

Unilever Human Rights Case Study

Collaborating to drive systemic change for women in our value chain

September 2024

Women can be held back from playing a full part in the workplace, their community and the economy because of the violence and discrimination they face. We are committed to respecting women's rights, and we have zero tolerance of any form of discrimination or harassment. As salient issues for Unilever, our strategies to address discrimination and bullying and harassment focus on interventions in the supply chains of key commodities such as tea, palm, and sugar as well as high-risk countries such as Brazil, Mexico, Indonesia, and India. Examples of this work include the [Women's Safety Accelerator Fund](#) (WSAF) and a strategic partnership in our sugar supply chain with Bonsucro.

In 2020, WSAF was launched in India, bringing together Unilever with stakeholders from the tea industry such as [IDH](#) and the [Ethical Tea Partnership](#), as well as retailers and brands such as Tesco, Twinings and Taylors of Harrogate, to create safer workplaces for women working in our tea supply chain. Over the course of 3 years, we engaged over 300 tea estates to improve their understanding of the rights of women and girls. Simultaneously, we collaborated with the management of these estates to establish standard response mechanisms for women's safety and dignity.

By the end of 2023, WSAF had benefited 358,205 people working on tea plantations, including 238,372 women and providing upskilling and leadership capacity to increase their representation in both supervisory roles and unions. Over 747,467 community members have been reached through awareness raising programmes that aim to drive attitudinal changes within the communities that workers live. Further information can be found [here](#).

Whilst the WSAF model is a scalable approach, sustainable change requires longer-term engagement. Following completion of the first phase of the project, the fund now looks to replicate this model and scale up both in tea and in other regions and sectors.

In addition to our collaboration with WSAF, we recently entered into a project partnership with a peer consumer goods company with financial support from the Bonsucro Impact Fund. Bonsucro is a global sustainability platform and standard for sugarcane, one of the world's most important crops, with the purpose of collectively accelerating the sustainable production and use of sugarcane, focusing on climate action, human rights, and value in the supply chain.

This project aims to identify systemic issues including forced labour, discrimination, and harassment in two of our largest sugar sourcing countries – Thailand and India. This project focuses on the views and experiences of migrant

workers to improve understanding of the root causes of forced labour and discrimination issues that exist within the sugar value chain and to help to strengthen human rights due diligence systems through effectively identifying, preventing, mitigating, and remedying issues.

We will be engaging suppliers that employ between 300-500 workers to participate in the programme. A representative sample of responses, gathered via digital tools developed specifically with their circumstances and situation in mind, will help to build up a picture of the challenges they may face. The survey data will also explore how gender, migration status and other factors can influence their risk of exploitation. Key corrective actions will be shared via public-private engagements between key industry stakeholders to influence policy development and secure support needed to drive change at a national and sectoral level. We will provide further updates on this project and WSAF in 2025 on [Unilever.com](https://www.unilever.com).

This case study includes information relating to the following UN Guiding Principles Reporting Framework questions:

A1.2 | A2.5 | B1 | B3 | C2.1 | C2.2 | C2.3 | C3.1 | C4.3 | C5.1 | C6.1