



HEAT AND GARMENT WORKERS' RIGHTS

FASHIONING A JUST
TRANSITION

SEPTEMBER 2025

Clean
Clothes
Campaign



CLEAN CLOTHES CAMPAIGN

Clean Clothes Campaign is a global network of over 200 organisations operating in more than 45 countries. Our network connects actors across the garment and sportswear industry, linking home-based worker organisations, grassroots trade unions, women's groups, feminist organisations, activists and other organisations in both garment-producing and consumer market countries. We offer direct solidarity support to workers fighting labour rights violations and we work together for a just transition in the industry.

Clean Clothes Campaign

**SUGGESTED CITATION**

Clean Clothes Campaign (2025) Fashioning a Just Transition: Heat and garment workers' rights. Amsterdam: Clean Clothes Campaign/Schone Kleren Campagne

PUBLICATION DATE

September, 2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Kalpona Akter, Garrett Brown, Repon Chowdhury, Giuseppe Cioffo, Giulia Contes, Krithika Dinesh, Jiska Gojowczyk, Hannelore Hillesum, Lidija Jovanovic, Jason Judd, Christie Miedema, Roy Ngerng, Liz Parker, Brahm Press, Leng Sombath, Carolijn Terwindt, and all the members of the Clean Clothes Campaign working group on just transition for their valuable contributions and exchanges.

CONTACT

Clean Clothes Campaign/Schone Kleren Campagne
info@cleanclothes.org
+31 20 412 27 85
www.cleanclothes.org

FASHIONING A JUST TRANSITION

This publication is part of the Fashioning a Just Transition project co-funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Clean Clothes Campaign/Schone Kleren Campagne and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.



Co-funded by
the European Union

RISING HEAT



Climate change is causing global temperatures to rise and increasing the frequency and intensity of heat waves. The effects of heat are worsened by environmental factors¹, especially in densely populated and industrial areas.

High temperatures - which can also lead to flash flooding and wildfires - exacerbate or bring severe new threats to garment workers, including harm to their health, safety and livelihoods. As the climate and ecological crisis intensifies, the risks to workers' well-being and economic security will continue to grow.

The garment industry is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of heat, as production is often concentratedⁱ in regions already exposed to increased temperatures. Countries heavily reliant on garment exports and highly exposed to heat are especially at risk: six of the "Critical 9" countries for heat stress - Indiaⁱⁱ, China, Indonesia, Pakistan,ⁱⁱⁱ Bangladesh^{iv} and Brazil - are major garment producers.^v The issues are not limited to these countries - garment workers² across garment supply chains, in countries as far apart as Cambodia,^{vi} the Philippines,^{vii} Uganda^{viii} and Serbia^{ix} are also already feeling the strain of rising temperatures at work, whether in factories or at home.

Meanwhile, fashion companies are generating significant greenhouse gases and contributing to serious environmental degradation that are driving higher temperatures, whilst simultaneously making vast profits from the exploited labour of workers who are among the populations suffering first and most from the climate crisis' effects. The solutions to protect workers from the impacts of heat are well established and already in use.³ There is no excuse for governments, suppliers, and brands to delay action or implementation. By failing to act, they continue to expose garment workers to dangerous temperatures, financial insecurity, and uncertain futures.

It is urgent that governments, suppliers and brands take measurable and immediate action to address the impacts of heat on garment workers. This position paper advances concrete actions to protect workers' health and safety and safeguard their livelihoods, that must go hand in hand with respecting all workers' and human rights and reducing greenhouse gases.

IN SHORT, GOVERNMENTS, SUPPLIERS AND BRANDS MUST TAKE URGENT ACTION TO:

- #01 Protect workers' health and safety from heat in the workplace in a way that is worker-driven, inclusive and addresses local contexts.
- #02 Safeguard workers' livelihoods and protect communities from heat risk and impact:
 - A) Protect wages when heat disrupts production.
 - B) Protect workers' livelihoods when heat leads to sickness, injury or job loss.
 - C) Worker-centred heat-adaptation plans to address socio-economic impacts of heat.
- #03 Protect and respect all human and workers' rights regardless of temperature - paying particular attention to the rights of women, home-based workers and migrant workers.
- #04 Mitigate climate change and environmental degradation to reduce heat risk.

[1] See for example the urban heat island effect <https://climate.mit.edu/explainers/urban-heat-islands>.

[2] Whilst the focus is on garment workers' rights, CCC recognises the interconnectedness of fashion, leather, foot-wear, and textile product life-cycles, and believes steps can be adjusted and applied across the sectors.

[3] For reviews of legislation, brand policies, CBAs and other tools to address heat, please refer to the reports listed at the end of the annex.

#01



Protect workers' health and safety from heat in the workplace in a way that is worker-driven, inclusive and addresses local contexts

All workers have the right to protection from the risks that high temperatures pose to their health and safety in the workplace, and to obtain redress when harm results from such exposure. Workplace refers to all production facilities, including the homes of homeworkers, and the commute to and from work.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

High outdoor temperatures, increased radiated heat, high humidity and inadequate airflows increase temperatures in workplaces and on commutes. This affects workers' comfort, physical and mental health, safety and well-being in multiple ways.^x For example, thermal discomfort can lead to workers removing their personal and protective equipment. At more extreme levels, high temperatures can lead to dehydration, dizziness, fatigue and confusion – which in turn can lead to work accidents. In some circumstances, high temperatures can lead to heat stress and heat stroke, which are serious medical conditions. Heat stress can further increase the transmission of some diseases,^{xi} as well as exacerbate underlying health conditions. Heat stroke is a medical emergency and can lead to death.^{xii} High temperatures are also associated with an increase in harassment and bullying, including gender-based harassment and violence.^{xiii}

While the health and safety of all workers can be negatively impacted by high temperatures, different groups are affected in different ways. Women workers,^{xiv} pregnant workers, workers with disabilities and older workers are amongst those who face unique health and safety risks. Other groups of workers, such as those in ironing^{xv} and washing departments, are exposed to higher levels of heat, increasing the likelihood and severity of risks to their health and safety. Migrant workers on non-standard forms of employment (informal workers) may face legal barriers to organising to defend their rights. These workers may also be excluded from social protection in case of health risks, accidents or job loss. Homeworkers may not have means or resources to reduce heat in their homes, compared to some factory workers.

Governments have failed to establish and enforce standards on heat in the workplace (in contrast to regulations on other health and safety issues such as noise). There is also scant evidence that companies^{xvi} are yet to take the issue of heat seriously, and there is currently no enforceable agreement holding companies legally and financially accountable to address health and safety risks to workers from heat.

WHAT SHOULD GOVERNMENTS, SUPPLIERS AND BRANDS DO?

All measures to protect workers must:

- Be gender sensitive and address the specific risks to migrant and homeworkers and take account of localised conditions.
- Give workers, independent trade unions and other forms of independent worker organisations¹ a central role in addressing the dangers of heat.
- Protect all workers if they put forward a grievance about heat or refuse to work because they have a reasonable belief that their health and safety could be endangered due to high temperatures.²
- Address and prevent all health and safety issues including thermal discomfort, harassment in the workplace, as well as mental and physical health.

[1] In most garment and sportswear producing countries and regions trade unions face a hostile environment and, as such, different forms of worker organising have been developed to overcome the barriers, legal and otherwise, that workers face when organising collectively. The crucial characteristic that we expect and demand of such alternative forms of organisations is that they are independent, worker-led organisations that are free from employer, government or political party control. Some of these different forms include (but are not limited to) independent worker committees, women's organisations or non-affiliated and non-legal workplace or sector-level unions. By these means, efforts are made to unite workers transnationally across the supply chain beyond traditional trade union structures.

[2] ILO Convention C155 – Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), Article 13: “A worker who has removed himself from a work situation which he has reasonable justification to believe presents an imminent and serious danger to his life or health shall be protected from undue consequences in accordance with national conditions and practice.”

GOVERNMENTS SHOULD:

- Work with trade unions to set or strengthen sector specific, streamlined standards to protect workers from the effects of heat in the workplace,³ and allocate the resources to state departments to enforce them. This includes standards to monitor heat risks, protect workers from exposure and reduce harm when it occurs, which requires setting temperature limits that will trigger action. Details of measures that should be included in such standards can be found in the annex.
- Ratify and ensure the respect of ILO Convention no. 155 on Occupational Safety and Health and no. 187 on the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health.
- Call for and engage in the negotiation of internationally recognised standards, protocols and enforcement mechanisms to prevent harm to workers' health and safety due to heat. This should include temperature thresholds,⁴ starting from the level of thermal discomfort, that trigger preventative measures - such as adjusted working hours or, if necessary, work stoppages - and the classification of high temperatures as work hazards.
- Provide adequate investment to deliver heat resilience in the workplace - including the homes of home workers and transportation - and workers' residences.

SUPPLIERS SHOULD:

- Protect workers' health and safety from the effects of heat in the workplace according to the highest applicable standard, guidance or best practice⁵ (see annex for details).
- Actively collaborate with independent trade unions, other forms of independent worker organisations⁶ and democratically elected workers' representatives - such as occupational health and safety committees or gender committees - to improve on these protections and make them specific to the locality and workplace.
- Join the International Accord for Health and Safety in the Textile and Garment Industry⁷ if they are active in the countries the Accord currently covers to ensure that workers can use its complaint mechanism to address the effects of heat in the workplace. Accord signatories should use their influence to ensure that it starts inspecting and remediating workplaces on the basis of a heat standard.

BRANDS SHOULD:

- Take decisive action to enable and compel their suppliers to protect workers from the effects of heat in the workplace. Brands should provide financial incentives and investment to suppliers while adjusting their pricing and purchasing practices that are causing or contributing to harmful impacts. Unreasonable and exploitative demands from brands can increase risks for workers who are forced to work long hours to meet production target demands.
- Join the International Accord for Health and Safety in the Textile and Garment Industry⁸ if they are active in the countries the Accord currently covers to ensure that workers can use its complaint mechanism to address the effects of heat in the workplace. Accord signatories should use their influence to ensure that it starts inspecting and remediating workplaces on the basis of a heat standard.
- Work with trade unions, other brands, suppliers, governments and other actors to comprehensively protect workers from heat across the garment sector, including robust regulation and its enforcement.

[3] Workplace refers to all production facilities, including the homes of homeworkers, and the commute to and from work.

[4] For reviews of temperature thresholds and other provisions for specific workplace circumstances in national legislation see the following tables and figures and supporting text:

- 'Overview table' on page 7 in Building and Wood Workers' International (2025) Adapting to the Heat - Existing Global Responses for Workers' Protections in Construction, Building Materials, Wood and Forestry Industries <https://www.bwint.org/BwiNews/NewsDetails?newsId=568>

- Figure 3 on page 23 in ILO (2024) Ensuring safety and health at work in a changing climate. Geneva: International Labour Office https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/ILO_SafeDay24_Report_r11.pdf

- Table 6 on page 44 in ILO (2024) Heat at Work: Implications for Safety and Health. A Global Review of the Science, Policy and Practice. https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/ILO_OSH_Heatstress-R16.pdf

- Table 10 on page 43 in Judd, J., Bauer, A. Kuruvilla, S. And Williams, S. (2023) Higher Ground Report 1: Fashion's climate breakdown and its effect for workers. ILR Global Labor Institute and Schrodgers <https://www.ilr.cornell.edu/global-labor-institute/higher-ground-fashion-climate-breakdown>

[5] A wealth of guidance is already available to support suppliers—for example ILO (2024) Heat at Work: Implications for Safety and Health. A Global Review of the Science, Policy and Practice. https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/ILO_OSH_Heatstress-R16.pdf

[6] See footnote 1 in this section (page 2.)

[7] The Accord provides a unique opportunity for addressing the effect of heat on workers and includes measures on transparency and due diligence in protecting worker safety. It also includes key roles for trade unions as well as financial and legal liability for brands.

[8] See previous footnote

#02



Safeguard workers' livelihoods from heat risk and impact

All workers, including homeworkers and migrant workers, must have the right to:

- A) Have their wages protected, and production targets and working hours adjusted, when high temperatures disrupt production.
- B) Receive full sickness and employment injury payments, benefits, and medical care for illness or injury resulting from heat, and severance payments and benefits when heat risk leads to workplace closure.
- C) Participate in developing localised climate adaptation plans that address how heat will affect jobs and communities, and that protect the right to health, including safe living conditions and housing conditions.

A) Protect wages when heat disrupts production

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

When temperatures rise, production should slow or stop in line with legally mandated or best-practice heat thresholds,¹ triggering protective measures such as equipment or facility shutdowns, shorter hours or more frequent breaks to safeguard workers. High temperatures can also disrupt other parts of supply chains, for example by delaying the transport of raw materials, which can also slow or halt garment production.

Workers must not bear the financial burden of these disruptions. They should never be forced to work longer hours or accept wage losses to cover reduced output. A living wage must be paid even when production targets or working hours are cut. This is particularly important as workers' workload and costs in the household increase during periods of high temperature, for example in terms of energy, transport and healthcare.

GOVERNMENTS SHOULD:

- Introduce or strengthen regulation so that suppliers are compelled to adjust production targets and working hours without reducing pay when heat disrupts production.

SUPPLIERS SHOULD:

- Collaborate with trade unions and workers to identify heat-related risks in the workplace, and with brands and trade unions to adjust production targets, pricing and work schedules, including work stoppage, shorter working days or more frequent breaks, while protecting workers' wages.

BRANDS SHOULD:

- Maintain orders, avoid cancellations, adjust lead times and ensure timely payments to suppliers - even if production is disrupted due to heat - to prevent suppliers from facing financial difficulties that could delay or halt wage payments to their workers or force them to work in unsafe temperatures.
- Pay workers in their supply chains their full, regular wage if their direct employer is unable to do so due to heat related disruption to production.

[1] For discussion of current legislation, collective bargaining agreements and joint protocols of measures to protect workers from heat, see for example Building and Wood Workers' International (2025) Adapting to the Heat - Ex-isting Global Responses for Workers' Protections in Construction, Building Materials, Wood and Forestry Industries. <https://www.bwint.org/BwiNews/NewsDetails?newsId=568>

#02

B) Protect workers' livelihoods when heat leads to sickness, injury or job loss

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Sickness pay and benefits and employment injury benefits are necessary to protect workers' livelihoods in event of illness or injury caused by heat. In addition, workers should not be out of pocket to cover medical costs for illness or injury caused by heat.

Workers may lose their jobs if a workplace closes permanently due to heat. Suppliers may close or relocate workplaces to avoid heat-related risks such as persistently high temperatures or operational disruptions, or if brands stop sourcing from the workplace^{xvii} to reduce heat-related risks and associated costs. During the Covid-19 pandemic, workers repeatedly did not receive their severance pay.

GOVERNMENTS SHOULD:

- Recognise heat related illness and accidents as work accidents or occupational diseases (which, for example allows for compensation in accordance with ILO convention 121 on employment injury benefits).
- Expand coverage and enforcement of medical care, income replacement during sickness and protection from employment-related injuries for all workers affected by heat-related illness or injuries - in accordance with ILO Conventions no. 102, 130 and 121.
- Hold suppliers accountable for the non-payment of social security contributions. This is especially important for extending protections to workers on non-standard forms of employment (informal) and precarious workers, as per ILO Resolution no. 202, which advocates for universal access to basic social protection.
- Support the global Severance Guarantee Fund, as a structural solution to widespread severance theft in the garment manufacturing sector.^{xviii} Such a fund is in line with ILO Convention no. 173, which addresses protection for workers in the event of employer insolvency and termination.

SUPPLIERS SHOULD:

- Pay legally mandated employee and employer social security contributions.
- Build up additional funds to the highest of applicable standard among existing regulations, ILO guidance or recognised best practices and pay workers full sickness, employment injury and severance pay.
- Support the global Severance Guarantee Fund, which supports suppliers in their compliance with their duty to pay severance after bankruptcy or mass dismissal.

BRANDS SHOULD:

- Pay full sickness and employment injury pay and benefits in line with international labour standards such as ILO Convention no. 102, 130 and 121 for heat related illness and injury if employers and governments fail to do so.
- Sign and implement the Pay Your Workers Agreement, which establishes a Severance Guarantee Fund with financial obligations for brands, and a worker grievance mechanism to guarantee that workers who lose their jobs are paid their legally owed severance.



#02

C) Worker-centred heat-adaptation plans addressing socio-economic impacts

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

At least 72 million people are involved in garments, footwear, leather and textile production.^{xi} Heat not only poses far-reaching risks to these workers in terms of health, safety, pay, benefits and wages. The harm extends well beyond these immediate workplace impacts to create ripple effects across entire communities, affecting housing conditions, social inclusion and economic well-being. It threatens long-term employment prospects in the garment industry,^{xx} can drive forced migration^{xxi} and reduce remittances from urban to rural areas.^{xxii}

Adaptation planning can anticipate and respond to these risks beyond the workplace. Effective plans address social dialogue, equitable access to new or changing jobs and training, safe and accessible transportation and protections for workers' rights, incomes and working conditions. They must be inclusive and worker-focused, using language and approaches accessible to workers and ensure meaningful participation of all workers, including women, migrant and home-workers.

Adaptation plans may be developed at community, company, or national levels. Governments hold primary responsibility for leading heat adaptation planning, particularly in nationally important sectors such as garment manufacturing. Plans may focus specifically on heat, be part of broader just transition strategies or extend beyond the garment industry. Regardless of scale or scope, all plans must be worker-driven, gender-sensitive, inclusive and localized, so that those most affected play a central role in shaping responses and so that local conditions are addressed.

Without planning, heat will continue to disproportionately affect the most precarious and least protected workers and their communities - including women, migrants, homeworkers and other marginalised workers - who are also least likely to benefit equitably from training and education opportunities.

GOVERNMENTS SHOULD:

- Co-create and monitor worker-centred adaptation plans in collaboration with independent trade unions, other forms of independent worker organisations² and other civil society organisations. Plans should address the socio-economic and livelihood impacts of heat, be gender-sensitive, inclusive and localized, and align with the ILO Guidelines for a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All.^{xxiii} Key components include:

- Reskilling and upskilling to support safer, more resilient employment.
- Upgrades to workplaces, residences and surrounding environments for heat resilience.
- Equitable access to jobs, training and safe transportation, with particular attention to women, migrant and home workers.
- Protection of labour rights, income security and decent working conditions.
- Finance and implement these adaptation plans.
- Review and revise existing national adaptation plans³ or heat action plans⁴ to explicitly address the livelihood and socio-economic impacts of heat on garment workers and their communities.

SUPPLIERS SHOULD:

- Work with trade unions and apply the ILO Guidelines for a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All^{xxiv} to all garment industry adaptation planning addressing the risks and impacts of heat.

BRANDS SHOULD:

- Integrate the socio-economic risks impacts of heat into their human rights due diligence, and work with trade unions to address these risks and impacts. This includes:
 - Assessing the socio-economic vulnerability of supply chain workplaces to high temperatures and addressing these risks.
 - Exiting responsibly from high-risk locations: no sudden withdrawals that leave workers without protection or income.⁵
 - Comply with, and contribute financially to, adaptation planning within the country.

[3] UNFCCC Submitted National Action Plans from developing country Parties <https://napcentral.org/submitted-naps>

[4] Heat specific action plans and case studies at the Global Heat Health Information Network: <https://ghhin.org/heat-action-plans-and-case-studies>

[5] See for example OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/15f5f4b3-en>.

[2] See footnote 1 in section #01 (page 2)

#03



Respect and protect all human and workers' rights regardless of temperature – paying particular attention to the rights of women, homeworkers and migrant workers.

Governments have a duty to protect all internationally and nationally recognised labour and human rights and companies have a responsibility to respect these rights – regardless of temperature.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT IN THE CONTEXT OF HEAT RISK AND IMPACT?

The expectations in this document are not a substitute for companies' responsibility to uphold core labour rights and abide by environmental laws and standards, nor for governments' duty to protect labour and human rights and adopt and enforce mandatory environmental and human rights due diligence laws.

Labour and human rights are the foundation for addressing heat risk and impacts on garment workers, and without them, the strategies outlined above will fail.

Trade union rights and social dialogue are essential to give workers a role in decision-making about the future of fashion, climate mitigation and adaptation strategies, measures to reduce heat risk and to advocate for lasting improvements in safety, housing, wages and climate resilience.

Living wages and secure contracts – regardless of employment status or citizenship – are critical to survive rising temperatures. They give workers the option to choose safer accommodation or invest in ventilation, insulation, or cooling – options that are often unavailable to those living in overcrowded, substandard housing with little control over their environment.

Freedom of association, secure employment and living wages equip workers with the power and resources to take action to protect their health and livelihoods in a heating climate. These rights are necessary for turning climate strategies into worker-driven reality rather than top-down policies that protect the rich and disregard everyone else. Yet, decades of exploitation in the garment industry have stripped workers of these most basic protections, leaving them exposed to heat, yet least responsible for causing it.

WHAT SHOULD GOVERNMENTS, SUPPLIERS AND BRANDS DO?

GOVERNMENTS SHOULD:

- Deliver on their duty to protect all internationally and nationally recognised labour and human rights^{xxv} – regardless of temperature – paying particular attention to the rights of women, home-workers and migrant workers. In particular, governments should protect freedom of association and collective bargaining, including the removal of barriers to organizing, especially for migrant populations, provision of secure employment and a living wage.

SUPPLIERS AND BRANDS SHOULD:

- Respect internationally and nationally recognised labour and human rights in the workplace and in their value chains – regardless of temperature – paying particular attention to the rights of women, homeworkers and migrant workers.

#04

Reduce heat risk by mitigating climate change and environmental degradation

Governments, suppliers and brands must act to rapidly cut fashion's impact on climate and the environment while protecting workers' and human rights.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Fashion is a major emitter of global greenhouse gas emissions and contributes to water scarcity, pollution, deforestation and other environmental harms - all of which worsen heat risks. Without urgent action, millions of lives and livelihoods are at stake.

Governments, suppliers and brands are falling short of climate and environmental obligations. Companies and governments - particularly those in countries that have contributed most to the crisis - have a responsibility to support those who have contributed least but face the harshest consequences, including through financial contributions.

Climate and environmental action must be combined with decent work, workers' rights and fair distribution of economic value - and leave no one behind: a Just Transition.

WHAT SHOULD GOVERNMENTS, SUPPLIERS AND BRANDS DO?

Governments and companies - especially those that have contributed most to, or benefited most from, climate change and ecological harm - should:

- Rapidly cut climate and environmental harm while protecting workers' and human rights.
- Uphold labour rights in all new climate mitigation jobs, such as in recycling, repair and re-use, and offer these jobs equitably to displaced workers.
- Finance a just transition in garment production - for example, through investment, taxation, subsidies, repayment of climate debt and direct payments.



CONCLUSION



As the climate and ecological crisis intensifies, driven in no small part by the fashion industry, work-place heat is no longer an isolated hazard but a systemic threat.

It is deepening existing labour rights violations and creating new ones for the very workers who have contributed least to the crisis. Heat in the workplace must be recognised as a fundamental and urgent labour and human rights issue across the sector.

Fashion's global workforce, with high numbers of women, migrants and workers on non-standard forms of employment, faces unsafe conditions, poverty wages and the denial of basic rights. As heat intensifies, so too does the risk of exploitation, illness, harassment and income loss. Communities face widespread social upheaval and economic consequences.

GOVERNMENTS, SUPPLIERS AND BRANDS MUST ACT WITH URGENCY:

They must dramatically reduce their contribution to climate and ecological change. They must stop the repression of fashion workers' rights and ensure their full freedom to organise, negotiate, and co-create climate adaptation strategies. They must end exploitative business practices, uphold the right to decent work in climate-vulnerable regions, and invest in social protection systems for all workers, regardless of contract type or migration status.

Without action, garment workers are left exposed to the full force of climate breakdown, threatening their safety, livelihoods and future.

ANNEX



Protecting workers from heat hazards in the workplace and during commuting

All measures to protect workers must:

- Be gender sensitive and address the specific risks to migrant and homeworkers.
- Give workers, independent trade unions and other forms of independent worker organisations¹ a central role in addressing the dangers of heat.
- Protect all workers if they put forward a grievance about heat or refuse to work because they have a reasonable belief that their health and safety could be endangered due to high temperatures.²
- Address and prevent all health and safety issues, including thermal discomfort, harassment in the workplace, as well as mental and physical health.

MONITOR RISKS:

Actions to monitor temperatures and health impacts include:

- In the absence of internationally agreed standards, set and implement best-practice temperature thresholds that trigger preventative measures – starting from thermal discomfort – taking into account the needs of the individual, including gender, cultural norms, health and capacities.
- Monitor temperatures according to internationally recognised protocols.
- Record health impacts of high temperatures.³
- Make monitoring data available to trade unions, workers, suppliers and buyers in a way that protects workers' privacy and security.
- Establish heat health warning systems and protocols.

[1] See footnote 1 in section #01 (page 2)

[2] See footnote 2 in section #01 (page 2)

[3] ILO Convention C187 – Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187): 3. The national system for occupational safety and health shall include, where appropriate: [...] (f) a mechanism for the collection and analysis of data on occupational injuries and diseases, taking into account relevant ILO instruments

PREVENT EXPOSURE:

Actions to remove or reduce workers' exposure to heat include:

- Do a heat risk assessment – that takes account of workers facing unique heat risks and the use of personal and protective equipment – and introduce controls to prevent or reduce the likelihood or severity of risk, for example:
 - Engineering controls to cool down the environment in and around garment factories and workspaces, such as heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) technology, insulation⁴ and 'green' roofs and natural ventilation building designs and insulation or the removal or relocation of heat-producing equipment.
 - Administrative controls such as removing piecework and other systems that incentivise long hours without breaks;^{xxvi} adjusting work schedules and targets with full wage payment; providing breaks, cooled rest areas and drinking water; setting maximum working temperatures; measures to allow workers to avoid travelling during weather emergencies without – losing pay^{xxvii} and opening workplaces only when conditions have been independently confirmed as safe.⁵
- Establish contingency plans for extreme heat events.
- Provide worker training to increase understanding of heat risks and prevention strategies.
- Establish an effective complaints mechanism for workers.
- Cut greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation.

[4] Adopting so-called green building standards should not be assumed to mean that high temperatures are addressed or that high emission controls such as air conditioning are avoided. Cooling and ventilation systems should avoid further contributing to high temperatures inadvertently through high energy consumption or through exhaust heat that increase local temperatures. See for example <https://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/long-read/cooling-the-world-without-heating-the-planet>

[5] Article 19 (f) of ILO Convention C155 – Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155): a worker reports forthwith to his immediate supervisor any situation which he has reasonable justification to believe presents an imminent and serious danger to his life or health; until the employer has taken remedial action, if necessary, the employer cannot require workers to return to a work situation where there is continuing imminent and serious danger to life or health.

MITIGATE HARM:

Actions to reduce harm when exposure to high temperatures occurs^{xxviii} include

- Provide water, cooled areas and rest.
- Provide immediate and sustained medical care^{xxix} for heat-related illness or injury.
- Compensate affected workers.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

For a more detailed discussion of current legislation, collective bargaining agreements and joint protocols of measures to protect workers from heat, see for example:

- Building and Wood Workers' International (2025) Adapting to the Heat – Existing Global Responses for Workers' Protections in Construction, Building Materials, Wood and Forestry Industries⁶
- ETUI (2025) Heatwaves as an occupational hazard: The impact of heat and heatwaves on workers' health, safety and well-being and on social inequalities⁷
- ILO (2024) Ensuring safety and health at work in a changing climate. Geneva: International Labour Office⁸
- ILO (2024) Heat at Work: Implications for Safety and Health. A Global Review of the Science, Policy and Practice.⁹
- Jelly, K., Swan, N. and Vari, A (2025) The missing thread: Workers absent from fashion companies' climate plans. Business & Human Rights Resource Centre¹⁰
- Judd, J., Bauer, A. Kuruvilla, S. And Williams, S. (2023) Higher Ground Report 1: Fashion's climate breakdown and its effect for workers. ILR Global Labor Institute and Schroders¹¹

[6] <https://www.bwint.org/BwiNews/NewsDetails?newsId=568>

[7] <https://www.etui.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Heatwaves%20as%20an%20occupational%20hazard%20The%20impact%20of%20heat%20and%20heatwaves%20on%20workers'%20health%2C%20safety%20and%20wellbeing%20and%20on%20social%20inequalities-2021.pdf>

[8] https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/ILO_SafeDay24_Report_r11.pdf

[9] https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/ILO_OSH_Heat-stress-R16.pdf

[10] https://media.business-humanrights.org/media/documents/BHRRC_The_Missing_thread_report_June_2025.pdf

[11] <https://www.ilr.cornell.edu/global-labor-institute/higher-ground-fashion-climate-breakdown>



ENDNOTES

- [i] Judd, J., Bauer, A. Kuruvilla, S. And Williams, S. (2023) Higher Ground Report 1: Fashion's climate breakdown and its effect for workers. ILR Global Labor Institute and Schrodgers <https://www.ilr.cornell.edu/global-labor-institute/higher-ground-fashions-climate-breakdown>
- [ii] Shivakumar, N. & Sundaresan, R (2024) Pressure cooker: Heat stress in Tamil Nadu's garment factories. Tansy Hoskins <https://tansyhoskins.org/pressure-cooker-heat-stress>
- [iii] LEF (2025) Global Climate Change: The Growing Problem of Heat Stress in Pakistan's Textile Industry – Article by Amjad Mahmood (Translation from LEF Monthly Newsletter) <https://lef.org.pk/global-climate-change-the-growing-problem-of-heat-stress-in-pakistans-textile-industry-article-by-amjad-mahmood-translation-from-lef-monthly-newsletter>
- [iv] Climate Rights International (2025) My Body Is Burning: Climate Change, Extreme Heat, and Labor Rights in Bangladesh <https://cri.org/reports/my-body-is-burning-extreme-heat-and-labor-rights-in-bangladesh>
- Nabi, M. H., Hasan, M., Chowdury, A. T., Naz, F., Hossian, M. (2023): The impact of climate change on the lives and livelihoods of readymade garment (RMG) workers: an exploratory study in selected readymade garment factories in Bangladesh. In: BMC Public Health 23, 2292. <https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-023-17165-7>
- [v] Sustainable Energy for All (2023) Chilling Prospects: Global Access to Cooling Gaps 2023 <https://www.seforall.org/our-work/research-analysis/chilling-prospects-series/chilling-prospects-global-access-to-cooling-gaps-2023>
- [vi] Parsons, L., Lawreniuk, S., Sok, S. & Buckley, J. (2022) Hot trends: How the global garment industry shapes climate change vulnerability in Cambodia. Royal Holloway, University of London and University of Nottingham. https://pure.royalholloway.ac.uk/files/45045019/Hot_Trends_Report.pdf
- Parsons, L., Mishra, P., Cole, J., Sim Dao Wei, J. and Vouch Long, L (2024) Heat stress in the Cambodian workplace. Royal holloway, University of London. <https://www.oppressive-heat.org/publications>
- [vii] Kent, S. (2024) What happens when it's too hot to make fashion? Business of Fashion. <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/sustainability/fashion-sustainability-heatwave-asia-manufacturing-workers-rights>
- [viii] Sseviiri, Hakimu & Mukwaya, Paul & Twinomuhangi, Revocatus & Kisira, Yeeko & Nuwahereza, Viola & Byarugaba, Disan & Kayima, Patrick & Nakalanzi, Swabra. (2022). Heat Risk Perception and Communication Strategies for Adaptation within Low-Income Communities in Kampala City, Uganda. 10.13140/RG.2.2.15419.28961. <https://preparecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Uganda-Heat-Perceptions-Research-by-H.Sseviiri-2022.pdf>
- [ix] Simić, A, Tamindžija, B. & Simović, V. (2024) Textile industry: Country profile – Serbia 2. Center for the Politics of Emancipation <https://cpe.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/CCC-CountryProfileSerbia-CPE-2024.pdf>
- [x] ETUI (2025) Heatwaves as an occupational hazard: The impact of heat and heatwaves on workers' health, safety and wellbeing and on social inequalities <https://www.etui.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Heatwaves%20as%20an%20occupational%20hazard%20The%20impact%20of%20heat%20and%20heatwaves%20on%20workers%E2%80%99%20health%2C%20safety%20and%20wellbeing%20and%20on%20social%20inequalities-2021.pdf>
- Flouris, A., Azzi, M., Graczyk, H., Nafradi, B., and Scott, N., (eds.) (2024). Heat at Work: Implications for Safety and Health. A Global Review of the Science, Policy and Practice. Geneva: International Labour Office https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/ILO_OSH_Heatstress-R16.pdf
- Lloyd's Register Foundation, "The Impact of Climate Change on Safety at Work," Lloyd's Register Foundation, 2025. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.60743/h5gk-tq84>
- World Health Organisation (2024) Heat and health <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-heat-and-health>
- [xi] See for example Mora, C., McKenzie, T., Gaw, I.M. et al. (2022) Over half of known human pathogenic diseases can be aggravated by climate change. Nat. Clim. Chang. 12, 869–875 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-022-01426-1>
- [xii] ILO (2024) Ensuring safety and health at work in a changing climate. Geneva: International Labour Office https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/ILO_SafeDay24_Report_r11.pdf
- [xiii] Anderson Hoffner, L., Simpson, J., Martinez, C., Patumtaewapibal, A. (2021) Turning up the heat: Exploring pro-tential links between climate change and gender-based violence and harassment in the garment sector, ILO Working Paper 31. <https://www.ilo.org/publications/turning-heat-exploring-potential-links-between-climate-change-and-gender>
- [xiv] UN Women (2024) Policy brief: Gendered impacts of heat waves and drought in Asia and the Pacific: A review in the context of El Niño. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Wom-en) <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/04/a-review-in-the-context-of-el-nino>
- [xv] Climate Rights International (2025) My Body Is Burning: Climate Change, Extreme Heat, and Labor Rights in Bangladesh <https://cri.org/reports/my-body-is-burning-extreme-heat-and-labor-rights-in-bangladesh>
- [xvi] Jelly, K., Swan, N. and Vari, A (2025) The missing thread: Workers absent from fashion companies' climate plans. Business & Human Rights Resource Centre https://media.business-humanrights.org/media/documents/BHRRC_The_Missing_thread_report_June_2025.pdf
- [xvii] Tatum, M. (2024, August 19). Delays and damp demand: Fashion's mid year supply chain outlook. Vogue Business. The global fashion supply chain continues to grapple with delays, increased costs, and logistical disruptions following the pandemic... <https://www.voguebusiness.com/story/sustainability/delays-and-damp-demand-fashions-mid-year-supply-chain-outlook?utm>
- [xviii] Judd, J., Kuruvilla, S. and Lowell Jackson, J. Security for Apparel Workers: Alternative Models, NCP Working Paper No. 3, April 2022 <https://www.ilr.cornell.edu/sites/default/files-d8/2022-05/NCP%20IndustriALL%20Severance%20042222.pdf> More information about the proposal can be found here: <https://www.payyourworkers.org/coalition>
- [xix] Curley, M. and Lally, A. (2024) Global Garment Workers Count – Working Paper 4. Estimating the Size & Com-position of the Global Garment Workforce: A Just Transition Baseline Tool for Civil Society & Policymakers. Katalyst Initiative. <https://katalystinitiative.org/working-paper-4>
- [xx] Judd, J., Bauer, A. Kuruvilla, S. And Williams, S. (2023) Higher Ground Report 1: Fashion's climate breakdown and its effect for workers. ILR Global Labor Insitute and Schrodgers <https://www.ilr.cornell.edu/global-labor-institute/higher-ground-fashions-climate-breakdown>
- [xxi] Climate Rights International (2025) My Body Is Burning" Climate Change, Extreme Heat, and Labor Rights in Bangladesh (July 2025) <https://cri.org/reports/my-body-is-burning-extreme-heat-and-labor-rights-in-bangladesh>
- Hossain, M. & Islam. M. (2024) Climate migrants falling prey to modern slavery. Prothom Alo <https://en.prothomalo.com/environment/climate-change/pad1cywj4o>
- [xxii] Parsons, L., Lawreniuk, S., Sok, S. & Buckley, J. (2022) Hot trends: How the global garment industry shapes climate change vulnerability in Cambodia. Royal Holloway, University of London and University of Nottingham. https://pure.royalholloway.ac.uk/files/45045019/Hot_Trends_Report.pdf
- [xxiii] ILO (2015) Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40ed_emp/%40emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_432859.pdf
- [xxiv] ILO (2015) Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40ed_emp/%40emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_432859.pdf
- [xxv] United Nations (2011) United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/guidingprinciplesbusinesshr_en.pdf
- [xxvi] ETUI (2025) Heatwaves as an occupational hazard: The impact of heat and heatwaves on workers' health, safety and wellbeing and on social inequalities <https://www.etui.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Heatwaves%20as%20an%20occupational%20hazard%20The%20impact%20of%20heat%20and%20heatwaves%20on%20workers%E2%80%99%20health%2C%20safety%20and%20wellbeing%20and%20on%20social%20inequalities-2021.pdf>
- [xxvii] The Guardian (2024) Spain introduces paid climate leave after deadly floods. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/nov/29/spain-paid-climate-leave-floods>
- [xxviii] See for example State of California's Regulation §3396. Heat Illness Prevention in Indoor Places of Em-ployment. <https://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/3396.html>
- [xxix] Nabi, M. H., Hasan, M., Chowdury, A. T., Naz, F., Hossian, M. (2023): The impact of climate change on the lives and livelihoods of readymade garment (RMG) workers: an exploratory study in selected readymade garment factories in Bangladesh. In: BMC Public Health 23, 2292. <https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-023-17165-7>