

## Module 5: The role of managers and supervisors in preventing sexual harassment in the workplace

### Learning objective

The contents of this module provide information and resources for participants to:

- Develop strategies, including training and awareness-raising, to assist managers and supervisors in global supply chains to become better aware of the risks of gender-based violence

### Module contents

One briefing:

- Briefing 5 – Workplace initiatives: the role of managers and supervisors

Three case studies of training and awareness carried out with managers and supervisors:

- Case Study 5.1: Ethical Trading Initiative: Equal treatment training for managers, supervisors and workers
- Case Study 5.2: Ethical Tea Partnership training to tackle discrimination and harassment in Kenya
- Case Study 5.3: Challenging sexual harassment in the textile sector through international support (Better Work)

Two learning activities (in Part C, electronic format):

- Activity 5.1: Identifying sexual harassment and violence in the workplace
- Activity 5.2: Role play on sexual harassment in the workplace

### Target Audiences

This module will be of particular interest to representatives from:

- Employers' organizations and trade unions at local, national and international level
- Trainers of managers, supervisors and workers in global supply chains
- Multi-stakeholder initiatives and CSR stakeholders
- Multi-lateral and national organizations
- NGOs and local agencies, including law enforcement agencies
- International and local development programme planners

## Briefing 5 – Workplace initiatives: the role of managers and supervisors

### 1. Introduction

#### Summary of key points

- Managers and supervisors have responsibilities in preventing sexual harassment.
- Tools to support managers and supervisors, including training and human resources policies, can help to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.
- Targeted training programmes can help managers and supervisors to reduce the incidence of sexual harassment, for example, by reducing production pressures.

The briefing provides guidance for training and awareness-raising of managers and supervisors, with a particular focus on practical initiatives for low/non-unionized workplaces. This includes measures to create a working environment that respects and empowers workers, builds human resources' skills, and promotes social dialogue to enable workers to participate in the development of workplace policies.

### 2. Managers and supervisors: their role in preventing violence and sexual harassment

Managers and supervisors have a responsibility to ensure that workplaces are free from sexual harassment. However, many supervisors have received little training on the issue. Managers and buyers do not always recognize the challenges and difficulties facing supervisors.

Verbal abuse, including shouting and name calling, often highly sexualized, is common in factories and farms. Supervisors, particularly those whose pay depends upon worker productivity, sometimes may mistakenly believe that using verbal abuse as a motivational punishment can spur worker productivity. For these supervisors, skills-training can equip them with positive motivational techniques that can replace verbal abuse; this in turn has the potential to increase worker productivity.

### 3. Training for managers and supervisors

#### The benefits of training for managers and supervisors

When managers and supervisors are aware of the damaging consequences of sexual harassment and have the tools to prevent it, there is a 'win-win' situation for the employer and workers. Training can help managers and supervisors improve efficiency, productivity, performance and retention of workers. Research by Better Work (Brown et al. 2014, Better Work 2015) found that factory profitability decreases as verbal abuse increases. In addition to decreasing productivity, verbal abuse raises production costs by forcing factories to pay more to attract and retain workers.



A growing number of lead companies and brands, multi-stakeholder initiatives and suppliers provide training for managers and supervisors to raise awareness about sexual harassment, deal with complaints and create a positive working environment. Training is one of the most important tools that can change workplace culture and reduce violence and sexual harassment, benefitting brands, employers and workers. Fair Wear Foundation, the Ethical Training Initiative, the Ethical Tea Partnership and Better Work, among others, have found that many supervisors are inadequately trained to manage people, as well as lack the skills to handle sensitive issues like harassment.

Three case studies, below, together with Case study 4.3, illustrate different training programmes for managers, supervisors and workers, with the aim of addressing sexual harassment and violence in global production workplaces.

- ➔ **Case Study 5.1 Ethical Trading initiative: Equal Treatment training for managers, supervisors and workers**
- ➔ **Case Study 5.2 Ethical Tea Partnership training to tackle discrimination and harassment in Kenya**
- ➔ **Case Study 5.3 Challenging sexual harassment in the textile sector through international support (Better Work)**

Training can change managers' and supervisors' perception of sexual harassment, as illustrated by the quote in the box below.

*"I always thought that when women spoke about being sexually harassed, they meant they were raped. But now I understand that sexual harassment can take place in many different forms." (Manager attending Better Work training in Jordan)*

### Issues to cover in awareness raising and training for managers and supervisors:

- Knowledge about compliance with international standards and national law.
- Company statement to make clear that sexual harassment and verbal abuse will not be tolerated.
- Understanding of how to prevent verbal abuse, violence and sexual harassment, and how to change workplace culture and behaviour.
- Awareness of the impact of unequal gender and power roles in the workplace and how to prevent discrimination.
- Understanding of workers' rights, decent work and freedom of association.
- Relevance of buyers codes of conduct and implications for continuing orders.
- Managing workloads, work pressures and long working hours.
- Managing the impact of unrealistic production targets.
- Business benefits derived from eliminating sexual harassment.
- The roles of supervisors and managers in improving communications and a culture of respect in the workplace.
- Benefits of having more female supervisors.

*A Manual on Improving the Working Conditions in the Cut Flower Industry* produced by the global union IUF makes a number of suggestions for training in a sector where women predominate in low-level precarious jobs. The following measures are recommended in training to address sexual harassment in flower farms:

- Companies should adopt a declaration that sexual harassment is strictly prohibited. They should further define the meaning of sexual harassment.
- A clear procedure for reporting sexual harassment cases should be put into place and a contact person designated.
- Establish women's committees and clearly define their roles.
- All workers should have an employment contract, thus giving job security and making them less vulnerable to sexual harassment.
- The employment contract should clearly spell out penalties for sexual harassment, and these should include dismissing the perpetrator.

- A clear and transparent system for recruitment, promotion, payment of salaries etc. must be put into place.
- The trade union and management should put in place an intensive awareness campaign against sexual harassment together with training programmes for workers to encourage openness on the subject.
- Establish a counselling and support programme for victims.

*“Before the training, I did not know that using bad words or talking to girls in the wrong way is considered sexual harassment. I also understand now how to prevent it or stop it, such as reporting it to HR.” (Worker attending Better Work training in Jordan)*

### Training methodologies

Mixed training methodologies are most effective, comprising group discussions, presentations, role-plays, games, stories, and case studies. This can help develop the participants’ understanding, particularly when dealing with difficult and sensitive issues such as violence and sexual harassment. Participatory activities, including role-plays, can be important in drawing out personal experiences of violence and sexual harassment and can help develop problem-solving techniques. Training is best tailored to the needs of the audience – senior managers may not want to play games but may be prompted into a good discussion by seeing a shocking video illustrating the type of physical violence that is common in factories.

The following link is a graphic example that can be used for this purpose: <http://www.mirror.co.uk/tv/tv-news/video-watch-shocking-moment-child-3118925>

After showing the videos to the management, trainers can raise questions such as:

- How realistic is this video clip?
- Have you ever seen or heard similar cases of bullying or scolding, or use of sexually explicit language?
- How does this type of behaviour affect business?
- Do you consider it as harassment? Why?

With greater awareness of the negative impact of sexual harassment in the workplace, it will be easier for managers and supervisors to establish workplace policies and practical initiatives to ensure that there is a working environment free from harassment and violence.

### Learning from Fair Wear Foundation training programmes for managers and supervisors

- The learning from the FWF training programme for managers and supervisors shows the importance of raising the awareness of the harmful effects of sexual harassment and violence.
- Although training may enhance supervisors’ knowledge, it will not immediately change their behaviour. Supervisors commonly considered ‘stress’, ‘pressure from the top management’ and ‘production pressures’ as reasons for their abuse.
- Many supervisors felt that they needed to be abusive to show that they had ‘power over production workers’, who are mainly women. They were used to seeing women abused and were not motivated enough to stop violence when it happens.
- Some supervisors felt powerless themselves, because of the culture in the factory. Some said they could not change anything unless the society or the factory organization changed.
- Supervisors learned from complaints and understood that they needed to change.

The case studies that follow look in greater detail at how employers, managers and supervisors can:

- Provide information and training for workers, so that they understand what sexual harassment is, and that all workers have a right to a workplace free from sexual harassment.
- Implement human resources policies and practices, including the adoption of a clear sexual harassment policy that defines sexual harassment, makes it clear that sexual harassment will not be tolerated, and that perpetrators will be disciplined or dismissed.
- Support establishment of a workplace sexual harassment committee.
- Ensure that there is a confidential procedure for making complaints about sexual harassment.
- Monitor the incidence of sexual harassment.

## Case Study 5.1

# Ethical Trading Initiative: Equal Treatment training for managers, supervisors and workers

Following revelations of extensive sexual harassment in the agriculture sector, the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) introduced a training programme for managers, supervisors and workers on equal treatment and preventing sexual harassment. The training aims to help managers and supervisors improve their people management skills and collaborate on improving equality in the supply chain.

**Training course for managers:** A half-day course for managers provides information about the business benefits of recognizing and understanding discrimination and sexual harassment and how they relate to workers' rights. In addition, information is provided about international standards and legal frameworks for workers' rights, managers' roles in promoting the equal treatment of workers in the workplace and how supervisors can be supported through the development and implementation of action plans.

**Training course for supervisors:** The two-day course gives participants an understanding of discrimination and sexual harassment, and how to promote the equal treatment of workers. It is designed to help supervisors define their role in their organizations, their rights and responsibilities and those of the workers that they supervise. The course is designed to encourage a culture of respect in the workplace, prevent and manage discrimination and sexual harassment, implement workers' rights in daily business and develop skills to be a good supervisor. Tools are given for working with managers and in developing an action plan to bring about real change in the workplace.

**Training course for workers:** Workers are provided with information and awareness about discrimination and sexual harassment, and workers' rights and responsibilities. Workers are important in setting the standards for respect and dignity as an integral part of workplace culture. Along with managers and supervisors, workers also have a responsibility to uphold the policies which protect their rights, including appropriate workplace behaviour towards their colleagues.

The training sessions are followed up by a joint action-planning meeting and by support to develop and implement relevant human resources policies.

ETI drew out the following key lessons from the programme:

- *Building trust through respect is an essential prerequisite to effecting change:* the role of the programme manager in first gaining the trust of the employers and then providing continuity, technical advice on labour law and other support to the facilitators was seen by participants as crucial to the success of the programme.
- *Sensitive, participatory training for managers, supervisors and workers is unique and highly valued:* participatory sessions, including role-plays, helped bring out personal experience of sexual harassment and discrimination. This needs to be handled very carefully so that participants are able to process and deal with these revelations appropriately.
- *Change happens at a personal level before it can happen at enterprise level:* participants, including the facilitators themselves, reported that they had been personally affected to a greater or lesser extent by the programme. One manager reported "the training was like a wake-up call. It was very important because you can't keep doing everything the same as you have done all the years. There were a lot of things I learned in the training that I needed to work on, like communication."

- *Supervisors and workers spoke of changes in their self-awareness, in their behaviour towards one another and in their expectations of how they should be treated.* Participants talked about realizing that they had been treated or had treated others in the past without respect.
- *The business benefits of the programme were that better communication led to less conflict – this may take time to emerge but should not be underestimated.* The business benefits of equal treatment of workers may not be easy to measure in the short term but are more evident in the medium and longer term.
- *Deeply entrenched cultural attitudes on gender... can be exposed by training but will take longer and more work to change.* ETI's impact assessment found that "a significant proportion of women are able to define sexual harassment correctly and are therefore more aware of what it is." However, it was also clear that gender relations are still male dominated and that both women and men have not fully internalized what sexual abuse and harassment really mean and that it is not acceptable. Training should therefore form part of a longer-term strategy to develop and implement strong human resources policies and to transform attitudes in the workplace.
- *Learning from the ETI training programme in South Africa:* in South Africa the ETI training programme for managers, supervisors and workers has been adapted and delivered by the Wine and Agricultural Ethical Trading Association (WIETA), a multi-stakeholder South African non-profit voluntary organization which promotes ethical trade in the wine industry value chain. Stakeholders include producers, retailers, trade unions, non-governmental organizations and the government. For further information about ETI and WIETA training see: [http://www.wieta.org.za/wieta\\_training.php](http://www.wieta.org.za/wieta_training.php)

## Case Study 5.2

# Ethical Tea Partnership training to tackle discrimination and harassment in Kenya

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The Ethical Tea Partnership (ETP) has carried out the ETI 'Supervisor Management Training Programme' in the Kenya Tea Development Agency Holdings Ltd (KTDA) factories. The programme is mainly geared towards supervisors because they have daily contact with workers and are largely responsible for how they are treated. Supervisors often have very little formal management training and therefore struggle with sensitive issues such as discrimination and harassment.

The training of supervisors is focused on the importance of managing people with respect. It increases supervisors' understanding of harassment and discrimination, thereby reducing incidences of abusive behaviour. Using role-play and other interactive sessions the training aims to improve supervisors' overall people management skills. It also gives them the skills and knowledge to identify and address issues of discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment.

In addition, training of managers has been carried out to raise awareness of the issues and to show managers how to ensure that there is a culture of respect in the workplace. The training introduces policies and systems that can be utilized to support supervisors and eliminate poor practices.

At the start of the project ETP co-financed the training of 11 ETI-accredited trainers, which included ETP's Africa staff. The training has been carried out across all 66 KTDA factories, as well as with head office management, training more than 1,000 managers, supervisors, and workers.

Following the training, gender committees have been set up at the head office and in all the KTDA factories. It is also compulsory for each factory board to have female representation. According to the ETP the benefits for business and workers include: improved working conditions, fairer working environments, increased staff morale, more effective management and increased productivity.

A 'Social Issues' Training Manual has been developed to support capacity building in the tea sector on gender and social issues, which includes modules on 'Sexual and gender-based violence, human rights and how this can be managed in the workplace' and 'Sexually transmitted infections and their effects on both women and men'. The modules contain information, group exercises and case studies.

For further information: Social Issues Training Manual (Ethical Tea Partnership, the Sustainable Trade Initiative and Solidaridad) see: <http://www.ethicalteapartnership.org/resources/>

For further information about the ETP training see: <http://www.ethicalteapartnership.org/tea-sustainability-programmes/producer-support/gender/> and power point presentation by Jane Nyambura of the ETP: <http://www.ethicalteapartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/Addressing-Gender-Issues-in-Kenya-Jane-Nyambura-Ethical-Tea-Partnership.pdf>

## Case Study 5.3

# Challenging sexual harassment in the textile sector through international support (Better Work)

This case study is an example of how a partnership between international organizations has provided training to reduce sexual harassment, as part of a wider initiative to assist competitiveness and economic development in countries where there are significant numbers of workers employed in new global supply chain industries. The case study highlights the productivity and competitive advantages of preventing and addressing sexual harassment.

Better Work is a partnership between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC). It brings together the expertise of the ILO in labour standards with that of the IFC in private sector development. The Better Work programme has improved workers' rights and factory compliance with labour laws in seven countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

The programme provides advisory and training services to various stakeholders to address compliance with labour standards, including sexual harassment. It also works closely with international buyers and national tripartite (government, employers and unions) partners to promote the scaling-up of experiences to the national level.

### ***Better Work Jordan***

Better Work Jordan was one of the first Better Work programmes set up in 2008. Following the financial crisis, in 2011 the government decided to mandate participation in Better Work Jordan for all garment-sector factories, to demonstrate commitment to compliance and attract investment. Training of workers and factory staff is a key component in Better Work's strategy to improve working conditions for garment workers and increase business performance in factories.

### ***Preventing and combating sexual harassment in Jordan's garment industry through training and awareness-raising***

Serious allegations of sexual abuse have been made across Jordan's apparel industry so Better Work Jordan (BWJ) established a task force to develop tools and materials to prevent and address sexual harassment in the workplace, including a template factory toolkit consisting of a model policy on harassment, an awareness-raising poster, a training brochure and a quick reference 'dos and don'ts' to display on the factory floor, together with a training module for managers, supervisors and workers.

For example, sexual harassment prevention training was carried out with the Jerash Garment & Fashion Manufacturing Co. Ltd. Training gave participants practical guidance on how to prevent and deal with sexual harassment, including sexual harassment policies, sensitizing managers and workers on what constitutes sexual harassment, and deepening managers' and supervisors' understanding of how sexual harassment affects workers and the workplace. The training defines sexual harassment, identifies its forms, causes and impacts while also providing ways to prevent and resolve it.

**Workers:** The training gave workers an understanding of what constitutes sexual harassment in the workplace, highlighting the different forms of harassment such as physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature, and the impact that it has on workers.





“We are foreigners in Jordan, so we do not know much about the laws, rules and procedures, but I now have a better idea of how to deal with the situation if something happens,” said factory worker Priyadorshani, Jerash Garment & Fashion Manufacturing Co. Ltd

“We didn’t know before the training how to report sexual harassment or what it means, its different forms. I will tell my friends what I learnt in the course. It is important for everyone to know what to do if they are sexually harassed,” said Sriyani Wikramaarachchi, Sterling Apparel Manufacturing L.L.C

**Managers and supervisors:** The training gave supervisors a clear understanding of their responsibilities to address sexual harassment, how to deal with allegations of sexual harassment and provided tools for managers and supervisors on how to protect their workers from sexual harassment and avoid inappropriate behaviour themselves. The training also provided information on ways to address sexual harassment, including information on how to conduct interviews, impartial investigation techniques and confidentiality issues.

“The awareness that was created, especially for the middle management and on the supervisors’ level, is one of the biggest successes of the training. BWJ played a great role in training our workers and our middle management in particular. We will ask BWJ to do follow-up sessions because people tend to forget. And it is good to have updates on the subject. We welcome any posters or other tools that could further assist us,” said Farhan Ifram, General Manager of Sterling Apparel Manufacturing L.L.C.

**Unions:** “We try to raise awareness on the issues among female workers in factories but there are many challenges, such as cultural barriers and language barriers. And sometimes factories try to internally solve these problems before we can find out about them. So there are a number of issues which hinder our efforts to raise awareness on sexual harassment but it is definitely a high priority for us and we need more support from organizations like Better Work Jordan to conduct more awareness-raising programmes in a diversity of factories,” said Mervat Abed Al Kareem Al Jamhawi, a member of the General Trade Union of Workers in Textile, Garment and Clothing.

Following training by Better Work and the ILO, employers’ associations and the trade union signed a groundbreaking collective bargaining agreement covering the full garment sector. It includes provisions on regulating working hours, wages and bonuses, improving health and a commitment to treat all workers equally.

The training carried out in garment factories in Jordan has uncovered a number of challenges:

- Fear of speaking out: many workers fear the consequences of openly discussing sexual harassment.
- Cultural differences and ingrained social attitudes: workers of both sexes often believe women are only sexually harassed if they signal they are sexually available, whether through their behaviour or physical appearance.
- Time constraints: workers are only permitted to spend a limited time in the training sessions before they are called back to the production line to fulfill their production quota. This often denies workers the time needed to feel comfortable in openly discussing sexual harassment.
- Factory adherence: the key messages of the sexual harassment prevention training need to be put into practice, with the aim of creating a working environment with zero tolerance for sexual harassment.

**Sources:** Better Work (2015); Brown et al., (2014)

## References and further resources

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