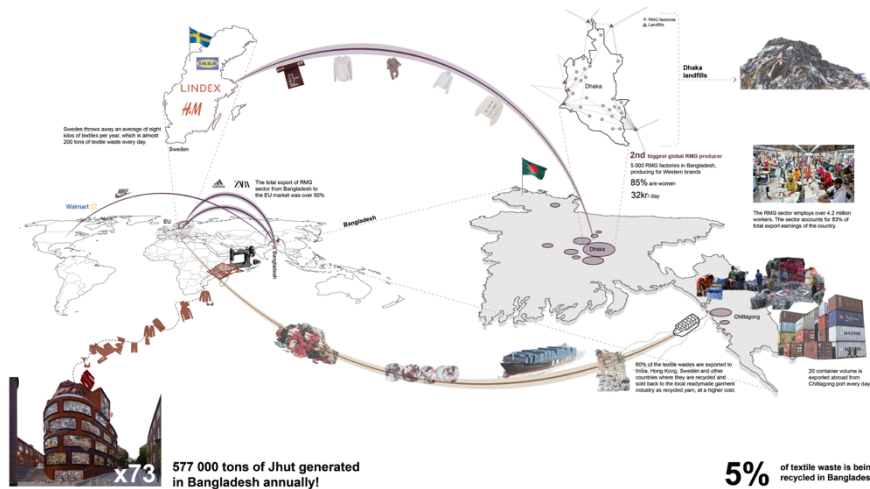


# (re)Made in Bangladesh

## Before departure

I love to travel, and when I learned that we could apply for the KTH Field Study grant for our thesis field visit, it felt like an incredible opportunity. My thesis partner, Sean, and I focused our research on sustainable textile recycling in Bangladesh's ready-made garments (RMG) industry.

Bangladesh is the second-largest RMG producer in the world and each year this industry generates 0.5 million tons of pre-consumer textile waste. Our goal was to gain first-hand insights into the challenges and opportunities within the RMG industry and contribute to developing sustainable solutions. We hoped our field study would provide us with valuable experiences and knowledge to make a meaningful impact in this sector.



## Upon arrival

We arrived in Bangladesh on the 29th of January, two weeks after our thesis project began, which gave us a good time to prepare for the field study. Our fieldwork spanned around eight weeks, during which we immersed ourselves in various RMG factories and engaged with local stakeholders and actors involved in textile waste recycling. Our thesis site was "Shoil Bazar," a small village known for importing textile waste from RMG factories and transforming it into various recycled textile products.

## Financials

Overall, living expenses in Bangladesh were significantly lower compared to Sweden, which allowed us to manage our budget effectively (1 SEK= 10 BDT approx.). To save money, we utilized local public transportation and explored affordable street food options.

## Accommodation

We stayed in different parts of Bangladesh for our study. The accommodation was arranged with the assistance of our local contacts. The accommodations were modest and comfortable, with varying costs depending on location and amenities. The average price was 250-750 SEK per night. These arrangements allowed us to stay close to our research sites and fully immerse ourselves in the local environment, enhancing the quality and depth of our field study.

## Project

Our project focused on textile waste, and during our field study, we engaged with various actors, recyclers, and stakeholders involved in textile waste recycling. Our site of intervention was "Shoil Bazar," a village where traditional handloom techniques are used for textile recycling. Observing how the entire village is involved in textile recycling and witnessing daily life revolving around this practice was an enriching learning experience for us. From an urban designer's perspective, we aimed to reinforce their existing practices and explore how incremental changes could enhance their textile recycling efforts. On a typical day, we visited factories, conducted interviews, and analyzed data. Our local contact person provided invaluable support, facilitating access to industry stakeholders and ensuring the success of our field study.



## Country

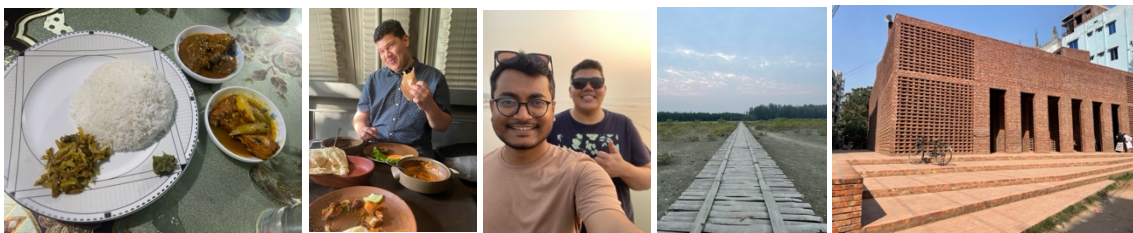
As a Bangladeshi, going to Bangladesh was a blend of nostalgia and discovery. We experienced the warmth of Bangladeshi hospitality and gained a deeper appreciation for the country's rich culture. With a population of over 160 million, the cities are densely populated and bustling with activity. In contrast, village life offers a serene and green environment, albeit lacking the amenities found in urban areas. This dichotomy between the vibrant city life and the serene countryside provided a unique backdrop for our field study, enriching our understanding of the social and economic fabric of Bangladesh.





### **Leisure and social activities**

During our spare time, we immersed ourselves in the vibrant local culture by exploring busy markets, delicious and spicy traditional cuisine, and attending various cultural events. Bangladesh's local cuisine, known for its spiciness, was a delightful experience for both of us as we enjoyed spicy food. At the end of our field trip, we took a few days to relax at Cox's Bazar, the longest sandy beach in the world. Additionally, we visited local mosques, temples, and old cities, and appreciated the beautiful modern architecture of Bangladesh.



### **Sustainability**

Bangladesh has a variety of transportation and we tried to take public transport during our visits. Our project directly contributed to addressing the Global Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

Throughout our research, we realized the profound impact of our textile consumption choices. Every small decision we make as consumers can have significant repercussions on the other side of the world. Through our thesis project, we aim to raise awareness about sustainable and conscious textile consumption.

### **Other recommendations and observations**

We recommend applying for a visa early (if needed) and thoroughly preparing before traveling to Bangladesh. The "Bkash" app is very useful for payments and easily allows money transfers from Swedish banks. However, it's important to keep some local currency (Taka) on hand for local transportation and shops. Building a good connection with local contacts and people is crucial for a successful field trip.

Overall, our field study experience in Bangladesh was enriching and insightful, contributing significantly to our academic and personal growth. We are grateful to the KTH Field Study Grant for providing us with this invaluable opportunity.