



Cover photo: Women working at the Tuzamurane Pineapple Cooperative processing plant in Eastern Rwanda.  
Aurelie Marrier d'Unienville/Oxfam (2017)

## WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES MATTER: PROVIDING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR WOMEN TO BE HEARD IN THE WORKPLACE

**Abstract:** This briefing aims to share the insights Oxfam gained from interviews conducted with 26 experts in December 2019, on the subject of what works for women to represent themselves effectively. It outlines practical steps companies can take to enable women to be heard in the workplace and fulfil their potential. The coronavirus pandemic has made clear both the risks of not doing so and the benefits for a just recovery when women's perspectives are understood and the barriers they face are addressed.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Oxfam research<sup>1</sup> has highlighted that women working in global supply chains face hidden barriers to working their way out of poverty. This briefing shares Oxfam's insights, based on interviews with 26 experts,<sup>2</sup> on the subject of what works for women to represent themselves effectively and how these hidden barriers can be overcome.

Women's concerns and ideas tend not to be heard either by the managers of their companies or by the brands buying the goods or services. If women believe that no one will listen and nothing can be done, the conversation needed to unlock their potential is closed down. This can have serious implications. For example, if a food worker fears the consequences of taking a day off due to illness, she might work on a food production line while ill.

In the time of coronavirus, such risks become everybody's business – and the need to address them has never been more urgent. Yet experts were unanimous that gender equality is not only a human right but is also good for business; and that treating all workers 'equally' in a world where women do not have equal power risks perpetuating hidden inequality.

Oxfam has reflected on what the experts told us. Put together with what we have learned from engaging with food and garment companies and research into their supply chains, this briefing outlines seven areas of good practice for companies with global supply chains to consider as they plan for a just recovery from the pandemic. These are: earning workers' trust; establishing good-quality dialogue and a variety of grievance channels; taking proactive steps to prevent retaliation and violence against women; senior management committing to achieving gender equality and reflecting this in performance incentives; ensuring fair, transparent and gender-aware recruitment and promotion; collecting disaggregated data, sharing learning and applying it in practice; and taking measures to provide secure, flexible work.

# INTRODUCTION

Oxfam works to end poverty and injustice. Part of Oxfam’s work towards genuine, lasting change, is working alongside others to identify commercially viable ways of doing business that enable waged workers and small-scale farmers to work their way out of poverty. Our research<sup>3</sup> has highlighted that women working in global supply chains face hidden barriers to working their way out of poverty. One of these is that their concerns and ideas tend not to be heard or responded to by management and are overlooked by the brands or retailers that buy the goods or services. For women in insecure or unpredictable work, the intersection of multiple barriers to accessing decent work or progressing into higher-paid jobs can seem insurmountable. If women believe that no one will listen to their perspectives and nothing can be done to improve ways of working, the conversations needed to unlock their potential never take place. This can have serious implications.

For example, experts reported that it was common for women workers to think that if they challenge current working practices, they may lose their jobs. Oxfam researchers have also heard from women working on food factory lines: some gave accounts of wetting themselves because they were too afraid to ask to go to the toilet; others were sure they could improve production and reduce wastage, but didn’t speak up due to fear of repercussions.<sup>4</sup> Women’s perceptions matter, whether or not they are accurate, because they determine their behaviour. When women work in global supply chains, such perspectives can become everybody’s business – affecting the quality and price of goods and services bought by the consumer, and putting the reputations of brands and retailers at risk.

Most experts said that they had yet to come across effective ways for women in the lowest-paid and most precarious roles to represent themselves. They emphasized how crucial it is to understand the barriers, since solutions based on that understanding have more chance of success.

According to International Labour Organization (ILO) findings, in 2019, across 80% of waged employees worldwide, on average women earn 20% less than men;<sup>5</sup> and in sectors with a predominantly female workforce, wages are on average 14.7% lower than in sectors with a predominantly male workforce.<sup>6</sup> Globally, women carry out three times more unpaid care work at home than men.<sup>7</sup> One in three women<sup>8</sup> are affected by gender-based violence,<sup>9</sup> which becomes a particular risk in workplaces where women work under the supervision of men. Since 2019, domestic violence<sup>10</sup> and harassment have been formally recognized as workplace issues in international law.<sup>11</sup> These facts reflect endemic hidden discrimination against women. Globally, women typically work harder than men to access paid work and progress into higher-paid jobs. Achieving greater equality requires transforming attitudes, practices and daily decision making across business and supply chain operations.

## Why gender equality is everyone’s business

The experts Oxfam interviewed were unanimous that women not only have a right to be treated fairly at work, but also that gender equality is good for business. For example, the McKinsey Global Institute found that redistributing unpaid care work between women and men could boost the economy by 26% of global GDP (\$256 trillion), and that: *‘companies in the top quartile of gender diversity were 15 percent more likely to have financial returns that were above their national industry median’*.<sup>12</sup> When the car seat manufacturer Martur offered childcare benefits, staff turnover reduced by 15%, reducing recruitment and training costs.<sup>13</sup>

*‘When there is an optimal gender balance within an organisation, employee engagement increases by 4 percentage points, gross profit increases by 23% and brand image strengthens by 5 percentage points.’*  
[Food service company Sodexo](#)

There is also evidence that consumers want the brands they buy to ‘do the right thing’;<sup>14</sup> that consumers, particularly millennials, will pay more for products they trust to be more sustainable;<sup>15</sup> and that during the coronavirus pandemic, the trend of companies with a social purpose finding it easier to attract and retain the best talent has been strengthened.<sup>16</sup>

In 2015, a United Nations agreement defined 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate change by 2030.<sup>17</sup> The fifth goal is to achieve gender equality and

empower women and girls.<sup>18</sup> The private sector was framed as central to delivering the SDGs, and Oxfam has outlined what companies can do to help deliver the goals. This includes implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), for example by carrying out human rights due diligence to understand where their business has most impact (positive or negative), and aligning their business decisions with promoting human rights, and gender equality in particular. Companies can also be transparent about their impact and what they do to achieve it. This is a key objective of Oxfam’s Behind the Barcodes campaign, which scrutinizes the policies and practices of powerful food retailers.<sup>19</sup> Figure 1 shows that companies are not necessarily making the link between their (positive and negative) human rights impacts and how they will contribute to achieving the SDGs.

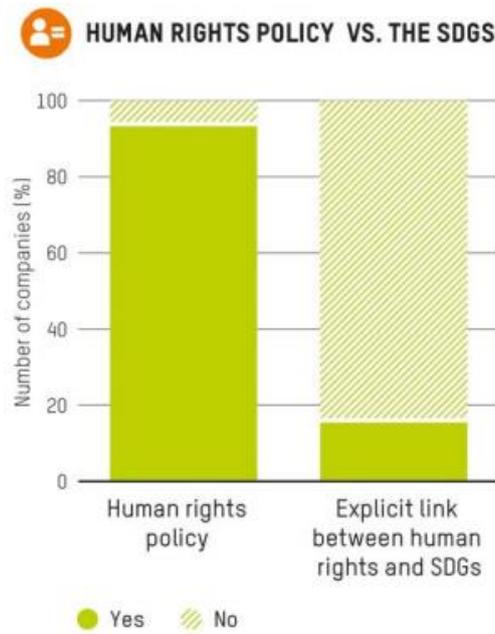


Figure 1: Companies explicitly linking SDGs with human rights<sup>20</sup>

In recognition of the lack of progress towards gender equality, in 2019 the UNGPs were updated to strengthen their gender dimensions. For instance, the text of one principle was changed from: *‘business enterprises should respect human rights’*<sup>21</sup> to *‘business enterprises should contribute to achieving substantive gender equality and avoid exacerbating or reproducing existing discrimination against women throughout their operations’*.<sup>22</sup> The social auditing industry is responding to this change; for example, the SEDEX ethical audit methodology now integrates gendered data tools, with the view that what gets measured gets managed.<sup>23</sup>

# PRACTICAL STEPS COMPANIES CAN TAKE

## 1. Earn workers' trust

Experts reported that women are more likely to speak openly about their experiences when managers make it clear that they hear and value their concerns and ideas. Women are also more likely to speak out (despite fear of repercussions) if they have reason to believe that something will be done to resolve the issue raised. The simple practice of managers reporting back, face to face, on the actions they take after hearing concerns and ideas goes a long way towards building trust and opening channels for meaningful dialogue.

One lesson learned was that workers' perceptions matter, whether or not they are well founded. For example, if a food worker believes she will be sacked for missing work, she will go to work ill, putting other workers and food safety at risk. There is also evidence that when women feel safe speaking up, they reveal risks and opportunities that companies really need to hear. Nike's experience (below) is a case in point.

### **Nike 'relief teams' lead to cost savings and increased production<sup>24</sup>**

Nike supported an Indonesian supplier to create women-only safe spaces to address productivity issues and worker wellbeing. Through these spaces, Nike identified that a root cause of high rates of absenteeism in women was staying home to look after sick children. Since women were not entitled to leave to look after dependants, many would call in to say that they themselves were sick, to avoid losing their job.

In response, the factory set up a multi-skilled 'relief team' and enabled women to call in to say they could not come to work, without having to give a reason why. They would be replaced for the day by someone in the relief team, with no repercussions.

**The result was less disruption to production lines and an increase in productivity which was greater than the cost of the relief team.** Workers reported reduced stress because managers' attitudes towards them had improved; there was less shouting, less condescension and more two-way dialogue. Women were relieved that they no longer had to lie about their absence and could take days off to look after their children without being fired.

The safe space approach identified all sorts of challenges and solutions, including discrimination and harassment, which compliance approaches had failed to identify or address. During the piloting, safe spaces achieved:

- cost savings
- reduced risk of production disruptions
- a 19% increase in production
- a 7% improvement in quality
- workers felt 22% more valued.

Reflecting on the experience, one senior manager said: *'I never realized workers had such good ideas.'*

## 2. Establish good-quality dialogue and a variety of grievance channels

The word 'grievance' is often associated with a formal process, but a theme emerging from the discussions with experts was that informal dialogue in safe spaces, ideally with support from the communities where workers live, was more effective in enabling women to be heard. This approach draws out women's priorities and builds their confidence to speak up in front of male workers and management. But investing in the *quality* of these safe spaces is crucial.

Criteria for processes to achieve good-quality safe spaces include ensuring:

- Explicit prior assurance that there will be no negative repercussions for workers exercising their right to freely associate and collectively bargain.
- Processes are genuinely free for women to participate in (e.g. during working hours and without losing income).
- Meetings are confidential and independent from management; they may benefit from external facilitation and/or skills training in the early stages.
- Women are free to decide their own priorities (including raising a concern even if they have no solution to offer) and to elect their own representatives.
- Elected representatives are listened to by management and responded to in meaningful, respectful and timely ways, until women confirm that the issues raised are resolved.
- Participants have access to expert independent advice and solidarity with women in other contexts.
- Support to achieve women's equality from the community in which they live.

A recurring theme among experts was the importance of not allowing corners to be cut.

Fair Wear Foundation trained (mainly male) supervisors in a garment company how to be effective supervisors without using violence or harassment and combined that with training women workers in technical and soft skills. Results to date include:

- Before the project, 80% of the participating factories reported workplace harassment. After the project, this was 60%.
- 77% of participating factories promoted women to supervisor and assistant supervisor roles after completing the training;
- 100% of participating suppliers reported reduced mistakes in the workplace;
- 75% reported reduced absenteeism<sup>25</sup>.

However, when the course materials were made free to access, companies typically cut corners in course delivery and the intended outcomes were not achieved. The lesson learned was to start small, focus on a high-quality process to build trust and demonstrate impact, then apply lessons learned when scaling up the approach. When female supervisors in the garment sector were trained to create facilitated safe spaces for women as part of the ILO/International Finance Corporation's Better Work programme, there was a 22% increase in productivity.<sup>26</sup> As a senior supplier manager in a global supply chain recently told Oxfam: *'In my experience, if you do the right thing, the money follows.'*

Over the last 150 years, the main solution available to disempowered workers has been collective organization through trade unions. Oxfam recently highlighted that the good practice of trade unions in Brazil has contributed to greater equality for women workers in Brazil.<sup>27</sup> It is therefore a matter of concern that trade union membership remains low or continues to fall across nearly all countries worldwide,<sup>28</sup> and that experts reported that trade unions are frequently undervalued as a resource by workers, managers and sourcing companies alike. Nevertheless, examples were cited where trade unions have helped women use their collective power to achieve positive change.

### **Working together to transform the systemic causes of gender inequality at work<sup>29</sup>**

The Salvadorian Coalition for Decent Work for Women (CEDM) brings together women's organizations and trade unions to achieve a decent wage and working conditions for women in El Salvador. Many women report discrimination, including being fired for being pregnant, and problems accessing childcare. Women's organizations in the coalition worked together to lobby for a change in national law, with the support of the Maquila Solidarity Network (MSN).<sup>30</sup> Their efforts are likely to have contributed to the government of El Salvador introducing new legislation in 2018 to define employers' responsibility to provide childcare at work.

Experts concluded that since women tend to face more barriers than men, it is more likely that women workers will find a way to be heard when companies take a range of actions and promote a variety of different grievance channels.<sup>31</sup>

### **3. Prevent retaliation and violence against women**

Since the quality of trust and dialogue can make or break women-only safe spaces, companies need to ensure that the necessary quality threshold is met. Experts frequently mentioned that retaliation can be one (destructive) indicator that women are genuinely speaking out and challenging social norms. Retaliation may be perpetrated directly or covertly. One example highlighted by experts was from the Garment and Fashion Workers Union (GAFWU), one of several Indian trade unions claiming that false sexual harassment charges had been made to defame men who championed women in the workplace.

Status quo power dynamics must be challenged to achieve gender equality, which inevitably means challenging current attitudes and practices. Retaliation happens in contexts where high levels of violence against women are considered acceptable. This violence can '*negatively affect women's physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health*'<sup>32</sup> and have serious implications for women's ability to earn a living or to feel confident that they can speak out without repercussions.

Companies seeking to transform negative power dynamics so that women and men can fulfil their potential at work need to identify, mitigate and challenge retaliation and violence in timely, fair and transparent ways, and to ensure cases are resolved. Oxfam uses a survivor-centred approach<sup>33</sup> in these situations.

Although controversial, there is increasing evidence that well-facilitated separate spaces for men can also play a vital role in enabling women's representation.<sup>34</sup> Men-only safe spaces can enable men to open up about the burden of providing a household income, suffering from addiction and dealing with anger or abuse. This can lead to discussions about solutions. Understanding what leads perpetrators to threaten/intimidate/assault women at work and at home (debt and excessive overtime are frequently reported triggers) – and supporting them to address these issues – can be transformative.<sup>35</sup>

Providing 'active bystander' training<sup>36</sup> on challenging unacceptable behaviour, and aligning performance incentives with applying the training, is another practical step that companies can take, alongside signposting to local resources.

### **What to avoid: the case of Prevention of Sexual Harassment Committees in India**

Although India is the only Asian garment-producing country with a law to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace,<sup>37</sup> experts told Oxfam that the worker committees this law requires have so far been ineffective and that women workers have reported to them that:

- Site management decide which workers can be representatives on these committees and may also control the agenda, meaning committees are not independent or confidential.
- Women don't feel safe reporting to these committees, and some have experienced retaliation.
- Women members of the committees say they themselves are being sexually harassed, and feel it is too risky to complain.

#### 4. Commit to achieving gender equality, and reflect this in performance incentives

For women in insecure or unpredictable work, particularly migrant workers or those with additional 'protected characteristics'<sup>38</sup> such as age, disability or pregnancy, the intersection of multiple barriers to decent work and higher-paid jobs can seem insurmountable. Positive discrimination is thus required. Preferential terms and access to opportunities can help women overcome the often-hidden norms and practices which result in discrimination against them.

*Experts reported that treating all workers 'equally' in a world where women do not have equal power is perpetuating inequality.*

Another theme arising was the need for clear board and senior management commitment to achieving gender equality, with integrated performance incentives across the business and business rewards in its supply chain. Oxfam's feminist principles<sup>39</sup> outline behaviours that support the development of gender equality at work, and Unilever aims to challenge harmful stereotypes to unlock women's potential.<sup>40</sup> Other ideas from experts included: paying equal wages for equal work; providing training on gender sensitization, unconscious bias and being an active bystander; and incentivizing staff whose actions help to level the playing field between women and men.

#### 5. Ensure fair, transparent, gender-aware recruitment and promotion

Experts told us that women's access to work is strengthened by fair, transparent and gender-aware recruitment, promotion, training, mentoring and sponsorship criteria. Due to their disproportionate responsibility for unpaid work in the home, women are less likely than men to access this support, but are more likely to access opportunities available during normal working hours (when there is no loss of pay).

Companies can source from businesses that demonstrate commitment to gender equality and use hiring practices, skill development and promotion decisions that are gender-aware and mitigate against unconscious bias. It is challenging to ensure that job profiles encourage women and men with the same skills and competences to apply. Research has found that women tend only to apply if they meet 100% of job criteria whereas men tend to apply even if they only meet 60%,<sup>41</sup> and women systematically under-represent their performance compared with men who perform at the same level. One theory for this is that social norms mean women are criticized for excessive self-promotion, and therefore self-censor.<sup>42</sup> Experts reported that women benefit from mentoring and sponsorship that helps transform how they represent themselves and their abilities. Unfortunately, there is also evidence that senior-level women who champion younger women are themselves more likely to get negative performance reviews, and that men are 46% more likely to have a higher-ranking advocate in the office.<sup>43</sup>

In many locations, there are additional social and/or cultural barriers to women progressing at work. For example, Oxfam's research in India<sup>44</sup> found that women believe that they will be expected to treat others harshly if they become a manager; and unmarried women in particular may need assurance that their reputation will remain intact if they accept a promotion. Ensuring that the criteria for selection and progression are both fair and transparent can help to address those concerns, alongside clear public messaging in workers' communities that the employer has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual coercion in its selection processes.

#### 6. Collect data, share learning and apply learning in practice

Companies can collect disaggregated workforce data<sup>45</sup> and use it to understand and respond appropriately to the different circumstances of women and men, with the aim of achieving gender equality. They can report publicly on progress towards gender equality over time, outlining the costs and benefits of that progress across their highest-risk business and supply chain operations.<sup>46</sup>

#### 7. Take steps to provide secure and flexible work

Experts highlighted that workers are more likely to risk speaking out if their income is secure. Women tend to consider their work secure if their income is predictable, guaranteed over the long term, or if they can

easily move to a different employer. Those who earn a living wage/income<sup>47</sup> are also more likely to feel safe speaking out.

A female agency worker in a UK food factory told Oxfam researchers: *'My problem is, why no permanent contract with the company? I really want permanent; I have family and kids. But I don't know the criteria – some people get [their days] cancelled and others not. They don't give you minimum hours, so you don't know how much you will earn each week. And if you call in sick, they give you two cancelled days afterwards to punish you.'*<sup>48</sup> To mitigate the exploitation of third-party workers, recruiters and employers can adopt the 'employer pays principle';<sup>49</sup> so that no worker pays to access a job. This can help women to access decent work.

Experts reported that employers typically overlook options to provide the flexibility that would help women fit work around their responsibilities at home, despite the fact that this flexibility is frequently available to managers. For women in many cultures, working from home remains the most realistic option to achieve economic independence. The ILO Home Work Convention states that homeworkers should have the same rights as other workers, but this is often ignored by companies and governments alike.<sup>50</sup>

Homeworkers Worldwide and the Ethical Trading Initiative have produced model homeworker policies, which a growing number of companies are using to make visible – and improve – the pay and conditions of homeworkers.<sup>51</sup> These can help companies consider how to engage women working from their homes and ensure that the flexibility of homeworking is not accompanied by precarious employment or exploitation.

#### **The Coalition of Immokalee Workers' Fair Food Program<sup>52</sup>**

This case was the most widely cited by experts. The Coalition of Immokalee Workers started in 2001 and set up the Fair Food Program (FFP), which now benefits about 35,000 tomato labourers, primarily in Florida. Since 2005, company members of the FFP have agreed to pay 1-4 cents more per pound of tomatoes. In turn, the growers have agreed to pay farmworkers at least the local minimum wage, to which the FFP premium adds a bonus, and to meet a set of labour standards (such as providing shade and water for workers, and ensuring freedom from physical and sexual abuse). Agreements are legally binding. Growers found to have violated FFP's code of conduct can lose access to buyers.

In 2019, it was estimated that 20 to 25% of all US tomatoes are now purchased from growers that take part in the FFP. There are independent reports that these workers now enjoy some of the highest labour standards in American agriculture. The FFP claims that 100% of workers are now directly employed and that 2,200 complaints have been resolved, free from retaliation, since 2011. Women have particularly benefitted from the reduction in harassment and elimination of sexual assault and modern slavery.

The FFP's success factors include:

- FFP auditors interview at least half the workers on each farm – often hundreds of them – which is far more than conventional auditors typically interview.
- All new workers must be shown a video outlining their labour rights.
- The coalition must be allowed to provide education sessions for workers at least once per season.
- Workers are urged to report abuses to a 24-hour hotline, which is monitored by an independent council that investigates the complaints.

# NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For example: Oxfam International. (2018). *Ripe for Change: Ending Human Suffering In Supermarket Supply Chains*. <https://indepth.oxfam.org.uk/behind-the-barcodes/>

<sup>2</sup> Oxfam identified and approached a range of experts. Some agreed to be interviewed and some referred us to others. The final 26 experts were: representatives of six corporates, three trade unions (national and international), two multi-stakeholder initiatives, one consultancy, one trust and nine NGOs; and four academics. In advance of each interview, Oxfam shared a summary of Oxfam's global supply chain research findings. During each interview we asked experts the following questions:

From your experience:

1. Do you recognize the findings from Oxfam's recent research into the experiences of factory workers in global supply chains? What do you think might be the top three underlying causes of these issues?
2. What do you think good looks like for low-paid female workers in global supply chains representing themselves effectively? Can you share any concrete examples? What are your top three 'must-haves' for effective low-paid women's representation?
3. What do you think good looks like to encourage women's progression from factory floor workers into higher-paid/supervisory/management roles? What could women who have progressed do more of to support the progression of other women? Can you share three concrete examples?

<sup>3</sup> For example: Oxfam International. (2018). *Ripe for Change*. Op. cit.

<sup>4</sup> Oxfam. (2016). *Poultry companies are denying their workers bathroom breaks. Tell Tyson to #GiveThemABreak*. <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/explore/stories/no-relief-for-poultry-workers/>

<sup>5</sup> ILO. (2019). *Global Wage Report 2018/19: What lies behind gender pay gaps*. [https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS\\_650553/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_650553/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> ILO. (2018). *ILO: Women do 4 times more unpaid care work than men in Asia and the Pacific*. [https://www.ilo.org/asia/media-centre/news/WCMS\\_633284/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/asia/media-centre/news/WCMS_633284/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>8</sup> World Bank IBRD-IDA. (2019). *Gender-Based Violence (Violence Against Women and Girls)*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialdevelopment/brief/violence-against-women-and-girls>

<sup>9</sup> Gender-based violence is defined by the UN as follows: 'The definition of discrimination includes gender-based violence, that is, violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty.' (CEDAW 1992: para. 6) <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm>

<sup>10</sup> Domestic violence is predominantly (but not exclusively) violence perpetrated by men against women. For example, the World Health Organization reports that: 'Globally, as many as 38% of murders of women are committed by a male intimate partner.' WHO. (2017). *Violence against women*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

<sup>11</sup> ILO Convention (C190) 2019 addresses domestic violence and harassment as workplace issues. [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C190](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C190).

<sup>12</sup> McKinsey Global Institute. (September 2015). *How advancing women's equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth*. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth> cited in Oxfam. (June 2019). *Business Briefing on Unpaid Care and Domestic Work: Why unpaid care by women and girls matters to business, and how companies can address it*. <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/business-briefing-on-unpaid-care-and-domestic-work-why-unpaid-care-by-women-and-620764>

<sup>13</sup> A. Sharma Kalra. (2017, October 10). *The business case for employer-supported childcare*. Human Resources. <http://www2.humanresourcesonline.net/the-business-case-for-employer-supported-childcare/>

<sup>14</sup> In a recent survey, 81% of participants responded that trust is a deal breaker in their decision to buy a product, agreeing with the statement: 'I must be able to trust the brand to do what is right'; only 38% of participants trusted the brands they buy from to do the right thing for society. 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: In Brands We Trust?, p.8+16. [https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2019-07/2019\\_edelman\\_trust\\_barometer\\_special\\_report\\_in\\_brands\\_we\\_trust.pdf](https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2019-07/2019_edelman_trust_barometer_special_report_in_brands_we_trust.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> In a 2015 survey, 66% of global consumers said they are willing to pay more for sustainable brands – up 55% from 2014. 73% of global millennials are willing to pay extra for sustainable offerings – up from 50% in 2014. See: <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/press-releases/2015/consumer-goods-brands-that-demonstrate-commitment-to-sustainability-outperform/>

<sup>16</sup> J. Smith. (2020, September 30). *Career priorities transformed by COVID-19 as workers seek more ethical jobs*. Insight. <https://workplaceinsight.net/career-priorities-transformed-by-covid-19-as-workers-seek-more-ethical->

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[jobs/?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=career-priorities-transformed-by-covid-19-as-workers-  
seek-more-ethical-jobs](#)

<sup>17</sup> United Nations, (2015), *Sustainable Development Goals: 17 Goals to transform our world*. Retrieved from: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2015/12/sustainable-development-goals-kick-off-with-start-of-new-year/>

<sup>18</sup> United Nations Global SDG Database, *SDG Indicators*. Retrieved from: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>

<sup>19</sup> Ruth Mhlanga, Uwe Gneiting and Namit Agarwal, (2018), *Walking the Talk: assessing companies' progress from SDG rhetoric to action*, (Oxfam). Retrieved from: <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/walking-the-talk-assessing-companies-progress-from-sdg-rhetoric-to-action-620550>

<sup>20</sup> R. Mhlanga, U. Gneiting and N. Agarwal. (2018). *Walking the Talk: Assessing companies' progress from SDG rhetoric to action*. Oxfam, p.16. <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/walking-the-talk-assessing-companies-progress-from-sdg-rhetoric-to-action-620550>

<sup>21</sup> UN-OHCHR. (2011). *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*. [https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/guidingprinciplesbusinesshr\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/guidingprinciplesbusinesshr_en.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> UN-OHCHR. (2019). *Gender Dimensions of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*. <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/gender-dimensions-guiding-principles-on-business-n-human-rights.html>

<sup>23</sup> BSR. (2019, October 3). *Making Women Workers Count: A Framework for Conducting Gender Responsive Due Diligence in Supply Chains*. <https://www.bsr.org/en/our-insights/report-view/making-women-workers-count-gender-responsive-due-diligence-report> cited in Sedex. (2020, March 6). *Driving progress on gender equality through better gender data*. <https://www.sedex.com/driving-progress-on-gender-equality/>

<sup>24</sup> Nike, personal communication (June 2018) cited in: S. Barrientos. (2019). *Gender and Work in Global Value Chains: capturing the gains?* Cambridge University Press, p.202-5

<sup>25</sup> Email exchange between Oxfam-GB and Fair Wear October 2020.

<sup>26</sup> N. Janssen and A. Rossi. (2018). *Gender Equality in the Global Garment Industry: Highlights of the Better Work Strategy 2018–2022*. ILO and International Finance Corporation (IFC). <https://betterwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/BW-GenderStrategy-Highlights-v4-Web.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> P. Williams. (2019). *Sweet and Sour: An investigation of conditions on tropical fruit farms in North-East Brazil*. Oxfam. <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/sweet-and-sour-an-investigation-of-conditions-on-tropical-fruit-farms-in-north-620875>

<sup>28</sup> Visser, Hayter and Gammarino (2015) cited in J. Visser. (2019). *Trade Unions in the Balance*. ILO, p.11.

[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_dialogue/---actrav/documents/publication/wcms\\_722482.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---actrav/documents/publication/wcms_722482.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Maquila Solidarity Network. (2018). *Right to childcare*. <https://www.maquilasolidarity.org/en/our-work/right-child-care>

<sup>30</sup> See: <https://www.maquilasolidarity.org/en/aboutus>

<sup>31</sup> The Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) and the UN provide guidance for effective company grievance mechanisms. See ETI. (2019). *Access to remedy: Practical guidance for companies*.

[https://www.ethicaltrade.org/sites/default/files/shared\\_resources/Access%20to%20remedy\\_0.pdf](https://www.ethicaltrade.org/sites/default/files/shared_resources/Access%20to%20remedy_0.pdf); and UN-OHCHR. (2011). *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*. Op. cit., p.36-40; and UN-OHCHR. (2019). *Gender Dimensions of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*. Op. cit., p.41-5.

<sup>32</sup> WHO. (2017). *Violence against women*. Op. cit.

<sup>33</sup> Oxfam GB's Survivor Policy defines a 'survivor-centred approach' <https://www.oxfam.org.uk/about-us/tackling-abuse-information-and-updates/keeping-people-safe/>

<sup>34</sup> The UK's Drive Project is one example of an initiative supporting/challenging domestic violence offenders to stop offending by asking 'Why doesn't he stop?' rather than only 'Why doesn't she leave?' See: <http://driveproject.org.uk/> and *A Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Strategy for England And Wales: Call to Action*, p.6. <http://driveproject.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Call-to-Action-Final.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> The World Health Organization reports that: 'Men are more likely to perpetrate violence if they have low education, a history of child maltreatment, exposure to domestic violence against their mothers, harmful use of alcohol, unequal gender norms including attitudes accepting of violence, and a sense of entitlement over women.' WHO. (2017). *Violence against women*. Op. cit.

<sup>36</sup> For example, Imperial College London provides active bystander training to staff and students:

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/engineering/staff/human-resources/active-bystander/>

<sup>37</sup> The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.

<http://legislative.gov.in/sites/default/files/A2013-14.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> The UK's Equality Act 2010 defines nine 'protected characteristics' (i.e. it is against the law to discriminate against someone on the basis of these): [age](#), [disability](#), [gender reassignment](#), [marriage and civil partnership](#), [pregnancy and maternity](#), [race](#), [religion or belief](#), [sex](#), [sexual orientation](#). <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/your-rights-under-equality-act-2010>.

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The ILO defines the prohibited bases of discrimination in employment as: race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction, social origin, age, HIV status, disability, sexual orientation, workers with family responsibilities, trade union members or activities, or any 'distinction, exclusion or preference... which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation'.

[https://www.ilo.org/empent/areas/business-helpdesk/faqs/WCMS\\_DOC\\_ENT\\_HLP\\_BDE\\_FAQ\\_EN/lang--en/index.htm#Q2](https://www.ilo.org/empent/areas/business-helpdesk/faqs/WCMS_DOC_ENT_HLP_BDE_FAQ_EN/lang--en/index.htm#Q2)

<sup>39</sup> For an explanation of Oxfam's feminist principles, see: <https://www.oxfam.org.uk/about-us/plans-reports-and-policies/modern-slavery-act-statement/>.

<sup>40</sup> Unilever. (2017). *Opportunities for Women: Challenging harmful social norms and gender stereotypes to unlock women's potential*. [https://www.unilever.com/Images/unilever-opportunities-for-women\\_tcm244-500987\\_en.pdf](https://www.unilever.com/Images/unilever-opportunities-for-women_tcm244-500987_en.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> T.S. Mohr. (2014). *Why Women Don't Apply for Jobs Unless They're 100% Qualified*. Harvard Business Review.

[https://hbr.org/2014/08/why-women-dont-apply-for-jobs-unless-theyre-100-qualified?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=tgr\\_newnlsignup&utm\\_campaign=nlconfirm\\_womenatwork\\_notactsub\\_v20191101&deliveryName=DM60937](https://hbr.org/2014/08/why-women-dont-apply-for-jobs-unless-theyre-100-qualified?utm_medium=email&utm_source=tgr_newnlsignup&utm_campaign=nlconfirm_womenatwork_notactsub_v20191101&deliveryName=DM60937); ForbesWomen. (2014). *Act Now To Shrink The Confidence Gap*. Forbes Magazine. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/womensmedia/2014/04/28/act-now-to-shrink-the-confidence-gap/>

<sup>42</sup> C. Exley and J. Keller. (2019, December 19). *Why Don't Women Self-Promote As Much As Men?* Harvard Business Review.

[https://hbr.org/2019/12/why-dont-women-self-promote-as-much-as-men?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=newsletter\\_weekly&utm\\_campaign=weeklyhotlist\\_not\\_activesubs&referral=00202&deliveryName=DM60780](https://hbr.org/2019/12/why-dont-women-self-promote-as-much-as-men?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter_weekly&utm_campaign=weeklyhotlist_not_activesubs&referral=00202&deliveryName=DM60780)

<sup>43</sup> J. Bennett. (2016). *Do Women-Only Networking Groups Help or Hurt Female Entrepreneurs?* The Academy of Management Journal. <https://www.inc.com/magazine/201710/jessica-bennett/women-coworking-spaces.html> cited in A. Welsh McNulty. (2018). *Don't Underestimate the Power of Women Supporting Each Other at Work*. Harvard Business Review. [https://hbr.org/2018/09/dont-underestimate-the-power-of-women-supporting-each-other-at-work?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=tgr\\_newnlsignup&utm\\_campaign=nlconfirm\\_womenatwork\\_notactsub\\_v20191101&deliveryName=DM60937](https://hbr.org/2018/09/dont-underestimate-the-power-of-women-supporting-each-other-at-work?utm_medium=email&utm_source=tgr_newnlsignup&utm_campaign=nlconfirm_womenatwork_notactsub_v20191101&deliveryName=DM60937)

<sup>44</sup> Oxfam confidential interview with leather worker

<sup>45</sup> For example, along the lines of the Workforce Disclosure Initiative's Survey 2020.

<https://shareaction.org/workforce-disclosure-initiative/why-disclose-to-the-wdi/>

<sup>46</sup> Oxfam. (2018). *Ripe for Change publications methodology and data: Supermarkets Scorecard Data*. Oxfam.

<https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620836/b-supermarkets-scorecard-data-030719-en.xlsx.xlsx?sequence=6&isAllowed=y>

<sup>47</sup> Oxfam uses the definitions of a living wage and living income outlined by the Global Living Wage Coalition.

<https://www.globallivingwage.org/about/living-income/> and <https://www.globallivingwage.org/about/what-is-a-living-wage/>

<sup>48</sup> Oxfam confidential interview with food factory worker

<sup>49</sup> Responsible Recruitment Gateway: *The Employer Pays Principle*. Institute of Human Rights and Business.

<https://www.ihrb.org/employerpays/the-employer-pays-principle>. Workers paying to access a job is a red flag for modern slavery.

<sup>50</sup> WIEGO. (2016). *C177: The Homework Convention – It's Time for Action!* <https://www.wiego.org/C177>

<sup>51</sup> See Homeworkers Worldwide: *Model Homemaker Policy*. <http://www.homeworkersww.org.uk/resources/model-homeworking-policy>; and Ethical Trading Initiative. (2010). *Homeworker Guidelines: What Retailers Can Do*.

[https://www.ethicaltrade.org/sites/default/files/shared\\_resources/homeworker\\_guidelines\\_retailers\\_0.pdf](https://www.ethicaltrade.org/sites/default/files/shared_resources/homeworker_guidelines_retailers_0.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> Summary based on the Fair Food Programme website: <http://www.fairfoodprogram.org/about-the-fair-food-program/>; and New York Times (2019, 7 March 2019). *Why Wendy's Is Facing Campus Protests (It's About the Tomatoes)*.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/07/business/economy/wendys-farm-workers-tomatoes.html>. See also <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/art-using-supply-chains-defend-worker-rights/>

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