



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Dindigul Agreement to End Gender-based Violence and Harassment **HAS IT WORKED?**

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The Dindigul Agreement to End Gender-Based Violence and Harassment (GBVH) at the factories of Natchi Apparel (P) Ltd. and the Eastman Spinning Mills (P) Ltd. in the South Indian city of Dindigul has attracted significant international attention. This worldwide interest is in large part due to its potential as a model for addressing GBVH not only in the global apparel industry, where most factories are staffed by female workers and male managers, but also in other industries and workplaces where female workers dominate. The detailed report by the Global Labor Institute, for which this is the executive summary, constitutes the final evaluation of the Dindigul Agreement which concluded on October 31, 2025.

The Agreement came about as a result of a long campaign by NGOs and labor groups following the rape and murder of a worker at the Natchi factory by her supervisor in January 2021. That campaign ended with an agreement between management of the Eastman factories and the Tamil Nadu Textile and Common Labor Union (TTCU) that established a framework for the prevention, remediation, and elimination of GBVH in the factories. Global Labor Justice (GLJ) and Asia Floor Wage Alliance (AFWA) served as witness signatories. Individual supporting agreements were also signed between GLJ, AFWA and the TTCU and three global brands: H&M, Gap Inc., and PVH Corp.

The institutions and policies established by the DA to prevent, remediate, and eliminate GBVH included, among others, extensive worker and management training in the factories, the creation of worker shop-floor monitors to help workers report GBVH cases, establishment of a multi-level grievance procedure, the creation of a high-level implementation committee and an oversight committee composed of all stakeholders, and a revitalization of internal complaints committees mandated by India's Prevention of Sexual Harassment Act. These were undergirded by the requirement of freedom of association in the factories, which brought the TTCU in as the workers' representative.

This report addresses four major research questions:

- Does the DA work? Are workers using the grievance procedure to raise GBVH grievances? Are grievances resolved? What are the benefits of the DA for workers and for the company?
- If the DA **does** work, why?
- Is the DA replicable?
- Is the DA scalable?

Research to answer these questions relied on extensive interviews in April–June 2025 with the agreement signatories—stakeholders who are the primary source of evidence regarding the establishment and implementation of the DA's provisions. The interviews were complemented by a subsequent week-long engagement at the factories, where the interviewees included general workers, migrant workers, GBVH survivors, local management staff, external assessors of the internal complaints committees, as well as a few others with knowledge of local conditions. Interviews were also conducted in the communities in which workers lived.

The analysis by GLI concludes that the Agreement works. Workers are extensively trained by both the union and external training providers and demonstrate an awareness of GBVH. They are unafraid to use the multi-channel grievance mechanism to raise grievances regarding GBVH as well as a wide range of issues. Grievances are resolved very quickly, thanks to the efforts of the union and the very collaborative relationship that has developed between the TTCU and Eastman management. The results are a testament to the value of freedom of association as an essential element in combating GBVH.

Qualitative evidence showed that workers are significantly empowered under the DA to voice opinions, both at the workplace and in their communities. However, the positive effects of the Agreement for workers have not brought about increased business for the apparel unit. This remains a puzzle for future research: Why do major brands not source from these factories given their excellent record with respect to core labor rights since implementation of the Agreement?

The Agreement works thanks to the efforts of all its institutions, actors, and policies. It is useful, though, to disentangle the effects of these efforts during the establishment and institutionalization phases, as the report does in detail. Successful institutionalization is largely due to worker training, the role of the shop-floor monitors, and the trust that workers have in the union and in the grievance procedure, which is enhanced through highly collaborative labor management relations. The legally mandated internal complaints committees have contributed significantly to a broader understanding of GBVH issues amongst the workers.

Is the agreement replicable? The report suggests that the DA's success results from several notable "hyperlocal" factors: the union is women-led, and hence the importance and urgency of GBVH is always salient to the leadership; its activity in workers' communities buttresses the legitimacy and trust the union has won; labor-management relations are of a particularly high quality; the TTCU has a remarkable degree of access to the workplace and senior management; and workers are knowledgeable about GBVH at work and at home through training, shop-floor monitors and the internal complaints committees. All these factors explain why workers are unafraid to raise GBVH grievances.

The principles that underlie the Agreement are surely transferable even where the specific institutions may be different. Given such hyperlocality, the report canvasses scaling options and scenarios, but finds little possibility that the DA can be scaled to other factories in the Tirupur cluster, let alone to hundreds or thousands of factories nationally and internationally. Scaling is the primary challenge, since GBVH is a global problem too urgent to be solved on a factory-by-factory basis.

In sum, the Dindigul Agreement **demonstrates** that it is possible to prevent, remediate, and perhaps even eliminate GBVH in factories dominated by women workers, and it contains many lessons for actors worldwide.