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for Women

Decent Work for Women Workers in the Ready-Made Garment Industry in Sub- Saharan Africa

Confidential

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Query Question: To synthesise evidence on ‘what works to ensure ‘decent work¹’ in the Ready-Made Garment Industry in developing countries, recognising that workers in this industry are predominately female. To understand what the key priority issues are in the sector and interventions which have a significant impact, and which offer potential for scale-up.

1. What are the key sector labour issues facing RMG female workers in sub-Saharan Africa?
2. What interventions in the RMG sector globally have achieved significant positive impact on improving workers conditions for factory workers particularly for women?¹
3. Which of these interventions have the greatest potential for scale-up in sub-Saharan Africa?

The RMG sector encompasses textiles, clothing, leather and footwear, including supply chains which support domestic, regional and international markets. For question 2, conclusions will be drawn from global learning in the RMG sector with some assessment of its relevance to the sub-Saharan Africa context. This query is restricted to workers in the formal economy. There should be emphasis on gender-specific interventions (such as VAWG or health services) as well as interventions that on the surface are seen as more gender neutral e.g. purchasing practises, unions or social audits (see footnote). A broad range of interventions should be considered.

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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AfCFTA	African Growth and Opportunity Act and the African Continental Free Trade Area
AMRF Society	Alternative Movement for Resources and Freedom Society
CCC	Clean Clothes Campaign
CLS	Core Labour Standards
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DFID	Department for International development (United Kingdom)
EPZ	Export Processing Zone
IDUL	Independent Democratic Union of Lesotho
IFTLGWU	Industrial Federation of Textile, Leather and Garment Workers Union (IFTLGWU)
ILO	International Labour Organisation
GVC	Global Value Chains
FWF	Fair Wear Foundation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RMG	Ready Made Garments
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TTWU	Tailors and Textile Workers Union
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment

Executive Summary

Economists see a potential unlocking of manufacturing potential and industrialisation in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) that could drive sustainable growth. However, if the growth is to be a genuine turning point in Africa's regional economic and social development its benefits must be inclusive. Women in Sub-Saharan Africa face entrenched gender inequalities. The ready-made-garment sector is often looked to in early industrialisation for mass low-skilled job creation including the potential for female employment at scale – it is currently reshaping the gender profile of work across many middle and low income countries. Achieving both the economic and social benefits of this growth requires better integration of the key objectives¹ of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Decent Work agenda with an explicit gender lens.

SSA currently accounts for less than 1% of global clothing exports. But the emerging apparel industry in SSA provides an opportunity to prevent a 'race to the bottom' and develop a sustainable industry that provides decent jobs and community-wide social and economic benefits.

This query explores priority issues and interventions that will contribute to ensuring decent work for women workers in the emerging ready made apparel sector in Sub-Saharan Africa. The report focuses predominately on rights at work and social dialogue pillars in line with ILO core labour standards and the principle of 'Decent Work'.

While the issues facing workers in garment manufacturing outside Africa have been well-documented, information about working conditions on the ground in SSA is less prolific. The research drew on literature and country case reports to identify the following key labour issues facing RMG female workers in sub-Saharan Africa.

- Poor remuneration in the face of rapidly rising living costs
- Limited job security, contract type and payment systems
- Low Levels of Unionization and hostility
- Lack of maternity rights
- Workplace harassment
- Lack of Institutional grievance Mechanisms
- Safety and Health at Work

Barrientos (2019) identifies two types of supplier strategy: the 'low road' of economic and social downgrading, based on low labour costs, and the 'high road' of economic and social upgrading, based on skill and productivity.

While SSA RMG is largely on the low road, the aspiration is clearly to change paths onto the high road. It is suggested this change of direction of travel might be supported by the following:

Recommendations for interventions on decent work at scale

Understanding the systematic pressures that drive the global apparel industry and deficits in Decent Work along with specific gendered constraints in SSA is critical. The global garment value chain, on which RMG in SSA producer countries will rely, has its supply and value spread across many countries and continents. Sourcing by brands is largely undertaken through global value chains in low or middle-income economies, using labour to produce low-price goods. (Barrientos, 2019).

¹ ILO (2013) Fact sheet on strategic objectives for decent work

- **A whole value chain approach is needed to address Decent Work at scale.** The Sub-Saharan RMG sector and its associated decent work deficits for women must be considered in the context of the whole global value chain. If the emerging SSA RMG is to avoid the ‘low road’ and address the decent work deficits that have been a feature of much of RMG in Asia, it is important to take a whole global value chain approach and address the systemic drivers identified below:
 - Workers in global supply chains are vulnerable and in precarious work
 - Suppliers often have rudimentary human resources systems
 - Lack of institutional grievance and trusted complaints procedures
 - Meeting tight production targets and deadlines
 - A culture of workplace harassment
 - Low levels of unionisation
 - Difficulties in monitoring abuses of workers’ rights
 - Limited or poorly implemented national governance frameworks on violence and harassment
 - Lack of a Living Wage
 - Poor safety and security in world of work: standards of accommodation and transport etc

- **Interventions with brands and retailers to champion change and support action** on rights and social dialogue are critical to demonstrating what can be achieved and driving change through the supply chain. Some, but not all, of global initiatives are present in Africa. There is an opportunity to consider supporting an expansion and improvement of initiatives that work at either worker, workplace or wider systemic level.

- **Voluntary initiatives that recognise the importance of freedom of association and collective bargaining are essential for achieving decent work.** Non-State actors are important in adhering, respecting and upholding the pillars of Decent Work. And employers, trade unions and civil society have important roles in promoting decent working conditions and engaging in social dialogue, multi-stakeholder initiatives and company led initiatives.

- **Governments also have a crucial role in protecting workers’ rights and pushing the Decent Work Agenda forward by effectively implementing legislation.** Better enforcement of legislation and standards in RMG requires governments, employers and trade unions to working together to implement solutions through social dialogue (Barrientos, 2019; Kabeer & Hossain, 2004).

- **Need for expanded knowledge on RMG in Sub Saharan Africa.** There is still relatively little documented on the issues facing women workers and the actual and potential impact of the sector on women workers in SSA. Investing more in knowledge and evidence can support more action at scale.

1. Introduction

The object of this report is to identify priority issues and interventions that will contribute to ensuring decent work for women workers, in line with the ILO core labour standards and its principle of 'Decent Work' in the emerging ready-made apparel sector in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Global value chains, on which an export-orientated Ready-Made Garments (RMG) relies, are reshaping the gender profile of work across many middle- and low-income countries. Important recent research powerfully demonstrates that gendered patterns of work in global value chains can 'both relegate women workers to poorly paid and unrecognised labour or lead to economic empowerment and enhanced worker rights' (Barrientos, 2019) .

However, economic growth through an expanding apparel sector in SE Asia, Turkey and South America has too often been accompanied by reports of labour abuses of the largely female garment production workers: for example, a history of regular fires and building safety concerns in Bangladesh were shockingly highlighted in the 2013 collapse of the Rana Plaza building in Dhaka which housed five garment factories, killing at least 1,132 people and injured more than 2,500.

This introduction sets out the definition and framework of Decent Work and the methodology for the review. Section 2 identifies key issues facing women workers, Section 3 identified interventions to improve decent work with some emerging evidence of impact and Section 4 provides recommendations on what has most potential to scale.

1.1. What is Decent Work?

A wide range of organisations - from the World Bank, International Labour Organisation, OECD, Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives such as ETI and Fair Wear Foundation, BSR, global unions - and development specialists argue that to realize the potential of economic development and job creation in SSA, there needs to be Decent Work principles in place that respect and implement the ILO Core Labour Standards (CLS), and a concerted effort to apply lessons from other regions to ensure that human rights and safe working conditions. In addition, women's empowerment must be a priority for brands, factories, and governments in SSA's emerging RMG. (BSR, 2017; Indusial, Mondial FNV, 2019)).

The ILO Decent Work Agenda promotes opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity (ILO, n.d.). To ensure that social progress goes hand in hand with economic progress, the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted the Declaration on Fundamental Rights and Principles at Work (ILO, 1998). These principles are "the starting point for a virtuous circle of effective social dialogue, better conditions for workers, rising enterprise productivity, increased consumer demand, more and better jobs and social protection, and for formalizing the informal economy" (ILO, 1998) and provide the foundation on which equitable and just societies can be built.

Decent work gives people opportunities for:

- Promoting work: work that is productive and delivers a fair income.
- Guaranteeing rights at work: so that workers have well-being and security in the workplace.
- Social protection: to enjoy working conditions that are safe, allow adequate free time and rest, take into account family and social values, provide for adequate compensation in case of lost or reduced income and permit access to adequate healthcare.
- Promoting social dialogue: freedom for people to express their concerns, organize in trade unions and participate in the decisions that affect their lives.

Equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men: including non-discrimination, equal pay for work of equal value, and maternity protection.

Box 1: Four strategic objectives at the heart of the [Decent Work agenda](#)

1. **Set and promote standards and fundamental principles and rights at work:** The ILO maintains and develops a system of international labour standards aimed at promoting opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity. The ILO's supervisory bodies provide guidance on the implementation of international labour standards through technical cooperation and a rights-based approach to development.
2. **Create greater opportunities for women and men to decent employment and income:** The ILO identifies policies that help to create and maintain decent work and income; policies that are formulated in a comprehensive Global Employment Agenda worked out by the ILO constituents – governments, employers and workers. The Agenda aims to place employment at the heart of economic and social policies. Through the creation of productive employment, it seeks to better the lives of people who are either unemployed or whose remuneration from work is inadequate to allow them and their families to escape
3. **Enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all:** The ILO actively promotes policies and provides tools and assistance aimed at improving and expanding the coverage of social protection to all groups in society. Social security involves access to healthcare and income security, particularly in cases of old age, unemployment, sickness, disability, child maintenance, work injury, maternity or loss of a main income earner. The Social Protection Floor is a global social policy concept that promotes nationally defined strategies for the provision of a minimum level of access to essential services and income security for all.
4. **Strengthen tripartism and social dialogue:** includes all types of negotiation, consultation and exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers on issues of common interest².

Decent work is based on the ILO principles and rights at work set out below³:

- Freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining
- The elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour
- The effective abolition of child labour
- The elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation

The ILO Governing Body has identified eight fundamental Conventions, considered to be fundamental principles and rights at work:

- Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)
- Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)

² ILO (2013) Fact sheet on strategic objectives for decent work

³ These principles are also covered by the ILO [Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work \(1998\)](#). As of 1st January 2019, there were 1,376 ratifications of these Conventions, representing 92 per cent of the possible number of ratifications. At that date, a further 121 ratifications were still required to meet the objective of universal ratification of all the fundamental Conventions.

- Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)
- Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)
- Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)
- Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)
- Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)

There are a range of other international and regional instruments that pertain to Decent Work.⁴ Of particular importance are the **UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights** (UN, 2011), unanimously endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011. These establish governments' duty to protect human rights and provide guidance on business' responsibility to respect human rights (due diligence) (see Box 3).

Box 3: UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights Implementing the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework

The Guidelines establish that the creation of jobs cannot be divorced from their quality, with both governments and businesses playing a role. The current need is to devise a systemic approach that ensures basic security and employment while remaining capable of adaptation to rapidly changing circumstances in a highly competitive global market (UN, 2011)

1.2. Methodology

This review was undertaken through desk-based research and online searches. Evidence concerning female garment workers across the SSA region proved to be limited. Primary sources highlighting women's workplace issues were drawn upon, including from trade union reports and campaigns.

The Report is structured around answering three main questions:

1. What are the key sector labour issues facing RMG female workers in sub-Saharan Africa?
2. What interventions in the RMG sector globally have achieved significant positive impact on improving workers conditions for factory workers particularly for women?⁵
3. Which of these interventions have the greatest potential for scale-up in sub-Saharan Africa?

⁴ The 'UN Handbook on addressing violence and harassment against women in the world of work' provides a useful overview of a number of international and regional instruments that relate to Decent Work and women's economic inclusion pp17-22 <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/addressing-violence-and-harassment-against-women-in-the-world-of-work-en.pdf?la=en&vs=4050>

⁵ This could include wages (Inc. minimum wages), sexual and reproductive health interventions, GBV, childcare, freedom of association, codes/standards, life skills, manager training, gender sensitive transport, brand purchasing practices and could include interventions from donors, governments and businesses.

Decent work is taken from the ILO's definition, which includes 4 core pillars - job creation, rights at work, social protection and social dialogue. The report focuses predominately on the rights at work (which is very comprehensive) and social dialogue pillars.

Key issues facing female RMG workers in SSA were identified through: 1) A literature review of issues facing female RMG workers in general, with most available research focussing on RMG in SE Asia. This draws on global literature from the ILO, Better Work, trade unions, research literature and the general issues for RMG female workers identified by BSR (2017). 2) A review of research and information from three key SSA garment producer countries – Ethiopia, Lesotho and Kenya. Research information on specific Decent Work issues for women workers in SSA is currently very limited and often anecdotal. There is a growing body of literature on RMG in Ethiopia, but less literature focussing on women workers in other SSA countries or on wider regional labour issues⁶. An understanding of workplace issues has therefore been drawn from global and national trade union sources as well as from private sector and civil society organisations working in the countries.

One of the only sources of country data was through the account of campaigns by trade unions of workplace issues – these have been researched mainly through the IndustriALL Global Union website, which includes reports from all its national affiliates in SSA. The IndustriALL Global Union represents more than 50 million working people in more than 140 countries, working across the supply chains in mining, energy and manufacturing sectors at the global level. National apparel sector trade unions in the SSA garment producing countries are affiliates of IndustriALL. Union research, press releases and campaign commentaries proved a rich source of information as to the actual issues that are affecting women at factory floor level.

Interventions considered include those at factory level alongside less direct systemic interventions targeted higher up the global value chain, such as at large brands or governments, and the impact of purchasing practices within the GVC.

Consideration of the potential for scale-up considers both a whole GVC approach, involving lead companies, suppliers and worker representatives as well as ways to encourage an increased body of research and literature on gender issues in SSA RMG. It also looks at the drivers for change: government interventions, civil society and trade union actions.

⁶ This is in contrast to the floriculture/agriculture sector in SSA, for which there has been more extensive research on GVC and production site labour issues – for example Christian, Evers & Barrientos; (2013). Women in Value Chains: Making a Difference

2. What are the key sector labour issues facing RMG female workers in SSA?

2.1. Sub-Saharan Africa's Ready-Made Garment (RMG) Industry

Sub-Saharan Africa's economic development presents an opportunity for quality economic growth. With more favourable trade policies, an increasing working age population, greater access to regional and foreign markets, and low labour costs, sub-Saharan Africa is becoming an increasingly attractive RMG sourcing destination. However, a 'change of gear' is required from steady but low-quality growth to a process of economic transformation. (McMillan, 2017).

SSA currently accounts for less than 1% of global clothing exports⁷. The majority of exports from Africa still come from North African countries such as Morocco and Tunisia (BSR 2017). Lesotho, Kenya and Mauritius are the top 3 exporting countries in Sub Saharan Africa. Though these countries export ratios were still below 20% in 2017, with no clear upward trajectory. Compared to nearly 70% in China and 30% in Vietnam (Shen Lu 2019). Other countries in East Africa are experiencing growth in RMGs (Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda) but from a relatively low base (BSR 2017). The export markets are very concentrated, with 97% of exports from Sub Saharan Africa going to just 3 markets: US 33.7%; EU 26.1% and regional 37.1%. Countries with the most promise for attracting FDI for manufacturing in general have been identified as: Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria and Zambia⁸.

Regional and international trade agreements are a significant factor for companies making decisions on where to locate production plants: developments such as the African Growth and Opportunity Act and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) are, according to the Africa Union, accelerating intra-African trade and boosting Africa's trading position in the global market (Megersa, 2019). (Megersa, K. (2019).

2.2. Women in Sub-Saharan Africa's Ready-Made Garment (RMG) Industry

Ensuring decent work for women is key to the growth in RMG being sustainable and inclusive (Bayat, 2019, SDGs). There is an urgent need to avoid deficits found in the apparel sector in SE Asia and ensure that the quality of the economic growth in SSA balances economic efficiency with decent work and gender equality (Bayat, 2019). This is an opportunity for the African continent to create a new model of RMG production that promotes security and skill development and does not rely on a cheap and disposable labour force.

Barrientos (2019) identifies two types of supplier strategy: the 'low road' of economic and social downgrading, based on low labour costs, and the 'high road' of economic and social upgrading, based on skill and productivity. While SSA RMG is largely on the low road, the aspiration is clearly to change paths onto the high road.

⁷ Shen Lu (2019) Challenges for SSA as an apparel sourcing hub –reports a decline from a 1.1% share in 2000 to a 0.6% share in 2019 drawing on UN Comtrade data 2019. BSR 2017 report on RMG in SSA reports on a below 1% share.

⁸ ODI (2016) Developing export-based manufacturing in sub-Saharan Africa. ODI <https://www.odi.org/publications/10395-developing-export-based-manufacturing-sub-saharan-africa>

The global RMG value chain is especially complex and made up of thousands of brands, retailers and suppliers around the world. In most apparel supply chains, clothing brands do not own product locations, and most product locations (suppliers) work for many different brands. Many supply chains have short production cycles and exert strong downward pressure on workers' pay and conditions because lead companies (brands) have demanding price targets and delivery times. (Morris & Pillinger, 2016; 2018; FWF, CCC, Barrientos, 2019)

The demographic profile of RMG workers in Global Value Chains (GVC) is over 80 per cent female, and significantly higher in some producer countries. Most are young women or older adolescent girls with low levels of formal education, frequently migrating from poor rural areas with little or no experience of formal work and limited or no support networks in their work locations far from home.

Across the RMG industry women tend to be employed in unskilled, low-value occupations. These include sewing machine operators and helpers in the production process. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to be employed in higher-wage jobs and in leadership positions. Furthermore, because of cultural and gender norms, women workers are often subjected to discrimination and sexual harassment during recruitment and in the workplace, and they are frequently discriminated against when it comes to their wages, conditions of work, benefits (including maternity protection and threat of dismissal upon pregnancy status) and promotion (Better Work, 2018) (see Box 5).

2.3. What are the key Decent Work issues for RMG in SSA

While the issues facing workers in garment manufacturing outside Africa have been well-documented, information about working conditions on the ground in SSA is less prolific (BSR, 2017). Research and case studies are few, to provide a systematic picture of issues facing women workers in SSA, the researchers drew on case reports highlighting deficiencies in Decent Work for women in RMG in Africa from Global Union IndustriALL, to which all SSA national garment unions are affiliated, to identify key sector labour issues facing RMG female workers in sub-Saharan Africa⁹.

The review of literature and reports informed the identification of the following list of Key Decent Work issues facing women in Sub-Sahara Africa RMG. These are elaborated on below with examples from Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho:

- Poor remuneration in the face of rapidly rising living costs
- Limited job security, contract type and payment systems
- Low Levels of Unionization and hostility
- Lack of maternity rights
- Workplace harassment
- Lack of Institutional grievance Mechanisms
- Safety and Health at Work

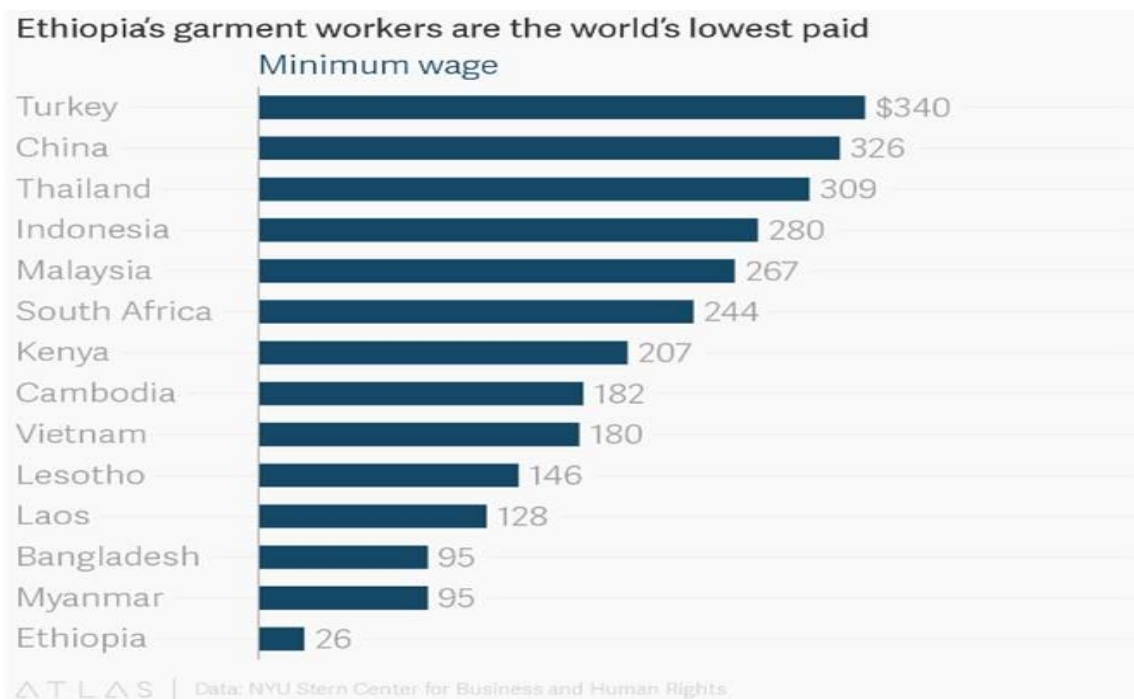
⁹ The union resources give a unique picture of workers' experience, in particular the obstacles to freedom of association and social dialogue. In some cases, an issue reported as a deficit has been resolved through action and, for the sake of continuity, this is included in the examples

a) Poor remuneration in the face of rapidly rising living costs

Garment workers tend to be poorly paid across continents, often lower than a national minimum wage, which is in itself inadequate for basic living costs. Emerging RMG sector in SSA is no exception (WRC, 2018; ASN Bank and FWF, 2018).

Ethiopia has the lowest pay across the global garment supply chain, while Lesotho stands at fifth from the bottom and Kenya is the eighth lowest (NYU Stern, 2019). In fact, Ethiopia has the lowest wage ever documented in the garment industry (WRC, 2018). Anecdotal information indicates that the typical worker's wage barely covers expenses for food, transportation to and from the factory, and housing. In the months after Hawassa's opening, living expenses rose, as the influx of workers caused severe inflation in the region surrounding the park. Prices skyrocketed for basics like lentils and the staple grain, teff. The cost of housing within a few kilometres of the park similarly increased—from 400 or 500 birr (\$14 or \$17) a month for a single bare room to as much as 1,500 birr (more than \$52). (BSR HERproject, 2018; Stern Center for Business and Human Rights, 2019). Ethiopia doesn't have a minimum wage and high unemployment gives young women workers few employment options.

"I only get 850 Ethiopian birr (about 38 euro) per month and struggle to cover all my expenses," Tigist Teshome, worker. (Deutsche Welle, 2015)



The Independent Democratic Union of **Lesotho** (IDUL), reported that wages didn't cover living expenses. IndustriALL, reports a trained machinist was earning a monthly minimum wage of US\$104, while a general worker received US\$77. 'Some couldn't even afford transport costs to go to work and walked long distances to factories. Exhausted on arrival, they were exposed to occupational injuries. Women workers are the most affected'. Young women workers supplemented the poor incomes with informal work during weekends.

b) Limited job security, contract type and payment systems

Vulnerability and precarious work cut across all four Decent Work Pillars including Freedom of Association, employment creation, social protection, and social dialogue. In interviews in **Tanzania** and **Kenya**, women expressed concerns about the fact that most did not have permanent, long-term contracts with their employers (BSR, 2017). The lack of a permanent contract or failure to respect the contract - e.g. excessive working hours or premium payment for overtime – leads to workers’ increased vulnerability and lack of agency.

c) Low Levels of Unionization and hostility

Social dialogue and freedom of association are fundamental underpinnings of Decent Work. Most development or economic analysis of RMG in SSA makes little reference to trade unions. Unions are the essential prerequisite for ensuring Freedom of Association, the fundamental principle underpinning the ILO Decent Work Agenda.

Unions in Sub Saharan Africa, while sometimes weak, often have an important role in civil society as social partners at both national and sectoral levels. Though workers often face hostility in the global garment sector and repercussions if contacting unions. Added to this, the fast turn-over of workers means it is challenging to organize factory workers (ITUC, 2015, Morris & Pillinger, 2016, 2018). Despite this, unions, especially where collective bargaining is recognised, have successfully negotiated agreements on wages, safety and health, sexual harassment policy and complaints procedures that improve the quality of work for workers.

In **Ethiopia** unions were stopped from organising at Hawassa despite a legal framework that provides for freedom of association. Hostility to unions has hindered workers from voicing their grievances heard and engaging constructive social dialogue – leading to ‘wildcat’ strikes at Hawassa in March 2019 turnover levels at the park at around 100% per year (NYU Stern Centre, 2019; Industriall, 2019).

The Decent Work Agenda is embedded in **Kenya’s** national constitution and the fundamental principles and rights at work are guaranteed by the constitution, including the rights associated with freedom of association (ILO, 2015). But there are reports of companies denying workers the right to join the union of their choice and victimising workers that voluntarily join¹⁰ (Industriall Union, 2015)

In Lesotho a company refused a union access to a factory following a campaign to stop gender-based violence¹¹.

The ITUC 2019 Index looks to expose the systematic attempts to undermine freedom and democracy at the workplace. Here are the SSA countries that show up on the 2019 ranking.

Rating 3 (Regular violations of rights)

Burkina Faso	Mozambique
Ghana	Rwanda
Lesotho	

Rating 4 (Systematic violations of rights)

Angola	Ethiopia
Botswana	Kenya
Cameroon	Nigeria
Congo	Tanzania
Djibouti	Zambia

Rating 5 (No guarantee of rights)

Eritrea	Zimbabwe
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¹⁰ Workers at Ashton Apparel EPZ Ltd in Mombasa reported that the company had been denying workers their constitutional rights to join the union of their choice and victimizing employees who had voluntarily joined the union.

¹¹ **The Independent Democratic Union of Lesotho (IDUL) has been engaged in a campaign to stop long-running gender-based violence at Nien Hsing Textile company Chinese owned factories.** The company refused the union access to the factory in retaliation for being asked about the violations when IDUL wanted to meet workers. (Industriall Union, 2019)

d) Maternity Rights

Maternity rights are critical to women's empowerment and a major issue across RMG in all continents (FWF, 2018, Morris & Pillinger, 2016 p38 and p 61). With reports of active hostility of employers to pregnant workers and young women often having to return home to rural areas.

In Kenya garment workers were fired for requesting maternity leave, and those joining unions faced dismissal (Tailors and Textile Workers Union)

The Better Work's programme in Lesotho conducted focus group discussions with workers from 17 factories and found:

- Awareness regarding the rights and needs of pregnant workers remains low.
- In a number of factories, workers still get paid only two weeks during their maternity leave despite an amended law that mandates six weeks of paid leave.
- Pregnant workers are not always accommodated at their jobs with lighter workloads.
- Maternity benefits are not always part of the induction training and workers do not receive adequate explanation of their benefits.
- Pregnant workers are often not aware of the safety and health risks at their workplace that could harm their unborn child.
- Many workers report for duty one month after giving birth worried about losing income if they stay at home with their babies.
- Factory improvements, such as a subsidized nursery on site, would help reduce the financial burden for working mothers of newborns.

e) Workplace harassment

Anecdotal and some systematic evidence indicates that workplace violence and harassment is widespread. A baseline study in 10 factories at **Hawassa Industrial Park in Ethiopia** showed that despite the 10 factories having their 'no tolerance to sexual harassment' policy in a visible place, over 43 per cent of women workers responded that there were no policies in place to prevent sexual harassment. Four out of ten women workers said that they expected sexual harassment (BSR, 2018). In one Ethiopian factory, nearly 21 percent of women and 29 percent of men agreed that sometimes women deserve to be beaten. In the same factory, over 47 percent of women respondents reported that suggestive or offensive comments from supervisors to workers are a normal occurrence.

A scoping study of **Ethiopia's** garment industry from 2016 noted that workers strongly emphasized the linguistic and cultural gap between foreign nationals in manager level positions and the newly recruited workforce leading to tension in the workplace (BSR, 2016). The high volume and aggressive delivery of management instructions injects tension into the relationship. Turnover increased because of this – we know from RMG in SE Asia that workers tend to leave a factory rather risk reputational damage of complaining about sexual misconduct on the part of managers (Morris & Pillinger, 2018).

The report by US based Workers Rights Consortium (WRC) in **Lesotho**. The report revealed that managers and supervisors at Nien Hsing forced workers into sexual relationships by "conditioning the maintenance of employment contracts/or provision of more favourable working conditions on a female worker's willingness to engage in such a relationship."

f) Lack of Institutional grievance Mechanisms

For workers' voice to be heard, it is essential to ensure that they have access to trusted grievance procedures that allow workers to make complaints of unfair treatment or violations of their rights

without fear of victimisation. Remedial plans need to be part of the grievance procedures. Trusted procedures appear to be crucial: where they exist FWF found that the rate of complaint may increase initially but as the procedure proves to be effective, the level of formal complaints reduce (FWF, 2018, 2019).

In a 2018 baseline report from, **Hawassa**, nearly 55 percent of women reported that they would not use the grievance mechanism if they were faced with an issue in the workplace. Furthermore, currently the Hawassa IP management currently does not hold a park-wide system to take and process workers' complaints. It is up to the discretion of individual factories to take and deal with workers' complaints and claims. (BSR, 2018).

g) Safety and Health at Work

Health and Safety at work is a labour issue that cuts across Decent Work. As Rana Plaza tragedy and the recent tragedy in Bangladesh¹² demonstrate, the garment sector has a poor record in occupational safety and health. Fair Wear Foundation (2013, 2018) identified a number of safety and health risks, including inadequate toilets or limits on use of toilets and toilet breaks, which can have consequences for women's reproductive and general health, especially for menstruating and pregnant women. Lack of access to hygienic toilets has been linked to many health issues in the workplace. (See Box 9).

Box 9: Factories working conditions

Clean Clothes Campaign reported in their 2002 report that of 23 factories visited in Southern Africa, almost half mentioned limited access to toilets. One factory had toilets open only at certain times during the day—and had only one toilet pass per line of 45 workers; another did not allow visits to the toilets at the end of the working day; another had one toilet for women workers, one for men workers and one for management—for a total of 920 workers; yet another recorded how often the women went to the toilets and how long they stayed (Clean Clothes, 2005).

Across all of the countries, a big concern among workers was safe and affordable transport to and from work. Infrastructure is a persistent challenge in many parts of SSA and poses significant safety and logistics challenges for workers, particularly women. Late shifts and overtime work until well after dark are common and leave workers more vulnerable to harassment and crime. In many cases, there are no affordable alternatives to public transportation. This also contributes to absenteeism and turnover, especially for women with young children and mothers who may be unwilling to make the trip to a factory for employment if they must bring their children on public transportation or roads are poorly maintained. In **Ethiopia** many workers take buses to get to work and home again and there are problems with armed thieves who stop buses to steal cell phones and cash. Workers who work late or live long distances from the industrial park routinely have to walk the last few miles beyond their bus stop. Some companies have cancelled their night shift in response.

RMG workers are frequently affected by diseases due to unhygienic working conditions and dust from raw materials, leading to coughs, fevers, jaundice, kidney failure, musculoskeletal problems, respiratory problems (Kabir et al. 2019). Many RMG workers do not get full payment when on sick leave - concerns about failing health lead to stress and mental health issues, as well as debt. The industry's female workforce, including internal migrants, have recorded low levels of awareness on sexual and reproductive health, rights and services that makes the workforce vulnerable to unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortion and HIV/AIDS infection¹³. Women workers often face multiple barriers

¹² <https://www.newsclick.in/Ten-Workers-Engulfed-Bangladesh-Factory-Fires>

¹³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/744571/WOW-Helpdesk-Query-5-SRHR-interventions-in-the-workplace-and-WEE.pdf

to accessing SRHR services including gender and cultural norms, time restraints; transport, language barriers; high cost of services; and bias or discrimination (Marin, 2013).

2.4. The systematic drivers of the Decent Work Deficit in RMG Global Value Chains

Barrientos points to three key issues that constitute the ‘mantra of global retail value chains’: cost, quality and speed of delivery (Barrientos, 2019). These, in turn, produce impact on the organization of RMG work, and ultimately workers’ lives. The coordination of end-to-end Just in Time delivery has important implications for the types of paid work undertaken by women and men at every tier of retail value chains, including global sourcing (Barrientos, 2019). On top of this women workers experience additional gender discrimination including the lack of implemented rights and social protection, violence and harassment in the home, community, workplace and market.

Understanding the root causes of the issues around decent work faced by women workers across SSA is essential. While there are frequent reports in the Western media of the poor treatment of female garment workers around the globe – including excessive hours, sexual harassment, poverty wages, lack of access to toilet and fires and poor building safety - too often there is little consideration of *why* this happens, how it can be prevented and what in the nature of GVC’s is contributing to the problems. This report argues that if the emerging SSA RMG is to avoid the ‘low road’ and address the decent work deficits that have been a feature of much of RMG in Asia, it is important to take a **whole global value chain approach and address the systemic drivers.**

The following section considers the key drivers of Decent Work deficits, a number of which are a result of brand or buyer practice that have adverse impacts on the supplier and their workers.

Adapted from Morris & Pillinger, 2016 and Morris and Rickard, 2019)

a) Workers in global supply chains are vulnerable and in precarious work

Precarious working arrangements – where there is no employment contract or the contract is temporary or insecure - leaves women vulnerable to being pressured to work unpaid overtime, being refused rights such as pregnancy or maternity entitlement, 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.

b) Suppliers often have rudimentary human resources systems

HR policies and procedures to deal with complaints working time, maternity and women’s health and safety, pay irregularities are often lacking. 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. Policies to tackle violence and harassment are a relatively new topic for suppliers, who often do not have appropriate confidential policies in place (Morris, Pillinger, 2016). Existing HR 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 low levels of awareness of the existence of such policies or knowledge of contents of policies (Better Work, 2014).

c) Lack of institutional grievance and trusted complaints procedures

The lack of or nature of internal complaints and grievance mechanisms can drive abuse of rights such as an absence of pregnancy and maternity protection, victimisation (for being pregnant, or a worker's refusal to comply with a demand for a 'favour' or to work additional overtime). A lack of internal confidential complaints and grievance mechanisms 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; FWF, 2019). 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). The Fair Wear Foundation found lower levels of violence and harassment in factories that have policies and procedures on violence and harassment, when workers know of them and trusted them (FWF, 2019, unpublished).

d) Meeting tight production targets and deadlines

Women workers may be at greater risk of denial of rights and harassment, where tight production deadlines require workers to carry out long hours and overtime (Better Work, 2013; Morris, Pillinger, 2018; FWF, 2019). Practices like short order placement, lack of clarity and short lead times are felt on the production line through stress and overtime (sometimes unpaid) and are a key trigger of sexual harassment (Early, 2017). Unrealistic productivity demands place stress on managers, 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).

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). 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; FWF 2019). 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.

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. If these incentives are very demanding or if production targets are difficult to achieve, this can contribute to a culture of sexual harassment or victimisation of workers (BIF, 2019). Furthermore, where the incentives of workers and supervisors are not aligned, this can contribute to harassment (Better Work, 2013).

Additionally the contract type and payment system a worker is subject to can influence harassment through insecure contracts that limit a worker's ability to speak out about rights abuse or workplace 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.

e) 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, Klinger, 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.

f) 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, IndustriALL, 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 argues that collective bargaining is the most important tool for preventing and combating low pay, rights abuse and 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).

g) Difficulties in monitoring abuses of workers' right

Common approaches to monitoring potential abuses of workers' rights do not sufficiently integrate gender and often mask the scale of the problem. Supplier codes of conduct are often gender neutral and ineffective in addressing the issues faced by women workers (Barraja, 2018). Social audits, used by most companies to verify that suppliers are upholding the company's minimum requirements mostly only pay minimal attention to gender issues when verify compliance with such codes (Barraja, 2018). Given that social auditing is often the basis for remediation plans and factory improvements, the absence of gender and women's considerations, 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, 2019).

h) Limited or poorly implemented national governance frameworks on violence and harassment

In June 2019 the International Labour Organisation agreed the 'Violence and Harassment Convention' (No 190), backed by recommendation on stakeholders' action. This provides the first internationally agreed definition of violence and harassment in the world of work. Garment producing countries have an important role to play in implementing the recommendations through effective legislation and its implementation.

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). 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, TUC 2012). Beyond the legal

framework, local officials cited institutional constraints like the status of factory owners as limiting their ability to enforce regulations (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).

i) Lack of a Living Wage

Garment workers are predominantly women who are completely reliant on wages to meet their family's needs. A living wage is defined as a wage that is sufficient to meet the basic needs of the employee and his or her family (e.g. food, clothing, housing and other daily expenses, for example for school and medical assistance). According to a Fair Wear Foundation and the ASN Bank report 'most workers in the clothing industry earn the minimum wage or even less. Companies comply with the law, but employees cannot make ends meet. Often the minimum wage in these countries is only 20 or 25 per cent of the living wage. In the majority of countries where our clothing is made, the minimum wage is not a living wage¹⁴.'

j) Poor safety and security in world of work: standards of accommodation and transport etc

Poor standards and security risks around accommodation and transport are common. Research by the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace identified four important indicators should be taken into account when studying the Cambodian garment workers' standard of living: food, housing, utilities and health (Chamsamphors 2009). (The standard of living of garment workers in Cambodia: its determinants and workers' perception <https://www.eldis.org/document/A71846>)

¹⁴ (<https://www.fairwear.org/stories/in-depth-asn-bank-fair-wear-mondiaal-fnv-on-living-wages>)

3. What interventions in the RMG sector have achieved improved working conditions for women?

This section of the review identifies a range of interventions by **significant stakeholders**. The Better Work programme, an international partnership between the ILO and IFC, has been a major actor at national level in eight garment producing countries. Better Work has developed a strong focus on gender, especially sexual harassment and social dialogue.

Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives, such as Ethical Trade Initiative and Fair Wear Foundation, are important initiatives because they bring together the essential elements for social dialogue in producer countries – government, employer and unions. Through its strong membership link with brands and workers, Fair Wear and Dutch union confederations have successfully progressed factory based interventions on the Living Wage, violence and harassment and social dialogue. Business and CSR initiatives use their influence with both lead companies and employers to promote research and certification strategies. Importantly brands themselves have developed strategies to improve pay and conditions at factory level – for example changes in Deuter outdoor wear led to major reductions in excessive working time in its Vietnam factory. International Framework Agreements between global brands and IndustriALL is one way in which the complexities of global value chains can begin to be dealt with and takes a whole value chain approach. ACT (Action, Collaboration and Transformation) is growing in influence with governments (e.g. UK) and brands as a means to increase garment workers’ pay to the Living Wage and reduce the potential of factories undercutting each other. Advocacy, research and campaign by CSOs is effective in challenging decent work deficits leading to sustainable supply chain reorganisation (e.g. Nike case study, Barrientos, 2019)

The review has categorised the types of interventions into the categories below. Very little evidence was identified, but the table provides a **very tentative rating of achievements and potential to scale** (promising, emerging promise, results not yet available) based on impact findings and scale so far.

1. Public Governance – ILO standards, legislation both in the destination market and origin countries (such as France and Germany frameworks).
2. International frameworks – OECD, World Bank, ILO and IFC Better Work initiative
3. Social Dialogue partners – global and national employer/ business organisations and trade unions
4. Private Governance - CSR, the commercial model targeted company-led interventions, social audits, the business model.
5. Multi stakeholder Initiatives (Government, Business and Unions partnerships) such as Ethical Trade Initiative and Fair Wear Foundation;
6. Advocacy – international and domestic.

Name of project Stakeholder/ partnership type	Geography	Description of intervention	Impact area	Achievements and potential for scale
3.1. Public Governance				
ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and Recommendation (No. 206)	Global	<p>Established in June 2019, the Convention (C19) and its accompanying Recommendation is an important new international labour standard that has particular relevance for the global apparel industry, with its high incident of sexual harassment and abuse.</p> <p>The ILO Recommendation provides useful guidance for governments, employers and worker organisations.</p>	Addressing violence and harassment in work	Results not yet available
France and Germany Legislative Frameworks “Devoir de vigilance des entreprises donneuses d'ordre”		<p>France: A new French law “Devoir de vigilance des entreprises donneuses d'ordre” makes it compulsory for large French companies to: <i>“Establish and implement a diligence plan which should state the measures taken to identify and prevent the occurrence of human rights and environmental risks resulting from their activities, the activities of companies they control and the activities of sub-contractors and suppliers on whom they have a significant influence.”</i> Essentially, the law builds on standard due diligence requirements as stated in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.</p> <p>There is a strong resemblance with the UK Modern Slavery Act adopted in 2015 in the UK, in that the core principle of due diligence is similar. But there are also some key differences – see link. https://www.ethicaltrade.org/blog/france-adopts-new-corporate-duty-care-law</p>	Supply chain transparency	Results not yet available France: A recent Amnesty International report found: “Unfortunately, we find that the objectives of the law are only very partially taken into account. The first plans are very heterogeneous, indicating that, faced with this new exercise, each company has applied this law with different stringency levels, with the majority of the plans still focusing on the risks for the companies rather than those for thirds parties or the environment” https://www.amidelaterre.org/IMG/pdf/2019_collective_report_-_duty_of_vigilance_year_1.pdf

<p>German Partnership for Sustainable Textiles</p>		<p>Germany: The Partnership for Sustainable Textiles is a multi-stakeholder initiative in Germany with members from the fields of business, politics and the civil society. The member companies of the partnership cover around half of the German textile market. The Textile Partnership was initiated by the German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development and aims at improving the social and environmental conditions in the global textile production. ACT and the textiles partnership will cooperate in particular in terms of sharing the experience and joint approach of ACT members in undertaking a self-assessment of their purchasing practices with members of the Textiles partnership as well as country level implementation work of ACT in textile producing countries.</p> <p>The strategic cooperation will be guided by the joint understanding that while there is no agreed benchmark to determine a living wage, remuneration of many worker in the garment and textile industry is considerably below any meaningful living wage criteria. ACT and the Textiles Partnership recognize that addressing this problem requires a systematic approach that facilitates progress towards a living wage through continuous and substantial real wage growth exceeding the level of inflation plus productivity growth.</p>	<p>National Textile Partnership</p>	<p>The member companies of the German partnership cover around half of the German textile market. No full evaluation but collaboration is viewed as an important step change: “Until now, living wages have generally been the exception rather than the rule, especially in the textile industry. A large number of players must come together and facilitate systemic change for being successfully implemented everywhere. For this reason, our cooperation with the ACT initiative is such an important lever” says Jürgen Janssen, Head of the Secretariat of the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles.</p>
<p>3.2. International frameworks</p>				
<p>Better Work Better Work is a significant partnership between the UN’s International</p>	<p>Better Work operates in 8 countries, 1,700 factories and has contacted 2,400,</p>	<p>Better Work brings together governments, global brands, factory owners, and unions and workers to improve working conditions in the garment industry and make the sector more competitive.</p>	<p>Gender equality, reduce sexual harassment, and close the gender pay gap in the global garment industry and build social dialogue, including</p>	<p>Promising Better Work fosters individual factory improvements, creating a ripple effect across national industries and impacting millions of lives. Partnering with national government bodies who have the power to enact good laws</p>

<p>Labour Organization and the International Finance Corporation, a member of the World Bank Group.</p>	<p>000 garment workers.</p> <p>Haiti, Indonesia, Jordan, Nicaragua and Vietnam, formerly Lesotho. Currently setting up in Ethiopia</p>	<p>Targeted factory initiatives and strengthening policies and practices at the national, regional, and international levels. It works with Brands and Retailers: leading brands and retailers are key partners in realizing workers’ rights and gaining a competitive edge for firms; Governments: collaboration with national government bodies to help create effective labour regulation for a sustainable impact; Factory Owners: enterprises are a key partner in efforts to create better conditions for workers in ways that also support business; Workers & Unions: help for workers to realize their rights and enhance their ability to engage in productive dialogue with employers.</p> <p>Better Work also work closely with national labour law enforcement bodies through joint activities and support mechanisms such as training labour inspectorates, as well as international buyers.</p>	<p>around sexual harassment</p> <p>Tackling low pay, gender-based discrimination during recruitment processes and sexual harassment in the workplace and social dialogue</p> <p>Improvement in compliance standards with ILO core labour standards and national legislation.</p> <p>Improvement in human resource management practices & grievance mechanism.</p>	<p>that offer protection and rights. Collaboration has led to industry-wide improvements such as the amending of Cambodia’s law to ban goods made in prisons from being exported, the development of a roundtable for social dialogue to ensure productive relations between employers and workers in Haiti, a historic revision of the labour law in Vietnam mandating worker/management committees in enterprises and the setting up of a workers’ centre in Jordan to provide leisure, skills training, legal advice, and mental health counseling to workers.</p> <p>The program curbed excessive overtime and sexual harassment in a study in Jordan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Factories participating in the programme closed the gender pay gap from 40% to 17% between 1996- 2007 in Cambodia¹⁵ -Reducing Workplace Violence: a 2018 impact assessment found supervisors more likely to listen to workers’ concerns regularly if they had participated in the BW program. (BW 2018) -Improvements in social dialogue by creating a management and worker committees where both cohorts regularly engage in constructive conversations (BetterWork, 2019). <p>An impact assessment, conducted by Tufts University, found that, overall, factories engaged in the Better Work programme saw a reduction in gender discrimination. Across all countries covered by the assessment, this included a fall in the gender pay gap, reduced sexual harassment and increased women’s</p>
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¹⁵ Better Factories Cambodia at a glance https://betterwork.org/dev/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Better-Factories-Cambodia-at-a-Glance_Web.pdf

				access to parental care. It also found that improvements for workers were associated with a rise in factory productivity, profitability, supply chain position and order sizes (ILO/IFC 2016). Indicating that going beyond a narrow compliance approach and building capacity within factories can have important implications in terms of addressing embedded gender discrimination, as well as enhancing business performance
<p>Social Dialogue and Industrial Relations project (SDIR)</p> <p>ILO Funded by Sweden and Denmark</p> <p>Oct 2015 – Dec 2020</p>	Bangladesh	<p>The SDIR Project works to enhance workplace rights and industrial relations in the Bangladesh RMG sector primarily by facilitating improved dialogue between employers and workers, particularly at workplace level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Workplace cooperation training (and workplace cooperation plans) in 287 targeted non-unionised factories -collective bargaining training in 123 targeted unionised factories -grievance handling training (including procedures) in all 410 targeted factories 	<p>Sustainable improvement in social dialogue, workplace cooperation and grievance handling.</p> <p>-Sustainable and effective mechanisms for conciliation and arbitration are established.</p> <p>-Enhanced capacities of employers and workers organizations to dialogue and to prevent and resolve disputes.</p>	Results not yet available
3.3. Social Dialogue partners				
<p>IndustriALL global union</p> <p>International Global Framework</p>	Global	The global framework agreement (GFA) between IndustriALL Global Union and the large fashion retailer, Inditex, was the first GFA to be agreed in the garment sector. The GFA was originally signed in 2007 and renewed in 2014, addresses decent work and observance	The purpose of GFAs is to stimulate global social dialogue between a multinational company	Emerging promise ILO published research found that while GFA did not necessarily always translate into changed workplace practice, IFA's nevertheless offer important potential to influence management- worker relations, the

<p>Agreements (GFAs) between multinational enterprises and Global Union Federations (GUFs)</p>		<p>of international labour standards, and covers over a million workers in over 6,000 supplier factories worldwide.</p> <p>GFA between H&M Hennes & Mauritz GBC AB and IndustriALL Global Union and Industriefacket Metall: representing 50 million workers, and one of the world's leading garment retailers H&M have together with the Swedish trade union IF Metall signed a Global Framework Agreement, protecting the interests of 1.6 million garment workers. The innovative global framework agreement (GFA) marks a new level of commitment to fundamental rights of workers across H&M's supply chain. The 1.6 million garment workers that are protected in the agreement are employed at around 1,900 factories run by the manufacturers where H&M buys their products. The GFA covers compliance and implementation of international labour standards of the suppliers of H&M Hennes & Mauritz GBC AB.</p> <p>The terms of the global framework agreement apply to direct suppliers, contractors and sub-contractors including homeworkers. No subcontracting is allowed without the prior written consent of Inditex. Suppliers who subcontract will be responsible for subcontractor compliance. The GFA puts in place mechanisms to monitor and review compliance and aims to collaborate on training programmes for management and workers. The agreement provides for the payment of a living wage for a standard workweek, limitations on working hours, safe and healthy workplaces, regular employment and environmental protection.</p>	<p>and the representatives of workers.</p> <p>They aim to promote compliance with ILO labour standards throughout complex supply chains.</p>	<p>incorporation of labour standards and the recognition of the role of trade unions. (Shaping Global Industrial Relations: The Impact of International Framework Agreement, K. Papadakis, 2011)</p>
<p>CEO Agenda 2019 (social dialogue)</p>	<p>Global</p>	<p>Agreement around eight sustainability priorities for the future of the fashion industry at Davos.</p>	<p>The CEO Agenda 2019 seeks to drive progress through addressing two important priorities</p>	<p>Results not yet available</p>

and private governance)			(relevant to decent work): -Supply chain traceability -Respectful and secure work environments	(note this is on a smaller scale than initiative ACT or GFA)
Private sector				
3.4. Private Governance				
HERrespect Business for Social Responsibility (BSR)	Bangladesh And now in Ethiopia and Kenya	It develops new approaches to workplaces transformation, recognising gender equality as a business priority. The programme carries out training to raise awareness about gender and violence, reflect on social norms, and build skills to prevent and address cases of sexual harassment and domestic violence. HERproject conducted a scoping study to provide a snapshot of the buyers, factories, and other stakeholders active in the industry and key trends that influence their operations in Ethiopia.	HERrespect promotes positive gender relations through supporting workplace and social norms change interventions in the garment sector.	Emerging promise HERrespect has had significant impact on making women and men more aware of appropriate behaviour and what constitutes sexual harassment. (BSR, 2017)
Deuter Outdoor Wear – an example of lead company engagement with supplier factory Working with FWF and supplier factories	Vietnam	Deuter, a leading German backpack company, revamped its contracts in 2015 with its Vietnamese factories after learning that workers were working excessively long hours. The subsequent radical whole supply chain reorganisation included adapting the design, purchasing and ordering practice timetables, building a new factory in Vietnam and other changes throughout the supply chain to ensure that workers were not required to work unacceptably long hours at peak times <i>“The outdoor industry is seasonal, with sharp peaks and troughs in demand. This has the potential to result in regular production spikes for suppliers that can drive overtime and undue pressure to deliver on</i>	Some outdoor wear brands have tackled the complex issue of reducing seasonal peaks and troughs in production as a way to reduce excessively long hours during peak season.	Promising Since these supply chain changes there has been a more even production pattern throughout the year, with worker’ hours reduced to levels that meet strict standards set by MSI Fair Wear, of which the company is a member. Deuter believes that its long and stable relationship with its supplier and the regular and secure working hours and pay is just one of the reasons ‘why workers stay working in our factories for much longer than is usual in the Vietnam garment industry’ FWF, 2016 and Deuter website.

		<p><i>time. We know that this can lead to excessively long hours, refusal of leave, or abusive behaviour by supervisors under pressure to meet their targets. At EOG we work with brands and suppliers to move away from a model of seasonal peaks to planning production for a steady and predictable flow of orders. Many outdoor brands have established long term, solid relationships with their suppliers, together finding innovative ways to avoid undue production pressures for factories and the workers.” Mark Held, President European Outdoor Group</i></p>		
Levi Strauss & Co.		<p>Developing new requirements for key suppliers and contract factories to help makes employees lives better – aligned to the SDGs. This will include (inter alia): eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, improving maternal and child health, combating HIV/AIDs, and other diseases, promoting gender equality and empowering women, and ensuring environmental sustainability.</p> <p>It is not clear from available information on funding whether LS&Co suppliers will be provided with additional funding to implement these brand requirements, including for time lost during worker training</p>	<p>Working to move beyond a compliance model of “do no harm”” to supporting factory – based programs that will help empower workers to improve their lives.</p>	<p>Results not yet available</p>
<p>3.5. Multi stakeholder Initiatives</p>				
ETI	South India	A series of workshops with unions and workers	<p>Support raising overall working standards and providing space for women workers to access their rights and protections in factories</p>	<p>Emerging promise</p> <p>Concluded that trade union education is an important factor, not only for knowing and understanding basic workplace rights, but also for developing workers’ confidence to raise issues in effective ways. This is supported</p>

				through elected committees and sector networks.
<p>Fair Wear Foundation (FWF)</p> <p>European clothing and outdoor wear brands, working closely with supply chain actors, governments, business associations, trade unions and NGOs to tackle factors in the garment supply chain.</p>	<p>India (Tirupur and Bangalore) and Bangladesh (Dhaka)</p>	<p>The FWF programme operated at three strategic levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -at factory level, training of management, supervisors and workers for the establishment and implementation of anti-harassment committees required by legislation in India and a Bangladeshi High Court; participative research in Vietnam on consequences for women of production pressures; -at community level, workers’ helplines and support from local workers’ organizations and NGOs; and -at international level, to gain leverage of FWF member brands with their supplier factories; 	<p>Its Strategic Partnership has three pillars: Living Wages; Violence and Harassment; Social dialogue.</p> <p>Establishing effective systems to address and prevent violence and harassment against women through whole supply chain interventions.</p>	<p>Emerging promise</p> <p>FWF found that working to end sexual harassment was a useful starting point for employers and unions to develop social dialogue, particularly in factories with no history of management-worker negotiation.</p> <p>“Working conditions for women have changed dramatically... after the Anti-Harassment awareness training, I am able to analyse sexual harassment of many kinds...For the sake of the industry, we should work together to prevent sexual harassment in all workplaces, so that more women join at work”, Ms Morsheda, President of factory Anti-Harassment Committee in India (UN Women, 2015)</p>
<p>The Action, Collaboration, Transformation (ACT) initiative includes international brands, manufacturers, and trade unions</p>		<p>Member brands agreed to apply due diligence to ensure that their purchasing practices facilitate the payment of a living wage as set out in the ACT Memorandum of Understanding. It is the first time in the history of the global garment and footwear sector that international brands have collectively agreed to be held accountable by a Global Union Federation for changing their purchasing practices. Based on comprehensive consultations, ACT has adopted global commitments of all member brands to change their purchasing practices in five areas that have been identified as essential for providing suppliers with the economic space to pay for negotiated wage increases and improvement of working conditions.</p>	<p>Aims to improve wages by establishing collective bargaining in key garment and textile sourcing countries, supported by world-class manufacturing standards and responsible purchasing practices (BSR, 2017).</p>	<p>Emerging promise</p> <p>Governments around the world are increasingly recognising that ACT is the initiative most likely to deliver living wages to garment workers. A 2019 Parliamentary enquiry into UK’s fashion industry highlighted ACT as a positive initiative towards living wages in the textile and garment industry. The ACT initiative with global brands aims to deliver sustainable change by linking the conditions under which brands buy their products to wages negotiated through industry-wide collective agreements.</p>

<p>Strategic Partnership (SP) for Garment Supply Chain Transformation</p> <p>Engaging heavily with trade unions, lead companies and the government as well as CSOs,</p> <p>Ethiopia was selected to be part of the Dutch Foreign Ministry Strategic Partnership (FNV, 2019), the aim of which is to:</p>	<p>Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Ethiopia</p>	<p>The Strategic Partnership (SP) with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the two main Dutch Trade Unions FNV and CNV, aims to achieve decent working conditions for all garment workers, by redesigning the industry.</p> <p>The partnership brings together the expertise of trade unions, NGOs, and ethical brands and factories that address three key labour issues: Living wage; gender-based violence and social dialogue.</p> <p>New ideas are tested to provide evidence to brands, factories, trade unions, governments and civil society organisations of how a fairer garment industry could benefit business and workers.</p> <p>-Strategy with brands and factories on implementing Living Wage and increasing pay levels for production workers.</p> <p>- Support for implementation of Employer/union joint Codes of Conduct on Sexual Harassment in Indonesia and Vietnam</p> <p>-Work with the Confederation of Ethiopian Unions to support tailor made interventions in each factory to help alleviate the existing challenges of female factory workers, notably by training to members to recruit new (female) members, sector workplace issues and negotiating collective agreements.</p> <p>-Implement safety standards and providing safety materials, food and sanitary items (with a special focus on female sanitary items) and related facilities; organise periodic and gender sensitive trainings for factory workers</p>	<p>The three goals the strategic partnership is designed to contribute to are:</p> <p>Human rights are effectively enforced and aligned with international norms by governments, ILO and UN.</p> <p>Trade unions and NGOs will be more effective participants in human rights protection through increased capacity for lobby and advocacy.</p> <p>Brands and factories in the global garment sector actively and effectively support and implement human rights at the company level.</p>	<p>Emerging promise – formal evaluation underway, due in 2020</p> <p>Examples of results include: Although it is too early to assess the impact of the, the living wages activities have already shown promise in Myanmar (FWF, 2019) Gender Forum for SE Asia garment produced country action plans on combatting gender based violence Participants came from Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Vietnam—representing non-governmental organisations, trade unions, private sector companies and government.</p> <p>Ethiopia: A recent study indicates increases in membership of the Industrial Federation of Ethiopian Textile, Leather and Garment Workers Trade Unions (IFETLGWU) by 13,922 workers, of whom 9,802 were women.</p> <p>Vietnam: The Strategic partnership supported participative research with women garment workers to examine the relationship between production pressure and raised level of sexual harassment. Research showing positive relationship to be published in early 2010</p> <p>Indonesia Social Dialogue The first gender-based violence free zone in Indonesia was established after a long struggle</p>
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		<p>on workplace issues, company rules and regulations and personal development and leadership skills;</p> <p>-Equip union leaders to protect women’s rights and provide support when there are breaches;</p> <p>-Set up minimum standards for medical coverage provided by factories for their employees by the government;</p> <p>Set up minimum standards on the quality of safety materials provided for employees</p>		<p>by local unions. A Women’s Post was created as part of the GBV free zone and female workers can complain about sexual harassment in their working environments.</p> <p>Bangladesh: In 2018, FWF and FNV partner organisations joined together in Bangladesh to submit a draft law on the Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace to the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs and to the Ministry of Labor and Employment which is still under discussion.</p>
3.6. Advocacy				
<p>Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC)</p> <p>brings together trade unions and NGOs covering a broad spectrum of perspectives and interests, such as women’s rights, consumer advocacy and poverty reduction.</p>		<p>CCC ‘educate and mobilise consumers, lobby companies and governments, and offer direct solidarity support to workers as they fight for their rights and demand better working conditions’.</p> <p>It develops campaign strategies to support workers in achieving their goals and works with similar labour rights campaigns. CCC produce a series of research reports that are informative for practitioners and policy makes. These include the following:</p> <p>Paper on human rights due diligence. In this paper from March 2016 Clean Clothes Campaign explains human rights due diligence, as explained in the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPR).</p>	<p>Clean Clothes Campaign is a large global alliance dedicated to improving working conditions and empowering workers in the global garment and sportswear industries, through ensuring that the fundamental rights of workers are respected.</p>	<p>No results yet available – but produces guidance and evidence on RMG workers issues</p> <p>Tailored Wages 2019: The state of pay in the global garment industry’ analyses responses from 20 top clothing brands about their progress in implementing a living wage for the workers who produce their clothes. Whilst 85% of brands had some commitment to ensuring wages were enough to support workers’ basic needs, no brand was putting this into practice for any worker in countries where the vast majority of clothing is produced.</p> <p>Fig Leaf for Fashion. How social auditing protects brands and fails workers A 2019 CCC</p>

				<p>report offers an extensive analysis of the corporate controlled audit industry, connecting the dots between the most well-known business-driven social compliance initiatives as well as the brand interests that they serve. Evidence presented throughout the report clearly shows how the 'social audit industry has failed spectacularly in its proffered mission of protecting workers' safety and improving working conditions. Instead, it has protected the image and reputation of brands and their business models, while standing in the way of more effective models that include mandatory transparency and binding commitments to remediation'.</p>
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4. Which of these interventions have the greatest potential for scale-up in sub-Saharan Africa?

Barrientos (2019) identifies two types of supplier strategy: the ‘low road’ of economic and social downgrading, based on low labour costs, and the ‘high road’ of economic and social upgrading, based on skill and productivity.

While SSA RMG is largely on the low road, the aspiration is clearly to change paths onto the high road. It is suggested this change of direction of travel might be supported by the following:

- **Understanding the systematic pressures that drive the global apparel industry and deficits in Decent Work along with specific gendered constraints in SSA is critical.** The global garment value chain, on which RMG in SSA producer countries will rely, has its supply and value spread across many countries and continents. Sourcing by brands is largely undertaken through global value chains in low or middle-income economies, using labour to produce low-price goods. (Barrientos, 2019).
- **A whole value chain approach is needed to address Decent Work at scale.** The Sub-Saharan RMG sector and its associated decent work deficits for women must be considered in the context of the whole global value chain. While factory-based initiatives can be helpful they will not alone transform the industry into one that incorporates Decent Work principles. A whole supply chain approach and collaboration between stakeholders reduces the risk of productivity pressure leading to excessive overtime, undercutting and a ‘race to the bottom’.
- **Interventions with brands and retailers to champion change and support action** on rights and social dialogue are critical to demonstrating what can be achieved and driving change through the supply chain. Some, but not all, of global initiatives are present in Africa. There is an opportunity to consider supporting an expansion and improvement of initiatives that work at either worker, workplace or wider systemic level.
- **Voluntary initiatives that recognise the importance of freedom of association and collective bargaining are essential for achieving decent work.** Non-State actors are important in adhering, respecting and upholding the pillars of Decent Work. And employers, trade unions and civil society have important roles in promoting decent working conditions and engaging in social dialogue, multi-stakeholder initiatives and company led initiatives.
- **Governments also have a crucial role in protecting workers’ rights and pushing the Decent Work Agenda forward by effectively implementing legislation.** Better enforcement of legislation and standards in RMG requires governments, employers and trade unions to working together to implement solutions through social dialogue (Barrientos, 2019; Kabeer & Hossain, 2004).
- **Need for expanded knowledge on RMG in Sub Saharan Africa.** There is still relatively little documented on the issues facing women workers and the actual and potential impact of the sector on women workers in SSA. Investing more in knowledge and evidence can support more action at scale.

Interventions that are recommended as promising or with emerging promise for upscaling include:

The **Better Work Programme** demonstrates impact both through targeted factory initiatives and strengthening policies and practices at the national, regional, and international levels to improve management HR practices and workplace policies on issues such as pay, complaints procedures and violence and harassment, and training for supervisors and workers. A combination of Better Work factory-based initiatives and training, together with industry wide approaches an SSA Better Work programme to address regional wide issues faced by women workers could be particularly effective.

Deuter working with the **Fair Wear Foundation (FWF)** provides a good example of positive impacts through addressing underlying drivers of decent work. They tackled the complex issues around seasonality to reduce excessive long working hours during peak season through changes to contracts in the supply chain. With positive impacts on more even production throughout the year, reducing workers hours to meet FWF standards and they believe knock on results in retaining workers. FWF provides potential for scale working across brands and at the factory, community and international level.

FWF is further supporting Decent Work including more action on social dialogue, through The **Strategic Partnership (SP) for Garment Supply Chain Transformation** with CNV International, Mondiaal FNV, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2016-2020). While Fair Wear's target audience is European brand members and their suppliers, the two Dutch union confederations support local trade unions in developing social dialogue initiatives, female union leadership and Freedom of Association in practice.

Initiating or supporting **interventions on factory supervisor and worker training, social dialogue and support for leadership training for women in trade unions, in partnership with the ILO or other multi-stakeholder interventions**. A focus on building the participation of national trade unions and CSOs can lead to encouraging local national interventions such as the Indonesian Employers' Association (APINDO) agreement to publish its Guidelines for employers on sexual harassment or the development of the Vietnam Code of Practice on Sexual Harassment. Such codes could be of great value in SSA as it could not only bring together the social partner signatories but also commits them to promoting social dialogue initiatives to implement the Codes.

Barrientos (2019) points to the context of global value chains where it is now recognized that value chain governance involves a diverse range of company, civil society and state actors who are able to influence the norms and rules framing the operation of value chains across global, national and local scales. To support this trend DFID might wish to build on the experience of a number of initiatives.

Supporting **social dialogue, research and development** in current business, purchasing and ordering practice that inevitably impact on female production workers pay and conditions (FWF 2018, 2019, unpublished) could have a profound and long-lasting impact. For example, the **ACT initiative**, which is focussed on the Living Wage, is supported by several brands that source in SSA, including PVH, H& M, Tchibo as well as IndustriALL (and therefore affiliated unions in all SSA producer countries). A 2019 a Parliamentary enquiry into UK's fashion industry highlighted ACT as a positive initiative towards living wages in the textile and garment industry.

To date private governance has received the greatest attention in the GVC literature, especially in Asia. This involves the power of lead firms to coordinate and distribute resources along their value chains. This mainly relates to product, environmental and labour standards applied by lead firms and private sector bodies (Barrientos, 2019 and others). There has been relatively little attention on GVC governance in SSA and it could be beneficial to explore the way in which lead companies can work

with other stakeholders to improve the context and environment of the RMG industry for female workers:

Social governance relates to the ability of CSOs, including NGOs, trade unions, charities and community groups, to influence social norms, policies, institutions and markets at national or international levels through advocacy and campaigns (Barrientos, 2019). This might be furthered by:

Supporting research by CSOs, advocacy organisations and unions on working and living conditions of female garment workers in SSA. Currently, unlike SE Asia, there is relatively little solid research and advocacy across the continent setting out the key issues facing female workers in each producer country, with pressure and recommendations for action. Organisations such as BSR, CARE International and Action Aid International, as well as the Clean Clothes Campaign, have been active and effective advocates for decent working conditions for female garment workers in SE Asia resulting in changes in workplace practice (Barrientos, 2019).

Support [a programme](#) to build leadership, activism and confidence of women garment trade unionists, similar to that provided by TUC Aid and NGWF to the NGWF in Bangladesh in 2015. Other models might be initiatives by FNV and IndustriALL to Ethiopian trade unions mentioned above.

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