

Business Partnerships for Global Goals

COVID-19 Vulnerable Supply Chain Facility

Business Partnerships as a Force for Good Learning Series

Welcome to the first Business Partnerships for Global Goals (BP4GG) programme newsletter

Through the BP4GG programme's Vulnerable Supply Chains Facility (VSCF), the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) partners with UK and international businesses with operations in Africa and Asia to provide relief and support to vulnerable women and men workers at farm/factory level during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The VSCF portfolio of eight projects trials shared value initiatives that aim to 'build back better' by strengthening supply chain resilience, and increasing social and environmental sustainability. To achieve this, we work in partnership with multinationals, not-for-profit organisations, and a range of supply chain actors. The VSCF practically demonstrates how businesses working in partnership with aid agencies and the not-for-profit sector can be a force for good at this highly challenging time.

This newsletter aims to showcase this approach by providing latest updates and learnings from the VSCF project portfolio, celebrating successes, showcasing hard work, and signposting to further learning opportunities.

Our Partners

- Arco
- Awaj Foundation
- CARE International
- Co-op
- Coventry University
- Dimensions
- Ethical Trading Initiative
- Fairtrade Africa
- Fairtrade Foundation
- Flamingo Horticulture
- Flower Watch
- FNET
- Girl Determined
- GoodWeave International
- Impactt
- IPL
- Marks & Spencer
- MM Flowers
- Mondelez International
- Minor Weir and Willis
- Monsoon Accessorize
- Morrisons
- New Look
- Partner Africa
- Practical Solutions International
- Primark
- Proctor & Gamble
- Sainsbury's
- Tesco
- Union Roasted
- VF Corporation
- Waitrose
- Women Working Worldwide
- Xpol



About the programme...

Business Partnerships for Global Goals (BP4GG) is a UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) programme which invests in partnerships with businesses and not-for-profit organisations to test and scale shared value business initiatives that contribute to the Global Goals.

The BP4GG programme was initiated shortly before the global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic was declared in March 2020. Given the profound global disruption to trade and economy, in April 2020 BP4GG was pivoted toward responding to the pandemic, resulting in the establishment of a rapid response facility, the 'COVID-19 Vulnerable Supply Chains Facility' (VSCF).

The Facility partners with 20 UK and international retailers and brands, and nine not-for-profit organisations, supporting over 100 suppliers across Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Myanmar, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. It is providing economic, social, and health benefits to around 1 million women and men directly and indirectly.

BP4GG is managed by Mott MacDonald Limited, in consortium with Accenture Development Partnerships and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).



Craspedia stored at Wilmar aggregation depot, Thika, Kenya
Photo credit Nicholas Ramsden

How is BP4GG supporting vulnerable women and men in the supply chains during the pandemic?

Creating value for the most vulnerable people through partnering with responsible businesses

- Supplying the most vulnerable workers and their families with relief packages including food, masks, soap, hand sanitiser and paracetamol
- Providing farms and garments factories with technical assistance for re-purposing toward COVID-19-safe processes to stay in production during the pandemic
- Financial inclusion for factory workers to support them during the pandemic and beyond
- Training and assistance for small flower farm and smallholders to enable them to continue to grow and harvest their crops during lockdown while building resilience
- Supporting cocoa farmers and flower growers to help them cultivate other crops and diversify their incomes through climate-smart farming

Focus on gender, social inclusion, human rights, operational safety, and climate change

- Strengthening healthcare systems to safeguard women against gender-based violence in the workplace and wider community
- Testing innovative and climate smart freight options for flowers from Africa to UK and Europe
- Increasing transparency of 'hidden' supply chains to provide enhanced protection against child labour, modern slavery and poor working conditions

BP4GG has already achieved the following by February 2021

1.

Eight projects are providing assistance to over 100 suppliers and have identified over 323,000 beneficiaries (of which 50% are women).

2.

206,000 vulnerable people (including 112,000 women) have already received benefits such as: food and health packages, training in a number of themes including new ways of packaging flowers for sea freighting, operational health and safety in farms and factories, COVID-19 testing centres, financial inclusion through mobile money apps, awareness raising on COVID-19, combatting Gender Based Violence (GBV) and climate resilience support.

3.

39,000 vulnerable people (including 19,000 women) already report improved knowledge, working practices, or conditions. 1,471 people report positive impact on their livelihoods.

4.

Additional private sector partners have joined our projects, including Xpol, ASDA's procurement arm International Procurement and Logistics (IPL), and Procter & Gamble.

5.

Match funding commitment from partners has increased since project start up.

6.

Other aid agencies have begun to fund one of the projects (GIZ and the Swiss State Secretariat of Economic Affairs, SECO)

7.

A 'Responsible and Inclusive Business Leaders List' has been developed – a database of hundreds of multinational companies operating in FCDO focus countries, developed on the basis of a credible, reliable and replicable methodology, sortable by various responsibility and sustainability metrics.

8.

Two coordination and learning events have been successfully organised by the Facility Manager, enabling cross-project learning.

9.

BP4GG was awarded A+ in the FCDO Annual Review 2020 – meaning the project has exceeded expectations.

Our Agriculture Portfolio is helping to keep farms, workers and smallholders COVID-safe and resilient in Africa

Agriculture supply chains in Africa have been severely disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, resulting in increased joblessness, poverty, and vulnerability for farm workers and smallholders across the continent, especially women. Global lockdown measures sent the horticulture and flower industries into crisis as exports were curtailed and internal African trade disrupted. In East Africa, demand for flowers fell to 20% of normal levels in April 2020, air freight capacity from Kenya to Europe dropped by 60%, and 50,000 flower workers (50% women) were laid off in Kenya due to COVID-19 impact.

Fairtrade has estimated that over 90% of farm workers have been affected by the crisis through issues including food insecurity, lack of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), challenges to safety and wellbeing, increased gender-based violence, and reduced pay. In Ghana, lockdowns and cocoa price collapse impacted farmers' ability to access transportation, storage, finance, trainings, and agricultural inputs needed for the 2020-21 harvest, with pressures higher on women and elderly cocoa farmers.

To respond to this situation, the VSCF partnership projects in agriculture are targeting a range of farm-level emergency support interventions, research and learning on pandemic resilience, and supply chain adaptation work. A high-level summary of these projects is given below.

“The health packages came as a relief to the company. The company could have really strained to provide these items which were not initially captured in its budget – not forgetting the flower sales which have been badly affected since March 2020. By providing masks and hand sanitisers to employees for use at the work place, we are able to make sure that they are being used accordingly to help control the spread of the virus, and to ensure that we are all safe including their families and the community in general”.

The Management at Panda Flowers



Flower farm worker harvesting carnations
Photo credit: Karen Smith BP4GG

Agriculture Portfolio

To respond to this situation, the VSCF partnership projects in agriculture are targeting a range of farm-level emergency support interventions, research and learning on pandemic resilience, and supply chain adaptation work. A high-level summary of these projects is given below.

Testing alternative mechanisms for transporting flowers from Kenya. Flamingo Horticulture Limited, together with service companies Practical Solutions International and Flower Watch, and logistics providers Kuehne & Nagel, are piloting sea freighting of flowers from Kenya to the UK and Europe as a sustainable, environmentally friendly, and cost-effective alternative to air freight. The project is engaging supply chain partners to introduce innovations and new processes, triggered by the impact of COVID-19 on air freight availability and prices. Three shipments were successfully completed in 2020. Additional buyers IPL and Xpol have joined the project since its inception in July 2020, which is already showing the increased interest of other substantive industry players in trialling this new mode of transportation. This project is on track to benefit over 15,000 men and women workers and farmers in Kenya.

Improving business continuity and growth for flower sector in Kenya. Fairtrade Foundation and MM Flowers have joined forces together with UK retailers Co-op, M&S, and Tesco to provide immediate relief from COVID-19 disruption for Kenyan flower workers through the distribution of health kits to 6,000 workers and will increase food security with the distribution of kitchen garden kits to 3,000 vulnerable workers and setting up nutritional gardens on four farms.

15,000+

men and women workers and farmers in Kenya to benefit from the Flamingo Partnership Sea Freight Flowers project

The Fairtrade Foundation and MM Flowers project will support

6,000

workers and will increase food security with the distribution of kitchen garden kits to

3,000

vulnerable workers

Recovery and resilience for cocoa farmers in Ghana.

Fairtrade Foundation is working with Mondelez International in Ghana to ensure Cadbury-supplying cocoa farmers and their families remain resilient to the pandemic through accelerating income diversification and climate-smart farming. This project partners with Mondelez's Cocoa Life social investment programme in Ghana, and specifically builds on the 'Climate Change and Organisational Strengthening Programme'. The project is directly supporting around 22,475 farmers (approximately 7,500 women) through grant activities to maintain their productive base and diversify their incomes through start-up capital for new business models. An additional 80,000 household members of direct beneficiaries are projected to benefit from increased income or food security as a result of involvement in income generating activities supported by grants.

Improving the the horticulture, flower and coffee industry across 4 countries in Africa. Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI), Partner Africa, Flamingo, MM Flowers, Minor Weir & Willis, Union Roasted and a coalition of UK food retailers including Co-op, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Tesco, and Waitrose, to provide technical assistance to 12 farm sites across four countries in East and Southern Africa – Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Zimbabwe - reaching 10,000 farmers (4,200 women). Site-level support is focusing on rebuilding business and making the working environment COVID-19 safe. Lessons will be shared at regional and international levels, and emerging good practice captured within the ETI Base Code (sustainability mechanism) with examples disseminated for businesses' adoption.

The Fairtrade Foundation and Mondelez International is supporting

22,475

farmers of which

7,500

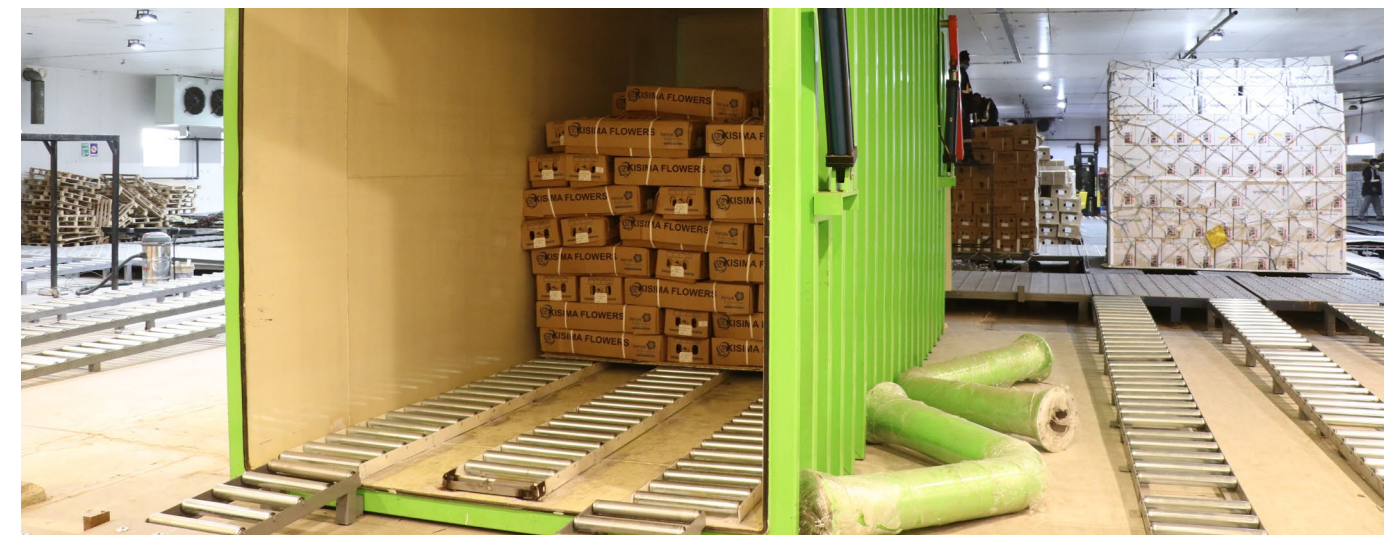
are women

10,000

farmers of which

4,000

are women are receiving assistance from Ethical Trading Initiative and their partners



Vacuum cooler used for preparing flowers for sea freighting at Kuehne & Nagel's freight depot at Nairobi International Airport.
Photo credit: Nicholas Ramsden BP4GG

Our Garments Portfolio is safeguarding workers, combatting gender inequalities, and increasing supply chain transparency in Bangladesh and Myanmar

The COVID-19 pandemic has hugely impacted the ready-made garments (RMG) sector, which supports over 4 million workers employed in over 4,000 factories in Bangladesh and Myanmar.

As lockdowns in the West led to plummeting demand in March and April 2020, orders were cancelled, jobs lost, and low-income workers made increasingly vulnerable – especially women, who comprise between 60% to 90% of the workforce in these countries. CARE's rapid gender assessment conducted for their project design in Bangladesh showed 33% of women reporting physical abuse, 100% indicating increased mental pressure, and reduction of ante- and post-natal care services by up to 87%. From mid-2020 there has been a gradual increase in orders and a return to work, which has posed further health risks on the factory floor – requiring improved Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) measures for safeguarding workers.

In Bangladesh, ILO estimates 87% of the RMG labour force is informal, and DFID's 2019 'Study on Modern Slavery in Bangladesh'¹ frequently found exploitation in the informal sector, which has increased under the stresses of the pandemic. In Myanmar, many garment workers have just one month of savings, in the form of cash and jewellery, and in the absence of a fully functioning national social security system, workers do not get fully compensated for loss of earnings due to termination or reduced working hours. The UN Call to Action in the RMG sector urges stakeholders, including the private sector and development partners, to work together to develop concrete and specific measures to help protect garment workers' income, and build back a more resilient garment industry. and training and support on how to use them.

“Through the VSCF project I got an amazing training in such a short time. I had little knowledge about sexual harassment but now I have clear knowledge about five types of harassment, namely sexual, mental, physical, social and cultural harassment. Now I can identify these forms of harassment on me or anyone in my neighbourhood and take appropriate measures. I also learned that if you face any mental issues you can call 109 and talk to a doctor. I will make sure my family and neighbours also know about this hotline number. I thank the VSCF project for providing such an amazing training and hope they will teach us various other things in the future.”

A mother and housewife shared her story after attending one of the gender-based violence awareness meetings



COVID-19 Relief Distribution in Dhaka, Bangladesh
Photo Credit Awaj Foundation

¹ [DFID_Study_on_Modern_Slavery_in_Bangladesh_.pdf](#) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Garments Portfolio

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the VSCF garments sector partnership projects are supporting a range of factory- and community-level operational safety and women's health interventions. Two projects are also addressing the vulnerability of informal workers in 'hidden supply chains', and piloting direct cash transfers to vulnerable workers to target immediate resilience and financial inclusion. A high-level summary of the four projects in garments sector is given below.

Supporting women in the garments industry to earn a living, stay safe and be respected in a COVID-19 environment. Multiple garments retail brands including Arco, Dimensions, M&S, New Look, Primark, Sainsbury's, and Tesco have joined forces with the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) to provide training and technical support to 20 factories in Bangladesh including COVID-19 occupational health and safety (OHS) training for factory workers and managers. In six factories assessed as having the greatest need, provision of masks and sanitisers and additional technical capacity building to the factories' Health and Sanitation Committees is provided. Wider learning will be shared through an Expert Support Network to increase understanding of how to best implement the ETI Base Code in the context of a pandemic. This project is supporting at least 30,000 garments factory workers (11,000 women).

Bringing agency and resilience to informal workers in garments factories in Bangladesh. GoodWeave International is working with Bangladeshi not-for-profit Awaj Foundation, and international retailers Monsoon Accessorize and VF Corporation, to support workers' livelihoods and address the hidden nature of informal work through modern day slavery identification, referral and remediation. The project is mapping garment supply chains – leveraging support from partner brands and four local suppliers – and seeking to identify cases of child, forced and bonded labour. COVID-19 prevention and legal rights information is being shared, and emergency relief packages are being provided to informal workers, reaching 17,000 beneficiaries. Identified individuals will be provided remediation/ referral services and best practices will be shared with other retail brands for wider uptake and adoption.

Ethical Trading Initiative and a number of garment retail brands are supporting

30,000

garments factory workers of which

11,000

are women

The GoodWeave International project has provided

13,000

factory workers with COVID-19 safety awareness

Preventing a COVID-19 health and supply chain crisis in the garments industry in Bangladesh. CARE

International and Marks & Spencer are working together in Bangladesh to strengthen community and factory health systems. This project builds on a previous DFID-CARE-M&S-GlaxoSmithKline collaboration, the HALOW+ project. The project is focusing on COVID-19 and GBV awareness and behavioural change for factory workers and community, training for health champions and committees, supporting the functioning of satellite clinics, setting up digital wellbeing centres, support to COVID-19 testing and quarantining, and providing capacity building across 25 factories and 15 communities. More than 80,000 vulnerable people (around 40,000 women) are expected to benefit from this project

Enabling garments factory workers to move from crisis to resilience in Myanmar. Impactt and Primark have

joined hands to support more than 5,000 garments factory workers (of which over 4,500 are women) in four factories in Myanmar through cash transfers over and above take-home-pay, and improving the working environment, especially gender equality. Approximately 1,500 workers (90% women) have already received cash. Payment of cash transfers will strengthen financial resilience and inclusion through access to the digital payments systems, and support how to use them. Four Factories will also be provided technical assistance and training on COVID-19 safety measures and gender equality. The project is also partnering with Women Win and Girl Determined to improve the working environment for female workers in the four factories through an innovative 'Resilience Fund' to support female worker health, GBV, and inclusion. This fund will partner factories with local workers rights organisations.

80,000

vulnerable people of which

40,000

women are expected to benefit from the Care International and M&S led project

5,000

garments factory workers of which over

4,500

are women are set to receive support from the Impactt and Primark project



COVID-19 Rapid Assessment in Dhaka, Bangladesh
Photo Credit: GoodWeave International

Latest project news

British High Commissioner to Kenya visits VSCF-supported farm

The British High Commissioner to Kenya, Jane Marriott OBE, paid an official visit to a VSCF beneficiary farm, Flamingo Ibis, on 3 February. Accompanied by Cabinet Secretary for Industry and Trade Betty Maina, and Governor of Meru County Kiraitu Murungi, the visit was part of a two-day itinerary in central Kenya, during which the High Commissioner toured a number of UK-backed initiatives in aid, trade, and defence – emphasising support which the UK is providing to ‘build back greener’ from the pandemic.

Flamingo Ibis Farm employs 5,000 workers, half of whom are women, on the slopes of Mt Kenya near Nanyuki, and produces both flowers (roses and carnations), and assorted vegetables. Around 300 smallholders in Meru and Laikipia counties also sell their produce to the farm, which exports around 20 tonnes of vegetables a week to Tesco, M&S, and Waitrose supermarkets in the UK. Given the average size of a household in the area is around six people, British consumers are supporting in excess of 30,000 Kenyans through purchasing the produce of Ibis Farm.

Ibis Farm has engaged with both the VSCF Sea Freight Flowers project (led by Flamingo Horticulture), and the Securing Workers’ Rights in COVID-19 project (led by the Ethical Trading Initiative). Whilst the vast majority of the farm’s produce is currently exported to the UK by air, air freight is still at least \$1 per kilo more expensive than before the pandemic, and this jump in price has catalysed a feeling amongst Flamingo leadership that sea freight is a cheaper and greener alternative for the longer term. The farm has received sea freight protocol trainings as part of the Sea Freight Flowers project, and flowers from the farm have been part of trial shipments by sea to the UK using refrigerated containers through the Port of Mombasa. The farm’s smallholder suppliers have also been provided with seeds for kitchen gardens and export crops and will be supported with financial inclusion training through the ETI-led project supporting immediate worker and smallholder health and livelihood resilience.



The High Commissioner, Cabinet Secretary, and Governor are briefed on a new Ibis Farm reservoir dam by farm management
Photo Credit: Nicholas Ramsden BP4GG

The High Commissioner spent several hours on the farm. The visit began with a briefing on the Kenya-UK flower and vegetable trade, and the support being provided by the VSCF. Around 40% of Kenya's horticultural produce, and 80% of Ibis Farm's produce, goes to the UK – and it was noted that flowers grown in Kenya's low-carbon farming sector have a lower carbon footprint even after being flown to the UK than flowers grown in the Netherlands. The briefing was followed by a tour of farm sites including vegetable plots, flower greenhouses, and the packhouse where beans, mangetouts, carrots, broccoli, and other veg is cut and packed for British supermarkets. Flamingo's preparation and packing of produce in Kenya ensures more Kenyan jobs created and livelihoods supported by the UK retail sector – jobs which have now also been supported by VSCF.

The newly signed UK-Kenya Economic Partnership Agreement will secure this trade for many years to come, meaning the VSCF support to safeguard vulnerable workers and support the industry to explore longer term climate-smart export options is particularly timely. The High Commissioner is keen for the UK to continue to support the growth and sustainability of UK-Kenya trade as part of a green, resilient route to recovery from the pandemic.

As part of this agenda, she discussed additional challenges to increasing the volume and speed of exports with Cabinet Secretary Maina during the visit – including the need for a fast track or 'green channel' for refrigerated containers through the Port of Mombasa, something other countries with significant volumes of perishable sea freight exports have. The Cabinet Secretary noted this, and said that a 'green channel for green growth' was needed.

The Sea Freight Flowers project will protect the jobs of around 18,000 workers and 200 smallholders, over half of whom are women, and seeks to 'crowd in' over 10 farms to the sea freighting process whilst achieving carbon emission savings of up to 87% on air freighting the same quantities of flowers. Given that vase life tests are showing flowers arrive in the UK in the same, if not better condition than using air freight so long as the cold chain is maintained, there is growing interest and momentum behind the export method. The final project results will be presented to the Cabinet Secretary in mid-2021 as part of the continuing UK support for a clean and resilient economic recovery from COVID-19, and will also be used to increase further interest and buy-in from industry. The BP4GG programme looks forward to showcasing this project's results in the run up to COP26, as the UK seeks to showcase the green recovery it is contributing towards.

A 'Responsible and Inclusive Business Leaders Tool' has been developed

An extensive database of multinational companies assessed on the responsibility and inclusiveness of their operations using an independently verifiable methodology, sortable by sector, presence in FCDO priority countries and links to the UK.

There are a large and growing number of companies and investors making commitments on climate and social impacts, from Blackrock insisting investee companies set out plans to reach net zero carbon, to Danone certifying its operations as sustainable through B-Corp certification. The challenge is how to tell if these companies are being genuine and if their commitments are leading to changes in their operations and positive impacts for people and planet.

The Responsible and Inclusive Business (RIB) tool has been developed to help identify businesses and investors who are taking action to help achieve the Global Goals. Underpinning the approach is the idea that companies take a 'sustainability journey' from making commitments, through reporting progress and then opening themselves up to external scrutiny.

The more transparent business and investors are about their activities the more likely they are to be taking sustainability seriously. The methodology 'scores' companies based on their commitment, action and accountability applying a range of benchmarks and indices that are widely used, robust and credible with expert audiences e.g. investors. These include the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), World Benchmarking Alliance <https://www.worldbenchmarkingalliance.org/>, Dow Jones S&P SAM sustainability Index and Arabesque SDG ray <https://www.arabesque.com/s-ray/>.

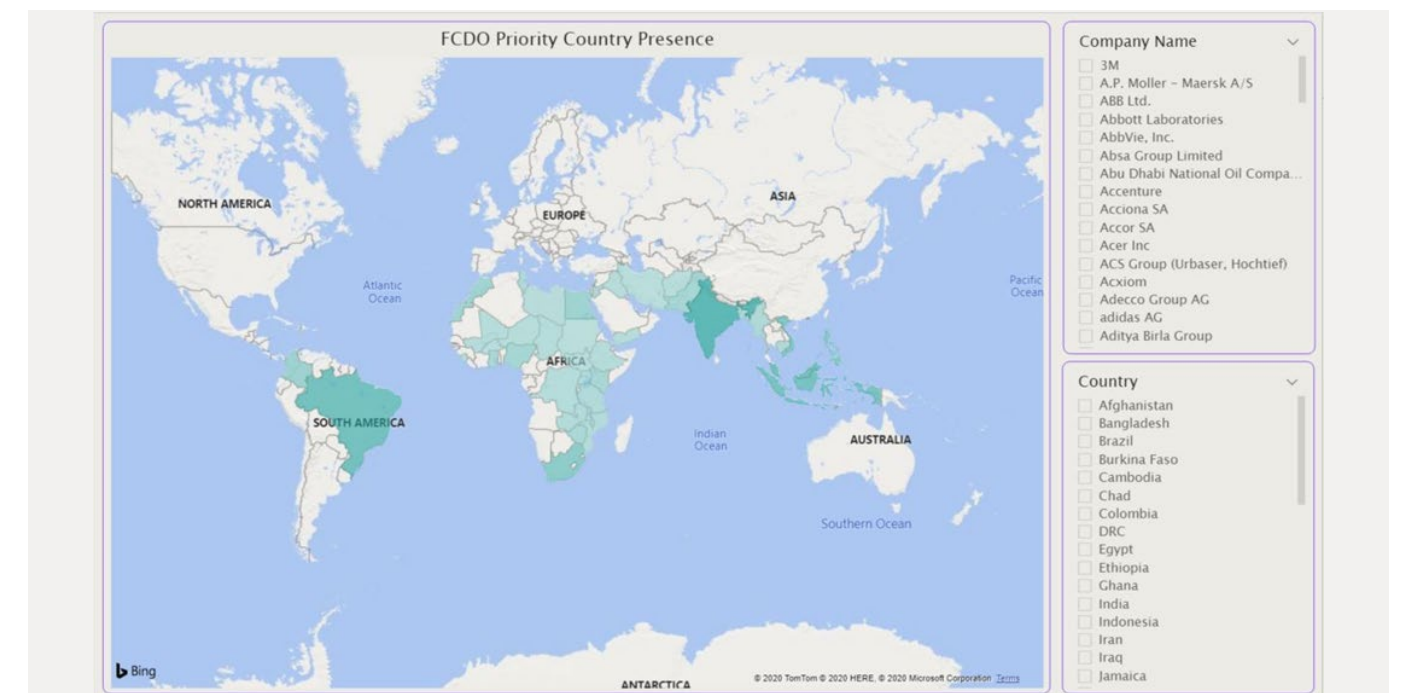
The resulting database covers large international businesses across sectors. It can be searched to determine companies' performance ranking on sustainability, presence in key developing countries, engagement in multi-stakeholder partnerships, linkages with the UK through headquarters, stock market listings or operations, and action on gender and human rights.



Vegetables from Ibis Farm chopped and packaged for M&S Food, Tesco, and Waitrose, on display for the High Commissioner's visit. Photo Credit: Nicholas Ramsden BP4GG



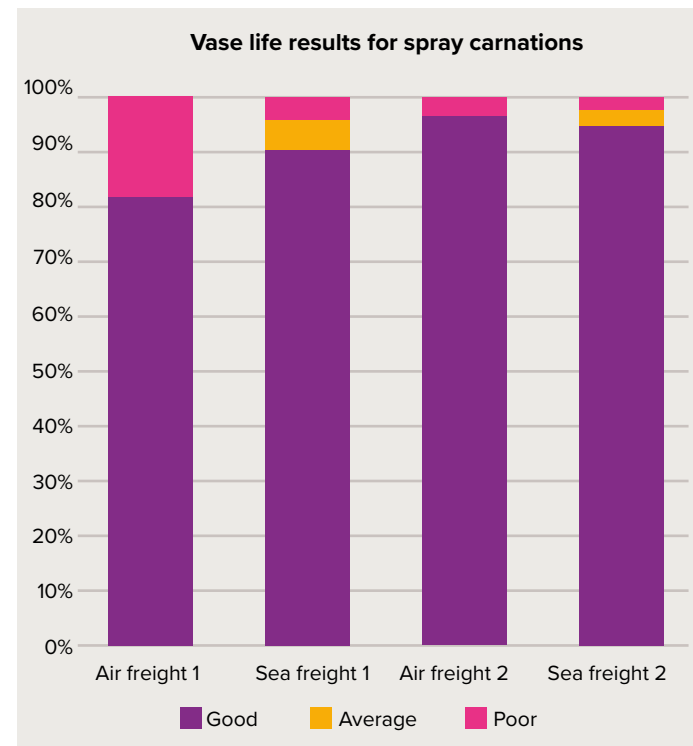
The High Commissioner, Cabinet Secretary, and Governor are briefed on the sea freighting of alstroemeria flowers from this greenhouse at Ibis Farm. Photo credit: Nicholas Ramsden BP4GG



Example of the tool's geographical display

Latest project news

The ‘Sea Freight Flowers’ project, led by Flamingo Horticulture, with IPL, Xpol, Kuehne & Nagel, and others
Countries: Kenya



Results for sea freight carnations for the first two containers compared to air freight

Seven months into implementation, five containers of flowers have been successfully shipped from Kenya to Europe. The protocols for treating and transporting the flowers are still being refined, however, the results on flower ‘vase life quality’ (see chart) are promising and improving with each new shipment. There is commitment from exporters to continue trials, and new companies like IPL, Xpol, FlowerHub, and Van den Berg have joined the project since its inception, demonstrating their increased interest and commitment to sea freight as an attractive alternative option to air freight.

BP4GG’s Agriculture Technical Lead conducted a field visit in November 2020 and noted positive feedback from partners including local players as well as high level of interest in the sea freight option from all stakeholders including the farmers and farm managers. As the proof of concept is established and sea freight becomes a long term, scalable option, it will enable farms to plan production more efficiently, particularly by smoothening supply to meet peak season demands, thereby making the supply chain more resilient. There is also feedback from partners that the lower price of sea freight enables more of the sale price of the flowers to come back to smallholder participants.

“40-60% of the cost of flowers is the air freight, meaning this is lost to the grower. If sea freight can bring this cost down even a few percentage points, the saving can be returned to the smallholder grower as additional income.”

Ruth Muiruri, CEO, Wilmar Flowers, Thika, Kenya

The ‘Resilience in Flower Supply Chains’ project, led by Fairtrade Foundation and MM Flowers, with Co-op, M&S, Tesco, and others
Countries: Kenya

This project includes support to long term resilience in the Kenyan flower industry and also provides immediate assistance to farms impacted by COVID-19. A major achievement during the last quarter of 2020 was the successful procurement and distribution of COVID-19 health packages to farm workers at ten farms. These packages were distributed to a total of 6,104 farm workers including recipients at K-Gorge farm (as pictured). The farm reported that the organisation is now better prepared to respond to or mitigate risks by putting in place hygiene, health and safety protocols that take into consideration potential risks such as COVID-19. Physical distancing is now enhanced in the packhouse, and in the offices as a new norm.

In Q1 2021 the project will be rolling out nutritional farm gardens to four farms, and kitchen gardens to another 10 farms, which will help ensure workers have access to sufficient food. Thanks to additional funding provided by SECO, four additional farms will also receive nutritional gardens alongside the four already supported by VSCF funding.

The COVID-19 communications campaign will be delivered via radio, posters and text messaging during February and the distribution of kitchen garden kits to 3,000 vulnerable workers will begin during this quarter.



Workers at VP Group K-Gorge farm in Naivasha supported by the Fairtrade and MM Flowers project receiving PPE and sanitiser from the VSCF. Photo credit: VP Group K-Gorge Farm, Anand Patil

Latest project news

The ‘Cadbury Farmer Resilience Fund’ project, led by Fairtrade Foundation with Mondelēz International

Countries: Ghana

In the first few months of implementation, the project team conducted targeted sensitisation of cocoa communities on climate change, and prepared community members to adapt Community Action Plans developed under the Mondelēz ‘Cocoa Life’ social investment programme to changing climatic conditions. Over 2,000 farmers received awareness.

over
2,000
farmers received awareness

December through January 2021 then saw the successful development of fundable grant projects by the nine cocoa farmer unions targeted by the project. Fairtrade teams worked with all 9 unions during the busy December period to co-create project designs for various new activities to supplement cocoa incomes, including food crop production and income generating activities, such as soap and bread making. In January, each proposal was assessed against scoring criteria by both Fairtrade and an independent assessor, and then approved by a Grant Fund Steering Committee. All grants were approved and contracted in late January, with unions commencing their grant projects in February 2021.



Farmer union members in Ghana being sensitised on climate change drivers and mitigations.
Photo credit: Fairtrade Foundation

The ‘Preventing a COVID-19 Garment Sector Health and Supply Chain Crisis in Bangladesh’ project, led by CARE International with Marks & Spencer

Countries: Bangladesh

COVID-19 and GBV awareness sessions have reached 73,355 participants across 25 factories through public announcements, video demonstrations, and distribution of awareness materials. In addition, a mobile app on COVID-19 and GBV has been developed. The project is also supporting worker communities with plans to train over 2,000 community members on the laws and consequences of domestic violence, and provision of pre-vaccination support and family planning and maternal health services to around 10,000 people.

CARE’s midterm baseline comparative analysis has shown significant improvements in COVID-19 and GBV awareness and practices across all the participating factories. 91% of the workers now have knowledge of and follow COVID-19 safety measures such as wearing masks, hand washing, and practicing social distancing – versus 57% at the start of the programme. 70% of community members know the correct use of face masks vs 37% at the start of the programme. Additionally, 76% know the factors of GBV, and 83% demonstrate knowledge of menstrual care, family planning and maternal health, vs 62% and 46% respectively at the start of the programme.

91%

of the workers now have knowledge of and follow COVID-19 safety measures



GBV training session being conducted by CARE Bangladesh
Photo credit: CARE International

Latest project news

The ‘Securing Workers’ Rights in a COVID-19 Context’ project, led by the Ethical Trading Initiative, with Partner Africa, Flamingo, Minor Weir & Willis, MM Flowers, Co-op, Morrisons, Sainsbury’s, Tesco, Waitrose and Union Roasted

Countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe

In September 2020, 12 suppliers were identified for support to mitigate and recover from the impacts of COVID-19 under the project. These suppliers operate in several sectors such as coffee, horticulture, and floriculture, and include processors, packhouses and smallholder co-operatives. Partner Africa, lead implementing partner on the project, has now conducted a needs assessment of the 12 suppliers using a rapid methodology.

Key findings from the needs assessment indicate that suppliers have faced increased production costs due to shortage of raw materials and having to make the necessary investments in mitigation against COVID-19 (i.e. purchasing of PPE, amended shift schedules and social distancing). As a result of government curfews there are delays in picking and delivery of produce which has led to significant deterioration of the quality of products and high post-harvest losses. Furthermore, shortage of freight options and cancelled orders has meant fresh produce has spoiled and gone to waste. Vulnerable workers such as casual/ temporary, elderly and female workers have been the most negatively affected by the pandemic. While having to manage daily household pressure, they have faced retrenchments, been requested to go on paid or unpaid leave and have struggled to find adequate jobs in their local area.

These assessments have enabled ETI and Partner Africa to design bespoke support packages for each of the suppliers which are rolling out in January/February 2021. In January, all four sites in Kenya received COVID-19 awareness training from East African regional subcontractor Response-Med, with 81 workers trained, who will go on to train a further 810 workers.

“We are proud to support FCDO’s Vulnerable Supply Chains Facility along with the Ethical Trading Initiative, dedicated to improving occupational safety and health standards for many of our suppliers in East Africa. As a responsible retailer, this work further demonstrates our commitment to trading ethically and making a positive difference to the communities we source from.”

Judith Batchelar, Director of Sainsbury’s Brand

The ‘Supporting women in the garment industry to earn a living, stay safe, and be respected in a COVID-19 environment’, led by the Ethical Trading Initiative with Arco, Dimensions, M&S, New Look, Primark, Sainsbury’s, Tesco

Countries: Bangladesh, with learning in Myanmar

One of the key activities during the first six months of implementation has been the development of a digital OHS training modules together with by the digital training partner service provider Quizrr, for use on tablets by garment workers in factories. ETI and Quizrr designed the training modules to ensure adherence to international standards whilst tailoring them to the Bangladesh context. For example, animations and characters were carefully designed to closely resemble targeted workers. The modules address issues such as the importance of adhering to safety guidance when traveling to and from work, and maintaining social distancing. The training will also be accessible via smartphones using a QR code, enabling more users to benefit. The training has now been rolled out and initiated across all 20 participating factories, with 11,700 workers already trained. Retail partners can track training progress on an online dashboard in real time, providing assurance that workers in their supply chain are being provided with this element of safety during the pandemic.

ETI has also designed a bespoke one-day four module manager and supervisor OHS training which has so far trained 652 managers and supervisors since its roll out in mid-December.



Quizrr dashboard interface

“ETI’s training techniques are very effective. Two of the factories of Modele Group have received tab-based training which is fantastic – this type of training is innovative, and our workers are enjoying it. Most of our workers have never used a tab before but this project has given them the opportunity to use and learn through a tablet. I believe that they are also sharing these perceived knowledges to their co-workers and family members”

Arup Kumar Saha, DGM Admin, HR & Compliance, Modele Group

11,700
workers already trained

652
managers already trained

Latest project news

The ‘Hidden Supply Chains in Bangladesh’ project, led by GoodWeave International, with Awaj Foundation, Monsoon Accessorize and VF Corporation
Countries: Bangladesh

A major early achievement of the project has been the distribution of COVID-19 emergency relief to 6,250 workers and their families in eight communities across Gazipur, Narayanganj, and Dhaka districts. The relief, which includes food and hygiene essentials, will support a household for approximately 30 days to bridge an immediate gap in food security. 80% of the food distributed went to women, and 62% to informal workers. COVID-19 safety awareness was raised during the food distribution events and reached 1,540 people, with 45% female adults, 49% male adults and 6% children. In addition, 156 COVID-19 safety posters were delivered to six factories, four of which are sub-contractors. Awareness raised through the posters reached a total of 11,134 workers. Of these, 6,373 are informal workers.

“I am the only wage earner of the family. My husband passed away 15 years back; I have a girl. I have no job right now, no other family member to earn, this relief is really helpful for workers like me. I am passing very hard days in the last few months to bear our family expenses.”

Sajeda, Bangladesh

6,252

vulnerable workers and their families have received food aid between October 2020 and January 2021



Relief distribution in Dhaka.
Photo credit: Magnifier Creatives

The ‘Bridging the Gap’ project, led by Impactt with Primark, Women Win, and Girl Determined
Countries: Myanmar

In September 2021, Myanmar was hit by a second lockdown which required adjusting project strategies to balance delivery with operational safety. Post this calibration of the project plan, in November 2020 workers at the first factory received cash through local Myanmar mobile money platform WAVE Money. So far, around 1,500 workers (90% women) have been reached, with a further 4,400 verified and planned to receive payments in February and March 2021. Increased financial inclusion has been a key result of this cash transfer modality, with 98% of factory workers conducted prior to the cash transfers now having access to the WAVE Money app and learning how to use it for the first time.

A vulnerability assessment of the workers conducted prior to the cash transfers showed that 89% of workers said they had less money since the pandemic, 88% of workers said things were more expensive because of COVID-19, and 93% said they did not have enough money to last another few months. Following payment of cash transfers, 97% of workers reported a positive impact on their financial concerns, and 100% said they were less stressed as a result of the cash transfers.

“Enough money to spend on my medicines means I am less worried”

“No need to worry about rice & oil for next 20 days for my family of six”

“I will spend this money for my food allowance. I feel so thankful for getting this money during this difficult time.”

“We can keep enough rice that is enough for our family for two months during this difficult time of COVID-19.” Implementers

Factory Workers benefitting from the project

1,500

workers (90% women) have been reached

89%

of workers said they had less money since the pandemic

100%

said they were less stressed as a result of the cash transfers

‘Listening and Learning’: using beneficiary feedback to drive better commercial and social performance

Our Learn and Improve agenda enables flexibly adjusting strategies and sharing lessons. The Facility under BP4GG is designed to make a difference in the lives of the most vulnerable people. To this end, we are keen to listen and learn from our partners, beneficiaries, and wider set of stakeholders enabling an environment of continued improvement. Partners are encouraged to learn and improve as a part of their project delivery. Cross-project coordination and learning is strongly encouraged, and the Facility Manager curates learning events whereby projects can share their experiences and learn from each other. Two such cross-project events have been organised up to December 2020. This helps address common issues through joined up thinking, and partners can leverage each other’s ideas and strategies to deepen or widen positive outcomes.

Incorporating beneficiary feedback to improve effectiveness. Project results are reported by project lead partners to the Facility Manager regularly, and beneficiary voices are integrated into project delivery throughout the process. The Facility Manager has started to undertake field visits to speak directly with people benefitting from the Facility (workers, suppliers, smallholder, other supply chain players), ensuring COVID-19 travel restrictions and safety measures are adhered to.

To improve our understanding of the relevance of the projects to the target population, and collect first-hand information from beneficiaries, BP4GG has partnered with 60 Decibels, a tech-enabled impact measurement company, to undertake 10 beneficiary

feedback studies across the VSCF projects. 60 Decibels will bring its LeanData methodology – light touch, remote, standardised surveys using phone, SMS, and Integrated Voice Response (IVR) – to gather feedback from VSCF beneficiaries. The process is similar to customer feedback surveys used by retailers. Through these studies our ‘customers’ (smallholders, farm/factory workers, managers, and suppliers) will tell us if our presence, engagement, processes, and services are relevant, useful, and supportive of lasting development outcomes in their lives. The results will help FCDO, the Facility Manager, and all project partners (both business and not-for-profits) to understand and triangulate reported results, and get a better and nuanced view of the portfolio’s impact.

Just as customer feedback drives business decisions, so recommendations from the beneficiary feedback reports will be shared with our partners in order to drive action to improve social impact. Given that over 400 multinationals, impact investors, businesses, foundations, and not-for-profits across 55 countries are already using this social impact measurement approach, BP4GG is providing our business partners with a ‘free preview’ of the tools, with the aim of complementing and improving existing corporate sustainability reporting and management systems.

Given the current travel restrictions resulting from COVID-19, the timing is even more appropriate for the use of the LeanData methodology to inform project strategies and future direction of travel for businesses.



“An exciting movement is underway at enterprises of all shapes and sizes, including MNCs, embracing greater inclusivity by more actively listening to their customers, employees and supply chain workers about the impact that these companies are having on their lives”

Tom Adams, Co-Founder 60 Decibels.

Beneficiary Voices

“The training has helped me understand more about the COVID whereby I should use the same skill to teach my fellow colleagues/farm workers. It is very important indeed.”

“The training has led me to know the truth of COVID-19 and has freed me from any fear because I know the truth and also the instructions to follow and also the prevention”

Feedback from participants in COVID-19 prevention and stigma training at 4 farms in Kenya

Project: 'Securing workers' rights in a COVID-19 context', ETI, Countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe

“We find it difficult to live. Living becomes difficult for us after especially after the cocoa season. After receiving the grant, we went to Atebubu in the Bono East region to buy the yam setts which will be distributed to our farmers. The yam setts we have procured can produce about 100,000 tubers yam. We are very happy”.

Osei Owusu, Union Treasurer, Amansie West Cocoa Farmers Union, Ashanti, Ghana

Project: 'Cadbury Farmer Resilience Fund', Fairtrade Foundation, Countries: Ghana



Awal attends family planning session, Bangladesh
Photo credit: CARE International

“I didn’t know much about family planning procedures. My wife used to have oral contraceptive pills taking advice from the pharmacy. After I participated in the Family Planning Week observed at Eco Couture by the VSCF project, I got to learn about family planning. I finally realised how dangerous it was for my wife to continue taking pills. VSCF also provided me with condoms. I had no idea that having oral pills continuously may hurt my wife and put her life in danger!”

Awal, Input man, Eco Couture factory, Bangladesh

Project: 'Preventing a COVID-19 Garment Sector Health and Supply Chain Crisis in Bangladesh', CARE International, Countries: Bangladesh

“In those terrible times of extreme poverty, the relief and counselling that we received from VSCF was what kept us going. They were always instructing people to maintain social distancing, when people were confined to home quarantine, the COVID-19 volunteers of VSCF went from door to door with relief support. I can’t thank them enough for what they’d done for us.”

Afrosa, garment worker, Dhamasona, Bangladesh

Project: 'Preventing a COVID-19 Garment Sector Health and Supply Chain Crisis in Bangladesh', CARE International, Countries: Bangladesh



Outdoor COVID-19 awareness training, Bangladesh
Photo credit: CARE International

Nayan’s monthly earnings at an informal ready-made garment (RMG) factory are close to 38 GBP per month, sometimes up to 50 GBP with overtime payment. Nayan knows that this is less than the minimum wage for RMG workers in Bangladesh, but it is important to him and his family that he still work there. Nayan lost his father when he was an infant, and it has been very difficult for his mother and grandmother to support their family.

“I know the salary I am getting each month is really less than the market price,” Nayan said. “Me and my family are struggling too much to meet our regular expenses, so I have to work whatever the payment is.”

Nayan’s older brother who also works for an RMG factory makes 70 GBP per month, however the boys’ combined income is barely enough to support their household. Nayan attended the emergency food distribution hosted by the Hidden Supply Chain Project in Narayanganj.

“This kind of initiative is very helpful for a family like ours,” he said.

Project: 'Hidden Supply Chains in Bangladesh', GoodWeave International, Countries: Bangladesh



Nayan at relief distribution in Narayanganj, Bangladesh
Photo Credit: Magnifier Creatives

Feedback from workers at two garments factories in Myanmar in receipt of cash transfers funded by VSCF

How did the cash transfer make you feel and why?

It made me feel so grateful and relief. That period was so difficult for me and everyone when the COVID 2nd wave was started so we were not sure whether factory work would shut down. I was able to pay debt for my hostel fees that i couldn’t pay for a month and i can send more cash to my family members.

What was the mood in the factory?

I still remember the day. Everyone checked their mobile during lunch time and there were quite a loud noise of joy and happiness voices that were coming from dining hall and everyone smiled on that day. The energy in the factory was boosted up. It was like that money that we were hoping for was here and it was true. Everyone were facing so much difficulties in that period because of COVID 2nd wave and that cash was so helpful to us.

How did the cash transfer make you feel and why?

I feel so supportive and glad because there was no OT on that month and my earning was less. My wife was just delivered my first child and it was a very difficult month but because of this support from UK government that money was used for my baby milk.

What was the mood in the factory?

The whole factory was so happy and joyful on that day. Everyone wore smiles on that day.

Project: 'Bridging the Gap', Impactt, Countries: Myanmar

BP4GG in the media

Links to articles featuring BP4GG's work to date

Agriculture projects media coverage

- [Protecting workers will protect supply chains in pandemic | Mott MacDonald](#)
- [Covid-19: ETI key partner in new FCDO fund to keep vulnerable workers safe and keep supply chains moving | Ethical Trading Initiative \(ethicaltrade.org\)](#)
- [Fairtrade Foundation secures DFID funding to support flower and cocoa producers hit by global pandemic | Fairtrade Foundation](#)
- [Coventry University secures DFID funding to support workers in developing countries hit by the global pandemic | Coventry University](#)
- [Fairtrade Foundation receives UK government grants to help cocoa farmers with COVID-19 relief \(confectionerynews.com\)](#)
- [The Fairtrade Foundation gains key grants including support for Ghana cocoa farmers | Confectionery Production](#)
- [Fairtrade partnerships secure more than €15 million in COVID-19 relief and recovery funding for producers](#)

British High Commissionaer to Kenya visits VSCF-supported farm

- [LinkedIn Article by Nicholas Ramsden](#)

Garments projects media coverage

- [GoodWeave International launches pilot project in Bangladesh to provide apparel workers COVID-19 relief and uncover hidden supply chains | GoodWeave](#)

Links to articles tackling issues related to BP4GG's work

- [Helping flower workers in Kenya tackle COVID-19 \(floraldaily.com\)](#)
- [Kenya, UK Finalize Negotiations of a Tariff-Free Access Trade Deal Ahead of UK's Exit From EU - allAfrica.com](#)
- [Ben & Jerry's partners with Fairtrade to boost cocoa farmers' incomes \(confectionerynews.com\)](#)
- [#PayYourWorkers Campaign: Pay Your Workers — Clean Clothes Campaign](#)
- [#PayUP Campaign: PayUP Fashion Brand Updates \(H&M, Target, Primark, etc.\) \(remake.world\)](#)
- [Exit-stage plight: Brexit's costs come due - Economist Radio | Podcast on Spotify](#)
- [Kenya's floral exports are blooming once more | The Economist](#)

Events

Links to previous events and publications

- Identified OHS needs from 20 factories part of the ETI VSCF project in Bangladesh, 12 November 2020
- Joint Ethical Trade Initiative Bangladesh: December Learning Sharing Event, 9-10 December 2020
- **Day 1:** Presentation <https://youtu.be/P43uee2grkQ>
- **Day 2:** Presentation <https://youtu.be/DQxpw1h6rgY>
- Care Learning Workshop - December 2020
- ETI and Fair Wear – [The Industry We Want](#): Virtual Event, 14 January 2021
- ETI-VSCF Knowledge Exchange series: [Covid-19 and Stigma in the Workplace](#), 26 January 2021

Links to our partners' events related to BP4GG work

- Fair Wear/ETI Webinar Impact of the Covid-19 Crisis on Garment Factories in Bangladesh, 24 November 2020
- [Fair Wear's Covid-19 Dossier](#)
- ETI and Fair Wear – [The Industry We Want](#): Virtual Event, 14 January 2021

Calendar of upcoming events

March 2021

- ETI - Access to Information among RMG workers in Bangladesh – identifying ways to bridge the gender gap, 4 March 2021
- ETI - Tools for addressing salient gender issues emerging from COVID-19, 31 March 2021
- Cross Agriculture and Garment sector learning events, March 2021

April 2021

- ETI - Issues emerging for smallholders, 28 April 2021

May 2021

- ETI - Lessons on purchasing practices in the time of COVID-19 and fair trade, 26 May 2021

Opening opportunities with connected thinking.