



## GLOBAL GARMENT AND TEXTILE INDUSTRIES

### Workers, Rights and Working Conditions

#### The Industry in Numbers

- The global fashion industries employ more than [75 million](#) workers worldwide. Most labor without employment contracts, fixed schedules or benefit of labor law protections.
- The global fashion industry's estimated worth is [\\$2.4 trillion](#), with textile and apparel exports totaling [more than \\$750 billion in 2017](#).
- Garment workers' wages are typically well below a living wage. For instance, women and girls from the most marginalized communities in India toil for as little as [15 cents](#) an hour in their homes.

#### Most Garment Workers Are Women

- Some [85 percent of garment workers are women](#).
- The persistent global gender gap in pay—women on average earn [between 60 percent and 75 percent of men's wages](#)—is reflected in high poverty levels for women in garment jobs.
- In some countries, garment workers work between [10 and 16 hours a day, six days a week](#), leaving them little time for their families and increasing their vulnerability to abuse, such as gender-based violence.
- [Sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence](#) are rampant in the garment industry. Tolerated, ignored or perpetuated by managers, it can become a widely-used means by which factories exploit workers.

#### Forced Labor and Child Labor

- [Forced labor and child labor exist in the garment and textile industries](#) of Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cambodia, China, Ethiopia, Nepal, India, Jordan, Malaysia, Nepal, Thailand and Vietnam.
- [Students in some countries are lured into forced labor](#) in garment factories, often in jobs disguised as internships or work study programs.
- The global fashion supply chain extends to the cotton fields, where in Uzbekistan each year, at least 175,000 people, mostly education and public health workers, but also many students younger than age 18, are [forced to harvest cotton for weeks as part of the largest government-run system of forced labor in the world](#).

## Dangerous Work Environments

- Three of the four deadliest garment factory disasters in history happened in this decade: [in 2012 \(Karachi, Pakistan; Tazreen factory, Bangladesh\) and 2013 \(Rana Plaza collapse, Bangladesh\)](#).
- Garment industry production has [doubled](#) in the last 15 years, with many factories housed in repurposed buildings that may be unsafe due to faulty electrical wiring or structural weaknesses exacerbated by heavy machinery.

## Collective and Protective Solutions

- When workers are free to form unions, they have a collective voice to demand safe workplaces and better wages and ensure employers comply with laws and labor standards.
- In many countries, governments do not punish employers that illegally fire workers, threaten them or even kill them for joining a union and seeking to exercise their rights at work. Together with unions and worker associations, garment workers have the collective strength to stand up for good wages, safe working conditions and respect on the job.

## A Sustainable Industry?

- The fashion industry uses [between 1.5 and 2.5 trillion gallons of water each year](#) and produces [10 percent of global carbon emissions—more than all international flights and maritime shipping](#).
- Textile dyeing is the second largest polluter of water globally, and requires around 2,000 gallons of water to make a typical pair of jeans.
- If nothing changes, [by 2050 the fashion industry will use up a quarter of the world's carbon budget](#).

## Solidarity Center at Work

- The Solidarity Center over the past decade has partnered with more than 50 unions, federations and non-governmental organizations dedicated to improving working conditions in the fashion industry.
- The Solidarity Center works directly with some 537,000 women garment workers worldwide.
- The Solidarity Center's Bangladesh office works with 85 union leaders representing thousands of workers. Its legal team advises union partners on the legal code and helps workers file cases addressing wage theft or other exploitation. It also conducts fire and building safety trainings to ensure workers have the tools they need to report hazards and bargain for workplace safety improvements.
- In Kyrgyzstan, the Solidarity Center assisted the Garment Workers' Union, the light-industry employers' association and government ministries in setting up a joint structure to discuss and recommend regulations for minimum safety and health and other workplace standards in the country's fast-growing garment industry.