



For workers' rights. For better business.

Research Project: Assessment of Past and Current Initiatives on Mill Workers' rights in Tamil Nadu, India

Terms of Reference

Introduction and Background

The Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) is a leading alliance of companies, trade unions and NGOs that promotes respect for workers' rights around the globe. Our vision is a world where all workers are free from exploitation and discrimination, and enjoy conditions of freedom, security and equity. Global supply chains are highly complex and challenging for companies committed to trading ethically. Our members commit to the promotion of the ETI Base Code in their own operations and their supply chains which outlines nine standards for workers, based on the ILO conventions.

Workers' rights issues are often deep-rooted and widespread and are best tackled through collaborative action. We harness the expertise, skills and resources of our alliance members to identify these issues and develop innovative, long-lasting solutions. Our measure of success is that workers can negotiate effectively for a better working life where their rights are respected.

The Tamil Nadu Multi-stakeholder (TNMS) Nalam programme

Tamil Nadu is the powerhouse of India's garments and textiles export sector and counts many global brands and retailers among its clients. There are more than 2,000 mills and 4,000 garment factories with around 240,000 employees in spinning mills and 500,000 employees in garment factories¹. Entrenched labour rights abuses across the mills and garment factories include: paying below minimum wage levels, excessive working hours, poor living conditions in hostels, low levels of personal health awareness, illness caused by exposure to cotton dust and no access to grievance mechanisms. It is mainly the female workforce who is subject to this severe labour exploitation, however increasingly male migrants are also migrated to work in Tamil Nadu.

ETI has established a successful Tamil Nadu Multi-Stakeholder (TNMS) platform in 2013 to address these labour rights issues and subsequently developed and implemented a training programme for women mill workers, supervisory cadres, and senior management personnel. This is a rights-based approach to enhance the employment and recruitment practices in Tamil Nadu textile industry. The objective of the programme is to: "contribute to the elimination of exploitive practices, including the Sumangali scheme, in the textile industry in Southern India by implementing a replicable model that promotes ethical recruitment and retention of young women into the sector." Through an innovative peer-group learning methodology workers learn about their role as workers, good health and safety, rights as workers, and how to discuss concerns with management. The workplace training programme runs for 18 months and is facilitated by ETI's own expert social workers, health, HR and labour law specialists, and covers six training modules: occupational health & safety; understanding self; rights at work; quality of life income

¹ Government of Tamil Nadu www.investingintamilnadu.com

and stability; understanding work and role in industry; ownership & responsibility. The programme builds the trust, expertise and communication skills of workers and supervisors learn how to better communicate.

As a result of the worker peer education training programme, we have seen many improvements, in individual workplaces and across the sector, but there is still much more work to be done to see wide scale improvements.

Scope

In the next stage of development, ETI will modify its approach in the region and work more directly on supporting and strengthening local mechanisms for labour rights improvements and facilitate dialogue among Industry, Industry Associations, International Buyers and the local civil society. In order to do so, we will use the findings from this research to inform our approach in the future.

Apart from ETI's own Nalam programme, the region has seen several other initiatives funded by various donor agencies and governments globally. As part of ETI's future scope, the aim of this research project is to extract lessons from all these initiatives and capture knowledge gaps and potential opportunities for improvement to feed into the design of future projects aiming to enhance workers' rights in the region. The learnings could also be used by other initiatives currently active in the region.

Main activities:

- Through desk-top research and interviews give an overview of the scope and aims behind previous and current labour rights based-initiatives answering research questions such as:
 - Why was the initiatives established to begin with?
 - What were they trying to achieve?
 - What issues were they tackling?
 - What was the scope and methodology of the initiative?
 - What were the outcomes?
- Mapping and analysis exercise to capture all the work and initiatives previously conducted in the Tamil Nadu to list and evaluate all the different projects and their results. This section will answer questions such as:
 - What did previous initiatives achieve?
 - What were the outcomes and outputs?
 - What are the knowledge gaps prevailing?
 - What did previous initiatives not achieve?
 - Can any specific challenges to success be identified?
- Collect information via desk-top research as well as interviews with different stakeholders such as partner organisations, corporate brands operating in the region (both previously and currently), local organisations, MSIs, Trade Unions and Industry Associations.

Methodology

The detailed methodology will be developed by the consultant, in collaboration with ETI but should include:

- The development of a research document based on desk-top research and a completed mapping exercise

- Interviews with key persons among various initiatives and donors
- Interview with key stakeholder such as industry representatives, local civil society organisations, corporate brands and retailers, and business associations

Output

- A short research report (no longer than 25 pages) with Executive Summary (2 pages)
- A verbal presentation (around 30 minutes) to highlight key findings and recommendations supported by a PowerPoint slide deck
- Succinct recommendations for the industry, with roles and responsibilities allocated at local, national and international levels

Competencies, skills and experience

- Consultant may have a background in academia, local NGO or working with local trade unions, ideally with a solid understanding of the garment supply chain in South India.
- Excellent command of English and Tamil or plan to work with local language speakers
- Strong knowledge of labour rights in Tamil Nadu textile industries and experience conducting similar studies in the region.
- Minimum five years' experience working on human rights and ethical trade issues.
- Capacity for high quality written work targeting different groups of stakeholders relevant to ethical trade, including corporate representatives, governments and human rights practitioners.

Suggested Timeframe for Outputs

Final report by mid-June.

Fees and Payment schedule

- To be agreed – please submit a budget with your application including daily fee rate and estimated expenses.
- ETI will agree a payment schedule based on agreed delivery milestones.

Submission of Proposals

Proposals for this work should be sent to Mye Kallander (mye.kallander@eti.org.uk) by **5pm UK** time on **8th April 2021**.

The proposal should include (max 5 pages):

- Prior experience with examples of outputs for similar types of work
- Proposed consultants who will undertake the work (with biographies, references)
- Budget for the work (daily rates, etc.) and estimated expenses
- Evidence of knowledge of the sector and of Tamil Nadu
- Evidence of ability to communicate in local languages either directly or through a translator (if using a translator, this should be built into the budget)

ETI will score the proposals based on:

- Understanding of issues
- Experience conducting similar research studies
- Local representation
- Methodology