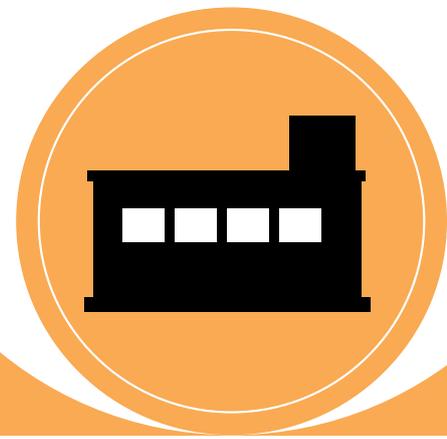


# Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Harassment (GBVH) in the Manufacturing Sector



## Why is addressing GBVH important to the manufacturing sector?

The manufacturing sector is a key source of economic growth in many countries, providing jobs and opportunities to many workers. Addressing GBVH is important for creating a safe, respectful and competitive work environment.

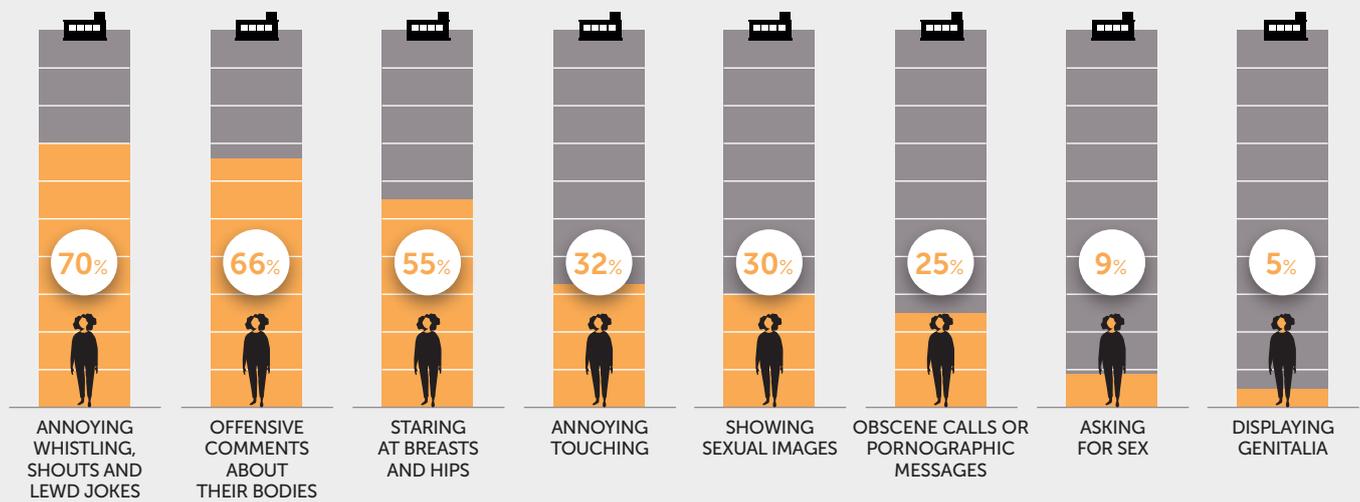
Surveys show that manufacturing workers are at increased risk of various forms of GBVH. Verbal abuse and physical violence – frequently targeted at lower-paid female workers – are often used by supervisors and managers as ineffective attempts to improve productivity. Sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse are also widespread in the sector. In India and Bangladesh, the Fair Wear Foundation reports that at least 60 per cent of garment factory workers experience harassment at work, although this figure is likely to be underreported because of fear of retaliation.

Temporary, informal and migrant workers are at increased risk of GBVH due to discrimination, job insecurity and lack of support networks. For example, Syrian refugees working in the Turkish garment industry face a higher risk of exploitation and sexual harassment because of precarious employment conditions.

There are also GBVH risks related to recruitment and hiring practices of contract workers. For example, migrant workers in the Jordanian garment sector are vulnerable to additional risks of economic and sexual exploitation from labour intermediaries/recruitment agencies. Home-based workers who carry out piecework can also experience GBVH from supervisors or agents who contract work to them.

Manufacturing workers can also experience violence from their partners, particularly where there are strong gender stereotypes about men being the main breadwinners and women staying at home. In Bangladesh, a study found that female garment workers experienced higher levels of violence from their partners than other women, including physical (34 per cent), sexual (43 per cent) and economic (35 per cent) violence. Female garment workers are better paid and more mobile than women in most other sectors in Bangladesh, which can exacerbate some men's fear of losing power and control over their family.

IN GUANGZHOU, CHINA, A SURVEY FOUND **70 PER CENT OF FEMALE FACTORY WORKERS** HAD BEEN SEXUALLY HARASSED AT WORK. PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED DIFFERENT FORMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT:



**15 PER CENT OF WOMEN** QUIT THEIR JOB BECAUSE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT.

Source: Sunflower Women Workers Centre (2013) survey of 134 women garment workers



## What are the benefits of addressing GBVH?

Addressing GBVH in the manufacturing sector can have the following benefits:

- Improves manufacturing workers' health and safety, as well as their morale, leading to improved wellbeing and productivity. In [Australia](#), it is estimated that the productivity cost of workplace sexual harassment in the manufacturing sector in 2018 was \$112.4million – an average of \$1,095 per victim. In this study, productivity costs included absenteeism and presenteeism, increased staff turnover, and manager time, which arise from workplace sexual harassment.
- Increases financial benefits for manufacturing companies as a result of lower absenteeism, staff turnover and time spent dealing with GBVH incidents. In [Cambodia](#), workplace sexual harassment costs the garment sector an estimated US\$89 million a year due to staff turnover, absenteeism and presenteeism. An estimated 13.5 per cent of workers say sexual harassment means they work less effectively.
- Strengthens manufacturing companies' reputation. In [Sri Lanka](#), the She Works partnership (a joint IFC and Australian DFAT initiative) has helped 18 leading companies position themselves as good employers due to their strong commitment to advancing gender equality and addressing GBVH.

## What are the risk factors?

Risk factors that increase the potential for GBVH in the manufacturing sector include:

- Supply chains with tight production targets and deadlines that apply strong downward pressure on suppliers. This can increase the risk of supervisors and managers using GBVH to increase productivity.

In [Haiti](#), [garment workers](#) with a daily production target are 50 per cent more likely to be worried about sexual harassment.

- Incentive structures which allow individual supervisors to assess workers' productivity and performance. These can create opportunities for sexual harassment and exploitation, including through the misuse of performance-related pay, bonus schemes and piece-rate systems.
- Long hours and unpredictable shift work that mean women have to travel home in the dark and/or on isolated transport.
- Worker accommodation that is overcrowded, without separate, lockable sanitary facilities or living areas.
- Low levels of unionisation, particularly for workers on the lowest tiers of global supply chains as unions can help raise grievances and support workers who have experienced GBVH.
- Temporary and agency workers who may be less likely to report GBVH for fear of losing their jobs. An estimated two-thirds of female workers in the electronics industry are in temporary, contractual or indirect wage employment.
- Complex subcontracting/supply chains, which make it harder to monitor and address GBVH risks.
- Presence of security personnel, who provide protection but who may also abuse their positions of power and status to perpetrate GBVH, particularly where they have access to areas where workers sleep.

GBVH risks also vary depending on country-level or local-area factors such as how women are treated in society, legal and regulatory frameworks, and trust in local authorities to investigate reports (see accompanying note on Emerging Good Practice for the Private Sector for further guidance on risk factors).

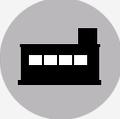
## What can investors and companies do?

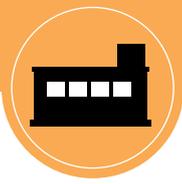
	Examples of entry points	Case studies
 <p><b>Leadership and company culture</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider engaging expertise to conduct robust GBVH risk assessments in direct operations and throughout the supply chain.</li> <li>• Take steps to develop a supportive organisational culture, including establishing a top-tier focal point or well-trained committee tasked with addressing GBVH.</li> <li>• Ensure representation of women in factory committees and trade union structures.</li> <li>• Proactively support career development and management opportunities for women.</li> <li>• Create mechanisms for regular dialogue around GBVH with key stakeholders such as workers' groups and representatives, landlords and police.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Factories in India, Japan, UK, US:</b> The <a href="#">Safe Circle</a> approach aims to develop a positive organisational culture around preventing violence on production lines. It has been used by manufacturing companies such as Ford Motor Company, Lockheed, Rolls Royce, and Bharat Heavy Electronics. The "safe circles" involve management and workers meeting together in small groups on a regular basis. A key principle of this approach is organisational transformation by increasing communication between supervisors and workers and among peers around GBVH.</li> </ul>



	Examples of entry points	Case studies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Put in place monitoring systems at the highest levels for regular reporting on GBVH.</li> </ul>	
 <p><i>Policies and procedures</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop company policies and procedures to address GBVH, including in the supply chain (either as a separate policy or integrated into wider company policies).</li> <li>Establish codes of conduct that cover GBVH, including in the supply chain.</li> <li>Seek input from trade unions and/or workers' groups when developing GBVH policies and procedures.</li> <li>Clearly communicate policies, procedures and codes of conduct to all workers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Solomon Islands:</b> The tuna processing facility, <a href="#">SolTuna</a>, has been supported by IFC to develop a respectful workplace policy that addresses sexual harassment and bullying. SolTuna also implemented a policy on supporting employees who are experiencing domestic violence. The company has trained a team of first responders in how to strengthen grievance mechanisms and handle reports. It is estimated that SolTuna may have gained around \$1.58 million by reducing absenteeism and increasing productivity as a result.</li> </ul>
 <p><i>Grievance mechanisms and investigation procedures</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and communicate confidential grievance reporting, referral and support systems for workers, including those working from home.</li> <li>Include options to report GBVH anonymously.</li> <li>Conduct mappings of formal services (healthcare, counselling) and informal resources (local workers' organisations, womens' organisations) to provide support to those who have experienced GBVH.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Multi-country digital tool:</b> A mobile app, <a href="#">Apprise Audit</a>, has been developed with global corporations and their supply chains in 13 countries, including Thailand, Bangladesh and China. The app allows factory workers to report GBVH, trafficking and forced labour in a safe and private way. An <a href="#">impact assessment</a> of the tool found that migrant workers felt more comfortable answering sensitive questions about sexual harassment using the app than reporting in person to an auditor.</li> <li><b>Bangladesh:</b> The <a href="#">Bangladesh Accord</a> provides garment workers with an independent grievance mechanism to raise concerns on issues including workplace violence confidentially, ensuring they are protected against retaliation. The Accord covers factories producing ready-made garments and is a legally-binding agreement between brands and trade unions.</li> </ul>
 <p><i>Recruitment and performance assessment</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess and revise HR policies, materials and training to address GBVH.</li> <li>Ensure all workers have contracts and background checks, including references from most recent employers.</li> <li>Clearly establish processes and criteria for bonus and reward schemes to remove opportunities for GBVH, for example aligning supervisor and worker pay incentives.</li> <li>Use robust recruitment processes to select, train, manage and monitor security companies and personnel.</li> <li>Conduct exit interviews with employees.</li> <li>Review factories' recruitment policies and procedures, including for migrant workers, to ensure they are in line with the <a href="#">General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment</a>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Multi-country:</b> The <a href="#">Better Work</a> programme (an ILO/IFC joint initiative) has been improving HR practices and reducing abusive practices in global garment supply chains in over 1,300 factories globally. An <a href="#">impact evaluation</a> of the programme found that factories had introduced a range of measures to reduce harassment and improve working conditions. Examples include preventing the use of insecure or unprotected contracts, creating different pay packages to avoid incentives for abuse or exploitation, and training supervisors in positive motivational techniques. Through unannounced audits, Better Work also assesses compliance with the law around compensation, contracts and HR, occupational health and safety, and working hours.</li> </ul>



	Examples of entry points	Case studies
 <p><b>Training and awareness raising</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver periodic mandatory training on GBVH to all workers, including subcontractors and suppliers, on unacceptable behaviour, how to prevent GBVH, how to report an incident, what support services are available and how to access them.</li> <li>• Provide targeted training (including in life skills such as leadership and decision-making) and awareness raising to vulnerable workers, such as migrant women.</li> <li>• Where available, train on-site worker health clinics and nurses on how to respond to reports.</li> <li>• Engage with wider public campaigns aimed at raising awareness around GBVH and promoting respectful relationships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bangladesh and India:</b> The <a href="#">HERRespect</a> programme takes a comprehensive approach to GBVH-related training and awareness-raising. It trains workers and managers on workplace harassment, violence and gender inequalities. It also includes factory-wide and community-wide awareness raising campaigns. An <a href="#">evaluation</a> of nine factories in India found the number of workers and managers who agreed that women deserve to be beaten had dropped by 55 per cent.</li> <li>• <b>Bangladesh:</b> The World Bank-funded <a href="#">NARI project</a> (nari means “women” in Bangla) provides targeted training and awareness raising to vulnerable young migrant garment workers near the Export Processing Zones in Dhaka, Kamaphuli and Ishwardi. The women stay in dormitories and training centres for four months, where they receive training, transitional housing, counselling and job placement. The project raises awareness about sexual harassment and how and where to report it. It also builds young women’s support networks.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Work with contractors and suppliers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage expertise to map GBVH risks in the supply chain and identify areas of influence, for example around production pressures.</li> <li>• Include clauses in contracts stating that GBVH is not an accepted practice and committing suppliers to address it.</li> <li>• Engage in dialogue and develop agreements (ideally at the sector level) between companies, suppliers and workers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lesotho:</b> In 2019, apparel brands and a supplier agreed to a set of <a href="#">enforceable brand-worker agreements to address GBVH in the garment sector</a>. The agreement created an independent complaints mechanism with the power to investigate worker complaints and determine punishments. Workers also have access to a safe reporting channel via women’s rights groups in Lesotho. Comprehensive training is offered for all factory workers, led by labour unions and women’s rights groups.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Physical design</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct regular gender-sensitive safety audits of worksites and worker accommodation .</li> <li>• Provide safe transport options and access routes.</li> <li>• Provide safe, secure and separate living spaces for male and female workers.</li> <li>• Install separate, lockable latrines for female workers.</li> <li>• Locate worker accommodation within a reasonable distance from the worksite in safe locations.</li> <li>• Ensure there is adequate and well-maintained lighting around the worksite and worker accommodation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Hawassa Industrial Park, Ethiopia:</b> After concerns about safety of women workers travelling to and from the <a href="#">Hawassa industrial park</a> at night, several garment companies provided factory buses. However, the buses were not able to go down unpaved roads and some women were sexually assaulted in the dimly-lit paths when they walked from the bus stop to their homes. Other companies at the park have changed shift hours so that no one walks home in the dark. However, donors and private investors have expressed <a href="#">ongoing concerns</a> about the safety and shelter options for women workers at the industrial park.</li> </ul>



## Resources for addressing GBVH in manufacturing

[How Business Can Tackle Gender-based Violence in the World of Work: A Toolkit for Action](#), Business Fights Poverty, 2019. This toolkit provides a five-step framework for businesses to prevent, commit, protect, collaborate and be accountable. It also includes the BSR Workplace Diagnostic Tool on Violence and Harassment.

[ITC-ILO Resource Kit on Gender-based Violence in Global Supply Chains](#), ITC-ILO and Fair Wear Foundation, 2016. This resource kit provides a range of approaches and examples of how to address GBV in the workplace, with an emphasis on manufacturing.

**To find out more, please see [Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Harassment: Emerging Good Practice for the Private Sector](#).**

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