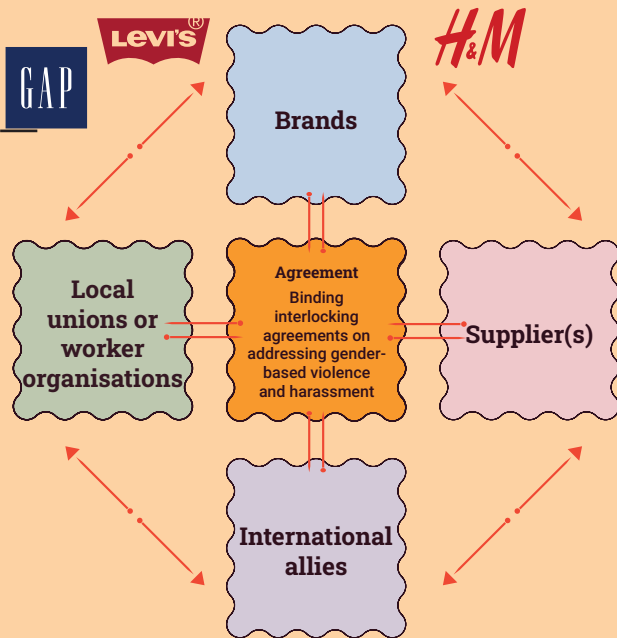


Holding the powerful to account: Addressing gender-based violence in supply chains

Pauline Jerrentrup's (PhD candidate, Department of Management) research seeks sustainable solutions to labour rights abuses in global supply chains.

Following allegations of widespread sexual violence in textile factories, NGOs encouraged international brands to leverage their supply-chain power to address gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) through innovative partnerships with local unions.



What are enforceable brand-union agreements?

Legally binding contracts between international brands, local unions, and NGOs, which go beyond voluntary corporate social responsibility commitments.

Terms of agreement

- Gender-based violence training
- Monitors ensuring protection from verbal harassment and sexual intimidation
- Grievance procedures



Case study India

Dindigul Agreement to Eliminate GBVH at the Natchi Apparel Factory and Spinning Mills operated by Eastman Exports in Kaithian Kottai, Tamil Nadu, India, 2022

The first time brands, such as H&M and Gap, have ever signed up to a binding initiative to tackle gender-based violence in Asia's garment industry, which supplies millions of tonnes of clothing for UK high streets.

Case study Lesotho, Africa

The Lesotho Agreements to Eliminate GBVH at Nien Hsing Textile Co.Ltd, 2019

10,000 garment workers producing denim clothing in five factories owned by a Taiwanese company supplying international brands, such as Levi Strauss.

The first agreement of this type.



Do they work?

The findings show that these agreements can improve conditions on the factory floor where unions have access and enforcement power.

However, both case studies also reveal a major limitation: brands stopped sourcing from factories after signing the agreements, leading to large-scale job losses that ultimately harmed workers' livelihoods.

The research highlights that for such interventions to be effective, they must include binding commitments by brands to maintain sourcing relationships.

Lesotho
2021-2022

81
investigations completed

404
calls received

6,159
attended training

India
Two-year review

76%
of GBVH grievances were resolved within two weeks