



## GLOBAL GARMENT AND TEXTILE INDUSTRIES

### Workers, Rights and Working Conditions

#### The Industries in Numbers

- The global garment and textile industries employ [60 million to 75 million people worldwide](#). Most of them labor without contracts, fixed schedules or benefit of labor law.
- The global garment and textile industries' estimated worth is [\\$4.4 trillion, with global trade totaling \\$600 billion](#).
- Garment workers receive only [0.6 percent of the cost](#) of a standard T-shirt.
- In the countries where the Solidarity Center works, unskilled garment workers may earn as low as \$66 (Sri Lanka) to as much as [\\$800 \(Hong Kong\) per month](#). A garment worker's wages are typically well below the [living wage](#) for the urban areas where factories are located. The international poverty line is [\\$1.90 per day](#).

#### Women are the Majority

- Three-fourths of garment workers [are women](#). The persistent global gender gap in [pay](#)—on average women earn only [60 percent to 75 percent](#) of men's wages—is reflected in high poverty levels for women in garment jobs.
- On average, garment workers work [10–16 hours a day, 6 days a week](#), leaving them little time for their [families](#) and increasing their vulnerability to abuse, particularly in countries where women walking alone are targets.
- Sexual harassment is endemic in the garment industry. Tolerated, ignored or perpetuated by managers, it can become a part of a factory's incentive structure.

#### 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 positions of forced child labor in garment factories, to positions disguised as [internships](#) or work study programs.
- In [Uzbekistan](#), each year more than 1 million people, mostly education and public health workers, but also many students under 18, are forced to harvest cotton for two to four weeks as part of the largest government-run system of forced labor in the world.

#### Dangerous Work Environments

- 3 of the 4 [deadliest garment factory disasters in history](#) happened in [2012](#) (Karachi, Pakistan; [Tazreen](#) factory, Bangladesh) and 2013 ([Rana Plaza](#) collapse, Bangladesh).
- The garment industry has grown [400 percent since 2005](#), with many factories housed in repurposed [buildings](#) that may be unsafe due to insufficient electrical wiring or structural weaknesses exacerbated by heavy machinery.
- In a 2014 [survey](#) conducted by the Trade Union Confederation of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) with the support of the Solidarity Center, 91 percent of garment workers surveyed reported being punished by management for making errors, not meeting quotas or missing shifts, including physical violence.

## Collective and Protective Solutions

- Unions—particularly those representing vulnerable workforces or workers unaccustomed to standing up for their rights, like [women](#), [migrants](#) and minority workers—can raise [safety](#), demand [better wages](#) and voice other issues, and ensure an employer [complies](#) with laws and labor standards.
- In many countries, hostility toward unions—including [firing](#), threats, violence and [assassination](#)—often is treated with [impunity](#) by governments.

## The Solidarity Center at Work

- The Solidarity Center has worked with more than 50 unions, federations and nongovernmental organizations dedicated to improving the working conditions of garment and textile workers.
- The Solidarity Center works directly with approximately 536,900 women garment workers worldwide.
- In every country where the Solidarity Center supports garment workers, field offices document cases of violence against workers and union organizers, including cases that police refuse to investigate.
- In 2014–2015, the Solidarity Center cooperated with international organizations and the garment industry in Cambodia to produce a seminal survey on living wage, used by unions in government negotiations for wage increases.
- The Solidarity Center’s Bangladesh office works with 85 union leaders representing thousands of workers. Its legal team advises partners on the legal code and helps workers file cases addressing wage theft or other exploitation. It also runs fire and building safety trainings, teaching workers how to report hazards to management and how to bargain for workplace safety improvements.
- In Kyrgyzstan, the Solidarity Center assisted the Garment Workers' Union, the light-industry employers' association and government ministries set up a tripartite structure to discuss and recommend regulations for minimum safety, health, and working standards in the fast-growing garment industry. The tripartite structure continues to meet to analyze existing conditions and solve disputes.
- Over the years, the Solidarity Center has worked closely with the garment workers union, and in May 2013, the union negotiated a contract with employers that covers all textile workers, including migrant workers. For 2015, the Solidarity Center provided support for a migrant outreach project among textile workers, holding trainings on combating labor trafficking and exploitation through collective worker action.