



**Sexual Harassment and Gender
Discrimination in the Garment Workplace:**
*The Reality for Women Workers and the
Prospects for Change*

CURRENT CONTEXT

#MeToo

Has brought to light harassment of less visible workforces: in hotels, farms, and garment factories.

Proposed ILO Convention

Potential instrument on violence against men and women in the workplace.



WOMEN AND HARASSMENT IN GARMENTS

WOMEN MAKE UP

80%

OF GARMENT WORKFORCE

54%

REPORT HARASSMENT

W R C

WORKER RIGHTS
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UNIVERSITY CODES AND LAWS

- The WRC model code and CLC code were among the first to acknowledge that:
 - There are particular rights violations that are specific to the circumstances of women workers; and
 - Women should enjoy specific protections against them
- Most brands' codes now include similar language
- Some improvements to garment-exporting countries' laws
 - But even when laws adopted or policies issued, implementation has often been dismal



PREGNANCY DISCRIMINATION

A group of approximately ten women are standing in a line, facing forward. They are dressed in traditional Indian attire, including colorful saris and shawls. The background shows a shop with shelves of various products, possibly a grocery or general store. The lighting is somewhat dim, suggesting an indoor or shaded outdoor setting.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND COERCION

“Many supervisors demand sexual favors and bribes from prospective employees. They promise jobs to the workers who are still on probationary contracts. [...] All of the women in my department have slept with the supervisor. For the women, this is about survival and nothing else. [...] If you say no, you won’t get the job or your contract will not be renewed. [...] Nine out of ten women have said yes to the supervisor, even those who are married. He takes some of the women to a nearby guesthouse for sex.” – Factory worker

GENDERED ATTACKS ON WOMEN LEADERS



The manager called the worker leader whom the factory had terminated “a bad woman who would go to any lengths to save herself, even taking off her clothes.”

CHALLENGES TO DOCUMENTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

- Victims' fear of retaliation
- Difficulties obtaining testimony
- Lack of knowledge of and lack of focus on gender issues by complainant organizations



MEANS OF OVERCOMING THESE CHALLENGES

- Arranging offsite interviews through community partners
- Ensuring confidentiality





EFFECTIVE REMEDIATION

- ✓ Effective, independent investigation
- ✓ Confidential complaint mechanism with trusted investigators
- ✓ Rights education
- ✓ Consequences for perpetrators



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