

FORUM REPORT:

Gender Equality Forum: Unleashing the Full Potential of Women in Global Supply Chains

2 October 2018 (10:00 - 16:00), Stockholm, Sweden

On 2 October, amfori organised the ‘Gender Equality Forum: Unleashing the Full Potential of Women in Global Supply Chains’ in Stockholm, Sweden. The event brought together representatives from businesses, government and NGOs to raise awareness about the importance of gender equality in global supply chains, share experiences and jointly identify practical solutions for companies.

Opening of the day

The event was moderated by Sandra Adler, Director of the Human Rights and Business Practice Group and Senior Advisor at Enact, Ms Adler opened the day with a brief introduction about the importance of gender equality for companies and their producers, and the positive impact it can have on global development.



Her introduction was followed by Stéphanie Luong, Vice President, Public Affairs and Lea Rankinen, Senior Vice President of Sustainability at SOK and Co-Chair of amfori Board, giving insights on why **gender equality is a key priority for amfori** and its members. Stephanie Luong noted that women represent a large share of the workforce in amfori’s members’ global supply chains but are disproportionately represented in low-wage jobs in the lower tiers of the supply chain. Lea Rankinen further stressed the importance of awareness raising and supporting upward career mobility of women to prevent gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment and other forms of workplace violence.



Panel Discussion

The morning panel explored how companies can embed a gender-lens into strategies, policies and due diligence processes, and how the OECD and business associations like amfori and BSR can support them doing so through the different tools and guiding documents on offer ([amfori’s Annex 14](#) or [BSR’s Gender Equality in Codes of Conduct Guidance](#)). The recent launch of amfori’s [Women Empowerment Programme](#) was presented as a concrete way for companies to engage with their suppliers on jointly promoting gender equality at the producer level.

Case Studies: exchanging good practices related to gender equality in global supply chains

The morning session was concluded by two inspiring case studies:

1. Women’s career paths in Bangladesh - obstacles and opportunities

Viveka Risberg, Program Director, Axfoundation/Chair of the Swedish amfori Network shared the outcomes of a workshop series in Bangladesh which yielded tips and recommendations from suppliers, agents, buying brands, organisations and local unions on how to enable women’s career advancement on the factory floor (see slide 5 in Axfoundations ppt).



2. Preventing sexual harassment and empowering women in the textile sector – a producer’s perspective

Mohammed Zahidullah, Head of Sustainability, DBL Group, presented the conglomerate’s vision “to be the most attractive employer for female workers in the garments industry of Bangladesh”. DBL Group’s vision is set out by concrete objectives to empower women at the workplace, such as having 50% of women in supervisor positions. Based on tangible results from different initiatives by the Group, Zahid presented the business case for gender equality and showed how women’s empowerment makes good business sense. During the Q&A with the participants he stressed that:

“One business doing good will not solve the problem. That’s why it is important to share knowledge.”



Working session:

Roadmap development: incorporating a gender-lens for buyers, factory managers and women

Following the morning session, participants gathered in small groups to map out key challenges, share experiences and identify solutions and practical steps on how to perform due diligence with a gender-lens. The working sessions saw animated discussions, helped participants to look at the issue from different perspectives and to empathise with different actors along the supply chain, whose buy-in is critical to realise a gender sensitive supply chain. The outcomes of the group work were presented in the subsequent plenary session. A summary can be found in the annex.



Closing of the day

Sandra Atler closed the day by pointing out that tackling gender issues forces companies to adopt a holistic approach, as it touches upon many other issues. She concluded by encouraging companies to use and leverage the tools at their disposal and to listen to the right’s holders.

amfori remains committed to working towards gender equality in global supply chains and will continue facilitating a close collaboration between buyers and producers to empower women and thus society at large. See the amfori [Women’s Empowerment Programme’s webpage for more information.](#)

**Annex: Outcomes of working session:
‘Roadmap Development: Incorporating a Gender-lens For Buyers, Factory Managers and Women’**

	Buyers’ perspective	Factory Manager perspective	Female factory workers’ perspective
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Different customer demands/projects - Business benefit unclear - Communication to customer - No relationship to factory - Lack of ownership (often sits in CR/Sustainability team) - Lack of KPIs/targets - Short-term costs in relation to profits - Lack of transparency - Management is aware of the strategic importance of sustainability, but not of what this means in practice for the buyers - Measurement of success - Sustainability not integrated in purchasing - Male dominated buyer climate/lack of gender diversity on buyer side - Time and money - Manage day-to-day operations and expectations - Awareness of issues - Engagement of different players and stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of long-term support/commitment from buyers - Lack of incentives - Mindset resistant to change - Lack of capacity - Cost to invest in CSR - Measurement of success - Audit fatigue - Factory management is confronted with too many requirements both in terms of audits and corrective actions/programmes - Compliance is going up but pricing is going down → damaging already vulnerable groups because this leads to lower wages, OHS etc. - Another requirement – why? - Different requirement from one scheme to another - Mixed messages from buyers and sustainability team - Where do I start? What to do? Where are the issues? - Cultural context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of awareness of women’s rights (both from males & females) - No forum to raise complaints/no voice in the workplace - Lack of female representation/agency and role model - Sexual harassment - Weak employment - Access to wages/banking system - Inequal pay - Double-burden: Balance between work + home duties (child care etc.) - No knowledge of factory’s future plans - Cultural context & social norms e.g. patriarchal society - Male supervisors feeling threatened - Male dominated supervisory bodies - Behavioral norms related to gender
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communicate externally - Integrate into mgmt. systems and set goals/targets - Measure via score cards - Collaborate with other brands using factories - Peer learning platform - Address via audit system - Engage with local initiatives, so you can use resources more effectively → initiative mapping/stakeholder mapping - Engage/educate C-level management (e.g. through amfori, through shareholders, tools to measure the impact qualitatively) [crisis management indicators] - Create business incentives for suppliers to meet expectations (e.g. long-term supplier relationships) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Address price issues - Improve internal communication - Set up grievance mechanisms - HR systems/HR policies-gender sensitive - Involve factory owners - Peer learning platform - Cooperation between stakeholders - Business incentives for suppliers for meeting expectations (e.g. long-term supplier relationships) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessing living conditions for workers - Ask female workers what their challenges are - Dialogue between female workers / NGOs / brands - Connect with other women e.g. at women’s cafés - Access points (training awareness, female supervisors, female representation, access points to grievance mechanisms and escalation points) - Engage with local ecosystem to raise awareness beyond factory - Engage men in the conversation - Worker committee representation - Raise awareness → women’s rights - Identify female role models/break gender norms

	Buyers' perspective	Factory Manager perspective	Female factory workers' perspective
Practical Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Calculate costs of improved conditions (e.g. living wage) - Use local auditors - Female auditors/NGOs interviewing females off-site - Improve data collection (ask different questions) - Train auditors to adopt a gender lens - Cross organization working, e.g. amfori/Sedex/APSCA - Focus (e.g. via training) on gender quality within own company as well as suppliers - Partnerships with local NGOs/organisations - Long term contracts - Buyer to join the assessments on the ground to understand production - Meet with buyers before visits to ask follow-up questions - CSR evaluation of buyer sourcing practices - Sharing/highlighting good practices - Include gender lens in country risk assessment - Add gender specific questions in amfori BSCI's buyer's checklist - Key message for senior and mid-level management - Getting data + short training for own team - Brand demand for female auditors - Integrate gender lens into buyers' KPIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide soft skills/life skills training - Capacity building: both skill development + awareness on women's rights for workers - Training for factory management (senior/mid-level management) - Workshops on gender norms and practical steps - Include female and male workers in training/projects - Third party mediators (e.g. between factory + NGO) to build trust - Use external training tools e.g. QuizzRR - Nominate female 'champions' - Raise awareness via internal communication e.g. calendar of inspiring women - Employ women in management roles - Sharing/highlighting good practices - Transparency on which initiatives are happening where to reduce duplication - Provide child-care facilities/ breast feeding rooms - Involve core team in creating a gender sensitive workplace - Collaboration with suppliers - Communicate about sexual harassment incidents - zero tolerance posters - global campaign - include women representatives in workers' committees - decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Request support from family members - Encourage female family members to be confident + ambitious - Utilize community centers/engage with female workers from other factories - Social workers at factory of farm level (employed by producer or industry organization) - Local workshop for buyers for stakeholder mapping - Develop awareness raising & training activities in close collaboration with local CSOs/NGOs - Identify role models & support team (factory/brand) - Facilitate worker representation for women (elections process) - Training on gender-norms for men & women - Gender balanced complaints processing body