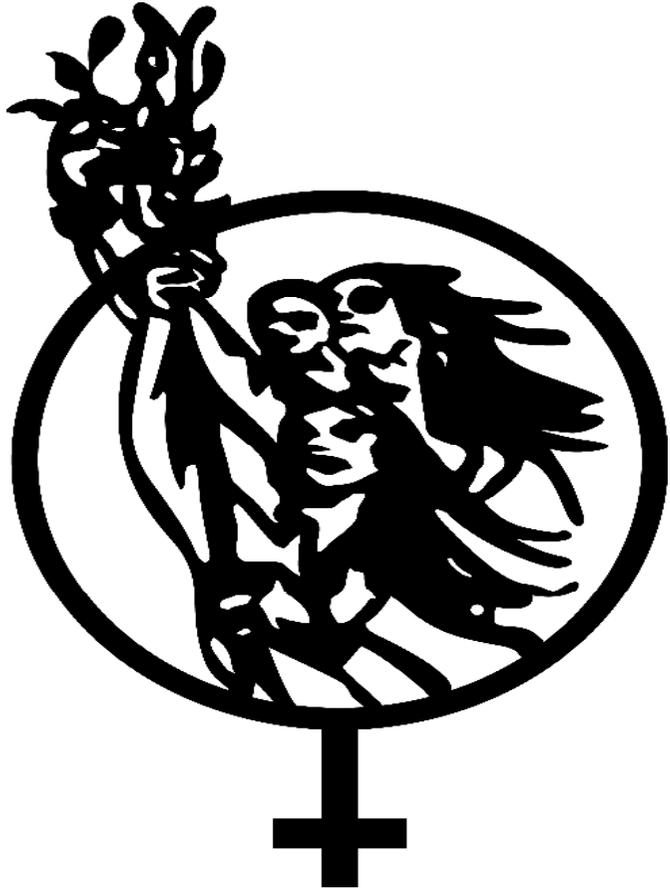


The Sri Lankan Garment Industry Trends and Strategies to Address labor Issues



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Introduction

- Apparel industry, which is operated in the FTZ, is the key export industry of Sri Lanka since its economic liberalization in 1977
- The industry's share of export earnings is about 50%
- The total value of exports of apparel is about 5 billion USD
- Contribution of the industry to trading sector's GDP is 20%.



The main markets and the brands

- The markets for Sri Lankan apparel are mainly the USA, UK, and other European countries.
- The factories cater to some of the high-end brands such as: **Victoria's Secret, Adidas, Tommy Hilfiger, H&M, Gap, Nike, Walmart**
- 1-3 per cent of the value of the products are paid to the workers



Employment

A key industry sector that provides employment for about 270,000 which consists of mainly unmarried rural youth.

80% of the workforce comprises of unskilled women in the age group of 18-25 years.

Educational qualification of the Labor Force:

- 22% are educated below GCE (OL),
- 59% up to GCE (OL)
- 19% up to GCE (AL)



Working Conditions

Minimum Wage of 16,000 RS.

Non existent living wage to cope up with the Living Standard



Compelled to spend more than 60% of the wage

Target oriented Payment



Excessive working hours(12-16 Hours) with less amount of a
to obtain incentive bonus, overtime bonus and attendance bonus

Low social and labour security



Occupational and Healthy Risks

- working in the same posture for extended hours
- working under strong electrical lights,
- Inhaling particle emissions from cloth or dust
- Working excessive hours without intervals
- Non- existing occupational health measures and Labor security



- Expose them to respiratory and other physiological illnesses
- Deprived of decent meals / Balanced Diet
- Malnutrition
- 62% female workers suffer under Anemia
- Pone to occupational accidents



Issues are facing by the FTZ Workers

- ▶ Law wages
- ▶ Exploitation
- ▶ Unskilled
- ▶ Unfair labour practices
- ▶ Intimate Partner violence
- ▶ Harassments in and outside the workplace
- ▶ Transport issues
- ▶ Street lights and other infrastructure issues
- ▶ Contract labor and manpower agency issue
- ▶ Prejudice about FTZ women workers
- ▶ Increase of domestic violence in boarding places
- ▶ Difficulties in accessing clean drinking water
- ▶ Poor knowledge amongst the female workers about sexual
- ▶ Reproductive health
- ▶ The increased harassments and abuses faced by the female workers on the streets



Physical and Political right Violations

- Gender based Violence including sexual assaults, harassments inside and outside of the factory
- Refusing to provide technical repairs of the machines and forcing them to sexual relationships



- Repression of the right to organize, to form a union or bargain collectively
- Activists are warned and Interdicted

Increasing Trends in the Sector

The gradual cessation of the relationship between the employer and employee

Exploitation of labor for maximum production through manpower agencies

These agencies and groups have scant regard for the labor legislation of the country and do not have a proper understanding of legal procedures



Present Economic Sociable Crisis of this Sector

- ▶ Sri Lanka is going through a severe economic crisis which has put working people in an extremely vulnerable position. As export sector workers who have been instrumental in earning foreign currency to the country we are left with doubts and questions about how the economy was conducted and how it will impact our livelihoods.
- ▶ Therefore, we fault the policy makers and the employers in making the industry unsustainable with their terrible leadership over the past 40 years. With close to no union representation in almost all major apparel sector companies, workers have never been consulted in the decision making process of the industry. However, now we learn nevertheless we will be the victims of the crisis all over again as with the pandemic.

Our Proposes are :-

- ❖ **We propose the following to national actors.**
- ▶ Guarantee against relocations of factories
- ▶ Guarantee against mass retrenchments and closures
- ▶ If there's a fall in profitability due to government policies and factories need to close, it should be done with the consultation of workers, case by case.
- ▶ Comply with freedom of association to build collective bargaining power of the workers in order to enable transparency and build consensus without resorting to unilateral decision making on the industry.
- ▶ Strengthen social security such as EPF, ETF and maternity benefits compliance by employers
- ▶ Reverse exploitative labour practices like manpower labour and assure job security
- ▶ Equitable wage increments to safeguard the food, health and education rights of workers and their families.

Activities of Dabindu

- ▶ Working together with National Human rights commission and the National women's committee.
- ▶ Publishing a monthly News paper
- ▶ Conducting workshops on awareness raising on workers' Rights, Women's rights, GBV, SRH,OHS,
- ▶ Providing Leadership Training
- ▶ Providing Self-defense courses
- ▶ Conducting dialog with the stakeholders
- ▶ Net work with other TU and CSOs
- ▶ National and International campaign
- ▶ Information gathering through informal discussion



Thank you

