

Just Transitions From promise to practice

Integrating decent work in
emerging circular supply chains
and green manufacturing



**Ethical
Trading
Initiative**



Aims for today

1

- To share and review lessons on what works, and what doesn't, in integrating decent work into environmental programmes working with the private sector.

2

- To discuss how to incentivize and support environmental initiatives to embed decent work outcomes from design, through implementation, to evaluation and beyond.



Just Transitions: From promise to practice

Integrating decent work in emerging circular supply chains and green manufacturing

Agenda	
9:30	Networking, refreshments
10:00	Welcome
10:05	Main presentation: <i>Integrating decent work in emerging circular supply chains and green manufacturing</i> - George – Just Transition Advisor, ETI
10:25	Case-studies - Vy – River Cleaning Operations Director, RiverRecycle (video) - Abil – Executive Director, ETI Bangladesh
10:45	Insights from the trade union perspective - Steve – Trade Union Coordinator, ETI, Unite the Union
10:55	Comfort break
11:00	Group discussion
11:40	Plenary feedback Thanks
12:00	More networking and refreshments!

Vision | A world of work where everyone's human rights are protected and respected.

Mission | To advance human rights in global supply chains through collaboration between businesses, trade unions, and NGOs. We work to address systemic barriers, strengthen respect for human rights, and drive lasting change.

2030 Strategy

- Effective human rights due diligence
- Worker representation and freedom of association
- Collective action for systemic change: bringing businesses, trade unions and NGOs together.
- Crisis preparedness, response and remediation



**Ethical
Trading
Initiative**



Ethical
Trading
Initiative

Introduction and context: Just transition

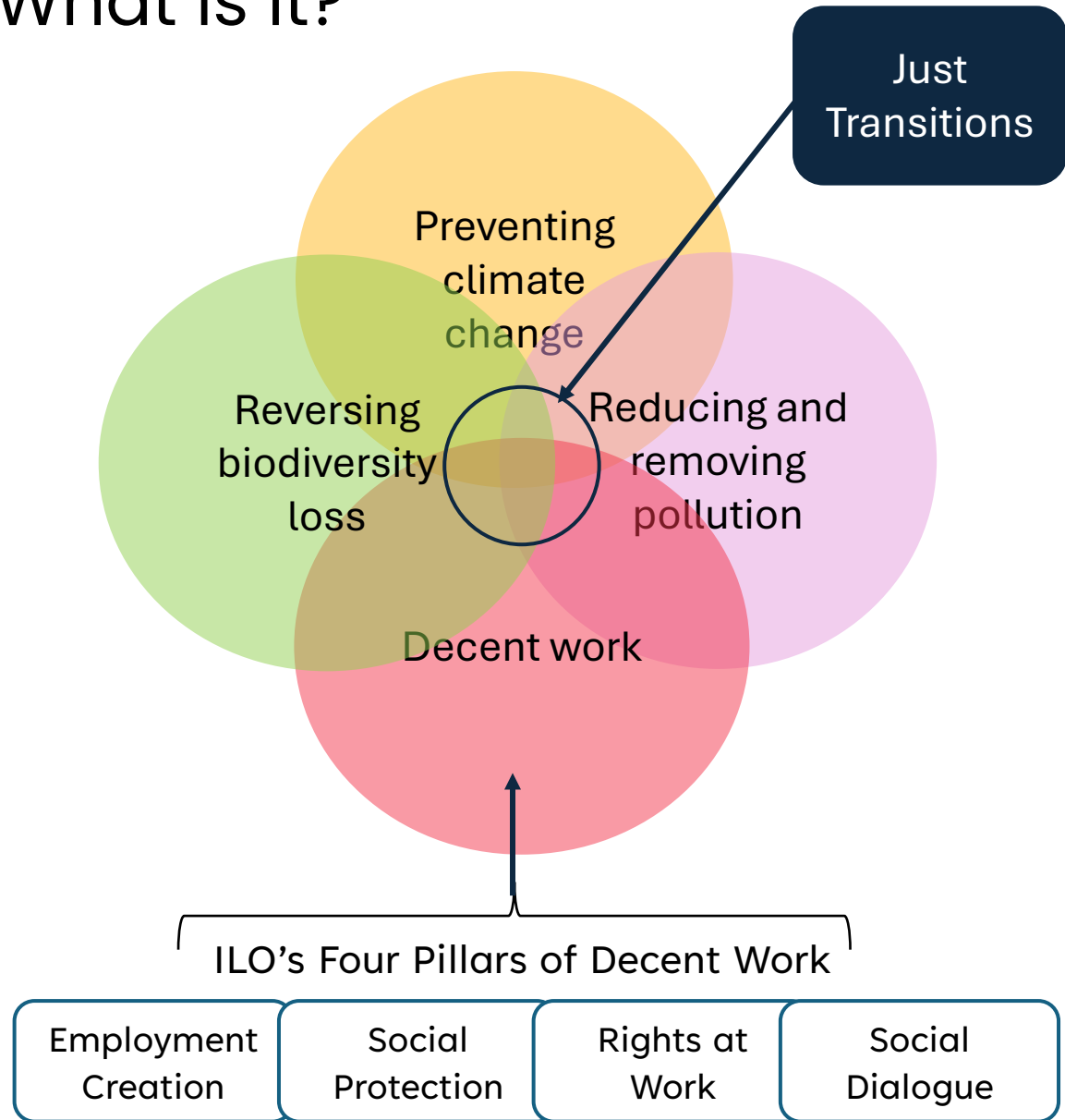


Photo credit: Henrique Pacini, UNCTAD



Just Transitions

What is it?



Just Transitions: Greening the economy in a way that is as **fair and inclusive** as possible to everyone concerned, creating **decent work** opportunities and leaving no one behind.



Just Transitions

Why now?

1970s

- Developed by the trade union movement

2015

- Inclusion in Paris Agreement at COP21

2016

- ILO publishes Just Transition Guidelines

2021

- Just Transition Declaration at COP26

2022

- ILO-led Just Transition Work Programme agreed at COP27

2025

- Decision to establish the Just Transition Mechanism at COP30



“Decides to develop a just transition mechanism, the purpose of which will be to enhance international cooperation, technical assistance, capacity-building and knowledge-sharing, and enable equitable, inclusive just transitions” Decision -/CMA.7



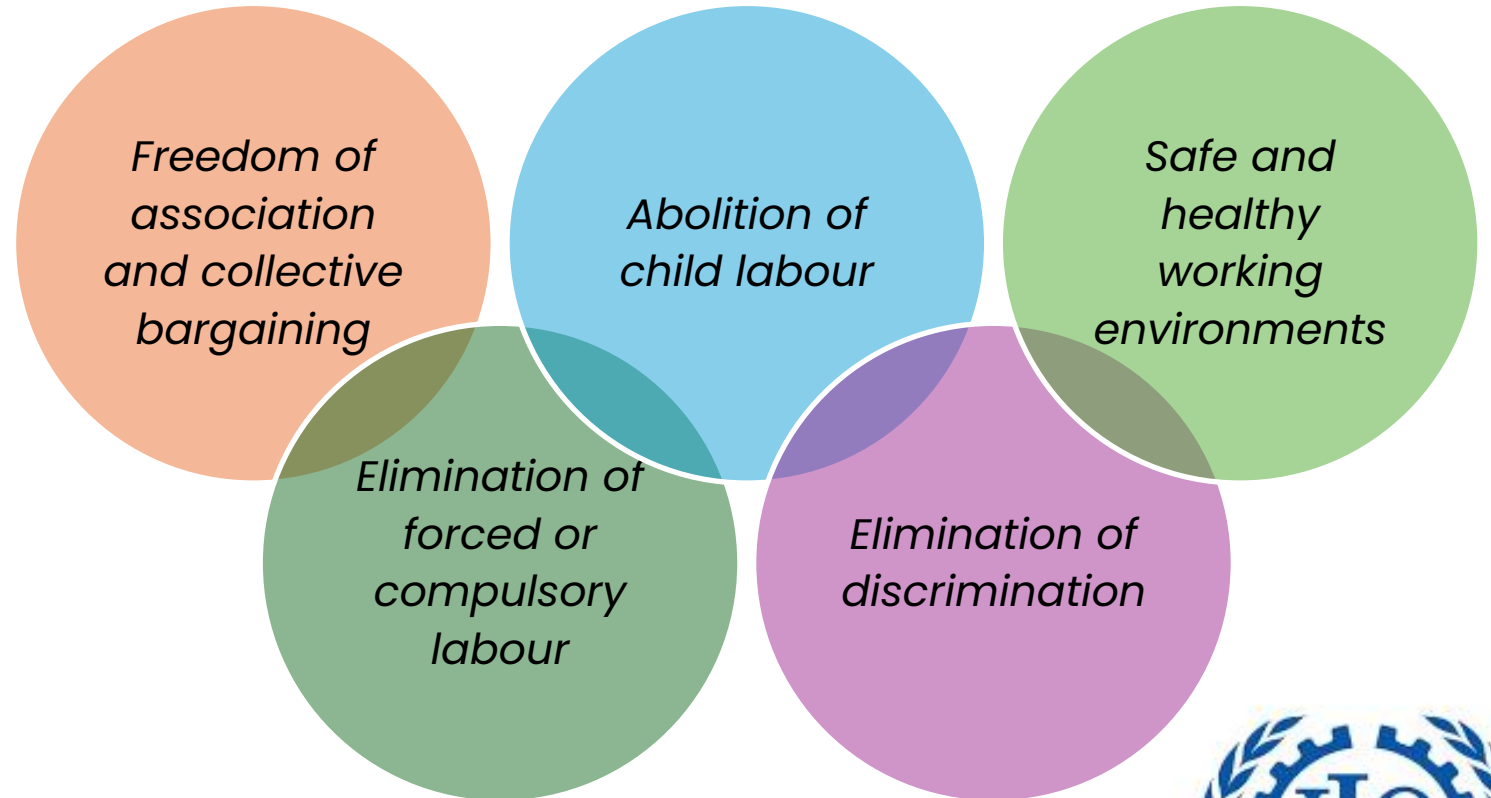
Rights at Work

Fundamental principles and rights at work

*"...established by the ILO's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998), [they] are **the foundation for fair labour practices worldwide.***

*They reflect a **shared commitment** to fundamental human values that are essential to social and economic life.*

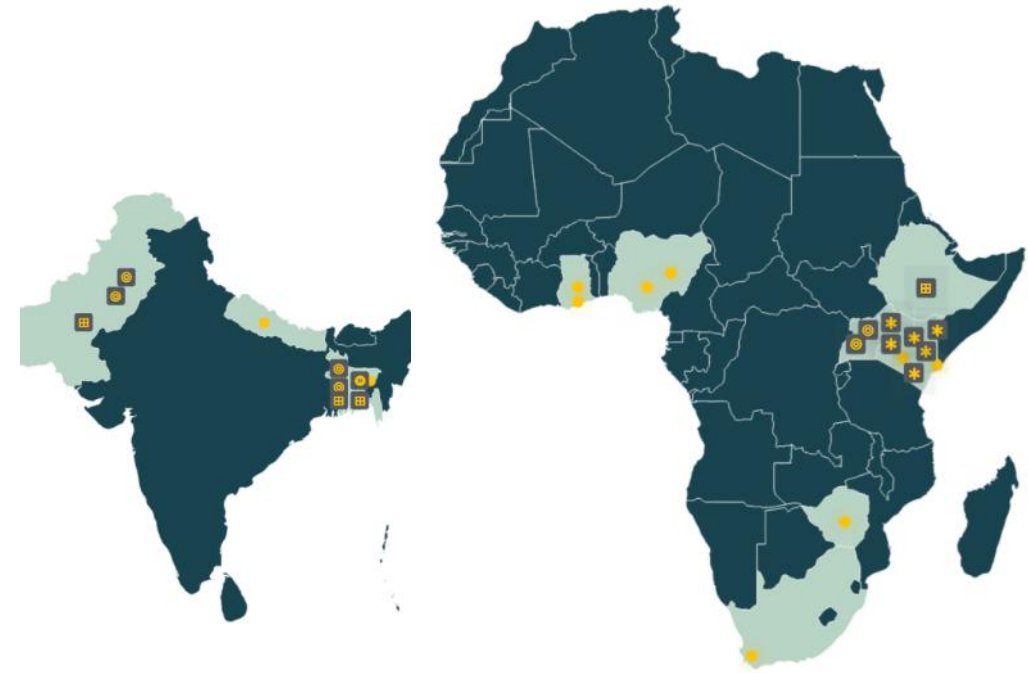
*The five categories of **universal and indivisible** fundamental principles and rights at work are:*



Introduction to SMEP



Sustainable Manufacturing and
Environmental Pollution Programme



- **Aim:** To address the environmental and human health impacts of the manufacturing sector in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.
- **Sectors:**
 - Plastics
 - Organic waste and water
 - Leather, tanneries
 - Textiles and apparel
 - Used lead acid batteries



SOUTH
SOUTH
NORTH
TOWARDS CLIMATE RESILIENCE





Ethical
Trading
Initiative

ETI's approach to supporting SMEP grantees on decent work and safeguarding



Photo credit: RiverRecycle

What have we been doing?

Needs Assessment

- One to one calls with all grantees

Online workshops

- Decent work, occupational health and safety, safeguarding

Coursework

- Workplace risk assessment
- Piloting worker-centred tools

One-to-one support

- Reviewing risk assessments & practical improvements

Communities of Practice sessions

- From principles to practice

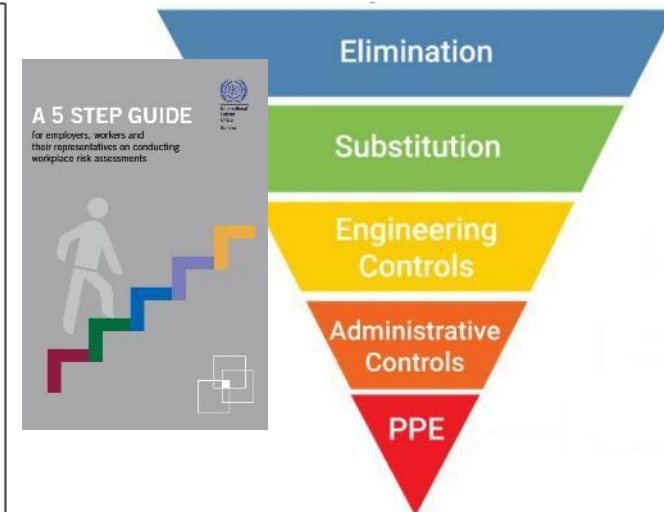
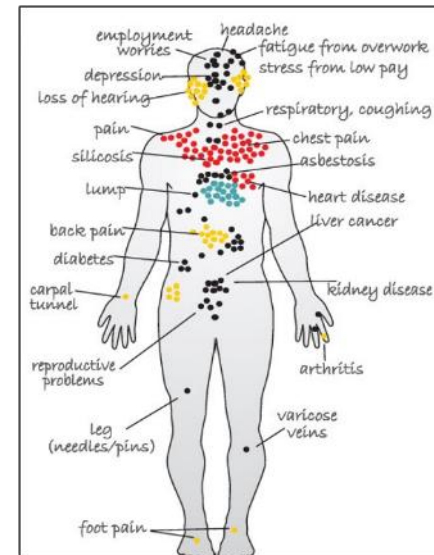
3x Briefing papers

- Literature review
- KIs with experts
- Documenting lessons across 3 themes

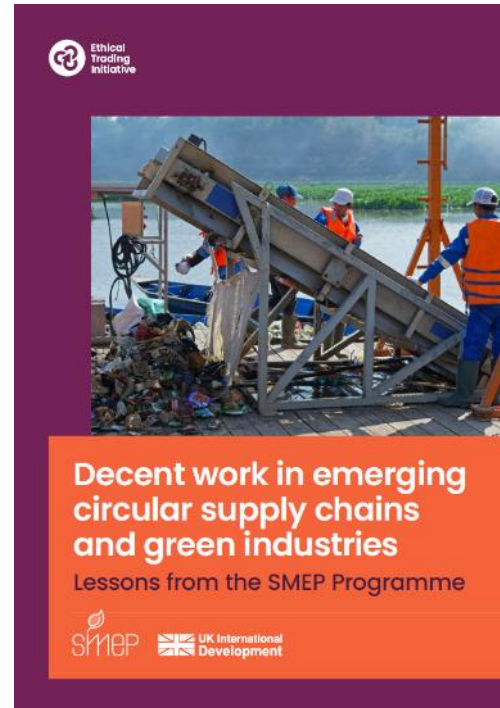
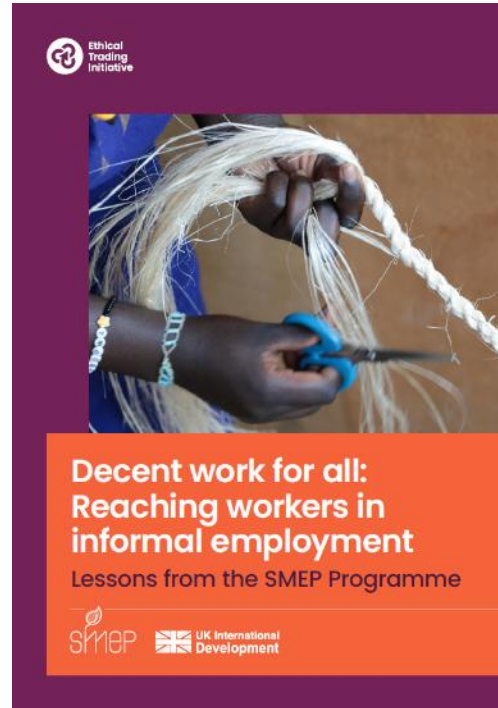
Sharing lessons, catalysing discussion

Overall approach

- Back to basics: ILO fundamental principles and rights.
- Focus on **how**, not only *what* and *why*.
- *Meeting businesses where they are.*
- Practical tools employers can use.
- Keeping language practical and accessible.
- Peer learning and good practice sharing.



Briefing papers



Training Resource Pack

Thank you to everyone who participated in the research.





Ethical
Trading
Initiative

Integrating decent
work in emerging
circular supply chains
and green
manufacturing

**Lessons and
challenges**



Photo credit: Henrique Pacini, UNCTAD

Key lessons and challenges

Enabling and supporting decent work...

- 1 At MSMEs
- 2 In emerging circular supply chains and green industries
- 3 For workers in informal employment



Photo credit: Henrique Pacini, UNCTAD

Key lessons

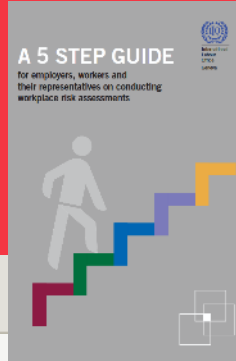
Decent work at MSMEs

- **Recognise the importance of MSMEs**
 - As employers.
 - In emerging circular supply chains and green industries.
- **Focus on OHS as an effective starting point** for progressing decent work.
 - Workers and managers often see benefits quickly.
- **Support risk assessment** as the foundation of OHS.
 - Make it worker-centred and gender responsive.
- **Look beyond** a sole focus on physical hazards.



Gender-responsive worker-centred Risk Assessment

Available in SMEP
Training Resource Pack



Risk Assessment template

Enterprise:

Section/Unit:

Date:

STEP 1 What are the hazards?

Spot hazards by:

- walking around the workplace;
- asking workers what they think;
- checking manufacturers' instructions;
- contacting your trade association.

Don't forget long-term health hazards.

STEP 2 Who might be harmed and how?

Identify groups of people.

Remember:

- some workers have particular needs;
- people who may not be in the workplace all the time;
- members of the public;
- if the workplace is shared think about how the work affects others present.

Say how the hazard could cause harm.

STEP 3 What are you already doing?

List what is already in place to reduce the likelihood of harm or make any harm less serious.

What further action is necessary?

Make sure that risks have been reduced 'so far as is reasonably practicable'.

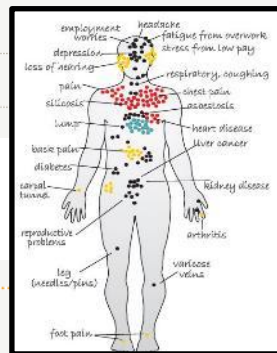
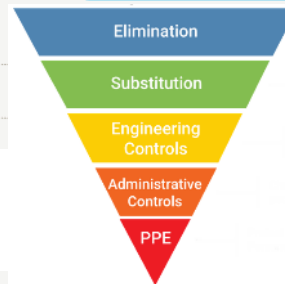
An easy way of doing this is to compare what is already being done with good practice. If there is a difference, list what needs to be done.

STEP 4 How will the assessment be put into action?

Remember to prioritize. Deal with those hazards that are high-risk and have serious consequences first.

Action by whom Action by when Done

Remember the hierarchy of controls



Consider using hazard mapping and body mapping here

STEP 5 Review date:

- Review the assessment to ensure OSH management is still improving, or at least not sliding back.
- If there is a significant change in the workplace, remember to check the risk assessment and where necessary, amend it.

Assessment Completed by:

Signature:

Key challenge

Decent work at MSMEs

Decent work is often seen as a cost rather than an investment.

Whilst incentives exist – e.g. compliance, productivity gains, market access and personal values – they are frequently outweighed by short-term commercial pressures.

What incentives are most effective in motivating MSMEs to invest in decent work?



Key lessons

Decent work in emerging circular supply chains and green industries

- **Challenge assumptions** – green jobs are not automatically good jobs.
- **Assess risks early** – especially in emerging sectors and new technologies.
- **Put workers at the centre** – involve workers in identifying and addressing risks.
- **Use a gender lens** – women's risks may be different and less visible.
- **Plan for climate impacts** – heat stress and extreme weather are already affecting workers.
- **Don't overlook the basics** – access to clean, safe toilets is really important!



Key challenge

Decent work in emerging circular supply chains and green industries

Low pay is a reality for many workers in these sectors. **Pay gaps** that reinforce existing socioeconomic inequalities may also be common.

How do we ensure work in emerging circular supply chains and green industries meets minimum wage levels and progresses towards living wages / incomes?



Photo credit: Henrique Pacini, UNCTAD

Key lessons

Decent work for workers in informal employment

- **Recognise informality** – it exists across many sectors and supply chains.
- **Make invisible workers visible** – understand who they are and where they work.
- **Prioritise at risk groups** – particularly women and migrant workers.
- **Strengthen protections** – improve job security, rights and representation.
- **Support responsible formalisation** – tailored to local realities and workers' needs. (ILO r.204)
- **Focus on outcomes** – formalisation is a means to decent work, not an end in itself.



Photo credit: Henrique Pacini, UNCTAD

Key challenge

Decent work for workers in informal employment

Given the prevalence of informal employment, including in emerging circular supply chains and green industries, and recognising the decent work deficits that come with that, **how do we support formalisation of employment in ways that protect the existing workforce's access to jobs, and recognises their priorities and needs?**





RiverRecycle



**Ambitious
Africa**

GHANA CLEAN-UP PROJECT

Progressing decent work in
plastic collection and
recycling





RiverRecycle



Ambitious Africa

A video of Vy Dinh, River Cleaning Operations Director, explaining how RiverRecycle and Beach Cleanup Ghana progressed decent work in their programme is available here:

<https://www.ethicaltrade.org/resources/guidance-and-reports/eti-insights-recording-just-transitions-manufacturing-integrating>

Skip to 42 min, 35 seconds to hear from Vy.



Abil Amin

Executive Director

ETI-Bangladesh



IMPROVING ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN THE SAVAR TANNERY ESTATE, BANGLADESH

40 Tanneries | 2500 Workforces | 2 Business Associations | 1 Workers Union

Programme Focus:

- ✓ Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) and decent work in tanneries
- ✓ Human Rights, Environment and Due Diligence (HREDD) and Environmental and Social Management Systems (ESMS) for resource efficiency and Leather Working Group (LWG) eligibility
- ✓ Market access for tannery owners

Consortium Partners:



How we achieved change with tanneries

- Individual **environmental assessment** → ESMS action plans to close gap between current practice Leather Working Group (LWG) standards (410+ KPIs on environment & social indicators)
 - 11 tanneries developed their environmental data management systems
 - 11 tanneries developed Industrial Carbon Emission report
- 31 **Anti-harassment committees** established
- 32 **Safety committees** established



How we achieved change with tanneries

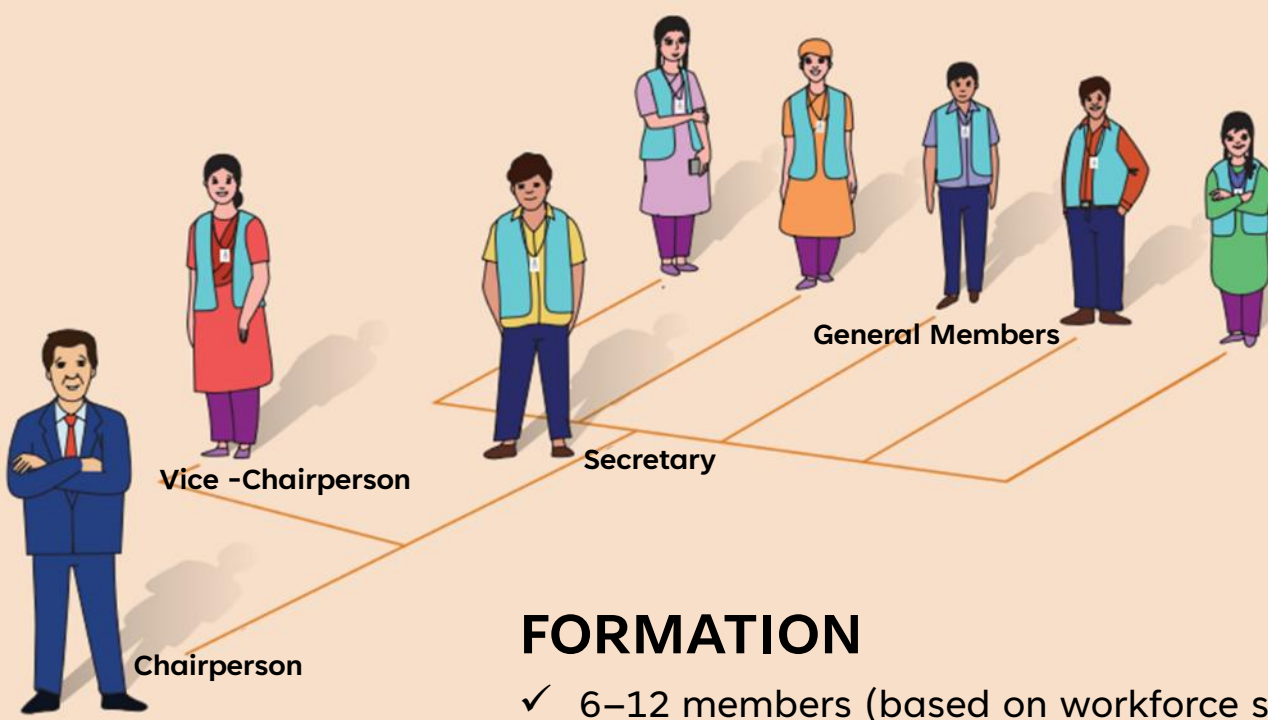
- **9 types of training reached 1600+ participants**
 - Chemical, Water, Waste, Housekeeping, OHS, DIFE Checklist, Safety Committee, Gender Sensitivity, Social Dialogue, Environmental & Social Management System, HREDD.
- Message boards, pictorial training flipcharts, campaigns in tanneries
- **140+ Climate Champions** (tannery resource person)
 - 940+ workers engaged
 - Promoted environmental discussion in tannery as **Climate Champions**
 - Promoted utilization and demand creation of PPE in tanneries

Workers' roles in environmental action and adaptation

- Co-developed ESMS action plan with management
- Defined their role in the implementation of KPIs
- Trade Union engagement in environmental discussion
- Recent CBA included reference to environmental priorities

Stakeholder engagement

- Project priorities integrated into annual planning of the Leather Development Forum.
- Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence (HREDD) embedded as a key priority.



Safety Committee

Bangladesh Labour Law requires factories with 50 or more workers to form a Safety Committee (SC). The committee's main role is to keep the workplace safe. It does this by identifying hazards and addressing worker concerns. The SC also recommends safety programmes and carries out regular inspections and investigations.

FORMATION

- ✓ 6–12 members (based on workforce size)
- ✓ 50% worker reps & 50% management
- ✓ Worker reps: nominated by Trade Union or, if no TU, by Participation Committee
- ✓ Management reps: nominated from manager, HR, welfare, supervisor, nurse
- ✓ Committee tenure: 2 years
- ✓ SC must be formed within 9 months of first production

MEETING

- ✓ Meetings: monthly or at least quarterly (extra if needed)
- ✓ Held during working hours (no pay loss)
- ✓ Duration: usually 1–2 hours
- ✓ Agenda set jointly by Chairperson & Member Secretary
- ✓ Minutes recorded & signed by both Chairperson & Secretary

TRAINING

- ✓ Mandatory training for all SC members
- ✓ Provided by employer (in-house/safety officers)
- ✓ Also, by DIFE, NGOs, ILO, donor programmes
- ✓ Training cost borne by employer

Anti Harassment Committee

- ✓ Promote safe and respectful workplace
- ✓ Prevent and address sexual harassment in the workplace
- ✓ Provide a safe, confidential mechanism for complaints
- ✓ Recommend disciplinary/ administrative actions against offenders

In Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Labor Rules (Amended 2022) addresses workplace harassment, The High Court Verdict of 2009 issues guidelines to prevent physical, mental, and sexual harassment of women and girls in workplaces and Bangladesh Labor Act 2026 states that no person should behave unmannerly or indecently to women at workplaces. It's compulsory for every workplace to abide by these laws.



- Sexual Harassment
- Verbal abuse
- Mental harassment
- Cyber Harassment
- Gender Discrimination

MEMBERSHIP

- ✓ At least 5 members (generally 5–7)
- ✓ Minimum half must be women, including the Chairperson
- ✓ Must include representatives from management and workers
- ✓ Women members preferably nominated by TU/Participation Committee), Management nominates their representatives (HR, welfare officer, supervisor, etc.)
- ✓ Better to have one/two external stakeholders in the committee

MEETING

- ✓ Recommended to hold at least bi-monthly meeting (if no case)

FILING A COMPLAINT

- ✓ File within 30 days (self, relative, lawyer, or in writing)
- ✓ Can report directly to a female committee member

COMMITTEE DUTIES

- ✓ Minor cases: hear both sides, resolve, report
- ✓ Serious cases: investigate, issue notices, collect evidence
- ✓ Ensure confidentiality, no humiliation
- ✓ Employer must cooperate
- ✓ Withdrawals of case must be recorded
- ✓ Report with recommendations in 30 days (extendable to 60)

ACTIONS IF PROVEN

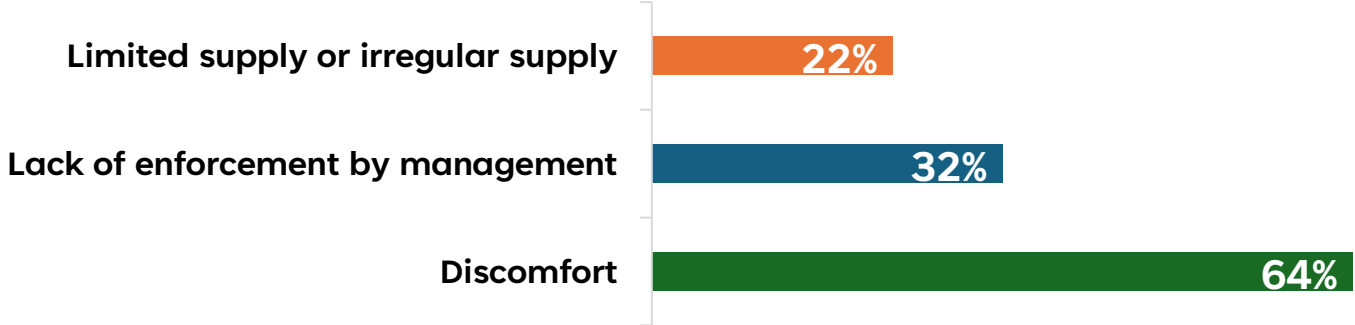
- ✓ False complaints → committee recommends measures
- ✓ During inquiry → accused may be temporarily suspended
- ✓ If guilty → disciplinary action within 30 days
- ✓ If criminal offense → case sent to court



Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) use

- ✓ **88%** of workers reported PPE availability
- ✓ Only **40%** used it regularly, and **23%** said they never used it
- ✓ Face masks were the most commonly used item (59%), followed by safety boots and gloves.

Main barriers to consistent use of PPE



“ Providing PPE alone is not sufficient. It must be comfortable, suited to the local environment, readily available, and consistently enforced. Daily use should be promoted through regular training, awareness, and active supervision. ”

As one respondent emphasised during baseline

Hand Gloves



Boots



Masks



Chemical Protective Apron





Why worker voice and unions matter in Micro/SME enterprises in emerging green sectors

Steve Craig

ETI Trade Union Coordinator

Unite the Union



Context & Background

Decent work for workers in informal employment

- **Definition:** Informal employment is work that is not registered, regulated or protected by legal frameworks. Workers often lack secure contracts, social protection and access to representation (ILO 2015).
- **Prevalence:** 2 billion workers, 60% of the global workforce (ILO 2018).
 - Not confined to small or unregistered enterprises.
 - Widespread in seemingly formal supply chains (e.g. via subcontracting, temporary, home-based work).
 - Often hidden, but often also essential
- **Relevance:** 52% of all circular economy employment is informal (CE 2025)
- **Demographics:** Women and migrant workers are disproportionately represented & often concentrated in lower-paid, less secure, more hazardous roles (ILO 2018)

ILO Recommendation 204: *'Transition from the informal to formal economy'*

Need for sensitivity to local context and workers' own priorities.

It should protect, not disrupt, livelihoods.

Someone dies at work
every **15 seconds**



Photo credit: Henrique Pacini, UNCTAD

Our 3-hour meeting
= **720 people**

Defining Decent Work

“The ILO defines decent work as **productive work** for women and men in **conditions of freedom, equity, security** and **human dignity**. Decent work is about more than just having a job. It is about **having a job** that is **fair, safe and respects workers’ rights**. It means earning a living in conditions of dignity, stability and with **opportunities for growth.**”



Photo credit: Henrique Pacini, UNCTAD

Four Pillars of Decent Work

The ILO's Decent Work Agenda rests on four interdependent pillars that together make work fair, safe and secure.



Employment Creation

Full, productive and freely chosen work that generates fair incomes and secure livelihoods.



Rights at Work

Respect for labour standards, including freedom of association and the right to organise.



Social Protection

Safe conditions and social security that shield workers and families from risk and hardship.



Social Dialogue

Negotiation among workers, employers and government to reach fair and lasting outcomes.

DECENT WORK

Worker voice, Agency & Representation... → FoA/CB

Progressing the Decent Work narrative

- ✓ Addressed 'knowledge vacuum' – workers, employers and NGOs/support organisations
- ✓ Fear, power, the 5W's (Who, What, Where, Why, When?) and expectation management
- ✓ Social and Cultural factors, Behaviours and Transitions, Trust, Dignity, experience, human resource
- ✓ How do trade unions 'add value'?

- Built Decent Work concepts into the DNA of the SMEP++ programme
- Decent Work integration located within M/SME, 'informal realities' and the world of work in emerging green sectors
- Rationale for worker voice, agency and representation – explain, communicate and demonstrate benefits
- Policy to practice transition – the 'how': understand the benefits; contributions to OSH; EDI; the organisation of work; communication; productivity; performance; quality; rights; gender...

Challenges for Micro/SME Enterprises in green sectors	How trade unions can assist
Informality & lack of employment contracts	Formalisation pathways & rights awareness
High level of OSH risks & hazards	Worker-led hazard identification & prevention (Hazard & Body Mapping)
Dynamic workplaces and rapid technological change	Skills training, reskilling & Just Transitions
Gender inequality & GBVH	Policies, training & safe reporting. Representation & agency
Weak governance & poor management practices	Social dialogue, accountability. Grievance mechanisms & dispute management
Need to improve productivity, performance & quality	Worker-driven improvement & stability

It's the fit...

Skills without rights leads to unsafe 'green jobs'; rights without skills limits employability...

Make informal M/SME enterprises safe, legal and demonstrate win-win benefits without overwhelming them.

Combined climate-labour diagnostics, dual objectives and KPIs

Decent Work & Just Transition: Principle – Policy – Process – Practice – Worker Centred

- 1. Unions are central to a just transition across the green sector**
- 2. Without worker engagement - transitions will not be 'Just'!**
- 3. Worker voice fills governance gaps by ensuring risks, abuses, and unsafe practices are surfaced early.**
- 4. Application of TU 'tools & techniques' to accelerate concepts and:**
 - Embed a participatory approach (workers as co-creators)
 - OSH measures, committees, newsletters, social dialogue
 - Peer learning, institutionalising Decent Work
 - **DW becomes the pathway, not the price of environmental progress**

Why decent work is non-negotiable in green companies and waste-innovation sectors

Green jobs are not automatically “good jobs”

Evidence shows that climate transitions can increase vulnerability if worker rights are not embedded from the start.

‘Green sector’ activity often involve:

- hazardous materials (batteries, chemicals, e-waste)
- heat stress (outdoor working, solar installation, construction)
- informal collection and recycling
- subcontracting and gig-style arrangements

Decent work ensures these jobs are *safe, formal, and fair*.

Comfort break!

5 mins!



Group discussion time!

1. How do we motivate and incentivise MSMEs to commit to decent work? For MSMEs what are the most urgent areas of need?
2. To what extent is decent work integrated into environmental programmes working with the private sector? What else needs to be done?
3. What can funders and investors do to catalyse and support decent work within environmental initiatives working with the private sector?





Key takeaways

A just transition is not just about changing what and how we produce. It's about improving how people work and live.

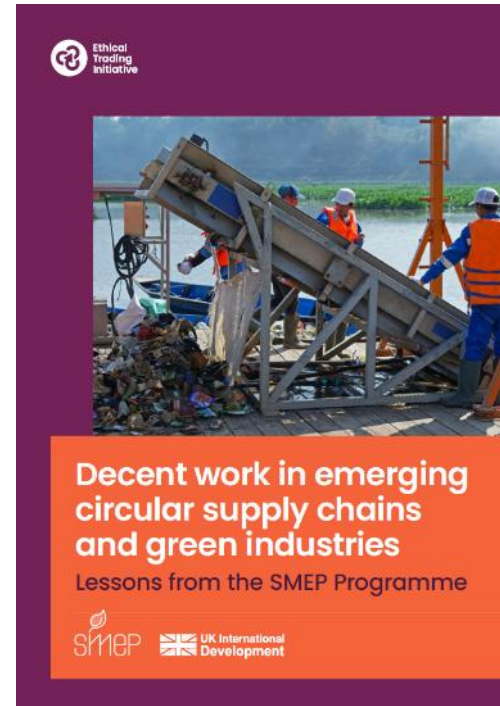
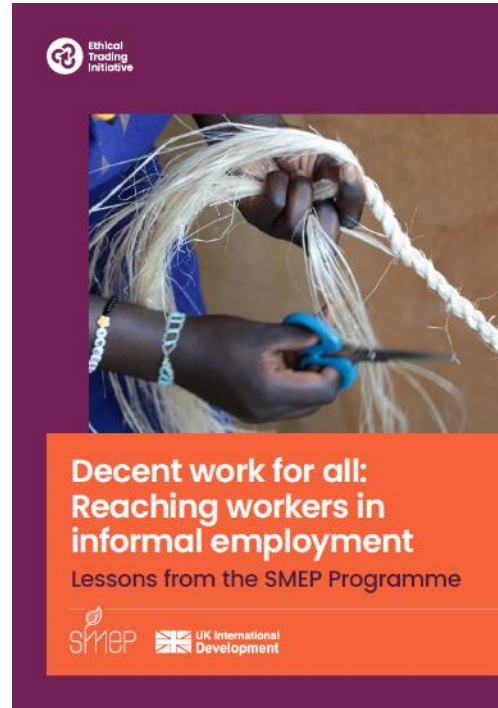
To achieve this:

- Put workers at the centre.
- Support MSMEs to succeed.
- Make decent work a deliberate objective.
- Start with practical actions.
- Build solutions with workers, not for workers.



Photo credit: RiverRecycle

Briefing papers



Training Resource Pack

Thank you to everyone who participated in the research.





**Ethical
Trading
Initiative**



Partnership | Progress | Prosperity



LONDON
CLIMATE ACTION WEEK

**Thank
you**

**For human rights,
for better business**

George.Williams@eti.org.uk

ethicaltrade.org.uk