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# Violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, in garment factories and supply chains

**Confidential**

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**Authors: Jo Morris and Sophie Rickard**

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# Table of contents

<b>Acronyms</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Background and Context – the garment sector .....	6
<b>2. Evidence Mapping: sexual harassment in the garment sector</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Nature and prevalence of sexual harassment .....	7
Factors associated with higher prevalence of violence and harassment .....	9
a) Worker in global supply chains who are vulnerable and in precarious work.....	10
b) Suppliers often have rudimentary human resources systems .....	10
c) Lack of institutional grievance and trusted complaints procedures.....	10
d) Meeting tight production targets and deadlines .....	11
e) Incentive structures for supervisors .....	11
f) A culture of workplace harassment .....	12
g) Low levels of unionisation.....	12
h) Difficulties in monitoring abuses of workers’ rights .....	13
i) Limited or poorly implemented national governance frameworks.....	13
<b>3. Interventions addressing sexual harassment in the garment sector</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>4. Productivity, pay and hours: potential risks and unintended impact</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>5. Conclusion</b> .....	<b>26</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>27</b>

# Acronyms

ACTRAV	Bureau for Workers' Activities
AHC	Anti-Harassment Committee
BIF	Business Innovation Facility
BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)
DFID	Department for International Development
ETI	Ethical Trading Initiative
FWF	Fair Wear Foundation
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Corporation for International Cooperation)
HR	Human Resources
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
RCT	Randomised Control Trial
RMG	Ready Made Garments
SFC	Sisters for Change
TUC	Trade Union Congress
WOW	Work and Opportunities for Women

# Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to map existing evidence on the nature and prevalence of sexual harassment in the garment sector to ensure DFID-funded interventions in the sector are designed and delivered with this evidence in mind. This report is informed by a comprehensive evidence review that covers a wide range of garment-producing countries and methodologies. However, whilst the garment industry is global, the bulk of the evidence for this query comes from South and South-East Asia. The review examines sexual harassment using the definition of violence and harassment in the workplace from the ILO's 2019 Violence and Harassment Convention, and refers to violence and harassment throughout. This query sought to answer three main questions, which we have included in this Executive Summary in bold together with a summary of the findings from each question:

**1. What is the qualitative and/or quantitative evidence from low- and middle-income countries on the nature and prevalence of violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, in garment factories and the factors which may be correlated or associated with higher prevalence?**

Whilst there is no global figure on the prevalence of violence and harassment in the garment industry, this review found evidence that violence and harassment is widespread. Specific forms vary between countries but generally includes sexual, physical, verbal and psychological forms of harassment. Whilst women and men can both experience violence and harassment, the evidence indicates it is experienced most commonly by women who comprise the bulk of the labour force in the garment sector, and is often perpetrated by male supervisors and managers. The few women in supervisory roles can still endure violence and harassment as a means to enforce gender appropriate behaviour and women in such roles can perpetrate harassment against others. The pre-existing unequal gender power dynamics and stereotypes of male and female behaviour and vocations in many garment producing countries can be a root cause of violence and harassment and women experience greater vulnerability to this in the garment sector. Low pay in the sector can leave women dependant on work and less likely to complain of violence and harassment. Migrant workers are under particular pressure to provide remittances for their families which limits their options to complain or leave employment.

Violence and harassment in the garment sector is not confined to only when workers are on factory premises during hours. It can occur within the factory, on the way to and from the factory and in employer arranged accommodation such as dormitories. Evidence from Cambodia and Vietnam highlighted that harassment on the way to and from work was common, with women employing coping mechanisms such as moving in groups to mitigate it. In India, violence and harassment in dormitories has led to the suicide of many young girls and in Cambodia harassment around accommodation was so common that women did not venture out at night.

Drawing on the ITC-ILO Resource Kit on gender-based violence in global supply chains, the review notes eight main drivers of violence and harassment in the workplace. Precarious work leaves women vulnerable to violence and harassment due to limited protection and power imbalances – a feature of the garment industry. Rudimentary human resource systems make tackling violence and harassment challenging and, in some cases, suppliers do not have systems in place to deal with violence and harassment at all. The lack of internal complaints and grievance mechanisms can drive violence and harassment as this allows harassment to go unchecked and can entrench power imbalances between production workers and managers. Further, women workers may be at greater risk for harassment, where tight production deadlines require workers to carry out long hours and overtime (Better Work, 2013; Morris, Pillinger, 2018; FWF, 2019). Production incentives for supervisors can encourage abusive behaviour to meet targets. The acceptance of workplace harassment can render harassment invisible, with factory managers and supervisors often denying it exists, with underlying gender inequalities and gender roles underpinning harassment. Lack of or limited space for unions to represent workers' needs and issues can also drive violence and harassment in the garment sector. In addition, common

approaches to monitoring potential abuses of workers' rights do not sufficiently integrate gender or women's issues, therefore masking the scale of the problem in social audits. Finally, and in addition to the ITC-ILO factors, the absence of comprehensive or effective legislation, as well as effective enforcement, can drive harassment.

## **2. What is known about the effectiveness of initiatives to address violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, in garment factories through prevention and response?**

This review found 13 initiatives focused on addressing sexual harassment in the garment industry, predominantly in South and South East Asia. Whilst this is not exhaustive – there may be other initiatives that are not publicly detailed or are embedded into broader programmes – it provides a good sense of the nature of such intervention. The mapping highlights that most initiatives are focused on only a couple of drivers of violence and harassment - reforming HR processes and systems (including training on processes) linked to violence and harassment and on supporting unions. There are very few initiatives addressing violence and harassment with a specific focus on productivity, incentives and purchasing practices and currently no available evidence on the effectiveness of interventions addressing these drivers. Whilst there is limited public data on the effectiveness of each individual intervention, some broad themes emerge. Firstly, training directly with factories to tackle sexual harassment can be an effective way to address sexual harassment in the workplace, however interventions have to be tailored to the context. Secondly, extending initiatives from factories to integrate the surrounding community are likely to be effective. This helps to address the underlying norms that can influence workplace violence and harassment, as the community outside of the workplace is where these norms are reinforced and responds to the evidence that violence and harassment in the garment sector extends beyond the factory to the route to and from work and accommodation. Working with anti-harassment committees is valuable but requires a long-time commitment to ensure they are sustainable and able to function independently. There is less evidence of work on legal cases or with legal frameworks to address harassment. Additionally, whilst there is evidence of interventions engaging brands on sexual harassment, it is unclear whether this extends to engaging brands on their impact on drivers of violence and harassment. Finally, the overall effectiveness or impact of initiatives can be hard to measure because precise data on violence and harassment is limited.

## **3. What evidence is there of unintended negative impacts from DFID or other programmatic interventions seeking to improve productivity within garment factories, on sexual harassment or identified drivers of sexual harassment - or of potential risks in this area?**

Improving productivity is the subject of considerable attention in the garment sector. However, there are also risk factors attached to productivity-focused interventions. Productivity pressure was noted above as a driver of violence and harassment - initiatives focused on productivity can have negative impacts on violence and harassment in the workplace. Productivity-focused initiatives can potentially exacerbate power dynamics between managers, supervisors and workers, which heightens the risk of harassment. Further, productivity improvements are linked to manufacturing costs, including worker pay and incentives and therefore, any changes to productivity can impact negatively on overtime and pay, which can be a driver of harassment. Whilst there is limited public evidence at an intervention level to explore this further, DFID's experience through BIF Myanmar's productivity work in the garment sector, where an increase in reports of sexual harassment was noted directly following a productivity-focused intervention, provides an interesting example. There is no definitive explanation for why reported harassment rose, however by synthesising available evidence on violence and harassment in the garment industry, there are three potential explanations: increased production targets; negative changes on pay and bonuses; and potential excessive overtime. These are all noted drivers of violence and harassment and the BIF experience in Myanmar highlights that productivity programmes and HR improvement interventions need to be carefully designed with an understanding

of underlying power structures and gender relations, both within a factory environment but also within the specific countries' cultural context.

The review highlights the pressures the global supply chain places on suppliers, underpinned by pre-existing gender norms and relations that may be permissive towards violence and harassment. The available data shows broadly similar trends across countries and suggests these trends are likely to extend to other garments producing countries and countries with emerging garment sectors (like Ethiopia). Moving forward, more holistic approaches are required, from employers changing their systems; brands to consider the impact of purchasing practices and use their influence to support supplier capacity building and public policy change; governments to effectively legislate and enforce in line with provisions of recent ILO Convention 190; unions to be given freedom of association, with women well represented; employers and governments held accountable and action taken to engage men and boys and address social norms in communities.

# 1. Introduction

## Research questions, approach and definitions

To support the design and delivery of DFID funded interventions in the garment sector, DFID have requested the WOW Helpdesk to answer the following three research questions:

1. What is the qualitative and/or quantitative evidence from low- and middle-income countries on:
  - a) the nature and prevalence of violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, in garment factories?
  - b) the factors which may be correlated or associated with higher prevalence?
2. What is known about the effectiveness of initiatives to address violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, in garment factories through prevention and response?
3. What evidence is there of unintended negative impacts from DFID or other programmatic interventions seeking to improve productivity within garment factories, on sexual harassment or identified drivers of sexual harassment - or of potential risks in this area?

To address these questions a desk-based review was undertaken. Initiatives working specifically on violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, in the garment sector and supply chains were sourced from websites of key actors within the garment sector and through an online search. To ensure robustness of findings, there was a purposeful attempt to cover a wide coverage of garment-producing countries and variety of methodologies. However, whilst the garment industry is global, the bulk of the evidence for this query comes from South and South East Asia. Furthermore, the limited availability of project- or programme-level evaluations, reviews or reports on interventions within the garment sector limited the response to questions two and three. Although the garment sector comprises both informal and formal work, the review focuses on the ready-made garment sector (RMG) and references to the garment sector throughout the report refer to the formal sector.

The review adopts the definition of workplace violence and harassment from the recent ILO convention<sup>1</sup> to guide the scope of the review. Therefore, whilst the original query referred to sexual harassment, throughout the body of the text, the term ‘violence and harassment’ is used. The definition is as follows:

- a) the term “violence and harassment” in the world of work refers to a range of unacceptable behaviours and practices, or threats thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm, and includes gender-based violence and harassment;
- b) the term “gender-based violence and harassment” means violence and harassment directed at persons because of their sex or gender or affecting persons of a particular sex or gender disproportionately and includes sexual harassment.<sup>2</sup>

This definition is used to account for the likely underreporting or acknowledgement or any kind of sexual encounter and the limited distinction between clear sexual encounters and verbal and physical abuse directed against predominantly female production workers in much of the available literature.

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<sup>1</sup> ILO Convention 190, June 21, 2019 [[https://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/108/committees/violence-harassment/WCMS\\_711570/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/108/committees/violence-harassment/WCMS_711570/lang-en/index.htm)]

<sup>2</sup> ILO Convention 190, June 21 2019, p.4 [[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_711570.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_711570.pdf)]

## Background and Context – the garment sector

The garment sector is a global and growing industry, driven by large retailers and marketers and employing between 60 to 75 million people worldwide in 2014, as compared to 20 million people in 2000 (Stotz, Kane, 2015). Whilst South and South East Asian countries are the main garment producing countries, countries within Sub-Saharan Africa are increasingly becoming involved in the garment sector as brands outsource production (Yost, Shields, 2017).

The garment sector is a huge source of formal employment for women and at least three quarters of garments workers worldwide are female (Svarer, Meiers, Rothmeier, 2017; Stotz, Kane, 2015). However, despite this huge growth of employment, most women carry out ‘low-skilled’ tasks such as sewing, embroidery, cutting and finishing of garments (Morris, Pillinger, 2016). The sector is characterized by poor working conditions, poor maternity protection, insecure employment, low levels of women in management and supervisory roles and low levels of unionization (Morris, Pillinger, 2018).

Within the sector, workers are generally covered by national level labour laws, which are discussed further below. There are also international regulations, brand or retail standards as well as various industry wide standards. The majority of international standards are based on the ILO core labour standards.<sup>3</sup> They include industry wide standards such as the ETI<sup>4</sup> and other certification bodies. Brands and retailers also have standards based to varying degrees on the ILO standards. The sector is brand and buyer driven, with power vested in buyers, whose commercial practices can have impacts for working conditions. For instance, purchasing practices such as short notice order changes or short lead times for orders, which are common in the sector, can negatively impact worker conditions, for instance through excessive overtime (Early, 2017).

In addition, there is an emerging evidence base indicating violence and harassment is prevalent in the garment industry. Whilst violence and harassment can be experienced by anyone, regardless of gender identity, for the purposes of this report women’s experiences are principally examined as they are more at risk of violence and harassment. This review examines the evidence of violence and harassment in the sector, the key initiatives addressing it and the potential unintended impacts of initiatives looking at productivity and increased efficiency in the sector.

### Structure of the review

The report is structured into four sections: an evidence mapping of sexual harassment in the garment sector (part 2); sexual harassment risks and unintended impacts linked to productivity (part 3); a mapping of interventions tackling sexual harassment in the garment sector (part 4); and finally a conclusion summarising the key findings of this review, which includes implications for future DFID programming.

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<sup>3</sup> See: <https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/introduction-to-international-labour-standards/lang--en/index.htm>

<sup>4</sup> See: <https://www.ethicaltrade.org/eti-base-code>



## 2. Evidence Mapping: sexual harassment in the garment sector

There is evidence that violence and harassment in the garment sector is widespread but underreported. This section examines the available evidence on the nature and prevalence of violence and harassment and the factors that drive higher prevalence of violence and harassment.

### Nature and prevalence of sexual harassment

This section covers the profile of survivors and perpetrators, the forms of violence and harassment, the location of such harassment and the coping mechanisms employed when violence and harassment is experienced. It then goes on to present the current evidence around the prevalence of violence and harassment.

Whilst women and men can both experience violence and harassment, as noted above it is experienced more commonly by women.<sup>5</sup> Women comprise a substantial portion of garment sector workers, for instance, one study found that 85% of the those employed in the garment sector in Cambodia are female (Care International, 2017). The pre-existing unequal gender power dynamics and stereotypes of male and female behaviour and vocations in many garment producing countries can be a root cause of violence and harassment and women are made more vulnerable to this in the garment sector (UN Women, ILO, 2019).

Violence and harassment are a combination of dynamics operating in the world of work and broader social, cultural and gender norms within society. Women are frequently found in lower paid production roles, supervised and managed by a small number of men, creating a large gendered power differential (Morris, Pillinger, 2015; Better Work, 2013). Where women do take on leadership roles, there is also evidence that harassment is used against them as a way of enforcing appropriate gender behaviour (Campbell, Chinnery, 2018). Women workers in the garment sector are often young with low levels of education, are rural-to-urban migrants, and for many it is their first formal employment, all of which compounds to intensify vulnerability (Better Work, 2013, CARE International, 2017; Svarer, Meiers, Rothmeier, 2017). Low pay can leave women dependant on work and less likely to complain of violence and harassment (Morris & Pillinger, 2015; Truskinovsky et al, 2014). As migrant workers, some are also under pressure to provide remittances for their families, which again limits options to complain or leave employment (CARE International, 2017). Further, migrant workers can have additional constraints on their mobility (where factories hold visas, living in industrial zones) and therefore are more vulnerable, with one study finding migrants 11% more likely to express concern with sexual harassment (Better Work, 2013). Conversely, in locations where there were more local competitors to provide alternative workplaces for women, harassment was found to be lower, as women could seek employment elsewhere (Truskinovsky et al, 2014).

Violence and harassment in the garment sector can take many forms, including physical, verbal, psychological and sexual (ILO, 2017). Quid pro quo harassment, where women were asked to engage in an intimate relationship to obtain leverage at work has been reported in multiple garment producing countries (CARE International, 2017; FWF, 2018; Better Work, 2013). Whilst the precise form of violence and harassment will differ from country to country, it generally appears to include

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<sup>5</sup> The majority of evidence reviewed for this query was concerned with harassment of women, perpetrated by men, however there is some evidence of female to female harassment and male to male harassment, including verbal harassment of a sexual nature. For example, evidence from CARE's research in Cambodia showed verbal harassment of male staff members, although the paper did not seek to explicitly look at gender of perpetrators (2017)

sexual, physical, verbal, psychological forms (see box below).<sup>6</sup> Whilst the evidence primarily draws from South and South East Asia, anecdotal evidence from Ethiopia suggests violence and harassment is a concern there as well, with female workers performing sexual favours for extra money (Yost, Shields, 2017).

#### FORMS OF VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

- **Cambodia:** physical and non-physical harassment, including receiving unwanted leers, sexual comments, noises or gestures, being rated based on looks or sexuality, being referred to in sexist or degrading terms, being made the subject of rumours of a sexual nature; hearing or receiving inappropriate jokes, public shaming and refusal of sick leave (ILO, 2012; CARE International 2017);
- **India and Bangladesh:** offensive and sexually explicit language, hitting, pinching, hearing suggestions to become a prostitute, slapping on heads, pulling of hair, 'mobbing' at factory gates, following, sexual assault and rape (FWF, 2013);
- **Indonesia:** sexual, verbal, physical abuse, noted need for greater understanding of forms of violence and harassment (Better Work Indonesia, 2012);
- **Vietnam:** verbal harassment including inappropriate or offensive comments about their or someone else's body or sexual activities, offensive sexual remarks or jokes; non-verbal forms including obscene gestures, offensive texts, being followed home; physical forms including kissing, touching of the body, hitting, punching (FWF, 2019, unpublished study, as quoted by Observer 9/4/2019).

Violence and harassment can occur within the factory, on the way to and from the factory and in employer arranged accommodation such as dormitories (Care International 2017; FWF, 2018; Svarer, Meiers, Rothmeier, 2017). A study in Cambodia found that harassment on the way to and from work was common and that generally there was no other option than to endure it (CARE International, 2017). Another study in India showed violence and harassment suffered in dormitories led to the suicide of many young girls (FWF, 2013). In Vietnam, half (49.5%) of all interviewed workers experienced harassment on the way to and from work (FWF, 2019, unpublished study, as quoted by Observer 9/4/2019).

Coping mechanisms in instances of violence and harassment largely appear to entail enduring the harassment and minimising exposure where possible or leaving the factory for a nearby competitor if possible (FWF 2013, Better Work). Whilst there is a perception that violence and harassment is unfair, in some regions norms about masculinity have led to a habituation of the experience of violence and high levels of tolerance for sexual harassment and intimidation (BSR, 2017; ). CARE's work in Cambodia highlighted a range of behaviour employed by women to minimise exposure to violence and harassment within and outside of the factory, including being silent to limit attention to oneself, walking in groups, running or walking quickly to the bus stop (to and from the factory), retorting to insights, ostracizing the perpetrator in groups and ranging to moving jobs within the factory, to a another factory or dropping out of the garment industry altogether (2017, p.47). Whilst these coping strategies can reduce incidences of harassment, they cannot eliminate it and are more effective against harassment outside of the factory to that inside it, where workers have less control over their environment (CARE International, 2017, p.47).

Reporting of violence and harassment within the factory is generally not seen as an option. Fear of dismissal or of reprisal prevent women from acting. A study on sexual harassment in the workplace in

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<sup>6</sup> A compendium of garment workers' experience of violence and harassment is included in the FWF submission to the ILO Committee of Experts. See: <https://www.fairwear.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/FWF-ILO-submission-final.pdf>

Vietnam by the employers' organization found that fear of reprisals prevents survivors from speaking out and that many only seek help or report their concerns when harassment escalates to serious sexual assault (MOLISA, 2013).

Knowledge of and trust in the reporting system are also factors that influence likelihood of reporting (Yost, Shields, 2017). Other studies highlighted that even where there appears to be an internal complaints system, many workers reported the system was not trusted (SFC, 2016, FWF, 2019). Furthermore, survivors of violence and harassment experience feelings of shame and embarrassment and usually fear personal or family reputational damage if violence and harassment is revealed (FWF, 2013; Morris, Pillinger, 2018). Victim blaming is also a concern. Evidence from CARE (unpublished) suggests that between 50 and 70% of people believe that if a person is harassed, they are at least partly to blame.

Whilst data on the **prevalence** of sexual harassment in the garment sector globally is not currently available, a range of studies indicate sexual harassment is widespread. Indeed, there are a variety of country specific studies in South and South East Asia that give a picture of the significant prevalence of violence and harassment in the sector.

Fair Wear Foundation found that at least 60 per cent of Indian and Bangladeshi garment factory workers report harassment at work (FWF, 2013). According to the CARE International study, a third of garment workers in Cambodia had experienced sexual harassment at work (CARE International, 2017). A baseline survey by Better Work Indonesia found that 85% of female employees reported sexual harassment as a concern, whilst 79% reported verbal harassment to be a problem and 87% reported physical abuse (Better Work Indonesia, 2012).

This evidence highlights that violence and harassment is a significant issue across the garment sector. However crucially, rates of harassment vary between countries and in some cases, rates vary among factories within the same country, indicating that some factories are organised in a way that discourages or limits opportunity for harassment (Better Work, 2013). This, therefore, indicates there are certain factors that can constrain or enable violence and harassment within the garment sector, which will be discussed further in the next section.

### Factors associated with higher prevalence of violence and harassment

This review notes nine main factors or drivers of violence and harassment within the garment sector. These drivers are adapted from the ITC-ILO Resource Kit on gender-based violence in global supply chains (drivers a-h)<sup>7</sup> with an additional factor around national governance frameworks for garment

#### RECENT FINDINGS FROM VIETNAM

- 43.1% of interviewed garment workers had experienced at least one workplace violence or harassment in the previous 12 months
- Of those interviewed who reported experiencing harassment, 87.7% reported verbal abuse and harassment such as unwelcome verbal abuse and harassment such as inappropriate or offensive comments, and offensive remarks or jokes;; 34.3% reported physical harassment such as kissing or touching; and 28.9% experienced non-verbal harassment such as obscene gestures, sounds or stares, or offensive emails, texts or behaviour that impacted on their safety, such as being followed home

*FWF, 2019, unpublished study, as quoted by Observer 9/4/2019*

<sup>7</sup> Morris, J. and Pillinger, J. (2016). Gender-based violence in global supply chains: Resource Kit. [online] Turin: ITC- ILO/ Fair Wear Foundation. pp. 53-56

producing countries included. The drivers are discussed in the context of the garment sector below, however as noted above, broader inequalities and unequal power relations in society underpin violence and harassment experienced in specific supply chains (Morris, Pillinger, 2016).

**a) Worker in global supply chains who are vulnerable and in precarious work**

Precarious working arrangements leaves women vulnerable to harassment due to limited protection and power imbalance. The garment sector is marked by power imbalance – between production workers and supervisors; supervisors and managers; and suppliers and purchasers. For women, often in the lowest paid roles and with short or uncertain contracts, this leaves them in position of acute vulnerability and powerlessness. As noted above, for female migrant workers this vulnerability is enhanced and unpublished research from CARE (2019) suggests that there is a strong association between remittance status and experience of harassment. The broader social dynamics, including differences in levels of education, age, stereotypes about garment workers, caste or class, existing gender norms can also impact violence and harassment (Better Work, 2013; Truskinovsky et al, 2014; ILO, 2017). In such a context, attitudes and social norms can trivialise, excuse or justify violence and survivors themselves can be blamed for the harassment, undermining efforts to hold perpetrators to account (Campbell, Chinnery, 2018).

**b) Suppliers often have rudimentary human resources systems**

Robust human resource policies and processes are needed to tackle workplace violence and harassment, however often suppliers do not have these in place, or where they do there are low levels of awareness of them. HR policies and procedures to tackle violence and harassment are a relatively new topic for suppliers, who often do not have appropriate policies in place (Morris, Pillinger, 2016). Existing systems are often not suitable for tackling sensitive issues like violence and harassment and in some places, suppliers may not have them at all (Morris, Pillinger, 2016). Furthermore, where policies do exist they need to be communicated to workers and supervisors, who then need to be trained on such policies (Campbell, Chinnery, 2018). Research has shown that without training there are actually low levels of awareness of the existence of such policies or knowledge of contents of policies (Better Work, 2014).

Limited internal training opportunities can also play a role in where harassment is used as a disciplinary or ‘motivating’ tactic. In many garment factories, line supervisors are recruited from production lines and given little or no training in modern management techniques and are therefore more likely to revert to verbal or physical harassment or abuse to manage workers on their line, especially if they in turn are under pressure (Better Work, 2013). Furthermore, low-wage women workers in particular have limited access to the training opportunities (ILO 2012; BSR 2013). This can limit their opportunity for promotion, which whilst not automatically reducing harassment, does entrench a binary structure of male supervisors/managers and female workers.

**c) Lack of institutional grievance and trusted complaints procedures**

The lack of or nature of internal complaints and grievance mechanisms can drive violence and harassment as this allows harassment to go unchecked and can entrench the power imbalance between production workers and managers and allow perpetrators to operate with a sense of impunity. Where there are no, or limited trusted grievance and complaints procedures, women will often remain silent to avoid the risk of losing their livelihood and exposure to further violence. (DFID, 2015). A report by the Bangladesh AWAJ Foundation and AMRF Society (2013) found that in the ready-made garment industry women rarely reported sexual harassment because of a lack of formal grievance and complaints mechanisms (2013). Women working in factories in Vietnam with clear complaints procedures recorded far lower levels of abuse than those without such procedures (25% compared with 58.7%) (FWF, 2019, unpublished study, as quoted by Observer 9/4/2019).

#### **d) Meeting tight production targets and deadlines**

Women workers may be at greater risk for harassment, where tight production deadlines require workers to carry out long hours and overtime (Better Work, 2013; Morris, Pillinger, 2018). Practices like short order placement, lack of clarity and short lead times are felt on the production line through stress and overtime (sometimes unpaid), a key trigger of sexual harassment (Early, 2017). Unrealistic productivity demands place stress on manager, supervisors and workers and this stress is passed downward onto workers, sometimes in the form of harassment or abuse as a disciplinary tactic (Better Work, 2013). In an effort to speed up production, and as an outlet for stress, verbal harassment, shouting, name calling, hitting and other forms of abuse may be used to 'get workers to complete their tasks more quickly' (FWF, 2018, p.10)

The Institute of Development Studies found suppliers in all countries and sectors reported difficulties in improving labour practices in a context of downward pressures on price, shortening lead times and supply chain volatility (Barrientos, Smith, 2006). During periods of high demand, workers may be required to work excessive overtime. Overtime can be the result of insufficient lead-in time, late orders, last minute production changes by brands, or factory owners reluctant/unable to hire sufficient workers (Hohenegger, Miller, Curley, 2018). Buyers may refuse to pay more per piece despite an increased minimum wage, resulting in factory owners forcing workers to produce more articles faster or without overtime plus-payment (FWF, 2018, BIF, 2019). If workers refuse to carry out overtime, they often face penalties, harassment, verbal abuse and dismissal (FWF, 2019; Barrientos, Smith, 2006; FWF, 2014). Long hours have further implications for harassment as overtime results in workers working late, and this puts them at greater risk of harassment on public transport or walking to their accommodation late at night (Morris, Pillinger, 2018).

These issues are exacerbated where there are high and low seasons: seasonal pressures to produce large quantities with insufficient lead-time, unrealistic targets and fierce competition between suppliers. In Vietnam, overtime was particularly prevalent in high season and interviewees in Vietnam said that excessive overtime often led to increased pressure and harassment, with harassment 2.4 times more likely to occur in where workers report working overtime of 30 hours or more per month (FWF, 2019, unpublished study, as quoted by Observer 9/4/2019). There was also a correlation between increased violence and harassment and the high season, with more women experiencing violence in the high season than in the low season, with violence and harassment more likely to occur in the high season than during the rest of the year (FWF, 2019, unpublished study, as quoted by Observer 9/4/2019).

#### **e) Incentive structures for supervisors**

The incentives structures for supervisors can play a role in increasing risks of sexual harassment as production incentives for supervisors can encourage abusive behaviour to meet targets. Research from Better Work found that supervisors' incentive pay systems were based either on the performance of the workers they supervise or on the basis of production line incentives or bonuses (Better Work, 2013). If these incentives are very demanding or if production targets are difficult to achieve, this can contribute to a culture of sexual harassment (Tufts University, 2019). Furthermore, where the incentives of workers and supervisors are not aligned, this can contribute to harassment (Better Work, 2013). For example, where workers are paid by the piece but the supervisor receives a fixed salary, there is a risk of harassment from the supervisor who determines eligibility for bonuses, without themselves receiving bonuses:

*"If a salaried line supervisor, who is predisposed to harass, is given the power to certify whether a worker has met a production quota that affects the worker's pay, the supervisor may use this power to demand sexual favours in exchange for approving the production bonus." (Better Work, 2013 p.2)*

Additionally the contract type and payment system a worker is subject to can influence harassment through insecure contracts that limit a workers ability to speak out about harassment for fear of losing their position, as well as leaving portions of their pay at the discretion of their supervisor who could use this as leverage to harass the worker. Research covering Vietnam, Indonesia, Haiti and Nicaragua found piece rate systems can have negative impacts on workers (Borino, 2018). Workers are more likely to be concerned with sexual harassment and verbal abuse (as well as more concerned about workplace accidents) if they are paid partially by the piece and partially by hourly pay (partial piece rate pay) (Borino, 2018). Typically, in these systems workers receive the hourly base salary, which is often very low, and the incentive pay, based on the output, is obtained only if a certain output threshold is reached (Borino, 2018). This leaves a substantial portion of their pay at the discretion of their (likely male) supervisor. In Cambodia and elsewhere, short term contracts make it easier to fire and control workers, making it hard for women to assert their rights (Morris & Pillinger, 2016; FWF, 2018).

#### **f) A culture of workplace harassment**

The acceptance of workplace harassment can render harassment invisible, with factory managers and supervisors often denying it exists (Morris, Pillinger, 2016). As noted above, underlying gender inequalities and gender roles underpin harassment and within the workplace, perpetrators also conform to these normative gender roles, of what it means to be a man (Cruz, Klingler, 2011). Whilst many supervisors might not be violent themselves, there is evidence some feel they need to be abusive to show they have power over production workers who are mainly women or to meet production targets (Morris, Pillinger, 2016). One training report noted understanding of sexual harassment to be low among factory managers prior to training (Better Work, 2014). If harassment is normalised, training of supervisors limited (see point b) and understanding of what constitutes harassment low, there may be forms of harassment, particularly verbal that are simply seen as normal practice. Furthermore, as noted above, harassment is underreported and low reporting of incidents can therefore contribute to minimising of the issue by managers, as well as potentially engendering a sense of impunity in perpetrators.

#### **g) Low levels of unionisation**

Lack of or limited space for unions to represent workers' needs and issues can drive violence and harassment. In the garment sector there is often intense hostility to unions and the fast turn-over of precariously employed young workers mean it is challenging to organize factories and there is limited ability for workers to contact a trade union without repercussions (ITUC, 2015, Morris & Pillinger, 2016, 2018). Widespread abuses of workers' rights, including violations of the right to freedom of association in the garment and textiles sectors in India and Bangladesh have been reported in the ITUC's Global Rights Index (2015). ACTRAV (the worker bureau at the ILO) underline the fundamental importance of effective social dialogue and fully functional industrial relations systems (the right to form and join a trade union, and negotiate collective agreements, as embodied in core ILO conventions) (2017). The report highlights the challenges trade unions face in exercising freedom of association and the right to bargaining collectively in efforts to address violence and harassment at work (ACTRAV, 2017). ACTRAV argues that collective bargaining is the most important tool for preventing and combating violence and harassment at work (2017).

Where unions are present, women are not always members and unions are not always able to represent women's needs and issues. For example, in Bangladesh, women are disproportionately underrepresented in the membership and leadership of unions, including in sectors where women are in the majority, despite efforts to increase their leadership roles (BILS, 2009).

However, unions can be important vehicles for effectively addressing violence and harassment, including education and training for women members. Social dialogue is an effective mechanism in

tackling work place issues and dialogue between unions and enterprises is the most common form of this (Hohenegger, Miller, Curley, 2018). A number of Global Framework Agreements (GFA) between fashion retailers (e.g. Inditex, H&M and Unilever) and trade unions cover millions of workers across supply chains (Morris, Pillinger, 2016). They promote social dialogue at the factory level, including on sexual harassment, and address decent work and observance of international labour standards. (Morris & Pillinger, 2016). The ITUC training guide notes sexual harassment as a union issue and includes a model policy, actions for unions in responding and the UN Women handbook notes the increasing role of unions in preventing violence and harassment, including through increasing representation of women in leadership roles within unions (2009; 2019). Many unions, especially in organised sectors where collective bargaining is recognised, have successfully negotiated agreements on sexual harassment policy and procedures. There are examples of unions addressing violence and harassment in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Lesotho (see section 3).

#### **h) Difficulties in monitoring abuses of workers' rights**

Common approaches to monitoring potential abuses of workers' rights do not sufficiently integrate gender or women's issues, therefore masking the scale of the problem. Supplier codes of conduct often do not adequately address gender issues. Codes of conduct are often gender neutral and so women's specific issues and challenges, as well as other less visible social issues like freedom of associate, discrimination, are often not reflected (Barraja, 2018). Women's experiences can be further rendered invisible due to the common tool that most companies use to verify that suppliers are upholding the company's minimum requirements: the social audit (Barraja, 2018). Women's issues are addressed minimally in auditing methodologies to verify compliance with such codes (Barraja, 2018). Given that social auditing is often used as the basis for remediation plans and factory improvements, the absence of gender and women's considerations from such audits means women's issues will not be addressed (Barraja, 2018). Fair Wear Foundation has found that auditing at or near a factory is unlikely to reveal sexual harassment and that a participatory approach away from the factory environment is more successful (2013, 2018).

#### **i) Limited or poorly implemented national governance frameworks**

In June 2019 the International Labour Organisation agreed the 'Violence and Harassment Convention' (No 190), backed by Recommendation No 2016 that provides stakeholders with recommended action. The new Convention and Recommendation provides the first international definition of violence and harassment in the world of work. However, the national governance frameworks in garment producing countries also have an important role to play in either driving or constraining harassment through both the effectiveness of the legislation and the extent to which it is properly enforced..

In Cambodia for example, the 1997 Labour Law would be the relevant piece of legislation for workplace harassment, however the definition of sexual harassment in the provision is unclear and it is unclear how it would be enforced (CARE International, 2017). In parallel the Cambodian Criminal Code, whilst covering assault and rape, uses a limited definition of sexual harassment and does not cover the range of behaviour associated with sexual harassment, leaving a gap for harassment falling outside the Criminal Code (CARE International, 2017). Even where laws are clear (India and to a lesser extent Bangladesh) on preventing and responding to work-place harassment and violence, there is limited evidence of laws being properly implemented (FWF, 2013). Beyond the legal framework, local officials cited institutional constraints like the status of factory owners as limiting their ability to enforce (CARE International, 2017). In India, workplace harassment committees are required by law, and in Bangladesh they are recommended, however implementation of such initiatives remains slow (FWF, 2018). Examples of implementation challenges: e.g. in a factory in India a complaint had been made to the factory owner but was withdrawn after the father of the young female worker made a private 'financial agreement' with the factory. The worker did not return to the factory. (FWF complaint 2013, unpublished). In Vietnam, the Code of Conduct on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace contains

important provisions, however there are low levels of compliance and awareness. In India, one study found limited action to implement or ensure compliance with the Prevention of Sexual Harassment Act (SFC, 2016).

Furthermore, the trust of survivors in the law and legal system can often be low. In Cambodia, women demonstrated low levels of trust that any action would be taken if they reported to the police and spoke of corruption concerns like being asked for money by police (CARE International, 2017). Whilst in one study in India, most women interviewed did not believe they would be treated equally under the law if they reported a case of harassment to the police (SFC, 2016).

**These nine drivers of violence and harassment are all underpinned by women's limited ability to react to or report instances of violence or harassment. Violence and harassment are normalised to the extent that it is seen as the responsibility of women to avoid it and victim blaming is common when violence and harassment occur. Reporting or speaking out risks backlash in the form of dismissal, reprisal in the form of further violence or harassment and potentially damage to reputation (CARE International, 2017).**



### 3. Interventions addressing sexual harassment in the garment sector

This section maps interventions aimed at addressing sexual harassment in the garment sector. Initiatives are mapped against the main drivers of violence and harassment outlined in the preceding section (grouped together), to highlight drivers currently being addressed and gaps in interventions. Following this there is a discussion of the available evidence of the effectiveness of strategies employed by such interventions. This discussion does not cover each initiative individually as there are limits to the available intervention level data on effectiveness. Furthermore, there may be further initiatives addressing violence and harassment in the garment sector that are not publicly detailed and/or are embedded into broader programmes—this review has not picked up on these.

<b>Initiative Overview</b> <i>Name of implementer, name of project (if available), project summary, location and donor (if known and applicable)</i>	<b>Gender inequality, vulnerability and workplace culture</b> <b>(a, f)</b>	<b>HR processes and complaints mechanisms</b> <b>(b, c, h)</b>	<b>Limited legal frameworks</b> <b>(i)</b>	<b>Constraints for unions</b> <b>(g)</b>	<b>Incentives and production targets</b> <b>(e, d)</b>
<b>Better Work:</b> Sexual Harassment and Prevention Training Training with factory workers and supervisors on sexual harassment <i>Multiple countries, case study for Jordan and Vietnam</i> ILO/IFC					
<b>Sisters for Change/Munnade</b> Legal capacity building project with women garment workers, paralegals and unions. <i>India</i>					
<b>Fair Wear Foundation:</b> Preventing Workplace Violence project Training with workers and managers, anti-harassment committees, helplines for workers. <i>India, Bangladesh</i>					
<b>Fair Wear Foundation, CNV International, Mondial FNV:</b> Strategic Partnership for Garment Supply Chain Transformation <i>Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Pakistan and Ethiopia</i>					

<b>Initiative Overview</b> <i>Name of implementer, name of project (if available), project summary, location and donor (if known and applicable)</i>	<b>Gender inequality, vulnerability and workplace culture</b> <b>(a, f)</b>	<b>HR processes and complaints mechanisms</b> <b>(b, c, h)</b>	<b>Limited legal frameworks</b> <b>(i)</b>	<b>Constraints for unions</b> <b>(g)</b>	<b>Incentives and production targets</b> <b>(e, d)</b>
Supported by Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs					
<b>BSR: HerRespect</b> Skills building with managers and workers, awareness raising, company policy <i>Bangladesh, India</i> Supported by DFID via Whatworks					
<b>CARE International: Enhancing Women’s Voice to Stop Sexual Harassment (STOP)</b> Supporting factories with harassment response mechanisms; female garment workers to feel safe to report; and national governments with the legal and regulatory framework Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam					
<b>CARE International: Promoting an Enabling Environment for Women in Factories (PEEWF)</b> Enhancing worker awareness, skill and understanding on gender discrimination, participation in workers committees, build the capacity of factory mid-level management on workers needs and rights, mobilize the community to create enabling environment Bangladesh Supported by Galeries Lafayette					
<b>Naripokkho, Christian Aid, BRAC, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust and SNV – SHOJAG Project</b> Awareness raising and training on harassment with factory works, managers and government <i>Bangladesh</i>					

<b>Initiative Overview</b> <i>Name of implementer, name of project (if available), project summary, location and donor (if known and applicable)</i>	<b>Gender inequality, vulnerability and workplace culture</b> <b>(a, f)</b>	<b>HR processes and complaints mechanisms</b> <b>(b, c, h)</b>	<b>Limited legal frameworks</b> <b>(i)</b>	<b>Constraints for unions</b> <b>(g)</b>	<b>Incentives and production targets</b> <b>(e, d)</b>
Supported by the Global Fund for Women					
<b>TUC Aid:</b> Supporting the empowerment of women trade union leaders in the Bangladesh garment industry					
<b>Action Aid Cambodia – Safe Cities Campaign</b> Campaign targeting authorities on harassment of vulnerable women including garment workers. <i>Cambodia</i>					
<b>ILO:</b> legislative and technical guidance and awareness raising to promote the effective implementation of the revised Labour Code on workplace sexual harassment provisions and support for social dialogue <i>Vietnam and Indonesia</i>					
<b>Asia Foundation:</b> Harassment-Free Workplaces in China’s Textile and Apparel Industry, China Industry guidelines, employee training, recommendations for legal improvements <i>China</i> Supported by Levi Strauss Foundation					
<b>IndustriALL:</b> supporting unions on training and strengthening women’s committees to tackle issues including harassment. <i>Ethiopia, Lesotho, India, Bangladesh, Turkey, Tanzania</i>					

The above table highlights that the majority of identified initiatives are focused on reforming HR processes and systems (including training on processes) linked to violence and harassment and on supporting unions. There are very few initiatives addressing violence and harassment with a specific focus on productivity, incentives and purchasing practices and currently no available evidence on the effectiveness of interventions addressing these drivers. Whilst there are other initiatives focused on the garment sector that do look at the sector more broadly (including productivity issues, excessive overtime, low pay and purchasing practices, see box to the right)<sup>8</sup> these do not necessarily explicitly address violence and harassment, although gender equality is likely a cross cutting issue. Similarly, a number of organisations carry out research, investigations and advocacy related to the garment sector and including violence and harassment, including the Clean Clothes Campaign, Labour Behind the Label, the International Labour Rights Forum and Human Rights Watch.<sup>9</sup> These initiatives are not included in the above table as they are not carrying out programmatic interventions, but as one report has noted, pressure from campaign groups can cause brands to invest more in supporting stable suppliers (Hohenegger, Miller, Curley, 2018). Therefore, advocacy and analysis may have an impact on brands in relation to violence and harassment. Advocacy can also take place at a project level, for instance, the CARE STOP project.

### Related Garment Sector Initiatives

There are several initiatives focused on the garment sector with gender or women's specific issues integrated as a cross cutting theme.

- Ethical Trading Initiative and Fair Wear Foundation: incorporated into base code, specific gender strategy
- GIZ: several garment sector projects in Asia that incorporate women's rights
- IDH Sustainable Trade: gender as an emerging area of focus
- ILO: relevant conventions, including probable forthcoming labour standard on workplace violence; supporting research, Better Work/IFC
- Better Work/IFC: programme working at all levels of garment sector including specific initiative on sexual harassment (noted above)

The mapping also highlights the concentration of initiatives in South and South East Asia, particularly Bangladesh. This is logical given the concentration of garment producing factories in this region and concomitant literature on this region, as noted in the methodology. However, it may indicate some countries with large garment sectors are under served in this space relative to the size of the sector and likely prevalence of sexual harassment.

The remainder of this section considers the effectiveness of the initiatives mapped based on five findings from a review of available evidence.<sup>10</sup>

### **Training directly with factories to tackle sexual harassment can be an effective way to address sexual harassment in the workplace, however interventions have to be tailored to the context.**

Initiatives incorporating training on sexual harassment prevention within broader initiatives to change HR processes factories have had some success. The Fair Wear Foundation found the number of workers who reported having experienced verbal harassment—mostly sexually explicit—had dropped from 75 to 62% and number who experienced physical abuse from 23 to 11%, compared to baseline

<sup>8</sup> Ethical Trading Initiative: <https://www.ethicaltrade.org/resources/eti-gender-strategy>

GIZ: <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/34136.html>

ILO: <https://www.ilo.org/global/lang--en/index.htm>

Better Work: <https://betterwork.org/about-us/the-programme/>

IDH Sustainable Trade: <https://www.idhsustainabletrade.com/approach/idh-gender-tool/>

<sup>9</sup> Further details available as follows: Human Rights Watch <https://www.hrw.org/>; Clean Clothes Campaign: <https://cleanclothes.org/>;

Labour Behind the Label: <http://labourbehindthelabel.org/>; and International Labour Rights Forum: <https://laborrights.org/>

<sup>10</sup> As noted above, there are limits on publicly available evidence on effectiveness of interventions and much of the evidence examines training, however this does not imply training is the only or most effective mode of intervention but acknowledges the public evidence base around this. In addition, training is only part of some of the models presented.

following a project involving training with workers and managers, and setting up an anti-harassment committee (FWF, 2018). Similarly, there is evidence from Jordan that workplace training can have a positive impact on knowledge of sexual harassment. In a Better Work intervention, less than 40% of workers or supervisors understood the implications of sexual harassment prior to the training, whilst 80% stated they did after (2014). Whilst only 17% of those participating had a clear understanding of the factory's sexual harassment policy, 74% of those workers felt the training helped them better understanding the factory's internal policy (Better Work, 2014). Further, only 33% of supervisors said they understood these responsibilities prior to the training, 80% said that had a clear understating of their responsibilities in addressing sexual harassment after the training (Better Work, 2014). One review found sexual harassment policies needs to be supported by training and education for staff and leaders and the Better Work project corroborates this (Campbell, Chinnery, 2018). The Fair Wear Foundation also reported an increase in confidence about raising problems with managers following the project, whilst a broader evaluation of the gendered impact of Better Work interventions also found the programme may have had a positive impact on women's capacity to voice concerns (FWF, 2018; Djaya, Brown, Lupo, 2019))

Sustaining training over a longer period of time can also be effective. TUC Aid's experience noted that training groups over a longer timeframe created a network amongst the participants (TUC, 2017). Similarly, an evaluation of a CARE programme in Bangladesh recommended that workers need regular refresher sessions to retain learning effectively (Consiglieri, 2018).

Training also has the ability to raise awareness in managers over sexual harassment. One report from Fair Wear Foundation noted that prior to training, managers had stated such training was not necessary in their factories, but following training were able to agree that a harassment was happening once they were able to work through what constituted harassment without judgement (FWF, 2013).

Whilst separate training sessions for workers, supervisors and managers are a key feature, a BSR evaluation of HERrespect India, noted that additional joint sessions between workers, middle, and senior management created important spaces for dialogue and enabled managers to understand worker concerns (BSR, 2019). The evaluation also noted success of the approach of starting with less sensitive topics and building trust before moving to more sensitive topics (BSR, 2019).

However, there are limits to training, with an evaluation of supervisory training from Better Work (although not focused on harassment) finding that training impact could be moderated by trainee variables like supervisors' mindset or perceived power (Babbit, 2016). For example, the evaluation found no direct evidence of training impacting a supervisors' sense of outcome dependence with workers, but did have positive impacts on individuation, whereby supervisors saw workers more as individuals (Babbit, 2016). This highlights that supervisor training can have the potential to improve relationships with workers, but that it will not automatically do so, and an understanding of roles and power dynamics will be needed in the design of any training initiative. Broader evidence from CARE on tackling violence and harassment in the workplace noted some other key points on successful training (Campbell, Chinnery, 2018)

- Training can clarify myths about sexual harassment, with research showing that individuals with prior training on sexual harassment reject myths, like women having ulterior motives for training;
- Training must inform trainees about policies and procedures related to violence and harassment and challenge organisational and societal gender norms;
- Training should be tailored to the organisation, accounting for the specific situations where violence and harassment may occur, women's status and positions in the organisation;

- Training for managers should include conflict management, communication and emotional skills;
- Training should be conducted in a universal manner, across all levels of the organisation and not specifically targeted at certain groups or made available only to those who attend voluntarily.

**There is evidence that extending initiatives from factories to integrate the surrounding community are likely to be effective**

Some of the projects noted above linked their work within factories to work in the surrounding community. This helps to address the underlying norms that can influence workplace violence and harassment, as the community outside of the workplace is where these norms are reinforced (Campbell, Chinnery, 2018). It also responds to the evidence that violence and harassment in the garment sector extends beyond the factory to the route to and from work and accommodation. A review of strategies to prevent violence against women noted that community mobilisation efforts to tackle social norms can be successful (Fulu, Kerr-Wilson, Lang, 2014). The same review noted there is evidence that approaches that incorporate men and boys work, although initiatives on changing masculinities are under-researched (Fulu, Kerr-Wilson, Lang, 2014). Mobilisation efforts that involve participatory projects, working with multiple stakeholders and identifying influential individuals and groups early can be successful (Campbell, Chinnery, 2018). Training within the community for those advocating for gender equality can also be successful (Campbell, Chinnery, 2018). Some of the above points on training would be relevant in this context as well.

**Supporting anti-harassment committees is valuable but requires a long-term commitment.**

In addition to training and policy work with factories, projects by CARE and Fair Wear Foundation integrated anti-harassment committees (AHC). AHCs ensured a more structural approach to raise sexual harassment issues (Consigliari, 2018). Developing these committees, however takes time. The Fair Wear Foundation project incorporated a hotline for concerns that could be responded to by Fair Wear to begin with, but over time workers began to use the AHC (FWF, 2013). Initially workers reported relatively minor issues, but as trust in the AHCs grew, more serious issues are reported (FWF, 2013). However, in order to enable an AHC to reach the point of handling such cases a lot of follow up and mentoring is required. The Fair Wear Foundation found that at least a year of follow up support was required for the AHCs to be functional (FWF, 2018).

Fair Wear Foundation found that anti-harassment committees could lead to nascent social dialogue, where managers involved workers to find solutions to problems concerning sexual harassment (2018). Complaints and factory training have also alerted managers to the close connection between harassment and fast turn-over of workers, prompting them to take action (FWF 2018b). Trade unions emphasise that where there is no freedom of association or recognition of collective bargaining rights, anti-harassment committees, training and other initiatives are intrinsically insecure and likely to be compromised by management control (ITUC 2015; ILO 2018; IndustriALL unpublished and 2018)

**There is scope to work on legal cases or with legal frameworks, however there was less evidence of this being carried out.**

One project led by Sisters for Change and Munnade incorporated an element of case work into their project. The project used Community Paralegals – women who have previously worked in garment factories, typically between 30-45 years old, now working to support fellow garment workers – to handle cases of sexual harassment (SFC, 2016). The project, in a survey of sexual harassment issues in the garment sector in its area of operation, noted a mixed response to the cases taken up, with perpetrators removed in some cases, under pressure from collective mobilisation of women, but not removed in all cases (SFC, 2016). Supporting women’s collective action and bargaining in this way and

challenging impunity of perpetrators, does align with broader evidence (Cruz, Klinger, 2011), although broader review of the effectiveness of legal empowerment is outside the scope of this review.

Other initiatives did work with governments, or local authorities, in the case of Action Aid's Safe Cities campaign. Further, another evaluation recommended further involvement of industry regulators, such as BGMEA and BKMEA, particularly in the training (Consiglieri, 2018). However overall there was less evidence of engagement with the legal framework and implementation mechanism, although this could be due to broader legal reform efforts on sexual harassment and labour law provisions or GBV prevention efforts being tackled through initiatives outside of the garment sector specifically.

**It is possible to engage brands on sexual harassment, but it is not clear whether this extends to engaging brands on their impact on drivers of violence and harassment.**

Both the CARE and FWF projects outlined above engaged directly with some brands in their projects. The link between brands' purchasing practices and sexual harassment has been outlined above and the Observer (9/4/2019) reported, brands have the power to implement predictable order and production timeframes, which in turn reduce production pressures and overtime. Brands also clearly have a lot of power and influence over the behaviour of buyers and suppliers and the knock-on impacts of this on violence and harassment.

*"We agreed to pilot an anti-harassment committee with Fair Wear Foundation because the brand we supply asked me to and also because we want to ensure a stable workforce."* (Indian factory director quoted in FWF, 2013, p.14)

The above quote highlights the influence brands have over suppliers. The CARE project evaluation highlighted the involvement of the brand as a key reason the suppliers engaged with the project. Therefore, brands influence can be used to positive effect by sexual harassment interventions.

However, there was less evidence in the review of initiatives working with brands to tackle some of the ways the brands themselves can cause harassment – purchasing practices and productivity pressures – although this could be due to the specific brands engaged in these projects already having better practices in this area. However, the involvement of brands is crucial to addressing two of the main drivers of violence and harassment and there is evidence brands are not doing enough in this regard. For instance, an impact evaluation of Better Factories Cambodia found that whilst brand/buyer participation was voluntary, costs of compliance are borne by the factories, which is a problem due to the power buyers have through purchasing practices to influence factory conditions (CLEC, CCC, 2012). One of the recommendations made in this regard was increasing brand/buyer contribution to the programme; and in turn having the programme publicly recognise those who had and had not participated (CLEC, CCC, 2012). However, it should also be noted that factories often carry out orders for multiple buyers and brands and an improvement in practices of one buyer may not impact the overall production dynamics of the factory if they process orders for multiple buyers (Hohenegger and Miller 2016).

**The overall effectiveness or impact of initiatives can be hard to measure because precise data on violence and harassment is limited.**

Whilst several reports were able to find a decrease in reported harassment, data in this area is tricky. Underreporting of violence and harassment was noted as a common feature (Campbell, Chinnery, 2018). Additionally, reporting of violence and harassment may in fact increase following interventions aimed at addressing such harassment, due potentially to increased awareness of policies and procedures or improved confidence in reporting process (BSR, 2019). For instance, Better Work found a marked improvement of knowledge of what to do following an instance of harassment after their sexual harassment training (2014). This kind of knowledge increase can provide an explanation as to why reporting increases. Therefore, such an increase in reporting is linked to the intervention, rather

than necessarily implying an increase in harassment itself. However, this can make it hard to determine the overall impact on initiatives aimed at preventing or reducing prevalence of violence and harassment. As a DFID review of measures reducing violence against women noted, many studies on preventing violence against women do not necessarily include a measure of this in their outcomes, making it hard to assess effectiveness (Fulu, Kerr-Wilson, Lang, 2014).

**This mapping has therefore highlighted that there are gaps in the coverage of the drivers of violence and harassment by initiatives that focus on harassment in the garment sector. Future interventions should therefore aim to be more holistic in nature and cover more drivers of harassment where possible. However, equally, the evidence shows the effectiveness of many of these interventions and therefore the comparative advantage of different partners in different modes of intervention should also be considered – not all partners can or should try to engage at a buyer level and vice versa some broader garment sector initiatives may not be sufficiently specialised to handle certain issues – for example sexual harassment legal case management.**



## 4. Productivity, pay and hours: potential risks and unintended impact

Improving productivity is the subject of considerable attention in the garment sector. Put simply, a productivity increase equates to more garments for the same amount of inputs and can have benefits for both suppliers and workers (Hohenegger, Miller, Curley, 2018). However, there are also risk factors attached to productivity focused interventions. Production pressure was noted above as a driver of violence and harassment and initiatives focused on productivity can have negative impacts on violence and harassment in the workplace. Given that challenges stem from production processes, as well as human resource management such interventions have included workplace training (Hohenegger, Miller, Curley, 2018; BIF, 2019). Trainings focused on productivity can potentially alter power dynamics between managers, supervisors and workers, which could heighten the risk of harassment. Further, productivity improvements are linked to manufacturing costs, including worker pay and incentives (Hohenegger, Miller, Curley, 2018). Therefore, any changes to productivity can impact negatively on overtime and pay, which as noted earlier can be a driver of harassment.

This review has sought to understand prevailing literature around sexual harassment in garments factories. . Whilst the available evidence does not enable the review to look at this question in detail from an intervention level, with the exception of the BIF RCT, noted below, the available evidence does highlight a significant association between production pressures, pay and hours with raised levels of violence and harassment.

International partners have sought to improve productivity in the garment sector. In Myanmar, the DFID-funded Business Innovation Facility (BIF) undertook a productivity initiative with garment factories that included training supervisors in new production systems, upskilling production managers and using production incentives, training HR managers to improve management of and communication with workers (BIF, 2019). This initiative was measured through a randomised control trial (RCT) to monitor its effectiveness (BIF, 2019). BMZ has also funded an initiative to support improved sustainability standards and increased productivity through dialogue between workers and management (GIZ, 2018).

However BIF in Myanmar found that worker reports of sexual harassment showed a slight increase ‘immediately after the training was delivered’ (BIF, 2019). Whilst the precise reason for this is not known and whilst available studies have not looked at the specific link between productivity training and reported harassment, press reports notes the association of production pressure on the incidence of violence and harassment, including sexual harassment (BIF, 2019). The specific training carried out through the BIF initiative may not have directly caused violence and harassment, however the outcomes or subsequent use of the training may have impacted potential drivers of violence and harassment (see section 2). For example, initiatives focused on productivity may result in increased production targets, which in turn increases production pressure within the factory – a noted driver of violence and harassment, whereby stress and pressure resulting from production pressures faced by supervisors and managers leads to harassment of workers ( Observer 9/4/2019); Better Work, 2013; Barrientos, Smith, 2006). It is possible that this dynamic was in operation in Myanmar during the period the training was being established and could be an explanation as to why workers were more likely to rate their managers’ power higher than before the training (BIF, 2019), increasing the gap between perceptions of their own power and that of their supervisors’. Furthermore, improvements in productivity may necessitate changes to pay, hours and overtime. As section 2 notes, changes in these areas can be a driver of harassment and the potential impact of a productivity initiative on these variables needs to be understood in order to mitigate potential risks of harassment. It should be noted that the BIF training was solely on productivity and efficiency and did not refer to sexual harassment

directly and whilst evidence presented in section 3 showed an increase in reporting of sexual harassment following training, this occurred after interventions specifically incorporating sexual harassment, which the BIF initiative did not.<sup>11</sup> The BIF example shows there may potentially be unintended negative impacts of productivity and efficiency training on sexual harassment and whilst the reasons for the increase in reported harassment are not known, the example highlights the need to consider the potential impact garment sector interventions could have on the drivers of sexual harassment, as laid out in section 2.

### **There is a circular relationship between productivity and violence and harassment**

Section two has demonstrated that production pressure is a driver of violence and harassment itself where stress manifests through harassment or where harassment is used as a tool to discipline or 'motivate' workers. Violence and harassment in the workplace, however, has a negative impact on overall productivity. Research suggests a link between violence and harassment and overall levels of pay and productivity - while CARE estimates the productivity cost of sexual harassment in the Cambodian garment sector to be \$89 million per annum (2017). Workers in Cambodia who are able to earn production bonuses have higher salaries and CARE research shows that those experiencing sexual harassment are less likely to achieve these bonuses (2017). Further, CARE's women's empowerment project in the garment sector in Bangladesh, that encompassed tackling harassment found at endline, a 20-25% increase in productivity of factory workers and lower absenteeism (Consiglieri, 2018). This highlights that effective tackling of sexual harassment could form part of productivity initiatives.

### **Interventions looking at sexual harassment are not often integrated with those looking at productivity or excessive overtime**

The mapping of initiatives in section 2, highlighted that initiatives focused on harassment in the sector are often not integrated into those looking at productivity, low pay, long hours or other aspects of the sector such as fast turnover of workers/failure to upskill (FWF, 2013). Most of the initiatives mapped were stand-alone initiatives focused on harassment that therefore may have had limited ability to target these issues as a driver of violence and harassment or ensure that productivity initiatives did not inadvertently drive harassment.

Conversely, broader garment sector initiatives that incorporate violence and harassment may have less success than those specifically targeting harassment. For instance, gender impact evaluation of the Better Work programme found that the programme was most successful in improving women's work attributes like take home pay and working hours, than tackling voicing of concerns (including harassment and violence) and health and wellbeing (Djaya, Brown, Lupo, 2019). This does not mean that Better Work's efforts on voicing of concerns were not worthwhile and pay related issues (incorporated in HR systems in section 2) can be a driver of harassment. However, it may highlight that striking a balance between standalone and integrated sexual harassment initiatives are required – considering what each could learn from the other.

### **There are risk factors associated with interventions looking specifically at productivity**

Any kind of training or perceived benefit given to one group of employees within a factory can alter the power balance and the impacts of this can be uncertain. The BIF experience in Myanmar highlights that productivity programmes and HR improvement interventions need to be carefully designed with an understanding of underlying power structures and gender relations, both within a factory

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<sup>11</sup> HR managers were trained on aspects such as overtime and transparent pay structures. HR managers were trained on 're-humanisation of workers' but this did not include sexual harassment awareness or complaints procedures. The evaluation did not include an assessment of how successful the 're-humanisation' training was in changing attitudes of managers and supervisors towards female workers as this was not an objective of the initiative. Nor was there a base line for the occurrence of sexual harassment preceding training.

environment but also within the specific countries' cultural context. Incentive structures are likely to be more effective if underlying power relations can be factored in. Additionally, productivity output may require a recognition that production workers' basic pay is low and they rely on a series of allowances and bonus payments. While underlying power relations within the factory can be factored in reducing violence and harassment it is also necessary to deal with the organisational factors that may lie beyond suppliers' control: reasonable lead-in and delivery times, price paid per article that reflects increases in the NMW and realistic production targets

Where the emphasis is on training supervisors, who are then expected to 'deliver' improved productivity this may result in undue pressure on workers, including violence, harassment, verbal and physical abuse as a means to make them work faster or longer. The BIF experience in Myanmar highlights the importance of carefully designed productivity interventions that take account of the potential for unintended economic consequences for workers, as well as changes in power structures and gender relations. Pay, incentive and hours arrangements are likely to be more effective if underlying power relations can be factored in. As has been noted, the relationship between productivity, the means by which it is achieved in the factory and harassment is a relatively new area of research and this section has been heavily reliant on research by Fair Wear Foundation. Besides Hohenegger, Miller, Curley, 2018 and CARE, 2017 research on productivity losses in Cambodia there is relatively little research to draw upon in this area.

**Any productivity or efficiency focused intervention in the garment sector therefore needs to understand the link between productivity,- changes in factory floor dynamics- and violence and harassment, ensure the design on any ensuing programmes are cognizant of the risk factors associated with productivity programming and ensure the programme integrates or is connected with initiatives that counter violence and harassment in the garment sector.**

## 5. Conclusion

Violence and harassment are a widespread phenomenon in the garment sector, encompassing multiple forms. The review highlights the pressures the global supply chain places on suppliers, underpinned by pre-existing gender norms and relations that may be permissive toward violence and harassment. The available data shows broadly similar trends across countries and suggests these trends are likely to extend to other garments producing countries and countries with emerging garment sectors (like Ethiopia). It has built on the drivers of violence and harassment articulated in the ITC-ILO Resource Kit (Morris, Pillinger, 2016) and noted the legal framework and its enforcement within garment producing countries as an additional factor influencing sexual harassment. It has demonstrated that production pressures and purchasing practices can act as a driver of violence and harassment and has also demonstrated unintended impacts of garment sector programmes that do not account for some of these drivers.

### **Some of the implications of this review for future programming are noted below**

- Interventions addressing violence and harassment need to move beyond solely supplier specific approaches. A more holistic approach is required: from employers changing their systems; brands to consider the impact of purchasing practices (and use influence to support supplier capacity building and public policy change); governments to effectively legislate and enforce (in line with provisions of recent ILO Convention 190); unions to be given freedom of association, with women well represented; employers and governments held accountable and action taken to engage men and boys and address social norms in communities;
- Approaches that engage brands, buyers and other actors in the supply chain are needed to address the full range of drivers of violence and harassment and understand the links between them
- The business case for ending violence and harassment among all relevant stakeholders needs to be further researched, developed and then promoted amongst brands, suppliers, and the government, encouraging brands to work with their suppliers to prevent violence and harassment;
- There is space for more work supporting legal response and cases for workers at an individual or collective level in areas of garment production. There is also space to promote sectoral social dialogue on violence and harassment in the apparel sector and world of work, including support for trade union training;
- Greater awareness needs to be built around practical tools and models already in existence to prevent violence and harassment in the workplace;
- Violence and harassment must be understood as a gender equality and mainstreaming issue as well as a key safeguarding issue for initiatives working on the garment sector that are not predominantly focused on harassment – and responded to accordingly. Violence and harassment are also an important workplace health and safety issue;
- Underpinning all of this are the existing gender relations and inequalities in any given community or society - the workplace sits in a wider society where harassment against women and girls is the norm and therefore more work outside of and around factories, particularly work that engages with men and boys, may be needed.

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**Experts consulted:** Alex Eastham, Head of Women and Markets, CARE International UK

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