



## **Asia Floor Wage Alliance**

### **AFWA-WLC Statement on International Women's Day**

***8 March 2026***

On this International Women's Day, the Asia Floor Wage Alliance-Women's Leadership Committee stands in solidarity to demand justice and dignity for women garment workers across Asia. We are women trade union leaders from Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka – representing millions of garment workers whose labor sustains one of the world's most profitable industries.

Women workers are the backbone of the global garment industry. We cut, stitch, finish, and pack the clothes that brands sell for billions. Yet in our workplaces, too many women face gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH), poverty wages, inhumane working hours, repression of Freedom of Association, and sudden factory closures that strip us of our livelihoods overnight.

Today, we do not speak only of injustice, but with hope, and with defiance – because women garment workers across Asia are organizing, demanding change, and building solutions that work.

#### **GBVH is a Regional Crisis**

Across our region, GBVH remains a daily reality. It is a regional crisis built into a global system that relies on a predominantly female workforce, exploits women's economic insecurity, and is driven by global fashion brands' purchasing practices demanding ever-cheaper, faster production. Harassment, humiliation, retaliation, and threats are used to discipline and silence us.

This violence does not end at the factory gates. The fear, stress, and insecurity generated at work follow women home, affecting their health, families, and communities. GBVH



reinforces cycles of silence and vulnerability, making it harder for women to organize, to speak out, and to claim their rights.

Until brands take responsibility for the purchasing practices and power imbalances that fuel abuse, GBVH will remain woven into the fabric of the global garment industry.

### **Our Lives are Worth More Than Production Targets**

Women are forced to work when we are sick, denied the leave that is our legal and moral right. When supervisors exploit women's economic vulnerability to control our bodies, silence our voices, and extract more labor, that is GBVH.

In Sri Lanka, our sister, [Pushpalatha Paramasivam](#) – a garment worker, a mother, a woman – was denied medical leave, forced to complete her shift, and died hours later in hospital. Her death was preventable. When production targets are valued over women's lives, our bodies become expendable. We stand in unwavering solidarity with our sisters in Sri Lanka demanding justice and accountability from brands such as Victoria's Secret, which continue to deny responsibility for the conditions in their supply chains.

Across Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India, excessive work hours and forced overtime pushes women to exhaustion, illness, and collapse. Women faint at their machines. They risk their health to meet impossible deadlines imposed by brands. This relentless pressure creates conditions where abuse thrives.

Not another woman worker should suffer or die for the sake of brands' profits.

### **Hard-Won Rights Must Become Lived Realities**

In Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the ratification of ILO Convention 190 was a hard-won milestone achieved through years of women workers' organizing. It affirmed our right to a



world of work free from violence and harassment. We call on all governments in our region – India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Cambodia, and others – to urgently ratify C190.

But ratification alone is not enough.

In India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, workplace sexual harassment committees often exist only on paper or are controlled by management. In Indonesia, the Undang-Undang Tindak Pidana Kekerasan Seksual (TPKS) law mandates similar mechanisms, yet not a single garment factory has implemented them. Rights recognized in law must translate to real protection on the factory floor.

### **Freedom of Association is Women Workers' First Line of Defense**

Women workers face severe repression of Freedom of Association in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and Cambodia. Collective bargaining agreements are rare. Workers who attempt to organize are silenced, dismissed, intimidated, or blacklisted. Without the right to organize, join unions and collectively bargain, women cannot report GBVH safely.

When women can organize freely, they can negotiate safe workplaces. They can demand accountability. They can transform fear into collective power.

Freedom of Association is not optional – it is essential to women's safety.

### **Factory Closures are Economic Violence**

ILO Convention 190 recognizes that violence and harassment in the world of work includes economic harm. Factory closures across our region are a brutal example.

In Sri Lanka and Indonesia, Nike factory closures have thrown thousands of garment workers – overwhelmingly women – out of work overnight, stripping them of wages and



security. In Bangladesh, brands cancel orders or exit markets without accountability, treating women's livelihoods as disposable.

When supply chains are restructured to protect profits, women – often primary breadwinners – absorb the shock, facing debt, hunger, and heightened vulnerability to abuse. When women's survival is reduced to a cost calculation, this is part of the continuum of GBVH.

### **We Know What Works**

Despite these systemic failures, women workers and their unions are not waiting for change – we are building it.

The [Dindigul Agreement](#) in India (2022-2025) and the [Central Java Agreement](#) in Indonesia (signed in 2024) set the standard for what responsible brands must do. These are not voluntary commitments; they are enforceable, union-led supply chain agreements that turn the principles of C190, C87, and C98 into binding obligations. They prove that real protection from GBVH is possible.

That is why in 2025 the AFWA Women's Leadership Committee launched [Violence Out of Fashion!](#) – demanding brands commit to the [SEWW framework](#). We are demanding enforceable supply chain agreements that center women workers' safety and collective voice, and that bind brands to real accountability.

On this International Women's Day, we demand more than words. We demand action.

Brands profit from our labor. They must now take responsibility for ensuring safe and dignified workplaces throughout their supply chains.

From Dhaka to Phnom Penh, from Dindigul to Central Java, from Karachi to Colombo, women garment workers are building a new standard for our industry – one rooted in dignity, safety, and equality.



We believe in a future where no woman fears violence at work. Where no worker collapses from exhaustion. Where no one dies because a t-shirt mattered more than her life.

Our labor sustains this industry. Our voices will transform it.