



# Asia Floor Wage Alliance's

Step-by-Step Approach to Prevent Gender Based Violence  
at Production Lines in Garment Supplier Factories in Asia

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Asia Floor Wage Alliance (AFWA), founded in 2007, is an Asian labour-led international alliance of garment industry trade unions, labour rights organisations, consumer groups and research institutes across Asia, Europe and North America.

For more information, please visit our website: <http://asia.floorwage.org>

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>AFWA</b>	Asia Floor Wage Alliance
<b>AFWA-WLC</b>	Asia Floor Wage Alliance - Women’s Leadership Committee
<b>GBV</b>	Gender Based Violence
<b>EEOC</b>	U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>QC</b>	Quality Circle
<b>SST</b>	Supervisory Skills Training

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# INTRODUCTION

This Asia Floor Wage Alliance (AFWA) Approaches Brief presents a step-by-step strategy for preventing gender based violence perpetrated on garment production lines. The principles and approaches that follow are rooted in ten years of organising by AFWA, including establishment of the only Asian-led alliance of trade unions and labour rights organisations, and a widespread legitimacy around a regional bargaining approach for Asian garment workers.

## CHAPTER 1

**Gender Based Violence (GBV) in Context** situates the proposed intervention in relationship to established and emerging standards addressing GBV in the workplace; the spectrum of violence faced by women garment workers on garment production lines; and barriers to ending GBV. Chapter 1 concludes with a case for taking a preventative approach to addressing GBV. This focus on prevention is better equipped to safeguard the rights of women workers since securing retroactive relief in cases of GBV is fraught by unequal power relations between women workers and perpetrators of GBV (UN Women-ILO 2019); and retroactive relief requires women workers to not only bear the harms associated with GBV, but also the harms that attend redressal processes.

## CHAPTER 2

**The Gender Based Violence (GBV) Escalation Ladder**, revisits the spectrum of violence documented by AFWA in garment production factories in Asia in 2018, and introduces the perspective that these forms of violence are routinely linked in processes of escalation.

## CHAPTER 3

**The AFWA Safe Circle Approach**, introduces our approach to addressing GBV on garment production lines. Designed to complement existing trainings, the AFWA Safe Circle Approach involves potential “victims,” “bystanders,” and “perpetrators” in face-to-face, regular, small group engagement processes designed to address behavioural violence on the production line. Chapter 3 lays out key principles underlying this approach, includes a 5-step guide to operationalizing the Safe Circle Approach, and situates the AFWA Safe Circle Approach in relationship to the widespread success of Quality Circles in industrial contexts.

## CHAPTER 4

**Adult Education Approaches to Prevent GBV through Organisational Transformation**, discusses adult education approaches to build social consciousness and leadership to prevent GBV among constituencies with low literacy and education-levels. This Chapter concludes with a brief discussion of good practices from gender sensitisation modules in Asia. This final chapter is designed to inform implementation of the AFWA Safe Circle Approach.

The approach to eliminating GBV on garment production lines outlined in this issues brief combines review of relevant scholarship on interventions to end GBV in industrial contexts with the rich experience of the Asia Floor Wage Alliance Women’s Leadership Committee.

# CHAPTER 1

## GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) IN CONTEXT

### 1.1 GLOBAL STANDARDS ADDRESSING GBV

Under existing international legal standards, gender based violence includes **(1) violence which is directed against a woman because she is a woman; and (2) violence that affects women disproportionately**. Forms of gender based violence include acts that inflict physical harm, mental harm, sexual harm or suffering, threats of the any of these acts, coercion, and deprivations of liberty (CEDAW, General recommendation 19, article 1).

On May 28, 2018, the International Labour Organization (ILO) convened a Standard Setting Committee to begin the historic work of creating a global standard protecting workers from violence and harassment in the world of work, with a specific mandate to address gender based violence. Consistent with prevailing international legal standards, according to the Committee of Experts convened by the ILO in October 2016, “violence and harassment” in the world of work includes a continuum of unacceptable behaviours and practices that are likely to result in physical, psychological or sexual harm or suffering.

Macro-level gendered societal discrimination seeps into garment factories as gender based violence and discrimination. In a global survey leading up to these deliberations, the ILO highlighted gender based violence as **“the most prevalent human rights violation that both reflects and reinforces inequalities between women and men”** and identified the workplace as a “relevant context in which this matter can be discussed with a view to prevention” (Cruz and Klinger 2011). As expressed by the ILO, the factory workplace is a significant microcosm where strategic interventions to prevent GBV are possible. As clearly structured and bounded arenas within the broader context of social discrimination, industrial workplace contexts provide

opportunities for intervention. It is both important and possible to intervene constructively to solve GBV at the workplace, at the level of industrial relationships between working people.

### 1.2 GBV ON GARMENT PRODUCTION LINES

#### Spectrum of GBV on garment production lines

Gender based violence on garment production lines is rooted in entrenched patterns of societal discrimination. AFWA research found that women garment workers may be targets of violence on the basis of their gender, or because they are perceived as less likely or able to resist. Comprising the majority of workers in garment supply chains in Asia, women workers are also disproportionately impacted by forms of workplace violence perpetrated against both women and men (AFWA et al. 2018a, 2018b, 2018c).

For women garment workers, violence and harassment in the world of work includes not only violence that takes place in physical workplaces, but also during commutes and in employer provided housing. In a 2018 study of garment production lines in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka, Asia Floor Wage Alliance documented a spectrum of gender based violence (Table 1).

#### Dynamics of GBV on production lines

Patterns of sexual violence and harassment reported by women garment workers reflect power asymmetries between men and women, and workers and supervisors. For the most part, the forms of gendered discrimination and violence described in Table 1 enter the industrial context of the garment factory as tacitly approved

**Table 1: Detailed spectrum of gender based violence in Asian garment supply chains**

	<p>Gendered aspects of violence, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Violence against a woman because she is a woman</li> <li>2. Violence directed against a woman that affects women disproportionately due to (a) high concentration of women workers in risky production departments; and (b) gendered barriers to seeking relief</li> </ol>
FORMS OF VIOLENCE	
(a) Physical and sexual violence/discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assault, including pushing to the floor, beating and kicking, gendered aspects (1) and 2(b)</li> <li>• Slapping, gendered aspects 2(a) and (b)</li> <li>• Pushing, gendered aspects 2(a) and (b)</li> <li>• Throwing heavy bundles of papers and clothes, gendered aspects 2(a) and (b)</li> <li>• Sexual harassment, gendered aspect (1)</li> <li>• Sexual advances, gendered aspect (1)</li> <li>• Unwanted physical touch, including inappropriate touching, pulling hair, and bodily contact, gendered aspect (1)</li> <li>• Rape outside the factory at accommodation, gendered aspect (1)</li> <li>• Overwork with low wages, resulting in fainting due to calorie deficit, high heat, and poor air circulation, gendered aspect 2(a)</li> <li>• Long hours performing repetitive operator tasks, leading to chronic leg pain, ulcers, and other adverse health consequences, gendered aspect 2(a)</li> <li>• Serious injury due to traffic accidents during commutes in large trucks without seatbelts and other safety systems, gendered aspect 2(a)</li> </ul>
(b) Verbal and mental violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General verbal abuse, including bullying and verbal public humiliation, gendered aspect 2(a)</li> <li>• Verbal abuse linked to gender and sexuality, gendered aspect (1)</li> <li>• Verbal abuse linked to caste or social group, gendered aspect 2(a) and (b)</li> <li>• Verbal abuse targeting senior women workers so that they voluntarily resign prior to receiving benefits associated with seniority, gendered aspect 2(a)</li> </ul>
(c) Coercion, threats, and retaliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Threats of retaliation for refusing sexual advances, gendered aspects 1, 2(a) and (b)</li> <li>• Retaliation for reporting gendered violence and harassment, gendered aspects 1, 2(a) and (b)</li> <li>• Blacklisting workers who report workplace violence, harassment, and other rights violations, gendered aspect 2(a)</li> </ul>
(d) Deprivations of liberty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forced to work during legally mandated lunch hours, gendered aspect 2(a)</li> <li>• Prevented from taking bathroom breaks, gendered aspect 2(a)</li> <li>• Forced overtime, gendered aspect 2(a)</li> <li>• Prevented from using legally mandated leave entitlements, gendered aspect 2(a)</li> </ul>

gendered industrial relations practices between women workers, supervisors, and managers.

Although women garment workers report sexual harm from both men in positions of authority within the factory and co-workers, reports of sexual harm most commonly featured employment relationships where women held subordinate roles in relationship to male supervisors, line-managers, and mechanics tasked with fixing their machines (AFWA et al. 2018a, 2018b, 2018c).

### 1.3 BARRIERS TO ENDING GBV

Significant barriers to ending GBV on garment production lines and in other workplace contexts have been well established. They include cultures of impunity, challenges in reporting, ineffective systems and procedures, and retaliation—including further targeting, loss of employment, social ostracisation, and personal and professional reputational harm (UN Women-ILO 2019; Feldblum and Lipnic (EEOC) 2016). Retaliation is pervasive: according to research cited by the U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission Taskforce (2016), 75% of women in America face retaliation for reporting workplace GBV.

Barriers to ending GBV are heightened in garment production line contexts. In garment factories where majority male supervisors and line-managers oversee an overwhelmingly female workforce, male monopoly over authority entrenches a culture of impunity around sexual violence and harassment. The Better Work Assessment Report, conducted by Tufts University under the leadership of Dr. Drusilla Brown, predicts that the most likely perpetrator of sexual harassment would be the line supervisor and the most likely victim would be the worker (Brown 2016).

**“In the workplace, such conduct may also be seen by workers as a condition of their employment or as a requirement for promotion.”**

**Better Work Assessment Report, Tufts University (Research Lead: Dr. Drusilla Brown)**

Low levels of job security among women workers heightens fear of retaliation, undermines reporting, and reinforces impunity (AFWA et al. 2018a, 2018b, 2018c). The International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) confirms these findings, warning that in the garment global supply chain, sexual harassment has become normalized, harassment is “swept under the rug on the way to meet production targets,” women have less bargaining power to speak up, and those who do face retaliation. In short: “persistent harassment is deeply embedded in some workplace cultures” (ICRW 2018).

These barriers to ending GBV are pervasive across workplace contexts. According to research cited by the EEOC Taskforce (2016), responsible for eliminating sexual harassment and other forms of sex-based discrimination, 60% of women surveyed had experienced gender harassment (Feldblum and Lipnic (EEOC) 2016 citing Ilies 2003). The most common workplace-based responses to gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) were (1) avoiding the harasser (33% to 75%); (2) denying or downplaying the gravity of the situation (54% to 73%); and (3) attempting to ignore, forget or endure the behaviour (44% to 70%) (Feldblum and Lipnic (EEOC) 2016 citing Cortina and Berdahl 2008).

## 1.4 GBV PREVENTION

GBV on garment production lines has negative impacts on the physical, reproductive, and mental health of women workers (AFWA et al. 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, UN-ILO 2019). Strategic intervention to prevent gender based violence on the factory floor is an urgent business imperative. Not only are such initiatives required to safeguard women workers, but there is also preliminary evidence that initiatives to address workplace violence stand to benefit brands and suppliers by increasing individual efficiency and production quantity among workers; and ultimately firm productivity and revenue (Rourke 2014; Morris and Pillinger 2016; Lin 2014; Brown 2016).

According to the Committee of Experts convened by the ILO in October 2016, gender based violence is a social rather than an individual problem, requiring comprehensive responses that extend beyond specific events, individual perpetrators, and victims/survivors (No. 35, para. 9). Existing practices for addressing

barriers to reporting GBV in the workplace and catalysing behavioural and cultural change include raising awareness, training, incentive-based initiatives, and protection from retaliation. These approaches have varying levels of success.

Drawing from the strengths of existing good practices, this issues brief introduces a supplemental approach to addressing GBV. Grounded in identification of a GBV Escalation Ladder (Chapter 2), we seek to catalyse deep engagement in organisational change processes to prevent GBV using the AFWA Safe Circle Approach (detailed in Chapter 3). This focus on prevention is better equipped to safeguard the rights of women workers since securing retroactive relief in cases of GBV is fraught by unequal power relations between women workers and perpetrators of GBV (UN Women-ILO 2019); and retroactive relief requires women workers to not only bear the harms associated with GBV, but also the harms that attend redressal processes.

## INCENTIVE PROGRAMMES: APPROACHES TO SUPPORT REPORTING OF GBV

Employer-created incentives programs have the potential to support or undermine a strong training program. In the health and safety context, many employers and compliance leads for global supply chains have acknowledged the problems with incentivizing “zero instances” of reporting (Morrison 2011). In some cases internal audits have shown they lead to under-reporting or non-reporting and they create peer pressure against reporting so units remain eligible for even modest rewards. In the context of reporting health and safety concerns and workplace injuries, the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration has warned employers about the consequences of “zero instance” incentive programs which are in tension with a prevention approach (US DOL OSHA 2012).

The diagram that follows highlights incentive techniques that promote reporting, and those that repress reporting.



# CHAPTER 2

## THE GBV ESCALATION LADDER

The AFWA step-by-step approach to prevent GBV at production lines in garment supplier factories in Asia is guided by the key finding that GBV in the workplace escalates in intensity over time. AFWA documentation of escalations in GBV is bolstered by a robust literature on workplace bullying. Duncan Chappell and Vittorio Di Martino (2006), researchers who have worked extensively with the ILO, have studied how workplace bullying typically escalates in intensity over time. They write:

Workplace bullying constitutes repeated offensive behaviour through vindictive, cruel, malicious or humiliating attempts to undermine an individual or group of employees. Bullying is frequently covert and occurs out of sight of potential witnesses. However, the behaviours usually escalate in intensity over time.

Scholarship on workplace bullying notes similar patterns in bullying, sexual harassment, and violence within workplaces, including in terms of frequency, severity and impact on well-being (Chappell and Di Martino 2006; Einarsen 1999). Affirming the relationship between sexual harassment, violence, and workplace bullying, a recent paper in the ILO Better Work Discussion Paper Series (Lin, Babbit and Brown 2014) explicitly defines sexual harassment in relationship to workplace bullying:

Sexual harassment is defined by Paludi and Barickman (1991) as bullying or coercion of a sexual nature, or the unwelcome or inappropriate promise of rewards in exchange for sexual favours.

The following sections provide an overview of key findings from research on workplace bullying, with a focus on relevant implications for addressing sexual harassment and violence.

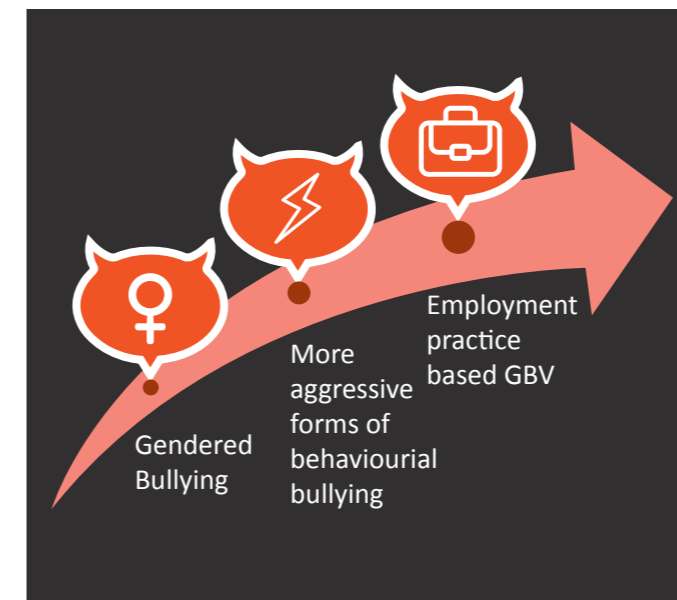
### 2.1 DYNAMICS OF WORKPLACE AND GENDERED BULLYING

Workplace bullying is defined as “repeated offensive behavior through vindictive, cruel, malicious or humiliating attempts to undermine and individual or group of employees” (Chappel and Di Martino 2006). Examples of workplace bullying include assigning heavy workloads, refusing applications for leave, allocating menial tasks (Fox and Stallworth 2006), excessive monitoring, unfair and persistent criticism, judging work incorrectly, and blocking promotion (Randle, Stevenson, and Grayling 2007), public humiliation, spreading rumours (Keashly 2001; Lutgen-Sandvik 2005; Namie and Namie 2009), rude, foul, and abusive language (Vega & Comer, 2005), and explosive outbursts such as yelling, screaming, and swearing (Lutgen-Sandvik, Namie, & Namie, 2009). Workplace bullying is further characterised by intensity, persistence (frequency, repetition, and duration), and power disparity between targets and perpetrators (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2005; Lutgen-Sandvik and Tracy 2012).

Consistent with internationally accepted definitions of gender based violence, this issues brief introduces the term “gendered bullying” as a subset of workplace bullying that encompasses forms of workplace bullying that are directed against a woman because she is a woman; and that affect women disproportionately. Existing literature has long recognised sexual harassment in the workplace—bullying or coercion of a sexual nature, or the unwelcome or inappropriate promise of rewards in exchange for sexual favours (Lin 2014; Paludi and Barickman 1991)—as a subset of workplace bullying.

**This issues brief provides fresh insight into this relationship: AFWA research and experience has documented an escalation from gendered bullying to sexual harassment and violence**

(Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Relationship between workplace bullying, gendered bullying, and sexual harassment**

	Workplace bullying	Gender based violence on production lines
Repeated acts	X	X
Perpetrated by one or more individuals	X	X
Extra-contractual	X	X
Rooted in unequal power relations	X	X
Coercive intentions	X	X
Perpetuated by job insecurity and pressure to perform among target groups	X	X
Fear of retaliation for reporting works through implicit or explicit threats	X	X
Creates hostile working environment	X	X
Adverse impact on organisations (lower morale, lack of trust, reduced productivity, increased turnover)	X	X

**Table 2: Shared features of workplace bullying and gender based violence on garment production lines**

Sources: Rayner and Cooper 1997; Quine 1999; Brake 2005; Hodson et. al. 2006; McKay et. al. 2011; McKay and Fratzl 2011; McCormack et. al. 2018; AFWA et al. 2018a, 2018b, 2018c.

Women workers may be more susceptible to both workplace bullying, gendered bullying, and sexual harassment since they are often seen as more vulnerable, less capable of retaliating, and less willing to retaliate than male targets (Gilbert 2013; McCormack, Djurkovic et. al. 2018). Workplace bullying, sexual harassment, and violence may occur simultaneously, taking a compounded toll upon women workers (Chappel and Di Martino 2006).

The AFWA Safe Circle Approach to ending GBV detailed in this brief, is informed by well documented features of workplace bullying, established over nearly three decades of study documenting this form of psychological violence in workplaces across the globe (e.g. Paludi and Barickman 1991; Einarsen 1999; Chappel and Di Martino 2006; Lin 2014; Eleanna and Papalexandris 2013); Valentina and Pozza 2019). Workplace bullying has received significant scholarly and policy-oriented attention in Europe since the 1990s, is well-established as a significant topic of research internationally, and is gaining traction in the United States (Vega and Comer 2005; Devi 2016). While addressing a range of workplace contexts, research on workplace bullying has also attended specifically to industrial relations and human resource management (Sjotveit 1992 and 1994; Ironside and Seifert 2003; Lewis and Rayner 2003; McIntyre 2005; Hoel and Beale 2006; Roscigno, Hodson and Lopez 2009; Beale and Hoel 2010; Hutchinson, Vickers, Jackson, & Wilkes, 2010; Hutchinson & Jackson 2014).

### Key insights from scholarship on workplace bullying, gendered bullying, and sexual harassment

The following characteristics (C1-C5) derived from scholarship on workplace bullying, gendered bullying, and sexual harassment anchor the approach to preventing gender based violence on production lines presented in this brief:

- **C1:** Covert perpetration: Workplace bullying is often covert and perpetrated out of sight of potential witnesses (Chappel and Di Martino 2006).
- **C2:** Identifying experiences of violence rather than identifying victims facilitates reporting: In order to uncover, measure, and address bullying and violence, it is more effective to ask targets whether they have experienced specific acts rather than asking them to more generally identify as a “victim” of bullying or violence (Galanaki and Papalexandris 2013; AFWA 2018a, 2018b, 2018c).
- **C3:** Naming and acknowledging abuse facilitates relief: Acknowledging abused persons as targets publicly exposes abuse and relieves target from blaming themselves (Lutgen-Sandvik 2008; Namie & Namie 1999, 2009; Tracy et al., 2006)
- **C4:** Organisation-level interventions are more effective than individual-level interventions to prevent workplace bullying (Vartia & Leka 2011; Johnson 2015).
- **C5:** Small communication changes in daily interactions can catalyse substantial transformation in working relationships (Lutgen Sandvik and Tracy 2011)

C1 lends insight into characteristics of workplace violence; and C2, C3, C4, and C5 provide meaningful guidance on developing strategies to prevent workplace violence.

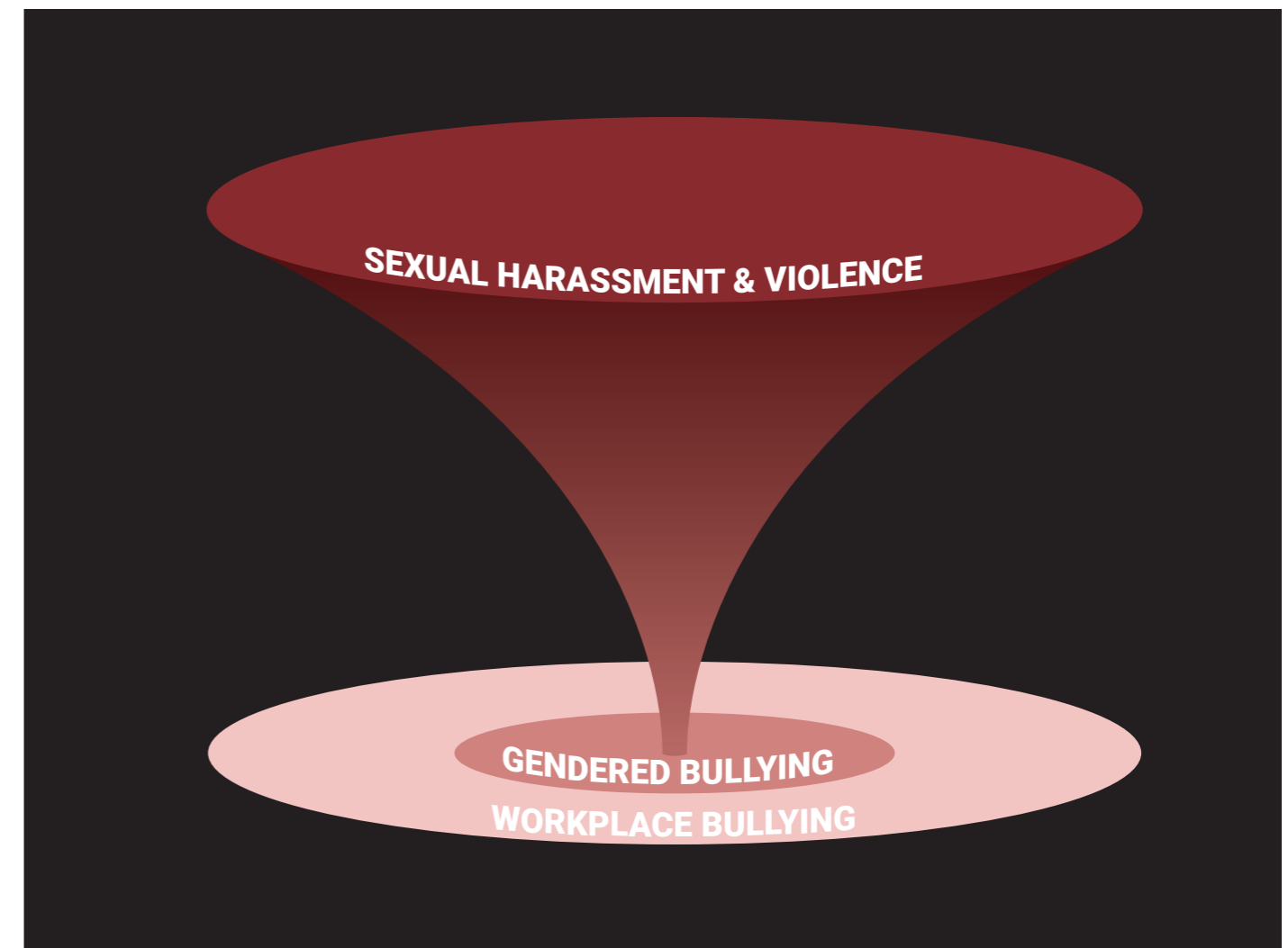
## 2.2 THE GBV ESCALATION LADDER

The concept of a GBV Escalation Ladder introduced in this section draws from and extends scholarship on escalation developed in literature on workplace bullying. According to the U.S. Equal Opportunity Employment Commission, Select Task Force on the Study of Harassment in the Workplace, GBV includes not only “unwanted sexual attention or sexual coercion,” but also “hostile behaviours that are devoid of sexual interest aiming to insult and reject women, rather than

pull them into a sexual relationship” (EEOC 2016). This gradation between types of GBV suggests escalation between modes of GBV—or the possibility of detecting a GBV Escalation Ladder.

AFWA identifies gendered bullying as a precursor to more aggressive behavioural GBV. Behavioural GBV, in turn, leads to employment-practice based GBV. The experiences of AFWA member unions in documenting and addressing GBV confirm the value of understanding GBV using a graded approach that accommodates a complex spectrum of behaviours and manifestation levels.

Figure 2: The GBV Escalation Ladder





**Table 3: Levels of GBV manifestation**

## GBV AS A TACITLY APPROVED GENDERED INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS PRACTICE

1. **Supervisory behavioural GBV practices**, perpetrated at the production line level by male workers in hierarchical positions—including supervisors, line managers, and mechanics—accounts for the majority of (a) physical and sexual violence and discrimination; and (b) verbal and mental violence.
2. **Employment-practice based GBV**, perpetrated at the factory level and rooted in control over job placement and security by male supervisors and managers in hierarchical positions, manifests as:
  - (c) coercion, threats, and retaliation, including:
    - i. retaliation when women workers refuse sexual advances,
    - ii. coercion and retaliation by senior management when workers challenge factory-level practices, and;
  - (d) deprivation of liberty, including:
    - i. restrictions on freedom of mobility,
    - ii. being forced to sign documents,
    - iii. being forced to work in unsafe workplaces,
    - iv. being forced to work overtime hours, and
    - v. being forced to submit to repeated abuse at work, an experience referred to by Asian women workers as “torture.”

## GBV AS A FEATURE OF PURCHASING PRACTICES IN GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS

Both behavioural GBV (production line level) and employment-practice based GBV (factory level) are related to purchasing practices in global supply chains. Purchasing practices create conditions that reinforce GBV practices by tolerating and privileging commercial priorities over social responsibility.

**Table 4: Spectrum of GBV in supplier factories**

a) Physical and sexual violence/discrimination	Use of physical authority, physical violence, sexual abuse, assault, etc.
b) Verbal and mental violence	General verbal abuse, including bullying, public humiliation, discriminatory language
c) Coercion, threats, and retaliation	Coercion/threats/retaliation for complaining, refusing sexual advances, refusing unfair labour practices
d) Deprivation of liberty	Forced overtime and deprivation of leave/breaks leading to lack of flexibility to deal with double burden of care work, deprivation of personal liberty to freely choose when to continue or leave employment, and continuous abuse—or “torture”— leading to quitting

### Levels of GBV manifestation

The levels on the GBV Escalation Ladder—gendered bullying, more aggressive forms of behavioural GBV, and employment-practice based GBV (Table 3)— correspond with the types of violence on the spectrum of GBV identified in supplier factories (Table 4).

### Key insights from the GBV Escalation Ladder

The escalation ladder described above—(1) from gendered bullying; to (2) more severe forms of behavioural GBV; to (3) employment-practice based GBV—provides significant insight into processes that catalyse patterns of workplace violence.

Furthermore, the GBV Escalation Ladder provides valuable locational information to inform targeted interventions to eliminate GBV. Experience among AFWA member unions has shown that the first forms of GBV on the GBV Escalation Ladder that workers confront take place on the production line between supervisors and workers. Accordingly, the AFWA approach to preventing GBV seeks to address behavioural GBV on the production line prior to escalation. This requires catalysing behavioural change among supervisors, line managers, and mechanics.

## THE QUALITY CIRCLE APPROACH

The Quality Circle (QC) approach has been beneficial to workers and firms across the globe—including in India, Japan, the UK, and the United States by manufacturing companies such as Ford Motor Company, Lockheed, Rolls Royce, Bharat Heavy Electronics Limited; among railway employees; and in educational institutions.

- Benefits to workers attributed to QCs “people building approach” include increased productivity, quality, performance, job satisfaction, and psychological well-being (Smeltzer and Kedia, 1985; Barrick and Alexander, 1987; Piczak 1988).
- Positive effects on communication between supervisors and subordinates, and among peers (Berman and Hellweg 1989).
- Benefits to firms include increased financial value due to enhanced productivity that outweigh costs associated with dedicating time to this management process (Barrick, Murray and Alexander 1992).

## CHAPTER 3 THE AFWA SAFE CIRCLE APPROACH

The AFWA Safe Circle Approach involves potential “victims,” “bystanders,” and “perpetrators” in face-to-face, regular, small group engagement processes designed to address behavioural violence on production lines in garment factories.

The following concepts lie at the core of the AFWA Safe Circle Approach:

- GBV is multi-level and complex in its manifestations. Facilitating effective problem solving to eliminate GBV from production lines requires an in-depth understanding of interlinked levels of GBV and their complexities.
- Ending GBV requires not only training, but also processes designed to catalyse organisational transformation. The Safe Circles Approach introduces organisational transformation processes to supplement training.
- Organisational transformation processes (1) require a graded approach to addressing GBV, grounded in an understanding of the GBV Escalation Ladder; and (2) must engage workers and supervisors on production lines—the frontlines of GBV Escalation.
- Transformation processes should take place in small groups of workers and supervisors. These processes should be structured, face-to-face, regular, and ongoing.

### AFWA PROPOSAL FOR A SAFE CIRCLE APPROACH TO PREVENT GBV

Consistent with UN Women and ILO recommendations (2019), the AFWA Safe Circle Approach seeks to develop and sustain a positive organisational culture on garment production lines, co-produced by workers and management who seek to advance the shared goal of

preventing GBV. AFWA’s focus on shifting organisational culture is consistent with recommendations from CARE which states that any effort aimed at addressing sexual harassment in the workplace must employ a “whole of organization” approach (CARE 2018).

The AFWA Safe Circle Approach combines new perspectives in responding to gender based violence in garment factories, with well-established circle approaches as implemented through quality circles (QCs) from other industrial contexts (See text insets page no. 19 & 20]. Workplace safety has already been an important and successful focus for QCs (Saheldin and Zain 2007), suggesting that these strategies can be well adapted to addressing workplace safety issues associated with GBV.

Improved communication and collaboration between workers and supervisors on GBV has the potential to achieve the following objectives:

1. Change supervisory relationships and practices at the level of the production line;
2. Identify and address more covert forms of gendered bullying before they escalate and manifest in more aggressive forms of violence; and
3. Increase reporting among targets of violence by promoting a “feedback rich” environment “where middle managers are trained to respond to complaints and issues in an emotionally intelligent way, and where people feel comfortable speaking up and listening”  
(Harvard Business Review)

## PERSPECTIVES ON QUALITY CIRCLES FROM UNITED NATIONS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION (UNIDO) AND JAPANESE STANDARDS ASSOCIATION (JSA)

A small group of frontline employees who meet regularly to try to improve the quality of their work.

- QCs can play a major role in creating a dynamic atmosphere in the workplace.
- QCs normally take a problem-based approach. They identify problems in their workplace and together they set about finding a solution. QCs try to be creative in seeking solutions.

“We all have an innate desire for personal growth. In the right conditions we get a lot of satisfaction from improving our skills, and from using our new skills together with our co-workers to achieve meaningful targets. QC Circles provide the right conditions.”

## 5 key principles underlying AFWA Safe Circle Approach

The AFWA Safe Circle approach is guided by the following core principles:

1. Support proactive engagement in preventing GBV among front-line (production line) workers who are targets of violence
2. Empower women workers to have a constructive voice at work
3. Facilitate on-going interaction and consensus-building among workers and supervisors who work together at the frontlines (production lines). Workers and supervisors should be selected from each production line to ensure that positive outcomes are distributed across production floors.
4. Design and achieve measureable and observable goals and outcomes
5. Increase communication/behavioural competence among supervisors and others in hierarchical positions of authority

Defining features of the circle approach

1. Members of a circle should be employed in the same workspace or engaged in a similar type of work. Designations of members need not be equal, but they should be engaged in common work.
2. Circles meet regularly, and are not just assembled to solve specific problems.

## Operationalising the AFWA Safe Circle Approach

The approach detailed below—including set-up, training, and operationalising Safe Circles—can take 6 to 12 months. This timeline is consistent with accepted practices for establishing Quality Control Circles in industrial contexts (DBJ and JERI 2003).

### Step 1: Establish Safe Circles (SCs)

- **Establish production-line level SCs:** SCs should be established on each production line in a factory, including both workers and supervisor(s) who work together regularly. The design of SCs as production-line level intervention platforms corresponds with recommendations from the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Task Force (2018).
- **Include workers and supervisors in each SC:** Each SC should include a minimum of 3 and maximum of 8 members, including supervisors and workers.
- **Appoint leaders within each SC:** Each SC should appoint (1) an SC Worker Spokesperson; and (2) an SC Leader. The SC Leader can be either a worker or supervisor.

### Step 2: Develop Shared Goals to End GBV

In order for the SC approach to be effective in eliminating GBV from production lines, SCs must remain focused on this core objective. The SC structure should not be seen as a panacea for all workplace grievances by either SC members or non-member workers and supervisors. The process described in Step 2 aims to clarify the focus of SCs on eliminating GBV, and building support for this process within the factory.

- **Create Factory-Level GBV List:** SC Worker Spokespersons from each production line, together with the local union in their supplier factory, should make a GBV List, including concrete experiences of behavioural GBV experienced by women on each production line.

GBV lists will likely have regional commonalities across Asia, and display country-level trends. This process aims to develop a shared articulation or

“common language” for discussing behavioural GBV at the production line and factory levels that is based upon lived experiences and factual information.

- Finalise GBV List in consultation with factory higher management
- Conduct meeting between higher management and all supervisors and mechanics, indicating zero tolerance for conduct on the GBV List. This step aims to engage top management and make their support visible, a core component of QC success (DBJ and JERI 2003; Cheung et. al. 2017).
- Identify alternate channels outside the SC for addressing workplace issues that do not fall within the parameters of the GBV list. As SCs are established as mechanisms for worker leadership and change within the factory, they may be alerted to problems that fall outside the mandate of their work to eliminate GBV. While SCs should not direct attention to addressing these problems, they should be able to forward/refer issues and cases to appropriate forums for resolution.

#### Tips:

- Include behavioural GBV practices perpetrated by supervisors and mechanics
- SC Worker Spokespersons should collect concrete experiences of GBV, including gendered bullying, from women workers on their production line prior to contributing to Factory-Level GBV List.

This approach is consistent with recommendations from UN Women and the ILO, advocating consultations with workers; and action in line with women workers’ experiences, ideas, and suggestions (UN Women-ILO 2019). It is also consistent with recommendations from the EEOC to conduct climate surveys to understand workplace issues prior to initiating training or other intervention (Feldblum and Lipnic (EEOC) 2016).



### Step 2, immediate benefits:

- As detailed in the literature on workplace bullying (Chapter 2), explicitly naming forms of GBV creates a common language for discussing violence, allowing women to disclose whether they have experienced specific acts rather than asking them to more generally identify as a “victim” of bullying or violence.
- This collaborative engagement between women workers, supervisors, and higher management, forging a team within the workplace to end GBV, takes initial steps forward in restructuring relationships of power to include mutual trust. (See UK Restorative Justice Council 2011)

### Step 3: Train and Develop Safe Circles for GBV-Free Production Lines

- SC members undergo training on a GBV module that is co-developed by brands and AFWA-Women’s Leadership Committees (WLCs) and adapted as required by local union in the supplier factory.

This step envisions a GBV module, developed as a collaboration between AFWA and brands, that can be adapted to local contexts with input from local unions. This approach to developing a core training framework that can be adapted to local needs has been effective in existing ILO programming. In 2012, the ILO Better Work Programme established a task force devoted to developing tools and materials to prevent and address sexual harassment in the workplace. The task force developed a factory toolkit, including a model policy on harassment, awareness raising poster, training brochure, a quick reference ‘dos and don’ts display for use on the factory floor, and a training module for managers, supervisors and workers. This template toolkit has been adapted to specific cultural contexts, beginning with

# DEVELOPING LOCALLY SPECIFIC GBV LISTS

GBV Lists created at the production line and factory level will provide a measurable index of behaviours to eliminate GBV, and a mechanism of measuring progressive change. Local development of GBV Lists is important to understand and make visible cultural differences that belie GBV in particular countries and contexts. Although there are commonalities among garment producing countries in Asia, the SC Approach must also accommodate local differences in language, dress code, and behavioural norms.

The country-specific GBV behavioural practices below—created in Cambodia, India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka, respectively—contain common elements and regional distinctions. They demonstrate the importance of developing locally specific GBV Lists.

## CAMBODIA

1. Yelling, naming and shaming in front of other workers: “you have a pig brain, not a human brain”, “Stupid”, “Lazy”, “Slow”, “No brain”. Foreign management abusing workers in language the workers do not understand
2. Using sexual language
3. Tickling and touching workers’ waists
4. Kissing and touching workers’ cheeks
5. Pulling a women worker into a room alone
6. Forced into sexual favours for promotion at work
7. Slapping
8. Pushing
9. Throwing materials at workers (bundles of garments, plastic boxes, shoes)
10. Pressuring workers into thumb printing resignation documents
11. Threatening to terminate contract or rotating workers if production targets are not reached, when refusing to undertake tasks, to do overtime, or when asking to take leave

12. Forcing workers to undertake tasks for which they are not skilled
13. Forced over time
14. Forced worker to work through lunchtime
15. Rape attempt
16. Beating or using gangsters to intimidate workers.

## INDIA

1. Yelling and shaming when production target is not met *‘Don’t touch or sit on the machine. You get out and die. You don’t have any other way to live, that, why you are here bastard. Get out from here and search some other job. You are not eligible for any job.’ ‘You are wasting time, you are a useless fellow’*
2. Scolding/Humiliating in front of other workers, if worker gives compliant
3. Using sexual language as an overtone to the conversation
4. Threatening physically *‘Shut up your mouth, you get out from here, I will beat you and throw you out of the factory’*
5. Making sexual offers especially to widows
6. Assigning broken machines in retaliation for refusing sexual offers
7. Physical violence : Stab and hit breast, Push to the floor and kick
8. Rotating across different sections for refusing sexual advances
9. Denying rest or leave if the worker is menstruating and feels ill
10. Forcing to work OT
11. Publicly humiliating of worker refuses to do OT
12. Pinching cheeks
13. No proper toilet breaks or lunch breaks

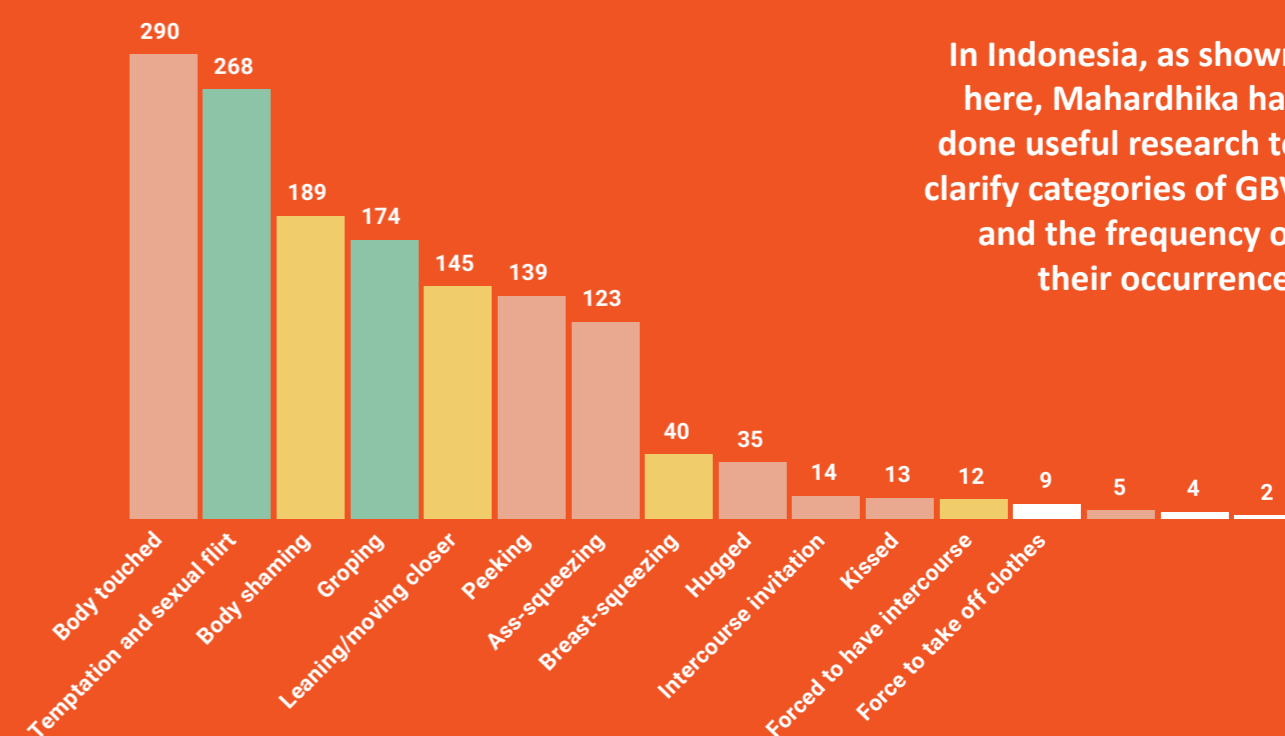
## INDONESIA

1. Yelling, mocking, scolding in front of other workers: “You stupid! You cannot work”, “If you are not willing to work, just go home!”, “Beware you, I will not extend your contract if you cannot work!”, “You don’t have to come to work tomorrow if you cannot do that kind of job!”, “You are very slow like

- elderly!” “Why don’t you just die,” (when a worker report back to work after taking sick leave).
2. Extending working hours that would not be considered overtime
3. Body touching
4. Whistling or cat calling
5. Flirting sexually
6. Sexually gazing
7. Body shaming
8. Groping
9. Leaning or moving closer
10. Peeking
11. Ass-squeezing
12. Breast-squeezing
13. Forcing sexual favours to mechanics/technicians to fix a broken sewing machine
14. Rotating/demoting to other departments as punishment.
15. Excommunicating, isolating
16. Throwing materials at worker
17. Corporal punishment (standing for hours)
18. Slapping

## SRI LANKA

1. Yelling, naming and shaming, being scolded in front of other workers: *‘Your mother sends you here to find a boy with whom to elope, ‘Bitch’ ‘If you are not willing to work, just go home,’*
2. Pulling hair and hair ribbons if they do not listen to supervisors.
3. Body touching
4. Body shaming
5. Leaning or rnoving closer
6. Ass-squeezing
7. Breast-squeezing
8. Assigning broken machines and forced to do target on time it woman worker refuses sexual advance
9. Transferring to an unfamiliar department as punishment if woman worker refuses sexual advance
10. Isolating worker as punishment
11. Throwing clothes, measurement tools at worker
12. Physically punishing by not letting worker use wash room or drink water
13. Slapping



**In Indonesia, as shown here, Mahardhika has done useful research to clarify categories of GBV and the frequency of their occurrence.**

# STUDY OF SEXUAL HARRASMENT OF FEMALE GARMENT WORKERS

## RESEARCH AT KBN CAKUNG, INDONESIA

### Research Purpose

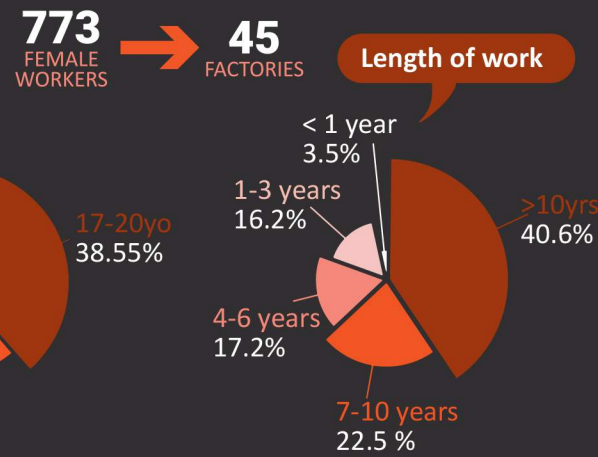
This study aims to describe the phenomenon of sexual harassment on female garment workers, detailed in three ways, which are:

1. How high the prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace against female garment workers?
2. What are the characteristics of sexual harassment experienced by women garment workers?
3. How does a female garment worker deal with sexual harassment?

### The Perpetrators

<b>199</b> Mechanics	<b>179</b> Operators	<b>98</b> Chiefs
<b>77</b> Others (outside Factory)	<b>35</b> Security & Parking Attendants	<b>4</b> Boss & HRD

### Scope of Research



**96.6%** of **437** victims didn't file a report to the authorities

**WHY?**  
SHAME  
NATURAL & CAN HAPPEN  
NOT A SERIOUS THING  
FEAR AND WORRY  
TROUBLESOME  
LACK OF ACCESS & INFORMATION  
RISK OF WORK

### 10 most frequent sexual abuses

- Body touched
- Whistling and cat calling
- Temptation & sexual flirting
- Naughty Gaze
- Body shaming
- Groping
- Leaning and moving closer
- Peeking
- Naughty Gaze
- Ass squeezing
- Breast squeezeing

### Victim of Sexual Abuse

Not only accepting degrading, disturbing and harassing behaviors, they also have to deal with the continuing threat and fear underlying the awakening of compensatory awareness. Harassment is common, difficult to avoid, but cannot be voiced or expressed.

### The Perpetrator

Free, feared, but unavoidable. There is wider space for the perpetrator to commit sexual harassment. Low reporting and follow-up make the perpetrator far away from the consequences of his actions or even provide space for building negative habits in the workplace. The perpetrators are even protected by the dependence of work relations, structures and systems that prioritize job targets.

### Work Place

Abandonment of the authorities and companies for harassment, the absence of sexual harassment handling mechanisms and the lack of worker union intervention builds the character of the workplace as a field of sexual harassment.

implementation in Jordan by the Better Work country team.

- SC members undergo Workplace Cooperation Program (WCP) and Supervisory Skills Training (SST).
- SC members undergo training on facilitation to facilitate effective SC meetings.
- Share information on training schedules, facilitators, and participants publicly within the factory. Make all materials available to workers and supervisors who are not direct participants in the SC processes.

### Step 4: Conduct regular SC meetings

Studies of QCs in industrial contexts documents QC meeting with varying frequency, ranging from weekly to monthly. Studies agree, however, that regularity of meetings is significant.

SC meetings will focus on (1) addressing incidents and persistent GBV practices on the production line; (2) problem solving to eliminate GBV practices; and monitoring progress towards eliminating all forms of GBV included on the GBV List.

Each production-line level SC should take the following preliminary and ongoing steps:

- Decide upon regular meeting times: SC meetings can take place during or after working hours.

#### Tips:

- Given (1) the prevalence of extended working hours in the garment industry and (2) the double-triple burden of work upheld by women workers (including care and other unpaid work), AFWA recommends holding SC meetings during working hours.

- Post a public schedule of SC meetings as an active reminder to all workers and supervisors that SCs are meeting regularly with the aim of eliminating GBV on all production lines.

- Share challenges and successes from the SC process. Workers who are not active members of the SC process are also important participants in eliminating GBV. Find opportunities for discussions and presentations between SC members and non-member workers and supervisors.

- Hold bi-annual SC-wide meetings including all SC Spokespersons and Leaders to review progress across all production lines and share good practices.

Bi-annual SC-wide meetings ensure that the AFWA SC Approach incorporates intervention at both the unit and organisational level, an evidence based practice for addressing sexual harassment in the workplace (Cheung et. a. 2017).

### Step 5: Monitoring and Reviewing SC Processes

SC monitoring and review processes should include self-evaluation and national-level external review processes.

- **National-level external review processes should be conducted by national committees including (1) union members representatives from AFWA-Women's Leadership Committees (WLCs); (2) supplier factories; and (3) brands.**

This process envisions a constructive and cooperative role among all stakeholders. The role of the National Committee is to demonstrate commitment and trust in SCs because QC scholarship shows that trust, commitment and faith in QCs are instrumental in their success.

**“A primary venue for worker-management communication and feedback is the labor union. Enhanced cooperation and communication between unions, workers and management facilitates mutual trust and respect, which in turn promote increased efficiency and productivity.”**

Verite 2011

**“[T]he existence of a union is not necessarily against an employer”**

SEWA, India

**Objectives:**

- **Strengthen and support SCs:** The primary objective of national committees is to strengthen and support SCs by providing a forum for both external guidance and cross-learning between SCs across factories.
- **Review the progress made by SC's at the factory level.**
- **Intervene in unresolved cases:** When an SC in a factory is unable to resolve GBV issues at the local level, it should refer these challenging problems to the National Committee.

**Intervention principles:**

- To fulfill these objectives, national committees should aim to foster a forum for constructive cooperation among stakeholders, aimed at supporting SCs.

- National committees should meet regularly and publicise this meeting schedule to all production-line level SCs.
- National Committee would be empowered to enlist the support of experts to investigate unresolved issues at the factory level.
- The National Committee would protect the confidentiality of victims.

SCs do not change the existing organisational structure or chain of command within the factory; nor are they a forum for either management or workers to unload off of their problems. Nevertheless, as problems come up for SCs that do not fall under their purview, they may forward these issues to appropriate channels for resolution (see Step 2 on Operationalising the AFWA Safe Circle Approach). This role in channelling problems outside of the Safe Circles mandate is integral to promoting a culture of employee involvement, improved communication, greater awareness, voice at work, improved morale, teamwork, harmony and employee motivation. Alternately, suppressing workplace issues undermines the organisational transformation process at the core of the AFWA SC Approach.

## **BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH CIRCLE APPROACHES IN OTHER INDUSTRIAL CONTEXTS**

Quality Circles (QCs), initially introduced to industrial contexts in the United States and Japan after World War II, engaged small groups of workers within the same workplace in (1) performing quality control activities, and (2) engaging in self and mutual development through regular, small group meetings. Whereas traditional management practices exclude lower-level employees from workplace decision-making, QCs are designed to involve employees at all levels as agents of leadership and change (Lee, Yang, and Chen 2000). This approach sought to cultivating a spirit of personal growth, continuous improvement, coordinated teamwork, and proactive employee participation (Park 1991; Harris 1995; Saheldin and Zain 2007).

## CHAPTER 4

### ADULT EDUCATION APPROACHES TO PREVENT GBV THROUGH ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

#### BUILDING SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND LEADERSHIP TO PREVENT GBV AMONG CONSTITUENCIES WITH LOW LITERACY AND EDUCATION-LEVEL

The AFWA Safe Circle Approach to ending GBV seeks to build organizational transformation processes that complement trainings at the workplace. AFWA local unions' experiences suggest that trainings in garment supplier factories, targeted towards workers and supervisors, need to be sensitive to the fact that such participants possess low literacy and have not had opportunities to pursue significant formal education. Such trainings need to be developed keeping in mind adult education and learning among participants with low literacy and education levels.

The field of adult education is both well established and evolving, and has long addressed processes of building social consciousness through reflection on daily experiences—such processes unlock the potential to dislodge embedded cultural norms that fuel GBV. Brazilian Educator and Philosopher Paulo Freire advocated a critical pedagogy that provides a learning space for adults to reflect on their daily life experiences as a catalyst for social transformation. For Freire, reflection is integral to processes of conscientization that provide people with a clear perception of their own social reality.

The AFWA Safe Circle Approach aims at (1) fostering critical consciousness among individuals and groups

through dialogue, problem-solving, and critical self and community reflection; (2) developing awareness of structures that contribute to inequality and oppression; and (3) catalysing action to transform the contexts that fuel GBV. This process aims to prevent GBV through cultivating empowerment, participation, and leadership development on gender justice, starting with the production line.

Good practices for facilitating adult education include self-directed and participatory learning within environments of mutual respect, with relevant, goal oriented, and practical training objectives (Imel 1998). Working group meetings and trainings for SC participants who may not have had higher education will benefit from incorporating a varied range of techniques. R.L. Otim (2013) highlights a range of these strategies including brainstorming, use of case studies, drama and role plays. In order to support engagement by low literacy, low education workers and supervisors, AFWA partners have used a range of techniques including drama, film screenings, and visual aids.

**UNESCO Definition of Adult Education:**  
**“[T]he entire body of organized educational processes, whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in**

## TIPS FOR FACILITATING TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SC MEMBERS

Facilitators play a crucial role in adult learning processes, including the AFWA Safe Circle Approach. The following facilitation tips are adapted from guidelines for adult learning prepared by M.S. Knowles, et al (2005)

1. Set the initial mood or climate of the working group meeting or training so that all participants feel comfortable and safe. Clarify the purpose of the meeting or training.
2. Working group or training participants may have distinct learning styles and motivations. Be sensitive to the needs and concerns of the particular group.
3. Where possible, in order to accommodate different learning styles and needs, incorporate a range of materials into working group sessions or trainings, including visual and audio materials.
4. Be a flexible resource. Participants may learn well from different methods of communication, including counseling, lecturing, advising, and personal testimony.
5. Include both intellectual content and space for expressing personal experiences, attitudes and emotions.
6. Be open to learning from participants.
7. Be open to sharing your own experiences. This will encourage participants to share their own experiences.
8. Be sensitive to the emotional expressions of participants. Especially in context of discussions on GBV, participants may express conflict, pain, anger, and a range of other emotions. Try to understand these emotional expressions from the point of view of the participant. Communicate empathetic understanding.
9. Accept your own limitations. The facilitator is not expected to know everything. Learn along with participants.

**schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their or behaviour in two-fold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development.”**

**(UNESCO 1976)**

## GOOD PRACTICES FROM GENDER SENSITISATION MODULES IN ASIA

AFWA studied and analysed three training modules on gender sensitisation, one each from India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka.

- UNNATI: Organisation for Development Education, Gender Awareness and Sensitivity Application-Training Resource Pack, India.

- Rifka Annisa, Gender Equality Training for Parents, Gender Equality Training for Youth, Indonesia.
- Women’s Education and Research Centre (supported by Women Defining Peace (WDP), Training module on gender sensitisation, Sri Lanka.

These modules were selected based upon their reputations for effective training and gender sensitisation. Each of these modules, designed for 20-25 participants, incorporate techniques in interactive and participatory facilitation discussed in previous sections of this Chapter.

Although conducted in different languages and contexts, these successful modules had common objectives and covered common topics. These objectives and topics, listed below, provide a framework for developing training materials for Safe Circle members.

Objectives for participants in gender sensitisation modules:

1. Understand the difference between sex and gender
2. Experience the difference between the powerful and the powerless
3. Understand gender biases in traditional cultures and customs
4. Explore how individual perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes are formed
5. Become aware of perceptions about women and men and patriarchal culture
6. Identify the daily tasks of men and women in different situation
7. Provide an understanding on “gender issues” and violence against women
8. Make the participants apply the knowledge they gained
9. Develop participants capacity to incorporate gender in their workplace

10. Think of socialization and its differing impact on women and men

### **Key topics to include in gender sensitisation modules:**

11. Sex and Gender
12. Understanding Gender and Gender Stereotypes
13. Understanding Gender Inequality and Women’s Subordination
14. Gender and Socialisation
15. Institutions of Patriarchy
16. Building Gender Awareness
17. Violence against Women
18. Women’s rights and law
19. Developing leadership skills
20. Strategies for problem solving, angry management, healthy communication
21. Developing leadership skills
22. History of women’s movement



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

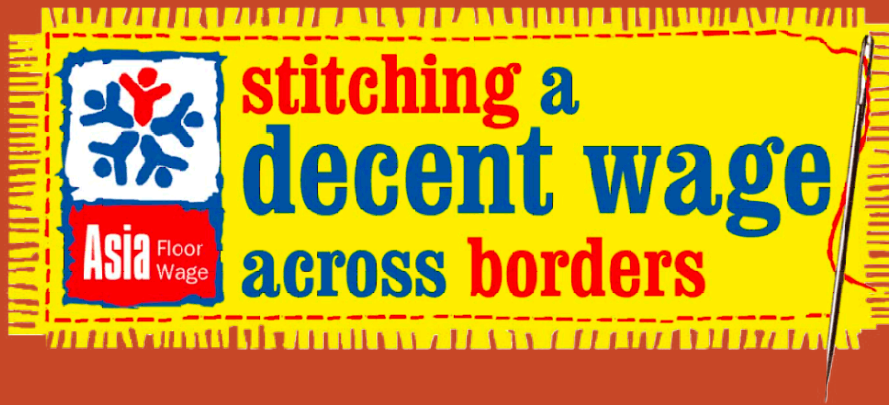
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