

H&M Foundation supports women garment workers in Bangladesh affected by COVID-19 in 1.3 million USD initiative

The non-profit H&M Foundation is initiating a long-term project to support women garment workers in Bangladesh, starting with their urgent needs connected to COVID-19. As a first step, 12 million SEK (1.3 million USD) is donated to WaterAid, CARE and Save the Children to provide around 76,000 young women, their families and community members in around Dhaka with emergency relief, also reaching 1 million people with messages on COVID-19 and hygiene practices. The H&M Foundation also calls for others to show their support.

“We will directly support women and their families with for example cash assistance for food, medication and other necessities, provide COVID-19 awareness raising and testing, hygiene materials and handwashing facilities. We hope to see more donors show their support in different ways”, says **Carola Tembe, Program Manager, H&M Foundation.**

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, which is a huge challenge when trying to contain the impact of a pandemic. The capacity of the health system is being put to the test and requires considerable external support.

“Together with the H&M Foundation we will address the immediate needs of improved hygiene in the fight against COVID-19, while building towards long term sustainable improvements in water, sanitation and hygiene services. An integrated approach that is fundamental for building sustainable, inclusive and resilient societies”, says **Cecilia Chatterjee-Martinsen, CEO of WaterAid Sweden.**

In addition to the health impacts of the pandemic, the subsequent lockdown has had devastating economic impact. The emergency relief efforts are carried out from May to December 2020 with the aim of having positive effects well after that.

“We will provide vulnerable women with subsistence allowance and access to health and gender-based violence support, also reaching thousands of community members. The donation from the H&M Foundation will support women and their communities in this time of great need”, says **Merlijn van Waas, Head of Sustainable Development, CARE Nederland.**

The initiative also includes Save the Children whose efforts will target children of women garments workers affected by COVID-19 securing their child protection and education rights.

“We will support them with solutions that they can use to ensure their children’s education and protection from violence or abuse. Ultimately helping these children to build a better life”, says **Onno van Manen, Country Director of Save the Children in Bangladesh.**

From urgent needs to long-term support

In addition to the COVID-19 related emergency relief donation, H&M Foundation is also taking on a long-term commitment, starting in the autumn of 2020, involving important players from different sectors to achieve systemic long-lasting change, equipping women garment workers in Bangladesh for a future where work is defined by automation and digitalization.

“Together with different partners we will make upskilling, re-skilling, digital literacy efforts and entrepreneurship available to women garment workers with the aim to increase their future employability”, says **Carola Tembe, Program Manager, H&M Foundation.**

Visuals

For visuals go to: <https://hmfoundation.bynder.com/web/3b5d7c8adb1a1bd7/bangladesh---covid-19-disaster-relief-2020/>

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NOTES TO EDITORS

WaterAid

- Project focus: Improvements in water, sanitation and hygiene services and awareness raising.
- Areas in Dhaka: Savar, Ashulia, Gazipur and Narayanganj.
- People directly reached: 19,500 women garment workers
- H&M Foundation donation: 2,9 million SEK.

CARE

- Project focus: Gender-based violence support and services, health services and supporting women and their families with cash assistance for food, medication and other necessities.
- Areas in Dhaka: Gazipur City Corporation, Gazipur Sadar, Savar, Ashulia and Mymensingh.
- People directly reached: 7,200 women garment workers and 30,000 community members.
- H&M Foundation donation: 6 million SEK.

Save the Children

- Project focus: Supporting disadvantaged children with focus on child protection and child education. Parents, teachers, education authorities and government are also included in the project.
- Areas in Dhaka: Selected areas of Gazipur, Savar and Narayngonj
- People directly reached: 19,000
- H&M Foundation donation: 3,1 million SEK.

Short facts H&M Foundation

- In collaboration with partners around the world, the H&M Foundation acts as a catalyst for change accelerating the progress needed to reach the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.
- Since 2013, 7.7 million people around the world have been directly reached through the initiatives within Education, Water, Equality, Planet as well as emergency relief, and 98 million USD has been granted in total.
- The total donation to emergency relief is 3.8 million USD, contributing to total aid for hundreds of thousands of people: <https://hmfoundation.com/emergency-relief/>.
- Concrete examples of how existing H&M Foundation projects have been adapted to respond to the pandemic: <https://hmfoundation.com/news/adapting-to-a-new-reality/>
- Earlier this year, to specifically support the work to prevent, detect and respond to the pandemic, H&M Foundation made a donation of 500,000 USD to WHO through the COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund: <https://hmfoundation.com/news/donation-to-covid19-solidarity-response-fund/>
- H&M Foundation also has an ongoing partnership with UN Foundation focusing on advancing the progress of the UN Sustainable Development Goals through women's empowerment advocacy and supporting social entrepreneurship.
- Previous projects in Bangladesh supported by H&M Foundation:
 - UNICEF: Getting vulnerable children aged 4-18 years access to school. 127,000 children and youths were reached. Donation: 45.8 million SEK. Project period: 2014-2019.
 - WaterAid: Improving the health, safety and dignity of millions of people, by renovating or building public toilets in Dhaka. Donation: 37.1 million SEK. Project period: 2013-2019.
 - WaterAid: Increasing access to safe drinking water, improved sanitation and hygiene practices for residents in Banglabazar, a low-income community in Bangladesh. Also increasing decision makers' awareness of these factors. Almost 40,000 people have been reached so far. Total donation: 15 million SEK. Project period: 2016-2020.

The H&M Foundation is a non-profit global foundation headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden. Its mission is to drive long lasting, positive change and improve living conditions by investing in people, communities and innovative ideas. Through partnerships with organisations around the globe, the H&M Foundation aims to act as a catalyst for change and accelerate the progress needed to reach the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. It focuses on four areas; Education, Water, Equality and Planet and can also provide emergency relief. The H&M Foundation is privately funded by the Stefan Persson family, founders and main owners of H & M Hennes & Mauritz AB. Since 2013, the family has donated 1.5 billion Swedish krona (\$200 million/€163 million) to the H&M Foundation. www.hmfoundation.com, www.unfounded.ltd. Follow @hmfoundation on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn.