

Children's Rights in the Garment and Footwear Supply Chain

A Practical Tool for Integrating
Children's Rights into Responsible
Sourcing Frameworks
JUNE 2020

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Authors: Marilu G Peries and Christopher Kip (UNICEF). An earlier draft of this document was prepared by Marissa Saretsky and Chloe Poynton (Article One).

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Click on section bars to
navigate publication

Table of contents

Introduction.....	4
Network on Children’s Rights in the Garment and Footwear Sector	5
Children and the Garment and Footwear Supply Chain	7
Impact on children in the supply chain.....	7
Limitations of current approaches addressing child rights.....	15
Better Processes, Better Metrics: Integrating Child Rights into Responsible Sourcing Frameworks.....	21
1 Assess and Integrate.....	24
2 Monitor and Report	32
3 Collaborate and Advocate	34
The Role of Investors	37
Annex A: Buyer-Level Process Metrics	41
Annex B: Supplier-Level Outcomes Metrics.....	44
Endnotes.....	48



Introduction



This guidance tool is designed to support companies in the garment and footwear sector to integrate child rights into their responsible sourcing programmes. It explores practical steps companies can take – individually and collectively – to ensure children are recognized as important stakeholders in their responsible sourcing efforts. The suggested steps do not foresee the creation of parallel processes. Instead, they provide guidance on how to integrate child rights into existing sourcing policy and practice. The guidance includes metrics, which support the measurement and reporting on child rights integration and outcomes over time.

MORE THAN 60 MILLION WORKERS ARE EMPLOYED in the garment and footwear sector worldwide.¹ Many of them are parents and caregivers who support families. UNICEF estimates that more than 100 million children are affected in the garment and footwear supply chain globally – as workers, children of working parents and community members near farms and factories.

The garment and footwear industry has enormous potential to contribute to social and economic development. It can support industrial growth, provide decent work and improve livelihoods. At the same time, however, decent work deficits, poor living conditions and widespread discrimination against women undermine the industry's contribution to positive social impact.

Children are a particularly vulnerable stakeholder group in the garment and footwear supply chain, as in many sectors. Child labour and exploitative conditions for young workers are significant concerns, especially in deeper tiers. Moreover, working conditions in many garment and footwear producing countries lack adequate support systems for working parents, especially mothers. In the absence of family-friendly policies, children are at risk of poor health and nutrition, neglect and limited access to basic services, including childcare. Children of garment workers also risk being trapped in poverty, due to low wages and poor

living conditions, which denies them a chance to develop and reach their full potential.

Over the past two decades, garment and footwear companies have invested significant resources to develop responsible supply chain management systems. The prevailing approach has been grounded in compliance – enforcing codes of conduct and auditing supplier performance against minimum commitments. These approaches have contributed to improved awareness and standards in formal tiers of the supply chain – such as in relation to occupational health and safety, working hours and child labour.

However, the limitations of compliance-driven approaches have become widely apparent in recent years. Beyond-compliance approaches have become more common, which go beyond a 'snapshot analysis' and seek to address underlying and multifaceted root causes.² While these approaches often include child labour, they rarely address other impacts on children and working parents. They also tend to be limited to the workplace, failing to address wider impacts in communities where workers live. There is, therefore, a critical need to enhance these approaches to improve the lives of workers and their families and thereby contribute to systemic change. Integration of child rights considerations into responsible supply chain processes is an important component of these efforts.

➔ Under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), businesses have a responsibility to act with human rights due diligence to avoid negative social consequences related to their business activities and supply chains.

Network on Children's Rights in the Garment and Footwear Sector

Recognizing the need for the garment and footwear sector to more effectively address adverse impact on children, and thereby reduce sustainability risks, in 2017 UNICEF and Norges Bank Investment Management established the *Network on Children's Rights in the Garment and Footwear Sector*. The network was set up to facilitate a dialogue between garment and footwear brands, manufacturers and civil society experts to raise awareness, share innovative practices and promote action to improve the human rights impact on children in the sector.³

One of the key discussions in the network focused on the need to develop guidance for companies to more effectively integrate children's rights into responsible sourcing approaches. A need for relevant child rights metrics was also expressed, which allow companies and investors to measure and track progress in meaningful ways. Until now, child rights risks beyond child labour are rarely called out in existing audit, monitoring and reporting mechanisms. This document attempts to fill this gap by

- gathering available evidence on how children are impacted in the garment and footwear supply chain;
- identifying limitations in current approaches to effective management of these impacts; and
- developing guidance and metrics for companies to take steps to integrate child rights into their approaches to supply chain management.



Jisha, 3, is held by a caregiver at the Early Childhood Development (ECD) day care centre located at a garment factory in Narayanganj, outside Dhaka, Bangladesh. Both of the child's parent work at the garment factory.

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The document also addresses the role of investors and includes recommendations on how they can use their leverage to encourage better integration of child rights in companies they invest in.

The findings and recommendations in this report are made with both garment buyers ('brands', 'retailers') and producers ('suppliers', 'manufacturers') in mind. Importantly, this guide recognizes the critical role of governments as a duty-bearer to protect children's rights and to promote their progressive realization, including in the context of business activities. Against this backdrop, this guide seeks to promote an understanding of 'shared responsibility', which includes collective action by all relevant stakeholders, to address child rights at the systemic level.⁴

Approach to developing this tool

As part of the *Network on Children's Rights in the Garment and Footwear Sector*, UNICEF partnered with Article One, a business and human rights consultancy, to develop this guidance tool. The research was carried out in 2017 and 2018 and included: three workshops with network companies, manufacturers and experts; a detailed desk review of over 25 apparel and footwear companies; and in-depth stakeholder interviews. In September 2019, a draft version of the tool was shared with network participants for review and feedback, which has been incorporated into this version of the tool.

STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS & WEBINARS



Three stakeholder workshops were held: two in Geneva, Switzerland (November 2017 and 2018) and one in Dhaka, Bangladesh (May 2018) to gather input from buyers and manufacturers in the development of the guidance tool. The workshops were attended by international garment and footwear buyers, local manufacturers, civil society organizations and civil society experts. The companies engaged in the workshops covered more than one million employees in their own operations and an estimated eight million workers in their supply chains.⁵ The manufacturers who participated in the workshop in Dhaka collectively employed more than 80,000 workers (of which more than 52,000 were women).⁶ In addition, four webinars were held between 2017 and 2019 that provided additional opportunities for discussion and stakeholder input.

COMPANY AND LITERATURE REVIEW



The second phase of research consisted of an in-depth review of 25 leading garment and footwear brands with regard to their approach to managing child rights risks. A literature review was also conducted, focusing on existing knowledge of responsible supply chain management, human rights due diligence approaches in the supply chain, and integration of children's rights.

INTERVIEWS WITH GARMENT & FOOTWEAR BRANDS



The last phase of research consisted of interviews undertaken with representatives from eight multinational garment and footwear companies. The interviews were conducted to gather intelligence on: existing supply chain management processes; the extent to which these approaches address child rights; successes and challenges; innovative or industry-leading practices to overcome challenges; and input on performance metrics on child rights.

Children and the Garment and Footwear Supply Chain

THIS SECTION COMPILES AND SYNTHESIZES EVIDENCE on the impact on children in the garment and footwear supply chain based on UNICEF research and stakeholder interviews.⁷ It also outlines limitations in current company approaches to working and living conditions in the sector.

Impact on children in the supply chain

While child labour is one of the most recognized child rights concerns in the garment and footwear supply chain, there are a myriad of other ways in which the rights of children are impacted – directly and indirectly. These impacts occur in both the workplace and the community in ways that are often interlinked. For example, working conditions can impact workers' living conditions in the community, and the community environment may affect the situation at work. Low wages for working parents can contribute to child poverty and child labour, and undermine efforts to achieve universal primary education. Likewise, limited access to health services and poor water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) standards in communities can affect the health and productivity of workers inside factories.

WORKING CONDITIONS FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

The conditions parents experience at work can directly affect the health, development and well-being of their children. For example, reasonable hours and sufficient wages allow parents to balance work and family life, and to provide the care, attention and resources their children need to thrive. In contrast, low wages, long hours and lack of access to basic services can negatively affect child survival, health, nutrition and education. This can lead to long-term – and in many cases irreversible – negative impact.⁸

This document categorizes impacts on children in three main areas:



1. WORKING CONDITIONS FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS



2. CHILD LABOUR AND PROTECTION



3. COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS



The Little Sun kindergarten, located in Binh Tan District, HCMC, is a spacious school with a budget of more than 2.5 million USD on an area of 5,000 m². It includes a ground floor, 2 floors, 16 classrooms, 5 function rooms for music, a gymnasium, common room and a large kitchen. The school has the capacity to accommodate 750 children from 2 to 5 years of age, which will give priority to receiving children of Pou Yuen workers who are admitted to learn.

IN BANGLADESH:

4% of female garment workers return to the same employer after giving birth

Less than half of garment workers could correctly identify the legal entitlement to maternity leave

IN VIETNAM:

20% of workers return to work after maternity leave

40% of factories do not submit maternity allowance claims on time (Better Work data)

Maternity protections



A sufficient period of paid maternity leave, including benefits, is critical to allow mothers to recover from childbirth and provide adequate care for their infants. Despite their importance, maternity protections are not consistently guaranteed in the garment and footwear supply chain, with female workers often being unaware of their entitlements.

Lack of employment protection and discrimination based on pregnancy is widespread across the sector, with implications for child health, especially where women are in precarious employment and vulnerable to dismissal. Research in Bangladesh and Vietnam found that women often return to work early before they and their infants are ready. In part, this can be a result of maternity pay often being insufficient to cover the cost of raising a child. In Vietnam, workers reported that they must budget carefully to cover their costs during the leave period.⁹ Without sufficient maternity protections, including leave with adequate pay, women may also choose to drop out of the workforce entirely.¹⁰

Maternity protection in the workplace

The ILO has compiled a [short video](#) (2018) providing guidance to improve and ensure maternity protections for women in the workplace. The video covers information on important aspects such as maternity leave and benefits, employment protection and non-discrimination, maternal health, and breastfeeding support.



IN BANGLADESH:

5% of workers say that there is a safe space to store expressed breastmilk

IN VIETNAM:

14% of workers know that they can take breastfeeding breaks during working hours

Breastfeeding support

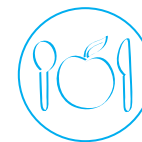


Breastfeeding, especially exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of life, is crucial to child health, development and survival.¹¹ However, one of the main reasons frequently cited by women workers for early weaning is returning to work and having limited time and support to breastfeed.¹²

For nursing workers, paid breastfeeding breaks are a labour right (protected in ILO Convention No. 183 on Maternity Protection). Breastfeeding breaks and support at work, including dedicated facilities for nursing, expressing and storing of breastmilk, is also critical to the health and well-being of mothers and their children.

In the garment and footwear supply chain, factories often do not offer breaks or dedicated facilities. In factories that provide breaks and facilities, workers may be unaware of their existence or are unable to take sufficient break time due to the demands of production.

Maternal health and nutrition



Special health and safety protections for pregnant and nursing workers are both an internationally recognized labour right and crucial to supporting maternal and child health. Exposure to toxic chemicals may be one of the greatest health risks to working mothers and their children in the garment and footwear supply chain, with potentially severe and

**IN VIETNAM:**

No factories surveyed had special health and safety protections in place for pregnant or nursing workers

37% of factories fail to take actions to assess, prevent and limit workers' exposure to hazards (Better Work data)

IN BANGLADESH:

98% of women workers were not offered a health check by their employer during pregnancy or after maternity leave

80% of workers advised that they were not able to bring water to their workstations

irremediable health impacts.¹³ Excessive hours, exposure to high temperatures and heavy workloads can also adversely impact maternal, pre- and postnatal health.

In addition, a mother's nutritional status affects her ability not only to perform in the workplace, but also to bear and raise a healthy child. Vitamin deficiencies – especially iron, calcium and vitamin A – are common among garment and footwear workers, who often lack disposable income to buy nutritious foods and time to make nutritious meals. These deficiencies can contribute to preventable complications during childbirth, and maternal and infant mortality.

Prenatal health care is a critical opportunity to treat vitamin deficiencies; however, for garment and footwear workers, long hours and demanding production schedules can mean they are not able to attend medical appointments. As with breastfeeding breaks, paid time off to attend prenatal health care is an internationally recognized labour right for pregnant workers – yet it is often not the reality for garment and footwear workers.

Access to childcare



Childcare is critical for working mothers because it facilitates their return to work after maternity leave and ensures that children grow up in safe, healthy and nurturing environments. Employer-provided childcare can support breastfeeding during working hours and

IN BANGLADESH:

3% of workers with children use factory-based childcare

IN VIETNAM:

Childcare allowances cover **less than 1%** of the actual cost of childcare

provide business benefits, including enhanced recruitment and retention of workers.¹⁴

Parents working in garment and footwear factories often have limited access to good quality childcare, which can be prohibitively expensive or may not be available during overtime hours. Factory-based facilities, where provided, are often underused, especially where workers report dissatisfaction with the quality of care. Where factories do not offer subsidized childcare facilities, workers must resort to informal babysitting arrangements, or expensive private alternatives, which are more able to accommodate long hours. They may also be forced to leave the children unattended.

A lack of affordable, quality childcare means that workers' children may be at greater risk of neglect and abuse while parents are at work. In Bangladesh, workers' older children sometimes drop out of school in order to care for their younger siblings, which makes them more vulnerable to child labour and exploitation.

Wages and working hours



Wages and working hours for parents and caregivers are critical aspects affecting their ability to provide an adequate standard of living for their children. Parents earning wages below the cost of living are less likely to be able to provide their children with adequate nutrition, decent housing and other basic necessities, such as health care and education.

Long hours for working parents limit the amount of time they can spend with their children. They are also a reason for mothers to

IN BANGLADESH:

30% of garment workers consider their salaries insufficient to afford health care and education for their children

IN VIETNAM:

22.5% of workers correctly identified the minimum wage, and only 55% understand how their wages are calculated

stop breastfeeding. Long hours (which can exceed 60 hours per week in the sector) can interfere with parent–child bonds and contribute to children’s vulnerability to exploitation and abuse where children do not have adequate care and adult supervision during the working day. The situation can be exacerbated by poor transportation options in urban areas, where working parents can spend significant time commuting to and from factories.

CHILD LABOUR AND PROTECTION

While considerable attention has been paid to eliminating child labour in the garment and footwear supply chain, ensuring the wider protection of children in business activities has received far less attention. This may include, for example, ensuring the protection of adolescent workers (those below 18 years and above the legal minimum age for work) inside factories, and safeguarding the rights of children in the communities where workers or their children live, including families of migrant workers.

Child labour and young workers



Employing children below the minimum age remains an acute problem in home-based and informal factories. In the formal, export-oriented garment and footwear sector, child labour most often occurs in the form of hazardous work for adolescents. UNICEF research found that where adolescents work in factories, they often do so without the knowledge of employers and therefore under the same conditions as adult workers – without the special protections they are entitled to by international standards and local laws.

IN VIETNAM:

18% of factories are non-compliant with regulations on the employment of workers below 18 years of age in hazardous work (Better Work data)

IN BANGLADESH:

11% of garment workers have school-aged children who are out of school and vulnerable to child labour

Understanding the drivers of family and community reliance on children’s labour is critical to making progress towards ending child labour in the garment and footwear supply chain. In many garment-producing countries, workers may have school-aged children who are not attending school and are therefore at risk of child labour. High education costs, lack of schools nearby and the child’s lack of interest in schooling were the most commonly cited reasons for out-of-school children in Bangladesh and Vietnam. Child labour also remains an acute problem in deeper tiers of the supply chain, which may fall outside the remit of monitoring and audit systems.¹⁵

Migration and left-behind children



The garment and footwear sector is reliant on internal and international migrant labour across Asia, Europe, North and South America and Africa. While migration can present opportunities for parents, it also poses a number of risks for children. In particular, substandard working conditions –characterized by long working hours, lack of quality childcare and low wages – as well as barriers to accessing basic services, may compel workers to send their children to live with relatives.

For children ‘left behind’, separation from parents, and a lack of parental care and oversight, can cause difficulties for well-being and development. In Vietnam, poverty is a key challenge for left-behind children and their families,¹⁶ and children may not have better access to education or health care despite remittances.¹⁷

IN VIETNAM:

23% of workers have children under 15 years old who do not live with them

IN BANGLADESH:

50% of garment workers live apart from their children

IN CHINA:

74% of migrant workers migrate without their children

80% experience anxiety about the impacts of separation on their children



IN BANGLADESH:

86% say that factory-provided health care clinics are not available to their children

Working parents may also be negatively impacted by separation, which can lead to workers feeling distracted at work and reduced productivity.¹⁸

COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Impacts on children do not end in the workplace but are linked to broader root causes in the community context. In the community, children are affected through the family's living conditions (e.g., housing, water, sanitation standards); the access they have to basic services (e.g., health care and education); and environmental concerns (e.g. water and air pollution).

Access to education and health care



There are critical links between workplace practices and access to education and health care in communities. Workers earning low wages often struggle to afford education and health care for themselves and their children, which in turn can contribute to school dropout rates, child labour, and poor health. In Vietnam, for instance, urban authorities struggle to provide enough schools to cope with increasing migration linked to employment in the garment and footwear sector. In addition, factory-based clinics treat only the workers and not their families.

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)



Garment and footwear production can reduce the quality and availability of drinking water in communities, especially in areas where access to water is already limited. Polluted wastewater and poor WASH infrastructure in factories and surrounding

IN BANGLADESH:

10% of households in urban slums where garment workers live have access to sanitary toilets

45% of workers said that they always wash their hands before eating or feeding a child and before handling or preparing food

communities can facilitate the spread of preventable diseases, which contribute to poor child health and parental absenteeism.

The sector can also affect access to clean sanitation and good hygiene practices. In Bangladesh, workers often lack access to clean toilets at home in their communities, which can place a strain on factory facilities. Menstrual hygiene is also a key concern, and many factories do not provide sanitary napkins for workers who cannot afford them. Hand-washing practices among garment and footwear workers are often suboptimal for a number of reasons, including lack of awareness; lack of soap in employer-provided facilities; the high cost of soap relative to workers' salaries; and limited supply of water at work or in the home.

Protecting the environment for children's health



Children are particularly vulnerable to environmental hazards, due to their physical size, developing bodies, and lack of knowledge about threats in their environment. Air pollution – including greenhouse gases, oil mists, acid vapours, volatile organic compounds, and bad odours – is a significant environmental impact of the garment and footwear industry that affects children disproportionately.¹⁹ Emission of greenhouse gases drives climate change, which harms children through extreme weather and natural disasters,

water scarcity, food insecurity, vector-borne and infectious diseases and mental health issues.^{20, 21} Because children's lungs are growing, they take in more toxic air per unit of body weight than adults. As a result, air pollution is also associated with some of the biggest causes of death for children, such as pneumonia, asthma, bronchitis and other respiratory infections and diseases. A growing body of research also points to risks that air pollution poses to children's developing brains.²²

Water pollution linked to garment and footwear production is a key threat to children – drinking and bathing in polluted water can cause a range of adverse health impacts to which children are vulnerable. Stages of the garment supply chain (e.g. dyeing

and finishing) produce significant amounts of contaminated wastewater. Although regulations often require wastewater to be treated before discharge, poor enforcement means that access to safe water in industrial and urban communities can be severely curtailed due to water contamination.²³

Additionally, hazardous chemicals from garment and footwear production – such as flame retardants, plasticizers, toxic dyes and waterproofing chemicals – can migrate into the environment and be transmitted from pregnant women to their unborn children. Small doses that might be tolerated by an adult can be toxic for a fetus or child. Pregnant women can also suffer disproportionately from noise pollution in the workplace.

Key root causes of impacts on children

The areas detailed in this section are interlinked with broader human rights concerns and underlying root causes. During the analysis and workshops with key stakeholders, the following root causes were identified:

POOR LEGISLATION AND ENFORCEMENT: Gaps in laws relative to international standards can be a key factor contributing to adverse impact on children. Even where laws exist, poor enforcement was identified as a key challenge across the industry. Main gaps that contribute to adverse child rights impacts can include: maternity leave that falls short of the minimum period of 14 weeks set by the ILO, or paid at a rate that does not offer an adequate standard of living; lack of special health and safety protections for pregnant and nursing workers; poor or non-existent regulation to protect children and pregnant women from pollution and toxic chemicals; limited entitlements to paid time off for breastfeeding and prenatal health care; legal minimum wages that do not constitute a living wage; limited protections for adolescent workers; and inadequate limits on working hours, especially for working parents.

GENDER INEQUALITY: Occupational segregation is prevalent across the industry, which often results in a concentration of women in the lower paid, lower skilled positions, with more precarious working conditions. Gender discrimination is widespread, with women often being absent or underrepresented in senior management. As women are typically the primary caregivers in many garment-producing countries, systematic discrimination against working women has been identified as a key contributor to adverse child rights impacts.

LIMITED WORKER VOICE AND REPRESENTATION: Across the industry, garment and footwear workers are often unable to exercise their rights to protect and promote their interests through freedom of association and collective bargaining. Lack of effective mechanisms for worker representation compromises workers' ability to negotiate better working conditions, including in relation to decent work for parents and caregivers. Even where trade unions are active, they are typically controlled by men and thus may not represent the specific needs of women and working mothers.

The case for child rights integration

Pursuant to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), human rights due diligence requires companies to assess risks to rights-holders, paying special attention to the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. Adverse impacts in the garment and footwear supply chain are particularly acute for children, as their age and development make them more vulnerable to negative consequences. For example:

- Childhood is a **unique period** of rapid physical and psychological development. Negative impacts on children's physical, mental and emotional health and well-being can be long-lasting and, in some cases, irreversible.
- Children engaged in child labour can never fully make up for time spent out of education, and **missed opportunities** are rarely restored.
- Children are a **unique stakeholder group**. They face specific vulnerabilities and needs. Business activities that have no negative impact on adults may be harmful for the health and well-being of children.
- Many impacts of children are **invisible**, and businesses rarely involve or seek the input of children on decisions that will profoundly affect them.
- Children may **not understand** that their rights are in jeopardy, and, even when they do, often **face barriers** in making their voices heard. All too frequently, child victims lack the confidence, resources and legal authority to demand accountability from those who violate their rights.²⁴

Beyond their responsibility to identify and mitigate child rights risks, companies will also find a business case for better integration and respect of child rights. Key arguments include:

- **AVOIDING UNLAWFUL PRACTICE:** Many garment-producing countries have laws related to child rights relevant issues such as child labour,

maternity leave, breastfeeding support, health and safety protections for pregnant and nursing women and childcare. By managing child rights holistically, companies can reduce the costs associated with non-compliance with laws and regulations.

- **IMPROVED RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND MORALE:** By implementing family-friendly policies, garment producers can improve recruitment, retention and loyalty, as well as reduce absenteeism. This is particularly relevant in the garment and footwear supply chain, where worker turnover is high and many working mothers choose not to return to work after maternity leave.
- **INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY:** Family-friendly working conditions can improve productivity, especially where working parents have the peace of mind that their children are safe, adequately cared for during and outside of working hours, and have access to learning opportunities.
- **MITIGATED REPUTATIONAL RISK:** Negative events that impact the welfare of children, such as exploitation of young workers in the supply chain, can jeopardize a company's reputation. A commitment to holistically addressing risks to children can mitigate this risk, including potential consequences for the company's bottom line.²⁵
- **ATTRACTING INVESTMENT:** Respecting and supporting children's rights can build investor confidence in companies' risk management. Many investors consider respecting child rights to be an integral component of good management of environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) risks (see section on the role of investors, p. 37).

From a child rights perspective, our current audit scope covers the presence of child labour, and only if required by local law, maternity protections, breastfeeding corners, and in-factory childcare.

– COMPANY REPRESENTATIVE

Limitations of current approaches addressing child rights

This section reviews shortcomings in existing company approaches that were identified through (a) desk research; (b) a review of the practices of 25 leading garment and footwear companies; (c) detailed stakeholder interviews; (d) and workshops with key stakeholders. Findings are presented at an aggregate level and do not represent individual company practices.²⁶

LIMITED COMMITMENT TO ADDRESSING CHILD RIGHTS IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN

Beyond child labour, child rights are rarely included explicitly in sustainability commitments, codes of conduct and other relevant supply chain standards. Many companies reviewed for this report operate under narrow definitions of children's rights in their supply chain. Above all, existing standards typically tend to exclude the situation of working parents, especially mothers. For instance, just 4 out of 25 companies reviewed reference entitlements to maternity leave. Most companies refer to compliance with local law, and only one company requires a minimum leave period that meets international standards set by the ILO (14 weeks). Furthermore, only 7 out of 25 companies expressly require that suppliers pay legally mandated maternity benefits.

The research found a number of other critical gaps in supplier policies relative to children and working parents. In particular, just 7 out of 25 companies ask suppliers to adhere to special health and safety protections for pregnant and nursing workers; 5 out of 25 companies have provisions on factory-based childcare,

either requiring suppliers to provide childcare where mandated by local laws or requiring such facilities, where provided, to be safe, healthy and free from hazards. However, none of the companies had provisions on the quality of childcare facilities or breastfeeding breaks and facilities.

In contrast, all the companies benchmarked had policies prohibiting the use of child labour in their supply chains. Fewer have child labour remediation strategies (12 out of 25) and special guidelines for employing adolescents (21 out of 25).

The lack of commitment to specific child rights concerns beyond child labour reflects a limited understanding among brands and suppliers of their impacts on children through the employment situation of working parents. A number of brands interviewed following the research revealed that they believe their suppliers are unaware of the ways in which children are affected through parental working conditions. In addition to lack of commitment in standards and codes of conduct, the review also revealed that topics related to decent work for parents (e.g. maternity leave, breastfeeding breaks, and childcare) are typically not covered in capacity-building efforts for suppliers (e.g. awareness raising, training).

COMPLIANCE INSUFFICIENT TO ADDRESS SPECIFIC NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND WORKING PARENTS

Supplier codes of conduct and auditing have contributed to a greater awareness of worker rights in the garment and footwear supply chain. However, the compliance approach is not without a number of well-documented limitations.²⁷ Among them are the creation of a 'policing not partnering' mentality, which can incentivize deception, worker coaching and unauthorized subcontracting.

Key findings of baseline assessment of company integration of child rights

The research included a review of the policies and practices of

25 apparel and footwear companies

to determine the extent to which child rights are included in responsible sourcing activities. Overall, the review revealed that child rights considerations beyond child labour are rarely integrated into responsible sourcing approaches. Key findings include:



Few brands have detailed requirements on **maternity protections** –

4/25 companies

have requirements for length of maternity leave

7/25 require

maternity pay and benefits

2/25 address

job protection during maternity leave

However, the majority of brands (17/25) prohibit discrimination specifically on the basis of pregnancy.



Maternal health and nutrition:

22/25 companies address access to drinking water and sanitary toilets at work.

However, fewer companies (6/25) address special health and safety protections for pregnant and nursing workers; none require suppliers to provide paid time off for prenatal health care.



Breastfeeding support is widely neglected in supplier standards – no companies assessed address paid breastfeeding breaks, and just

2/25 had standards

on workers' ability to breastfeed during the working day.



Migrant workers and left-behind children:

Most brands (17/25) have provisions specifically related to the protection of migrant workers; however, none have provisions extending to migrant workers' families or left-behind children.



Access to childcare: Just

5/25 brands have provisions on access to childcare, either requiring facilities where stipulated by national laws or provisions related to the safety of facilities. No companies had provision on the quality of childcare facilities, or accessibility.



We cannot rely on worker interviews during audits to understand the issues workers face, as very often they are coached by factory management to respond in a way that paints the supplier in a positive light.

– COMPANY REPRESENTATIVE

Where children are concerned, compliance is often ineffective to address their specific needs and vulnerabilities, including in the community context. Key limitations of the compliance approach in relation to children's rights can include:

- **FOCUS ON EXISTENCE RATHER THAN QUALITY OF FACILITIES AND SERVICES:** Addressing negative impact on children requires a commitment to focus on the actual needs of working parents and children (e.g. sufficient quality of facilities, not just their existence) rather than compliance checks. For instance, simply providing childcare facilities is not sufficient to meet the childcare needs of working parents. Safety, quality (e.g. access to learning opportunities), accessibility (e.g. working hours) and affordability are important considerations that determine whether children benefit from these services, not just mere existence.

We have not identified any cases of child labour in our first-tier factories for a number of years now, so we have shifted our focus to look into the upstream supply chain for child labour and other human rights issues.

– COMPANY REPRESENTATIVE

- **EXCLUSIVE WORKPLACE FOCUS:** Compliance checks are typically designed to identify a predefined list of issues in the workplace, neglecting workers' broader living situation in the community. However, impacts on children occur in both factories and communities in ways that are normally interlinked. An exclusive focus on the workplace fails to identify important negative consequences for children that stem from their living situation and access to basic services, especially for vulnerable groups such as migrant workers.
- **FAILURE TO IDENTIFY ROOT CAUSES AND SYSTEMIC PROBLEMS:** Compliance checks provide a 'snapshot in time' and may not provide sufficient information to understand underlying root causes that lead to violations. Audits may be effective in revealing only the symptoms or consequences of underlying problems but not to shed light on their root causes. An understanding of underlying factors is critical, however, to remedying existing violations and preventing future ones.
- **DUPLICATION AND 'AUDIT FATIGUE':** Individual audits and competing standards from a number of brands can contribute to duplication and 'audit fatigue', whereby suppliers approach audits as unmeaningful, 'box-ticking' exercises rather than tools for improvement. Rather than improving the relationship between a brand and its suppliers, audits can reinforce a 'police force' dynamic. This dynamic and audit fatigue can place a strain on the relationship, and inadvertently incentivize deceptive behaviour, such as coaching workers on appropriate responses to audit questions and removal of unauthorized workers from the workplace.
- **LACK OF MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT WITH RIGHTS-HOLDERS:** The ineffectiveness of the compliance approach, and sometimes beyond-compliance efforts, can stem from the failure to engage rights-holders in the assessment of social impact. Lack of meaningful engagement with rights-holders can give a false sense of social compliance where hidden consequences on the most vulnerable, including children, remain undetected. Workplace interviews rarely allow workers to safely and anonymously relay their experiences, and grievance mechanisms are inconsistently available and not always accessible, especially for children.
- **LIMITED TO FIRST TIER:** Audits tend to focus on first-tier suppliers, where garment and footwear buyers have direct business relationships with producers. However, some of the most severe impacts may occur deeper in the supply chain (e.g. in subcontracted factories or second- or third-tier suppliers) where some of the most vulnerable workers may be engaged. Child labour, for example, has largely been eliminated from the first tier in many garment and footwear producing countries, but remains an acute problem in deeper tiers.

LIMITED AWARENESS OF THE NEEDS OF WORKING PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Frequently, the mechanisms through which companies engage workers in the supply chain are interviews during the audit process, a growing number of worker voice tools, and grievance mechanisms. Worker interviews rarely allow workers to safely and anonymously relay their experiences, especially where management is present or involved in the selection of workers.

One may think that limited use of our grievance mechanism means that there are no issues, when in reality it is a sign that it is simply not working.

– COMPANY REPRESENTATIVE

Workers can be coached on how to respond to questions, and interviews may be limited to closed questions on defined topics. Often, these topics are limited to (legal) employer obligations within a narrow understanding of the employer–employee relationship, not covering family aspects. As a result, the needs of working parents and their children, and how work in the factory is impacting family life, are rarely covered in the scope of audits.

Worker voice tools have been growing in popularity in recent years. However, these tools are typically designed primarily to gather data from workers on pre-identified working conditions indicators, rather than to meaningfully engage and empower workers to improve their conditions.²⁸

Another key barrier to engaging workers is the inconsistent availability, quality and effectiveness of grievance mechanisms. According to KnowTheChain, a publicly available benchmark of company approaches to managing forced labour risks, few garment and footwear brands have formal grievance mechanisms.²⁹ Even in these cases, there may be accessibility barriers (e.g., language barriers, or lack of confidence in anonymity) which are magnified for children. Multiple companies noted during interviews that grievance mechanisms are underutilized due to accessibility factors.

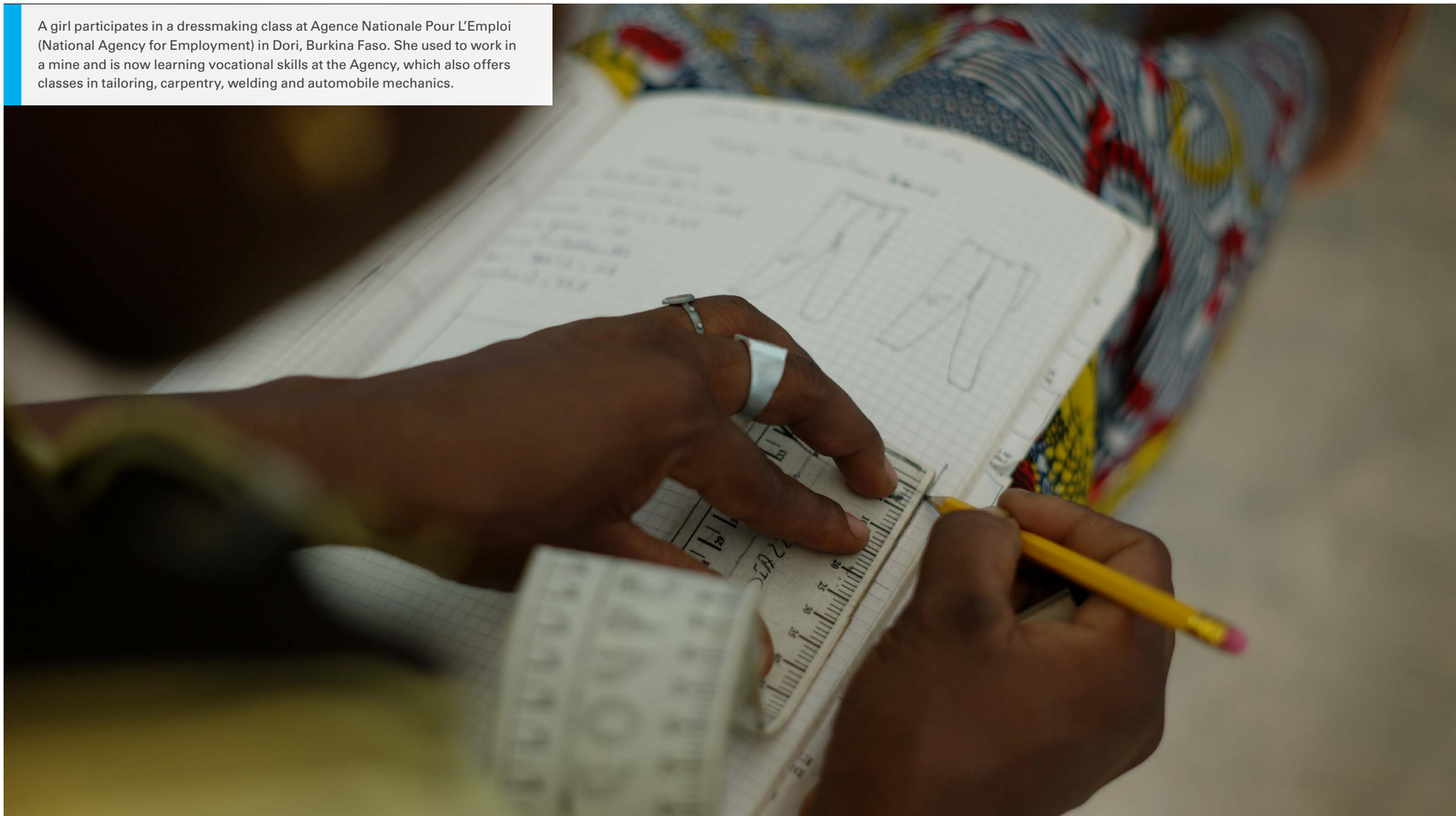
Outside of audits, worker voice and grievance mechanisms, companies infrequently engage workers as key stakeholders in human rights due diligence and responsible supply chain management. Compliance approaches are typically not based on genuine worker engagement, and do not incorporate the candid perspectives of workers in relation to their working and living conditions. These factors can contribute to a poor understanding of the specific needs of working parents and their children.

REDUCED VISIBILITY CAN PREVENT ACTION ON CHILD RIGHTS

The production of garments and footwear involves many actors at various stages of the supply chain – from raw material processing to cutting, sewing and assembling final products. As a result of the complexity of the supply chain, companies can lack visibility into deeper tiers, especially the raw material level. According to KnowTheChain 2018 benchmark report, less than half of 20 companies had a process in place to trace their supply chain, and only seven disclosed information about suppliers beyond the first tier.³⁰

Visibility beyond tier one is critical to addressing child rights risks because the most salient and severe impacts on children may be found in the deeper tiers of the supply chain. Risks in relation to child labour, poor conditions for working parents and exploitation of women can be most acute in informal, subcontracted or home-based enterprises, which are often invisible to brands.³¹ Although many brands prohibit the use of unauthorized subcontracting, the practice is still commonplace.³²

A girl participates in a dressmaking class at Agence Nationale Pour L'Emploi (National Agency for Employment) in Dori, Burkina Faso. She used to work in a mine and is now learning vocational skills at the Agency, which also offers classes in tailoring, carpentry, welding and automobile mechanics.



We face challenges driving strong purchasing practices in a uniform way throughout our supply chain...and believe that a stronger industry-wide initiative is needed to level the playing field amongst businesses and go beyond islands of good practice.

– COMPANY REPRESENTATIVE

CONFLICTS BETWEEN BUYING PRACTICES AND RESPONSIBLE SOURCING PRIORITIES

There is a widely recognized link between purchasing practices and working conditions.³³ This link is also important for child rights given that worsening conditions for working parents often also affect their families (e.g. longer working hours). Additionally, in times of higher production pressure, factory managers may be incentivized to outsource (where risks to children are generally higher), seek to tap into vulnerable workforces (e.g. adolescent workers) or rely on child labour.

The research revealed that in many companies, responsible sourcing and buying teams are out of alignment, resulting in suppliers receiving mixed messages. For instance, while a responsible sourcing team may be asking suppliers to provide better maternity policies, childcare support or breastfeeding breaks, buyers may be simultaneously undermining suppliers' ability to invest in these standards by pushing for cheaper prices or shorter lead times.

A global UNICEF business survey on family-friendly policies showed that companies (especially small and medium-sized enterprises) in industries exposed to price fluctuations were less likely to offer employee guarantees such as paid leave, childcare and flexible working arrangements due to greater uncertainty and planning difficulties.³⁴ Apparel and footwear brands can contribute to this uncertainty through their purchasing practices.

Buying practices that have been correlated with substandard factory workplace conditions include:

- **SHORT-TERM RELATIONSHIPS:** Short-term contracts between buyers and suppliers leads to production planning errors that can negatively impact workers and their families.
- **DOWNWARD PRESSURE ON PRICES:** Can leave suppliers with reduced cash flow to pay workers and improve factory performance.
- **INCREASED QUALITY DEMANDS:** Can contribute to slower per piece production times and lead to long working hours and reduced feasibility for breaks (including for breastfeeding).
- **SHORT TURNAROUND TIMES:** Changes or cancellation of orders can increase production costs and affect working hours, wages, and working conditions.

Better Processes, Better Metrics: Integrating Child Rights into Responsible Sourcing Frameworks

THE PRECEDING SECTION SUMMARIZED DIFFERENT WAYS in which children are affected in the garment and footwear supply chain. It also discussed limitations in current company approaches to manage these risks. This section presents an 'action framework', as well as corresponding metrics, which support garment and footwear companies to integrate child rights in responsible supply chain approaches. In particular, it enables companies to:

- Identify gaps in responsible sourcing policies and programmes in relation to child rights
- Take proactive steps to integrate child rights

- Monitor outcomes and measure progress on child rights
- Report on steps taken and progress achieved to improve impacts on children

This section focuses on the manufacturing stage of the garment and footwear supply chain. However, it also highlights the importance of including deeper tiers of the supply chain in responsible sourcing efforts. Moreover, while targeted towards companies, the framework calls for multi-stakeholder and collective action to increase effectiveness, avoid duplication of efforts and scale impact. Engaging and addressing the needs of affected stakeholders – whether children, adolescent workers, women or working parents – is a critical component throughout each of the following steps, ensuring that adequate safeguards are in place.³⁵

The framework below builds on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the Children's Rights and Business Principles and relevant apparel and footwear guidance tools such as the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains in the Garment and Footwear Sector.

The following text outlines practical steps that companies can take to improve their internal systems to address impacts on children and working parents in the supply chain. The suggested steps do not foresee the creation of parallel processes. Instead, they provide suggestions, guidance and examples of how to integrate child rights into existing responsible sourcing efforts, thereby enhancing their effectiveness and ensuring that children as a vulnerable stakeholder group are adequately considered.



A girl plays a game with friends at a UNICEF-supported Adolescent Club near her home in Dhaka's Duaripara slum. Twice each week Moni and 35-40 other young people have the opportunity to get together and be ordinary teenagers in a safe space.

Overview: action framework for integrating child rights

1

ASSESS AND INTEGRATE

1.1 Assess child rights risks and company preparedness to respond

- ☐ Assess risks to children in the supply chain, including in deeper tiers (Annex B)
- ☐ Conduct internal assessment of the company's maturity with respect to policy and practice on child rights (gap analysis)

1.2 Integrate child rights into policies and management systems

- ☐ Update policies to integrate risks to children identified in impact assessments
- ☐ Integrate child rights indicators in relevant business processes such as supplier screening, selection, audit processes and responsible purchasing guidelines
- ☐ Establish remediation processes and standard operating procedures to prevent and mitigate 'high risk' impacts on children

1.3 Get internal buy-in and train key decision makers

- ☐ Obtain senior management support for integrating child rights into responsible sourcing policies, processes and approaches
- ☐ Integrate child rights into training programmes for decision makers and relevant company functions (e.g. buying, compliance, sustainability, etc.)

1.4 Strengthen supplier capacity to address child rights and root causes

- ☐ Support capacity of suppliers to address child rights risks
- ☐ Incentivize suppliers to address child rights risks
- ☐ Promote the business case for investment in child rights
- ☐ Implement programmes with suppliers that address root causes of child rights risks (e.g., women's empowerment, family-friendly policies, access to basic services)

2

MONITOR AND REPORT

2.1 Monitor progress on activities and child rights outcomes

- ☐ Track and review progress towards integration of child rights into responsible sourcing processes
- ☐ Assess and monitor outcomes for working parents, young workers and children at factory/community level

2.2 Stakeholder engagement, worker voice and grievance processes

- ☐ Support suppliers in establishing effective worker engagement processes (e.g. collective bargaining, worker voice) and grievance mechanisms
- ☐ Solicit the voice and input of working parents and young workers to tailor approaches based on needs and preference

2.3 Report outcomes, progress and disclose suppliers

- ☐ Report progress towards child rights integration and outcomes in the supply chain
- ☐ Disclose list of suppliers to improve transparency

3

COLLABORATE AND SUPPORT

3.1 Collaborate and invest in promising initiatives

- ☐ Collaborate with key stakeholders (e.g., business partners, civil society, government) to scale good practices that achieve positive impact for children
- ☐ Invest in and support programmes that address root causes and improve access to basic services in communities, including in deeper tiers of the supply chain

3.2 Support and advocate for children

- ☐ Support local government and advocate for better public policies that protect and fulfil child rights
- ☐ Engage in joint advocacy through industry platforms to support the creation of an enabling environment



UNICEF's
assessment in

Bangladesh and Vietnam showed frequent violations of maternity protections yet the review of brand practices showed that maternity rights indicators are rarely included in conventional audit and monitoring efforts by brands.

1

ASSESS AND INTEGRATE

Ensuring respect for children's rights requires an analysis of the company's actual and potential impact on children. Understanding this impact and evaluating the company's internal proficiency to managing these risks are important first steps to developing effective mitigation strategies. Risk and impact assessment on child rights should be followed by steps to assess the company's maturity to manage these impacts. This may require an analysis of the integration of child rights considerations in policies, management, monitoring and reporting systems.

1.1 Assess child rights risks and company preparedness to respond

❑ IDENTIFY RISKS TO CHILDREN IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN:

Integrate child rights considerations into impact and risk assessment processes. Undertake research and collect feedback through worker and stakeholder engagement processes to identify risks and impact. Assessments should cover the full spectrum of actual and potential impacts on children, as outlined in Annex B. This should include critical areas in the workplace and community, including direct and/or indirect impacts. Assessment may be conducted in a stand-alone manner or integrated into existing risk and impact assessment processes and materiality analyses.

TOOLS AND FURTHER GUIDANCE:

- Annex B for list of issues and indicators
- Danish Institute for Human Rights & UNICEF, [Children's Rights in Impact Assessments](#)
- UNICEF Bangladesh, [Better Business for Children: Understanding Children's Rights and the Ready-Made Garment Sector in Bangladesh](#)
- UNICEF Bangladesh, [The Ready-Made Garment Sector and Children in Bangladesh](#)
- UNICEF Viet Nam, [The Apparel and Footwear Sector and Children in Viet Nam](#)

❑ CONDUCT INTERNAL ASSESSMENT OF COMPANY'S MATURITY AND PREPAREDNESS TO RESPOND:

Addressing adverse child rights impacts requires the integration of relevant indicators and processes into company policies and systems. As a first step, companies should conduct an internal gap assessment to understand the extent to which child rights indicators are adequately integrated in responsible sourcing policy and practice.

Traceability and supply chain mapping

Assessing impact on children in the supply chain will require traceability analyses to map the supply chain, emphasizing lower tiers where visibility may be more limited. This will help to identify areas where risks to children may be most severe (e.g. areas with high levels of informal employment and lack of legal protections). Surfacing the complex supply chain will also enable companies to invest resources in a way that prioritizes the most salient impacts – in line with the UNGPs and OECD guidelines.

This should also include mapping avenues for enhancing company response and maturity. Companies should also evaluate purchasing practices and engage suppliers to understand how their buying behaviours impact working conditions, including for working parents and caregivers.

TOOLS AND FURTHER GUIDANCE:

- UNICEF, [Children are Everyone's Business: Workbook 2.0](#)
- Sedex, [Self-Assessment Questionnaire](#)
- Higg Index, [Brand & Retail Module](#)
- Better Buying, [Index Report, Fall 2018](#)

METRICS

- ☐ The company includes child rights in risk identification and impact assessment processes (including audits, worker voice, materiality analysis, etc.)
- ☐ The company undertakes a gap analysis to assess its preparedness and proficiency to address, manage and mitigate identified child rights risks through its sustainability policies and processes
- ☐ The company traces its supply chain to the raw material level, with a specific focus on identifying child rights risks in deeper tiers of the supply chain

1.2 Integrate child rights into policies and management systems

- ☐ **UPDATE POLICY COMMITMENTS:** Based on risk identification, impact assessment and gap analysis, update relevant policies (i.e. sustainability commitments and supplier

codes of conduct) to include identified risks to children, as relevant. Addressing child rights specifically in policies and codes of conduct is important because it sets expectations on minimum requirements and recognizes children as a particularly vulnerable stakeholder in the sector.

TOOLS AND FURTHER GUIDANCE:

- Business for Social Responsibility, [Gender Equality in Codes of Conduct](#)
- UNICEF & Save the Children, [Children's Rights in Policies and Codes of Conduct](#)

Why is this important to children's rights?

A policy commitment is a statement approved at the highest levels of the business that shows the company is committed to respecting children's rights and communicates this internally and externally. There are a wide range of forms a company may use to set out its commitment – this may be a separate policy or commitments within other formal policies, or provisions within other documents that govern the company's approach, such as a supplier code of conduct.

Referencing a policy commitment sets a foundation that is required to drive respect for children's rights into the core values of the business. It shows that top management considers respect for children's rights to be an important part of conducting business; and it sets expectations of how staff and business relationships should act, as well as what others can expect of the company. It should trigger a range of other internal actions that are necessary to meet the commitment in practice.

- ❑ **INTEGRATE CHILD RIGHTS INTO RESPONSIBLE SOURCING PROCESSES:** Integrate relevant child rights risks into supplier screening, selection and audit processes. Key child rights considerations can also be included in supplier contracts and requirements for suppliers to implement standards in their own supply chains beyond tier one. Also, include more robust and relevant child rights-related standards in audit protocols, including by engaging with third-party audit firms. Doing so will ensure that audits will serve to check not only the availability of certain provisions and benefits, but also their quality and effectiveness.

Establish prevention and remediation processes and management systems for ‘high risk’ concerns. For example, implement child labour prevention and remediation systems where child labour has been identified as a ‘high risk’ concern. Remediation policies are important not just for child labour, but for a broad range of child rights impacts (e.g. maternity rights violations). Processes should define standard operating procedures, including response mechanisms and monitoring processes, typically in collaboration with civil society partners.

- ❑ **ESTABLISH PRINCIPLES THAT ENSURE ALIGNMENT OF BUYING BEHAVIOUR WITH SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES:** Purchasing practices impact working conditions, including for working parents and their children. Develop responsible purchasing principles, based on

key purchasing risks identified in the initial assessment. Examples of issues that can be addressed in a responsible purchasing policy include high-pressure cost negotiation strategies, short lead times, and/or delayed payments to suppliers, which put pressure on suppliers and can contribute to poor working practices.

TOOLS AND FURTHER GUIDANCE:

- Ethical Trade Initiative, [Guide to Buying Responsibly](#)
- Better Buying, [Seven Purchasing Practices that Impact Working Conditions](#)
- ILO, [Purchasing Practices and Working Conditions in Global Supply Chains: Global Survey Results](#)

METRICS

- ❑ The company has a public commitment to addressing adverse child rights impact in the supply chain
- ❑ The company includes child rights (*Annex B*) in its supplier code of conduct
- ❑ The company includes child rights (*Annex B*) in its supply chain management processes (e.g. audits, supplier screening and selection processes)
- ❑ The company has prevention and remediation processes for high-risk concerns (e.g. maternity rights violations, child labour)
- ❑ The company takes steps to improve purchasing practices to avoid negative consequences on working conditions, including for working parents and children

EXAMPLE

Adidas AG is promoting maternal health and well-being through commitments in its Workplace Standards and Guidelines on Employment Standards. According to these standards, Adidas suppliers are required to provide a minimum of three months of maternity leave at minimum wage to employees, regardless of local law, must monitor the health of pregnant workers regularly, and adjust hours and work type accordingly with respect to maternal health. Furthermore, to meet Adidas' standards, suppliers are expected to provide alternative transportation options for women who may need to return home at midday to breastfeed or care for children.

Source: [Adidas Guidelines on Employment Standards](#)

Josna (29), a garment factory worker, prepares his son Abir (5) for the Day Care Center before going to work in Mirpur Slum, Dhaka, Bangladesh.



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Services may exist,
but because of
high [production]
pressure many
workers may not be
able to avail of them.
You cannot capture
this in an audit.

– BANGLADESHI
MANUFACTURER

EXAMPLE

Hennes & Mauritz AB (H&M) is one of the companies that publicly demonstrates its commitment to addressing its impacts on children's and women's rights in its Human Rights Policy. According to the company's policy:

"H&M looks to those human rights defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its two corresponding covenants, The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Additionally, we also look to children's and women's rights as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

"H&M's approach to its business operations is informed by the ILO International Labour Organization's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, The Children's Rights and Business Principles, the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the United Nations Global Compact, to which we are signatories."

Source: [H&M Human Rights Policy](#)

1.3 Get internal buy-in and train key decision makers

Turning policy into actions that promote child rights in the supply chain requires support from senior decision makers and internal functions, such as buying and procurement teams. By obtaining buy-in from senior management and training internal business functions, companies can improve their preparedness to manage child rights risks in the supply chain.

- ❑ **OBTAIN SENIOR MANAGEMENT SUPPORT FOR INTEGRATING CHILD RIGHTS INTO RESPONSIBLE SOURCING APPROACHES:** Senior and middle-level management support for responsible sourcing programmes increases their chances of being effective and successful. Obtaining buy-in on integration of child rights is just as important in managing child rights risks, and a senior member of management should be designated as responsible for policy and compliance with child rights commitments.

- ❑ **INTEGRATE CHILD RIGHTS STANDARDS INTO TRAINING PROGRAMMES:** Include child rights risks uncovered as part of the assessment process and incorporated into supply chain standards into training and capacity-building efforts. Child rights can be integrated into existing programmes for internal decision makers and company functions (e.g. buying and procurement).

METRICS

- ❑ Child rights standards are approved by senior management who are accountable for improving performance, with a dedicated focal point responsible for monitoring and implementation, including in the supply chain
- ❑ The company includes child rights in training activities of internal functions (e.g. compliance, buying, etc.)

1.4 Strengthen supplier capacity to address child rights and root causes

Programmes that go beyond compliance checks help companies fill in gaps associated with audits and allow companies to address root causes and specific needs of working parents (e.g. family-friendly workplace policies).

- ❑ **INTEGRATE CHILD RIGHTS INTO SUPPLIER TRAINING PROGRAMMES:** In addition to improving compliance with new standards, training can empower suppliers and workers to understand and address important aspects for working parents and children. Ensuring that workers understand their rights and entitlements as working parents is critical to improvements. This step is particularly important because providing entitlements and investment in services is too often ineffective if awareness of, and demand for, entitlements and services is low.

We need to emphasize training, implementation and making sure the right processes are in place, rather than just ticking the box [...]. A compliance and audit culture sometimes creates a false sense of meeting social standards because it looks at yes or no questions, but does not measure real impact on workers, especially in relation to more complex challenges facing women and children.

– BANGLADESHI
MANUFACTURER

- ❑ **WORK WITH SUPPLIERS TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS AND CAPACITY ON CHILD RIGHTS:** Integrate the needs of working parents, adolescent workers and children into existing capacity-building programmes. Such programmes can focus on child rights outcomes at factory (e.g. management training, technical assistance) and/or community levels (e.g. health, nutrition, WASH), and should be developed in collaboration with local organizations and tailored to cultural and geographical contexts. Offering incentives for suppliers to address child rights risks (e.g. higher order volumes) and promoting the business case can promote sustainability of these efforts.
- ❑ **IMPLEMENT PROGRAMMES WITH SUPPLIERS THAT ADDRESS ROOT CAUSES OF CHILD RIGHTS RISKS:** Programmes that tackle root causes of adverse child rights impacts may include, for example, women's empowerment, freedom of association and living wages, etc.

Improving audit protocols

Audits are frequently carried out by third-party audit firms. While brands and retailers typically provide their standards (e.g. code of conduct) and determine parameters such as sample size, their ability to influence auditor protocols and tools (e.g. worker interview questionnaire) may be more limited. Engagement of audit firms and organizations like the Association of Professional Social Compliance Auditors

EXAMPLE

In China, The Children's Place sponsors a training programme entitled 'Parents at Work: Distance Without Separation' through the Centre for Child Rights and Corporate Social Responsibility (CCR CSR). This training programme provides parents with approaches on how to care and communicate with their children over long distances.

It is estimated that 61 million children in rural China are living without day-to-day care from their parents, as mothers and fathers travel to the coastal cities to work in factories. In addition, it is estimated that 12.6 million migrant children travel with their parents to their work city. Due to their parents' busy work schedules, these children may struggle to integrate into society in the city they have moved to. Enabling factory workers with the 'know-how' regarding their childcare challenges has been proven to be beneficial to them and their children.

Implementation of the programme focused on the company's key footwear suppliers in China. Trainings have targeted 850 workers across 4 factories and are currently still underway.

Source: [Parents at Work – Distance Without Separation](#)

(APSCA) are important to improve the way audits are designed and executed. As brands and retailers may increasingly update their standards (e.g. integrate child rights), it is important that collaborative efforts are undertaken with audit firms to ensure that appropriate modifications are made to audit processes (e.g. in terms of worker engagement on family topics), to ensure effective implementation.

Eggar (15) is at a tailoring workshop with her teacher Lucy (on the right). Eggar is out of school and wishes to become a good tailor one day. 24 pupils attend the training daily, 12 of them in the morning and the other 12 in the afternoon. The groups are mixed with boys and girls between 12 to 18 years of age.



- **WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES:** Support women's empowerment initiatives at the factory level and integrate challenges for adolescent workers and working mothers (i.e., access to childcare, breastfeeding facilities, prenatal health). Work with suppliers to promote women's advancement into higher-skilled, higher-paid positions, including in senior management. Capacity-building should also include a focus on eliminating discrimination based on pregnancy and motherhood.

EXAMPLE

There are strong links between women's empowerment programmes and children's rights. A child rights perspective can be leveraged through companies' existing gender programmes such as in relation to maternity protections, childcare and gender equality.

A number of brands and retailers have developed women's empowerment programmes in their supply chains. For instance, Gap Inc. has developed the P.A.C.E programme which, in collaboration with local NGOs, has trained thousands of women in life skills, reproductive health and hygiene, occupational health and safety, and gender empowerment. In addition, some women have received career advancement coaching to allow high-performing workers to advance their careers. An independent evaluation conducted in 2013 found that women having undergone the P.A.C.E. training in Cambodia were promoted three times faster than other female garment workers at the same factory.

Source: [P.A.C.E – Empowering Women](#)

EXAMPLE

Levi Strauss & Co., the Levi Strauss Foundation, Target, and Eileen Fisher are sponsoring joint research by Harvard University and MANAUS Consulting aimed at identifying the state and drivers of worker well-being in factory settings. The goal is to create roadmaps for human and business flourishing. Since 2016, over 13,000 workers in 15 apparel factories in 6 countries have been surveyed, forming the largest study of well-being in the global supply chain. MANAUS and Harvard, together with the other research partners, are working on a multi-stakeholder effort to change the way brand–vendor partnerships are structured to unlock gains for workers and businesses.

“Through the Worker Well-being initiative, LS&Co. is partnering with global manufacturers to go beyond labor compliance and improve health, financial empowerment, and equality for the workers who make its products. LS&Co. defines well-being as a state of being happy, healthy and engaged, which is brought about when basic human needs are nurtured. Research shows that optimizing workers’ well-being also drives traditional business metrics. Therefore investing in workers’ well-being is becoming a new baseline for doing business with LS&Co. [...] By 2025, LS&Co. will produce more than 80 per cent of its product volume in Worker Well-being factories and incorporate all of its strategic vendors into the initiative.[...] LS&Co. commissioned [a] report to identify and promote promising strategies to advance gender equality across the apparel supply chain while strengthening business operations. The report identifies five priority focus areas for investment – skill development, pregnancy & parenthood, menstruation, wages, work hours, harassment & gender based violence – and details ten strategies that are making the global apparel supply chain more fair, engaging, and productive for all.”

(excerpt from Levi Strauss Foundation, [Improving Business Performance Through Gender Equality](#))

Sources: [Shining a Light on Worker Well-Being](#), OECD, [Measuring the Impacts of Business on Well-Being and Sustainability](#)

- **FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION:** Support programmes that improve workers’ right to collective bargaining and freedom of association, with a focus on fair representation of women. In addition, companies can support enhanced workplace communication and dialogue via training on worker–management negotiation techniques, and sign up to global framework agreements, where applicable.
- **LIVING WAGES:** Develop a roadmap that progressively increases wages towards a living wage standard – sufficient to cover the needs of workers and their families. Minimum wages in many garment-producing countries

are insufficient to cover the basic needs of workers and their families. Companies should work collectively with stakeholders, including workers and trade unions, to achieve progress with measurable impact.

METRICS

- ❑ The company implements meaningful capacity-building programmes with suppliers that encompass child rights risks
- ❑ The company implements meaningful measures that progressively improve root causes of adverse child rights impact (e.g. women’s empowerment, collective bargaining and/or living wages)

 Monitoring progress on human rights integration, and reporting transparently on measures taken, are important parts of the human rights due diligence process. They show to what extent companies are continually implementing commitments and achieving progress.

2

MONITOR AND REPORT

Monitoring, analysing and reporting data on the ways in which workers and their children are affected in the supply chain is essential for the realization of children's rights – because what gets measured and assessed opens the door for effective management. Companies should therefore take steps to define child rights indicators (Annex B), monitor their implementation and publicly disclose actions taken and progress made.

2.1 Monitor progress on activities and child rights outcomes

- ☐ **TRACK AND REVIEW PROGRESS TOWARDS INTEGRATION OF CHILD RIGHTS:** Undertake measurement to monitor and report how child rights risks are being managed in the supply chain. As a first step, determine whether the necessary governance and management processes are in place that support the assessment and reporting on child rights metrics in the supply chain. Where gaps have been identified, efforts should focus on specific metrics, as proposed in Annex B, to improve the maturity of child rights risk management. This should also include appropriate and child rights sensitive remediation processes (e.g. grievance procedures).

- ☐ **MONITOR OUTCOMES FOR WORKING PARENTS, YOUNG WORKERS AND CHILDREN AT FACTORY/COMMUNITY LEVEL:** Outcome data is important to developing strategies to improve impacts on children and encourage more sustainable business practices. Child rights indicators (Annex B) should be used to assess outcomes and determine whether policies and programmes are having the intended outcomes. Extend monitoring into deeper tiers of the supply chains. Outcome metrics should go beyond the existence of policies and processes captured during compliance audits and assess, e.g., quality of services, frequency of use, and specific outcomes for workers and their families (Annex B).

METRICS

- ☐ The company tracks its activities to integrate child rights and periodically reviews progress
- ☐ The company monitors child rights outcomes at the factory/ community level (Annex B), including in deeper tiers of the supply chain

2.2 Stakeholder engagement, worker voice and grievance processes

Companies can take concrete steps to better understand factory working conditions and the well-being of workers, as well as any issues related to child rights risk and impacts. To do so, both proactive and reactive communication channels should be available to workers.

- ☐ **SUPPORT SUPPLIERS IN ESTABLISHING WORKER ENGAGEMENT MECHANISMS:** Assist suppliers to develop communication channels through which workers can

voice challenges without retaliation or fear of reprisal. Use appropriate technologies to engage workers and identify social impact through applications, surveys and hotlines. Invite worker input on challenges faced by working parents, adolescent workers and their families. Engagement should always occur in consultation with unions and worker representations so as not to undermine freedom of association.

- ❑ **ESTABLISH EFFECTIVE GRIEVANCE MECHANISMS THAT ENCOMPASS CHILD RIGHTS:** In addition to worker voice engagement, establish grievance mechanisms that allow workers to convey child rights concerns and violations when they arise. Design grievance mechanisms in a way that ensures they are accessible to working parents, children and young workers. Given that women represent the majority of garment and footwear workers, the mechanism needs to be designed and equipped to respond to gender-specific issues that affect women in their role as parents and caregivers, as well as female adolescent workers.

TOOLS AND FURTHER GUIDANCE:

- UNICEF, [Discussion Paper: Operational-level grievance mechanisms fit for children](#)
- IHRB, [Remediation and Operational-Level Grievance Mechanisms](#)

- ❑ **SOLICIT FEEDBACK TO TAILOR APPROACHES BASED ON NEEDS AND PREFERENCES:** Feedback that has been obtained through proactive engagement with workers and suppliers can provide essential information to ensure that capacity-building programmes and beyond-compliance approaches can better meet workers' needs. Companies should not employ a one-way dialogue with workers in supplier factories. Establishing a two-way dialogue will help ensure responsible sourcing approaches are more targeted and effective. This can also be achieved through working with unions and worker representatives.

METRICS

- ❑ The company has or supports meaningful worker engagement processes (e.g. collective bargaining, worker voice) that encompass child rights concerns
- ❑ The company has or supports effective grievance processes in the supply chain that encompass child rights concerns
- ❑ The company has or supports meaningful stakeholder engagement mechanisms for soliciting feedback from suppliers, workers and other affected stakeholders on responsible sourcing approaches

2.3 Report outcomes, progress and disclose suppliers

- ❑ **REPORT PROGRESS TOWARDS INTEGRATION OF CHILD RIGHTS AND OUTCOMES IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN:** Report on steps taken at HQ level to integrate child rights into responsible sourcing efforts, as well as outcome indicators

at the supplier and/or factory level. With enhanced policies and processes in place to manage and track performance on child rights, companies can meet rising external expectations from stakeholders such as investors, policymakers, consumers, etc.

- ❑ **PUBLICLY DISCLOSE LIST OF SUPPLIERS, INCLUDING BEYOND TIER ONE:** Based on information captured by the mapping process, publishing supplier lists, including beyond tier one, is an important step to increase transparency in the sector. It enables actors, including civil society groups, trade unions, local communities and workers themselves to alert brands of any potential issues in their supply chains, and work toward resolving them. Greater transparency can also help investors and consumers make more informed decisions and reward companies with responsible approaches to managing risks of adverse human rights impacts.

METRICS

- ❑ The company reports on activities towards integrating child rights in its business policy and practice, including in the supply chain
- ❑ The company reports on child rights outcomes at the factory/ community level, including in deeper tiers of the supply chain
- ❑ The company discloses list of suppliers, including beyond tier one

We need collaborative, centralized solutions rather than each factory and brand developing their own systems (e.g. public-private partnerships).

– BANGLADESHI MANUFACTURER

3

COLLABORATE AND ADVOCATE

While governments have a duty to protect their citizens from human rights infringements, the UNGPs recognize the important role of companies to support and reinforce government action. For example, companies can use their leverage and influence to raise awareness and promote government action to improve the protection of child rights (e.g. decent work for working parents, access to basic services, migrant workers' rights). Companies can also collaborate with business and civil society partners to tackle root causes and drive systemic change.

3.1 Collaborate and invest in promising initiatives

- ❑ **COLLABORATE AT INDUSTRY LEVEL TO REDUCE DUPLICATION AND SCALE POSITIVE IMPACT:** In order to reduce audit fatigue and duplication of efforts, and free up resources for investment in programmes that tackle root causes, consider streamlining assessment processes through sector collaboration. This could take place, for example, via joint audit programmes and/or the creation of

EXAMPLE

VF Corporation has established a Worker and Community Development (WCD) programme that invests in worker health and well-being in VF's supplier factories. The programme includes three core workstreams: (1) Water and Sanitation, (2) Health and Nutrition, and (3) Childcare and Education.

The programme was developed in response to poor living conditions for garment workers and weak systems within factories. It focuses on investing in infrastructure and the improvement of factory management systems. The programme uses a human-centric designed process, and is therefore needs based, and locally adapted based on the location of the factory, built on the input of workers.

The programme is funded by VF and seen as an investment with a need to show a business return. A theory of change (TOC) framework links programme activities to supply chain stability and improved reputation. Each workstream has its own theory of change that feeds into a master TOC.

Source: [VF Worker Well-Being](#)

sector-wide standards for monitoring risks that include a focus on working women, adolescent workers and children. Engage in initiatives that develop common reporting indicators for the sector that include outcomes for working parents and children.

TOOLS AND FURTHER GUIDANCE:

- [Sustainable Apparel Coalition](#) (SAC)
- [Social and Labour Convergence Program](#) (SLCP)

- ❑ **PARTNER AND INVEST IN PROGRAMMES THAT IMPROVE ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES IN COMMUNITIES:** Based on identified community needs, cooperate with public authorities, civil society organizations,

supplier factories (and where possible collectively with other companies) to improve access to social services. Efforts should support and reinforce public services to avoid undermining government efforts, and specifically target needs of working parents and their families. This step is especially important to address risks beyond tier one, where the impacts are likely to be most severe, but the company's leverage is likely to be at its lowest.

METRICS

- ❑ The company participates in or supports industry initiatives to scale positive impacts on children
- ❑ The company engages in or supports collaborative programmes that address challenges and root causes in workers' communities

3.2 Support and advocate for children

- ❑ **SUPPORT LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS AND ADVOCATE FOR BETTER POLICIES THAT PROTECT AND FULFIL CHILD RIGHTS:** Reinforce government efforts that seek to improve standards and enforcement on issues that particularly affect garment workers (e.g. situation of migrant workers, living wages, maternity protection, freedom of association, access to basic services, etc.).
- ❑ **ENGAGE IN JOINT ADVOCACY THROUGH INDUSTRY PLATFORMS:** Collaborate at sector level and undertake joint advocacy through industry platforms at the international and national levels. Advocacy can be done individually or collectively with industry associations at global levels

(e.g. Sustainable Apparel Coalition, American Apparel and Footwear Association) and national levels (e.g. Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association) to increase leverage and influence.

METRICS

- ❑ The company engages in activities that support local government efforts to protect and fulfil child rights, including the rights of working parents
- ❑ The company engages in advocacy efforts, including through industry platforms, that call for public policy to improve child rights



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Umeh (40) stitches trousers at the garment factory where she works. Her shift could last anywhere from 8 to 12 hours depending on the orders the factory has received. “The hardest part is you don’t get a break (apart from an hour for lunch). You have to work very fast all the time. Umeh stitches ready-made trousers for low-cost outlets in the US and Europe. Her base pay is 5000-6000 Taka (approximately US \$65 - \$78 per month).

EXAMPLE

ACT (Action, Collaboration, Transformation) is an agreement between global brands, retailers and trade unions to achieve living wages for garment and footwear sector workers. Collective bargaining is done at the industry level so that workers within a country can negotiate their wages under the same conditions, regardless of the factory they work in and the retailers and brands they produce for. Wages are then linked to back purchasing practices so that the payment of the negotiated wage is supported and enabled by the terms of contracts with global brands and retailers.

Source: [Action, Collaboration, Transformation](#)

EXAMPLE

The Social Responsibility Committee of the American Apparel and Footwear Association regularly engages in government advocacy intended to promote issues related to social responsibility commitments of their apparel member companies. This includes sending letters to governments of export countries to express support for policies that respect labour rights, including increases of minimum wages and respect for trade unions in the sector.

In May 2019, the AAFA followed up a November 2018 letter to the Cambodia Prime Minister expressing support for freedom of association and respect for human rights issues in Cambodia.

Source: [Leading Fashion Brands send Letter to Cambodia Government](#)

The Role of Investors

INVESTORS HAVE A CRITICAL ROLE TO PLAY in promoting business respect for child rights. Many investors diversify their investments across markets and sectors, giving them exposure to a range of sustainability risks, including companies' adverse impact on children's rights. Investors can engage and encourage companies in the garment and footwear sector to address the potential and actual negative impacts on children in direct operations and supply chains. They can also contribute to improved disclosure, influence standards and publicly advocate for better business practices.

EXAMPLE

Children's rights is one of the key focus areas for Norges Bank Investment Management's approach to responsible investment. Norges Bank Investment Management expects companies it invests in to respect children's rights in line with the UNGPs and Children's Rights and Business Principles, and to incorporate children's rights into strategic planning, risk management and reporting. Expectations for investee companies are set out in detail in [expectation documents](#). Norges Bank Investment Management expects company boards to take into account the interests of all relevant stakeholders, including children, and to effectively guide, monitor and review efforts to carry out policies to respect child rights, including in the supply chain.

Source: [Norges Bank Investment Management. Children's Rights Expectations of Companies](#)

Under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, investors have a responsibility to respect human rights, including children's rights. Considering children's rights in investment analyses can also shield investors from reputational and financial risks.³⁶

This section highlights three ways in which investors can use their leverage and influence for children's rights:

1. ACKNOWLEDGING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT POLICY AND PRACTICE

An important step towards influencing company behaviour is to integrate children's rights into the investor's responsible investment policies and practices. The investor's approach to child rights risk management should be communicated, and specific expectations with regard to children's rights should be articulated to companies. Children's rights indicators should be included in investment analyses, e.g., during risk screening and evaluation of companies' ESG performance. To improve risk management, investors can also identify regions, sectors and companies that are most at risk of adverse impacts on child rights and implement additional due diligence steps, as necessary.

TOOLS AND FURTHER GUIDANCE:

- UNICEF and Sustainalytics, [Investor Guidance for Children's Rights Integration](#)
- UNICEF, [Children's Rights and Business Atlas](#)



Jamal, (26 years), holds his daughter, Jui (2.5 years) as they walk near their home and a garment factory where he works in Gazipur, outside Dhaka, Bangladesh.

2. ENGAGE WITH COMPANIES AND STANDARD-SETTERS ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Exercising active ownership and engaging in dialogue with companies on child rights can be crucial to influencing company behaviour. Investors can promote good management of children's rights risks through exercising their rights as owners, such as by voting to promote responsible business practices and by raising concerns with investee companies that may not be meeting expectations on children's rights. The latter is especially important where there are known negative impacts on children's rights, including in a company's supply chain. In this context, children's rights expectations can be included as a topic of discussion in meetings with existing and potential investees.

The issue of children's rights can also be raised in interaction with other investors, industry initiatives, standard-setting bodies and sector-specific initiatives (e.g. Sustainable Apparel

EXAMPLE

Platform Living Wage Financials (PLWF) is an investor alliance of financial institutions, representing over 2.6 trillion USD in assets under management, working together to assess and engage investee companies on living wage in the supply chain. Key to PLWF's investee engagement is to recognize the link between living wages and working parents' ability to provide their children with adequate nutrition, decent housing, health care and education. Since 2018, PLWF have focused their work on the garment and footwear sector, assessing and engaging over 30 multinational brands and retailers by 2020.

Source: [Platform Living Wage Financials](#)

Coalition). Increasingly, investors recognize the role they can play as advocates for more responsible business practices to reduce sustainability risks, including in the garment and footwear sector.³⁷ Investors can also be drivers of improved reporting practices by encouraging better corporate disclosure on how companies manage and affect child rights outcomes. The latter may also be promoted by supporting benchmark initiatives (e.g. Corporate Human Rights Benchmark, World Benchmarking Alliance) and reporting frameworks (e.g. Global Reporting Initiative, Sustainability Accounting Standards Board).

TOOLS AND FURTHER GUIDANCE:

- Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB), [Investing the Rights Way: A Guide for Investors on Business and Human Rights](#)

3. CONSIDER CHILD RIGHTS IN INVESTMENT ANALYSES

Through their ESG risk analysis, investors can regularly evaluate the maturity of child rights management processes of investees and incorporate this into their investment analyses. This is an area where indicators remain scarce and data availability is limited in many sectors and markets. The proposed indicators in Annex A are intended to fill this gap and support companies, investors and ESG service providers to enhance their ESG risk analysis in relation to child rights impacts.

Sample of questions investors in garment and footwear companies can ask:

- ☐ Does the company have a public commitment to children's rights, including in the supply chain?
- ☐ Does the company assess its impact on children's rights in the supply chain and integrate the findings into its responsible sourcing processes?
- ☐ Does the company align its purchasing practices with sustainability objectives in relation to child rights outcomes?
- ☐ Does the company have processes in place to support the situation of working parents (e.g. family-friendly policies) in the supply chain?
- ☐ Does the company have processes in place to address child labour and the situation of young workers in the supply chain?
- ☐ Does the company address wider root causes in the community that contribute to adverse impacts on children?
- ☐ Does the company monitor and publicly report on child rights integration and outcomes in the supply chain?

Female Workers in a garment factory in Tan Binh District, Ho Chi Minh City. Only 24 per cent of babies under 6 months are exclusively breastfed in Viet Nam, and only 22 per cent are breastfed until two years. These rates are often lower among factory workers who typically wean their babies early, replacing the breast milk with formula. Concerns and uncertainty among working women about their ability to breastfeed once they are back to work after maternity leave can contribute to lower breastfeeding rates.



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Annex A: Buyer-Level Process Metrics

The following metrics focus on processes and management systems in the garment and footwear sector to adequately manage child rights risks in the supply chain.³⁸ They were designed with a dual purpose:

- ❑ **GARMENT AND FOOTWEAR BUYERS:** To support the assessment of the maturity of their child rights management efforts in the supply chain and provide guidance on recommended steps.
- ❑ **INVESTORS:** To support a more effective evaluation of the maturity of child rights management efforts among investee companies and to support the integration of child rights into investment screening, analysis and decision making.

➔ The following indicators build on expectations outlined in the UN Guiding Principles Reporting Framework, the Global Reporting Initiative Standards, as well as UNICEF's *Children's Rights in Sustainability Reporting Guidelines*.³⁹ It is important to note that child rights risks beyond child labour are rarely called out in existing assessment frameworks and reporting mechanisms. These metrics attempt to narrow that gap.⁴⁰



Wa'ed, 16 years, attends a UNICEF-supported vocational training centre in Azraq Refugee Camp, Jordan.

© UNICEF/UN0272796/HERWIG

Buyer-level process metrics

1

ASSESS AND INTEGRATE

1.1 Assess child rights risks and company preparedness to respond

- ☐ The company includes child rights in risk identification and impact assessment processes (incl. audits, environmental assessments, worker voice, materiality analysis, etc.)
- ☐ The company undertakes a gap analysis to understand its preparedness and proficiency to address, manage and mitigate identified child rights risks through its sustainability policies and processes
- ☐ The company traces its supply chain to the raw material level, with a specific focus on identifying child rights risks in deeper tiers of the supply chain

1.2 Integrate child rights into policies and management systems

- ☐ The company has a public commitment to addressing adverse child rights impact in the supply chain
- ☐ The company includes child rights (Annex B) in its supplier code of conduct
- ☐ The company includes child rights (Annex B) in its supply chain management processes (e.g. audits, supplier screening and selection processes)
- ☐ The company has or supports prevention and remediation processes to address instances of adverse impact on children
- ☐ The company takes steps to improve purchasing practices to avoid negative consequences on working conditions, including for working parents and children

1.3 Get internal buy-in and train key decision makers

- ☐ Child rights standards are approved by senior management who are accountable for improving performance, with a dedicated focal point responsible for monitoring and implementation, including in the supply chain
- ☐ The company includes child rights in training activities of internal functions (e.g. compliance, buying, etc.)

1.4 Strengthen supplier capacity to address child rights and root causes

- ☐ The company implements meaningful capacity-building programmes with suppliers that encompass child rights risks
- ☐ The company implements meaningful measures that progressively improve root causes of adverse child rights impact (e.g. women's empowerment, collective bargaining and/or living wages)

Annex A: Buyer-Level Process Metrics (*continued*)

Buyer-level process metrics

2

MONITOR AND REPORT

2.1 Monitor progress on activities and child rights outcomes

- ☐ The company tracks its activities to integrate child rights and periodically reviews progress
- ☐ The company monitors child rights outcomes at the factory/community level (Annex B), including in deeper tiers of the supply chain

2.2 Stakeholder engagement, worker voice and grievance processes

- ☐ The company has or supports meaningful worker engagement processes (e.g. collective bargaining, worker voice) that encompass child rights concerns
- ☐ The company has or supports effective grievance processes in the supply chain that encompass child rights concerns

- ☐ The company has or supports meaningful stakeholder engagement mechanisms for soliciting feedback from suppliers, workers and other affected stakeholders on its responsible sourcing approaches, including communities located near facilities

2.3 Report outcomes, progress and disclose suppliers

- ☐ The company reports on activities towards integrating child rights in its business policy and practice, including in the supply chain
- ☐ The company reports on child rights outcomes at the factory/community level, including in deeper tiers of the supply chain (Annex B)
- ☐ The company discloses its list of suppliers, including beyond tier one

3

COLLABORATE AND SUPPORT

3.1 Collaborate and invest in promising initiatives

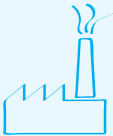


- ☐ The company participates in or supports industry initiatives to scale positive impacts on children
- ☐ The company engages in or supports collaborative programmes that address challenges and root causes in workers' communities

3.2 Support and advocate for children




- ☐ The company engages in activities that support local government efforts to protect and fulfil child rights, including the rights of working parents
- ☐ The company engages in advocacy efforts, including through industry platforms, that call for public policy and investment in child rights

Annex B: Supplier-Level Outcomes Metrics



The following factory-level metrics can be used to assess the state of child rights outcomes at the factory/community level, and to determine whether programmes designed to improve respect for child rights are producing their intended outcomes. The metrics also support the monitoring of and public disclosure on child rights outcomes. For a list of metrics included in existing reporting and auditing standards, see UNICEF's draft working paper on [Children's Rights Metrics in Supply Chain Monitoring and Reporting](#).

IMPACT AREA	DESCRIPTION	METRICS	RELEVANT STANDARDS	SDGS
General	 <p>A set of foundational indicators is important for understanding and monitoring the situation of children and working parents in supplier operations. Understanding how working parents are employed, and the average ages of children, can help to identify age-specific risks and tailor appropriate interventions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of workers with children under 18 Proportion of workers' children in the following age brackets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Under 2 years » Pre-school aged (2-5 years) » Primary school aged (5-10) » Secondary school age (11-16) » Adolescents (16-18)* Proportion of working parents who currently live with their children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Care should be taken to protect privacy when collecting data on children. Data should always be given voluntarily and with consent, and anonymized unless collected for the purpose of determining eligibility for benefits. Age brackets are suggestions and should be modified based on country contexts. 	SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
Working Conditions for Parents and Caregivers	 <p>Maternity Protections</p> <p>An adequate period of paid maternity leave is critical to allow mothers to recover from childbirth and care for their infants. It is also a key measure to promote breastfeeding. Prevention of discrimination on the basis of pregnancy and maternity is important to provide social protection for families and ensure children's health and development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average length of maternity/paternity leave taken by workers Average wages paid during maternity/paternity leave (percentage of regular earnings) Percentage of women who return to work under same employment conditions after maternity leave Number of workers dismissed from employment due to pregnancy or childbirth Number of women required to submit mandatory pregnancy tests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BetterWork (BW) Global Compliance Assessment Tool – Compliance Points: Discrimination (Gender); Compensation (Paid Leave); Working time (Leave) Fair Labor Association (FLA) Compliance Benchmarks: ND.6, ND.7, ND.8, HOW1.5 SA 8000 Criteria: 5.1 Sedex SMETA Measurement Criteria (v. 6.1): 5.34, 6.34, 7.3(d), 7.5(d), 7.11, 7.12 GRI Reporting Standards 401 and 406: 401-2, 401-3, 406-1 Social and Labour Convergence Program (SLCP Data Collection Tool 1.3): wb-23–4, wb-23–5, disc-6–10, disc-8, hb-5–16, hs-30 	SDG 3: Good Health & Wellbeing SDG 5: Gender Equality
	 <p>Breastfeeding Support</p> <p>Breastfeeding is crucial to child health, development and survival. Breastfeeding rates can be lower among working women due to a lack of awareness of its importance and the demands of factory work. Paid breastfeeding breaks, dedicated facilities and conducive workplace environments are fundamental to supporting nursing workers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of working mothers breastfeeding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Exclusive up to 6 months » Complementary up to 24 months Prevalence of breastmilk substitute usage Length of paid breastfeeding breaks taken by nursing workers during working hours Existence of safe and accessible breastfeeding facilities Utilization rates of breastfeeding facilities Other forms of breastfeeding support (e.g. awareness raising, lactation consultants) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BW Global Compliance Assessment Tool – Compliance Points: Compensation (Paid Leave); Working time (Leave) FLA Compliance Benchmarks: ND.8.1, ND.12, HOW.3 SA 8000 Criteria: 7.1 Sedex SMETA Measurement Criteria (v. 6.1): 1.11, 6.8(c), 6.29, 6.36, 7.8(d) SLCP (Data Collection Tool 1.3): wh-8–1 	SDG 3: Good Health & Wellbeing SDG 5: Gender Equality




Annex B: Supplier-Level Outcomes Metrics *(continued)*

IMPACT AREA	DESCRIPTION	METRICS	RELEVANT STANDARDS	SDGS
Working Conditions for Parents and Caregivers	 <p>Maternal Health & Nutrition</p>	<p>Special health and safety protections for pregnant and nursing workers are crucial to maternal and child health. Excessive hours, heavy workloads, and exposure to hazardous chemicals can contribute to severe impacts on maternal and child health. Paid time off for prenatal appointments and nutritional support are also critical to maternal and child health.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entitlement to special health and safety protections for pregnant and nursing mothers Percentage of workers offered pre- and postnatal health checks Percentage of entitled workers who took paid time off to attend prenatal appointments Provision of nutritional advice and supplements to pregnant and nursing workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BW Global Compliance Assessment Tool – Compliance Points: OHS (Health Services and First Aid); Compensation (Paid Leave); Working Time (Leave) FLA Compliance Benchmarks: ND.12, HSE.11, HSE.12, HOW.17 SA 8000 Criteria: 3.2 Sedex SMETA Measurement Criteria (v. 6.0): 5.34, 6.1(e), 6.34, 6.35, 7.8(d) GRI Reporting Standards 403 SLCP (Data Collection Tool 1.3): hs-30, fl-0 	<p>SDG 3: Good Health & Wellbeing</p>
	 <p>Access to Childcare</p>	<p>Childcare is critical because it facilitates women's return to work after maternity leave and ensures that children are protected while parents work. Quality childcare provides children with early development opportunities and can be an important factor to prevent early school dropout.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of safe and accessible childcare facilities (either in factory or community) Other forms of childcare support (e.g. financial grants, subsidies, after-school care) Percentage of workers with children of childcare age who use childcare Quality of care in childcare facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of children per caretaker at employer-supported childcare facility Percentage of trained/qualified caregivers Accessibility of childcare services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of fees relative to workers' salaries Opening hours relative to working hours Distance to home and availability of transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FLA Compliance Benchmarks: HSE.27 Sedex SMETA Measurement Criteria (v. 6.0): 3.9(t), 4.17, 4.22, 4.23 SLCP (Data Collection Tool 1.3): hs-57--1, hs-57-3, wb-22-2 	<p>SDG 3: Good Health & Wellbeing</p> <p>SDG 5: Gender Equality</p>
	 <p>Wages & Working Hours</p>	<p>Wages and working hours affect parents' ability to provide adequate standards of living for children. Parents earning wages below the cost of living are less likely to be able to provide basic necessities to their children. Long working hours can interfere with parents' ability to care for and supervise their children. Conversely, flexible working hours and arrangements allow parents to balance work with family life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average earnings as proportion of living wage (calculated with Anker methodology) Average income for women compared to men (gender pay gap) Ratio of women to men in management positions Average number of hours parents spend away from their children due to work (incl. commute) (day/week) Entitlement to (and uptake of) flexible working hours for working parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FLA Compliance Benchmarks: ND.3, C.1.13 SA 8000 Criteria: 8.1 Sedex SMETA Measurement Criteria (v. 6.0): 5.6, 5.12, 6.2(a), 7.1(b) GRI Reporting Standards 405 SLCP (Data Collection Tool 1.3): ab-4, disc-6-2, fl-7, wb-3, wh-3-2, wh-8, wh-9 	<p>SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth</p>

Annex B: Supplier-Level Outcomes Metrics (continued)

IMPACT AREA	DESCRIPTION	METRICS	RELEVANT STANDARDS	SDGS
Child Labour and Protection	 <p>Child Labour & Adolescent Workers</p> <p>In formal enterprises, child labour can often occur in the form of hazardous work for adolescents (those above the minimum age and below 18). There is a critical need to promote appropriate work opportunities and vocational training that empower young people through skills, employability and decent work. Work of children below the minimum age remains an acute problem in home-based and informal factories, particularly in deeper tiers of the supply chain.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of child labour monitoring and remediation policy and processes • Existence of child safeguarding policies and monitoring systems to protect children from harm • Number of child labour incidents identified and remediated • Percentage of child labour incidents involving migrant versus non-migrant children • Percentage of adolescent workers (above legal minimum age and below 18) • Entitlement to health and safety protections for adolescent workers (e.g. non-hazardous tasks) • Existence of measures to prevent sexual harassment of adolescent workers • Percentage of adolescent workers receiving training and skills development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BW Global Compliance Assessment Tool – Compliance Points: Child Labour (Hazardous Work and other Worst Forms; Documentation and Protection of Young Workers) • FLA Compliance Benchmarks: CL.4, CL.5, CL.6, CL.8 • SA 8000 Criteria: 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 • Sedex SMETA Measurement Criteria (v. 6.0): 4.4, 4.10, 4.12, 4.13, 4.14, 4.15, 4.19, 4.26, 4.28 • GRI Reporting Standards 408: 408-1 • SLCP (Data Collection Tool 1.3): cl-1, cl-2, cl-4–9, wb-3–8, wb-3–9, hs-30 	SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
	 <p>Migration & Left Behind Children</p> <p>Children are affected by labour migration in different ways: they are left behind by migrant parents; they are brought along with their migrating parents; and they migrate alone as workers. Whether children benefit from migration depends on access to resources, learning opportunities and parents' ability to supervise and form bonds with them. Left-behind children can benefit from parents' remittances but face a number of risks to their psychosocial development and well-being.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of migrant parents who live apart from their children • Existence of measures and support systems (e.g. childcare, summer camps) to address needs of migrant families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BW Global Compliance Assessment Tool – Compliance Points: Contracts and Human Resources (Information Questions; Contracting Procedures) • FLA Compliance Benchmarks: ER.5, ER.6, ER.14, ND.3.1.3 • Sedex SMETA Measurement Criteria (v. 6.0): 1.1(j), 7.1(h), 7.8(a), 8.4, 8.31, 8.35, 8.36 	SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Annex B: Supplier-Level Outcomes Metrics (continued)

IMPACT AREA		DESCRIPTION	METRICS	RELEVANT STANDARDS	SDGS
Community & Environmental Impact	 Access to Education & Healthcare	Working conditions impact access to basic services in communities for workers and their families. Workers earning low wages may struggle to afford education and health care for their children, which in turn can contribute to school dropout rates, child labour and poor health. Long working hours can also prevent workers from accessing community-based health care and childcare.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of working parents with school-aged children enrolled in primary and secondary school Primary school completion rates for children of working parents Percentage of workers' benefiting from factory support to access education (e.g. subsidies, scholarships) Percentage of workers enrolled in employer-sponsored health care plans Percentage of workers' children enrolled in employer-sponsored health care plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sedex SMETA Measurement Criteria (v. 6.0): 4.25 SLCP (Data Collection Tool 1.3): ab-9 	SDG 4: Quality Education
	 Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH)	Gaps in WASH standards pose risks to the health of workers and their children. Factories have a considerable impact on the availability and quality of drinking water in communities, especially where access to safe drinking water is already limited. Preventable diseases (e.g. diarrhoea) can be exacerbated by limited access to clean water, sanitary toilets and hand-washing facilities in the workplace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of workers who have undergone WASH training and awareness raising in the workplace Percentage of workers with access to sanitary toilets, hand-washing facilities with soap and clean water in the factory Percentage of workers with access to sanitary toilets, hand-washing facilities with soap and clean water at home Percentage of local population with access to safely managed drinking water and sanitation services around production facilities and operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BW Global Compliance Assessment Tool – Compliance Points: OSH (Welfare Facilities; Worker Accommodation) FLA Compliance Benchmarks: HSE.19, HSE.20, HSE.21 SA 8000 Criteria: 3.8, 3.9 Sedex SMETA Measurement Criteria (v. 6.0): 3.3, 3.4(r), 3.9(i-k), 3.22 SLCP (Data Collection Tool 1.3): ab-9, hs-5, hs-6 CDP: W8.1a 	SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
	 Environmental protection for children's health	The garment and footwear industry causes significant emissions of air pollutants, including greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change. Other environmental impacts can include wastewater and hazardous chemicals. Children are particularly vulnerable to environmental hazards, due to their physical size, developing bodies, and lack of knowledge about threats in their environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total greenhouse gas emissions across the value chain (scope 1+2+3) in carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) per year Percentage of safely treated domestic and industrial wastewater flows out of total wastewater flows, in compliance with regulations and discharge permits Quantity of water withdrawn for industrial uses in km³ per year Amount of air emissions (indoor and outdoor) above WHO air quality threshold limit values and national permits for particulate matter (PM), ozone (O₃), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), sulfur dioxide (SO₂) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) Number and percentage of workers exposed to hazardous chemicals in the workplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HIGG FEM 3.0: Water Q1; Wastewater Q1, Q7, Q9; Air Emissions Q1, Q2, Q6; Energy Q1, Q7 GRI Reporting Standards: 303-3, 303-4, 303-5, 305-2, 305-3, 305-4, 305-6, 305-7, 305-6, 305-7 SLCP (Data Collection Tool 1.3): hs-1, hs-3, hs-26, hs-27, hs-30 WHO Air Quality Guidelines 2005 WHO Guidelines for Indoor Air Quality 2010 CDP: C6.1, C6.2, C6.3, W8.1a, W8.1b ZDHC Manufacturing Restricted Substances List (ref. hazardous chemicals) 	SDG 3: Good health and wellbeing SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities SDG 13: Climate Action

Endnotes

- 1 According to the International Labour Organization (ILO). 'Better Work, Better Business, Better World.' Available at <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/departments-and-offices/governance/betterwork/lang-en/index.htm>
- 2 See, for example, ILO & IOE, 2015. 'Child Labour Guidance Tool for Business', p. 49'. Available at <https://www.ilo.org/ipeinfo/product/download.do?type=document&id=27555>
- 3 The focus was on the garment and footwear supply chain and did not include the many other ways in which the sector can affect children (e.g. practices of brands and retailers, marketing practices, product safety, etc.). For an overview of network activities, see the Summary Report accessible here.
- 4 In 2015, the World Economic Forum introduced the concept of 'Shared Responsibility' for global supply chain management. It recognizes the urgent need for collaboration between influential actors, and calls for collective action, influence and resources from all major stakeholders in global supply chains, including multinational and local businesses, state entities, philanthropic bodies and international organizations, to address the underlying causes of the most serious and entrenched human rights risks and abuses.
- 5 Estimates are approximates based on information provided by the companies in the workshop, as well as desk research.
- 6 Based on information provided by the garment manufacturers in the workshop held in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- 7 See, for example, UNICEF Bangladesh, 2018. 'Better Business for Children: Understanding Children's Rights and the Ready-Made Garment Sector in Bangladesh', Dhaka. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/knowledgecentre_10635.html and UNICEF Vietnam 2017, 'The Apparel and Footwear Sector and Children in Vietnam'. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/vietnam/sites/unicef.org.vietnam/files/2018-07/Footware%20Report%20Eng%20revised.pdf>
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This guidance tool is designed to support companies in the garment and footwear sector to integrate child rights into their responsible sourcing programmes. It explores practical steps companies can take – individually and collectively – to ensure children are recognized as important stakeholders in their responsible sourcing efforts. The suggested steps do not foresee the creation of parallel processes. Instead, they provide guidance on how to integrate child rights into existing sourcing policy and practice.

Children's Rights in the Garment and Footwear Supply Chain

A Practical Tool for Integrating Children's Rights
into Responsible Sourcing Frameworks

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