Ahead of the expected announcement of a new minimum wage of 5,300 taka (€50.32) by the Government of Bangladesh, Clean Clothes Campaign is disappointed that it still falls a long way short of a living wage, leaving millions of garment workers still earning poverty wages.

Whilst the proposed revision represents a 77% increase on the current minimum wage of 3,000 taka (€28.48) it will still be just 21% of the €259.80 (25,687 taka) that the Asia Floor Wage Alliance, of which Clean Clothes Campaign is a member, calculates to be a living wage for the country.

Since the government announced the work of the Minimum Wage Board back in the summer of 2013, trade unions and labour groups across Bangladesh have been calling for the government to endorse a rise to 8,000 taka (€76.27) and in doing so signal a real commitment to move towards a living wage.

Over 4 million people – predominantly women – work in the garment industry in Bangladesh, and the industry accounts for 76% of Bangladeshi exports and yet the people working in the industry are the lowest paid garment workers in the world.

The past few months have seen widespread industrial action as workers join together to demand wages are set high enough to cover the basic costs of living. As Clean Clothes Campaign partners the Garment Workers Trade Union Center explained in September “Workers have been demanding a fair wage for a long time. Recent times have witnessed huge demonstrations and strikes in the apparel sector demanding wage increases and enhancement of other benefits. In Bangladesh itself garment workers get less than what workers in many other sectors receive as minimum wage. Even the poverty reduction project undertaken by the government envisage 18000 taka as minimum wage for a family.”

Clean Clothes Campaign is campaigning for all workers to receive a living wage. We believe that a minimum
wage should be a living wage which allows a garment worker to earn enough in a standard working week (no more than 48 hours) to be able to feed herself and her family, pay the rent, pay for healthcare, clothing, transportation and education and have a small amount of savings for when something unexpected happens.

We urge the government of Bangladesh and the brands and retailers that buy from the country to take urgent steps to ensure every garment worker is paid a wage they can live on.

Filed under: living wage minimum wage Bangladesh