



**FAIR
WEAR
FOUNDATION**



**SUPERVISORY
SKILL-BUILDING
PROGRAMME**

CLIMBING THE LADDER



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Fair Wear Foundation (FWF) is an international multi-stakeholder non-profit organisation that works with clothing companies—and their supply chains—to improve working conditions in the garment industry. By becoming a member of FWF, a company commits to implementing the FWF Code of Labour Practices throughout its supply chain. Currently more than 130 brands have joined FWF.

FWF has joined together with CNV Internationaal, Mondiaal FNV and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a Strategic Partnership for Garment Supply Chain Transformation. The Strategic Partnership has three main focus points: social dialogue, living wages and gender. This report is published as part of the Strategic Partnership.

The Supervisory Skill-Building Programme was implemented in South India between 2014 and 2017 by FWF, SAVE and CIVIDEP with funding from the Delegation of the European Union to India.

FWF strives to increase awareness about working conditions and workers' rights in textile factories. Reducing economic discrimination and workplace violence are key FWF priorities as part of its focus on gender equality and violence prevention.

For more information, please visit www.fairwear.org.

FWF would like to thank all the factory employees—workers, supervisors and management—and FWF brands that participated in the Supervisory Skill-Building Programme and provided input for this report.

Special thanks also to local partners SAVE and CIVIDEP who have been invaluable in creating and adapting training materials, conducting training sessions and documenting lessons learned.

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ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE IN THE GARMENT INDUSTRY

Economic discrimination against women is a global phenomenon. On average, women in most countries only earn 60-75% compared to men.

Many factors contribute to this, including that women are more likely to engage in unpaid or low-wage activities, have less opportunity to progress to or within the formal sector, and are less likely to be represented by unions who protect and advance their rights.

This is clearly visible in the global garment industry, where the majority of workers are women. In India, for example, the garment and textile industry is the second largest employer and source of livelihood to more than three million people. An estimated 60-70% of garment employees are women, yet men inhabit almost all supervisory and managerial roles.

While men receive opportunities to climb the ladder if they show interest and potential, women are often stuck at the production level.

'I thought all the supervisors were men. I never thought girls could be supervisors.'

Amala¹

a female garment worker

¹ The names of workers, supervisors and factory managers have been changed to protect their privacy.

This results in low wages, reduced attention to women-specific issues such as maternity leave, and a situation that leaves women in vulnerable positions—increasing the risk of sexual harassment.

In the case of India, violence against women and (sexual) harassment are widespread. Even though national legislation is in place to prohibit, prevent and address it, effective grievance channels are largely unavailable in garment factories.

In addition, both men and women workers rarely have access to formal opportunities for skills development. Male workers are often promoted from production worker to line supervisor without additional management or communication training. This lack of skills makes it difficult for them to reach production targets. The resulting pressure creates stress for both supervisors and their workers. As a coping strategy, many supervisors adopt unhelpful or even harmful management techniques they have seen others use like verbal or physical abuse.



'Our workers are abused using very unprintable language, very abusive language. Sometimes there are actually sexual advances made to them demanding sexual favours.'

Gopinath Parakuni, General Secretary for CIVIDEP India

THE ROLE OF BRANDS

It is vital that brands ensure they are not contributing to the economic discrimination and workplace violence experienced by women workers in particular.

'Brands and factories worldwide bear a responsibility to ensure garment workers have equal opportunities for economic advancement and safe violence-free workspaces with clear accessible mechanisms to prevent and report harassment.'

Andrea Spithoff - FWF Gender coordinator

Besides the need to respect the fundamental human rights and dignity of workers, there is also a strong economic incentive for factories to improve conditions and empower female workers.

Research conducted by the International Labour Organization found that:

'Improving working conditions and empowering female workers boosts profitability and profit margins.'



The ILO implements a Better Work programme in seven countries, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia and Vietnam. Their research found that factory productivity increased by 22% in production lines overseen by female line supervisors trained through its programme. Across all factories the ILO tracked in Vietnam, there was a 25% increase in average profitability after four years of participation with Better Work. To learn more follow [this link](#) to the ILO report.

THE FWF SUPERVISORY SKILL-BUILDING PROGRAMME - OBJECTIVES

In response to the pervasive discrimination and harassment against women in garment factories, FWF's local Indian staff teamed up with Indian civil society organisations SAVE and CIVIDEP in 2014 to create a special training programme for supervisors in the garment-producing regions of Bengaluru and Tirupur. A more extensive programme previously developed by local stakeholders, including CIVIDEP, formed the basis for this programme.

The programme's main objectives are to reduce economic discrimination against women and promote violence-free workplaces and prevent harassment in garment factories.

➔ PROGRAMME OBJECTIVE 1:
REDUCE ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION

The aim is to enhance women workers' opportunities to advance in their careers and earn more income through technical skills training to become effective line supervisors. This includes addressing gender stereotypes through demonstrating women's capabilities to factory management.

'We see that in the industry there are very few opportunities for women workers to grow. Under this project we are trying to provide opportunities to upskill the garment workers so that they can move up the ladder.'

Suhasini Singh, FWF India Country Manager

➔ PROGRAMME OBJECTIVE 2:
PROMOTE VIOLENCE-FREE WORKPLACES AND PREVENT HARASSMENT

The aim is to enhance supervisors' skills in communication and team management and thus reduce line supervisors' abusive behaviour and harmful conditions on the factory floor.

Secondly, this objective aims to increase workers' and supervisors' awareness of labour rights and grievance mechanisms, especially regarding sexual harassment.

'During the training they [supervisors] realise that so far the only way to deal with workers for them was shouting. During the sessions it dawns upon them that this is not correct behaviour and their behaviour will have many [negative] consequences on the worker's life.'

Suhasini Singh, FWF India Country Manager

'Earlier we knew not much about the committees in the company. We saw photos, but we were not sure who were in the committees. But now we know how to form a sexual harassment committee and whatever has to be done to address the problems of girls.'

Amala

a female garment worker

THE FWF SUPERVISORY SKILL-BUILDING PROGRAMME - CONTENT

The programme is composed of two separate training modules aimed at women workers and (mostly male) supervisors. The modules differ in that the former emphasises empowering women for economic advancement, while the latter aims to improve working conditions on the factory floor.

TRAINING FOR WOMEN WORKERS

Women are trained to become effective supervisors by building their confidence and capabilities. The training focuses both on human resource management as well as technical skills, such as organising work-flow and improving productivity. Trainers also offer regular support to women workers promoted after the training to discuss challenges in their new supervisory role.

TRAINING FOR SUPERVISORS (MOSTLY MALE)

Supervisors are trained on how to be effective supervisors without using violence or harassment, focusing on soft skills, such as better communication and team management. The training emphasises the positive consequences of respectful behaviour towards workers and why abusive behaviour is ineffective.

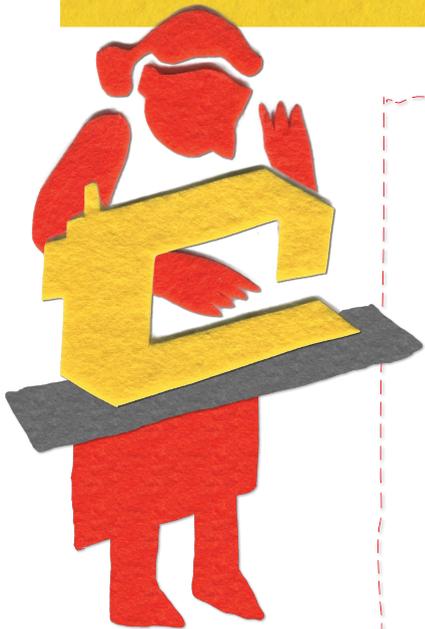
Both the women workers and the existing supervisors learn about labour laws and complaint mechanisms, with a focus on anti-harassment.

TOP MANAGEMENT INVOLVEMENT

To increase the factories' commitment, the local programme coordinator also meets with factory top management before, during and after the training and provides advice on factory policies related to sexual harassment and anti-discrimination.

'The training is spread across three to four months. A lot of games and activities are involved to keep them engaged in the sessions instead of lectures and presentations. For topics like law, harassment and human resources, trainers give numerous day-to-day examples.'

Suhasini Singh, FWF India Country Manager

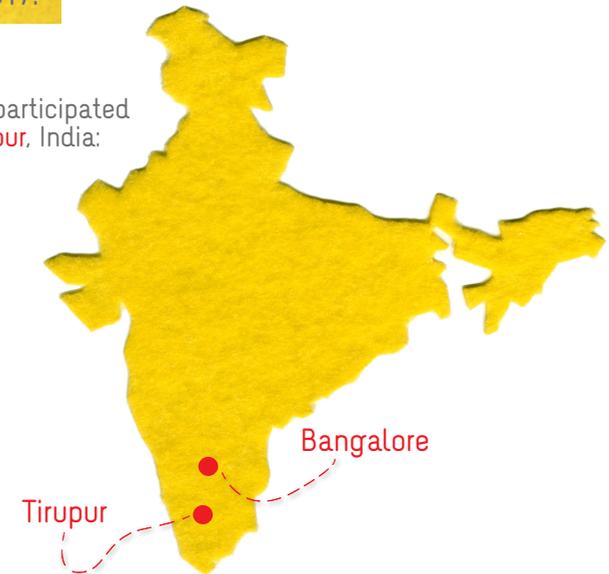


An example of a role-play activity done as part of the anti-harassment training component

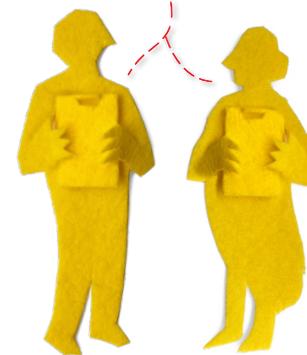
Participants engage in role-play to identify and distinguish between different types of abuse: verbal, physical, and sexual. The trainer asks participants to consider how the person being abused feels. Identifying the feeling of humiliation and lowered self-esteem is a powerful way to enhance participants' understanding of the effects of their actions.

3-year programme: 2014-2017:

18 garment factories participated in Bangalore and Tirupur, India:



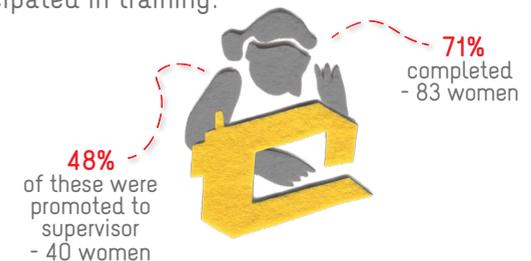
71 supervisors participated
35% completed
- 25 supervisors



16 men

9 women

117 women garment workers participated in training:



48% of these were promoted to supervisor - 40 women

71% completed - 83 women

Monthly income of those promoted rose 21-47%

1. ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION REDUCED AS WOMEN GAINED ACCESS TO TRAINING AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROMOTION

➔ More women have the opportunity to become supervisor

The skills acquired through the training set women workers on a path to become supervisor. Thus far 77% of participating factories promoted women to supervisor and assistant supervisor roles after completing the training.

➔ Gender stereotyping is addressed by showing women can be effective supervisors

The programme changed factory managements' and workers' perceptions of what women are capable of and encouraged a shift in the culture to offer women more opportunities for economic advancement.

'We were very scared to send our workers to this training programme...But now we are confident giving them supervisory roles. One can see the changes this training has brought about among [women] worker participants.'

Ravi
a male factory manager

'She [a promoted woman supervisor] is a role model in the factory. She is also member of the Internal Complaints Committee and very disciplined in her work.'

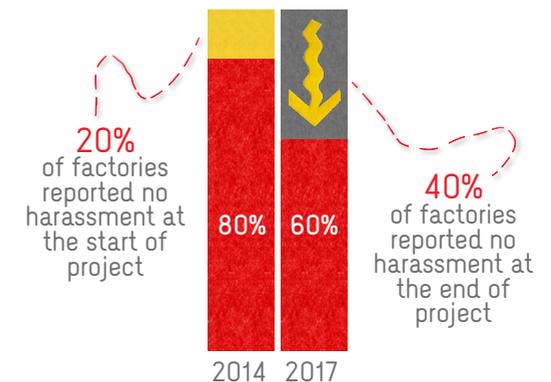
Sekar
a male management representative

'I thought all the supervisors were men. I never thought girls could be supervisors. In the training I came to know that women can be not only supervisors, but also production managers and general managers, and that women can rise to all those levels. Even my boss told me that I should not stop here, that I should try reaching higher levels like production manager. So I think I won't stop here. I will try to become production manager.'

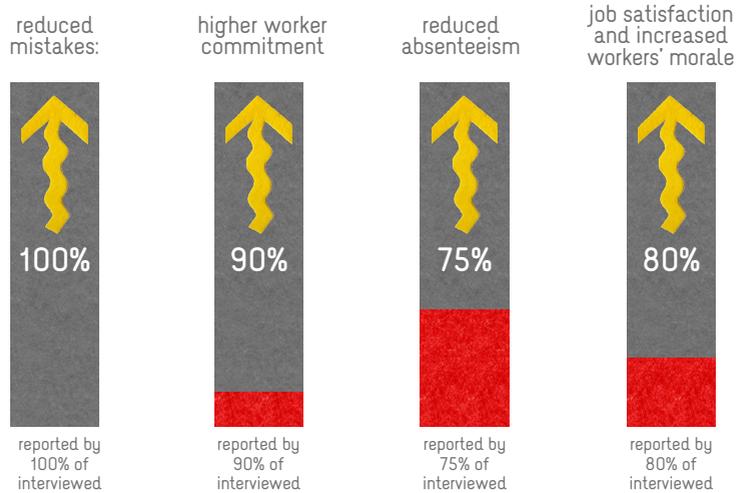
Amala
a female garment worker promoted to supervisor

The programme saw significant positive change for the participating women workers, as well as improving working conditions and productivity at the factories. Hear directly from the participants and factory managers in the next few pages.

Decrease in abuse by floor supervisors after 3-year programme: 2014-2017



Increase business-related indicators after 3-year programme:



➔ More women gain confidence and choose to become line supervisors

A total of 40 women have been promoted to line supervisors thus far (48%). Besides having the opportunity for promotion, it is important that women workers gain confidence and feel empowered to take on the new role.

➔ Improved income and status among women garment workers

Wages of participating women workers that were promoted to supervisory roles increased in the range of 21% to 47%.

The women participants also all reported an improved status in their homes and communities, due to greater self-confidence, professionalism, and handling responsibilities like planning the household budget and managing anger and stress.

'Earlier we used to send busses to get workers to come and work but now we see many workers at our gate wanting to work with us. The turnover and absenteeism have reduced in our factory so there is no need to recruit more workers.'

Shankar
a male factory manager

'Through this training I have learnt very relevant things to my work. My self-confidence has increased and this has helped me to take right decisions to handle challenges at the workplace. This training has been also been helpful at home.'

Selvi
a female garment worker promoted to supervisor

'I was a tailor before, but now a supervisor. Since attending the supervisor training, I get a lot of respect.'

Amala
a female garment worker promoted to supervisor

'I am convinced that I can grow in my career and reach a higher destination like becoming a supervisor in the future. The training sessions deepened and widened my knowledge about my work, operating machines, hierarchical set up in a company, and sexual harassment.'

Priya
a female garment worker

CASE STUDY: NANDINI, 26 YEARS OLD

'I come from a small village which is around 400 kilometres away from Tirupur.

I have been working in this factory for five years. Initially, I only did work that was assigned to me but after the training I have knowledge about the entire functions in the factory. The training was extremely helpful for me. I found the session on roles of supervisors most interesting. Since October 2016, I have been promoted to supervisor level. I never thought that I would ever become a supervisor!

I will probably get married in a few years but, because of my increased income, I can ask for a better match for me—someone who would earn at least equal to me. I have been encouraging my co-workers to join this training programme too.'

2. FACTORY WORK ENVIRONMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY HAVE IMPROVED DUE TO REDUCED VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE



Improvement in supervisors' management style

Supervisors, both male and female, learnt that managing workers and reaching production targets through shouting and (verbally) abusing workers are forms of harassment and were taught alternative ways to manage teams and communicate effectively.

'Yelling and shouting has reduced on the shop floor, which has led to a better work environment and increased productivity.'

Vijay
a male management representative

'I was shocked to know that some of our very common behavioural practices are also considered harassment. We need to work a lot on ourselves to be respected by workers in the line.'

Anand
a male line supervisor

'If women are harassed by male colleagues, then it's difficult to complain openly to a male supervisor. As a man, he will support them, so we don't bother to complain. But with a female supervisor, women will be more comfortable to approach them with problems. That's why it's necessary to have female supervisors.'

Amala
a female garment worker promoted to supervisor

'I have adopted many changes in my work. Unlike, before the training days, now I communicate with all workers and listen to other people's views. I completely refrain from using bad words.'

Savitha
a female line supervisor



Women workers are more confident and aware of how to stand up for their rights and address harassment complaints.

Due to the power dynamics between workers and supervisors and the vulnerable position of women, women workers often do not report harassment by their line managers. Through the training, both workers and line supervisors learnt the functions of internal complaints committees, penal consequences of sexual harassment by law, and grievance procedures in their factories.

In addition, some stated the presence of female supervisors made it easier for women to report complaints.



Improved worker job satisfaction and factory functioning due to improved morale

Significant reductions were reported in mistakes and errors due to better communication of expectations, less shouting and better planning. Combined with the opportunity of training and growth, this improved workers' morale at work and 77% of workers from participating factories reported reduced absenteeism.

'Most of the women come from rural areas, so for them to assert their rights, to know their rights is not easy. These are very deep-rooted issues, and to address that might take time. But I would say this is a very good beginning. Workers are more confident to say what happens within the factory.'

Gopinath Parakuni
General Secretary for
Cividep India

'Our factory has an ICC [internal complaints committee] but no one goes to this committee with their complaint. Since I know the importance of this committee now, I will encourage my co-workers and friends to approach the ICC in case they are harassed.'

Ruba
a female garment worker

In Bangladesh and India, FWF runs the Workplace Education Programme: Violence and Harassment Prevention, which aims to train workers, supervisors and management about violence and harassment in the world of work, and to establish functioning workplace harassment committees to prevent and address issues. To learn more about this programme, read our publication: [Breaking the Silence](#).

CASE STUDY: RAJESH, 26 YEARS OLD.

Rajesh joined as an assistant in the cutting section of a participating factory in 2011. After three years, he was promoted to packing supervisor. In 2016, he participated and completed the supervisors training.

'This training has brought in a drastic change in my personality and I feel that I have developed both personally and professionally. The supervisor training has changed my attitude toward work and my behaviour towards workers. I focus more on identifying and solving the problems in the section instead of shouting at workers for their shortfalls. My line of workers looks up to me so I should behave responsibly. I was recently awarded as Good Supervisor by my factory and I couldn't have been happier about this recognition'.

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

This field-tested programme addresses the challenge of providing training that is accepted by and benefits the garment industry, while at the same time having tangible effects on career opportunities for women workers, improving working conditions and reducing harassment in factories.

FWF and its partners have gained valuable insights into how to design the curriculum, how to select participants, and how to schedule sessions.

For future programmes, FWF will integrate the lessons learnt based on the successes and challenges experienced while rolling out this programme in India. These include the following:

- **LONGER TERM SUPPORT FOR PROMOTED WOMEN**

Expanded built-in external guidance is necessary beyond completion of the training to support promoted women in their new role as supervisor.

- **PROVIDE BOTH SUPERVISORS AND WOMEN WORKERS WITH TECHNICAL SKILLS TRAINING:**

Technical skills development was only included in the women workers' training as it was assumed supervisors were already equipped in this area. However, often this was not the case and their lack of technical skills (such as quality management and structuring a production line) may lead to them feeling overwhelmed and this can result in verbal or physical abuse. By adding this component for supervisors, they would learn to manage lines in more effective ways, which could also have a positive impact on their overall behaviour towards workers.

- **FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**

Factory managers are reluctant to invest in training given the high turnover of workers, factory managers are reluctant to invest in trainings, so finances played a large role in the overall success of the programme.

Factories only had to cover the wages of participating supervisors. The programme funding covered the wages of participating women workers, as it was unclear whether their higher skills would benefit the factory or whether they would choose to apply for a new job elsewhere upon completing this training, and gaining new skills.

To further offer the programme in a financially sustainable way, the funding will need to transfer to the industry. A fee would probably need to be charged (likely to be at least partially paid by the brand) and the factory might be asked to cover all participants' wages. Charging a training fee might also create another incentive to reduce drop-out rates. FWF is currently investigating which business model would be appropriate to ensure financial sustainability while still being acceptable to the industry.

- **WAYS TO ENSURE HIGHER COMPLETION RATES**

Various issues led to participants dropping out of the training. Ways to mitigate this and improve completion rates include:

- Gain additional buy-in from the brands and top factory management;
- Conduct planning in close collaboration with factory management;
- Take account of the timing and possible competing events when scheduling a training (for example, not before large festivals);
- Ensure the training is offered and completed within two to three months;
- Ask brands to ensure their orders do not add to production pressure so that workers are needed on the shop floor and cannot attend the training.

SCALING THE PROGRAMME

Due to the success of the supervisory skill-building programme in India, FWF is seeking to share this methodology more widely to support brands and factories in ensuring women have greater opportunities to advance in the garment industry, as well as promoting violence-free workplaces.

Get in contact through fairwear.org to find out more.

FWF'S PARTNERS:

CIVIDEP

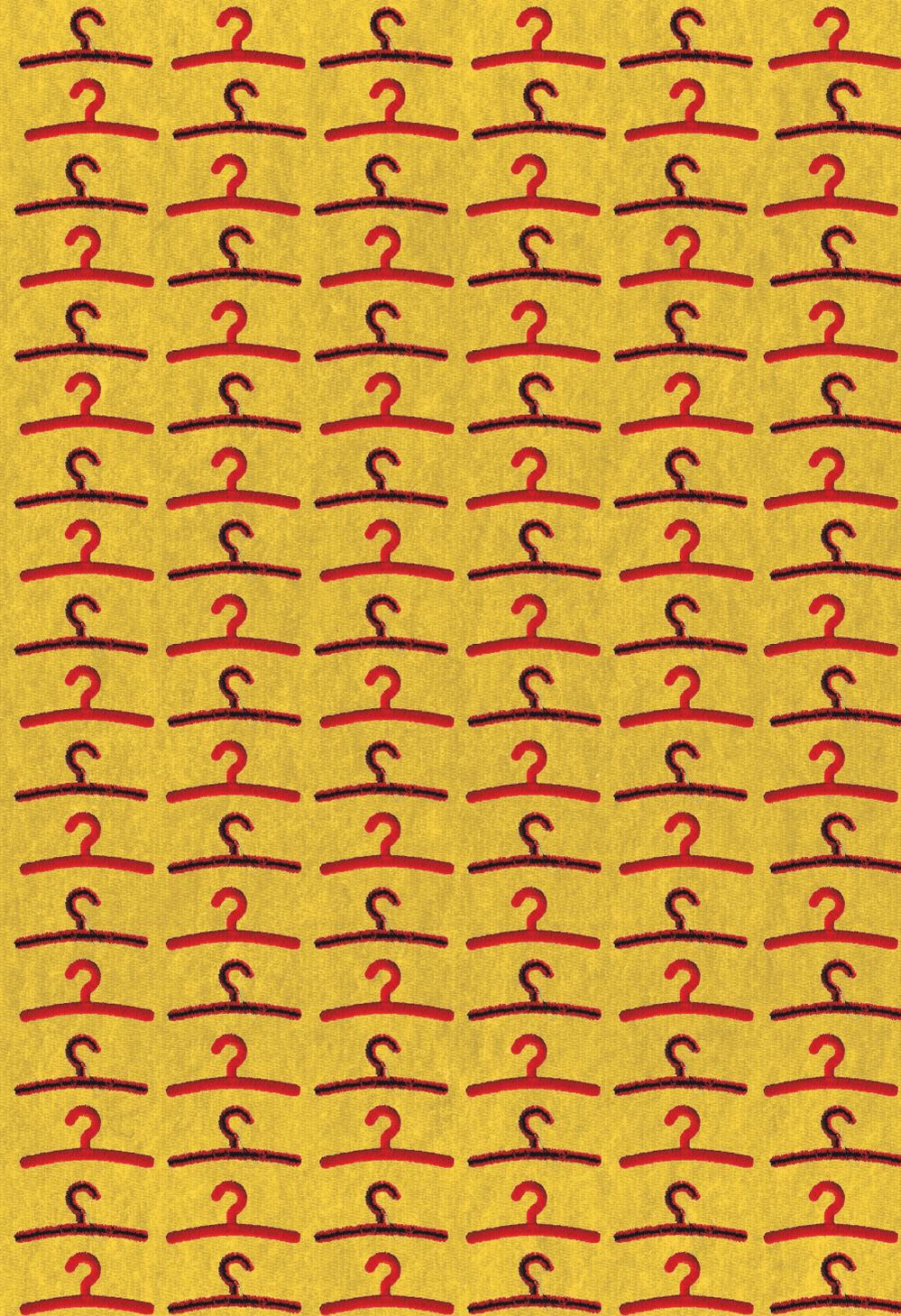
Cividep is a civil society organisation in Bengaluru that studies the effects of corporate activities on communities and campaigns with other organisations and individuals for workers' rights and unionisation and corporate accountability. www.cividep.org

SAVE SOCIAL AWARENESS AND VOLUNTARY EDUCATION (SAVE)

SAVE is a holistic human rights organisation located in Tirupur, India. For 17 years, SAVE has defended the rights of children, women and workers through research, advocacy, education, networking, and skills and capacity building. www.savengo.org



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