



LITERATURE REFERENCE GUIDE

Annex to “The Weakest Link in the Global Supply Chain: How the Pandemic is Affecting Bangladesh’s Garment Workers” Report



Literature Reference Guide

This literature reference guide covers relevant writing on the topic of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent responses of garment companies as they relate to the Bangladesh readymade garment industry and its associated stakeholders. Associated stakeholders include Bangladeshi manufacturers, Bangladeshi factory workers, Bangladeshi labour activists, international civil society organizations, and the government of Bangladesh. The Guide also includes reports and articles published prior to the pandemic that have to do with the conditions of apparel workers in Bangladesh.

Twenty interviews were conducted as primary research for “The Weakest Link in the Global Supply Chain: How the Pandemic is Affecting Bangladesh’s Garment Workers” report. The review of related literature was prepared as secondary research to inform and expand on the data and insight provided by the interviews. The “Weakest Link” report captured brands’ actions during and immediately after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing primarily on the year 2020. The authors therefore limited most of the literature reviewed to that same period.

Material included in this guide: newspaper articles, journal articles, public statements, industry reports, announcements, policy papers, presentations, sustainability reports and whitepapers. The material was sourced by the three authors using keyword searches and references from published material, as well as sources knowledgeable on this topic.

The guide is listed alphabetically by author or source and includes a summary of each piece of literature.

This research intends to contribute to the broader understanding of how enterprises engaged with their suppliers and factory workers at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on Bangladesh as a case study for how developing countries were impacted. It aims to provide a basis for further research on corporate social responsibility and supply chain accountability towards the goal of advancing companies’ responsibility to respect human rights.

This guide was prepared by Nancy Reyes Mullins, independent researcher, with inputs from Sanchita Banerjee Saxena, director, Subir and Malini Chowdhury Center for Bangladesh Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, and Salil Tripathi, senior adviser (global issues), Institute for Human Rights and Business.

Amed, I., et al. "The State of Fashion 2020: Coronavirus Update." Business of Fashion and McKinsey & Company, 1 April 2020, <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/global-markets/the-state-of-fashion-2020-coronavirus-update-download-the-report>

An in-depth report on the global fashion industry in the wake of the coronavirus crisis, focusing on the themes, issues and opportunities impacting the sector.

The coronavirus pandemic has already disrupted global financial markets and the fashion industry to an unprecedented extent. This update to the State of Fashion 2020 report by The Business of Fashion and McKinsey & Company forecasts consolidation, innovation, and bankruptcies in the wake of this once-in-a-lifetime humanitarian and financial crisis.

Anner, Mark. "Leveraging Desperation: Apparel Brands' Purchasing Practices during Covid-19." Center for Global Workers' Rights in Association with the Worker Rights Consortium, 16 October 2020, <https://www.workersrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Leveraging-Desperation.pdf>

This report examines the findings from a new survey of apparel suppliers conducted online between July 5 and August 21, 2020. It also draws on recent trade data, interviews with stakeholders, quarterly financial reports, and other sources. Its conclusion: Brands are using suppliers' pandemic-driven desperation as leverage to drive down prices and impose onerous payment schedules on new orders they are placing. Many suppliers are being forced to accept orders below cost, potentially forcing them out of business and putting workers' livelihoods at risk.

Anner, Mark. "Unpaid Billions: Trade Data Show Apparel Order Volume and Prices Plummeted through June, Driven by Brands' Refusal to Pay for Goods They Asked Suppliers to Make." Center for Global Workers' Rights in Association with the Worker Rights Consortium, 6 October 2020, https://www.workersrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Unpaid-Billions_October-6-2020.pdf

To analyze the impact of buyer order cancellations, this research brief compares the value of monthly apparel imports to the US for the months of January through June for 2019 and 2020.

US and EU trade data provide considerable evidence of a significant loss in value due to order cancellations. A total of USD 16.2 billion was lost, combined, from April through June in the US and from April through May in the EU (a number that will almost certainly increase when June data are available for the EU). Assuming that wages make up 10 percent of the value (at import price), what this suggests is the loss of more than USD 1.6 billion in workers' wages, based on reduced imports and retroactive price discounts for the US and EU markets alone.

Anner, Mark. "Abandoned? The Impact of Covid-19 on Workers and Businesses at the Bottom of Global Garment Supply Chains." Worker Rights Consortium, 27 March 2020, <https://www.workersrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Abandoned-Penn-State-WRC-Report-March-27-2020.pdf>

This Research Brief draws from responses from an online survey of Bangladesh employers, administered between March 21 and March 25, 2020, to document these trends. There are approximately 2,000 suppliers in Bangladesh and 4,000 factories (many suppliers own multiple factories). Of these, 316 suppliers completed the survey. The findings reveal the devastating impact order cancellations have had on businesses and on workers. Crucially, it illustrates the extreme fragility of a system based on

decades of buyers squeezing down on prices paid to suppliers: factory closures, unpaid workers with no savings to survive the hard times ahead, and a government with such a low tax revenue that it has very limited ability to provide meaningful support to workers and the industry.

“Poverty Data: Bangladesh.” Asian Development Bank, <https://www.adb.org/countries/bangladesh/poverty>. Accessed March 2021.

The Asian Development Bank’s website with downloadable statistics on social and economic indicators such as population, gross domestic product (GDP), inflation rate, trade balance, external debt, fiscal balance for 45 economies in the Asia and Pacific, including Bangladesh. The website also breaks down data based on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the ADB’s Social Protection Index.

Banerjee Saxena, Sanchita; Kaur, Harpreet; and Tripathi, Salil ‘How the pandemic has impacted the various layers of the global garment supply chain’ in Covid-19 and Human Rights, (Ed: Kjaerum, M; Davis, M F; Lyons A; Routledge 2021) <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003139140-18/pandemic-impacted-various-layers-global-garment-supply-chain-sanchita-banerjee-saxena-harpreet-kaur-salil-tripathi?context=ubx&refId=b41c27c2-5326-4a45-80d4-2fd16a068fe1>

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaken the world’s economy and supply chains worldwide, and the global garment industry is certainly no exception. During the time of a global crisis such as the pandemic, these already difficult conditions have been made even more precarious for the millions who depend on these jobs for their livelihoods. This global pandemic has put a spotlight on many of the inequalities and unequal power dynamics that were always present in the system.

In this chapter, the authors seek to do the following: (1) understand why a global pandemic has caused such disruptions in the global supply chain, (2) recognize that this has been detrimental to workers at the bottom of these supply chains, (3) explore corporate responses to the unprecedented crisis, (4) examine certain short term and longer-term changes to alleviate some of this hardship on workers, and (5) identify the role and responsibility of the state and business as duty-bearers. We do this by drawing on evidence from three complimentary projects of primary research and we also drew on additional research including available literature and publicly-accessible information. The primary focus of this chapter is on Bangladesh, but conclusions are drawn based on insights gained from studies in India and Vietnam as well.

Barenblat, Ayesha; Cline, Elizabeth. “Introducing PayUp Fashion: Why the Future of Any Fashion Sustainability Efforts Must Be Worker-Centric.” *Remake*, 13 October 2020, <https://remake.world/stories/news/introducing-payup-fashion-why-the-future-of-any-fashion-sustainability-efforts-must-be-worker-centric/>

This article is an introduction to consumers to the #PayUp (PayUp Fashion) campaign and a call to action to sign the petition which pushes for 7 Actions: 1) #PayUp, 2) Keep Workers Safe , 3) Go transparent, 4) Give workers center stage, 5) Sign enforceable contracts, 6) End starvation wages, 7) Help pass laws. The #PayUp movement was borne from the fashion industry’s catastrophic decision to refuse payment for completed orders heading into the COVID-19 pandemic. As early as March of 2020, global brands refused to pay for an estimated \$40 billion worth of finished goods that garment workers had spent untold hours sewing.

Barradas, S., et al. "Un(der)paid in the pandemic. An estimate of what the garment industry owes its workers." Clean Clothes Campaign & Worker Rights Consortium, August 2020, <https://cleanclothes.org/file-repository/underpaid-in-the-pandemic.pdf/view>

The purpose of this report is to demonstrate the breadth of the lost wage ("wage gap") workers currently -- and will continue to -- face. The wage gap, although based on only rough estimates, indicates the amount of funding that is needed to make workers whole. The report analyses nonpayment of wages to garment workers during the months of March, April, and May resulting from order cancellations by apparel brands, unpaid leave, and state-sanctioned wage cuts during the Covid-19 crisis. Based on a review of news reports and information from worker organizations, it estimates that across South and Southeast Asia garment workers have received 38% less than their regular income. Extrapolating these findings to the global garment industry, a conservative guess of wages lost by garment workers worldwide, excluding China, for the months of March, April, and May would amount to between 3.19 and 5.79 billion USD. The final section of this report calls on global brands and retailers to make a wage assurance to workers in order to fill the devastating wage gap. Countries of focus for this report: Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

Berkhout, Esmé; Galasso, Nick; Lawson, Max; Andrés Rivero Morales, Pablo; Taneja, Anjela; Alejo Vázquez Pimentel, Diego. «The Inequality Virus.» Oxfam, January 2021, <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/inequality-virus>

This paper shows that the heaviest toll of this pandemic falls onto people of color and women both across and within nation-states, and will serve to further increase existing inequality and vulnerability. It offers startling new data, shows how inequalities intersect, and connects examples across countries. Crucially, it offers bold solutions. The paper presents the results of an Oxfam survey of 295 economists from 79 countries.

The coronavirus pandemic has the potential to lead to an increase in inequality in almost every country at once, the first time this has happened since records began. The virus has exposed, fed off and increased existing inequalities of wealth, gender and race. Over two million people have died, and hundreds of millions of people are being forced into poverty while many of the richest – individuals and corporations – are thriving. The crisis has exposed our collective frailty and the inability of our deeply unequal economy to work for all. Yet it has also shown us the vital importance of government action to protect our health and livelihoods. Transformative policies that seemed unthinkable before the crisis have suddenly been shown to be possible.

"Better Buying Special Report: Guidelines for Better Purchasing Practices Amidst the Coronavirus Crisis and Recovery." Better Buying Institute, 02 April 2020, <https://betterbuying.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Better-Buying-Special-Report-COVID-19-Guidance-for-Brands-and-Retailers.pdf>

Amidst a near constant stream of reports of order cancellations by big brands and retailers, it appears that suppliers are being left on their own to sustain their businesses through the Coronavirus pandemic and address the impacts of production stoppages on their workers. Will the efforts being made by some leading companies to improve purchasing practices for mutually beneficial sustainable partnerships falter as retailers and brands prioritize their own short-term cash flow over long-term survival of key business partnerships in their supply chains?

These concerns prompted Better Buying to carry out a micro-survey of suppliers to gather quick input on how the Coronavirus is impacting their businesses and workers. We also asked about the specific impact of their customers' Coronavirus-related purchasing practices, and whether any customers have implemented best practices. The results provide a snapshot of impacts and best practices suppliers globally are experiencing as a result of the coronavirus crisis and guidelines for retailers and brands have been developed on the basis of these.

"Major fashion brands record profits while vulnerable workers languish in poverty." Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, 11 November 2020, <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/from-us/media-centre/major-fashion-brands-record-profits-while-vulnerable-workers-languish-in-poverty/>

Press Release by the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC) on the new findings of their study on how the fashion industry is responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. It found, "a mismatch between industry rhetoric of unprecedented challenges and their lack of policy development to ensure worker rights are adequately protected. Fifty fashion companies were invited to respond (34 responded) to questions regarding responsible actions taken to respond to garment workers' rights during the pandemic."

"COVID-19 Apparel Action Tracker." Business and Human Rights Resource Center. 2020, <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/from-us/covid-19-action-tracker/>. Accessed December 2020.

The Action Tracker tracks and publishes the commitments made by 50 global fashion brands, the ongoing demands from the labour movement, and recommendations on how to build back better.

Butler, Sarah. "Why are wages so low for garment workers in Bangladesh?" The Guardian, 21 January 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/jan/21/low-wages-garment-workers-bangladesh-analysis>

News article highlighting the issues with unrealistically low price points and the complex supply chains of the apparel industry, and the need for greater worker representation through unions and on the ground retail representatives to monitor conditions.

Cernansky, Rachel. "Most fashion designers never meet their suppliers. They should." Vogue Business, 2 July 2020.

The article makes that argument that, "design teams should learn more about the factories that make their clothes. For brands and suppliers alike, the benefits are manifold." The author references Remake's "immersive journeys" and The North Face, Coyuchi and Prana's work with The Renewal Workshop, as examples of programs that connect designers with clothing manufactures to "help to engender a clearer appreciation of social and environmental challenges in the manufacturing process." "Immersive visits support the fundamental process of building personal relationships with the workers at the beginning of the supply chain. Designers learn to appreciate more fully the human repercussions of every decision they make."

Chalmers, John. "Special Report: How textile kings weave a hold on Bangladesh." Reuters, 2 May 2013, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bangladesh-garments-special-report/special-report-how-textile-kings-weave-a-hold-on-bangladesh-idUSBRE9411CX20130502>

The article focuses on the extremely low wages of garment workers in Bangladesh despite the explosive growth of the industry thanks to supportive government policies. It points out that parliamentarians have business interests in the garment sector, often as owners of factories. In an interview, Babul Akhter, a leader of the Bangladesh Center for Workers Solidarity, states that he thinks "many of these politically connected garment makers take advantage of their clout to disregard the minimum wage levels stipulated under the law." The article also highlights the intense competition between factories for high-volume orders, which results in prices going down and lower wages for workers.

Cline, Elizabeth. "Levi's Agrees To #PayUp, As Advocates Demand More For Garment Workers." Forbes, 6 July 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/elizabethcline/2020/07/06/levis-agrees-to-payup-as-advocates-demand-more-for-garment-workers/?sh=31f096852100>

The article covers big brands' refusal to pay for clothing orders "to the tune of an estimated \$40 billion." It uses Levi's as an example of a brand that was listed on the Worker Right Coalition's Tracker (Covid-19 Tracker: Which Brands Are Acting Responsibly toward Suppliers and Workers?) after having cancelled orders from suppliers at the onset of the Covid-19 crisis but subsequently settled disagreements with suppliers and changed their financing to help at-risk factories. The article points out that consumer-facing campaigns, such as #PayUp and the WRC Tracker, seem to be successful in pushing companies to commit to payment of orders, and that the longer term goal is for "deeper accountability and long-term protection for garment workers."

Donaldson, Tara. "This is the only thing that can save fashion from its state of emergency: Video." Sourcing Journal, 29 May 2020. Retrieved from <https://sourcingjournal.com/topics/sourcing/fashion-supply-chain-inventory-crisis-coronavirus-john-thorbeck-212944/>

The article summarizes a conversation with John Thorbeck, chairman of Change Capital on the need to revisit fashion's business model. He believes fashion brands will need to "look further upstream at the supply chain, closer to factories, closer to materials and I think we have to help to regenerate the productivity of this fashion supply chain." Fashion brands and retailers, according to Thorbeck, need to move from focusing on finished goods to components, and really partner with suppliers throughout the process.

Ellis, Hannah; Tekisalp, Lale and Witten, Jessica. "Digital Technology and Data in the Garment Supply Chain during COVID-19." BSR HERproject, January 2021, Sourced from: <https://www.bsr.org/en/our-insights/report-view/digital-technology-data-in-garment-supply-chain-during-covid-19>

As technology changes the nature of work, innovations can substantially impact worker well-being positively while also posing significant risks to workers' rights. As technologies advance and the use of worker data becomes increasingly ubiquitous in the garment supply chain, shortcomings in regulation, limited awareness, and a lack of worker representation leaves vulnerable workers—especially women workers—without key protections.

This paper explores the landscape of digital technology in the garment supply chain and analyzes the actual and potential impacts of data use on workers, with a special focus on women workers.

Findings in this paper will be used to strengthen the protection of workers' data in BSR member company consultations and in HERproject on-the-ground implementation. This paper also makes recommendations to key stakeholders in the garment supply chain on how to implement digital technologies in a way that respects and promotes workers' rights.

"Farce Majeure: How Global Apparel Brands Are Using the Covid-19 Pandemic to Stiff Suppliers and Abandon Workers." European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights, ILAW, and the Worker Rights Consortium, 2020, www.ecchr.eu/fileadmin/ECCHR_PP_FARCE_MAJEURE.pdf

This paper explores the power imbalances between brands and suppliers and their contractual manifestation. It examines the law of force majeure and related doctrines and how they apply to the current circumstances. The paper explains how brands violate their due diligence obligations under both the UNGPs and the OECD guidelines through canceling orders already completed. Note: this paper is focused on those brands who retail their own goods to the consumer.

Fathi, Nazila. "Safety First: Bangladesh Garment Industry Rebounds." International Finance Corporation, Dec 2019, https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/news_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/news+and+events/news/insights/bangladesh-garment-industry

Article discussing the steps taken by Bangladesh and the international community which have led it to become the the second largest exporter of garments in the world, and have enabled it to overcome several major garment factory disasters. Some of these include better labor regulations and safety conditions, partially enabled by a \$40 million credit facility established by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), increased training programs, and the enforcement of stricter safety codes and labor laws.

Frost, Natasha. "Sorry, businesses: "Force majeure" is no get-out-of-jail-free card." Quartz, 09 April 2020, <https://qz.com/1833611/force-majeure-wont-help-most-coronavirus-hit-businesses/>

Article on the use of force majeure by corporations, with examples on uses of the clause prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"GMAC Open Letter to all buyers sourcing from Cambodia." The Garment Manufacturers Association in Cambodia, April 2020, <http://www.asiatex.org/Uploads/File/2020/04/07/u5e8c599ba9223.pdf>

The Garment Manufacturers Association in Cambodia issued a one-page letter appealing to all buyers sourcing from Cambodia to honor their contracts for goods already produced and those in production.

Hossain, Akbar. "Coronavirus: Two million Bangladesh jobs 'at risk' as clothes orders dry up." BBC Bengali, 29 April 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-52417822>

News article on the conditions in Bangladesh following the shuttering of retail shops across large parts of Europe and the United States, the subsequent cancellation of orders by global retail brands (estimated to be worth more than \$3 billion), and the announcement by the government of a \$588 million stimulus package for the sector to pay wages.

“Brands Abandon Asia Workers in Pandemic.” Human Rights Watch, 01 April 2020.

A news release by HRB summarizing of apparel brands' business practices in response to COVID-19 and their impact on millions of garment workers in Asia.

“Whoever Raises their Head Suffers the Most.” Workers' Rights in Bangladesh's Garment Factories. Human Rights Watch, 22 April 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/04/22/whoever-raises-their-head-suffers-most/workers-rights-bangladeshs-garment#>

A report documenting the continuing violations of garment workers' rights in Bangladesh, details allegations of illegal anti-union tactics by managers, including assaults on union organizers, and shows the inadequacy of efforts to date to compensate victims of the Rana Plaza collapse and Tazreen Fashions fire. It also examines why recent government reforms and company interventions have not been sufficient to remedy the problems. It concludes with recommendations on what can be done to ensure enhanced respect for workers' rights in Bangladesh, including measures that will contribute to improved factory safety.

Ratifications for Bangladesh. International Labour Organization website, https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:11200:0::NO::P11200_COUNTRY_ID:103500#:~:text=Out%20of%2035%20Conventions%20ratified,in%20the%20past%2012%20months. Accessed February 2021.

The ILO's website page for the Information System on International Labour Standards listing the conventions ratified by Bangladesh. Out of 35 Conventions ratified by Bangladesh, of which 30 are in force, 2 Conventions have been denounced; 3 instruments abrogated; none have been ratified in the past 12 months.

“COVID-19: Action in the Global Garment Industry.” International Labour Organization, 22 April 2020, https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/sectoral/WCMS_742343/lang--en/index.htm

This public statement by the ILO summarizes the Call to Action in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. “COVID-19: Action in the Global Garment Industry,” aims to catalyse action from across the global garment industry to support manufacturers to survive the economic disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and to protect garment workers' income, health and employment. This global action also calls for work on sustainable systems of social protection for a more just and resilient garment industry.

“Call to Action Progresses at the National Level.” International Labour Organization, 21 October 2020, https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/sectoral/WCMS_758610/lang--en/index.htm

This public statement is an update on the Call to Action. The International Working Group, together with endorsees, has continued its engagements with international financial institutions (IFIs) and bilateral donors. Concurrently, employers and workers in the priority countries have been establishing National Working Groups to guide and implement the Call to Action. The ILO has helped to provide working groups a mapping of available funds and schemes that could support implementation in each country.

“Prevention and mitigation of COVID-19 at work for small and medium-sized enterprises: ACTION CHECKLIST AND FOLLOW-UP.” International Labour Organization, 21 August 2020, https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS_753619/lang--en/index.htm

This document aims to provide basic knowledge about the workplace prevention of COVID-19, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, that is spreading worldwide. It provides small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with an Action Checklist to assess COVID-19 risks and information for taking measures to protect the safety and health of their workers. The document provides background information on what is COVID-19, how it is spread, and what are the symptoms, as well as supporting the case for why enterprises should put in place preventive and mitigation measures against COVID-19, and provides clear guidance on how to use the 30 point checklist, and an action plan and follow-up form.

Islam, Zyma; Preetha, Sushmita. "Cancellations, half-payments and empty promises: The 'new normal' for global RMG?" *The Daily Star*, 26 June 2020, <https://www.thedailystar.net/the-new-normal-global-rmg>

This article is based on data submitted by individual factories to the BGMEA as the pandemic intensified and cancellations started to happen. The Daily Star received a copy of the data in mid-May [2020]. Factories reported details of orders that were either straight-up cancelled, or put on hold until later date. The data was then cleaned for duplicate entries and incomplete data to calculate the estimates presented in this report.

Islam, Zyma; Preetha, Sushmita. "Is foul play the new normal?" *The Daily Star*, 30 June 2020, <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/you-suffer-we-survive-1920733>

The article reports on the value of orders canceled by brands since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic based on data from the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA). The total value of these orders is around \$3.7 billion. The data was submitted by individual factories to the BGMEA as cancellations started to happen and The Daily Star received a copy in mid-May. About 470 of the buyers are from the US, and approximately 280 others from the UK. Italy and Canada follow closely with approximately 180 and 170 buyers fully or partially cancelling or putting their orders on hold. Fifth and sixth in line are Germany and France, with approximately 150 and 140 buyers.

Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights. ITUC CSI, <https://survey.ituc-csi.org/Bangladesh.html?lang=en>. Accessed February 2021.

The ITUC CSI's website for the Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights. The ITUC affiliates in Bangladesh are the Bangladesh Free Trade Union Congress (BFTUC), the Bangladesh Jatyatabadi Sramik Dal (BJSD), the Bangladesh Labour Federation (BLF), the Bangladesh Mukto Sramik Federation (BMSF), the Bangladesh Sanjukta Sramik Federation (BSSF) and the Jatio Sramik League (JSL). The site identifies the labor laws and rules related to trade union rights and cases of violations.

Kabir, Humayun; Maple, Myfanwy; Usher, Kim. "The impact of COVID-19 on Bangladeshi readymade garment (RMG) workers." *Journal of Public Health*, 31 July 2020, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32734293/>

This paper describes the potential impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic on the readymade garment (RMG) workers of Bangladesh. It articulates the RMG workers' existing vulnerability during the COVID-19 pandemic based on currently available evidence and personal conversations/communications with RMG workers. The authors argue that the COVID-19 pandemic will have long-

lasting effects on the garment workers, especially related to their health issues, financial hardship and inability to pay for essentials such as food, and future employment opportunities. The stakeholders (such as the international retailers/brands, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, Government of Bangladesh) responsible for the global supply chain RMG factories should reconsider the health and overall wellbeing needs of the RMG workers during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Kabeer, Naila. "The Power To Choose: Bangladeshi Garment Workers in London and Dhaka." Verso, 2002.

A book by social economist Naila Kabeer which examines the lives of Bangladeshi garment workers in Bangladesh and Britain to shed light on the question of what constitutes "fair" competition in international trade. She argues that if the unhealthy coalition of multinationals and labor movements is truly seeking to improve the working conditions for women and children in the "Third World," as well as those of western workers, their efforts should be directed away from an attempt to impose labor standards and towards a support for the organization of labor rights. Any attempt to devise acceptable labor standards at an international level which takes no account of the forces of inclusion and exclusion with local labor movements is, she further argues, likely to represent the interests of the powerful at the expense of those of the weak.

Kamol, Ershad. "RMG owners, workers form monitoring committee." New Age Bangladesh, 9 May 2020, <https://www.newagebd.net/article/106066/rmg-owners-workers-form-monitoring-committee>

An article announcing the formation of an eleven-member monitoring committee, including three representatives of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, intended to monitor the health of the factory workers, COVID-19 infections, and salary payments as set by the government.

Karim, Naimul. "Garment workers to graduates: Bangladeshi women aim to shake up textile sector." Reuters, 26 July 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bangladesh-workers-education-trfn/garment-workers-to-graduates-bangladeshi-women-aim-to-shake-up-textile-sector-idUSKCN245002>

An article highlighting a special university programme that aims to inspire female workers to become leaders and boost women's rights across industries. The course, Pathways for Promise, is based at the Asian University for Women (AUW) in the southeastern port city of Chittagong. About 470 disadvantaged women including tea pickers and refugees have enrolled for the free degree programme since it started in 2016, and receive a monthly stipend while they study. It also features graduates with connections to the garment sector in Bangladesh and the need for an improvement of labour rights and conditions in the sector and country.

Karim Byron, Rejaul. "Bangladesh gets UN recommendation for graduating from LDC status." The Daily Star, 27 February 2021, <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/bangladesh-gets-un-recommendation-graduating-ldc-status-2051857>

An article announcing the United Nations Committee for Development Policy's recommendation that Bangladesh graduate from Least Developed Country (LDC) status along with Nepal and Lao PDR after the second triennial review of the LDC category of UN CDP in February 2021.

Khambay, Alysha; Mall, Gurdeep. "New digital platform shines light on labour rights issues in fashion supply chains." Business and Human Rights Resource Center, 7 Dec 2020, https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/blog/new-digital-platform-shines-light-on-labour-rights-issues-in-fashion-supply-chains/?utm_source=Business+%26+Human+Rights+Resource+Centre+Updates&utm_campaign=938286a7f7-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_12_07_10_44&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c0049647eb-938286a7f7-182158666&mc_cid=938286a7f7&mc_eid=48c380aaff

This article announces the creation of Business & Human Rights Resource Centre's new company 'dashboards' for 275 of the largest global fashion and textile companies. The dashboards are intended to provide labour rights advocates and unions easy-to-access information about company performance and actions in protecting and respecting the rights of garment workers in their supply chains and cover the full database of labour and human rights allegations BHRRC has collected about each company over the last 18 years.

Kyritsis, Penelope; LeBaron, Genevieve, and Nova, Scott. "Hunger in the Apparel Supply Chain: Survey findings on workers' access to nutrition during Covid-19." Worker Rights Consortium, November 2020, <https://www.workersrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Hunger-in-the-Apparel-Supply-Chain.pdf>

This research report presents the findings of a survey of 396 garment workers across 158 factories in nine countries, undertaken between August and September 2020. It presents new data about how garment workers' food security—and linked dynamics of employment status and income—has deteriorated amidst the pandemic. Workers from our sample reported making clothes for over 100 apparel brands and retailers; the brands and retailers that were identified by survey respondents with the most frequency were: adidas, Gap, H&M, Nike, The Children's Place, PVH, Gildan, Walmart, JCPenney, and Express. Our data reveal an alarming pattern: garment workers' declining incomes are leading to widespread hunger among workers and their families, as they are increasingly unable to obtain adequate food and nutrition. These dynamics are a direct result of apparel brands' responses to the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the long-term trend of low wages for garment workers in brands' supply chains, which has left workers unprotected.

Labowitz, Sarah and Baumann-Pauly, Dorothée. "Business As Usual is Not an Option. Supply Chains and Sourcing after Rana Plaza." NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights, April 2014, https://www.stern.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/assets/documents/con_047408.pdf

A report about the garment industry in Bangladesh, its supply chain, and the workers at its heart. It is written in the context of intense international attention on working conditions in the global supply chain, and a shared desire for higher standards in the factories that produce the inexpensive clothing on which consumers in the United States and Europe have come to rely. It starts from the premise that the garment sector has greatly benefited the people and the economy of Bangladesh. But for low-cost garment production to continue to create value for business and society in Bangladesh and around the world, actors across the supply chain need to acknowledge and address the risks created by an indirect sourcing model. The report is based on extensive research by the Center for Business and Human Rights at NYU Stern School of Business on the supply chain for garments, including a wide range of interviews and focus groups with buyers, suppliers, workers, and policymakers in Bangladesh, New York, Washington, Berlin, and Geneva.

Labowitz, Sarah and Baumann-Pauly, Dorothée. "Beyond the Tip of the Iceberg: Bangladesh's Forgotten Apparel Workers." NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights, 2015, http://people.stern.nyu.edu/twadhwa/bangladesh/downloads/beyond_the_tip_of_the_iceberg_report.pdf

This report is the second study by the NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights on working conditions and the garment industry in Bangladesh. It is the result of a large-scale data analysis of factory data that the Center collected and analyzed from publicly available sources and a field survey conducted in June 2015. The Center's analysis sheds light on an important, but opaque part of the garment sector: indirect suppliers.

Indirect sourcing is key to Bangladesh's high-volume, low-cost model of garment production. Many workers are employed in factories that supply foreign brands indirectly through other, larger factories or agents. Indirect sourcing factories operate on very tight margins and with very little oversight, increasing the vulnerability of workers to safety violations and labor rights abuses.

Ljarja, Artemisa; Dr. Musiolek, Bettina. "The European Floor Wage Benchmark. A Living Wage in Central, East and South-East Europe," Clean Clothes Campaign, March 2021, https://media.business-humanrights.org/media/documents/2020CCC_EuropeFloorWage_REPORT_web_english_2.pdf

More than 1.7 million -predominantly women - work in the garment and shoe industry in Central, East and Southeast Europe ... The statutory minimum net wages in these countries are below the statistical poverty lines defined by the EU and do not prevent workers from falling into poverty. At the same time, profits being made by brands and retailers in the garment supply chain are enormous, even during the pandemic ... In response to this unacceptable situation, Clean Clothes Campaign has developed the Europe Floor Wage, a cross-border base living wage benchmark which is based on the costs of living in 15 European garment production countries, including 7 EU Member states... The Europe Floor Wage benchmark is a concrete tool to show brands and governments what wage is needed to live on and it can be used by unions and labour NGOs to strengthen their bargaining power.

Lowell Jackson, James; Judd, Jason; Viegelahn, Christian. "The supply chain ripple effect: How COVID-19 is affecting garment workers and factories in Asia and the Pacific." International Labour Organization and Cornell University, October 2020, https://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/issue-briefs/WCMS_758626/lang--en/index.htm

This research brief assesses the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on workers and factories in garment supply chains in Asia and the Pacific, presenting evidence from the main garment-exporting countries of the region, summarizing policy responses and proposing ways forward.

M., Muvija. "Boohoo to tackle failings in Leicester supply chain." Reuters, 25 September 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-boohoo-group-suppliers/boohoo-to-tackle-failings-in-leicester-supply-chain-idUSKCN26G0UQ>

News article on the recently completed independent review of fashion retailer Boohoo, which found many failings in its English supply chain after allegations about working conditions and low pay. The company laid out six steps it was taking to improve governance, including appointing new independent directors to its board, making supply chain compliance a standing item at board meetings and the formation of two committees to oversee risks to the business and its supply chain compliance.

Majumdar, Abhijit; Shaw, Mahesh; Kumar Sinha, Sanjib. "COVID-19 debunks the myth of socially sustainable supply chain: A case of the clothing industry in South Asian countries." Sustainable Production and Consumption, Volume 24, Pages 150-155, 6 July 2020, <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352550920304139>

The purpose of this research is to understand the reasons behind the lack of social sustainability in the clothing supply chain operating in South Asian countries and to suggest ways for an appropriate redressal. Interviews with experts have revealed that the dominant power of some brands in the clothing supply chain is the primary reason. Unauthorised subcontracting of clothing manufacturing and the use of contract labour are also responsible for violations in the 'code of conducts' of social compliance.

Post COVID-19, a sustainable sourcing model that incorporates disruption risk sharing contracts between the brands and suppliers should be adopted. Unauthorised subcontracting of clothing manufacturing by the suppliers must be prohibited. Supplier selection and the order allocation policies of the brands should also be tuned to facilitate social security of workers. The participation of NGOs and labour unions should be encouraged so that community development initiatives reach the grassroots level.

"Initiative of Manusher Jonno Foundation Survey Period; 2020. Violence against Women and Children: COVID 19 a Telephone Survey. Manusher Jonno Foundation, June 2020." <http://www.manusherjonno.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Final-Report-of-Telephone-Survey-on-VAW-June-2020.pdf>

Final report of a telephone survey conducted to understand the extent of violence against women and children during the pandemic, conducted in June 2020. The survey found that the pandemic has exacerbated gender inequality, risks of violence for women, and children's safety at home and an increase in early marriage. Domestic violence was the major form of violence against women.

However, there were other forms of violence such as rape, attempted rape, sexual harassment and murder. A number of incidents of harassment was recorded where women were sexually harassed while receiving food or other type of reliefs during this pandemic. The report makes nine recommendations to the government and other actors to prevent domestic violence and child marriage as well as protect the survivors and provide them with proper support.

McNamara, Mei-Ling. "Anger at huge shareholder payout as US chain Kohl's Cancels \$150m in orders." The Guardian, 10 June 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jun/10/anger-at-huge-shareholder-payout-as-us-chain-kohls-cancels-150m-in-orders#:~:text=Kohl's%20one%20of%20the%20US's,shareholders%20the%20Guardian%20can%20reveal>

Article regarding Kohl's payment of \$109 million in dividends just weeks after cancelling clothing orders, leaving suppliers in Bangladesh facing financial crisis.

Nazir, Sahar. "Peacocks sale at threat as Edinburgh Woollen Mill faces allegations of unpaid bills." Retail Gazette, 8 October 2020, <https://www.retailgazette.co.uk/blog/2020/10/peacocks-sale-at-threat-as-edinburgh-woollen-mill-faces-allegations-of-unpaid-bills/>

An article detailing how the allegations of unpaid debts brought by BGMEA against Edinburgh Woollen Mill (EWM) Group were affecting the negotiations of the potential sale of a stake in one of EWM Group's companies (Peacocks).

Nelson, Eshe. "British retailer Arcadia Group, owner of Topshop, files for bankruptcy." The New York Times, 30 November 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/30/business/british-retailer-arcadia-group-owner-of-topshop-files-for-bankruptcy.html>

News article providing details on how and why Topshop owner Arcadia Group has gone into administration (a form of bankruptcy). "Arcadia said lockdowns to curb the spread of coronavirus have had a "material impact" on its business. In recent years, the company has struggles to keep up with fast-fashion online rivals, and its dependency on physical stores has been a disadvantage as the virus has sped up the long-running demise of the British high street."

Nova, Scott; Zeldenrust, Ineke. "Who will bail out the workers that make our clothes?" Worker Rights Consortium, March 2020, <https://www.workersrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Who-Will-Bail-Out-the-Workers-March-2020.pdf>

Brands and retailers are shoring up their own finances by refusing to honor contracts with apparel suppliers, forcing suppliers to the brink of bankruptcy and causing large-scale dismissals of workers. This report calls for brands to pay suppliers what they owe them, for the swift mobilization of international financial resources to provide income support to garment workers, and for deeper reforms to address the supply chain inequities that Covid-19 is laying bare.

O'Driscoll, Julia. "#PayUp's Ayesha Barenblat on the Seven Actions Holding Fast Fashion Accountable." Eco-age, 11 November 2020, <https://eco-age.com/resources/remake-ayesha-barenblat-seven-actions-holding-fast-fashion-accountable/>

An interview with Remake's Ayesha Barenblat on the #PayUp campaign launched during the pandemic by the nonprofit in an effort to hold brands accountable to honour their financial commitments towards their suppliers and pay for any outstanding orders, keep their workers safe, become transparent about their supply chains, make worker concerns a central issue, sign enforceable contracts, end starvation wages and help pass laws. The next stage of the campaign consists of 7 Action Items aimed at rebuilding fashion in a way that centers people and planet.

Paul, Ruma. "Garment exporter Bangladesh faces \$6 billion hit as top retailers cancel." Reuters, 31 March 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/health-COVID-19-bangladesh-exports/garment-exporter-bangladesh-faces-6-billion-hit-as-top-retailers-cancel-idUKKBN21I2R9>

News article reporting on the expected losses (\$6 billion) for Bangladesh due to cancellations from some of the world's largest brands and retailers, and includes commentary from two groups which represent that majority of the readymade garment and knitwear manufacturing in the country, Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) and Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), as well as major apparel brands.

Reinecke, J., Donaghey, J., Bocken, N. & Lauriano, L. "Business Models and Labour Standards: Making the Connection." Ethical Trading Initiative, 2019, https://www.ethicaltrade.org/sites/default/files/shared_resources/Business%20models%20%26%20labour%20standards.pdf

A report commissioned by the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) and aimed at opening up a new front of discussion that looks at how business models create downward pressures on labour standards and argues that until such models are changed the problems with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives will persist. The report, focusing on the apparel and food sectors, has two objectives: 1. To understand how flaws in prevailing business models create systemic downward pressures on workers' rights; 2. To identify opportunities for Business Model Innovation and draw lessons from these.

"The running list of 2020 retail bankruptcies." Retail Dive, 2020, <https://www.retaildive.com/news/the-running-list-of-2020-retail-bankruptcies/571159/>. Accessed February 2021.

A running list of major retailers that have filed for bankruptcy protection in 2020. The list is managed and updated regularly by Retail Dive. The website reports that 17 major retailers went into bankruptcy in 2020, and in all, retailers closed more than 9,500 stores in 2020.

Sakamoto, Maiko; Begum, Salma; Ahmed, Tofayel. "Vulnerabilities to COVID-19 in Bangladesh and a Reconsideration of Sustainable Development Goals." Sustainability, 30 June 2020, no.12: 5296, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12135296>

The study reviews the chronology (timeline) and epidemiology of COVID-19 in Bangladesh and investigates the country's vulnerabilities concerning COVID-19 impacts. It focus on four areas of vulnerabilities in Bangladesh: The garment industry, urban slums, social exclusion, and pre-existing health conditions. The authors concluded that if at least some Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) had been at least partly attained, the situation would not be as dire as it is now. Based on this conclusion, they suggested a tolerance capacity to indicate how long people can survive without outside support.

Saxena, Ila. "The debate on force majeure heats up." Apparel Resources, 27 April 2020, <http://apparelresources.com/business-news/sourcing/debate-force-majeure-heats/>

The article discusses the use of the 'force majeure' clause, recognizing that "the clause is a part of most LC agreements, at least in the case of bigger retailers and brands," but suggests that COVID-19 may not have been a valid reason to cancel orders and that brands should consider alternate solutions before applying the cause and leaving suppliers to bear the losses on their own.

Schübler, Elke, et al. 13 August 2019. "Garment Supply Chains since Rana Plaza: Governance and Worker Outcomes." DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.26932.19842.

This report summarizes the results of the Garment Supply Chain Governance Project, an analysis of lead firms' current practices and their impact on garment factories and workers in the context of various public and private labour governance initiatives to date. The study finds an intensified climate for compliance strongly associated to lead firms' engagement in the Accord (or the Alliance).

The most significant change in buyer-supplier relations has been an intensified sourcing squeeze exerted by lead firms on suppliers in Bangladesh and increased power asymmetries. They define the asymmetrical cooperation as a model which, "enables a partial, unstable compromise between financial

and product market pressure on the one hand, and garment worker protection on the other." The report cautions that, "improvements may not persist as the Accord and Alliance initiatives are withdrawing from Bangladesh and it is unclear what regulatory initiatives will follow in their footsteps."

Siddiqi, Dina. "What the Pandemic Reveals: Workers' Rights in Bangladesh and Garment Supply Chains." Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, 3 September 2020, <https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2020/09/03/what-the-pandemic-reveals-workers-rights-in-bangladesh/>

The article provides an overview of the impact of the pandemic on Bangladesh's garment industry and the underlying "power differential between Euro-American retailers and national suppliers and the damaging effects of this asymmetry," as well as "the chronic weaknesses of the Bangladeshi garment industry itself, including its "labor management" practices, and the frequent blurring of lines between the industry and a deeply authoritarian state with highly repressive laws." The author points out that pandemic, "has exposed the precarious nature of Bangladeshi women's inclusion in the global supply chain as well as their fundamental expendability as a labor force for foreign buyers and Bangladeshi suppliers."

"Platform on Sustainable Textiles of the Asian Region." STAR Network, <http://www.asiatex.org/en/index.html>. Accessed December 2020.

The challenges faced by the textile industry in many Asian countries are similar – to ensure decent conditions for workers and reduce environmental impacts. Overcoming these challenges requires collaboration. Strong networks and regular knowledge-sharing can help the industry to implement sustainable business models across the board. To strengthen regional exchange, in 2016 the "Asian Dialogues on Sustainable Production in the Textile and Garment Sector" was launched.

The Asian Dialogues are a platform where representatives of the Asian textile industry, government bodies, buyers and employees discuss challenges and opportunities on the way towards sustainability and develop a more cooperative relationship. Since 2016, the conference has been held twelve times at locations in Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Myanmar, Vietnam and Pakistan.

Street, Chloe. "Coronavirus shines a light on the need for transparency in fashion's supply chain." London Evening Standard, 21 April 2020, <https://www.standard.co.uk/insider/fashion/transparency-index-fashion-revolution-supply-chain-coronavirus-a4420301.html>

The article looks at the Fashion Revolution's annual 'Fashion Transparency Index' report, which benchmarks 250 fashion brands on their performance in five key areas (policy and commitments, governance, traceability, supplier assessment and remediation, and spotlight issues) and points out that although there has been slow but steady improvement in scores (amongst the 98 brands reviewed each year over the past four years, there has been a 12 percentage point increase in their average scores), "the covid-19 crisis has cast a light on many of the structural problems within the industry."

"The covid-19 pandemic proves exactly why transparency in the fashion industry is so vital," says Global Policy Director and Fashion Transparency Index report author Sarah Ditty. "If major brands and retailers publish information about how they do business with their suppliers, then they can be held to account for their purchasing practices, especially during a crisis like this."

Taher, Md. Abu. "Politicization of Trade Unions: Issues and Challenges in Bangladesh Perspective." Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol. 34, No. 4, pp. 403-420, April 1999. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27767614>. Accessed March 8, 2021.

Abstract: In Bangladesh, trade unions are highly politicised. Most of the trade unions are affiliated with industrial federations and even with the national federations of trade unions, which have got political affiliation with major political parties. The excessive political interference in trade unions indicate a trend towards a rapid mushrooming of trade unions in the country. It is also evident that most of the trade union leaders tried to perpetuate leadership by virtue of their strong political affiliation particularly with the ruling party without any approval or consent of the workers. In the contemporary situation in the field of trade unions in our country, the author believes that politicization of trade unions is detrimental to the workers' interests. To overcome this situation the present study suggests some measures for flourishing of trade unions in the truest sense of the term.

"Fashion's Next Trend: Accelerating Supply Chain Transparency in the Garment and Footwear Industry." Transparency Pledge Coalition, December 2019, https://transparencypledge.org/fashions_next_trend_dec_2019.pdf

The Transparency Pledge Coalition's second report takes stock of supply chain transparency as of late 2019. It provides an update on coalition outreach and details uptake of the Pledge by brands, retailers, and responsible business initiatives. Formal communication between the Pledge coalition and RBIs/ Brands/ Retailers can be found in Annex III (online only).

Tripone, Anna and Sherman, John. "Moral bankruptcy during times of crisis: H&M just thought twice before triggering force majeure clauses with suppliers, and here's why you should too." Harvard Kennedy School - Corporate Responsibility Initiative, 31 March 2020, https://www.hks.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/centers/mrcbg/files/TriponeSherman_ForceMajeureArticle_31March2020_Final_0.pdf

An op-end discussing the use of force majeure clauses by companies during the Covid-19 pandemic in order to avoid paying suppliers for orders they have already produced and the high human cost of this strategy on the millions of workers in low-income countries producing goods for the west.

The authors argue that, "in order to keep their social licenses after the pandemic, companies should consider the ability of their suppliers to survive a force majeure provision being triggered. Companies should assess the pre-existing vulnerability of supply chain workers who would be laid off, and whether they will have an adequate social safety net and benefit from tailored fiscal support. And they should advocate collectively with their peers to press governments to strengthen that safety net."

Turton, Shaun and Bopha, Phorn. "Coronavirus pandemic tears holes in Asia's garment industry." Nikkei Asian Review, 03 April 2020, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Business-Spotlight/Coronavirus-pandemic-tears-holes-in-Asia-s-garment-industry>

The article provides insight on the response of brands to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on textile producing countries and the workers in these countries. It highlights the dependency of developing countries in Asia on the textile sector and how the pandemic will invariably result in the closing of factories and wide job loss.

“The Social and Economic Impact of Covid-19 in the Asia-Pacific Region.” UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, 28 April 2020, <https://www.undp.org/publications/social-and-economic-impact-covid-19-asia-pacific-region>

The COVID-19 pandemic and the associated economic crisis are posing huge challenges, raising many unknowns and imposing wrenching trade-offs. Both crises are global, but their impacts are deeply local. The policy response to both crises needs to be rapid, even if it is rough around the edges. But countries cannot pull this off on their own—the global crises require global solidarity and coordination. This report calls on countries in the region to avoid returning to the pre-pandemic environmentally unsustainable development path, and to capitalize on the opportunity to build a better future.

“Secretary-General’s Nelson Mandela Lecture: “Tackling the Inequality Pandemic: A New Social Contract for a New Era” [as delivered].” United Nations Secretary-General, 18 July 2020, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2020-07-18/secretary-generals-nelson-mandela-lecture-%E2%80%99Ctackling-the-inequality-pandemic-new-social-contract-for-new-era%E2%80%9D-delivered>

A lecture given by UN Secretary General, António Guterres, in honor of Nelson Mandela, and addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. The lecture called out the “tragic disconnect between self-interest and the common interest” and “the huge gaps in governance structures and ethical frameworks.”

Waxman, Sharon. “Resilient Workers in Fragile Supply Chains: The FLA calls for international action.” Business and Human Rights Resource Center, 6 Feb 2021, <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/blog/resilient-workers-in-fragile-supply-chains-fla-call-for-international-action/>

Opinion piece by the President & CEO of the Fair Labor Association, calling on FLA affiliates to honour their contracts with suppliers as a way to help ensure workers continue to get paid. “Buyers should treat suppliers as partners and work with them to prevent worker retrenchment whenever possible. And when retrenchment cannot be avoided, they need to ensure that workers receive the legally mandated severance benefits.” She also calls on governments to take the lead in protecting their citizens and adopt more robust social protection systems.

“Fired, Then Robbed: Fashion brands’ complicity in wage theft during Covid-19.” Worker Rights Consortium, 20 April 2021, <https://www.workersrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Fired-Then-Robbed.pdf>

Research by the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) reveals that many workers are being denied some or all of this essential compensation, in violation of the law and the labor rights obligations of the brands and retailers whose clothes they sewed.

The WRC has identified 31 export garment factories, in 9 countries, where there is definitive evidence that the factory fired workers and then failed to pay them severance they legally earned. In some cases, workers have received partial payment; in others, they have received nothing. In total, the wage theft at these 31 facilities robbed 37,637 workers of \$39.8 million. This is an average of more than a thousand dollars (US) per person, which is about five months’ wages for the typical garment worker.

"COVID-19 and human rights: Assessing the private sector's response to the pandemic across five sectors." World Benchmarking Alliance and Corporate Human Rights Benchmark, February 2021, https://assets.worldbenchmarkingalliance.org/app/uploads/2021/02/CHBR-Covid-Study_110221_FINAL.pdf

The World Benchmarking Alliance decided to supplement the 2020 Corporate Human Rights Benchmark assessment with a separate study, which considers how 229 companies (global companies across five sectors identified as presenting a high risk of negative human rights impacts) have been impacted by, and have responded to, the increased human right risks and impacts associated with the COVID-19 crisis. Overall, the study shows that the majority of companies across all sectors have failed so far to demonstrate a meaningful response to the crisis, and still have a long way to go to adequately manage the risks and impacts of COVID-19. The study also shows, however, that certain basic steps to manage the human rights risks and impacts of the crisis have been widely adopted by companies, with a few also demonstrating leading practices. This shows that business can place human rights at the heart of their response to the crisis, if they choose to do so.