Strategies

The garment manufacturing is still a labor-intense industry, despite the advancements in technology and automation over the past decades. It is estimated that there are around 60-70 million garment workers worldwide, of which 75%-80% are women. The global garment industry has the potential to lift millions of women and men out of poverty worldwide and advance gender equality. Good quality jobs catalyze women's economic empowerment, offer social protection and measures to balance work and family and operate in an environment free from discrimination and harassment.

Better Work Training

A 2022 survey, performed by the United Nation's International Labour Organization (ILO) of 1,173 Indonesian female workers, found over 70% of respondents had experienced or have become a victim of one of the forms of violence and harassment at work.

To help address these issues, A&F Co. has partnered with Better Work, a notable cross-country program by United Nation’s International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), to implement sexual harassment prevention training to workers in Cambodia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Jordan and Vietnam. Over 90 factories with 1,000+ mid-management, HR and compliance staff have completed the training. Participants learned how to identify forms of
sexual harassment, how it impacts workers, how to deal with cases of sexual harassment and help to establish sexual harassment policy, as well as required steps to take in light of sexual harassment cases. From this training, an estimated 200,000+ workers could benefit.

Through years of efforts, Better Work has decreased reduced sexual harassment concerns by up to 18% since 2001.
A&F Co. partnered with the Personal Advancement & Career Enhancement (P.A.C.E.) program from 2019 to 2022 to implement female training programs in Cambodian factories. P.A.C.E. was originally created by Gap Inc. in 2007 to support women working in the apparel industry. It has provided life skills, technical training and more to 500,000 working women and girls so far. In 2019, A&F Co. set a goal to train 50,000 workers in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Vietnam using modules focused on communication, problem solving, time and stress management, water sanitation and hygiene and financial literacy.

The modules program encourages women to express themselves in different situations by understanding the dynamics of communication at work, at home and in the community, as well as how gender may play a role in communication. These topics are intended to help women learn how to build problem solving and decision-making skills, as well as how to establish consensus with other people. In an effort to help women workers be happier and gain satisfaction at work, time and stress management instruction on multitasking and prioritization skills is also provided, as well as physical exercise and positive thinking trainings. To help prevent financial crises, financial literacy courses educate women on the importance of saving and financial planning.

Through this initiative, A&F Co. has also funded the CARE/P.A.C.E. Indonesia program to educate P.A.C.E. trainers to work with junior high girls. So far in 2019 to 2020, nearly 3,200 girls from over 27 schools have completed the Child Protection Training and Protection from
Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Training, 74 teachers were trained and certified as P.A.C.E. facilitators and over 130 boys took part in class sessions. Additional programs were also provided, including a social media campaign to educate students on hand washing and other COVID-19 prevention techniques and an online gender sensitization session for male students on sex and gender and division of domestic labor during COVID-19.

**HERproject**

From 2008 until 2019, A&F Co. partnered with BSR’s HERproject* – a collaborative initiative that aimed to drive impact for women and business via workplace-based initiatives on health, financial inclusion, and gender equality. A&F Co. supported HERproject trainings in 15 factories in three different countries, impacting over 20,000 women. HERproject programs were implemented through peer education methodology, where peer educator and peer-to-peer trainings were held over a 12-to-18-month period.

A&F Co. supported programs on women’s health (HERhealth) as well as promotion of positive gender relations in the workplace (HERrespect). As a result of the HERhealth trainings, female workers increased their awareness of key health-related issues, including nutrition, menstrual hygiene, maternal health, family planning, HIV/AIDS and STIs. Through HERrespect, participants improved their communication skills, discusses gender norms and relationships, and built their understanding and skills related to violence and relationships at home and workplace. In addition, joint sessions between management and workers were held throughout the program to encourage positive communication between workers and management.

*Since Jan 1, 2023, BSR’s HERproject, Gap Inc. P.A.C.E, CARE and Better Work have come together to form a new initiative called RISE: Reimagining Industry to Support Equality in order to scale impact and accelerate equality for women workers in global garment supply chains.