

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Research Organisation

Mental Health Needs Assessment: Understanding Views, Needs and Priorities of Factory Workers and Management

July 2026 – September 2026

Dhaka, Bangladesh

BACKGROUND and CONTEXT

RISE: Reimagining Industry to Support Equality accelerates equality for low-income workers in global garment and footwear supply chains through collaboration with industry stakeholders and a firsthand understanding of workers' needs and priorities. RISE pursues its mission through three core strategies: (1) strengthening knowledge and skills for workers and managers; (2) embedding gender equality in business practice and (3) influencing industry and public policy.

There are 60million workers (approximately 65% women) in global garment, footwear and home textile sector. The daily reality for workers especially women, is shaped by persistent inequality and discrimination; limited financial inclusion, inadequate access to healthcare, violence and harassment at work and growing climate related risks. These challenges restrict workers from reaching their full economic potential and directly affect business performance and productivity.

Mental health is a critical component of worker well-being and an essential contributor to safe, productive, and resilient workplaces¹. In the garment sector, production pressures, financial insecurity, unsafe or unsupportive workplaces, and gendered responsibilities can negatively affect workers' mental health. Recent research in Bangladesh found that 69% of garment workers reported symptoms of depression and 48% reported symptoms of anxiety². Poor mental health also contributes to absenteeism, presenteeism, turnover, and reduced productivity. Globally, depression and anxiety result in an estimated 12 billion working days lost each year,³ costing the global economy US\$1 trillion annually. When working conditions are not fair and safe, women's mental health and overall wellbeing may suffer, impacting on individual productivity and, in turn, business.⁴

Despite increasing awareness, there remains limited evidence on the specific mental health needs and priorities of garment workers and the most effective ways to support them within factory settings. **In this regard, RISE is undertaking a Mental Health Research initiative to generate worker-centered evidence that will inform practical, scalable mental health solutions that can be integrated into existing RISE workplace programs.**

¹ World Health Organization (2024). [Mental Health at Work Fact Sheet](#).

² Innovation (2025). [Stitched Under Stress](#)

³ World Health Organization (2024). [Mental Health at Work Fact Sheet](#).

⁴ World Economic Forum (2022). [Global Gender Gap Report 2022: Insight Report](#) July 2022.

PURPOSE OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

To conduct a rapid participatory Mental Health Needs Assessment in Bangladesh to better understand the mental health views, needs, and priorities of garment/footwear workers and factory management and inform the design of RISE mental health programming.

Specific objectives:

- Adapt RISE's existing participatory research methodology and tools for the Mental Health programmatic context in Bangladesh.
- Conduct research with workers, managers and relevant stakeholders about mental health views, needs and existing support systems.
- Develop practical recommendations to inform the integration of a mental health component into RISE workplace programs.

SCOPE OF WORK

The assessment will use a participatory, worker-centered, gender-responsive and no-harm approach, and include the following activities:

- **Adapt the research approach for a mental health context:** Review and adapt RISE's existing research methodology and data collection tools, for the mental health programmatic context in Bangladesh, including participatory research tools and exercises, key informant interview protocols, and, ensuring a participatory, worker-centered, gender-responsive and no-harm approach. See **Annex** for themes and questions.
- **Conduct research:** Collect qualitative data to better understand the mental health views, needs, and priorities of garment workers and factory management through:
 - **Group discussions and interviews** with workers and managers using participatory tools and exercises in 2–4 RISE-nominated factories;
 - **Community-based consultations** with workers in safe, neutral locations (e.g. worker cafés or community centers) to capture perspectives beyond the workplace; and
 - **Interviews** with local women's organizations, worker representatives, mental health service providers, and other relevant industry stakeholders.
- **Analyze findings:** Synthesize qualitative findings and insights to identify key mental health needs, workplace and non-workplace stressors, existing support systems, worker priorities.
- **Develop report and recommendations:** Prepare a concise results report with practical, recommendations to inform the integration of a scalable mental health component within RISE's existing workplace programs and present the findings to the RISE team.

RISE will identify and coordinate 2–4 participating factories, in the Greater Dhaka region, Bangladesh, including liaison with factory management and worker recruitment for workplace-based research.

DELIVERABLES

Sl No.	Deliverable	Indicative Timeline
1.	Inception meeting, workplan and timeline	By 9 August 2026

2.	Adapted final research tools and exercises	By 16 August 2026
3.	Completion of data collection	By 30 August 2026
4.	Thematic analysis of findings	By 6 September 2026
5.	Final Report	By 13 September 2026
6.	Presentation of findings and recommendations	By 20 September 2026

TIMELINE, LEVEL OF EFFORT & BUDGET

The assignment will be implemented between July and September 2026, and expected to take 18-20 working days. Applicants should propose their own workplan, level of effort, and detailed budget aligned with the scope of work and deliverables. The fees will be agreed in advance and payment will be made in accordance with our shared agreement. The organization will be responsible for its own taxes and other statutory obligations.

REPORTING

The organization/consultant will report to the RISE Country Lead and work closely with the Program Associate. RISE Program Director will sign-off all final deliverables.

CONFIDENTIALITY & INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The organization is expected to maintain the confidentiality of all programs related information. All data and information gathered by the organization for RISE will be the property of BSR.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Interested organizations should submit a brief proposal (2–3 pages) that includes:

1. Technical proposal outlining the proposed approach, methodology, workplan, and timeline.
2. Organizational profile demonstrating relevant experience in participatory research, mental health and worker wellbeing (or related topics), and the garment/manufacturing sector.
3. Project team profiles highlighting relevant expertise and English language proficiency.
4. Financial proposal with a detailed budget, including professional fees and anticipated expenses.
5. Relevant work samples of comparable research, needs assessments, or publications.

Proposals will be evaluated based on the proposed approach, relevant experience, project management capacity, and ability to deliver high-quality outputs within the proposed timeline.

APPLICATIONS

Please send everything in one file to recruitment@riseequal.org and reference the RFP title '**RISE Bangladesh Mental Health - (your Organisation name)**' by **24 July 2026**. For any questions or follow ups, reach out to Sreya Nath at snath@bsr.org. Only suitable candidates or organizations will be contacted for an interview w/c 27 July 2026.

Annex

Theme	Suggestive Research Question
1. Understanding Wellbeing	How do workers and managers understand and talk about wellbeing, stress and emotional challenges?
2. Wellbeing and Resilience	What helps workers and managers stay motivated, positive and able to cope with challenges?
3. Workplace Drivers	How do production demands, working conditions, management practices and workplace relationships affect wellbeing?
4. Financial, Family and Community Stressors	What non-work factors most affect wellbeing and stress?
5. Gender and Life Stage - Intersectionality	How do wellbeing needs and stressors differ by gender, age, life stage and worker profile?
6. Coping and Help-Seeking	How do workers and managers cope with stress, and who do they turn to for support?
7. Trust and Existing Support Systems	What support is currently available, and how accessible, trusted and confidential is it?
8. Manager Wellbeing and Capability	What pressures do managers face, and what support or skills do they need to support workers effectively?
9. Program Design and Feasibility	What types of support would be useful, acceptable and scalable through RISE workplace programs?