



International
Labour
Organization



Gender equality in global supply chains

«Gender Equality in the Workplace» webinar, Global Compact Network Italia

Yulia Gershinkova

*Junior Professional Officer in Business and Decent Work
ILO Office for Italy and San Marino, 13 July 2021*

Women in global supply chains

- ▶ Around **190 mln** women work in global supply chains
- ▶ Disproportionately represented in **lower-skilled** and **low-wage** production jobs in the **lower tiers** of the supply chain
- ▶ Women's jobs are often concentrated in countries where **labour laws** and **international labour standards** are **poorly implemented**
- ▶ Women workers are exposed various **gender-related risks**, including occupational segregation, precarious work, poor access to maternity rights and childcare, long working hours and overtime, unsafe working conditions, lack of freedom of association, limited access to education and skills development, violence and harassment
- ▶ Reliance on migrant, young, female labour with the **lowest bargaining power** and **little union representation**
- ▶ **Gender gap** in supply chains can reach between **30 to 50%**



Photo: Ethical Trading Initiative

▶ Guiding frameworks for GSC policies to promote gender equality

- ▶ The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998) (reflected in the labour principles of the UNGC)
- ▶ Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981, (No. 156), and Recommendation No. 165
- ▶ Home Workers Convention, 1996 (No. 177)
- ▶ Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), and Recommendation No. 191
- ▶ Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), and Recommendation No. 206.
- ▶ 2016 Resolution concerning decent work in global supply chains (**private sector to comply with laws and ILS, conduct due diligence, report and establish grievance mechanisms**).
- ▶ The ILO MNE Declaration (direct guidance to enterprises on **social policy** and **inclusive, responsible and sustainable workplace practices**).
- ▶ The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights
- ▶ The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises

▶ What can companies do to achieve gender equality in supply chains? (1)

- ▶ Adopt policies on **equal opportunities** in employment and occupation that eliminate discrimination and promote **social dialogue** and **collective bargaining**.
- ▶ Carry out **human rights due diligence** applying a gender perspective to identify how real or potential adverse impacts may differ for or may be specific to women, prevent and address them.
- ▶ Support business partners in developing **equal pay for work of equal value** policies (gender pay gap identification and assessment; job evaluation; temporary budget allocation for adjustments; pay transparency and reporting; discontinuation of pay history, pay equity reviews).
- ▶ Support business partners in adopting policies to **combat violence and harassment at work** (zero tolerance and prevention policies; workplace risk assessments and audits; guidance, training and awareness raising).

▶ What can companies do to achieve gender equality in supply chains? (2)



- ▶ Ensure **work/life balance** and **equal sharing of care responsibilities** (access to maternity health care, maternity protection and family leave, breastfeeding in the workplace; on- or near-site subsidized childcare; fair flexible working arrangements and homeworking conditions).
- ▶ Promote **women's economic empowerment** (assist suppliers in increasing the proportion of women in managerial roles; support women's entrepreneurship; gender-responsive procurement).
- ▶ **Empower women** in a human-centred future of work (financial inclusion of women; digital skills training; investing in climate resilience and sustainable infrastructure).

▶ Promoting gender equality in GSC through global framework agreements

- ▶ Joint commitments between **multinational enterprises** and **global union federations**
- ▶ Cover **supply chains** and include **references to the ILO** Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work; **follow up mechanisms** with trade union participation
- ▶ Significant increase in recent years in the inclusion of **gender equality clauses** in sectors dominated by women workers

Carrefour – UNI GFA on social dialogue, diversity and equal opportunities

- Company's commitment on anti-discrimination, gender diversity, equal opportunities, support for pregnant and nursing women, flexible working arrangements for staff returning from maternity or paternity leave, addressing violence and harassment at work.
- Includes references to the fundamental ILO Conventions, the UNGPs and the OECD Guidelines
- Provisions are extended "throughout the company's operations, including its supply chain and at its franchisees"



Photo: Food and Agriculture Organization

Better Work programme

- ▶ Collaboration between **ILO** and **IFC** to monitor and improve working conditions in garment supply chains and competitiveness of apparel business
- ▶ Brings together factories, governments, brands, business associations, workers and unions
- ▶ Brand partners include large MNEs like Inditex, H&M, M&S, Levi Strauss & Co, Gap Inc., etc.
- ▶ Helps global brands and retailers to manage GSC, mitigate risks and remedy poor working conditions, provide greater transparency on compliance
- ▶ Active in **1,700 factories** in nine countries (characterized by low labour law enforcement) employing more than **2.4 mln workers**, **80%** of whom are **women**
- ▶ Challenges to gender equality include **occupational segregation**, gender-based **discrimination** upon recruitment, gender **wage gap**, **sexual harassment**, **working hours**, **women's underrepresentation** on supervisory roles, lack or limited **pregnancy-related healthcare**, low female **trade union representation**
- ▶ Addressing **discrimination** and promoting **paid work & care** in its in-factory services and GSC engagement; influencing national and global policies on gender equality to promote **voice & representation** of women and foster female **leadership & skill development**

Better Work has

decreased gender
pay
gap by

17%

reduced sexual
harassment
concerns to

18%

increased women's
access to prenatal care
by

26%



[Click here to learn more](#)

▶ ILO Resources and Tools

- ▶ The ILO Helpdesk for Business on International Labour Standards
- ▶ Company-Union dialogue
- ▶ Decent Work in Global Supply chains report, 2016
- ▶ Promoting women's economic empowerment at work through responsible business conduct in G7 countries, including video materials available in IT
- ▶ Tools and resources for business on non-discrimination and equality
- ▶ Business Networks, including EPIC
- ▶ Training and webinars , including upcoming MOOC on Business and Decent Work

▶ **Thank you for your attention**

