected regular buying orders. Taslima, a female garment worker said, for example, 'whenever any order comes we work here with our hearts as not to make any mistakes. Many buyers, in the past, were pleased with our service and we got orders. But now we don't get regular orders. It makes us feel very bad '(in discussion with the author, December 2003–January 2004).

The MD of Bantai expressed his concern about the decline of the company.

Now what you are watching is that the company is dying. When the Taiwanese partner left us we are down in business. Now the worker size is 150. Others left, as there is no work. My colleagues are trying to get the order. If we can't survive we will close it down (in discussion with the author, 14 January 2004).

Eventually, the company was closed in 2005 and all the workers lost their jobs. The vulnerability of women workers has become more acute especially when we consider the fact that until the emergence of the garment industry in the 1980s, women in Bangladesh did not participate actively in the paid labour market outside

the home due to cultural and religious norms and values in a patriarchal society. Women were physically confined to their households and excluded from the public sphere of fields, markets, roads and towns (Chen 1995). The religious norms emphasised that women should observe *pardah*, which means wearing the 'curtain' or 'veil'. In other words, women should not be seen by males outside the family. Since the inception of the garment industry, Bangladeshi women garment workers have broken down the traditional attitude of the society towards women and become more empowered. But the future of these garment workers is now under threat as the garment factories are closing down gradually as a result of the adverse effects of the removal of the MFA. There is little alternative for the workers who have lost their jobs.

How the entrepreneurs are vulnerable

We can also define vulnerability from the perspective of garment entrepreneurs in Bangladesh. Entrepreneurs have been drawn into the garment industry by the advantages given by the MFA and also by the support of the government. It has been a very difficult time for the garment factory owners to cope with the challenges of globalisation. They have sacrificed much to respond the demands of the global market and almost in spite of these demands become successful. However, the phasing out of the MFA has resulted in a decreasing market share for the Bangladesh garment industry and little or no attraction for foreign investors and, as a result, a good

number of garment entrepreneurs have had to close or scale down production as is evident in the case of Bantai Industries. Production of caps in the company dropped from 50,000 dozen caps per month in 2000 to 20,000 dozen per month in 2003–2004. The General Manager explained the company's financial condition

...from the last two years we are passing hard times. The order has been dropped but we are paying monthly salary and all other facilities, sometimes from our pocket (in discussion with the author on 10 January 2004).

The owner of Bantai Industries lost its business as a result of the closure of the factory in 2005 and has become vulnerable in the process of global integration. Another type of vulnerability emerges from external forces. The buyers, International Labour Organisation (ILO), human rights organisations and non-government organisations (NGOs) such as 'Working Women' are active in pressuring the garment manufacturers to sustain ethical work practices. The garment entrepreneurs argue that these pressure groups focus only on ethical work practices in the factory and that they are not aware of the need for an ethical price. In other words, if the producers were to receive a better price from the buyers, they could follow the 'high-road'. In this context, Moniruzzaman, former President of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) outlines his views of the difficult situation the company finds itself.

Our buyers focus on the working conditions. But they don't give [an] ethical price in return

of good practices in the workplace. Buyers demand good working conditions and other facilities. But they are not giving the right price. Those who say about ethical working condition, they should also speak about ethical price. If we upgrade facilities we need money. If we get good price we must follow ethics. But buyers don't compromise with price. Suppose in a factory, per day cost is US\$800. For that you need to produce 1000 garments. If you produce 1200 products then 200 products will be your profit. As there is no scope of increasing the overseas price we have to increase productivity. Then the workers are in pressure (in discussion with the author on 25 December 2003).

This view raises the issue of fair trade as well as illustrating the position of entrepreneurs in LDCs in the global market.

How the unions are vulnerable

As in many post-colonial countries, the labour movement in Bangladesh is not free from politics. Labour organisations in these countries became partly or at least closely associated with nationalist liberation movements and from then on their evolution proceeded along a different path from labour organisations in developed countries (Sturmthal 1972). Since independence, trade unions in Bangladesh have maintained a strong alliance with political parties and unions have been used to bolster the interests of major political parties. Under these circumstances, in the development of labour organisations in Bangladesh, the major concern has been the involvement of women in unions. The very limited choice of jobs for women has pushed the garment workers to protect

their jobs in this industry. For this reason women's participation in unions is very low in Bangladesh as the employers tend to disapprove unions. In spite of a number of efforts by NGOs, women's groups and human rights groups to encourage women to become union members (Rock 2001), participation of women garment workers in trade unions has been insignificant. On one hand, the women are worried about their jobs, and on the other hand unions are politicised. In order to avoid politics and the political uncertainty of union representation, Bantai developed an alternative strategy.

An interesting feature of Bantai is the introduction of a welfare committee in the workplace rather than a trade union. The workers in this company are not members of a trade union: they have formed an association named the welfare committee. It is a committee designed by the management to take care of the workers. The welfare committee consists of 17 members. The management selects members for this committee who are smart and active. The workers co-operate with the management in selecting the welfare committee members. The members are selected from all four sections of the production line: gathering, picking, sewing and finishing. Workers from each section communicate their problems to the member of the welfare committee who work in that section. For instance, if a worker in the finishing section has a problem, he or she relays that problem to the member of the welfare committee who also works in the finishing line. In this way the workers present their demands to

the management through the welfare committee. This committee meets with management to fulfill their demands. For example, if a worker needs leave for family reasons, the committee help him or her to obtain leave. For any kind of problem faced by workers, the welfare committee represents them and talks with management. The committee meets once a month to discuss the current condition of the workers. However, the question is why the management of Bantai has formed a welfare committee. In this regard, the General Manager of Bantai outlines the importance of welfare committee.

We go for a welfare committee not for a trade union. We know that a trade union is good but the question is who runs it and do they really work for it? The leaders of trade unions have no knowledge of the industrial law and labour law. For the employers, if there is fair trade union practice we don't have any problem but we face a lot of problems of trade unions. Most of the union members are outsiders. In Bangladesh the first step of action of a trade union is to call a strike but as law it is the last step. For these problems we feel it is not necessary. If we can provide freedom in the workplace, free to be associated with then why do we need a trade union? (in discussion with the author on 10 January 2004).

Paul-Majumder, a researcher into the Bangladeshi garment industry also feels the same way. She argues that Bangladesh cannot build up trade unions in a formal way because the workers, especially women workers, are not literate. They are not familiar with industrial relations and many issues related to jobs such as job

security, appropriate wages, labour law, ethics at work, compensation and other services. In underdeveloped countries such as Bangladesh, women workers do not have the confidence to take the role of leadership as is argued by Paul-Majumder.

In this situation we feel that we should maintain labour law to organise workers. Workers feel free if they organise themselves without outsiders. When they will grow up leadership in the welfare community they can join a trade union. In my opinion, union is important but not at the level when labourers are unconscious. In welfare community they will gain leadership role, will be conscious and after that they will be able to build up union among themselves not from outsiders (in discussion with the author on 7 January 2004).

The emergence of an alternative to trade unions such as welfare committees means that trade unions have become vulnerable in Bangladesh, particularly in the garment industry. It is disappointing that the responsibility of unions is under question, leading to the formation of alternative associations to trade unions. The only satisfactory fact is that the tendency to form this type of association has not occurred on a large scale. In order to avoid such initiatives it is essential to identify the reasons for the emergence of welfare committees. Politics in unions, the wide gap between union leaders and workers, the influence of outsiders in unions, the union leaders' lack of awareness of the women's problems at work, the attitude of employers to unions and above all the lack of capability for women to take a leading role have created an opportunity for the

garment employers to opt for a union alternative strategy. These are the factors by which unions have become vulnerable. Trade unions can only survive if their vulnerability can be overcome.

The case study has defined 'vulnerability' from different perspectives in the context of the global integration of the garment industry in Bangladesh. The garment workers are scared of losing their jobs because of the adverse effects of globalisation. The garment manufacturers have been compromised by the demands of different key actors in the global market, although they themselves do not get a fair price for their products. The unions are under threat as employers tend to follow alternate strategies. Consequently, Bangladesh is facing enormous pressures attributable to intense competition in the global market. All these factors have triggered vulnerable conditions in the country that have a tremendous impact, in particular, on the women garment workers and the garment industry owners and, in general, on the economy of the country. The case study, in this paper, demonstrates that even after adopting a 'high-road' strategy, the garment industry in a LDC, like Bangladesh, could not survive in the global market but rather has become vulnerable.

Conclusion

The case study in this paper highlights two key points: first, although the garment industry in Bangladesh has achieved rapid growth, different actors have become vulnerable in the processes of global

integration; and, second, by applying good practices in the work place garment entrepreneurs in Bangladesh, and in all likelihood other LDCs, cannot ensure sustained access to the global market. In other words, besides the adoption of good practices in the workplace, the continual success of the garment industry in Bangladesh and other LDCs depends on obtaining more access to the principal markets, and this can be done by arranging trade policies favorable to the LDCs. In the context of Bangladesh, a concrete domestic policy is needed to secure the jobs of women in the garment industry and to educate the workers and management about the importance of unions. Moreover, ethical prices for the products of the entrepreneurs from the buyers cannot be avoided. In a nutshell, fair treatment from the global market and its regulatory institutions can reduce the extent of vulnerability of the garment industry in Bangladesh and other LDCs.

Notes

- ¹ A good employer is one who ensures enlightened working conditions in the workplace such as a safe and sound working environment, good wages, good relations with employees, adequate facilities on the job etc.
- ² This means involvement of Bangladesh in the global market —import of raw materials, contact with the retailers, supplying orders to the buyers, complying with the rules and regulation of the WTO and other issues relating to external forces.
- ³ In this paper good practice, mutual gains, high-road strategy and good employer refer to the same concept.
- ⁴ The Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA) is an international agreement, signed and

negotiated by the governments of 44 countries (the number of member countries increased later) to provide for special rules governing trade in textiles and the clothing industry. Trela and Whalley (1990, p.13) claim that “the MFA contains a series of bilaterally negotiated quota restrictions covering trade in both textiles and clothing between individual developed and developing countries”. Under the quota, the exporter is allowed to supply a certain volume of textile and clothing products and the amount of quota is negotiated between the importing and exporting country (Smith 2003). According to the rules of the MFA, individual importing countries could choose which products to restrict from which countries and it has provided the basis on which industrialised countries have been able to restrict imports from developing countries.

- 5 Bantai’s foreign partner was Taiwanese and the foreign partner was interested to do business in Bangladesh to take advantage of the MFA.
- 6 The interview with the MD of Bantai Industries P/L was conducted on 14 January 2004 by the researcher in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Besides this interview, the workers of Bantai participated in focus group discussions with the researcher on the factory premises on several occasions in the period December 2003–January 2004. There was no interference from management during the focus group discussions. The workers felt free to share their opinions. The discussion area was separated by a curtain from the rest of the factory floor. The duration of each discussion was approximately . The discussion area was separated by a curtain from the rest of the factory floor. The duration of each discussion was approximately one hour.
- 7 The MD of Bantai has a good relationship with this NGO. For this reason this NGO charges less for its services to the workers of Bantai.

- 8 Property or money given by a bride’s family to a groom’s family or vice versa as part of a marriage contract. The practice of giving or taking dowry can be found in the subcontinent particularly in villages.

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