

CLEANING UP THE GARMENT INDUSTRY IN BANGLADESH:

WASTEWATER, ENVIRONMENT, AND BRAND REPUTATION

» **Water is a vital finite resource,** integral to public health, agricultural and industrial development, and every citizen's survival. Textile factories create large numbers of jobs in Bangladesh, boosting the country's economy. They also pollute water sources and degrade the soil, endangering the livelihood of small farmers, and badly damaging the country's ecosystem.

» **Brands must embrace public value:** An approach that combines active public participation, exchange, and dialogue with transparency and accountability. In working toward sustainable solutions, it considers both **society** and the **environment** as **active stakeholders**. Public value articulates a **shared purpose**.



» **If left unaddressed,** as the textile industry in Bangladesh grows – and water use increases – the situation will only get worse, with hazardous effects for public health, communities, and the environment.

AS BUSINESS SURGES IN BANGLADESH, SO DOES POLLUTION

» **By exercising social responsibility, brands can help reverse this trend** and avoid an ecological catastrophe. By pressuring polluters, working with governments to strengthen environmental protections, and refusing to buy goods that have been unethically produced, brands can create the right conditions to get this done – while securing and enhancing their brand image.

» **Brands must get active in the fight to protect water bodies – and their image too**

VERY FEW FACTORIES USE PROPER WASTEWATER TREATMENT PRACTICES, INSTEAD SENDING VAST QUANTITIES OF POLLUTED WATER INTO THE COUNTRY'S WATERWAYS

Elevated Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD) and Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) values – indicators of poor water quality – in four riverways, were found to be far exceeding acceptable levels.



LAW	REALITY	RESULT
» Environmental law mandates that all washing, dyeing, and finishing textile factories use effluent treatment plants (ETPs) to treat wastewater before discharging it into the waterways.	» ETP inspections and enforcement are often weak. The Department of Environment (DoE) lacks the technical skill needed to enforce laws and protect water quality.	» The result is inefficiency and corruption – tempting polluters to bypass wastewater treatment for the sake of higher profits.

Loopholes in factory operations:



Hidden drains used by factories to dispose of untreated wastes



Corruption nexus among factories and government agency personnel



Bribes exchanged for environmental compliance certificates



Barring of DoE inspectors from factory premises

Dire effects of improper wastewater management:



Rivers poisoned by toxic and hazardous pollutants



Polluted surface and groundwater, unfit for human consumption, agriculture, or fisheries



Disappearance of aquatic life, especially edible fish



Increased respiratory tract problems and skin diseases in communities

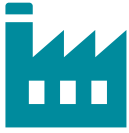


Degraded soil quality and shrinking agricultural production

In a WIN-sponsored survey ², approximately 67% of respondents in Shanirvar Dhamshona Union and 88% in Kanchpur Union said that textile industry pollution has negatively affected their income. In Shanirvar Dhamshona Union, around 25% of farmers and 4% of those who make a living from fishing said that the production capacity of agricultural land and the availability of fish have declined since the textile sector became active in their area.

² Effectiveness of Effluent Treatment Plants (ETPs) in the Garments Industry of Bangladesh: a Water Sector Integrity Perspective, Transparency International Bangladesh, Water Integrity Network, 2017

THE GARMENT SECTOR IN BANGLADESH



Bangladesh has approximately 1,700 **washing, dyeing, and finishing factories manufacturing fabrics for export**. The industry is centred around Dhaka, Chittagong, and Mymensingh.



Factories are almost always located near water bodies or rivers, including the Chittagong, Gazipur, Konabari, Narayanganj, Savar, and Tongi.

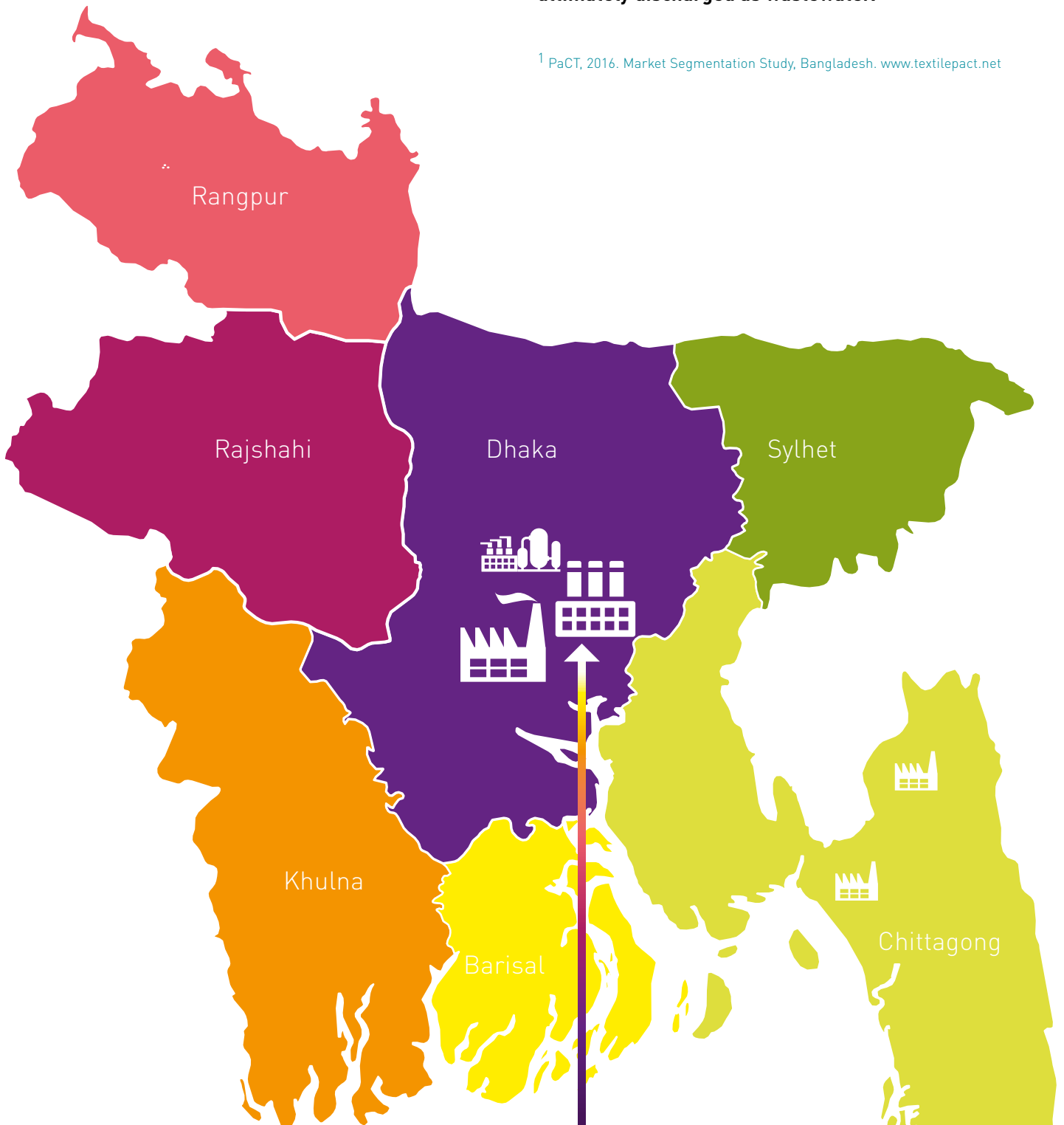


Textile production in the country is **extremely water-intensive, consuming 200 –250 litres of water per kilogram of fabric produced – far exceeding the international best practice.**¹



Approximately 300 tons of water are consumed to produce 1 ton of cloth. **Approximately 80 – 85% is ultimately discharged as wastewater.**

¹ PaCT, 2016. Market Segmentation Study, Bangladesh. www.textilepact.net





Konabari Industrial Cluster in Gazipur is one of the country's major textile belts, with 28 washing, dyeing, and finishing units generating 51,000m³ of wastewater daily, with the five largest units responsible for 60% of the run-off. Together, these 28 factories use 120 tons of chemicals and dyes every day. WIN found that untreated wastewater streams are frequently discharged into surrounding fields, irrigation channels, or as surface water. The discharge enters the Turag River and flows downstream to the Buriganga and Shitalakhsya Rivers, creating severely polluted waters.

COMMUNITY VOICES



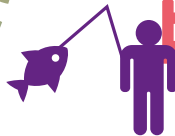
More than 1,000 acres of agriculture land have been damaged by the effluent. Many new diseases are seen in the crops, and as many as 1,000 farming families are affected – Agriculture officer



We cannot grow any crops on our farmland because of the effluent for 20 years now – Farmer



At one time the water of Shitalakkhya River was used for many different domestic purposes. Now it is fully damaged by industrial water – Farmer



Easy steps to take:

- 1** » **Recognize the facts:** Pollution coming from the garment industry endangers the country's ecosystem and its citizens, while negatively affecting brand image and reputation!
- 2** » **Accept responsibility:** Brands doing business in Bangladesh have a responsibility to safeguard environmental resources and public well-being.
- 3** » **Start a conversation:** Join us and other members of the private, public, and civil sectors in a conversation about strengthening public value in the country's garment industry. With a shared purpose, we can work toward solutions.
- 4** » **Utilize resources:** build local capacities, increase communication, and raise awareness.
- 5** » **Get involved:** Find out about the Water Stewardship Initiative via www.waterintegritynetwork.net.
- 6** » **Make a difference:** Change the future of wastewater, environment, and brand reputation in Bangladesh.