

Breakthrough partnership

At C&A Foundation we believe that ending gender-based violence and promoting women's leadership is essential to make fashion a force for good. Women make up 80% of the workforce in the apparel industry and are disproportionately affected by the issues.

In partnership with Breakthrough, a human rights organisation, we take a holistic approach to address gender-based violence (GBV) in the apparel industry in India. Since 2017, we are creating awareness and inspiring garment workers to combat gender based violence (GBV) and discrimination against women within their workplace, in their communities and during their commute to work. As Sohini Bhattacharya, the CEO of Breakthrough puts it, "We are connecting women with each another and facilitating the development of their social capital so that they feel empowered to stand up and speak out against gender-based violence that they experience".

This initiative encompasses strategies that, together, help to create awareness on GBV that women experience, including the root causes and impacts of GBV, and demonstrate to women and men how they can create their own support systems by sharing their challenges and strengths with one another.



Here is how Breakthrough is promoting change:

01.

Constant dialogue

Maintaining constant dialogue with garment worker through participatory events held in factories.

02.

Engage with factory owners

By working with the garment factory owner and management team to make improvements on already existing policies to end gender based violence "including sexual harassment " and discrimination in the workplace.

03.

Media campaigns

Media campaigns in public areas, like bus stops, educate women on how to recognize gender-based violence and where to turn to in case they suffer from it.

04.

Community outreach

Holding events inside factories where women can bring their families, is an interactive way to reach out to the families and communities to address the issue of GBV holistically.

What we've learnt:

To promote significant and long-term changes for women within the workplace, creating co-ownership and sharing responsibilities of this initiative among factory workers, management and other stakeholders is a powerful way of facilitating systems change. Making improvements in the factory's code of conduct, focussing on the legislative provision of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013, was a key strategy. This will impact all of the 65 factories where the factory owner is planning to roll out this initiative

7.5K
garment
workers
(70% are
women)

have already been
directly impacted by
this initiative

130K
garment
workers

from other factories
under the same
management can count
on an improved policy
environment in their
workplace regarding
GBV – thanks to this
initiative

2
million
people

are indirectly impacted
by media campaigns in
the communities
#StreetLink



Insights

Importance of interacting on multiple levels

In a society where gender-based violence has been present for so long, and is normalised to a certain extent, it can be hard for women to envision a world with gender equality and a work environment without discrimination. It takes time. Time which garment workers don't have, as they spend long hours, including Sundays, inside the factories.

The Breakthrough programme #streetlink took a multi-layered approach to reach out to garment workers on their commute and in their local communities by advertising at bus stops. This campaign, together with events held inside the factories, was key to creating awareness on how to identify and fight deeply rooted issues such as sexual intimidation, harassment and gender-based violence in their lives.

By choosing to engage with women and men on multiple levels, Breakthrough is able to have several interactions with workers, communities and facilitate the process of changing perceptions.