



Making the Business Case: Women's Empowerment in the Apparel Industry

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Time: 8:30 – 9:30 am (EDT)

SPEAKERS

Maryam Piracha, Pakistan Deputy Country Director, *Market Development Facility*

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Rania Attia, Lead Market Systems Analyst, *Arab Women's Enterprise Fund Egypt*

Hayat Abdul Malik, RMG Sector Lead, *Private Enterprise Program Ethiopia (PEPE)*

MODERATOR

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QUESTIONS

Maryam and Suniya's Presentation

What does "influence on norm" mean exactly?

Influence on norms, in this particular case of women inclusion would look at identification of various cultural/societal norms that limit the participation of women in workplaces, such as household perception and the traditional roles of women. Influence on these norms would then infer devising strategies or initiatives that address the causes of these norms. An example is the perception of lack of safety for women outside the household and influencing them by providing safe logistics to and from the workplace and segregation from the opposite gender.

Was the manufacturer willing to invest for the additional facilities like the day care for its employees? Or who covered that cost?

MDF works on private sector development and willingness of the partner is integral to the sustainability of the intervention. In this case, Servis has been a pioneer in women

inclusion initiatives. The idea of a daycare, keeping in mind the benefits that a business accrues from investing in women workforce, was put forth by the partner, and MDF co-invested in business model to reduce the business risk from the model.

Also, if childcare was cost-shared, what was the sustainability plan for that?

The co-funded model ensures sustainability of the model. By co-investing with the partner MDF mitigates some of the risks that are an off set of the intervention. However, the daycare was a complete investment of the Partner, and therefore raising their stakes to ensure its utility.

In Pakistan, are women currently only working in sewing operator level in factories, or are they also working in supervisor level? If yes, how are they experiencing it?

Women are seen to encompass various roles within factories. While sewing operations are the most probable ones because they do not require heavy labor unlike most other operations within the factory, women are also seen in supervisory roles and management roles in certain places. In Servis for example, to contribute to the conducive environment, upward and lateral mobility is provided to women. Women are working as shadow supervisors for building their capacity.

How much percentage of earnings of female workers increased?

All income from female recruits is captured as new income, since these women were not engaged in full time employment prior to this intervention.

Given the priority for daily domestic chores and limited available dietary calories, how much time and energy does the domestic chores demand and thus what is left for participation in outside work as promoted in the webinar?

Most households in the neighborhood have women living as a part of joint families. When a woman goes out to work and brings home money, the household members such as the mother in law and sister in law may contribute to household chores. We do not unfortunately have energy count for domestic chores, however for all our interventions we do capture daily clocks and workloads as a starting point and try to assess changes in these and how the shift in workloads are being dealt with or managed. Women mostly work out of sheer necessity and in this case, they often have support from other household members. The additional income outweighs the additional workload in these cases.

Continuing isn't it necessary to minimize the domestic drudgery before women will have substantial time to participate in economic activities away from the home?

In line with the previous question, joint families provide support to women and increase in income allows the participants to enhance their standards of living. Moreover, additional income opportunities are essential for households where there is a dire financial need and therefore as a market systems development program we look at opportunities to create more access for women and monitor the agency outcomes.

Could you speak a little more about the daycare services provided? What services did they offer children and parents? What did parent engagement in the daycare services look like – were parents able to visit during the day? Were parenting training courses offered during or after business hours – and how well-attended were these? About how far away (distance and time wise) were the work sites from workers' homes

The workers homes are in the nearby vicinity, such that, the maximum distance for one of the participants from a nearby village is 45 minutes. The day care is equipped with children's toys, TV, fridge and necessary facilities. While trainings are provided for on job skill, parenting training skills are not imparted. The parents were able to visit the daycare anytime they want.

Is there any statistics about male and females working productivity during the project time? Or some other indicators measured during the project time period, like absenteeism ratio of male and females, workers turnover is high or low in female workers, punctuality (time in and time out)?

We have conducted preliminary assessments which highlight female productivity to be 65% and the quality of the work produced is higher in comparison to the male counterparts. It was also pointed out by the management, that for complex orders by their quality conscious brands they delegated those pieces to women because of their attention to detail.

We are in the process of better understanding worker profile (to what extent women leave after marriage or for any other reason) and doing a longitudinal study to better assess outcomes on agency.

Could you please explain a bit what is exactly Servis employs supervisor? It is quite interesting – same here in Bangladesh.

Servis employs women within stitching lines and provides them with opportunities for upward mobility by working as shadow supervisors with their experienced male supervisors. The female supervisors are hired to contribute to the conducive environment for women so that the workers are safe from any threats of harassment and have the comfort of working around females.

In what regions did the interventions in Pakistan take place? How were local governments engaged?

MDF works with partners across all provinces in Pakistan. The intervention by Servis was conducted in Muridke, a small neighborhood in Punjab. However, certain other interventions on women inclusion have been explored and implemented in other parts of Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The local government was not engaged for this intervention because it was a model developed on private sector investment. However, going ahead, we have engaged with local district level authorities and plan to showcase best demonstratable examples of women inclusion in workforce through a multi stakeholder awareness campaign planned over the next few months.

Hayat's Presentation

What are some of the factors that influence why women would like to quick their jobs after 5 years (if in good conditions) and move to their own entrepreneurial activities?

Given that the Industrial Parks and FDI driven RMG sector is relatively new in Ethiopia. We don't have data or evidence generated on the reasons why women would like to move out of employment after 5 years into entrepreneurial activity. Interviews with incoming workers indicate that for a large no of workers seeking employment have aspirations to learn a skill that they can then apply to their own start up business after a certain period of time.

Is there a difference with the work that women and men do? Are the wages the same?

Wages are set for job functions and not by gender. However, as mentioned during my presentation over 90% of operator level/non-skilled workers are women.

For the Ethiopia project, were the factories providing dormitories for the workers? Or were they commuting to the jobs?

In Hawassa Industrial Parks, there are no dormitories, so the workers are commuting to their work, which is why factories are now providing transport services.

You mentioned the success in Asia, how much of that can be attributed to the power tiller mechanization of rice cultivation, reducing the farm drudgery so more labor was available for the textile industry?

It's true that much of Ethiopia's farming isn't mechanized however this isn't a hinderance for labor availability for industry as there is a large (and increasing) unemployment both in rural and urban areas.

Any work in minimum standard wages for employees as that is one concern for employees in the industrial parks?

Yes, this is a concern for all. A commission has been established recently to look at the establishment of a process for minimum wage setting.

Is there any learning from refugee integration into labour market for this program or vice versa? Because Ethiopia has one of the largest refugees' influx and progressive policies on refugees into labour market integration.

Yes, Ethiopia hosts a large refugee community and has recently passed a law that allows refugees to live and work outside of camps. This isn't something that we are working on ourselves but other programs such as the Jobs Compact has started looking at refugees' integration into the labour market including industrial parks.

For the Ethiopia case, how did you overcome the social norms barriers for women moving to urban areas?

Our labour sourcing program aims to disseminate accurate information about the employment opportunity to all members of community. We support the investors associations efforts to create stronger linkages between the industrial park and the local community via communication efforts including visits to the park by village elders and political leaders. Strengthening this work will continue to help us address the misperception issues that might create barriers for women that want to move for the employment opportunity.

Is there a presence of workers unions at the Hawassa IP that women can join?

90% of the factories have workers councils established. Trade unions have not yet been established there although they exist in some other industrial parks.

The financial savings scheme in Ethiopia, are men also eligible for the program?

Yes, there are no exclusions for men.

Hi, I am Mirela (margimandriti@gadc.org.al) and work for Gender Alliance for Development Centre – Albania, Western Balkans. Since 2015, we have been involved in projects to empower women workers in textile and shoes industries and from the other side to work with Inspectorate of Labour, trade unions and other institutions to improve the situation of working conditions of these women and to open debate in media, parliament, CEDaW, and the European Commission. We partner as well with Clean Clothes Campaign and have established a European Production Focus group in Western Balkans. My question is: what are your plans for working with these methodologies in Western Balkans?

We are an Ethiopia focused programme.

How do you build confidence, practices and attitude on women to dare utilize the space so as there are all sorts of discussions on inequality in employment and services, they also believe in themselves to fight for and occupy this space?

In Ethiopia, most of the jobs are being taken up by female workers. 85% of Industrial Park employment at the moment is female.

I would be interested to hear your opinion about the recent report done by NY Uni Stein Centre for Business and Human Rights about conditions for female workers at the Hawassa IP. What aspects do you think represent the real situation...and which issues really need more research and/or understanding?

<https://www.theafricareport.com/12866/ethiopia-factory-workers-paid-less-than-subsistence-wage/>

The assessment in this article is accurate. The headline of the Stern report comparing wages in Ethiopia with other countries isn't helpful. The context of Ethiopia is very different to the other countries that they refer to and more research is absolutely needed to help inform the Ethiopia context.

Were savings (10%) automatically taken out of workers' salaries or did women voluntarily save a portion of their incomes? If the savings accounts were opened and filled voluntarily, what messages were most effective for encouraging women to regularly save money?

Each worker that chose to subscribe to the programme had a savings account opened where the workers' savings and the factory's portion were automatically deducted. The savings book is kept with the worker and she sees her savings increase.

Do you have any early results on the uptake of the SST provision among other RMG firms?

Not yet.

Does Enterprise Partners support a worker voice mechanism? And/or how are labor rights concerns addressed within the garment factories?

No, we don't work directly on worker voice. We work with the ILO and other organisations who are programming directly to address improvement of social dialogue and increasing workers choice.

Are factories/EPZs in Ethiopia seeing an influx of other East African labor migrants, or are employees mostly from Ethiopia's rural areas?

Only Ethiopians for now. Ethiopia has recently allowed refugees to obtain work permits and once this starts being implemented, we might anticipate job seekers coming to the EPZs.

Rania's Presentation

Was there a difference in the performance of male and female supervisors?

That was not what we were measuring because the majority of supervisors are men. Our beneficiaries are the women workers.

Did you work with an agency to develop the Supervisor Skill training program curriculum? Are the training modules/curriculum shareable?

Yes, the GIZ LMAP was our partner.

How to make the private manufacturing firms to have a trust on the partner organizations?

We had the same objectives, and we were offering solutions to their problems. We also had a validation workshop with the RMG companies after completing our research to make sure that our proposed solution interventions were relevant.