



The pandemic, supply chains and gendered impacts: lessons for response and adaptation by sustainability systems

An ISEAL briefing paper

June 2021

Why this briefing paper?

There is now wide recognition that the ongoing pandemic has had a profound impact on women across all dimensions of economic and social activity. From shifting gender roles within the household to effects on women's active role in the economy and the real health and well-being effects of the pandemic, there is a growing concern that women are 'losing out' severely. According to the United Nations, although SDG 5 on Gender Equality was seeing modest progress in general, the pandemic has all but wiped out even the few gains made over the last decade.

From the standpoint of sustainability standards and systems, the pandemic has opened up the opportunity to review many streams of work, including how they conduct their assurance activities. This briefing paper attempts to pull together insights on gender and gender risks across the supply chain to support current thinking and innovation across such systems.

The aim here is to raise the profile of gender as an issue of interest and lens through which systems can think through adaptation and innovation in their assurance and monitoring & evaluation systems. The overall picture emerging from our research is that schemes have a long way to go on this journey towards recognising and addressing gender risks in their supply chains. A large part of this is the recognition that these risks have not emerged from the pandemic but only been exacerbated by it. Addressing these risks therefore speaks to how gender-sensitive and responsive schemes choose to be overall and how they can better use their assurance function to identify risks and accordingly respond to them.

This briefing paper draws on desk research into the gendered impacts of the pandemic on key sectors of interest and into solutions and tools that can support system thinking and responses. It also builds on ISEAL's dialogue with its members on this topic and a few external expert interviews. The paper is structured into two parts – part one explores the gendered impacts of the pandemic and part two explores solutions and lessons learned to support adaptation and response by schemes.

Part 1: The gendered impacts of the pandemic

1.1 Overall impacts of the pandemic on women

A growing body of evidence indicates the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on women, relative to men. Current data as well as experience from previous crises suggest that public health emergencies further expose women's vulnerabilities (UN Women, 2020a). Gender equality gains of the last decades might be buried because of COVID-19 (Center on Gender Equity and Health, 2020).

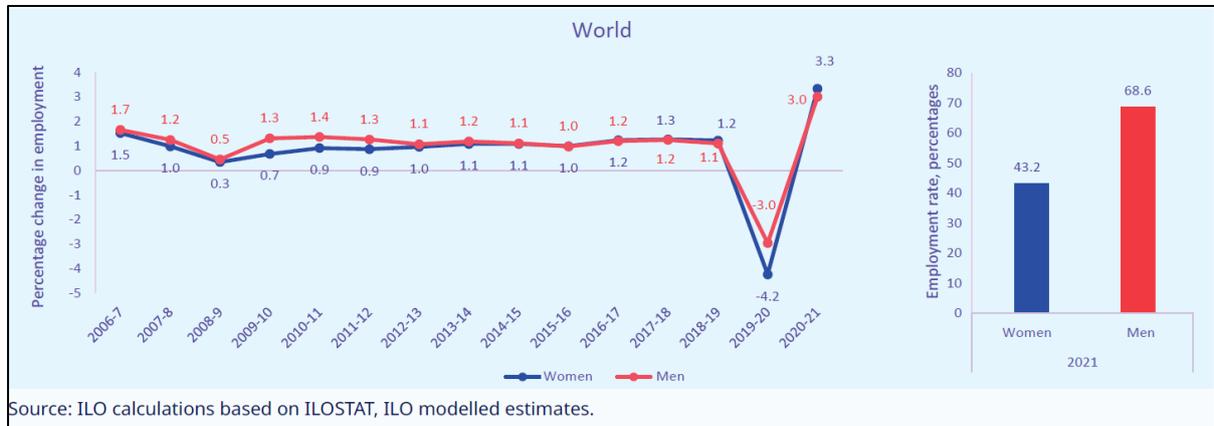
Many of the gender issues exacerbated by the pandemic are pre-existing gender inequalities present at a social, economic, and political level (Taylor and McCarthy, 2021). Indeed, the way women's roles are set up and played out in the professional and domestic spheres are deepening existing gender disparities that are felt at home, at work and in society more broadly (McKinsey & Company, 2020).

Globally and across all regions and country income groups, women have been affected by employment loss to a greater extent than men (ILO, 2021). Evidence shows that crisis affect more women than men and that the effects on women's economic security takes always longer to recover than for men (ILO, 2020c). Younger and older women are especially likely to have left the labour market. As the figure on the right portrays, the impacts of crises on women's economic wellbeing are multi-layered.



Figure 1: Main issues affecting women in supply chains, and how COVID-19 has exacerbated these (Oxfam International, 2021).

Figure 2: Percentage change in employment by sex (2006-2021) and employment rate (2021) (ILO, 2021)



Women, who anyway face persistent structural challenges to decent jobs and economic independence, are losing their livelihoods faster because they are more exposed to hard-hit economic sectors such as tourism, hospitality, travel, caregiving, manufacturing and food services (Taylor and McCarthy, 2021; UNFPA, 2020). Research also shows that economic effects of the pandemic across sectors has widened gender pay gaps and made working conditions for women workers more precarious.

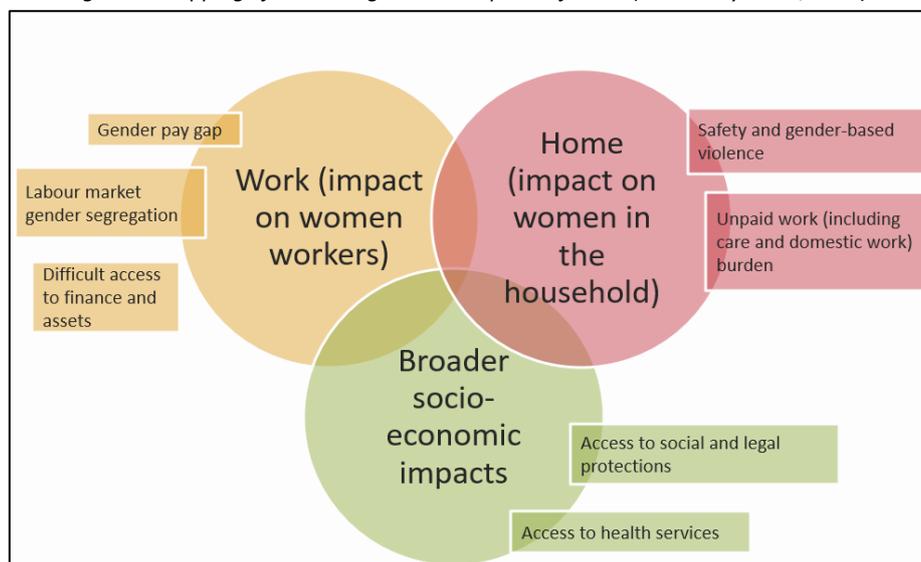
Beyond working conditions, for many women, the pandemic has also increased ‘time poverty’ (UN Women, 2020b). This is important as it effects women’s ability to work effectively and productively but is intrinsically linked to gendered roles within society and the household. Despite women’s contribution to the workforce, there is no observed change in the gender division of labour within the household (Ngalawa, H. and Derera, E., 2020). In some regions, women’s share of unpaid care work is as high as 80 to 90 percent and this has gone up during the pandemic. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), women spend on average 4.1 times more time than men in the Asia-Pacific region on unpaid care and domestic work (Burki, T., 2020). Some authors refer to this as the “third shift” to signal undervalued and unpaid emotional labour that is mostly taken care of by women (Power, K., 2020).

This inequity in the division of paid and unpaid labour between women and men is a key structural issue that affects women’s role in the economy and perpetuates their gendered role in society (King et al., 2020). Further, unpaid care responsibilities have a negative and measurable impact on women’s participation in the paid economy (Power, K., 2020).

There is robust data indicating that the pandemic has worsened women’s safety. Violence against women has increased around the world, as lockdown and isolation have force women to shelter in places with their abusers, often with tragic consequences (UN, 2020a; WHO, 2020). 243 million women are thought to have experienced sexual or physical abuse at the hands of an intimate partner at some point over the last 12 months (Burki, T., 2020).

A combined outcome of the economic and social impacts noted above has been the increased vulnerabilities that women face in many societies because of the pandemic. Market closures and movement restrictions as well as unemployment and shrunken incomes have impacted women’s food security (Neha and Kumar, K., 2020). A study carried out by BSR in 2020 surveying 1054 workers across Bangladesh, Egypt, Kenya, China, India and Vietnam showed that many workers had to reduce or skip meals due to their reduced incomes (BSR, 2020). According to a new analysis commissioned by UN Women and UNDP, by 2021 around 435 million women and girls will be living on less than \$1.90 a day — including 47 million pushed into poverty as a result of COVID-19 (UN Women, 2020b). The figure below attempts to map out the spheres of impacts from crises such as the current one in various dimensions of women’s work and life.

Figure 3: Mapping of risks and gendered impacts of Covid (created by ISEAL, 2021).



COVID-19 has also meant a reduced access to healthcare, education, and other public services (UN, 2020b). Given their lack of formal employment, women have had less access to social and legal protection mechanisms, which have proven to be particularly concerning during this crisis.

The crisis has had particularly devastating effects on many vulnerable population groups and sectors around the globe (WHO, 2020). Young people, women, low-paid and low-skilled workers have less potential to achieve recovery quickly (UN women, 2020a). Women and girls in communities already suffering from institutionalized poverty, racism and other forms of discrimination are particularly at risk (UNFPA, 2020). The pandemic also shows that children who were marginalised previously, especially girls, are losing out to education and opportunities more than boys and this may mean a permanent loss to their empowerment, agency and overall life prospects (Taylor, P. and McCarthy, M., 2021).

The overall picture for gender equity is a disappointing and concerning one. But as noted above, gender disparities that have widened because of the pandemic only signal pre-existing deep-rooted structural inequities in the economy, at home and in society at large.

1.2 Impacts on women workers

Emerging evidence suggests a nuanced picture of how women workers have been affected across geographies and sectors across various dimensions.

On the health and safety front, covid-related occupational risk is noted as being higher in sectors and occupations with more women employees (see Figure 4 below). According to a UNFPA report, 70 % of the workforce in the health and social sector are women (UNFPA, 2020). In the retail sector, that is largely female employee led in most countries, health and safety has been a significant challenge. Additionally, especially in developing countries, women are overrepresented in sectors that are characterized by low pay and poor working conditions, including lack of basic worker protections like paid sick and family leave (King et al., 2020, ILO, 2020a). This has meant that they do not have access to social security, medical pay or other safety covers that can support during a health crisis such as this.

On the wage front, research in multiple sectors indicates that women have lost out more than men. A recent study published on women workers in supermarket supply chains notes that across many commodities such as tea, coffee, rice, wine and fish, women workers have lost out more in wages than men through the pandemic (Oxfam International, 2021). The recently published 'Gender Benchmark Report 2021' by the World Benchmarking Alliance that evaluated the gender performance of thirty five leading apparel and garment sector brands, indicates poor performance across all dimensions of gender equality and an appalling performance on compensation and benefits (WBA, 2021).

Finally, women's entrepreneurship and overall economic success has also suffered more during the pandemic. Research shows a disproportionate impact on female-led companies and entrepreneurship, including women-owned microenterprises in developing countries, generally constrained by lack of access to finance and assets (McKinsey & Company, 2020; ILO, 2020a). Those in rural areas have been particularly affected, as travel restrictions and market closures have meant a limited access to sales and inputs (Ngalawa, H. and Derera, E., 2020).

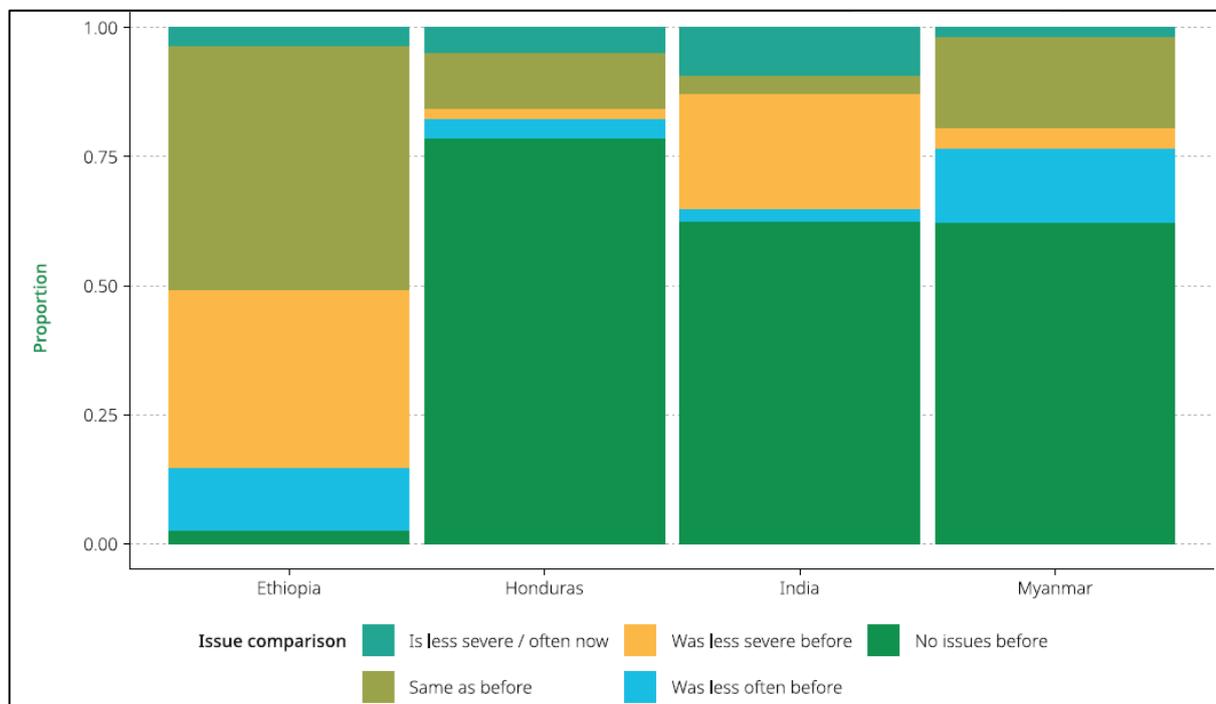
LATEST ESTIMATES BY THE ILO INDICATE THE DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON WOMEN'S JOB LOSSES GLOBALLY. **4.2% OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT WAS DESTROYED AS COMPARED TO 3% OF MEN'S.** FURTHER, IN 2021, THERE WILL BE **13 MILLION FEWER WOMEN IN EMPLOYMENT** COMPARED TO 2019 WHILE MEN'S EMPLOYMENT WOULD HAVE RECOVERED TO 2019 LEVELS.

1.2.1 Garment and apparel sector

Women garment workers comprise around 80% of the workforce in this sector and generally earn the lowest wages – averaging only 88% of what male workers earn (Clean Clothes Campaign, 2021). In this sector, women have been particularly hit due to orders been cancelled or suspended by global buyers.

For those factories where work has been suspended, wages have not been assured (ILO, 2020b). Millions of vulnerable workers in the garment industry have been denied full wages legally owed to them. In Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers Association has reported that over \$2.4 billion of ready-made garment orders have been cancelled or suspended by global buyers. With almost 50% of orders reduced by retailers invoking *force majeure*, over a million workers were dismissed (Taylor, P. and McCarthy, M., 2021; Leitheiser et al., 2020). In Cambodia, workers in garment factories who were suspended due to the pandemic, will only receive 37% of their monthly minimum wage. During the initial pandemic closures, in the readymade garments sector, about 2,138,778 garment workers have been dismissed, the majority of whom are women (ILO, 2020b). Another recently published study based on 1140 garment worker interviews (57% women) across India, Honduras, Ethiopia and Myanmar notes the unequal impacts of the covid pandemic on garment workers, especially women who faced increased gender-discrimination and violence during the pandemic period in garment factories (Figure 4) (LeBaron et al., 2021).

Figure 4: Comparison of forced labour indicators with pre-pandemic (LeBaron et al., 2021).



The recently published Gender Benchmark Report by the World Benchmarking Alliance evaluated the performance of 35 leading garment and apparel companies and found their performance on gender equality to be severely lacking (WBA, 2021). The report investigated various dimensions such the company’s overall gender strategy to specific topics such as benefits, safety and overall well-being (Figure 5).

The report’s call to action asks companies to take an integrated and holistic approach across their entire value chain to understand and respond to the concerns raised by the benchmark report. A key goal should be to understand the interconnectedness between various dimensions of gender equity – pay, benefits, safety, workplace wellbeing and leadership.

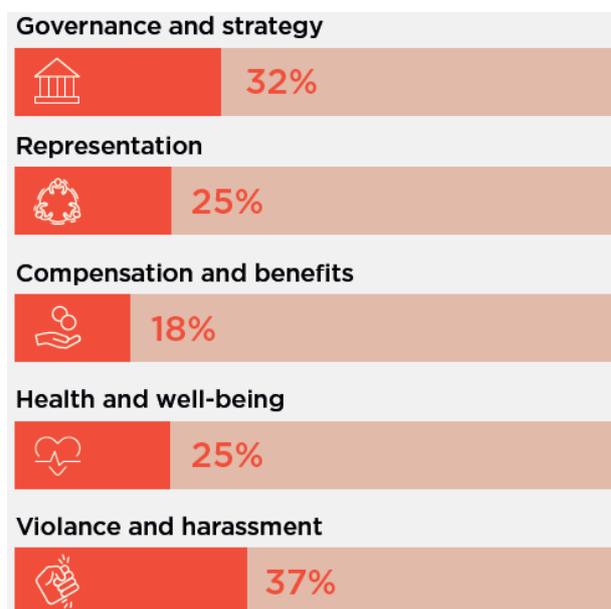


Figure 5: Garment and apparel companies average scores per measurement area in the 2021 Gender Benchmark Report (WBA, 2021).

1.2.2 Large- and small-scale agriculture

COVID-19 has especially threatened smallholder farmers and agricultural workers and market disruptions have affected women in the agricultural sector particularly (House of Commons, 2020; UN, 2020a). In low and middle-income countries, women comprise up to 43% of the agricultural labour force, playing a crucial role in certain commodities such as tea, where they represent half of the workforce and up to 70% in flower plantations (BSR, 2020). Many women also work as seasonal agricultural workers, street vendors or as informal food traders (Burki, T., 2020). Agriculture is the first source of income of almost 80% of women economically active in the poorest countries and at a global level, of the 600 million poor livestock keepers, two-thirds are women.

A drop in farm and off-farm work during the pandemic has increased unemployment and reduced income for women (Neha and Kumar, K., 2021). Floriculture is one of the hardest hit sectors by the pandemic, generating high work insecurity and a precarious situation for many (Hivos, 2020). Workforce in most fresh flower suppliers has been reduced by more than 50 percent and most suppliers have not counted with seasonal workers during the season (BSR, 2020).

1.3 Conclusion

It is too early to know the full impact of the pandemic but research showing the gendered impact of COVID-19 is abundant. Impacts include economic impacts such as increased unemployment and decreased incomes. Women are particularly vulnerable not only due to their presence in sectors that have been hit hardest but also because of their position in the supply chain itself.

A key finding from the research is the fallout of gender-segregation or occupational segregation along gendered lines that increases the vulnerability of one gender unfairly when a crisis hits the sector as a whole (as the covid pandemic has done). As sustainability schemes look at their supply chains, they have an opportunity to give greater consideration to risks related to gender issues.

Part 2: Lessons for response and adaptation by sustainability systems

Sustainability standards are important market-based tools to further sustainability goals and are increasingly used by business across many sectors. Given the wide array of gendered impacts noted above as a result of the pandemic, how have sustainability schemes responded in this context? The following section explores to what extent systems have responded to gender risks and issues in their supply chains. It also shares ideas and innovations by external organisations that may inspire schemes to do more going forward.

2.1 System innovation to identify and respond to gender-related risks

One of the key advantages of sustainability standards is the systems and structures they have in place such as assurance, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) that can be put to good use to gain insight on gender risks and issues within certified entities and across supply chains. In this section, we explore how schemes could adapt their assurance and M&E systems specifically to better pick up and address gender-related risks in their supply chains.

2.1.1. Adaptations to assurance to identify gender risks.

At a generic level, the current pandemic has severely impacted the ability of sustainability systems to perform on-site audits necessitating innovations in assurance activities. In 2020, ISEAL commissioned ASI to identify possible approaches, good auditing practices, and potential areas for alignment between sustainability standards adopting interim solutions to maintain oversight of compliance. The report found that 75% of organisations adopted remote audits where it was not possible to go on-site (ISEAL, 2021). In the same line, a recently published paper examining the audit policy changes of 98 private regulatory programs found that 31 programs offered postponements or extensions and 29 programs offered remote audits (Auld and Renckens, 2021). As noted below, many have implemented new policies to adapt to COVID and implement remote auditing practices (table 1).

The type and level of system adaptation to the covid-pandemic varies greatly across ISEAL member organisations. Some have created COVID hubs to monitor the impact of the pandemic on farmers, others are putting together specific support programmes such as the Fairtrade Producer Relief Fund (Fairtrade, 2020) or Goodweave's Child and Worker Protection Fund (Goodweave, 2020).

Table 1: Sample of sustainability systems new policies to adapt to COVID

Organisation	Policy	Publication
Aluminium Stewardship Initiative	Interim Policy regarding Audits, Audit-related Travel and Coronavirus v4	June 2020
Aquaculture Stewardship Initiative (ASC)	ASC Exit Policy for Audits Conducted Under the ASC COVID-19 Policy	July 2020
FLOCERT	COVID-19 Changes in Operations	July 2020
Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)	COVID-19 Policy Responses	July 2020
GLOBALG.A.P	GLOBALG.A.P Remote	May 2020
Rainforest Alliance	Audit Exception Policy for COVID-19 Guidelines for Conducting Remote Audits	May 2020
Social Accountability Accreditation Services (SAAS)	SAAS COVID-19 Alternative Process Requirements for the SA8000 Program v8	July 2020

There are two main types of adaptations we are seeing on the assurance front in response to the pandemic. The first is to do with considerations around remote (or hybrid) audits – where they can work and where they cannot. This comes with the realisation that conducting effective audits on social issues is a known challenge that is made more difficult in a remote audit situation. The Aluminium Stewardship Initiative has, for example, a process by which it stipulates ‘Unable to audit’ areas. Once flagged, those are followed up by on-site auditors at the next onsite visit (Staniaszek et al., 2020).

The second main adaptation is a growing focus on developing or improving remote worker voice tools as a part of or a supplement to existing assurance activities. This serves two goals - first to improve data gathering and risk identification, second to better align audit data with traditional worker feedback mechanisms. The Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) for instance, has recently piloted the use of a Worker Voice Tool in Pakistan to explore, amongst other objectives, better risk mapping in a remote auditing context. The exercise revealed limitations when trying to reach women because of their poor access to personal phone devices (ISEAL, 2021, forthcoming).

But as the previous section has detailed, COVID-19 is only exacerbating pre-existing gender risks and it is important to consider this dimension as part of innovations and adaptations to assurance. Considering this gender lens, important questions can be asked about some of the innovations underway. For example, as schemes explore a shift to hybrid and remote auditing models, do these changes increase or decrease audit effectiveness to pick up on gender risks? Do remote audits have better or worse results with regard to capturing feedback from women workers? Can new initiatives around the effective use of technology to support audits also be used to pick up site-specific gender risks or challenges?

Our research suggests that much more thinking can be done along these lines as part of current innovations and adaptations that schemes are investing in. Although raising significant challenges, the pandemic also offers the opportunity to do better on the integration of the gender lens into assurance activities. There are resources to help schemes do this effectively. In 2018, BSR published guidance on gender equality and social auditing, which has become a reference when it comes to integrating a

gender lens into social auditing (BSR, 2018). UN Women has recently published a guide on incorporating gender-related COVID-19 risks into each stage of the audit cycle (See figure 6 below) (UN Women, 2020c).

Figure 6: Incorporating the intersection of gender and COVID-19 into each stage of the audit cycle (UN Women, 2020c).

		RELEVANT RISKS	CONSIDERATIONS
AUDIT STAGE	1 PROACTIVE STRATEGY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of audit plan relevance Lack of agility in risk assessments Lack of systems flexibility to address emerging concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has our risk profile significantly changed? How does this change impact gender-specific risks? Do we have systems in place to address the emerging risks in the context of gender mainstreaming? Should there be a focus on proactive engagements including advisory and support components rather than gender related regular audits? How are we equipped to provide proactive advice to management in terms of gender-responsible interventions?
	2 AUDIT STAFF WELLBEING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and safety risks for personnel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the Business Continuity Plan specifically address the unique needs of female and male personnel, as well as risks, when working remotely? Consider how to reorganize existing engagements given remote working requirements taking into account the specific needs of single parents. Implement cost-effective remote auditing which does not expose our personnel to harm.
	3 AUDIT ENGAGEMENT PLANNING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk assessments conducted for interventions do not focus on gender-specific risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does audit engagement include gender-related risks? Is the team up-to-date on evolving gender-specific concerns? Is the data collection for the engagement sufficient to understand gender mainstreaming behind the audit topic? Is data disaggregated by gender? Has the office or function being reviewed included gender aspects in its COVID-19 strategies?
	4 AUDIT WORK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inability to demonstrate gender-responsive results during/ after the crisis Lack of coordination between implementing partners and governments may impede implementation of interventions Interventions are gender blind Theory of Change and results framework in project documents are not gender-specific Beneficiary selection criteria is too generic to ensure that the most vulnerable groups of women are targeted There is no effective monitoring covering gender-specific indicators so the actual beneficiaries are not those targeted by the project Data collected against project progress is not sufficiently disaggregated to analyse the impact on women and girls Lack of capacity on the ground may result in less effective design and implementation of interventions and therefore not achieve planned impact on women's lives. Existing budgets may not be able to cover the additional costs incurred. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the relevant results framework include specific and measurable indicators that can demonstrate the results and impact of gender-responsive programming? Has the office included gender aspects in its COVID-19 appeal and working priorities? Has the office performed a COVID-19 risk assessment? How was gender mainstreamed in this assessment? Does it include all emerging risks? How are these risks to be mitigated? Is there a need to develop new outputs and results or revisit existing indicators (e.g. crisis response times)? Do pandemic interventions include gender perspectives? Do programme documents outline the main barriers to equality for women, men, girls and boys, e.g. do cash-for-work programmes specifically target women? Do GBV interventions cover the COVID-19 context? Are women and girls, and relevant civil society organizations, consulted during the project design phase? Are women and girls consulted as part of monitoring? Do they have equal access to provide feedback? Is the existing data collection and validation workflow gender-sensitive? Are staff and implementing partners trained in sex-disaggregated data collection? Has the implementing partner capacity been assessed on an ongoing basis to determine the needs and ability to ensure duty of care (i.e. capacity for moving to online implementation, ability to cover extra costs of doing business differently, costs of procuring necessary safety equipment to keep employees safe, etc.) Procurement – Does the entity have a gender-responsive procurement policy? This may help to support local women who are experiencing economic hardship under crisis. Are emergency procedures being used? Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) – does the PSEA policy specifically address the risks faced by women and girls within the context of the COVID-19 outbreak and does it include sufficient reporting and investigation mechanisms? Is the policy well understood and effectively implemented?
	5 REPORTING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk of alienating target beneficiary groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has gender-related data been presented sensitively? Avoid referring to persons infected with COVID-19 as "cases" or "victims".

2.1.2 Improving data collection and analysis to identify risks and patterns.

A second clear message from all the gender-focussed research is the importance of good, well-established gender-data gathering systems. In order to formulate adequate response strategies to gender issues, schemes first need to have data about the scale and nature of gender inequities within their supply chains or at the level of certified entities such as farms, factories and enterprises.

The importance of collecting gender-disaggregated data

There is limited availability of sex and age-disaggregated data across supply chains that is hampering analysis of the gendered implications of COVID-19 and the development of appropriate responses.

Collecting the right data in a systematic way has huge implications and can increase understanding of the needs and challenges of women in their supply chains and come up with potential solutions. Unfortunately, the lack of gender data is a chronic historical issue. Particularly at lower tiers of global supply chains and in particular sectors such as small-scale agriculture and the informal market, where many women are concentrated, data is lacking. The contribution that women make in these sectors is hidden by the fact that data is normally captured at producer group or cooperative level, usually based on land tenure (WOW, 2020).

In addition, schemes may not be gathering the right data to shed light on key gender equities. For example: in order to respond to issues such as the gender wage gap, schemes need to capture wages by job category and gendered split within that job category across all certified entities. Similarly, to identify risks related to occupational segregation, schemes need to have a good sense of the share of women and men working in various job categories or occupational profiles. There are a few current efforts to develop a comprehensive list of gender indicators and data needed to holistically assess gender inequities at the workplace and supply chain level. One example below is the Gender Benchmark Methodology of the World Benchmarking Alliance (Figure 7) (WBA, 2020).

Figure 7: World Benchmarking Alliance Gender Benchmark Methodology (WBA, 2020).

WEIGHTING	MEASUREMENT AREAS	WORKPLACE	SUPPLY CHAIN
20%	GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGY 1 Strategic action 2 Senior leadership accountability 3 Gender-responsive human rights due diligence process 4 Sex-disaggregated data	5 Grievance mechanism 6 Employee engagement 7 External stakeholder engagement	8 Commitment in the supply chain 9 Grievance mechanism 10 Corrective action process
17.5%	REPRESENTATION	11 Gender equality in leadership 12 Professional development and promotion 13 Occupational segregation 14 Turnover and absenteeism	15 Gender equality in leadership 16 Non-discrimination against pregnant and/or married women workers 17 Enabling environment for freedom of association and collective bargaining 18 Gender-responsive procurement
17.5%	COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS	19 Gender pay gap 20 Primary/secondary carer leave 21 Childcare and other family support 22 Flexible work	23 Formal contracts 24 Living wage 25 Family-friendly benefits provision
17.5%	HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	26 Health information and services	27 Safe and healthy work environment 28 Health information and services
17.5%	VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT	29 Violence and harassment prevention 30 Violence and harassment remediation	31 Violence and harassment prevention 32 Violence and harassment remediation
5%	MARKETPLACE	33 Marketing content	
5%	COMMUNITY	34 Community support	

Data collection is not just a job of the auditing process and can be gathered by multiple tools: self-assessment tools, worker surveys via questionnaires, worker interviews via focus groups and by establishing gender-responsive grievance mechanisms. Some schemes have used other means to identify risks such as local media monitoring or indices to identify country-specific risks (e.g SDG

gender index or UNDP gender social norms index). Others have made the collection of sex or gender-disaggregated data a requirement of their revised standard (Rainforest Alliance, 2020). Workforce profiling is also proving essential for that purpose¹.

Once data is gathered, one should ask questions to assess gender-based opportunities and risks across the scheme. Questioning the nature, likelihood of the risk we are identifying, and the potential for this risk to be contextual is particularly relevant in the context of the pandemic. Has our risk profile significantly changed? How does this change impact gender-specific risks? What is the likelihood of the risk occurring? What is the significance of the actual or potential risk? Some schemes are innovating to include risk assessments in their systems². As part of our research, the table below captures gender frameworks and tools that might be helpful when thinking about improving data collection (including selection of indicators) and analysis of gender risks.

Table 2: Gender frameworks and tools that support data collection.

World Benchmarking Alliance	Assesses and compares how companies are driving and promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment across their entire value chain.
COVID-19 and gender rapid self-assessment tool (UN Women)	The tool enables companies to assess their COVID-19 response and ensure they are supporting women during and beyond the crisis with gender-sensitive measures throughout their value chain.
WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool	Business-driven tool designed to help companies from around the world assess gender equality performance across the workplace, marketplace, and community.
UNDP’s Gender Equality Seal	Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme for Public and Private Enterprises is a collective effort involving national governments, private sector companies and civil society to establish and achieve standards that empower women.
Equileap’s Gender Equality Global Report & Ranking	The ranking research and rank over 3,500 public companies around the world using the Gender Equality Scorecard.
Bloomberg’s Gender Equality Index	The Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index (GEI) tracks the performance of public companies committed to disclosing their efforts to support gender equality
Corporate Human Rights Benchmark (CHRB)	First open and public benchmark of corporate human rights performance
ETI gender dimensions of the Base Code Standards	Aims to help businesses understand the likely gender issues in their supply chains and provide guidance on how to respond to them.
Sedex risk assessment tool	Supplier risk assessment tool to identifying and managing risks in supply chains. Includes a Sedex self-assessment questionnaire to capture gender disaggregated data.

2.1.3 Gender due diligence

In addition to system adaptations noted above related to assurance and data-collection, gender-responsive human rights due diligence processes are rapidly gaining momentum as tools to collect

¹ In 2018, BCI introduced the ‘co-farmer’ concept. The concept aims to recognise women’s contribution to cotton production and fight the lack of gender data (BCI, 2019).

² The Gender in-depth Risk Assessment Tool supports farms and groups in identifying gender issues. This is part of an improvement requirements of Rainforest Alliance 2020 Sustainable Agriculture Standard. At the beginning of each certification cycle, the gender committee will complete the Gender in-depth Risk Assessment Tool (Rainforest Alliance, 2020).

and analyse data around gender-related human rights risks or violations. Human rights due diligence is the action taken by a company to identify and act upon actual and potential risks for workers in its operations, supply chains and the services it uses. Due diligence is an essential step in respecting workers' rights as promoted through the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

A gender-responsive human rights due diligence process expands on diverse national and international legal frameworks such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD Guidelines. Gender-responsive human rights due diligence ensures a complete integration of a gender lens in the due diligence process. It has components of risk identification and assessment as well as mitigation, remediation, and monitoring. As schemes consider how they can be effective partners to support business-led due diligence efforts, it might be worth considering how their gender-related data can support gender-responsive due diligence efforts as well.

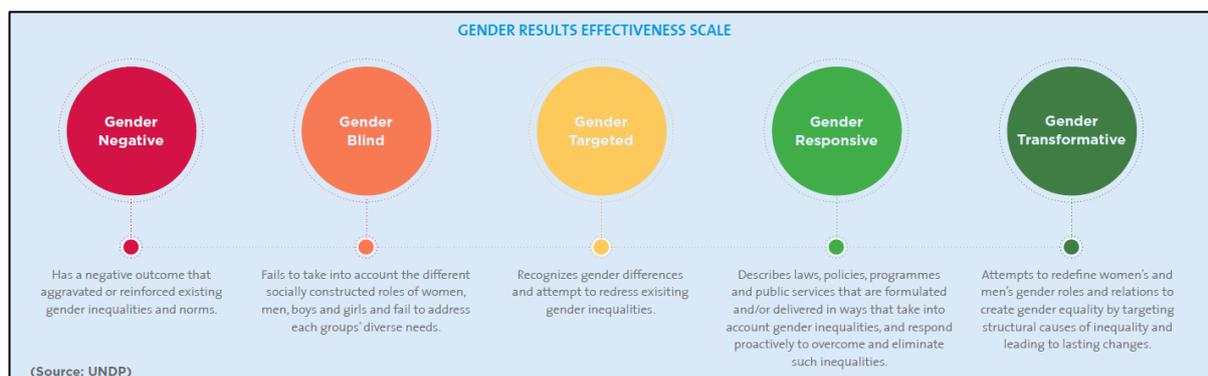
A number of tools are available that put forward frameworks or tools for gender-responsive human rights due diligence.

- A Framework for Gender Responsive Due Diligence (BSR) / The Gender Data and Impact (GDI) tool (BSR)
- Human rights due diligence framework (Ethical Trading Initiative) / Base Code Guidance Gender and human rights due diligence (Ethical Trading Initiative).
- A gender-responsive human rights due diligence tool (Girls Advocacy Alliance)

2.2 Adopting a gender strategy for the system

At the end of the day, what schemes are doing about gender - in assurance, data collection or any other sphere - has a lot to do with how gender-responsive their scheme is on the whole. Just as with individual companies, having a gender strategy in place that adopts a holistic gender lens across the scheme and its activities will make undertaking some of the adaptations suggested above easier and more impactful. Schemes may have a spectrum of engagement on gender as an issue but, as noted in the chart below (figure 8), they must at least ensure that their activities are not gender-negative or further exacerbating existing gender inequities as the pandemic has.

Figure 8: Gender results effectiveness scale (UN Women, 2020c).



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Acknowledgments

ISEAL would like to thank all engaged organizations for their invaluable time and contribution to this document. This work was funded by a grant to ISEAL from IDH, the Sustainable Trade Initiative. This report was written by an ISEAL team comprising of Rita Mendez, Senior Coordinator with editorial support from Vidya Rangan, Senior Manager.

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