



be better

SUSTAINABILITY
REPORT
2021

epic
GROUP

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Making a change, to the better...

In 2020, we ambitiously set our sights on sustainability, putting significant effort and resources into these initiatives.

We are constantly reminded of the ecological crisis the world is facing, with stories of hurricanes, forest fires, drought, heat waves and floods dominating the news. It is a stark reminder that the work we do is critical and must rapidly scale. In fact, our sustainability efforts have now become an integral part of our business, reorganizing itself to meet the needs of the planet and its people.

We are in a business environment that is challenging and volatile; yet through it all, we have been making steady progress in our sustainability goals, moving forward in a measured and systematic manner. While the pandemic and supply chain challenges created pressures on timelines, our ethos - the relentless pursuit of better, prevailed. This enabled us to learn and rapidly move forward. We have seen the completion of our first Effluent Treatment Plant upgrade, and now we are well into our second upgrade. Our new micro-factory is operational, equipped with a complete solar roof and efficient infrastructure, while another micro-factory is being built. We progressed on our Higg Index scores, while significantly reducing the use of risky chemicals in our facilities.

We also celebrated our multi-talented female staff, recognizing their valuable contribution to the progress of our company and their individual journeys of strength, ambition and resilience.

As a leader in denim manufacturing, we are continuously rethinking how denim garments are made. Our landmark agreement with CleanKore is a step towards low-impact denim. This enabled us to remove hazardous Potassium Permanganate spray from our finishing process, reducing water, chemicals and carbon emissions.

We are also humbled to be recognized by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh as one of the 10 best 'green factories' in Bangladesh, and by our customers for our continued work on sustainability.

No company becomes sustainable as an island. Our progress is a result of hours of work by our teams across all business functions, our customers, suppliers and service providers. By joining the UN Fashion Charter for Climate Action, and working with Sustainable Apparel Coalition, we are adding our voice and resources to a larger global transition. Our commitment remains steadfast, and our urgency for action has heightened more than ever before.



Sunil Daryani
Joint CEO

Ranjan Mahtani
Chairman

Dinesh Virwani
Joint CEO



When social equity deteriorates with a pandemic out of control, and the world burns through the heat trapped by carbon emissions...

**We aspire to
make a stand and
do what's right,
to be better.**

Environmental Sustainability Plan 2021-2023

In 2020, we announced our environmental sustainability plan 2021-2023 and aspirational goals. As we move into the second year of execution, we have made steady progress towards meeting all of our targets.



Higg EFM

Higg EFM rating with Epic Group recognized as Higg EFM LEADER



Aspirational Target

75

2017 (Baseline)	33
2020	63
2021	73



GHG Emissions

Reduction of Greenhouse Gas intensity against 2017 baseline



Aspirational Target

20%

2017 (Baseline)	0.68
2020	0.57
2021	0.58



Water

Reduction of FreshWater intensity against 2017 baseline



Aspirational Target

40%

2017 (Baseline)	30.5
2020	26.0
2021	25.2



Chemicals

Risky chemicals in manufacturing operations



Aspirational Target

0

2017 (Baseline)	77
2020	12
2021	7

Higg Index Facility Environmental Module (FEM)



We made great strides in streamlining and upgrading our environmental management systems and performance across all aspects of our business to improve our verified Higg FEM scores.

Improved performance in water, wastewater, waste and chemical management has resulted in improved progress in 2021.

We have achieved Higg FEM LEADER status in our Pearl Garments Company Limited and Green Textiles Limited Unit 3

Higg FEM 2021 VERIFIED SCORES (AVERAGE)		
EPIC GROUP	INDUSTRY BANGLADESH	INDUSTRY GLOBAL
73	63	49

Factory	2021 Verified Score	2022 Verified Score
Cosmopolitan Industries Private Limited	69	73
Epic Garments Manufacturing Company Limited	62	71
Green Textiles Limited	64	70
Green Textiles Limited Unit 3	61	76
Pearl Garments Company Limited	73	78
Epic Garments Manufacturing Company Limited Unit 2	59	72
Epic Ethiopia	57	72
Average	63	73



Water

Water is a precious resource especially in Bangladesh where Epic Group has manufacturing facilities and laundries. Bangladesh faces a significant water crisis with the rapid depletion of its ground water resources. This highlights the need for a reduction of freshwater use, an initiative Epic Group is already spearheading.

In 2021, we established SOP for water conservation applicable to all Epic Group facilities. To reduce domestic water consumption, we introduced push taps with employee education and engagement.

Our laundries carry the highest water footprint. Here, we are continuously improving and upgrading chemistry, recipes, processes and machinery to reduce water consumption.

Upgrading our Effluent Treatment Plants to reuse water is a core strategy of Epic Group to reduce freshwater use.

	Total Water Use (m ³)	Freshwater Use (m ³)	Water Reuse /Rainwater (m ³)
2017 (Baseline)	1,462,089	1,462,089 (approx. 600 Olympic swimming pools) 	0
2021	1,746,918	1,710,643 (approx. 700 Olympic swimming pools) 	36,275

2017
(Baseline)
**Freshwater
Intensity**
(litres/garment)

30.5

2021
**Freshwater
Intensity**
(litres/garment)

25.2

2021
**Intensity
Reduction**

17.3%

Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) Upgrades

Meet ZDHC Aspirational Parameters for discharge
Reuse up to 50% of water back in process

Apparel laundries consume significant amounts of water and generate effluent that must be treated before discharge. Using advanced technology to purify the effluent allows us to reduce pollutants in the water released to the environment after treatment, also allowing us to reuse the water.

At Cosmopolitan Industries Private Limited, we upgraded our 1600 m³/day capacity ETP using Membrane Bio Reactor (MBR) technology at a total project cost of USD 1.2 Million. The ETP uses a combination of physio-chemical primary treatment, biological secondary treatment, MBR filtration with a cutoff of 0.03 microns, a multigrade filter and an activated carbon filter and finally, chlorination to remove any harmful bacteria before it is reused or released to the environment.

Cosmopolitan Industries Private Limited currently reuses 30% of treated water back in the process, which will be increased to 50% by the end of 2022.

Epic Garments Manufacturing Company Limited ETP upgrade has already commenced with expected completion by mid 2023, with a projected investment of USD 3 Million.



Energy and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions

As the elevated levels of greenhouse gases in the planetary atmosphere leads to climate breakdown, decarbonization becomes a paramount goal for the whole world. We have stepped up our decarbonization efforts through multiple actions taken in our facilities. As a consumer of large amounts of electricity, natural gas and oil for our operations, we are working hard on energy efficiency improvements and reduction of energy wastage.

Actions below indicate some of the work done while a longer journey lies ahead of us.

- Setting up SOP for Energy Conservation for all the facilities with periodic audits
- Insulation of steam distribution lines & valves
- Replacing faulty steam traps and upgrading our steam systems
- Installation of condensate & flash steam recovery system
- Installation of servo motor instead of clutch motor in sewing machines
- Installation of sensor-based control devices for compressed air supply in sewing machines
- Adding renewable energy into the grid

Whilst we retrofit and improve energy efficiency, newer facilities of Epic Group are designed to provide optimum energy and resource efficiency.



Adding jacket insulation to steam system valves to reduce energy loss.

Energy and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions

A typical motor vehicle emits 5 tons of CO₂ per year.

	Total Energy Use (GJ)	Renewable Electricity (kWh)	GHG Emissions from Fossil Fuels (Tons CO _{2e})	GHG Emissions from Biogenic sources (Tons CO _{2e})
2017 (Baseline)	594,630	0	32,455	0
2021	635,709	189,525	30,119	9,581

Visualising GHG Emissions

Epic Groups total emissions are equivalent to emissions for a year from 6000 cars.



2017
(Baseline)
GHG Emission Intensity
(kgCO_{2e}/garment)

0.68

2021
GHG Emission Intensity
(kgCO_{2e}/garment)

0.58

2021
Intensity Reduction

15%

Powered by the Sun

Epic Group's Green Textiles Limited Unit 4 facility has a 733 kW solar PV installation which will generate approximately 1,000,000 kWh of electricity per annum, providing 60% of the facility's electricity needs.



Chemicals

Factories use a myriad of chemicals – including process chemicals, machine maintenance chemicals and janitorial. In many parts of the world, chemical industry is loosely regulated, and poses risk to human and ecological health.

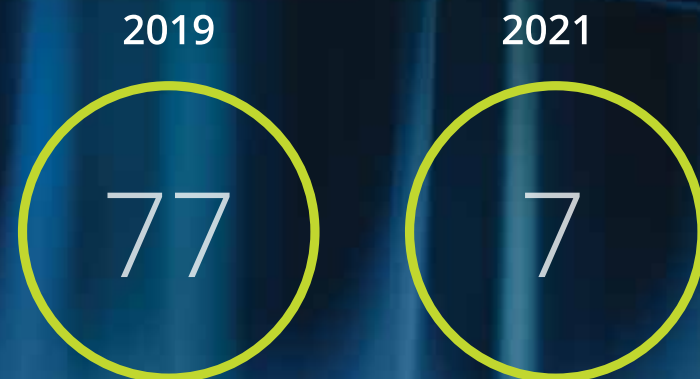
We identified 77 risky chemicals in our inventory in 2019, going beyond ZDHC and Brand Manufacturing Restricted Substance Lists (MRSL), and working with chemical specialists and suppliers to reduce the risky chemicals to 7 by end of 2021. The chemicals left, such as contact cleaners and lab testing chemicals, have no viable alternatives as yet. We are working with consultants and chemical manufacturers to bring this to zero.

Comprehensive chemical management systems, use of PPEs, safe chemical storage and handling procedures are introduced to ensure worker health and safety.



99.86%

Risky Chemicals in use



For the year 2021,

99.86%

of the chemicals
used by weight
were deemed
safe.

Sustainable Fiber and Products

During 2021, Epic Group produced



Representing 17% of total garments made by Epic Group.

All cotton used by Epic Group is Better Cotton Initiative (BCI)/equivalent or better.

All our facilities in Bangladesh hold the Global Organic Cotton Standard (GOTS), Organic Claim Standard (OCS) and Global Recycled Standard (GRS), Recycled Claim Standard (RCS) and OekoTex 100 standard, allowing us to support our customer switch to more sustainable materials.



Detoxing Denim with CleanKore

Finishing Denim garments involve tedious manual processes such as hand-sanding, hand-whiskering, spraying harmful Potassium Permanganate (PP) by personnel in protective gear and multiple washing cycles. CleanKore's patented technology changes all this by dyeing only the surface and keeping the white core of the yarn intact, significantly reducing water, chemicals and process time.

The elimination of manual processes such as PP spraying ensures improved health and wellbeing of apparel workers. CleanKore technology cuts down the use of water, chemical and process time, enhancing the sustainable nature of the end product.

Partnering with CleanKore, we are rapidly scaling this technology with our customer base, starting with 4 million pairs of denim in the first year and scaling **15 - 20 million** pairs of denim by the third year.



44%

Water savings
in garment
finishing

66%

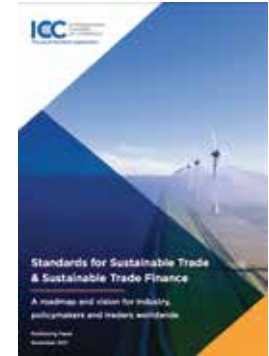
Energy savings in
fabric dyeing
Elimination of
PP spray

CleanKORE
The Dyeing Process...Redefined

epic
GROUP

Relentless pursuit of **better**

Creating New Models for Sustainable Finance



The transformation towards a sustainable business requires us to reimagine new financial tools and instruments. Epic Group partnered with HSBC to launch HSBC's first sustainability-linked trade finance scheme in Hong Kong.

The scheme pricing is tied to Epic Group's performance in 3 KPIs - Higg Index Facility Environmental Module (FEM) scores, greenhouse gas emission intensity and freshwater use intensity.

Epic Group also supports ICC in setting Global Standards for Sustainable Trade & Sustainable Trade Finance, which will act as a framework for the industry, policymakers and financiers worldwide.



Supporting a Global Transition

Sustainability cannot be achieved by a single organization. Global apparel value chains are complex and interlinked, and deeply tied to national infrastructure and policies. As we work on our own journey, we become part of a larger transformation by adding our voice and resources to a global movement.



Epic Group is a member of Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC) and actively contributes to the development of its suite of tools including Higg FEM 4.0

Vidhura Ralapanawe, Executive Vice President for Sustainability and Innovation of the Epic Group serves as a Board Director of SAC, providing strategic direction to the SAC.



Epic Group is a signatory of United Nations Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action, and is committed to rapid decarbonization of the company operations and its supply chain.

Epic Group leadership and teams engage with the global community advocating transformation towards sustainability through multiple forums and publications.

A Salute to the Heroines of Epic

Global apparel industry is powered by women.

Percentage of Women among
Epic Group Associates



70%

They are the lifeblood of our operations.

Women are often the unsung heroes of this industry, and many a times in their families and communities. They also shoulder a disproportionate burden in all these spaces. Part of women's empowerment is also celebrating them in recognition of their contribution to the world at large. They become role models to our associates, building courage and aspirations.

We celebrated the unique contributions of seven courageous women across the Epic Group in Bangladesh.



Heroines of Epic



Alpona Akter
Growth Minded

Reaching for my dreams

I was the eldest child in my family with four other siblings. I struggled to go to school due to financial difficulties. I passed my SSC exams with much difficulty.

Due to our financial difficulties, I had to start working to support my family while I was studying for my HSC exams, and quit my job to pass HSC. It broke my heart when I realized that I cannot continue my education.

After the exam, I joined Epic Group as a cutting department Associate. At the factory, I saw that many employees were continuing their studies. It gave me courage to enroll in a degree programme. It was difficult going as I had to study every night. My determination paid off, and I graduated, and again enrolled for a Master's Programme.

Now I am supporting myself and my family. I want to develop myself at Epic Group and become a production General Manager in the near future.



Sheuli Begum
Ratnagarva Ma

Being my family's pillar of strength

I come from a middle class family. I got married at age 12. Within 3 years of marriage, I had two daughters, and then another daughter and a son. My love for studies saw me pass my SSC exams.

My husband was in business, which suddenly ran into trouble. We decided to come to Dhaka with our four children. It was tough as we did not have any support and I had to work nights to support our family. My husband got diagnosed with diabetes, and a leg injury resulted in an amputation of a leg.

In 2008 I joined Epic Group as a helper to support our family and children's education. I wanted to give them a better pathway to life than we had. I was ready to do whatever was needed to ensure their future is bright.

My eldest daughter completed her Bachelors & Masters in Economics. My second daughter completed her Bachelors & Masters in English. My third daughter is studying Zoology at the university and my son is sitting for his SSC exams. I am a proud mother who ensured that their education was looked after without hindrances, carrying the family burdens singlehandedly.

My dream is to see my children as future leaders of corporates and society.

Heroines of Epic



Fahmida Nahar

Home Grown Leader

Fahmida joined Epic Group as Trainee IE officer and now works as DGM production.



Shahinoor Afroza

Home Grown Leader

Shahinoor Afroza joined Epic Group as a Trainee Executive 17 years ago and is now the Sr. Manager, Corporate Affairs.



Shahnaz

Woman Samaritan

Shahnaz's husband suffered from a stroke and was paralyzed. Shahnaz took the full responsibility of her family with two children, bearing the expenditure of her husband's medication and children's education.



Suma Akter

Growth Minded

Suma Akter joined Epic Group 2012 as an Associate. Along with her job she completed her graduation in accounting from Govt Titumir College. She is now studying for her Masters. She aspires to become a merchandiser.



Monjila

Ratnagarva Ma

Monjila's income supported the education of her son, Sakib, a brilliant student who aced his SSC and SSC exams. Sakib is now a final year student completing his MBBS.

Supporting Career Advancement

The global apparel industry has always seen men in managerial roles, with women playing associate roles. At Epic Group, we challenged this traditional model to encourage more women leaders in our ranks.

We recognize the enormity of this challenge, which is systemic in nature, reinforced by belief systems – both cultural and organizational.

Our approach is also systemic, tackling a multi-faceted challenge by addressing all aspects of it, including skills, attitudes and systems. We are ably supported in this endeavour by our Brand partners and other organisations such as BRAC and UN Women.

In one year from inception, the number of female supervisors has increased from nine to 92, with women supervisors now accounting for 46% of the supervisor cadre in sewing operations.

Womens Empowerment Training

Womens Empowerment Training has been the lynchpin of this transition.

Since the training began one year ago, it has become easier for female workers to talk to their supervisors about issues common to women, such as family problems or physical conditions, and this has brought about greater levels of cooperation in the workplace. Male employees also welcome the training, as it has helped them recognize the potential of women and eliminate prejudices that hinder female achievement.

Now that female workers have the confidence in themselves to play more active roles in the company, the overall productivity at our workplace has also improved. We will continue to support a culture in Epic Group where both men and women have equal opportunities to rise up to their potential.

When we believe we can, we change the world



Ambia Akter
Supervisor

One year ago, I attended Women's Empowerment training, organized by Epic Group with a leading Brand Partner and UN Women. I had been working at Epic for six years then, starting as an Associate.

I realized that I had been under the misconception that women are incapable of taking up managerial positions. I begin to believe that I am capable of leading. The greatest thing I have acquired in this training is confidence.

I went through a lot of training to become a supervisor including 75 hours of technical training followed by soft skills training including leadership and communication skills. After attending the training, I was promoted to supervisor and now I oversee a line with 30 machines.

Most supervisors used to be men. The change was not easy. At first, I heard many colleagues saying women are incapable of being supervisors, but when I showed my achievements, male employees began changing their attitude.

In Bangladesh, the idea is still prevalent that women are less capable both at work and at home. But if we are offered an appropriate and supportive environment where we can make our best efforts, women can be promoted to leadership positions and boost their careers. We ourselves have to change our own mindset that we cannot do something just because we are women.

I believe I am capable of doing things which I had never dreamed of achieving when I started working. My next aim is to move up in my career to become a production manager. I want to keep challenging myself and achieve new things in my life.

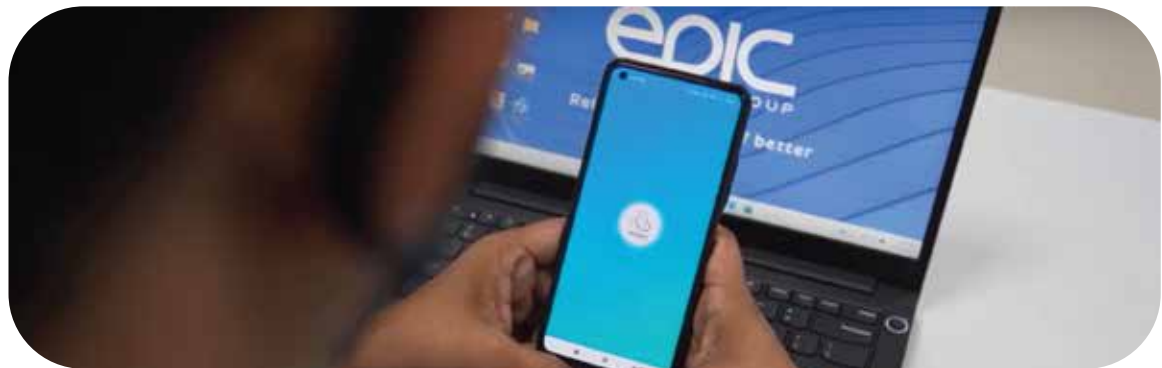
WOVO Mobile App Improving Communication

Robust two way communications between our associates and management is important to us.

The WoVo app allows full two way communication between employees and HR to enable swift, confidential and secure ways for employees' voices to be heard.

Launching the App has enabled us to handle employee grievances quickly with accountability and confidentiality.

Other capabilities of the tool such as surveys and data analytics help Epic Group to improve its operations and support employees.



Covid-19 Vaccination Programme

Covid-19 was a global health crisis impacting people in all walks of life. Ensuring health of our associates was of paramount importance for us, and we launched our Covid-19 vaccination programme for all employees in partnership with the Government of Bangladesh.

**In collaboration with Ministry of Health and Family
Welfare of Bangladesh, Epic Group
vaccinated our associates**



92%

of employees
received the
1st dose of the
vaccine



76%

of employees
received
both doses of
the vaccine



Clear Vision Workplaces Programme

We launched the Clear Vision Workplaces programme to improve the eye health of our employees in partnership with VisionSpring. We conducted free eye checkups for all BD facility associates and provided glasses to those who needed them.

Total number of employees screened	20,203
Eye glasses provided	5,978 (29.58%)
Referred to eye hospital for special conditions	525
Total Cost	\$ 55,686

How it works

Clear vision in 15 minutes



Vision Champion
Training



Registration



Pre-Screening



Refraction



Counselling



Pathway to Promise

Five associates began a five-year undergraduate programme at the Asian University for Women through our “Pathway to Promise” initiative, fully funded by the Epic Group.

This initiative will provide education, training, mentoring and see these associates progress through to leadership roles at Epic Group. Together, Epic Group and AUW are paving the future for Women’s Empowerment in Bangladesh.



ASIAN UNIVERSITY FOR WOMEN

Into new realms of possibility

Mahfuza Ripa

I come from a poor family, being the youngest of 5 daughters. It was difficult to live with the earnings of my father. Due to our difficult financial situation, my elder sisters got married at very young ages, and one of my sisters died. After this incident, my father allowed me to study, but he couldn't afford the expenses. I passed my HSC with the financial help of my elder sister.

Due to Covid, our financial situation worsened, and instead of going to university, I joined Epic Group as a quality inspector. My family and neighbours weren't happy that I was working, so it was always a struggle to find acceptance back at home.

When I heard that Epic Group was offering an opportunity to study at the Asian University for Women, I was determined to get selected and passed the exam and selection process. Now I am thrilled that I am studying and able to be the woman I dreamed to be. After graduation, I want to become an HR Manager at Epic Group.



Pathway to Promise



Shamima Khatun

I always wanted to go to university, but couldn't because our family was solely dependent on my mother's income. I joined Epic Group as an Associate, and I am honoured to be able to achieve my dreams. After graduation, I would like to become a merchandiser at Epic Group.



Samseda Akter Hera

I was working as a quality controller when I was selected to this programme. Epic Group has given me an opportunity that I always aspired, but couldn't due to family finances. I want to work in Learning and Development at Epic Group after my graduation.



Farzana Akter

My father was a shop keeper, and though I wanted to go to University, I couldn't do it due to finances. At Epic Group, I was working as an associate, and was thrilled to receive this fantastic opportunity, to be better and serve my country well.



Sheamuli Akhter

My father retired from his work and fell into sickness, so with good HSC results, instead of going to university I began working. I was working at Epic Group as an Associate for two years when I was selected for this programme. I am excited to be able to fulfill my dreams of the future.

Supporting Reproductive Health for our Associates

Epic Group launched this programme to provide access to comprehensive, high-quality sexual and reproductive health education for female apparel workers.



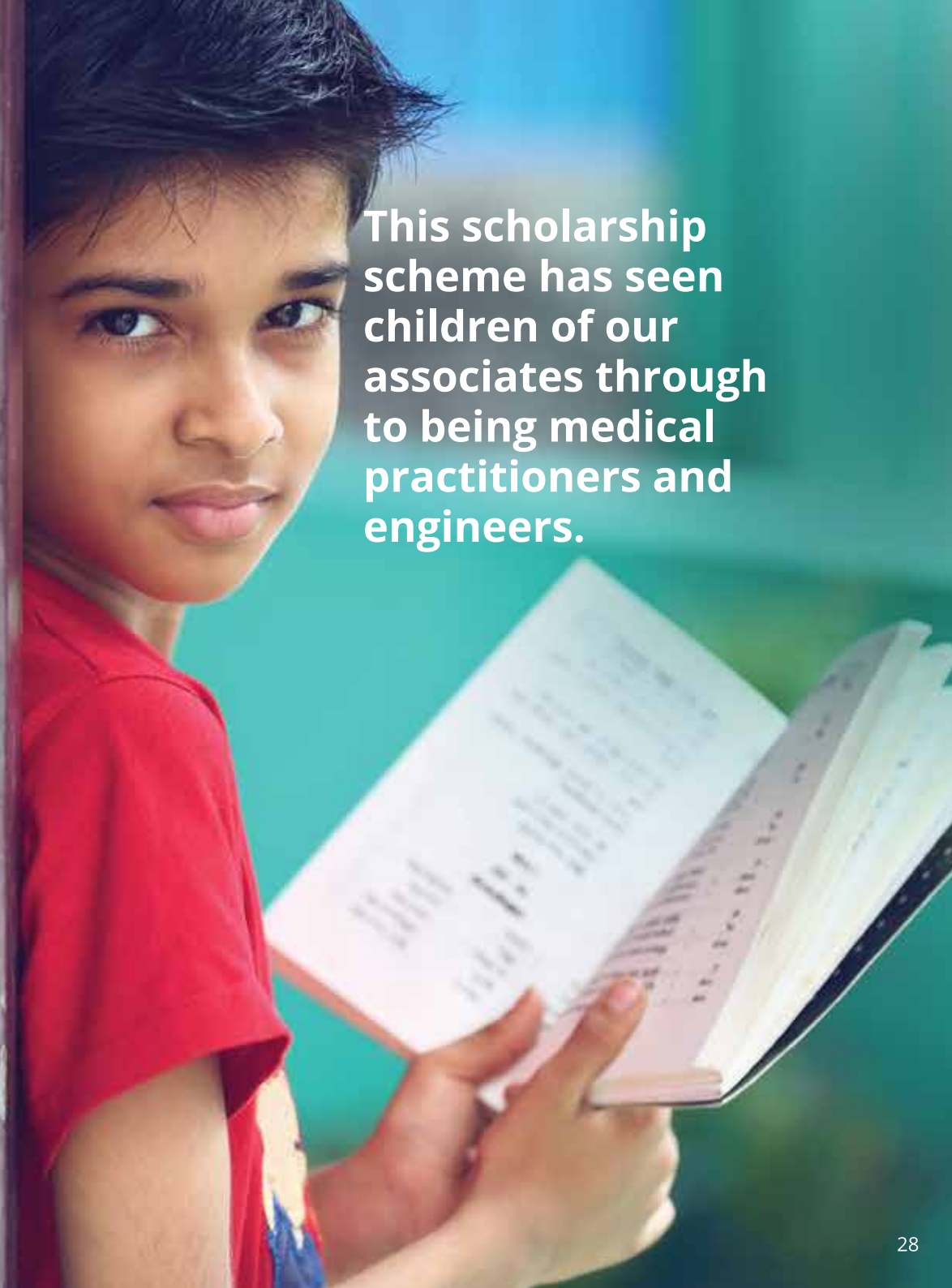
Total 3250 associates underwent this training in 2021.

Within the year, we also ran programmes on hygiene to help employees avoid common communicable diseases.

Scholarship Programme

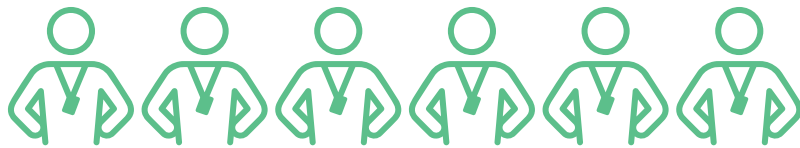
From 2012 we arranged a scholarship for the high performing children of our associates at Epic Garment Manufacturing Company Ltd, where we covered 309 children. In 2020, 50 children benefitted from this scheme. We also arranged a scholarship program at Pearl Garment Company Ltd in collaboration with a leading global retailer which benefitted 20 associates' children and in Cosmopolitan Industries Pvt. Ltd. where 12 children benefitted from this scheme.

This scholarship scheme has seen children of our associates through to being medical practitioners and engineers.



BRAC Safety Training

In 2021, Epic Group & BRAC jointly organized a programme where we trained trainers on employee safety.



**Total 52 trainers
developed during the
program.**



This collaboration brings a new approach to the training curriculum with a focus on safety awareness and effective safety management. The trainers in the supplying facilities will receive direct support through an e-learning platform, real-time online and onsite support to enhance the learning experience and provide an up-to-date safety programme. This curriculum includes:

Fire Safety Training, including Helpline Training, for all workers at a facility.

Safety Committee Training, supporting our focus on worker safety as a preventive measure.

Security Guard Fire Safety Training, to assist during incidents when there is a need to evacuate.

Safety Management System Training for the Managers of the facilities will be introduced.

Building the Epic Family

We build a culture of togetherness, and an integral part of this is how we celebrate together.

These events of camaraderie include annual company picnics to celebrations of religious events.



Beyond Compliance

Health and Safety Management

Pearl Garment Company Ltd, Epic Garment Manufacturing Company Ltd - Unit 2 and Green Textiles Ltd Unit 2



All units 100% remediated. Cosmopolitan Industries Private Ltd new warehouse remediation in progress.



(Higg FSLM and Betterwork)



Verified score of Higg Facility Social Labour Module at Epic Garment Manufacturing Company Limited

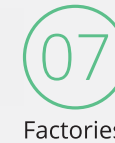
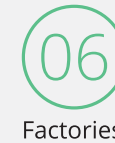
2021 : 87
2022 : 89



Social Compliance Audits for 2021



Facility Certifications and Accreditations



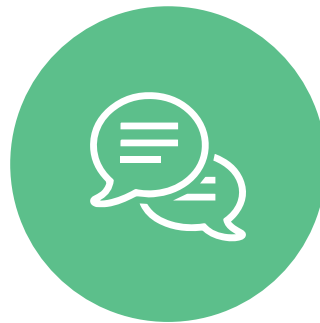
Relentless pursuit of **better**

Focus on Health and Safety

Our Health and Safety approach is built on 5 pillars.



Policy
Governance



Communication
and Training



Safety in
Infrastructure



Equipment and
Chemical Safety



Health and
Welfare



Policy Governance

- Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- Safe Evacuation & Emergency Response Plan
- Housekeeping Policy
- Incident Investigation and Control Procedure
- Health and Safety Committee
- Policy and Procedure for Helpline Calls Investigation
- Procedure of Communication
- Injury Reporting & Investigation Policy
- Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment Policy
- Building Electrical and Fire Safety System Maintenance Policy
- Load Management Policy



Communication and Training

- Fire and Emergency Drill
- Basic Fire Safety training
- Security Guard Fire training
- Safety Committee training
- Safety Management System training for managers
- Electrical Safety training
- Equipment Safety training
- Chemical Safety training
- Health & Hygiene related training
- Safety Complaint Channel
- First Aid & HIV
- Harassment and Grievance
- CTPAT
- Anti Corruption and Anti Bribery
- Babysitter (Baby health and Safety)
- Maternity Leave and Risk for Expecting Mother
- Ergonomics during work



Fire
drills

60



Night
fire drills

42

A Culture of Knowledge and Capacity Building



Employees participating in health & Safety training in **2021**

12,832



Employees participating in other training in **2021**

8,391



About Epic Group

For over 50 years, Epic Group has been a key player in the apparel industry, first as a major textiles trading house, then as a leader in sourcing quality fabrics, and since 2005 as a state-of-the-art manufacturing company with facilities worldwide.

Our evolution speaks to our core principle - to relentlessly pursue better.

This means we are dedicated to seeking out ever higher standards in everything we do, from world-class apparel manufacturing and design services to innovative machinery that enables us to reach increasingly better environmental sustainability targets.

By combining speed, efficiency, technology, design and innovation, we meet ever-changing market trends and our customers' demands with unfailing reliability.



**For any clarifications or further details,
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To find out more about us, please visit us at
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