PAST AND FUTURE OF INFORMAL WORKERS

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The informal economy comprises half to three-quarters of all non-agricultural employment in developing countries, according to the International Labor Organization (ILO). In the case of Bangladesh, the informal economy is critical to social and economic development and benefits from social protection are a minority. A report by the ILO in 2011 found that about three times as many urban workers are in the informal economy as paid workers, and that about half of urban workers are in the informal economy as well. In Bangladesh, the informal economy is estimated to be 60% of the country’s GDP.

The Savar building collapse in the Rana Plaza building on Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, in April 2013, was a wake-up call for global retailers. It highlighted the dangers of outsourcing work to factories in developing countries, where workers are often paid less and have fewer rights. The building collapse claimed the lives of 1,134 workers and injured 2,500 more. The managers requested workers to return to work and more than a thousand workers reported to the factories, unaware of the danger they were putting themselves in. Over one thousand workers died in the collapse.

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