Ethical Trading Initiative

Respect for workers worldwide

Base Code Guidance:
Gender equality (A)
Gender and the Base Code

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Photos ILO, ETI, UN Women

1. Introduction

Inequality, discrimination and injustice based on gender can be seen in the type of work performed, how workers are treated in the workplace, and in their pay and conditions. Women workers in particular – across all tiers of the supply chain – are often the disadvantaged gender because of discriminatory sociocultural practices and attitudes which consider women's work to be of lower status. Making progress towards gender equality is thus critical to the achievement of decent work particularly for women.

This guidance:

- Aims to help businesses understand the likely gender issues in their supply chains and provide guidance on how to respond to them.
- Is targeted at addressing women workers' needs because of their particular disadvantages (although the ways in which other genders as well as vulnerable groups such as young women and migrant workers are affected by discrimination in the workplace is also highlighted where relevant).
- Emphasises the need to develop women's access to collective structures such as trade unions and action so as to understand their views and experiences, and give them a voice in the workplace.
- Recognises that achieving gender equality in the workplace is a complex and long term process which requires a focus on the challenges women face in the economy and in society - and which cannot be achieved by companies alone.

Women represent an average of 68 per cent of workers in the garment sector workforce and 45 per cent of the textile sector workforce.[1]

In addition, the guidance acknowledges the diversity among companies in terms of their resources and influence over behaviours among suppliers, particularly at the lower tiers of their supply chains. It encourages a level of ambition appropriate to the centrality of gender equality for workers' rights and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and more specifically the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs).

Part A (this part) sets out the rationale for addressing gender issues in supply chains. It provides an overview of the key factors affecting women in the workplace and the ways in which these are interlinked, and goes on to explain the reasons why gender equality is good for businesses, women and wider society. It then outlines the gender dimensions of the ETI Base Code and the kinds of challenges companies face in observing the principles enshrined in the Code from a gender perspective. It illustrates how gender equality and justice are enablers of decent work.

Part B provides specific guidance on how to address gender issues in supply chains. Presented as a roadmap, Part B explains how businesses can take a gradual and long-term approach to integration of gender equality considerations and women's rights both within their own organisation and in their supply chains. Guidance is provided on how this can be applied in relation to the ETI human rights due diligence approach in terms of conducting assessments, designing appropriate responses and taking action. It also includes examples and case studies aimed at helping companies learn from the experience, lessons and insights of other gender-related initiatives.

2. Overview – Gender and workers' rights

Globalisation has created new employment opportunities for people around the world, including for many women who previously lacked opportunities to engage in paid work. Yet, while access to decent, paid work is a key enabler of women's economic, social and political empowerment, more women are found in informal, temporary and part time work. This includes work in lower paid roles and tiers in the supply chain, such as homeworkers and seasonal agricultural labourers.

Some of this is related to overarching sociocultural norms and attitudes, and to expectations around unpaid work (including caring for children and the elderly and doing household chores) which is largely seen as women's work. This limits the kinds of paid work that women can take on, as well as their ability to take on positions of responsibility or to work overtime if they choose.

Limited awareness of their rights, less bargaining power and weaker social networks also make women more vulnerable to lower paid jobs, and less likely to be promoted or receive the protections provided to the workforce generally. Other barriers can include restrictions on women's mobility, lack of access to public spaces and the lack of safe public transport, which means that women cannot travel far for work, further limiting their choices and forcing them into poor quality work.

Understanding "negative masculinities"

Traditional attitudes and behaviours around masculinity often promote men's power and control over women and condone violence as a way of maintaining that control. Whilst strength, leadership and power may be seen as important "masculine" attributes that maintain social order and peace, abuse of this power and the use of violence to abuse and control those who do not have power contributes to a destructive or negative "masculinity".[2]

Negative masculinities in the workplace are reinforced by organisational norms, the behaviour of managers and leaders, lack of codes of conduct, weak compliance with national laws and respect for human rights, and workplaces dominated by men. In workplaces where the majority of employees are women, the dominance of men in senior management and supervisory positions can generate a negative masculine culture, and this may make it difficult for women to pursue managerial positions and opportunities.[3]

In addition, while both men and women experience violence and harassment in the workplace, women are much more likely to be subject to sexual harassment and violence, typically as a result of the power imbalance between men and women. Sexual harassment and violence against women workers can take many forms - ranging from verbal abuse to forced labour, assault and rape.

Discrimination on the basis of gender identity, sex, race, religion, caste, ethnicity, socio-economic class, HIV/AIDS status, marital status and literacy and educational levels also shapes the way in which workers are treated. Individuals with more than one of these characteristics face multiple disadvantages and inequalities which makes them specially vulnerable. For example, global supply chains are heavily dependent on young, migrant women workers. This group of workers typically has less protection, limited union representation, and very little bargaining power – and can often find themselves working long hours with compulsory overtime, unreasonable targets, compulsory pregnancy testing and unsafe and unhealthy working conditions.

LGBTQI+ workers

LGBTQI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning), intersex and others) people can find it challenging to secure employment due to discrimination, and also find that their rights and needs are not covered by national legal frameworks or workplace policies. There is also evidence of a pay gap between LGBTQI+ and non-LGBTQI+ workers.[6] Women and men who either are or are perceived to be gay, bisexual or trans experience homophobic and transphobic violence and harassment.[7] Transgender people are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment, derogatory statements and homophobia, along with general religious and cultural prejudices – an ILO study in South Africa found that this is not only in terms of doing their jobs, but also gaining employment.[8] The same study found that the majority of LGBTQI+ workers hide their sexual orientation and gender identity in the workplace, and this can cause stress, as well as affect their productivity and career progression. Because of a lack of clear policies and guidelines, and because LGBTQI+ workers are often not represented in trade unions and management structures, trade unions and employers are also often unclear on how to respond to the challenges and discrimination these workers face.[9]

2.1 Why is gender equality important for business?

There are various international commitments (see Annex 1), as well as national laws regarding women workers' rights. These include:

- Mandatory legal frameworks such as the UK Equality Act, Modern Slavery Act, Gender Pay Reporting regulations and national legislation
- Voluntary frameworks, such as the gender components of the UNGPs, the SDGs, the UN's Women's Empowerment Principles, and the ETI Base Code.

More than 1,800 business leaders have signed up to UN Women and the UN Global Compact (UNGC)'s 'Women's Empowerment Principles', which provide a framework for their commitment to support the empowerment of women within the workplace and the wider community.

Companies are also driven by a concern for their workers, and believe that protecting their rights, and supporting them to realise their aspirations is part of their organisational values.[10] Businesses which promote gender equality and adopt gender-sensitive practices can differentiate themselves in the market and gain a good reputation.[11]

There is also evidence that by taking steps to address the challenges and discrimination faced by women workers, manufacturers can increase productivity and reduce absenteeism, staff turnover, overtime, production errors and return rates.

A 2010 McKinsey survey of companies that invest in programmes targeting women in emerging and developing markets found that at least one third had measured improved profits and a further 38 per cent were expecting return.[13]

The benefits of investing in women employees and leaders include:

- **Production quality and output:** Investing in women's skills and supporting their access to resources can improve the quality or output of women's work. For example, a training programme run by IFC and ECOM Agroindustrial Corporation for female coffee farmers in Indonesia, resulted in the farmers' productivity increasing by 131 per cent.
- **Improved retention rates and reduced absenteeism and turnover rates:** Programmes that improve work-life balance for parents or health outcomes for women can lead to these benefits. After Nalt Enterprise, a garment factory in Vietnam, provided a kindergarten for workers' children, staff turnover fell by one third. A programme that delivered health services to women workers in garment factories in Bangladesh found a $3:$1 return on investment over an 18 month period as a result of combined savings from reduced absenteeism and staff turnover.

In some countries, factories have increased production and reduced staff turnover to as low as 2 per cent monthly by offering training, childcare and paid time off for women workers.[12]

- **Stronger community relations:** There is some anecdotal evidence that employing women improves companies' relationships with the communities in which they operate. There are examples from mining and construction companies which have found that employing more women on their sites enhances wider information-sharing amongst the social networks of local women and men alike.[14]
- **Better financial returns:** A study spanning 3,000 companies worldwide showed that between 2012 and 2014, large companies with at least one woman on the board outperformed companies with no women on the board by 5 per cent on a sector-neutral basis.[15] Evidence from a sample of companies in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea also has shown that increasing the number of female directors has a positive effect on performance, as measured by return on equity (ROE).

Source: IFC (2013) 'Investing in Women's Employment'; IFC (2017) 'Investing in Women: New Evidence for the Business Case'.

The relationship between "women-oriented" employment policies and practices and improved business performance

Business strategy

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Women-orientated employment policies and practices

Improving working conditions; or providing new opportunities in non-traditional sectors

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Employee outcomes

Commitment; motivation; satisfaction; work-life balance

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Employee performance

Reduced absenteeism and staff turnover; productivity; improved employee relations

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Organisation performance

Cost savings; access to new talent and markets; high calibre staff

IFC, 2013, 'Investing in Women's Employment'

2.2 Key concepts

Gender refers to the attributes, roles and opportunities that are associated with being women and men. These attributes, roles and opportunities are socially constructed and women and men, and society at large learns them through socialisation processes. These ideas shape how society understands the value of women and men, and the kinds of characteristics and behaviours that are considered appropriate and desirable for them. Gender does not refer simply to women and men but also to the relationship between them. These social definitions are not fixed; they manifest differently in different contexts, and change over time.

Gender equality is an internationally recognised human right, and refers to women and men having equal and equally respected rights, and equal access to resources and opportunities. It also means that society values women and men equally for their similarities and differences, and the diverse roles they play. It is as concerned with the situation of men as women. However, in many areas, including in global supply chains, as it is women who face greater risks and discrimination, it is often associated with a greater focus on women.

Gender equity refers to the process of ensuring fairness for women and men, and creating a level playing field for them. This goes beyond treating women and men equally, to actively compensating for the historical process of discrimination which shapes women's current economic, social and political disadvantages.

A glossary of wider concepts and terms relating to gender is available in Annex 2.

3. Understanding the gender dimensions of ETI's Base Code

The ETI Base Code is founded on the conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and is an internationally recognised code of good labour practice. It is widely used as a benchmark against which to conduct social audits and develop ethical trade plans. The provisions of the Base Code constitute minimum and not maximum standards. Companies applying this code are expected to comply with national and other applicable laws. Where the law and the Base Code address the same subject, companies are expected to apply the provisions that affords the greater protection to workers.

3.1 Employment is freely chosen

According to the ILO, women and girls are disproportionately affected by forced labour, accounting for 71 per cent of the 40.3 million people in modern slavery. Both women and girls, and men and boys are vulnerable. However, because women and girls are concentrated in sectors where there is an absence of regulation or lack of law enforcement, and where forced labour is prevalent, for example the garment industry, they are particularly at risk. Women in particular are disempowered and are more vulnerable to sexual harassment and violence.

Women from marginalised groups – young women, lower caste and indigenous groups – are also particularly vulnerable to exploitation. According to the ILO, the incidence of forced labour is especially high amongst scheduled castes and tribes in India, indigenous minorities in Nepal and non-Muslims in Pakistan. In Latin America, the majority of forced labourers are from indigenous groups.[16]

Forced labour is not always based on physical violence or coercion. Migrant workers – a growing percentage of whom are women – who are formally recruited can find that the terms and conditions of their employment are different to what they agreed to when they left their home country. Workers can be exploited by recruiters or agents who require them to pay to obtain work, or force them to use associated services such as accommodation, or hand over some or most of their earnings. Employers can often confiscate passports and mobile phones, and thus control whether workers are able to seek help.

Because many of them are paid less than men, and often well below minimum wage, and because they don't have access to mechanisms to report mistreatment, women can remain caught in coercive and exploitative situations. The lack of trade unions in general and women's representation also means that their needs may not be respected by employers.

For more information on forced labour, see the ETI Base Code Guidance on Modern Slavery[17]

3.2 Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining is respected

Women have become increasingly active in the trade union movement and in a growing number of organisations of informal workers in developing countries. In addition to fair wages and working hours, women have been active in campaigns, social dialogue and collective bargaining on issues including the gender pay gap, maternity rights, childcare services and sexual harassment in the workplace.

Women's collective action is good for companies too – for example, research in Ethiopia, Mali and Tanzania has found that female agricultural sector workers who joined collective action groups focused on supporting their use of improved technology, experienced higher productivity and product quality as well as increased access to credit and market information.[18]

However, as increasing numbers of women are involved in the informal economy and in precarious work, they can fall outside of the ambit of national laws that cover collective organising. In situations where laws are not adequately enforced, they may find it difficult to know about their rights. In addition, their activities may not be seen as legitimate, and they are often stigmatised and face an unfavourable regulatory environment.[19] Women in casual or seasonal work may find it more difficult to join trade unions for many reasons including a restricted scope of membership requirements, and a lack of awareness and understanding of the benefits of joining a trade union. In some cases, where union leadership is male dominated, trade unions may be less engaged with the specific interests of women workers.

Even when women workers do join trade unions, they can face significant barriers to participation or to taking on leadership positions. These include:

- Restrictions on women's mobility, access to public spaces and interactions with others, particularly men, inhibit women's ability to attend meetings regularly, and take prominent leadership roles.
- Women's domestic responsibilities (which are challenging enough to manage alongside work) make it particularly difficult to find the time, energy and alternative caring arrangements for engaging in trade union work, and can also create tensions with household members.
- Women's lack of awareness about the benefits and incentives for participating, on the basis of which they can make an informed decision about whether the costs and challenges are worth it.[20]
- Governments and businesses can use a range of tactics to undermine rights to association and assembly, including intimidation, dismissal, and blacklisting. Women trade unionists and human rights defenders can also be subjected to violence, including sexual harassment.

3.3 Working conditions are safe and hygienic

Given the prevalence of gendered job segregation, the work-related risks and hazards that men and women are exposed to are different. For example, exposure to hazardous chemicals, because workers have not been given appropriate training or the personal protective equipment (PPE) they need, can cause reproductive health issues for women. There is also strong evidence that lack of hydration and restroom breaks increases the risk of urinary tract infections for women. And when women do not have access to restrooms with soap and water or sanitary napkins, they are forced to use unsanitary products which can cause gynaecological infections. Their predominantly male supervisors do not necessarily understand menstruation as a workplace issue, or the impact that restricting women's breaks has on their health.[21]

Undertaking paid work as well as unpaid household care and chores means women often work longer days than men, and the pressures of managing both can lead to stress-related illnesses, including depression, headaches, ulcers, high blood pressure and fatigue. These pressures increase when women are forced to work overtime.

Harassment and violence in the workplace has significant implications for women's health, including their mental and emotional well-being. For women, sexual harassment has also been linked to a decrease in productivity. Violence limits a woman's power to protect herself from pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.[22] Most employers do not tend to provide mental health support and services as part of the remedy process.

As women workers are often of reproductive age, family planning and reproductive health are a key need. However, young women workers lack basic knowledge in reproductive health and employers contribute to these workers' health risks by limiting access to quality services, onsite and off, hiring workplace health providers with limited knowledge of the health needs of women workers, and not providing health education information in their clinics. Further, when women become pregnant, they could be denied leave to access ante- or post-natal care, as well as maternity leave. In extreme cases, their employment can be terminated.

3.4 Child labour shall not be used

By ILO estimates there are currently 152 million child labourers, and 73 million of them work in hazardous child labour.[23] Of these, girls are often employed at the lowest levels of supply chains, helping their parents, usually mothers, with outsourced work.

One of the key drivers of child employment, along with a lack of social protection and access to quality education and health services, are the low wages paid to adults, which make it necessary for their children to work. For example, if homeworkers who are paid a piece rate, are given low rates per piece, or expected to fulfil large orders within a short time, adult workers may need their children, usually girls, to help them. Barriers to the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining compound the issues further.

For more information on this, and how to identify and manage situations of child labour in supply chains, see the ETI Base Code Guidance on Child Labour.[24]

3.5 Living wages are paid

Gender segregation in the job market means that women are concentrated in low paying, insecure jobs. In agricultural value chains, for example, women's work is often invisible as they provide the majority of labour on male-owned farms but do not receive the income or influence how it is spent. One study of sugar farming contracts in Africa found that women provided the majority of the labour on 60 to 70 per cent of the contracted plots, yet they held less than half (43 per cent) of the contracts.[25] Women are also paid systematically less for work of equal value. In developing countries, according to ActionAid's calculations, this has created a gender wage gap equivalent to some US$2 trillion in women's earnings, or as much as the worth of India's entire economy.[26]

Research has further demonstrated that women receive fewer bonuses and social protections than men. For example, women are less likely to receive a pension.[27] They are also more often paid by the hour. A significant number of women workers are engaged in piece work, for which they are can be set unrealistic targets. It is very difficult for workers to earn a living wage when they are paid for the number of garments they produce, rather than the number of hours they work. This type of casual employment can be subject to seasonal variations, and typically does not include benefits such as pensions or health insurance. The challenges of establishing trade unions and collective bargaining in the workplace, as well as women's relative lack of representation or influence in trade unions who could negotiate targets based on what can be realistically achieved in a day's work exacerbates this issue.

For more information on living wages, see the ETI Base Code Guidance on Living Wages .[28]

3.6 Working hours are not excessive

Workers in factories, and on farms, are often required to work long and unreasonable hours. Typically, they are expected to work between 10 and 12 hours, rising to 16 to 18 hours a day when there are deadlines for orders.[29] Workers can be asked to do overtime with little notice, and threatened with dismissal or other penalties or subjected to verbal abuse if they cannot work the additional hours. The push for more flexible working hours and the increase in informal, piece-rate working arrangements are further exacerbating the problem of excessive hours.

For women workers, the issues are compounded as they have to juggle the additional demands of unpaid care work. Women typically dedicate an on average 4 hours and 25 minutes to unpaid care work in a day compared to 1 hour and 23 minutes for men.[30] Additionally, many women are solely responsible for their families. Women's resulting time poverty, which is directly associated with their lower income and asset base, limits their ability to move into higher-return jobs.

3.7 No discrimination is practised

Discrimination cuts across, and often underpins, many of the issues outlined in the other Base Code sections. Women's concentration in lower-paying sectors, and lower-value jobs can partly be due to the discrimination they face in terms of social norms, and their domestic and childcare responsibilities. But it can also relate to discrimination in recruitment, access to training, and access to promotion opportunities.

Globally, 700 million fewer women than men are in paid work. Young women are most likely to be unemployed - in Northern Africa and the Arab States, the female youth unemployment rate is almost double that of young men, reaching as high as 44.3 and 44.1 per cent, respectively.[31] Women may be refused jobs if they are married or have children. There have been cases in some companies where women have had to take pregnancy tests in order to be recruited – migrant workers in particular can be subjected to mandatory pregnancy testing before they leave their home country, as well as testing as a condition for continued employment.[32] In other cases, women can be refused all or part of their maternity leave; forced to leave employment before or after giving birth; or are unable to return to work at the same level or pay. Women can also lose their jobs if they get married, become pregnant, or if their unpaid care responsibilities cause them to be absent from work.

Women are also often denied opportunities to training that might support their professional development. In some cases, this is due to stereotypical ideas about what women can or cannot do, or at a more practical level, because training is organised at a time that conflicts with their unpaid care responsibilities. This affects the extent to which women are represented in supervisory or leadership cadres. For example, in Ethiopia, men are five times more likely than women to hold leadership positions in cooperatives.[33] In garment factories in Bangladesh, just one in 20 supervisors is a woman.[34]

In a study of maternity protections in 146 countries, the ILO found that only 38 countries guaranteed women's right to return to work to the same or equivalent post, 26 guaranteed the same post, and 82 did not have any legal guarantees in place.

Source: International Labour Organisation, 2016, 'Women At Work'

3.8 Regular employment is provided

Casual or non-standard work is becoming increasingly common, particularly among women, young people and migrants – a reflection of the challenges they face in accessing employment. For example, in the services sector in countries like Bangladesh or Afghanistan, the share of female temporary workers can be over four times higher than the share of temporary male workers.[35]

Casual work can be an important way of supporting women to enter the labour market. However, casual workers:

- Are often not given a minimum number of hours, and the amount of hours they do is variable and difficult to predict. This poses challenges for care responsibilities or women with multiple jobs.
- Do not have secure, long-term contracts which guarantee wages and benefits.
- Can be paid less, are easier to dismiss, and are less likely to receive training and other benefits.
- If pregnant, enable employers to avoid responsibility for maternity benefits.[36]

Further, because these jobs are low-paid as well as insecure – and because employers seem to consider these workers' skills as easily replaceable – the power dynamic is weighted heavily in the employers' favour, undermining the already limited bargaining power of women, youth and migrant workers'.

There is also worrying evidence of temporary workers being asked for sexual favours for continued work. For example, in Kenya, insecure temporary horticultural workers were granted permanent status if they agreed to have sexual relations with supervisors or managers.[37] Many occupations within which these temporary casual jobs occur are also characterised by difficulties in organising workers and engaging in collective bargaining.

3.9 No harsh or inhumane treatment is allowed

While both men and women experience violence and harassment in the workplace, women are much more likely to be subject to sexual harassment and violence. A 2015 ILO report found that worldwide, 35 per cent of women have experienced direct violence at the workplace, and of these between 40 and 50 per cent were subjected to unwanted sexual advances, physical contact or other forms of sexual harassment.[38]

Research in Kenya revealed that more than 90% of women in export processing centres and the tea and coffee sectors had experienced or observed sexual abuse within their workplace. Additionally 95% of all women who had suffered workplace sexual abuse were afraid to report the problem for fear of losing their jobs. The vast majority also noted that promotions were related to some form of sexual relationship with a supervisor.[39]

Harassment and violence against women workers can take many forms - ranging from verbal abuse to forced labour, assault, and rape. The implications of violence against women for their health, including their sexual and reproductive health and rights as well as their mental and emotional well-being are discussed in section 3.3.

There are various reasons for women workers' increased likelihood of experiencing violence in the workplace. An ILO guide[41] on gender-based violence in supply chains outlines the complex inter-related characteristics of supply chains – and the ways in which these reinforce gender inequalities and unequal gender roles in work, family and wider society and contribute to making sexual harassment and violence in the workplace so pervasive. In summary, these are:

- Precarity of work/lack of job security
- Suppliers with rudimentary HR systems
- A lack of institutional grievance and complaints procedures
- Incentive structures for supervisors
- A culture of workplace harassment
- Low levels of unionisation, and
- Difficulties in monitoring abuses of workers' rights.

Gender-based violence in the workplace includes:

- Sexual harassment and unwanted sexual advances
- Sexual abuse and violence, including 'coercive' or transactional sex, rape and sexual assault
- Abuse and harassment around pregnancy
- Psychological abuse and intimidation
- Threats and acts of physical violence
- Inadequate or inappropriate sanitary facilities and rules about their use
- Involuntary excessive long working hours and unpredictable or late demands to work overtime.[40]

Annex I. Key international commitments and legal requirements on gender equality

The International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICECSR) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) explain that women's right to work requires equal opportunities and treatment as well as the elimination of discrimination on the grounds of marriage or maternity. In addition, rights at work include: fair wages and equal remuneration for work of equal value; safe and healthy working conditions; equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including in relation to hiring, promotion and training; rest, leisure and reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay; the right to form and join trade unions; social security, including but not limited to 'special protections' such as paid leave and adequate benefits for women before and after childbirth.

ILO Conventions provide a comprehensive set of labour standards, as well as recommendations meant to provide guidance to countries in applying the Conventions. The Conventions aim to promote decent work which is defined as work that 'is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organise and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men'.

The ILO's fundamental conventions are:

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

Others to note:

- Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183)
- Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No.156)

UN Women's Empowerment Principles (WEP) are a partnership initiative of UN Women and UN Global Compact (UNGC), and provide a set of considerations to help the private sector focus on key elements integral to promoting gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and community. Forged through an international multi-stakeholder consultative process, they provide a "gender lens" through which business can survey and analyze current practices, benchmarks and reporting practices.

National laws. By 2014, 59 countries had passed laws stipulating equal pay for work of equal value; 125 countries had laws to prohibit sexual harassment in the workplace. However, over 70 countries maintain restrictions on the types of work that women can do by, for example, banning them from working at night or in occupations such as mining or construction.

Annex 2. Key gender-related concepts

Empowerment refers to an increase in people's ability to make their own decisions and, in doing so, bring about the changes in their lives that they desire. It involves increasing awareness, building confidence, having increased access to resources, having more choices, as well as tackling the imbalances in power and the structures and institutions that discriminate against people and perpetuate gender inequality.[42] Programming interventions often focus on empowering women because of the inequalities in their socio-economic status. The process of empowerment is as important as the goal.

Agency refers to women's ability (or inability) to make choices and decisions about their own life, to feel like they are able to act, and be able to act on those choices to achieve a desired outcome, free of violence, retribution or fear. This can include women's ability to earn and control income and to own, use, and dispose of material assets; to move freely; to make decisions over when and whom to marry, how many children to have, and when to leave a marriage; to live free of violence; and to have a voice and influence in society.[43]

Intersectionality refers to the idea that women and men who face disadvantage due to multiple social stratification categories, i.e. gender, race, class and other identity characteristics, do not experience these independently but as a complex, interwoven, 'unique' experience of discrimination – where the interactions between the inequalities and injustices reinforce each other.[44]

Gender mainstreaming refers to the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or development programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It makes women's as well as men's voices, perspectives and expertise central to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.[45] Mainstreaming does not necessarily mean that targeted activities to support women are no longer necessary, but the aim is to incorporate the women's perspective throughout every policy and programme, even if they are not targeted at women.[46]

Endnotes

[1] Svarer, C. et al.. (2017), Empowering Female Workers in the Apparel Industry: Three Areas for Business Action', BSR: www.bsr.org/reports/BSR_Empowering_Female_Workers_in_the_Apparel_Industry.pdf

[2] The term negative masculinity is used in order to enable the possibility of some positive attributes of masculinity. It does not offer a value judgement but rather distinguishes masculine traits that are destructive to mental and physical wellbeing of men and women from other constructive masculine traits.

[3] Fair Wear Foundation (2013) 'Standing Firm On Factory Floor Harassment: preventing violence against women garment workers in Bangladesh and India' UN Women and Government of the Netherlands: https://www.fairwear.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/StandingFirmReportFWF2013.pdf

[4] Crenshaw, K, (1991) 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Color; Stanford Law Review, Vol. 43, No. 6, pp. 1241-1299

[5] International Training Centre/ Fair Wear Foundation (n.d.), 'Gender-based violence In lgobal supply chains: Resource Kit': gbv.itcilo.org/

[6] Drydakis, 2009, p. 366, cited in ILO (2016) 'PRIDE at work: A study on discrimination at work on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in South Africa', ILO Geneva: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_481581.pdf

[7] International Labour Office (ILO), (2017) Ending violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work', International Labour Office, Geneva: www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_553577.pdf

[8] International Labour Office (ILO), (2016), PRIDE at work: A study on discrimination at work on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in South Africa, ILO Geneva: www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_481581.pdf

[9] International Labour Office (ILO), (2016), PRIDE at work: A study on discrimination at work on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in South Africa, ILO Geneva:www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_481581.pdf

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