



# Manufacturing (Apparel)

## Related Commodity Reports

- Apparel

## Summary of Key Documented Trafficking in Persons Risks

- ✓ Structural Supply Chain Features Contributing to Trafficking in Persons Vulnerability
- ✓ Undesirable and Hazardous Work
- ✓ Vulnerable Workforce
- ✓ Presence of Labor Intermediaries

## Manufacturing Sector in Sub-Saharan Africa Overview

Production in the African manufacturing sector grew from USD 73 billion in 2005 to USD 157 billion in 2014.<sup>1</sup> Asian countries are key export destinations and intra-regional African trade is growing as well.<sup>2</sup> The U.S. and the E.U. both have preferential market access programs – the Everything but Arms Initiative and the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).<sup>3</sup> Manufacturing represented an average of 10 percent of GDP for African countries.<sup>4</sup> Most products manufactured in African facilities are considered “low complexity” products such as sugar, metal ores, and knit apparel. These low complexity products are considered to be relatively weak drivers of job creation; there were an estimated nine million jobs in manufacturing in sub-Saharan Africa in 2010.<sup>5</sup> This report will focus primarily on the apparel manufacturing sector because apparel is the key manufactured product exported to the U.S. from the region.

Africa currently manufactures about two percent of apparel globally.<sup>6</sup> Mauritius has been the traditional leader of apparel production in sub-Saharan Africa. Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Tanzania, and Uganda have been cited as up-and-coming apparel producing countries, fueled by both government investment and preferential market access to U.S. and European markets. Ethiopia in particular has been cited as the future of Africa apparel manufacturing, with the manufacturing sector growing at roughly 11 percent per year between 2004 and 2014.<sup>7</sup>



The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), United States Trade Act, is a unilateral trade program that significantly enhances U.S. market access for (currently) 41 sub-Saharan African countries. The Act was originally enacted to last from October 2000 to September 2008, but amendments have extended AGOA to 2025.<sup>8</sup> Countries that have capitalized on AGOA, such as Lesotho, have seen boosts to their apparel manufacturing sector. Conversely countries such as the Gambia and Swaziland that have been excluded or dropped from AGOA status have seen rapidly contracting sectors.

The World Bank notes that apparel production in particular is often a “springboard for national development.”<sup>9</sup> The sector has relatively low barriers to entry, as it is not highly capital intensive and primarily utilizes low-skilled workers. Further, production can easily be shifted from country to country in pursuit of lower production costs.<sup>10</sup>

Constraints to future growth of the manufacturing sector include unreliable power, weak infrastructure, lack of access to modern equipment, and low productivity rates.<sup>11</sup>

## Trafficking in Persons Risk in the Apparel Manufacturing Sector in Sub-Saharan Africa

### Structural Supply Chain Features Contributing to Trafficking in Persons Vulnerability

Apparel and textile supply chains are complex, unpredictable, and often include informal relationships. The current global sector has developed in response to globalization, and multinational brands’ requirements for flexibility and quick turnaround times. Major brands have outsourced production to others, and focus mainly on branding and marketing. Production for large multinational companies is largely managed by agents with large networks of worldwide factories.<sup>12</sup> Brands attempt to shorten lead times, putting pressure on suppliers and causing an increase in temporary, contract, and seasonal labor within the workforce (see below).

### Undesirable and Hazardous Work

The same factors that result in low barriers to entry also mean that the sector is highly competitive, and put downward pressure on wages and working conditions. Low wages have specifically been cited as drawing foreign investment in countries including Ethiopia,<sup>13</sup> where workers may earn as little as USD 35 a month.<sup>14</sup>



Health and safety risks facing workers in the apparel sector include chemical exposure, dust, poor ventilation, musculoskeletal stress, and noise exposure.<sup>15</sup> Apparel and textile production, particularly sewing machine operation and hand sewing, often require workers to complete “monotonous, highly repetitive and high-speed tasks,” as well as to remain in one posture for long periods of time. Workers who are paid at a piece rate may be incentivized to work far beyond what is safe, in order to earn a basic wage. These risks apply to the global apparel sector, but may be particularly relevant where countries lack strong labor enforcement mechanisms, including many sub-Saharan African countries.

## Vulnerable Workforce

The workforce in the global apparel sector – and in sub-Saharan Africa in particular – is predominantly female. Women make up an estimated 80 percent of workers in most apparel producing countries in sub-Saharan Africa; however, men are more common in Malawi and Zimbabwe.<sup>16</sup> For many workers, employment in the textile apparel sector offers a first opportunity to gain employment in the formal economy, which is typically higher paid and more stable than the informal sector or agriculture. This appears to be true in many emerging apparel sectors in sub-Saharan Africa. For example, a study among female garment workers in Ethiopia found that most had never worked in the formal sector prior to their apparel sector employment.<sup>17</sup> However, recent research found that women tended to be overrepresented in lower level positions, leaving them more vulnerable to poor working conditions and wage instability.<sup>18</sup>

The phenomenon of migrant workers in the manufacturing sector of Mauritius has been well documented. According to the U.S. Department of State, there are over 37,000 migrant workers in the manufacturing and construction sectors from India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, China, and Madagascar, “some of whom are subjected to forced labor.”<sup>19</sup> Protections for workers are further weakened in Export Processing Zones, where many migrant workers are engaged.<sup>20</sup> Transnational migrant workers have also been noted in Zambia, Lesotho, and South Africa. In addition to transnational migrants, many female workers in manufacturing in Africa are domestic rural to urban migrants.

## Presence of Labor Intermediaries

Migrant workers to Mauritius typically secure their employment via third-party labor brokers, leaving them with recruitment related debt.<sup>21</sup> Research has found that the use



of subcontracted labor, even among local/domestic workers, is common in countries including Kenya, Tanzania, and Ghana.<sup>22</sup>

## Examples of Actions Related to Trafficking in Persons in the Manufacturing Sector

### Government Actions

The United States Department of Labor reviews each country's efforts to uphold core labor rights including "the right of association, the right to organize and bargain collectively, prohibitions on forced and compulsory labor, a minimum age for the employment of children, and acceptable conditions of work with respect to minimum wages, hours of work, and occupational safety and health" as part of its review for AGOA eligibility.<sup>23</sup>

According to the ILO, Ethiopia, South Africa, and Lesotho have worked to strengthen their labor inspection systems, supporting better conditions in their manufacturing sectors.<sup>24</sup>

### Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives/Partnerships

Better Work Lesotho – a partnership between the ILO and the IFC – was launched in 2010 with funding from the U.S. Department of Labor and works to improve working conditions in garment factories, and as a result, to strengthen Lesotho's market position as a garment exporter.<sup>25</sup>

Ethical Apparel Africa is a company consulting with brands seeking ethical manufacturing in Africa. By 2027, Ethical Apparel Africa intends to develop at least 15 African-owned facilities that are socially and environmentally sustainable, with a particular focus on empowering female employees.<sup>26</sup>



## External Resources for Business Good Practice

- BSR. *Women’s Economic Empowerment in Sub-Saharan Africa: Recommendations for Business Action*. <https://www.bsr.org/en/our-insights/report-view/womens-economic-empowerment-sub-saharan-africa-business-action>
- Human Rights Watch. *Follow the Thread: The Need for Supply Chain Transparency in the Garment and Footwear Industry*. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/04/20/follow-thread/need-supply-chain-transparency-garment-and-footwear-industry>
- OECD. *Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains in the Garment and Footwear Sector*. <https://mneguidelines.oecd.org/OECD-Due-Diligence-Guidance-Garment-Footwear.pdf>
- Know the Chain. *Apparel & Footwear Resource and Action Guide*. <https://knowthechain.org/apparel-footwear-resource-and-action-guide/>



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## Endnotes

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- <sup>9</sup> World Bank. *The Global Apparel Value Chain, Trade and the Crisis*. April 2010. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/100641468339015732/pdf/WPS5281.pdf>
- <sup>10</sup> World Bank. *The Global Apparel Value Chain, Trade and the Crisis*. April 2010. <https://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/100641468339015732/pdf/WPS5281.pdf>
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- <sup>26</sup> Ethical Apparel Africa. <https://www.ethicalapparelafrica.com/>

