

Committee: Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (GA3)

Issue: Evaluating the working conditions in the textile, clothing, leather, and footwear industries in LEDCs

Student Officer: Rita Theoria Ioannidi

Position: Co-Chair

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Rita (Theoria) Ioannidi and I am honored to serve as the Co-Chair of the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (GA3) in the 6th American College of Greece MUN (ACGMUN) conference. I am a 10th Grade student at Hellenic American Educational Foundation (HAEF), Athens College.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate you on your initiative to participate in this conference and make clear that I look forward to helping you construct resolutions. Since this is my first time acquiring co-chairing duties, I hope we will all equally enjoy this year's conference, trying to make this experience unforgettable.

Secondly, I would like to mention what a wonderful experience MUN is. During the 3 years of my MUN career, I have attended numerous conferences. Despite the pandemic, I have benefited from this experience, as I have met new people with common interests, and I have acquired extensive knowledge on matters affecting a global basis.

In the following study guide, you will find important information on the topic of evaluating the working conditions in the textile, clothing, leather, and footwear industries in LEDCs. I would like to remind you that the study guide serves as an introduction to the topic. It poses a detailed overview but requires additional research in order for you to understand the topic in depth. With that in mind, I would encourage you to contact me via email without hesitation if you have any questions on the topic (ritaioannidi@yahoo.com).

I am looking forward to meeting you at this year's ACGMUN conference,

Best Regards,
Rita Theoria Ioannidi

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

The garment market contributes to and boosts the international economy, as it has been declared as the 4th sector in the globe according to Fashion United. In the industry professionals ranging from the highest technical level to those with limited qualifications are employed. Nevertheless, whilst enterprises are constantly augmenting their revenues, the working conditions these industries present aggravate. Even though the industry provides various job opportunities, there is also the denunciation of workers who find themselves manipulated into modern-day slavery aiming to satisfy the needs of the textile, clothing, leather, and footwear industries.

Since the tipping point in 2013, the Rana Plaza factory collapse, it has come to attention now more than ever that when it comes to garment-producing factories in Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs), the personnel are many times faced with inadequate working conditions. The collapse of industrial facilities, the hundreds of lethal accidents, the high risk of exposure to employment injury, the reduced remunerations, and the recompenses constitute a limited number of examples of the alarming working conditions that have been noted. In the absence of a well-functioning labor inspection system and suitable enforcement mechanisms, decent working capacities and livelihood in dignity are still questioned for the overwhelming majority of workers in the industrial zone and their entourage.

The garment industry occasionally runs without implementing measures and regulations concerning the security of workspaces and of the workforce, legal frameworks, health regulations, fundamental human rights, measures against child labor, and legal licenses, as the catastrophes at industrial establishments have proven. On top of that, with limited to non-existent governmental supervision it constitutes an impossible task to liberate the personnel and manage to meet the legitimate requirements.

The United Nations' responsibility is to implement supervision mechanisms that ensure that adequate working conditions are provided and that industrial facilities are operating in accordance with security and health regulations in order to improve the working conditions in the textile, clothing, leather, and footwear industries in the less economically developed countries.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs)

Less economically developed countries (LEDCs) often referred to as third world countries, are low-income countries confronting severe structural impediments to sustainable development. They are dependent upon economic and environmental modifications as they dispose of low levels of human assets. They massively contribute

to the profits of the textile, clothing, leather, and footwear industries, as most facilities are located in the region.

The Textile, Clothing, Leather, and Footwear (TCLF) sector

The manufacturing sector of garments is diverse in the goods that it produces. Due to the sizing of the workforce and the profile of workers employed, the industry offers significant potential to contribute to economic and social development. It is also important to consider its geographical dissemination and rapid market-driven changes: both factors are the reason why the industry offers countless employment opportunities to millions of workers worldwide regardless of their qualifications.

Clandestine Migrants

The term was defined by the International Labor Organisation, in 1975 as “migrants, who find themselves during their journey, on arrival or during their period of residence and employment, in conditions contravening relevant international multilateral or bilateral instruments or agreements, or national laws or regulations”

Child Labor

Employment of individuals under the age of 18 is prohibited and is regarded as exploitative, as has been frequently mentioned in LEDCs. Children who are forced by situation and background to labor to provide necessities suffer from having to take on responsibility for the family's economic demands, are more often than not engaging in activities of the sector. These occupations that hinder children's education are hazardous to their mental, physical, social, or moral development.

Sweatshops

Sweatshops are defined as factories or workspaces in which the personnel is remunerated with low wages, engaging in extortionate activities under an inadequate, unhealthy, oppressive environment, which excludes their individual interests and enables their exploitation. More often than not, sweatshops tend to violate a minimum of 2 labor laws, which incommode and hinder the well-being of the workforce, promoting an exorbitant manufacture. The conditions, which allow the sweatshops to remain undetected, include masses of uneducated and unskilled labourers, especially minors, management systems, which neglect human rights, governments whose actions present ineffective protection and security.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The historical background of the Textile Industry

First monitored in the late 19th century, the term sweatshop was utilized so as to refer to aspects of the tailoring trade. Originating from greed, opportunism and even competitive pressures, sweatshops exploit employees by underpaying and overworking them. Up to this day, a clear, single definition of the term sweatshop has not been provided.

Referred to by the grand masses as a hardworking overly exploited worker of the garment sector, a sweater handles an extensive workload. Nevertheless, in 1895, the Standard Dictionary of The English Language defined the term sweater as an entrepreneur who insufficiently remunerates and exhausts the laborers. Traditionally dependent upon “homework”, a term referring to an extensive and overly demanding workload conducted in afterwork hours.¹

As in 1988, the U.S. General Accounting Office stated that it constitutes a business that regularly violates both safety or health and wage or child labor laws.² Later on, in 1993 Webster’s Third New International Dictionary provided a definition to the uprising scourge sweatshop, as a petit manufacturing establishment employing workers under unsupervised, unfair and unsanitary conditions.

The final definition derived from the term textile, which characterizes a material that a clothing maker weaves and knits from yarn to make fabric. Therefore, the textile industry definition is “the platform or industry in which the development, production, processing, manufacture, and distribution of textile and fabric materials occur”³. A textile business utilizes raw materials like wool and cotton, by creating yarn and eventually manufacturing fabric.

Prior to the Industrial Revolution, before 1835 textile was commonly a home-made material and its manufacturing was devoid of machinery, the products were for personal usage, despite the small-scale reselling term of certain manufacturers. With the integration of machinery, after the Industrial Revolution, in the factor contributing to its shaping as a highly profitable sector, mass production of fabric materials was suggested, which spurred the expansion. By inventions such as the flying shuttle, spinning Jenny or cotton gin invented by Eli Whitney in 1794 aiming to hasten the removal of cotton seeds from cotton fiber, the leading cotton export in America was provoked in the mid-1800s. As well as the spinning Jenny, invented in the 1760s by James Hargreaves, enabled the spinning of multiple threads of wool or cotton at a time, which augmented the industrialization, or the flying shuttle in the 1730s, which

¹ "Definition of SWEATSHOP." *Dictionary by Merriam-Webster: America's Most-trusted Online Dictionary*, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sweatshop.

² *USD Sites* | University of San Diego, sites.sandiego.edu/mzwolinski/files/2015/04/Sweatshops_essay_web.pdf.

³ "What is Textile Industry? Definition and Meaning." *Textile Apex*, textileapex.blogspot.com/2015/11/what-is-textile-industry-definition.html.

facilitated a weaver's work, by enabling him to utilize solely one hand in weaving wider fabrics.

England's needs for cotton garments had increased during the 18th century, which resulted in the expansion of the industrial facilities globally. As a result, cloth production was rapidly increased and a new division of labor in spinning and weaving arose, in which many laborers engaged. This modification created an extensive need for dexterity to perform, which resulted in augmented efficiency in the working domain.

With the goal of satisfying the aforementioned need and achieving higher productivity, thousands of cotton mills sprang out, the rapid development of new technologies and methods facilitated the manufacturing procedure. Artisans were desired in the factory-style brick buildings, profiting from the increased wages, the ameliorated conditions, and the time off. Despite the progress made, the conditions were insufficient, and a great number of laborers suffered from unsanitary and unfair conditions.

The aforementioned technological inventions were dominant to the factor, until the early 20th century, when continuing technological innovations, such as the production of yarns from short fibres such as cotton or wool, were monitored. Consequently, the business model dominant for centuries debuted to alter radically. The "cotton mill people", a newly founded class of industrial workers in the American continent shifted the centre of local production.

Throughout the 20th century, economic and political forces modified the dynamics of the industry. As well as the consumer demand increase projected upon the vulnerabilities of the industry, an effort was made to enhance the legal framework for civil rights. The labor, human rights, and feminist movements achieved the implementation of an international legal framework, containing federal laws and legal victories, that desegregated the establishments and provided protection for the personnel against exploitation.

Nowadays, despite the efforts, the dominant situation semblable to that of the 20th century, appears to be stable, as the textile industry functions whilst encumbering the working conditions of the human asset, that is suffering, being deprived of the fundamental human rights in the facilities in LEDCs. Even though, the circular economy pattern enforced in the Textile industry seems to be boosting the local economies by recruiting 30 million civilians globally in the sector. The hardworking, overly exploited, uneducated employees don't benefit from this pattern, as they earn a limited remuneration under unhealthy conditions of an extensive overload of responsibilities, earning a living under the constant fear of infections and buckling batiments.

On top of that, the industry has a tendency of not regarding all of its employees equally. Despite women forming the backbone of the industry, gender discrimination is still widespread. In addition to having 20% to 30% less compensation than men, women also face workplace assault, harassment, and discrimination, have less

possibilities for development, and have a quiter voice and influence at decision-making levels. The unpaid caregiving that women must provide at home limits their options to evolve in the sector as well.

Illegal Employment

Since the early founding of the TLF sector, illegal employment has always been a major preoccupation. Clandestine migrants, since the Industrial Revolution, have always been a valuable asset to the garment sector, manufacturing an extensive overload of apparel materials, with a lower remuneration, due to their illegitimate recruitment.

Nevertheless, since the uprising of globalization, it is estimated to have climaxed, as in the formal sector it is estimated that 23.6 TLF workers are employed globally and as claimed by Mr Kari Tapiola, Deputy Director-General of the ILO "No one knows just how many work un the informal sector, but the figure may be five to ten times as high. From 1970 to 1990, the number of employees increased by 597% in Malaysia, 416% in Bangladesh, 385% in Sri Lanka, 334% in Indonesia, 271% in the Philippines and 137% in Korea, without taking into account the illicit workers. As a result, the wages reached a maximum of \$3.80 per hour, which indicates the suffering of both the illegally and legally employed workers.⁴

The "fast fashion trend" that dominates the sector has led to an increase in the need of foreigners who work in the garment industry. Since brands and retailers provide continuously changing collections at low rates, they are always looking for low-cost production facilities that can quickly supply high-quality goods. Short lead times and an emphasis on low pricing contribute to unstable working conditions and the demand for ever-cheaper labor.

As a result, the workforce in the global apparel sector is becoming more and more dependent upon migrant workers. These workers are particularly susceptible to exploitation since they frequently perform the same tasks as local workers, although for less money and under more insecure circumstances, and because they encounter unique obstacles when trying to express and assert their rights as employees. A rising issue in the supply chains for clothing and textiles is the abuse of migrant labor.

In the supply chains for clothing and textiles the abuse of migrant labor has grown to be common. Migrant workers in the global apparel business generally experience similar working circumstances to local employees. Both local and migrant employees are impacted by violations of the right to freedom of association or the absence of a living wage. Unfortunately, a variety of difficulties make them considerably more defenseless than they already are.

⁴ "More Than 60 Per Cent of the World's Employed Population Are in the Informal Economy." *International Labour Organization*, 30 Apr. 2018, www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_627189/lang-en/index.htm.

Hazardous Health Conditions/ Hygiene

The TCLF sector may include exposure to harmful pesticides and chemicals, subsection to isolation, high temperatures and high risk of animal threats, causing severe health damage. Additionally, unsanitary conditions allow viruses and diseases to spread, exhausting the staff in the process. The TCLF sector has been declared as a physically demanding labor domain, in which women are unable to engage in longer than a decade.

In nations such as Bangladesh, which has been declared as the second largest industrial zone globally, the health problems that the industrial workers face have become as a “public” health issue, as the majority of the population is engaged in industrial activity, including in the TCLFs.

In regions, such as India, Cambodia, Viet Nam and Sri Lanka, the female garment industry workers are more exposed to poor working environment, with no infrastructure for hygiene, which deteriorates their health condition massively.

Health issues such as fatigue, musculoskeletal pain, headaches, and eye pain degenerate the worker's physical health. These issues occur not only momentary; they also affect the public in the long run as well. As a result, they prevent the workforce from engaging in future activities, as poor physical health acts as a barrier for job seekers. Employers tend to act discriminately against job seekers, who suffer from chronic health disorders and are unwilling to recruit the individuals. The unemployment as a result of these health issues, deteriorates the quality of life of these individuals and diminishes their opportunities.

Marxism

Defined as “a social, economic and political philosophy that analyses the impact of the ruling class on labourers, leading to uneven distribution of wealth and privileges in society”, by The Economic Times⁵. Marxism consists one of the most significant theories and a philosophy that has massively contributed to the shaping of the modern society. Formulated by the German philosopher Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels, in “The Communist Manifesto”, in which they questioned the injustice enforced upon the poorly remunerated working class. This milestone in international history inflamed progress and evolution and depicted the ideal classless society.

Often confused with Socialism and Communism, which is the implementation of Marxist theories in a political system, both formulated so as to eliminate the Capitalist ideologies. Suggesting the absence of private property and belongings,

⁵ "The Economic Times: Business News, Personal Finance, Financial News, India Stock Market Investing, Economy News, SENSEX, NIFTY, NSE, BSE Live, IPO News." *Business News Today: Read Latest Business News, India Business News Live, Share Market & Economy News | The Economic Times*, economictimes.indiatimes.com/defaultinterstitial.cms.

insisting on the control of such assets utilised by the governments to benefit the civilians.

Inspired, other philosophies, one of which being Leninism, in 1917. Being Vladimir Lenin's perception of Marxism, which motivated to overturn the regime of Russian Capitalism.

Neo-Marxism initiated during the 20th century society, was a progressive work of Marxist ideologies combined with the work of Max Weber considering the societal changes. Neo-marxism concentrates on the imperialistic and militaristic governments to forbid the accrual of surplus capital.

Marxism has found great appeal in the labour class during the past, as it has been the guide, rulebook and motivation to labour unions, organisations and political parties, such as the Bread and Roses union, or the Coalition of Labor Union Women. Marxism continues to appeal to the modern working class, as more educated workers are motivated by the aforementioned theory and subsequently protect their labor rights by forming syndicates or by founding labor unions and organizations. Karl Marx's theory has further influenced the political arena, as many political parties have been founded with the aspirations of ameliorating the working conditions of the low-remunerated working class and constructing a classless society.

Child Labour

ILO estimates that 170 million are engaged in child labor, of which a high prevalence exists in a minimum of 18 cotton countries. Nevertheless, cases depicted in the ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor are present in the TCLF sector as well. In the sector minor workers are exposed to harmful pesticides and chemicals, subjected to isolation, high temperatures and at risk of animal threats, causing severe health damage, such as obstructing the minor's physical and mental growth and development and causing respiratory and musculoskeletal disabilities.

This relatively new preoccupation has provoked distress and the mobilization of multiple factors, such as local governments, Non-Governmental Organizations(NGO's), UN organs and labor syndicates. As of 2007, more than 400,000 minors were assets in cotton seed farms in India. This scandal convulsed the national and international community, which caused the coordination of the ILO, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund(UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme(UNDP) and several NGOs, in order to decrease the engagement of minors in cotton farming activities. In 2009-2010, 382,500 youngsters, 169,000 of whom under the age of 14, were found to be placed in cotton farming activity in the region. The percentages are to be diminuated.⁶

250 million children between 5 and 14 are obliged to work in sweatshops in LEDCs and are remunerated with less than 20 cents daily, for working up to 16 hours

⁶ The Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO), www.somo.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/FactsheetMigrantLabour.pdf.

daily. In the TCLF sector in Bangladesh delayed salaries and no overtime payment pose common difficulties that minor workers face. Same conditions that apply to adult workers apply to minor as well minor as they fulfil their duties up to 72 hours straight, being beaten and abused, becoming victims of corporal, sexual, psychological, and verbal abuse are common and well documented in LEDCs.

Sexual Abuse

In the TCLF sector, according to research carried out by Industrial, the presence of gender-based violence and harassment is vivid, as female workers report inappropriate touching, sexualized gestures and sexual favors. There is high risk of sexual abuse by male co-workers, managers, machine technicians and supervisors in a daily basis. The female workforce is oppressed and unable to report incidents of sexual abuse, as they risk unemployment.

Psychological Abuse

In India, adolescent girls and young women employees of the Textile Industry often suffer from depression and behavioral problems. The inadequate working conditions and challenging socioeconomic conditions make stress and depression common. The demanding circumstances of an overly extended workload, stress, pressure and competition provoke severe mental health disorders with a long-lasting impact, such as anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, suicide (PTSD) and behavioral problems.

Verbal Abuse

Under the pressure of an extended workload and intensified work female workers report routines of verbal abuse in a daily basis. They become victims of their male supervisors and managers due to their exhaustion, accidents which occur or denial to sexual favors.

Workers' Rights in LEDCs and Movements

Whist globalization has benefited humanity in a plethora of domains, it has sometimes been detrimental to those working in the garment sector in LEDCs. Labor abuses to those in the TCLF sector are rife. Dating back to the founding of the factory-style brick buildings the manager or employer tented to dismiss pregnant workers or deny maternity leave, retaliate against organized syndicates, force overtime work and cultivate a fertile ground for sexual assault and harassment. The unprotected working force has made remarkable efforts throughout the historical timeline to ameliorate the situation and safeguard their rights.

The formation of the first turnout, entitled "mill girls" or "female operatives" in Lowell, Massachusetts, consisted of the weapon of laborers against wage cuts. First encountered in 1835, in antebellum newspapers and periodicals to define the young Yankee women, who engaged in activities in cotton factories. They aimed to secure

their rights, which were “not to be trampled upon with impunity”⁷, represented the poorly remunerated workforce and reflected the voice of protest.

In 1843, the Lowell Female Labor Reform Association, the first union of working women, protested and consequently mobilized the political arena, as they organized a public petition for 10-hour day duties. The parliament approved the petition for 10-hour day duties, which was considered as an achievement of major importance, as the requests of the working class were considered as important.

Further on laborers suffering from the demolishes of establishments, factory fires, infections, wage discrimination and sexual assault, organize syndicates and form movements so as to establish and protect their fundamental rights and expose the insufficient working conditions. After extensive efforts, their voice is heard, and the global communities is convulsed by the atrocities they daily face.

The global community decides to take a stand and protect the labor class, by founding the International Labor Organization in 1919, as well as the Human Rights Watch in 1978 by R.L. Bernstein. The Human Rights Watch research, advocates and ensures the safeguarding of labor rights by exposing the corrupted or unfocused local authorities and scrutinizing corporate accountability practices of global apparel and footwear facilities.

An international legal framework is applied, including the ILO Working Conditions Laws Report 2012, which defines the production and trade limits, employment trends, wages, working hours, labor inspection/administration, private compliance initiatives, social dialogue, and labor relationships.

Lethal disasters of Industrial facilities

It has been noted that multiple facilities have collapsed, demolished, or been set on fire, due to arson or insufficient implementation of the protocols. The poorly maintained machinery and infrastructure is prone to destruction and demolition, which has been evident in nations, such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, or India, and has resulted in lethal catastrophes, with hundreds of casualties.

Karachi garment factory inferno

Declared “Pakistan’s deadliest industrial fire”, the Karachi garment factory inferno in 2012 resulted in 260 casualties. Due to the architecture of the building, which failed to satisfy the safety requirements, and disposed of no fire exits, hundreds of industrial workers were trapped in the flaming factory. The media spread awareness on the matter, depicting an objective

⁷ National Park Service (NPS). “The Mill Girls of Lowell”, *National Park Service (NPS)*, <https://www.nps.gov/lowe/learn/historyculture/the-mill-girls-of-lowell.htm>

view of the situation. The public was convulsed by the conditions under which the workers made a living and raised funds.

The blaze at the Ali Enterprises factory in Baldia commenced in the early afternoon hours of 11 September 2012 and raged for 15 hours. As the flames engulfed the building the helpless staff aimed helpless to reach safety grounds. A total sum of 40 firefighting vehicles approached the inferno and aimed to extinguish it. A rescue party was organized and even 24 hours after the breakout the members battled to reach the survivors and transfer them to safety grounds.

The survivors claimed that the infrastructure was inadequate and functioned without sticking to the necessary protocols, which forced the workers to get severely injured in their effort to approach the exits, as well as doorways and stairs, which were stuffed with racks of the garments manufactured previously. Officials confirmed that the factory site was with combustible materials, including piles of clothes and chemicals, harmful to the personnel.

The national court sentenced two men to death for arson after proven guilty following an investigation, which proclaimed the catastrophe as an act of organized terrorism.

More than five years later, on 20 May 2018, the victims received additional compensation, as their families received payments and funds following negotiations of the ILO. Since the owners of the factory denied providing the victims' families with compensation, claiming that they had no responsibility for the inferno.

Image 1: The Karachi garment factory remains⁸



⁸ British Broadcasting Cooperation. "Pakistan fire: Two to hang for Karachi Garment Factory", *British Broadcasting Cooperation (BBC)*, 22 September 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-54250075>.

Tazreen Factory fire

Tazreen a colossal industrial facility, found in Bangladesh's capital and largest city, Dhaka's most industrialized region, was engulfed by flames on 24 November 2012. The nation of Bangladesh was stricken by another massive inferno, which provoked the death of 112 workers on duty. The working force was reassured by the manager that "nothing has happened" and were ordered to continue with their tasks, therefore the misled workers made no attempts to evacuate the building. Emergency and general exits were locked, so workers found themselves trapped inside the building, with the sole way out through windows on the upper floors. As a consequence, an exceeding number of a hundred workers suffered from severe head and back injuries when escaping through the crammed windows and others found a tragic death. The struggling families of the victims fought for over three years to secure compensation for the fallen at this death trap factory and eventually achieved to establish a trust fund.

Rana Plaza

Another example of exposure to unsafe working conditions, was marked on 24 April 2013, when an industrial facility in Dhaka, Rana Plaza, collapsed, which did not only result in the demise of 1,132 people but injured twice as many workers as well. The state of Bangladesh, despite being already alarmed by the Tazreen fashions factory disaster only months earlier, had not either ensured adequate conditions in such a colossal facility or a well-regulated surveillance system.

Ranked as one of the most alarming and destructive industrial accidents on record, the Rana Plaza has raised awareness on the insupportable conditions in the great majority of factories in LEDCs, including some of the lowest wages globally and working minorities' exposition to an unsafe environment. Workers are constantly becoming more involved and knowledgeable on their rights, form unions and make constant efforts to redress the dominant situation.

Despite the awakening no fewer than 35 textile factory incidents have occurred afterwards, which demonstrates that despite the effort, uneducated civilians engage in the manufacturing procedure in the TCLFs, in facilities where respecting the necessary legal grounds is not considered necessary. A well-functioning labouring system has not been yet put into place and decent work and livelihood in dignity are not yet achieved in the TCLFs.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

Bangladesh

From \$19 billion to \$34 billion per year, Bangladesh's garment industry has seen a 79 percent increase in revenue. Consequently, Bangladesh is now the second-largest exporter of clothing in the world, with the industry contributing 80% of all export revenue. In the devastating wake of two garment factory fires that claimed more than 1,200 lives in 2012 and 2013, revenues impressively increased. These disasters created the need for improvement of labor laws and safety measures, which were enforced after the workers' deaths. With these upgrades, Bangladesh has emerged as a desirable option for global clothing brands, particularly for those looking to diversify their manufacturing bases and, more recently, for those worried about how potential trade wars might affect their bottom line.

China

For more than a decade, China has dominated the global apparel manufacturing and exporting industries. With the turn of the millennium, China's exports of apparel soared thanks to the World Trade Organisation's decision to lift textile quotas. The nation produced more than half of the world's textiles and apparel and exported more than 30% of the world's garments. The apparel industry in China has, however, slowed down its growth in recent years in an effort to create a more technologically advanced and a more sustainable sector. Throughout the past two decades, China's garment companies sought out novel opportunities in the domestic market while taking into account the competitive global market. China's average spending on clothing and footwear has increased due to the country's rising disposable income. The desire of Chinese consumers to purchase domestic brands has also significantly increased. A poll done in 2021 revealed that about 60% of Chinese consumers had purchased garments from domestic clothing businesses.

Segment Amounts	US\$155.90bn
Annual Growth	3%
most revenue is generated	China, US\$44,540.00m
Revenue Change	16,7%
Per Person Revenues	US\$2.030

Table 1: General information about the textile, clothing, leather, and footwear industry⁹

⁹ Statista. "Textile & Other Footwear – Worldwide", *Statista*, 2023, <https://www.statista.com/outlook/cmo/footwear/textile-other-footwear/worldwide>.

Cambodia

The exports of textiles, garment and footwear products make a key sector for the Cambodian economy and remain the most profitable export sector, with an annual growth of 10 percent over the past ten years. The Cambodian TCLF sector experienced a minor decline in 2020 and a recovery accordingly in 2021, reaching total of \$6.5 billion. With a steady annual increase, Cambodia's garment industry provides 1 million workers employment. It is estimated that around one-fifth of the total female population in Cambodia has been employed in this industry.¹⁰

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

Being the only tripartite U.N. agency since 1919, the ILO aims to bring together governments, employers, and workers of all 187 Member States, to set labor standards, develop policies and devise programs promoting decent work for all individuals. The tripartite structure of the ILO gives an equal voice to all parties to ensure that the views of the social partners are closely reflected in labor standards and in forming policies and programs. ILO's main aims are to promote rights in work environments, encourage decent employment opportunities, enhance social protection and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues.

On 6 February 2019, ILO released a working paper on the future of work in TCLFs, in order to facilitate the cooperation of the ILO constituents and other key factors in the TCLF industries. A paper exploring the impact of technological advances, climate change, and globalization further called for action to be taken so as to form a future that benefits thousands of enterprises and industrial workers. It represents the ILO's efforts to secure decent work, legal employment, adequate working conditions, social protection, the expansion of skills of the workforce and the respect towards labor rights. This has been further achieved through meetings, in October 2021, directing the industrial factors towards a more resilient, inclusive, and Sustainable Garment and Textiles Sector in LEDCs rights. The International Labor Organization's constant efforts to ameliorate the working conditions in LEDCs in cooperation with local governments, such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and many more, promote enhancing cooperation between tripartite constituents and other stakeholders has resulted in the negotiation of new initiatives at national and international.

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

The OECD recognizes the impact of the TCLF sector in global economy and has implemented the policy "Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains in the Garment & Footwear Sector", which aims to aid the enterprises of the sector to meet the expectations of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, such as non-binding principals and standards for responsible business in a global context, including

¹⁰ Rastogi, Vasundhara. "Cambodia's Garment Manufacturing Industry", *ASEAN Briefing*, 1 November 2018, <https://www.aseanbriefing.com/news/cambodias-garment-manufacturing-industry/>

providing a safeguarded and health working environment in the sector. This Guidance has been approved and implemented by all local governments, trade unions and civil societies.

Pakistan

Pakistan is globally recognized as one of the world’s leading textile producers. During 2021 its textile exports rose up to \$19.3 billion, contributing massively to the increase of the country’s income. Recently it has been noted that Pakistan’s manufacturing units have shut down, as the industry has to contend with a tax hike. Moreover, due to the county’s internal struggle with financial issues, such as high inflation and government-imposed restrictions, the textile industry fails to fulfill orders. It lacks the essential raw material for production. As a result, the workers are suffering from unpaid salaries, they find themselves daily on the verge of unemployment, and the domestic markets are in decline.

Sri Lanka

With an export revenue exceeding \$5.9 billion, Sri Lankan apparel manufacturing and supplying industry has gained a strong reputation globally for the ethical manufacturing of high-quality garments. The TCLF sector is the major contributor to Sri Lanka’s economy of 46.46%, utterly privately owned and operated, with 350,000 direct employees. By utilizing fashion BPO services, research, development, and innovation centers, Sri Lankan textile and apparel manufacturers have seized opportunities in the global market to advance beyond traditional exports and tailoring designs and offer sophisticated and innovative solutions whilst taking into account labor laws and respecting the worker’s rights.

World Health Organisation(WHO)

WHO is familiar with the working conditions in TCLF sector and has made an effort to ameliorate the working conditions, by creating a healthy workspace framework and model, which is flexible to diverse countries, workspaces and cultures and by outlining principals based on a systematic review of definitions of a healthy workspace. With its main aims being improving workplace health and creating healthy workspaces.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
28 September 1864	Foundation of the first international labor union in London, as a form of self-preservation, protest, way of life and battle for a new regime to dominate, aiming to establish equality and working rights
3-8 September 1883	Foundation of the first Russian Marxist organization in Geneva, which

	emphasised the need for economic and industrial development
August 1895	Standard Dictionary of the English Language defines the term “sweater”
1 December 1900	The creation of Iskra, journal by Russian Socialists that was deployed as an official instrument of social-democratic labor party, in order to values including decent working conditions for the working force.
October 1919	The creation of the UN’s sole tripartite agency, International Labor Organisation, which aims to ameliorate the labor industry
April 1975	Definition for clandestine migration is provided
January 1988	U.S. General Accounting Office defines the term “sweatshop”
December 1993	Webster’s 3 rd New International Dictionary provides definition for the term “sweatshop”
6 March 2011	Cambodia’s garment sector in transition, from downturn to recovery
11 September 2012	Krachi garment factory inferno
24 November 2012	Tazreen factory fire
24 April 2013	The Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh in 2013, the tipping point in the world of work
11 September 2016	ILO in cooperation with Bangladesh government conducting efforts to strengthen workplace safety and labour rights in the Bangladesh Ready-Made Garment Sector
20 May 2018	Additional recompensation is given to the families of the victims of the Karachi factory fire
11 October 2021	Fast fashion’s textile workers protest via a peaceful demonstration for basic rights and wages, which descends into police violence outside the Denim Clothing Company in Karachi, Pakistan

RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

Resolutions of the 73rd session

The General Assembly advocates for Labour Rights, by adopting 6 Resolutions aims to end Illicit Wildlife Trade, as it concludes the Seventy-Third Session, one of them being the A/73/L.117 resolution. This resolution welcomes the adoption of the ILO Centenary Declaration in the context of the implementation of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. It emphasizes on the importance of comprehensive and productive employment as along with as decent work for all as essential components of sustainable development. States that all such goals for sustainable development and comprehensive and productive employment should continue to be the top priority of both national and international cooperation.

International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1990)

Adopted on 18 December 1990 by General Assembly resolution 45/158, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families, includes 93 Articles. Under those articles is ensured the protection against discrimination of any kind in the workplace, as well as the protection of the labourers fundamental human rights, as stated in the Human Rights Convention. This convention is a comprehensive international treaty focusing on the protection of migrant labourers and the protection of their human rights. By this convention the link between migration and human rights is established.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Preliminary Safety Assessments and CAP Development

DIFE inspectors on follow-up of preliminary safety assessments and CAP development, creating a manual, which provides guidance for inspectors on how to follow up preliminary safety assessments of RMG factories and the development of Corrective Action Plans(CAPS).

ILO Working Conditions Laws Report 2012¹¹

In addition to highlighting global and regional trends in more than 150 nations, this report provides an international legal comparison of national working conditions legislation. The three basic working conditions, working hours, minimum wages, and maternity protection, are covered by national legislation in this report. As they consider legislation and policies that have an impact on workplaces and their workforce, ILO constituents, policymakers, and researchers are intended to receive comparative legal information on these issues from the report. This report is contributing to ILO's efforts to ameliorate the working conditions and is regarded a source which sets a successful standard of the working conditions.

¹¹ "Working Conditions Laws 2012." *International Labour Organization*, 6 Feb. 2014, www.ilo.org/travail/info/publications/WCMS_235155/lang--en/index.htm.

Law No. 13/2003

Law No. 13/2003, entitled as Decree of the Minister of Manpower and Transmigration of the Republic of Indonesia No. KEP-235/MEN/2003 of 2003, concerns the types of work endangering the health, safety, or morality of employed children. It states that without any exceptions, every worker must have an equal chance to find employment, every worker or laborer has the right to receive fair opportunities from entrepreneurs without discriminatory practices and states that local authorities must introduce policies and create manpower planning within the context of manpower development. This law facilitates the development of recruited children and promotes a fair treatment of the personnel, nevertheless it is not enforced in a global basis.

Article 31-EU Charter of Fundamental Rights

Article 31 defines the fair and just working conditions, of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and is based on Directive 89/391/EEC, which calls for the introduction of initiatives to enhance adjustments in occupational health and safety. Likewise, it alludes to Article 3 of the Social Charter, Section 19 of the Community Charter, and Article 26 of the Social Charter as it is adjusted with regard to workplace dignity. This article safeguards the rights of the labor class, ensures workplace dignity and promotes an equitable and decent workplace environment.

R204 - Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204)

R204 is the first international labor standard to concentrate on the informal economy in all process of attaining its diversity and to point directly toward the transition to the formal economy as an inclusive development and decent work for all. The initiative orients Members States towards pursuing three goals-allow employees and economic units to transition from the informal to the formal economy while respecting workers' fundamental rights and ensuring opportunities for income security, livelihoods, and entrepreneurship, encourage the development, maintenance, and sustainability of businesses and decent jobs in the formal economy as well as the coherence of macroeconomic, employment, social protection, and other policies. This recommendation provides plausible and fruitful solutions, which tackle effectively the issue, although it has not been put into place yet.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Recommend the creation of a Standard Guideline

Implement a soft-law policy, a non-binding guideline, that establishes the fundamental standards for the conditions of work in industrial facilities. A policy that establishes the rights, obligations, and hygiene requirements for the facilities, whose duty is to preserve workers' rights and ensure adequate working conditions for the workforce, particularly migrant workers and minorities, by combating all forms of

discrimination, strictly forbid or reduce whatever practices of child labor, and recommends the minimum wage and remuneration for all workers. So as to ensure that the enterprises are familiar with the defined minimum services and standards and fulfill them.

Ensure access to Health Insurance

Many large corporations in the TCLFs do not offer health insurance to their workers, despite the fact that accidents occur frequently because underfunded factories collapse or sustain significant damage. Health insurance must be offered to workers in order to protect them because their lives are at risk in the workplace and the vast majority of them are unable to pay for their own recovery. This can be ensured by agreeing to the terms of a specific medical nursing at the employment contract, signed by every worker and employer, which includes the terms and sum of the compensation provided by the enterprise for each incident.

Provides a clear definition for the term sweatshops

The term sweatshop has not yet been officially defined by the United Nations. A good solution would be to clearly define its meaning, so as to detect more accurately the cases, in which workers are being overexploited and to set a well-structured frame for discussion and reference when brought to the legal frame. Setting the criteria of a sweatshop, leads to its more accurate detection and evaluation of the working conditions of a facility.

Implement Supervision Mechanisms

Another great solution would be to implement surveillance mechanisms, supervised by the United Nations which guarantee that workers receive adequate working conditions, that the legal framework is being implemented and that facilities run whilst respecting the Standard Guidelines. A mechanism further responsible for proposing sanctions to any enterprises who violate the aforementioned standards. Ensure that each employee has the appropriate equipment and training, and they are aware of the quality standards as per the requirement. This mechanism would not only, detect cases of violation of the Standard Guideline and evaluate the working conditions but they would as well urge all enterprises to function accordingly.

Ban Child Labour

As previously stated, the prevalence of child labor has increased to an alarmingly high level, with serious negative implications on the minors' schooling and development. Limiting recruitment of minors is essential to avoid endangering the health, safety, and morality of the minors. This can be accomplished by enacting laws against enterprises hiring underage workers and enforcing penalties for any breaches.

Ensured Equality

As mentioned before, the female workers are victims of abuse and harassment in a daily basis and other minorities as well, that are employed in the sector, such as minors and specifically underaged females suffer from physical, corporal, verbal and psychological abuse as well. A realistic solution would be creating a code of conduct, which defines that every laborer, without any exception, ought to have an equal chance to find employment, receive fair opportunities without any discriminatory practices. Local authorities should accept this code and introduce policies accordingly and create manpower within the context of manpower development.

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