

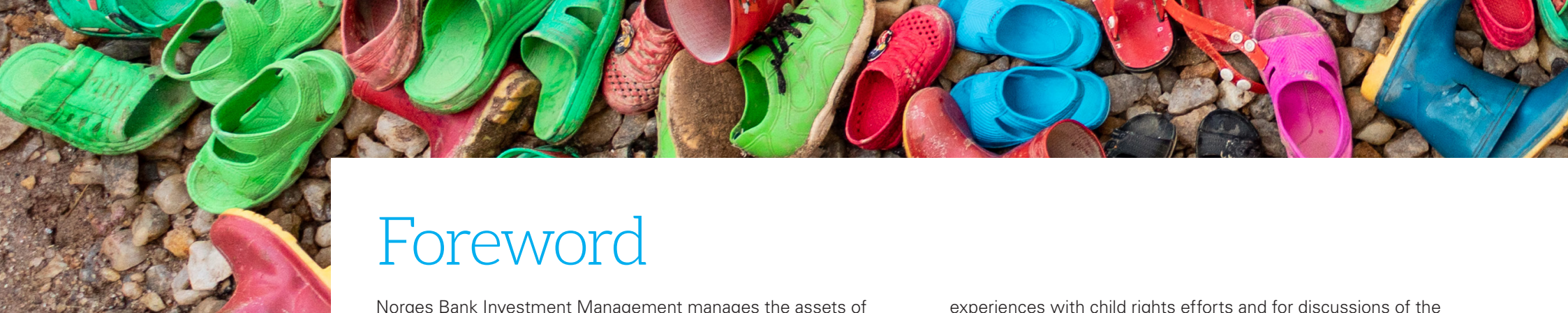


# NETWORK ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN THE GARMENT & FOOTWEAR SECTOR

Summary Report (2017–2019)







# Foreword

Norges Bank Investment Management manages the assets of the Norwegian Government Pension Fund Global. Our mission is to safeguard and build financial wealth for future generations. We do this within our objective to secure the highest possible return with moderate risk. Responsible investment is at the core of this objective. It supports the long-term economic performance of our investments and reduces financial risks associated with the environmental and social practices of companies in our portfolio.

Children's rights have been a focus area for us since 2008 when we published our first set of expectations of companies. Children are the basis for future prosperity – and they are also vulnerable members of society. For us, respecting children's rights is an inherent part of good business practice and risk management.

In 2017, together with UNICEF, we established a children's rights network for companies in the garment and footwear sector. Our aim was to facilitate dialogue between leading brands and retailers in the industry about how children are affected in supply chains, what the related risks are, and how companies can improve their respect for and work on children's rights. Over time, our ambition is to contribute to improved market practices among companies and greater respect for children's rights.

In the past two years, the network has regularly brought together companies and subject-matter experts for in-person workshops and group calls. The network has been a forum for exchange of

experiences with child rights efforts and for discussions of the challenges and opportunities related to the integration of child rights in responsible sourcing programmes.

This has also been an opportunity for us at Norges Bank Investment Management to enhance our own understanding of how companies manage child rights risks. Reflecting some of the discussions in the network, we updated our public company expectations on children's rights in 2019, emphasizing the importance for children's rights of decent working conditions for young workers, parents and carers.

Today we publish the network's summary report along with a practical guidance tool for companies. The guidance tool is intended for use by company practitioners who would like to integrate child rights in their responsible sourcing policies and practices and explore appropriate mechanisms for their supply chain. The tool also contains suggested metrics that companies can use to monitor and report on their own processes and on outcomes at factory level.

We want to thank UNICEF, the companies and experts that have participated in the network. Our collaboration has led to improved understanding and clarity on an important topic. We now encourage others to explore and make use of the guidance tool. We hope that we can continue this conversation together.



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**Carine Smith Ihenacho**  
Chief Corporate Governance Officer  
Norges Bank Investment Management



# Foreword

A garment and footwear sector that upholds the rights of children and guarantees decent work for parents and caregivers has the potential to positively transform the lives of millions of families around the world. It can strengthen local communities, promote skills, training and education, and support children of parents who work in the sector as they aspire to reach their fullest potential.

We have seen tremendous progress in the fight against child labour in recent years. Its gradual decline has taken place against the backdrop of a concerted and sustained effort at global and national levels. Many multinational companies have adopted codes of conduct prohibiting child labour in all its forms. Focusing on root causes, improving access to and the quality of education, addressing issues around poverty and inequity, strengthening legal and policy frameworks, and creating better coordination across governments and industry appear to be a winning formula.

Yet, the lives of children are touched by the garment and footwear sector in many more ways than just child labour. As dependents of workers and community members living near farms and factories, children are affected every day. It is imperative that we address their challenges holistically, tackling squarely issues that pertain to decent work deficits, weak maternity protection, the absence of childcare support, environmental impacts, and access to basic services, including health and nutrition, to name a few. These are common challenges in garment communities across many countries, and

they affect the lives of millions of workers and children.

We cannot shift the dial on these issues alone. We can only realize the opportunities associated with a responsible and sustainable industry in collaboration with others. At UNICEF, we are deeply grateful for the partnership with Norges Bank Investment Management, with which we have joined efforts to bring together a variety of stakeholders including some of the world's largest apparel and footwear brands, to lead the change we wish to see – a world in which all children enjoy all their rights, everywhere.

This report summarizes the outcomes of these discussions and suggests promising ways forward. Together with an accompanying guidance tool for companies, this report reminds us of the urgency with which we must act. There has never been a more important time than now – a time in which the socio-economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown into sharp relief the vulnerabilities of workers and their families.

What lies before us is a critical opportunity to 'build back better' and to realize a garment and footwear sector that supports the rights of every child. We look forward to continuing the dialogue and working with our partners to help foster a new reality that is better for children than the old.



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**Charlotte Petri Gornitzka**  
Deputy Executive Director  
United Nations Children's Fund



# Introduction

This report presents a summary of the activities and outputs of the Network on Children's Rights in the Garment & Footwear Sector (the network). The network was established in November 2017 by Norges Bank Investment Management and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Its purpose was to provide a platform for dialogue between international garment and footwear brands and retailers, manufacturers and sustainability experts. The aim was to identify challenges, explore solutions and share innovative practices to improve the impact on

children's rights in the global garment and footwear supply chain.<sup>1</sup>

The network was active for two years, between November 2017 and November 2019. It was succeeded by a peer-learning group of companies that participated in the network. The peer-learning group seeks to build on network learnings and support the practical integration of children's rights in human rights due diligence and responsible sourcing.

## Network participants

The network brought together leading garment and footwear companies from Asia, Europe and the US, representing a market value of more than US\$280 billion. The companies represented in the network covered more than one million employees in their own operations and an estimated eight million workers in the garment and footwear supply chain.<sup>2</sup>

The network also involved experts from international and non-governmental organizations, local civil society groups and business and human rights experts. The network was led by UNICEF with support from Norges Bank Investment Management.

### Network participants included:

Companies: adidas AG, Carrefour SA, Hennes & Mauritz AB, Kering SA, Li & Fung Ltd, Tesco PLC, Next, The Walt Disney Co, VF Corporation

Organizations and experts involved in workshops and seminars: Article One, Better Work, Center for Child Rights and Corporate Social Responsibility (CCR CSR), Fair Labor Association (FLA), International Labour Organization (ILO), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Phulki (Bangladesh)

<sup>1</sup> The network focused on addressing the impact on children in supply chains. It did not address the many other ways in which children can be affected in the garment and footwear sector, such as through marketing practices, advertising, product safety and working conditions for employees in the companies' own operations.

<sup>2</sup> Rough estimates based on information provided by the companies in the first workshop, as well as desk research.



Aysha Khatun, 16, tailoring clothes at her home in Nimtala, Satkhira, in southwestern Bangladesh.

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# Main objectives of the network

The network was established to provide a forum to enhance the understanding of the impact on children in the garment and footwear supply chain and improve business practices for children in sourcing activities. Specifically, the network's objectives were to:

- Deepen the understanding of the ways in which children are directly and indirectly affected in addition to child labour, both positively and negatively;
- Facilitate peer learning, and disseminate innovative and good practice examples of the embedding of children's rights in human rights due diligence and responsible sourcing frameworks;
- Contribute to improved monitoring, assessment and disclosure of children's rights and the measures taken by companies to improve the management of children's rights in the supply chain over time.

***The network brought together leading garment and footwear companies from Asia, Europe and the US, representing a market value of more than US\$280 billion.***

# Key activities and outputs

**Second workshop in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in May 2018, attended by 25 representatives from five international brands and retailers, six manufacturers, civil society groups, Norges Bank Investment Management and UNICEF.**

## Workshops and webinars

The network organized three in-person workshops, four webinars, and several bilateral company conversations between November 2017 and May 2019. The workshops were held in Geneva, Switzerland, and Dhaka, Bangladesh. In addition, network insights were presented at a seminar on child rights metrics in global supply chains, organized by UNICEF, and during a UNICEF-led session at the OECD Forum on Due Diligence in the Garment and Footwear Sector in 2019.



## Development of practical company guidance

During the discussion at the first workshop, participants expressed the need for more research and evidence on the different ways in which children are affected in the supply chain in addition to child labour (such as working conditions for parents and living conditions for workers and their families). They suggested that the network develop practical guidance for companies on the effective integration of children's rights in human rights due diligence and responsible sourcing practices.

Responding to these suggestions and recognizing current gaps, UNICEF partnered with Article One, a business and human rights consultancy, to develop a guidance tool on children's rights in the garment and footwear supply chain.<sup>3</sup> The guidance tool outlines practical steps that companies can take – individually and collectively – to embed children's rights in company policy and practice in the supply chain. The document was designed to:

- synthesize evidence on the impact on children in the garment and footwear supply chain;
- review and identify limitations in prevailing company approaches to managing children's rights;
- suggest concrete steps to integrate children's rights into approaches to responsible supply chain management.

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF, Children's Rights in the Garment and Footwear Supply Chain: A Practical Tool for Integrating Children's Rights into Responsible Sourcing Frameworks, 2020, <[www.unicef.org/reports/childrens-rights-in-garment-and-footwear-supply-chain-2020](http://www.unicef.org/reports/childrens-rights-in-garment-and-footwear-supply-chain-2020)>, accessed 9 June 2020.



The guidance tool was developed in 2018 and 2019 based on discussions during the workshops and webinars, a detailed literature and desk review of the children's rights practices of 25 leading garment and footwear companies, and in-depth interviews with companies in the network.

The guidance tool and its suggested practical steps for companies do not propose the creation of parallel processes. Instead, they seek to support the integration of children's rights within existing responsible sourcing policies and practices.

Moreover, the guidance tool includes a comprehensive set of metrics that can support the continuing assessment and reporting of children's rights integration, including outcomes for working parents and children. These metrics are designed for use by garment and footwear buyers (for instance, brands and retailers) as well as by manufacturers who seek to assess their potential and actual impact on children's rights in their operations and supply chains and to monitor progress over time.

A first draft version of the guidance tool was presented to network participants at the third in-person workshop in Geneva in November 2018. Following comprehensive feedback, a revised version was shared for further feedback with network participants in 2019. Companies in the network and peer-learning group had the opportunity to further discuss the recommendations and draft metrics before the guidance tool was published in June 2020.<sup>4</sup>



Excerpt from an initial draft of the child rights guidance tool, including corresponding metrics.

Children's rights guidance tool published in June 2020. The tool summarizes evidence on the impact on children in the garment and footwear supply chain and practical steps, including metrics, that companies can take to embed child rights in company policy and practice.

***“From a child rights perspective, our current audit scope covers the presence of child labour, and only if required by local law, maternity protections, breastfeeding corners and in-factory childcare.”***

Company representative in the first workshop in Geneva, November 2017

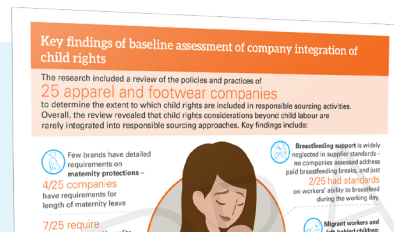
<sup>4</sup> UNICEF, Children's Rights in the Garment and Footwear Supply Chain: A Practical Tool for Integrating Children's Rights into Responsible Sourcing Frameworks, 2020, <[www.unicef.org/reports/childrens-rights-in-garment-and-footwear-supply-chain-2020](http://www.unicef.org/reports/childrens-rights-in-garment-and-footwear-supply-chain-2020)>, accessed 9 June 2020.

# Key discussion topics and insights from the network

## 1 Expanding the focus beyond child labour

When the network first convened, Article One reviewed children's rights integration in responsible sourcing practices among 25 leading garment and footwear companies. The review showed that, beyond child labour, children's rights are rarely included explicitly in sustainability commitments, codes of conduct or human rights due diligence processes. The review, which included bilateral company interviews, showed that many companies operate within narrow definitions of children's rights.

Key findings of the assessment of child rights integration among 25 apparel and footwear brands and retailers



Most importantly, existing practices and standards typically tended to exclude the situation of working parents, especially mothers. For instance, just four out of the 25 companies reviewed referenced entitlements to maternity leave in their supplier codes of conduct. Most companies referred to compliance with local law, and only one company required a minimum maternity leave period that meets international standards set by the International Labour Organization (14 weeks).

Furthermore, only seven out of the 25 companies expressly required that suppliers pay legally mandated maternity benefits. As the network activities progressed, UNICEF presented findings from factory and community assessments in Bangladesh and Viet Nam.<sup>5</sup> These assessments provided insights into the ways children are affected directly and indirectly in both the factory and community context.

They emphasized that impacts on children in the factory and

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