



Fact Sheet: The Dindigul Agreement to End Gender-Based Violence and Harassment

Background: In April 2022, Indian women- and Dalit-worker led union TTCU signed a historic agreement with clothing and textile manufacturer Eastman Exports to end gender-based violence and harassment at Eastman factories in Dindigul, in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, India. TTCU, GLJ-ILRF, and AFWA also signed a legally binding agreement, subject to arbitration, with multinational fashion company H&M, which has an ongoing business relationship with Eastman Exports. This agreement requires H&M to support and enforce the TTCU-Eastman Exports agreement. Under the terms of the agreement, if Eastman Exports violates its commitments, H&M is obligated to impose business consequences on Eastman Exports until Eastman comes into compliance.

Together, these interlocking agreements constitute the Dindigul Agreement – an “enforceable brand agreement” (EBA) in which multinational companies legally commit to labor and allies to use their supply chain relationships to support a worker- or union-led program at certain factories or worksites.

Signatories:

- *Union* – Tamil Nadu Textile and Common Labour Union (TTCU)
- *Supplier* – Eastman Exports Global Clothing Pvt. Ltd. (Eastman Exports)
- *Fashion company* – H&M Group (H&M) (owns H&M, COS, Arket, Monki, & Other Stories)
- *US and regional allies* – Asia Floor Wage Alliance (AFWA) and Global Labor Justice - International Labor Rights Forum (GLJ-ILRF)

Scope: The Dindigul Agreement covers all workers at Natchi Apparel and Eastman Spinning Mills, in total over 5000 workers. Almost all workers at these units are women and are caste-oppressed, and the majority are Dalit, born into the lowest rung of Hinduism’s caste system and subject to severe discrimination. Many are 18-22 years old, and many are migrants from neighboring states who live in management-owned dormitories and do not speak the local language. The Dindigul Agreement lasts three years with the possibility of renewal.

Components to end gender-based violence and harassment: The Dindigul Agreement creates conditions for union-led collective action to end GBVH at Natchi Apparel and Eastman Spinning Mills in the following ways:

- **Enabling collective action on GBVH through AFWA Safe Circles.** The Dindigul Agreement implements AFWA’s [Safe Circles approach](#), a worker- and union-led training,

monitoring, and remediation program to end GBVH in fashion manufacturing, which includes:

- *Training*: TTCU is granted access to train all management, supervisors and workers on GBVH and their rights and responsibilities under the Dindigul Agreement, on full pay during normal working hours.
 - *Shop floor monitoring and remediation*: TTCU will train shop floor monitors, union-selected workers who help their co-workers report GBVH occurring on the shop floor and who hold regular meetings with management to resolve it.
 - *Anti-retaliation protections*: the Dindigul Agreement prohibits retaliation against any worker for participating in or cooperating with the Agreement. Shop floor monitors have heightened protections from retaliation in the form of a rebuttable presumption of retaliatory intent if management or supervisors take any adverse action against them.
- **Adopting global labor standards on GBVH.** The Dindigul Agreement requires Eastman to prohibit gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) in the world of work at included factories as defined by the [ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 \(known as C190\)](#). C190 recognizes that: GBVH includes a wide range of behaviors and harms including physical, psychological, sexual, or economic harms; GBVH at work includes conduct during, linked to or arising out of work, not just at the workplace itself; and that GBVH occurs at the intersection of other forms of discrimination, such as race, migration status or caste.
 - **Protections against caste and migration status based discrimination:** The Dindigul Agreement specifically prohibits GBVH at the intersection of caste or migration status. These critical protections will allow caste-oppressed and migrant workers to monitor, remediate and eliminate these forms of discrimination at the workplace.
 - **Reflecting women garment workers' experience of GBVH.** The Dindigul Agreement requires Eastman to explicitly prohibit at included factories specific forms of GBVH that TTCU and AFWA's Women Leadership Committee of women trade union leaders in the garment sector in Asia have identified as being systemic in fashion manufacturing. Examples include gendered verbal abuse and corporal punishment. Through Safe Circles, women workers will identify specific ways these GBVH practices are happening on the shop floor and work with management to remediate them.
 - **Protecting the right to form and join unions.** The Dindigul Agreement recognizes that GBVH can only be prevented when workers have the right to speak out with a collective voice, and prohibits any violation of workers' rights to form and join unions and engage in collective bargaining under ILO standards on freedom of association.
 - **Building on and strengthening India's mandatory workplace GBVH committees.** India's 2013 Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act requires workplaces to create Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) to receive, investigate and recommend remediation of complaints of GBVH connected to work. The Dindigul Agreement

strengthens these committees at Natchi Apparel and Eastman Spinning Mills in several ways. Under the Agreement, ICCs are composed of a majority of women workers selected by TTCU and can delegate to the roster of independent expert assessors (discussed below) to investigate allegations of GBVH. Upon receiving a complaint, ICCs and assessors are required to ensure worker safety and privacy. If and when the ICC finds GBVH has occurred, Eastman must follow any committee-recommended remedies, which are designed to be survivor focused in process and outcome.

- **A new independent grievance mechanism with business consequences.** The Dindigul Agreement establishes a roster of independent expert assessors, appointed by the Oversight Committee, to directly receive, investigate, and make findings on complaints of Eastman non-compliance with any aspect of the Dindigul Agreement, including Eastman failure to implement any ICC-recommended remedy for GBVH. Independent expert assessors have the power to report to the Oversight Committee if Eastman fails to comply with any aspect of the Dindigul Agreement, which can trigger business consequences from H&M unless Eastman comes into compliance.
- **Transparency and industry learning.** The Dindigul Agreement will make public and key data points about its implementation in order to promote transparency. Recognizing that GBVH in the garment industry in Tamil Nadu is not unique to the included worksites, the signatories will take steps to implement best practices from the Dindigul Agreement at other clothing and textile manufacturers in Tamil Nadu, India.

Governance: The Dindigul Agreement creates an Oversight Committee to supervise the execution of the Agreement, composed of an independent gender and labor rights expert and representatives from TTCU, AFWA, GLJ-ILRF, Eastman, and up to two signatory fashion companies (if additional fashion companies join the Dindigul Agreement). The Oversight Committee role includes receiving any reports from the Agreement’s independent grievance mechanism (discussed below) that Eastman Exports has failed to comply with the Agreement, which also triggers mandatory action from H&M under its legally binding agreement with TTCU, AFWA and GLJ-ILRF.

Enforcement: The Dindigul Agreement includes a legally binding agreement between TTCU, AFWA and GLJ-ILRF and H&M that creates support and accountability for Eastman’s compliance with the terms of Eastman’s agreement with TTCU. H&M is required to take steps to impose business consequences for Eastman Exports if Eastman Exports violates its agreement with TTCU. This agreement is enforceable through binding arbitration in Stockholm, Sweden, the home jurisdiction of H&M. If H&M breaks their contract with TTCU, for example by failing to impose business consequences on Eastman Exports as required, TTCU, AFWA, or GLJ-ILRF or witness signatories can enforce the contract against the fashion company through arbitration. The contract includes clauses from the [Model Arbitration Clauses for the Resolution of Disputes under Enforceable Brand Agreements](#), co-authored by GLJ-ILRF.

Making history: The Dindigul Agreement is the first EBA in India, where clothing manufacturing is the second largest employer for women after agriculture. The Agreement is also the first EBA in the world to include both clothing factories and factories that produce fabric and textiles for use in clothing, Dindigul being a global hub for manufacturing textiles that get used in clothing factories in India and around the world. The Dindigul Agreement was the central demand of the Justice for Jeyasre Campaign, led by TTCU, AFWA and GLJ-ILRF and honors the loss and legacy of Jeyasre Kathiravel, a Dalit woman and TTCU member murdered by her supervisor at Natchi Apparel in January 2021.