



### Rokye

**Job:** Sewing accessories onto jacket in garment factory

**Wage paid:** Approx 1400 Taka per month (around £20) 10 kg of rice costs 200 Taka. 75 per cent of this wage will have to be spent on food and accommodation. Rokye would need around twice this amount to be able to afford basic essentials, such as food and medicines and decent accommodation. Often workers aren't paid on time and many have to wait up to two months to receive their pay cheques.

**Working hours:** 8am until 8pm. 'Often I work until one in the morning and sometimes until 3 or 4 am as a double shift, with one break.'

**Working conditions:** Rokye sits cross-legged, bare footed, on top of a long bench, close to lots of other workers all repeating the same action. There are no chairs for the workers to sit on. Rokye looks uncomfortable, hunched over a denim jacket, sewing on diamante beads – one by one by one. Each bead is small: it has to be threaded, and then sewn on to the jacket. This job is extremely tedious and tiring on the eyes. Rokye has to hold the material up close to his eyes to see what he is doing. When he finishes one jacket he picks up another one. The manager says that the jacket is called the 315 jacket - because there are 315 diamante beads on it. Rokye has to repeat the same action 315 times for each jacket. His fingernails are yellow from bruising – the workers have to work so fast that they often prick themselves. Rokye is not allowed to talk as he works. The workers sit in silence and only talk when spoken to by a manager. This is very common in clothes factories – some have signs on walls saying, 'NO TALK, ONLY DO YOUR WORK' and 'HARD LABOUR IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS'. In some factories, workers can even be forced to pay a fine out of their already poor wages if they are caught talking whilst at work!

**Living conditions:** Rokye, like most other workers, rents a room in the Dhaka slums, sharing a very small, cramped space with 5 or 6 other people. The slum area surrounds the garment factories and 85 per cent of the houses have no electricity. Most people have no running water – they collect water from wells and ponds which are unclean and often carry disease. Residents are also required to pay for water from the Water Authority. This costs around 200 Taka (£3) a month and many garment workers cannot afford it. The mortality rate in slums is double the national average. There is poor sanitation and hygiene: open sewers, piles of rubbish. Diarrhoea is common, as are other potentially fatal diseases such as dengue fever and malaria. Mosquitoes from stagnant water are everywhere. Most workers can afford only very basic food. They usually have no breakfast, and have a very simple lunch and dinner – mainly rice – with maybe fish or meat once a week. 64 per cent of people in the slum area where Rokye lives suffer from malnutrition.

**Social life:** Workers have no leisure time and little chance of having a social life. They cannot afford a cinema ticket or bus journey out of the city. Most of their time is spent working, and so workers hardly see the city or their homes in daylight hours.