GENDER INEQUALITY IN INTERNATIONAL SUPPLY CHAINS: SNAPSHOT ANALYSIS
INTRODUCTION

ETI conducted a gender analysis* as part of its ongoing focus on gender equality within workplaces and global supply chains, women workers' rights and the issues they face in the world of work.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Gender equality is now firmly on the agenda – it's good for workers and good for business – don't miss the boat!

2. Many ETI companies are taking action. Activity is currently fragmented and needs a more strategic and rights-based approach.

3. Companies can't tackle gender inequality alone – it is deeply entrenched. There are multiple drivers of change (commercial, social, legal, political etc.).

4. Building alliances between companies, trade unions, NGOs, governments and international organisations is key.

5. ETI is developing tools to address discrimination across the Base Code, and promote gender equality in global supply chains.

* In collaboration with Prof Stephanie Barrientos and Dr Lara Bianchi, The University of Manchester, supported by an ESRC Impact Acceleration Award, and with valued inputs from Ergon Associates and independent gender experts Barbara Evers, Caroline Downey, Elaine Jones, Linda Shaw, Lucy Brill and Sally Smith.
GENDER INEQUALITY IS ENTRANCED...

Violence against women garment workers in Bangalore*

45m people are employed in India’s textiles and clothing sectors – 60% are women

1 in 7 women garment workers has been raped or forced to commit a sexual act

1 in 14 women garment workers has experienced physical violence

3.6% of reported action resulted in action by factory or police

0 criminal charges were brought against perpetrators

Social norms need to be tackled:
• Traditional attitudes, patriarchal norms and gender-stereotyped roles of women
• Lack of social recognition of equal rights in both private and public spheres
• Underlying structural factors: poverty, unpaid care work, lack of effective community structures, discriminatory and ineffective allocation of resources

Legal framework – good laws make a big difference:
• Strong legislation on gender equality
• Robust implementation and enforcement

*B Source: Eliminating Violence Against Women At Work* – Sisters for Change / Munnade p2

...BUT COMPANIES ARE TAKING ACTION
Gender equality is good for business

There are multiple drivers for action:

- **Presence of a large number of women workers**
  Women make up 70% of workers in garment and many agricultural sectors, but are concentrated in insecure and vulnerable work.

- **Campaigns & media attention**
  Eg following the Rana Plaza disaster or media exposés on sexual harassment in the agriculture sector.

- **Alignment with companies’ core values**
  Desire to enhance wellbeing and rights of potentially vulnerable workers.

- **Addressing business risk**
  Eg to future sustainability, stability or reputational risk due to rising public concern and commercial pressures.

- **Product sourcing and supply chain resilience**
  Eg sourcing artisanal products with an ageing workforce, ensuring worker retention in factories, supporting workers and marginal producers in the face of climate change.

- **Beyond compliance and transparency**
  Eg implementing Indian 2013 Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the workplace (POSH) Act; Company reporting under UK Modern Slavery Act reporting given women account for 58% of forced exploited labour.

- **Commercial benefits**
  Improved productivity, better workplace management with lower turnover, higher skilled, more content workforce.

- **Company commitments under external frameworks**
  Eg ETI Base Code, UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, Sustainable Development Goals.

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Gender initiatives: snapshot

- **10 ETI companies**
- **32 initiatives**
- **>12 countries**
- **>115 workplaces**
- **>170,000 workers**
- **>£50m invested**

* Likely to be under-reported. Full information not available for every initiative.
We found a variety of country-specific gender projects taking place (see map). These range from strategic interventions to secure living wages in garment factories, to improving health services for workers. In addition, we identified 4 broad types of initiatives that are also taking place across multiple countries.

1. **Fairtrade bananas**
   - Fairtrade certification to ensure higher prices and secure income for smallholders from downward price pressure.
   - Training programme for junior managers on leadership training.
   - Mentor training for girls to help them develop leadership skills.
   - Scholarships and funding for girls to attend school.

2. **Fairtrade coffee**
   - Fairtrade certification to ensure minimum price is based on cost of sustainable production to shield smallholders from downward price pressure.
   - Auditing approach to detect gender issues and discrimination.
   - Supervisor training to empower women and address abusive workplace practices.
   - Mentor training and women’s empowerment project in garment factories.

3. **Gender committees**
   - A safe space for women to discuss and address issues facing women, particularly women in marginalised communities.
   - Mentor training for girls to help them develop leadership skills.
   - Scholarships and funding for girls to attend school.

4. **Savings & Loan**
   - Cooperative costing for women’s labour.
   - Cooperative members.
   - Costing women’s unpaid labour into women’s income.
   - Revenue supports the price of sesame oil.

**Types of gender initiatives being implemented across multiple countries**

- Gender-related initiatives:
  - Industry strategy for women through implementation and action.
  - Full participation of women in factories.
  - Gender oversight in corporate policies.

- Auditing approach & discrimination:
  - Understanding of methodologies of audits for detecting gender issues and discrimination.

- Emerging tools for trade:
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Training & capacity building
- Leadership training
- Skills training
- Peer training on health & wellbeing

Research
- Internal surveys and studies on issues e.g. absence, wages, retention
- Understanding context

Philanthropic activities
- Eg donating free products for sale by women to raise money for health and wellbeing

Improving auditing skills & processes
- Working with small, high quality auditing firms
- Addressing skills, working with suppliers

Needs assessments
- Participatory tools to gather qualitative information on workers’ needs and priorities

Partnerships & collaboration
- Eg cooperatives on costing women’s unpaid labour; local NGOs on training development; local unions through formal collaboration agreements

Sourcing from social enterprises
- Participatory tools to gather qualitative information on workers’ needs and priorities

Positive recruitment policies
- Promoting recruitment through quotas
- Fair & transparent recruitment
- Highlighting equal opportunity in adverts

ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED

Improved gender ratios
- Increase in women in senior positions
- 1.5% increase in female managers

Increased empowerment
- Young women workers able to articulate needs
- Improved self-esteem & confidence

Improved gender relations
- Positive effect on gender relations between men & women
- Better interpersonal relationships

Positive quality & productivity
- Women workers using less water and improving yields
- Factories improving efficiency

Positive effects on health & wellbeing
- Indications of improved household wellbeing
- Reduction in anaemia

Positive retention
- Reduced staff turnover – improved policies for parents
- Reduced absenteeism

Addressing wage issues
- Increases in number of women in higher paid jobs
- Women’s unpaid labour costed

Enhanced understanding
- Improved gender sensitivity of Tier 1 managers
- Understanding of barriers at workplace

IMPACTS ACHIEVED
IMPACTS ACROSS ETI’S BASE CODE

Number of initiatives:

20
No discrimination

7
Living wages

7
Freedom of association and collective bargaining are respected

4
No harsh or inhumane treatment

3
Safe and hygienic working conditions

1
Child labour

1
Employment is freely chosen

0
Working hours not excessive, regular employment
LESSONS FROM ETI MEMBERS’ GENDER INITIATIVES

Performance and productivity programmes

- If factories alone choose auditors/external support, they risk choosing the cheapest/those without correct skills
- All women on shop floor ≠ no discrimination

The ‘softer stuff’ matters: tone and framing

- Recognise that farms/factories have a primary commitment to production
- Frame issues in a way business understands
- Recognise, collect and use existing knowledge and practice
- Try to show commercial benefits of gender equality where relevant
- Where programmes work, celebrate progress and use demonstration effect
- Use hooks such as SDGs, International Women’s Day as mandate and opportunity

Social auditing: gender

- Social audits failing to highlight gender discrimination
- Reduce audits in exchange for participation, reinvest costs into improvements
- More time for worker interviews, ensure female-only focus group discussions with a range of women, and same for men
- Gender and equal opportunities training for social auditors (eg gender profiling of workers and management; gender relevant across base code)
- Use gender sensitive participatory auditing methods
- See audits as information channel for increasing women’s voice rather than compliance exercise.

Worksite training and development

- Work with and do not undermine any existing worker organisation or representation
- Work with partners who have institutional links (municipal/national authorities; trade unions)
- Manage expectations honestly from the beginning - "We can’t all be managers"
- Ensure non-dominant women included (contract, migrant, younger, lower socio-economic status)
- Integrate learning from training into staff development plans
- Refresher or new training – otherwise gains can be lost in high turnover environments

The ‘softer stuff’ matters: tone and framing

- Use needs assessments and map situations before starting gender-related work
- Collect broader data and triangulate – single parents, widowed women, older women, partner status, dependents
- Set SMART targets to help demonstrate progress and ensure data is gender disaggregated
- For major change programmes, consider appointing a dedicated expert or nominated champion

Working with cooperatives

- Inclusive methodologies are available (eg Gender action learning system, Draw the Line tool)
- Ensure fair payments to all relevant parties (eg paying women and men working a plot, Fairtrade guidance)
- Take steps to avoid dependency on buyers

Project management and data collection

- Relying on productivity/performance may have different implications for women and men, eg on transport to work, hours of work
- Detailed, gendered analysis of pay gaps can reveal indirect discrimination

- Failing to highlight gender discrimination
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### STEPS TO SUSTAINABILITY

**Generate an enabling policy environment first**
- But remember those below the policy line & lower tiers

**Collaborate broadly**
- Eg on endemic issues (GBV, sexual harassment)
- Co-owned factories
- Neighbouring farms

**Work with institutions or partners with links**
- Municipal, regional, national govt (eg skills programmes)
- Workers’ organisations
- Local health networks
- Local institutes/training
- Local trade unions

**Link to social protection**
- Health insurance schemes
- Pensions
- Visibility to the state

**Lead by example! Continued demonstration of support for gender work**
- Resources
- Local and international staff
- Stated commitments

**Ensure skills and capacity to operate**
- Cooperatives
- Committees
- Management support
- Support for workers

**Positive outcomes for businesses**
- Awareness of male dominated culture
- Integrate women’s own perceptions
- Management support

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**Think about gender implications of commercial actions and materials across supply chain!**
RECOMMENDATIONS

For ETI

ETI to raise gender visibility, collecting practical tools and foster more direct, active, innovative collaboration across members.

For companies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Take a strategic, rights-based approach throughout</th>
<th>Improve data collection, tracking, reporting and social audits</th>
<th>Involve women, range of women and men</th>
<th>Collaborate, work with structures and institutions</th>
<th>Remember reality and celebrate progress</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consider overall company approach and alignment on gender across values, supply chain, ethical trade, raw materials.</td>
<td>Ensure supply chain mapping and social audits collect gender data, as detailed as possible. Ensure suppliers use auditors qualified on gender.</td>
<td>Involve a range of women at all stages of conceiving, designing, planning, implementing, M&amp;E. Involve and support men too.</td>
<td>Partner and collaborate with workers organisations, women’s organisations, government at all levels. Embed change over time.</td>
<td>Be conscious of local norms, culture and practices for women and men – learn from others how to address and overcome. Celebrate progress and raise visibility of women’s work and good gender practice.</td>
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NEXT STEPS FOR ETI AND GENDER EQUALITY

1. ETI sees gender equality as a powerful driver for positive change across the Base Code. [ethicaltrade.org/eti-base-code](http://ethicaltrade.org/eti-base-code)

2. This is part of ETI’s ongoing work on gender inequality, which is embedded in the ETI Perspective 2020 strategy. [ethicaltrade.org/about-eti/our-strategy](http://ethicaltrade.org/about-eti/our-strategy)

3. We’ll be driving development of tools and resources for promoting gender equality and achieving progress. Specific Base Code guidance on gender, coming soon – watch this space!