

No Water, No Life:

Water saving practices of DBL Group

71% of the Earth's surface is covered by water. An adult human body has on the average 50% to 65% water; in infants, this is up to 78%. Relating to water, the famous poet W. H. Auden once stated: "Thousands have lived without love, not one without water". The significance of water for a human being requires no explanation.

The textile and apparel industry makes significant use of water, particularly in the fabric dyeing and finishing operations. The International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank Group reports that the Bangladesh textile and apparel industry currently consumes 1,500 billion liters of groundwater annually and discharges this as wastewater. It was once reported that to dye one kilogram of fabric, up to 200 liters of water are required. Hence, for a dyeing facility which has 90 tons per day capacity, up to 18 million liters of water are required every day. The depletion of groundwater occurs by 1 to 2 meters every year. This arises the question: "How can we survive in the future?"

DBL's approach to water saving



Even from early on in 2010, DBL Group was making use of 120 liters for dyeing 1 kilogram of fabric instead of 200 liters. However, this was still a significant amount. And that was when DBL undertook the Cleaner Production (CP) program by

the International Finance Corporation (IFC) as a supplier of H&M.

After an initial analysis, several water-saving opportunities were identified. Along with the existing practices, some of the implementations made by DBL include:

1. Using efficient machineries which consume up to 50% less water than the average
2. Using chemicals which require less water and contributed to water consumption of 55 liters per kilogram of fabric from 120 liters

3. Repairing leaking taps and educating staff to turn off water after use
4. Replacing water taps with aerator water taps
5. Replacing single flush cisterns with dual flush
6. Reusing hot water from boilers.

In addition, proper moisture management is done to further reduce the water consumption. Furthermore, wicking finishing process converts hydrophobic fabrics (such as polyester) to hydrophilic. Hydrophilic products intake water much better than hydrophobic ones and thus enable optimum consumption of water.



Results

Resource saving and reduced emissions

In overall, DBL reduced the consumption of water significantly. In comparison between 2016 and 2010 (before the CP program), DBL Group has been able to save not only water but dyes and chemicals as well, even when production went up by 74.44%. These are summarized below:

	Consumption for per kilogram of fabric processed		
	2010	2016	Savings
Water consumption	120 liters	55 liters	65 liters
Dyes and chemicals used	540 grams	417 grams	123 grams

Community impact



Continuous improvements have been made throughout the years after the initial phase of CP. DBL currently has a fabric to water ratio of 1:55. Through CP as well as DBL's own initiatives, we have been able to save 1.22 billion liters of water and 2.4 million kilograms of dyes and chemicals in 2016 alone. The water saving has catered to serving 13,927 families in Kashimpur, assuming a requirement of 240 liters of water per family per day. The dyes and chemicals saved means that there are lesser amounts of effluents and wastewater discharged into the environment.

DBL believes in "Sharing is caring" and "Collective goodness is better than individual goodness". And therefore, DBL is creating awareness among other factories in the Konabari local cluster about prevention of ground water depletion and saving for next generation. Best practices are discussed among the different factories so that a collective positive impact on the community can take place.

Other programs

Along with the reduction of water usage, DBL is also implementing the Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals (ZDHC) program to address the wastewater quality discharged after being treated in the biological Effluent Treatment Plants (ETPs). H&M and other brands and retailers have a shared commitment through this program to help lead the industry towards zero discharge of hazardous chemicals by 2020.

Within the garments production units, the Sustainable Action and Vision for a better Environment (SAVE), a project co-financed by DEG and Puma, in partnership with H&M and ASSIST, was implemented. This had helped in saving 22,927 cubic meters of water along with 351,188 kilowatt-hours of energy and 8,000 kilograms of waste.

Linking with the SDGs

The water saving practices of DBL has contributed to multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and these include:



Increased access to water for the community
Reduced dumping of treated wastewater

Sustainable management of water
Reduced wastewater discharge



Conclusion

Water is the essence of life. DBL believes in continuous improvement and sharing the knowledge with and learning from different stakeholders. Through these initiatives and sustainability reporting, DBL aims to contribute to a combined effort of multiple stakeholders for the preservation of water for sustainability of the future generation. As stated by the American marine biologist, explorer, author, and lecturer, Ms. Sylvia Earle:

“No water, no life. No blue, no green.”