



Bridging the divide: How knowledge sharing and digital exchange can drive a sustainable recovery in the Asian garment sector

This note has been prepared by ILO and GIZ and does not necessarily reflect the views of the OECD.

Objectives of the session

- Build and strengthen the case for regional knowledge exchange as a key vehicle both to drive the post-COVID-19 industry recovery and to accelerate the (longer-term) transition to a more sustainable future.
- Elevate stakeholder voices and concrete good practices from the region, to showcase how regional exchange and learning has been and can be leveraged to advance sustainability and decent work objectives, at the firm and industry level.
- Identify opportunities and actions to further strengthen and professionalize the regional knowledge landscape for enhanced sustainability.

Background

Asia has a wealth of experience and 'good practices' in driving sustainability and decent work in the garment sector, but regional exchange and learning is often constrained by both practical bottlenecks (e.g. language, cultural and contextual differences; no single platform or forum for exchange/sharing) and structural disincentives (e.g. notions of knowledge as power and a source of competitive advantage).

However, the COVID-19 crisis has prompted a growing sense of regional solidarity, in recognition of the common challenges the sector faces across the region. Some common key challenges the sector is facing are related to brand 'due diligence' pressures, legal regulatory changes in sourcing

countries and changes in international trade relations and trends within the industry, which may further shift the sustainability goalposts for suppliers in the post-pandemic era.

COVID-19 has had a tremendous impact on textile and garment production in Asia. It laid bare the existing problems of power-imbalances in business relationships for example, in the context of purchasing practices and accelerated trends, such as digitalization and automation.

In this context, industry partners in Asia are increasingly seeing the advantage of greater cooperation, knowledge sharing and exchange of ideas across the region and how can those be maximized.

For more information

- [Sustainable Textile of the Asia Region \(STAR\)](#) Network of Asian Producer Associations
- ILO recommendations on the role of knowledge creation and sharing in global supply chains are contained in the [ILO Resolution concerning decent work in global supply chains \(2017\)](#)

About the partners

About the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

As service provider in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development and international education work, GIZ is dedicated to shaping a future worth living around the world. Together with commissioning parties and partners, GIZ generates and implements ideas for political, social and economic change.

[GIZs FABRIC project](#) (Promoting Sustainability in the Textile and Garment Industry in Asia) supports the Asian textile industry in its transformation towards fair production for people and the environment. It identifies the common interests of key actors and brings them together with the aim of developing a shared vision of sustainability and promoting greater cooperation. Such an approach can pave the way for qualitative growth alongside price competition. Acting as a think tank, the project creates a pool of knowledge from successful sustainability initiatives in individual countries and disseminates that expertise across the wider region. In cooperation with global initiatives such as Partnership for Sustainable Textiles, it works with industry stakeholders towards adopting a joint position on sustainable production criteria. The project operates in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Viet Nam and with China.

About the International Labour Organization (ILO)

The only tripartite U.N. agency, since 1919 the ILO brings together governments, employers and workers of 187 member States, to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.

The [ILO-Sida Decent Work in Garment Supply Chains Asia project](#), which co-hosts this session, is a regional initiative launched in 2019, aimed at bringing together knowledge and insight from across

the garment sector in Asia, and leveraging this for enhanced regional action and industry coordination to drive decent work and sustainability goals.

With a core focus on four key areas -social dialogue, gender equality, productivity and environmental sustainability- the project will shine a light on the models and approaches that drive effective change, whilst giving industry partners the tools and support they need to adopt scalable actions across the supply chain.