

## **Call for Submissions:**

# **Practices, Experiences and Lessons Learned in Eliminating Gender Inequality in the Garment Sector in Asia**

**Submission deadline: 15 September, 2020**

## Background

The [Decent Work in the Garment Sector Supply Chains in Asia](#) project aims to contribute to improved working conditions and rights of women and men workers as well as improved social dialogue, productivity and environmental sustainability of the garment sector in Asia. This project is implemented by ILO, with financial support from the Government of Sweden (Sida). While the project has a broader geographic coverage, the focus countries for the work on promoting gender equality are Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar and Viet Nam.

Working with governments, workers' and employers' organizations and other multi-stakeholder organizations, the project is set to increase knowledge development and sharing of good practices and tools; capacity development and; advocacy and networking across four main thematic areas:

- Social dialogue and industrial relations systems;
- **Advance gender equality;**
- Enhance productivity and competitiveness;
- Reduce environmental impacts.

### *Advance Gender Equality*

The purpose of the call for submissions is to gather good and promising practices for closing gender gaps in the garment sector in Asia, with a specific, but not exclusive, emphasis on Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar and Viet Nam.

The key issues for this call are: pay equity; workplace discrimination, violence and harassment; unpaid care, work and family responsibilities and maternity protection and paternity leave; and women's voice, representation and leadership. Additional context for each of the four issues can be found in Annex 2.

## Objectives

The objectives of this call are to:

- Increase knowledge on which industry-relevant policies, programmes and initiatives have been successful in closing critical gender gaps, and why. This includes those led by government, industry (including manufacturers and brands), multi-stakeholder initiatives, development actors, and others.
- Identify key actions towards addressing gender gaps in the garment sector in Asia, and to help inform a regional action plan.

## Scope

Submissions should be made based on initiatives designed to address gender inequalities as evidenced through pay equity; workplace discrimination, violence and harassment; unpaid care, work and family responsibilities and maternity protection and paternity leave; and women's voice, representation and leadership throughout the garment sector in Asia. These four key issues were identified by the ILO's Centenary Women at Work initiative based on a review of evidence of the major issues preventing gender equality in the world of work. Submissions should be relevant to the new industry dynamics and sectoral shifts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Who can submit?

Governments, workers' organizations, employers' organizations, companies, community organizations, groups, and other development partners including individuals who have experiences, good practices, and lessons to share from Asia can make submissions.

## What happens to your submission?

An independent selection committee will identify the experiences, good practices and lessons learned that can be used in the project's forthcoming publications, activities, and regional action plan.

Selected submissions/ submitters may be asked to further detail their experiences and will be:

- Published online on the new regional knowledge hub (currently under development);
- Invited to present their submission, alongside other selected submissions, in a regional webinar;

Some of the selected submissions/ submitters will also be:

- Featured in ILO briefs and regional reports related to the project;
- Invited to present in select conferences or high-level meetings.

## Instruction for submission

To participate in the call, please make your submission using the template in annex.

Please provide links to any materials (reports, evaluations, etc.) that can further support the reader to understand your case study.

The completed form can be submitted via email ([BKK\\_Garment@ilo.org](mailto:BKK_Garment@ilo.org)) by **15 September, 2020**. Please include "Call for Submissions" in the subject line.

## Selected resource materials

- [Violence and Harassment Convention \(No. 190\) and Recommendation \(no. 206\) 2019 \(No. 190\)](#)
- Report: [Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work](#)
- Report: [A quantum leap for gender equality: For a better future of work for all](#)
- [Equal Pay International Coalition \(EPIC\)](#)
- Report: [Better Work Global Gender Strategy](#)
- Brief: [The COVID-19 response: Getting gender equality right for a better future for women at work](#)
- Brief: [Family-friendly policies and other good workplace practices in the context of COVID-19](#)

# Annex 1 - Submission Form

## Submission information

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Country</b>	
<b>Organization (if applicable)</b>	
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Phone number</b>	

## Experience, initiatives and lessons learned

<b>Title of your submission</b>
<b>Background</b> - Please provide a brief description of background context and timeframe which led to initiatives/measures. Describe the issue that called for actions to address key gender gaps in the garment sector in Asia.
<b>Initiatives/measures taken</b> - What actions were taken to respond to the situation? (How were they implemented, who was engaged, what went well, what were the challenges, etc.)

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<b>Results</b> (Description of achievements, positive changes, outputs and impacts)
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<b>Enabling/hindering factors</b> (Description of factors/conditions that supported/hindered the implementation of initiatives/measures, and how certain challenges were overcome)
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<b>Lessons learned</b> (Information on lessons as well as any cautions and limitations on its potential applicability in other setting or situations) Were there any lessons learned from this experience that you can share?
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**Relevant information/materials** Please provide any evidence, project results, website links, brochures and other materials, reports, photos, etc.

## Annex 2 - Gender Focus Areas

### Pay equity

Women represent a large share of the workforce in the garment and textile sector in Asia. Yet women working in the sector are disproportionately represented in low-wage jobs in the lower tiers of the supply chain, and consistently lag behind men in terms of pay. In the Asia region, the gender pay gap (i.e. male-female difference in earnings) in the garment sector is highest in Pakistan (64.5 per cent) and India (34.6 per cent). In comparison, the unadjusted gender pay gap ranges from around 17–25 per cent in the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. While a portion of the gender pay gap in the sector can be attributed to differences in age and education, occupational segregation and direct and indirect discrimination also appear to be contributing factors. Notwithstanding ‘equal pay for work of equal value’, recognising that jobs and tasks that are ‘traditionally’ deemed as female tend to be under-valued. SDG target 8.5 aims to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value by 2030.

### Workplace discrimination, violence and harassment

Gender-related occupational segregation, both horizontal and vertical, is prevalent in the garment sector, with female labour concentrated in jobs such as weaving and sewing, while men are generally employed in more technical and higher-skilled (and often higher paid) positions such as machine supervisors. These attitudes and practices create a glass ceiling to career progression for women in the garment industry. They also influence the recruitment and talent management, when women or men believe they cannot apply for certain jobs. For example, in Myanmar, ILO reported that women do not see a career path in the garment sector. Also, in a recent survey in Bangladesh, 4 out of 5 production line workers were female, whilst approximately 1 in 20 supervisors were women, meaning that 95 per cent of the managerial talent in factories emerges from 20 per cent of the workforce. It also places women at greater risk of redundancy, as new technologies mean that more manual jobs are being made redundant. For example, in Bangladesh, the female share of employment has actually decreased since the 1990s, as the garment sector modernized.

The new ILO International labour standards on eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work provide guidance on prevention and protection; enforcement and remedies and; guidance and training through Convention No. 190 and the accompanying

Recommendation No. 206. The issue of sexual harassment and workplace violence are a risk to all sectors, including the garment sector. While many brands have recognised this negative impacts of this issue and are keen to have global supply chains free from violence and harassment, the costs of such efforts often fall disproportionately on factories with little or no capacity to undertake such measures.

Evidence shows that sexual harassment is prominent in this sector in part since some 80 per cent of workers are female, most are young and some are migrants, attributes that put them at risk to sexual harassment due to unequal power relations. Better Work (ILO-IFC) surveys at the factory level find a strong prevalence of sexual harassment in several countries. A survey published by CARE found that nearly one-third of garment workers in Cambodia had experienced sexual harassment over the previous 12 months. Some 31 per cent of Myanmar workers responding to an Oxfam survey said they had experienced verbal or other abuse by supervisors or management. Excessive overtime means that women working in the garment sector often have to travel by public bus late at night, which many women feel unsafe doing. There is generally a lack of adequate mechanisms to ensure women workers' access to justice.

## **Unpaid care, work and family responsibilities and maternity protection and paternity leave**

Women face additional gender-specific barriers relating to traditional norms and attitudes around their roles and abilities, including their disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work, which limits their time availability, mobility and access to education and training opportunities. ILO reports that women in Asia and the Pacific spend more than four times as much time on unpaid care as men – and that men in this region do the least unpaid care of all regions. According to ILO-Gallup report, unpaid care and domestic work is the top lever for women engaging in and staying in the workforce in Asia and the Pacific. Therefore, measures to support them to manage and share their work and family responsibilities – such as care services, encouraging men's involvement in unpaid care, promoting paid paternity leave, etc. are some measures that support workers with family responsibilities.

Increasing casualization of the workforce further impacts women as short-term contracts and non-standard forms of employment, such as home-based work, often excludes access to any maternity benefits that may exist within legislative frameworks and leave women with no social protection before or after giving birth. Further, in countries where Employers are responsible for payment of maternity benefits, this puts a disproportionate burden on companies and leads to discriminatory practices in hiring and contract renewal – in addition to turnover costs. Only about one-quarter of 26 countries in the Asia region meet the

international standards related to duration of maternity leave set out in ILO Convention No. 183.

## **Women's voice, representation and leadership**

Though women account for the majority of the garment sector workforce in many Asian countries, they are disproportionately represented in low-wage jobs in the lower tiers of the supply chain, and remain largely underrepresented in social dialogue and collective bargaining, policy dialogue and managerial structures. This is partially driven by stereotypes of women's aspirations, preferences, and capabilities, as well as social and familial expectations for women to oversee care work within the home. While women are the majority in this sector, men dominate the leadership and representation in tripartite and bipartite dialogue and policy-making fora.

There is ample evidence of the positive spill over effects of having more women - alongside men - in leadership roles. In a recent ILO enterprise survey, 68 per cent of enterprises based in Asia and the Pacific reported that gender diversity and equality improved business outcomes, yet a widespread lack of promotion of women in leadership roles persists. Impact evaluations from an International Finance Corporation and Better Work Bangladesh training toolkit found that despite female supervisor trainees demonstrating higher levels of effectiveness, promotion rates for women were only 55 per cent whereas promotion rates for male trainees were 85 per cent. Until women are able to bring their views, solutions and competencies into social dialogue, gender gaps will remain widespread. While crises generate negative impacts, they can also provide opportunities for positive shifts. The COVID-19 situation provides an opportunity to reflect and act upon opportunities to advance gender equality in the sector.