

# Impact of Covid-19 on Decent Work

## March Wage Digitization Digest-14<sup>th</sup> Edition

The Wage Digitization Digest is a monthly desk-based intelligence report produced by Synergos that sources from English-language media spanning a monthly timeframe specified in the digest. The report covers the impact on workers during Covid-19, in garment and agricultural value chains, with a focus on digital wages, gender equity, and worker wellbeing across Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tanzania and Uganda. This month's research covers news sources from Apr 1 – Apr 30, 2021.

### Major Stories

- 1. A new World Bank study on the impact of Covid-19 on firms globally has found that firms in South Asia suffered disproportionately more than other low-income regions:** The survey covered over 130,000 firms in 50 countries, looking at firm financial health, operations, viability, and access to assistance during Covid-19. It reports three key findings for South Asia: first, firms in the South Asia region suffered disproportionately more from the economic brunt of the pandemic. Second, even within the region, Covid-19 did not affect all firms equally. Although exporters remained resilient by some metrics, firms that are smaller, female-led firms and those in vulnerable sectors suffered higher rates of closure. Third, while digital technologies are taking the center stage as the pandemic continues to unfold, the South Asia region lags in the adoption of these technologies ([World Bank](#)).
- 2. Kenya's government is seeking to digitize the Mombasa auction where many East African countries producing tea sell their product for export:** Digitizing the auction will enable additional trading days and allow top export markets to trade with ease through an online platform. The goal is to increase capacity of the auction and promote transparency and accountability in the industry. The Mombasa auction is one of the main regional selling and buying hubs for tea in East Africa. Historically, Tanzania, Uganda, and Ethiopia also rely on the Mombasa auction ([Big News Network, Kenya News](#)).
- 3. Tanzania's Tea Board has finally set tea auction guidelines to establish an online tea auction platform at the Tanzania Mercantile Exchange in Dar es Salaam.** While this original announcement of the platform was in September 2020, delays in regulatory approval led to a more recent confirmation in mid-April. Tanzania's tea sector is projected to produce about 40,000 tons of processed tea in the 2020/21 harvest season, up from the 37,000 tons in 2018/19. Historically, Tanzania has relied on the Mombasa Tea Auction in Kenya ([The Citizen](#)).
- 4. Pakistani textile exporter associations demanded an investigation into the national cotton crisis, due to soaring cotton and cotton yarn prices. Exorbitant prices threaten Pakistan's textile production as well as smallholder farmers' ability to sell cotton:** Over 8 textile exporters associations on April 12 demanded enquiry under judicial commission to investigate the cotton yarn crisis. They learned that approximately 2 million bales had been sold without sales tax and invoices in the local market and sought to identify the reasons for these issues. Exporters feel that the government is turning a blind eye to the cotton yarn crisis that is impacting the financial future of the textile sector and its exports. Internationally, cotton prices have decreased but the price in of cotton and cotton yarn in Pakistan have reached record highs (more than 40% increase

from the norm) that are out of line with the global market ([Business Recorder](#)).

5. **A renewed national lockdown in Bangladesh has brought a new round of concerns for garment factory workers, owners, and industry associations:** Upon calls from industry associations to keep garment factories open during lockdown, factories can stay open with a 50% workforce restriction. Meanwhile, the lack of public transportation has added additional transportation costs for approximately 20% of garment workers. In anticipation of possible unrest in at least 538 manufacturing units over wages and Eid bonuses, the government formed a crisis committee consisting the representatives of Department of Labor, Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments, BGMEA, Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association and labor organizations to clear the salaries and bonuses before Eid. The State Minister for Labor and Employment enforced this with a May 10 deadline for factories to complete the payment of worker salaries and festival bonuses ([Dhaka Tribune](#), [Dhaka Tribune](#), [The Load Star](#), [Daily Star](#), [The Daily Star](#), [Apparel Resources](#), [The Daily Star](#), [The Daily Star](#), [Prothomalo](#), [Dhaka Tribune](#)).
  
6. **India is undergoing a massive surge of Covid-19 cases that has led to several state government-imposed lockdowns. Garment factories across major hubs are experiencing a 20-40% loss of production and workforce and are laying off workers again:** Even prior to April, India's factory activity grew at its weakest pace in seven months in March 2021 as Covid-19 cases dampened domestic demand and output, resulting in a spike in layoffs. This is even after industrial production declined by 3.7% in February 2021. Despite foreign orders growing at a faster pace in March, overall demand has declined to its lowest since August 2020. Output also grew at its weakest pace in seven months. A survey indicated that factories had the highest rate of layoffs in the past six months in March but did not provide any concrete numbers ([Reuters](#), [Newslick](#)). With new restrictions in April, apparel manufacturers across various hubs are working at approximately 30 to 40% capacity. A new report says that the full recovery for Indian apparel players will be prolonged and pushed back to 2023 ([RMG Bangladesh](#)).

# Country Deep Dives in Africa

## Ethiopia

Population (2019): 112.1M<sup>1</sup>

Employment in Agriculture (2013): 25.2M<sup>4</sup>

Labor Force (2020): 55M<sup>2</sup>

Employment in Garment (2019): 62,000<sup>5</sup>

Labor Force, % Female (2020): 46.5%<sup>3</sup>

Total Informal Employment: data unavailable

**Tea:** The East African Tea Trade Association (EATTA) showed data that average tea prices at the Mombasa Auction have hit an all-time low so far this year with a kilo averaging \$1.81 USD on April 10. An asking price below \$2 a kilo is considered a low rate. The price drop came amid an increase in volumes traded that week which totaled 10.5 million kilos, up from 10.4 million kilos the week prior. “High volumes of tea produced in the East African region and elsewhere on the globe have contributed to the continued price decline in the global market,” KTDA management services managing director, Alfred Njagi, noted. This threatens tea farmer incomes ([The Star](#)). In addition, brokers at the tea auction in Mombasa, the second-biggest trading auction in the world, could be counting huge losses following a raid by detectives on April 16th. Officers from the Directorate of Criminal Investigations in Kenya confiscated personal electronic gadgets belonging to East Africa Tea Trade Association (EATTA) staff. They also took away the main server, disabling the IT system ([Standard Media](#)). This affects the Ethiopian tea sector as a majority of Ethiopian tea is sold at the Mombasa auction. For more on the raid, see the Kenya section.

**Coffee:** The Ethiopian Coffee and Tea Authority disclosed that Ethiopia has collected a revenue of \$107 Million USD in one month from March to April 10, 2021 from exporting 27,000 tons of coffee. The Authority states that this is a record high earning from coffee for a month's period ([2Merkato](#)). A new study by an international team of researchers looking at the peculiar effect climate change has on Africa's largest coffee-producing nation, Ethiopia, found that warmer weather and increased rainfall will increase production for average quality coffee but decrease production for specialty coffee. The study's results are relevant for the country's millions of smallholder farmers, who earn more on specialty coffee than on ordinary coffee ([Science Daily](#)). This study comes at a time where Ethiopia's coffee production continues to lag behind other leading countries. One factor is underproductive coffee trees. Farmers are adopting a tree rejuvenation technique called stumping to increase production, improve livelihoods and adapt to climate change. The World Bank's BioCarbon Fund Initiative for Sustainable Forest Landscapes private sector strategy in Oromia includes \$4 million USD to help scale up coffee stumping ([The World Bank](#)). In an effort to boost export income from coffee, the Ethiopia Coffee and Tea Development Authority announced that it is collaborating with international non-profits to replace old coffee varieties with improved ones. The authority revealed

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank Open Data, India. [Data.worldbank.org](https://data.worldbank.org)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> ILOSTAT – Employment by sex and economic activity (thousands) from Labor Force Surveys and Household Surveys. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>

<sup>5</sup> Improving Worker Wellbeing in Ethiopia's Garment Industry through the Model of Shared Responsibility, ILO Vision Zero Fund. 2020. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---africa/---ro-abidjan/---sro-addis\\_ababa/documents/publication/wcms\\_737627.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---africa/---ro-abidjan/---sro-addis_ababa/documents/publication/wcms_737627.pdf)

that it is undertaking various reforms within the sector that would help the country generate more income from coffee export ([The Reporter Ethiopia](#)).

**Garment:** The fashion industry is setting its sights on Ethiopia as a new home of manufacturing. Martijn van der Erve, CEO of Erve Group, saw the opportunity to produce in Ethiopia as an alternative to popular manufacturing locations like Bangladesh. The CEO cited Ethiopia's fast growing economy, potential duty-free imports, competitive energy costs, and government support for international investment as several factors in the opportunity to set up shop in Ethiopia as one of the first global buyers and retailers producing in Ethiopia ([Fashion United](#)). Of the more than 2,000 employed in the Mekelle Industrial Park, only 700 have returned to work as of mid-April 2021. The park, located in the war-torn Tigray region, hosts garment and textile factories supplying to global buyers and retailers. Since early 2020, its factories were closed due to Covid-19 and multiple have now been damaged by the war between the Tigray People's Liberation Front and Ethiopian government armed forces. Many households in the region have fled from the violence and the IndustriAll Federation of Textile, Leather and Garment Workers Trade Union (IFLGTUWU) has faced many difficulties reaching members and their families ([Just Style](#)).

## Kenya

**Population** (2019): 52.6M<sup>6</sup>

**Employment in Agriculture:** 12M<sup>9</sup>

**Labor Force** (2020): 24.7M<sup>7</sup>

**Total Informal Employment:** data unavailable

**Labor Force, % Female** (2020): 49%<sup>8</sup>

**Agricultural Economy:** Delayed rains in Kenya have helped prevent locusts from breeding, bringing farmers some optimism in the fight against locusts however farmers are concerned about crop production without rain ([APNews](#)).

- **Coffee:** A constitutional petition in the High Court by five cooperative societies seeking to halt the enforcement of the Crop (Coffee) General Regulations, 2019 was recently dismissed but not without exposing the intrigues surrounding ongoing reforms in the Kenyan coffee industry. A law currently before parliament, Coffee Bill 2020, is undergoing a consultative process. If enacted, the law will allow members of coffee factories to register as autonomous societies, bypassing membership to larger cooperatives that over-burdened small-scale farmers with debt. The Coffee Bill 2020 would empower farmers to participate in decisions affecting production, processing, and marketing of their crop at the factory level ([All Africa](#)). A recent report shows that coffee production in Kenya declined by 18% in 2020 due to the combined factors of weather conditions, coffee prices, cultural practices, government policies, price support programs, and governance at farmer's institutions. The low volume made it difficult for many smallholder farmers to

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<sup>6</sup> World Bank Open Data, Kenya. [data.worldbank.org](https://data.worldbank.org)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> World Bank Open Data, Kenya. [Data.worldbank.org](https://data.worldbank.org).

\*Calculation based on ILO Employment in Agriculture (% of total employment), Employment to population ratio 15+, and total population 15-64.

obtain chemicals and fertilizer on credit and as a result, many farmers did not break even on their crop and had to sell their land for cash flow ([All Africa](#)). Kenya's expanding middle class is increasing domestic consumption of coffee with estimates on domestic consumption to reach 3,600 tons in 2021 (10% of total production) ([Economist](#)).

- **Poultry:** Outbreaks of Newcastle disease has left poultry farmers in Kiambu county fearing for their livelihoods due to the death of hundreds of thousands of birds ([The Poultry Site](#)).
- **Tea:** Kenya's tea output has fallen to 92.28 mkg from 102.84 mkg, for reasons that have not been disclosed. Despite significant increase in the production of black tea in India, Sri Lanka, Malawi and Bangladesh, the overall global black tea output so far this calendar has marginally fallen below the corresponding months of 2020 because of Kenya pulling down the output ([The Hindu Business Line](#)). The Agricultural Ministry's plans to proceed with major tea sector reform continues to face resistance from directors at the Kenya Tea Development Agency. While directors expressed that they were not against all new regulations, they are against the government's plans to enforce all tea to be sold through the auction process, making tea selling via private treaty illegal ([Kenya News](#)). Kenya's Tea Auction is also experiencing major change. The government is looking to digitize the Mombasa auction to enable additional trading days and allow top export markets to trade with ease through an online platform. The goal is to increase capacity of the auction and promote transparency and accountability in the industry ([Big News Network](#), [Kenya News](#)). Kenyan police raided the Kenya Tea Development Agency offices in Nairobi and East African Tea Trade Association offices in Mombasa on April 16. The East African Tea Trade Association (EATTA) in Mombasa reported that this could cost Kenya key market buyers from other countries, a major concern as 32% of the tea exported to the world passes through Mombasa. Many were shocked and confused by the raid ([The Star](#)). Agriculture Secretary Peter Munya explained that the raid occurred because they were investigating compliance breaches including price and auction manipulation, abuse of dominance, and insider trading ([Kenya News](#), [Business Daily](#)). KTDA brought the issue to court and as a result, the Criminal High Court restrained the Attorney General from "invading, ingressing, breaking into or remaining in the premises and places of operation" of KTDA Holdings, KTDA Management Services, and Chai Trading Limited ([The Star](#)).

## Nigeria

Population (2019): 200.9M<sup>10</sup>

Employment in agriculture (2013): 22.1M<sup>13</sup>

Labor Force (2020): 61.4M<sup>11</sup>

Total Informal Employment: data unavailable

Labor Force, % Female (2020): 44.8%<sup>12</sup>

**Agricultural Economy:** A food and agro-processing firm, WACOT Ltd, and an agritech firm Syngenta Crop Protection have formed a partnership to boost Nigeria's food security and sustainable

<sup>10</sup> World Bank Open Data, Indonesia. [data.worldbank.org](https://data.worldbank.org)

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> ILOSTAT – Employment by sex and economic activity (thousands) from Labor Force Surveys and Household Surveys. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>

development of the agriculture sector. The deal will see Syngenta working closely with WACOT over the next five years to help improve the sustainability, quality and safety of Nigeria's agriculture with world-class science and innovative crop solutions ([Salaam Gateway](#)). Food inflation has quickened to its highest pace in 15 years, rising to 22.95% in March, caused by wide-ranging price increases across items such as cereals, yam, meat, fish and fruits. Those soaring costs have been in part blamed on a worsening conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria's agriculture belt that Buhari has struggled to quash ([Bloomberg](#)).

- **Cocoa:** According to the Nigerian Export Promotion Council, cocoa products account for over \$800 million in exports for Nigeria, with cocoa beans making up about 90% of that. Cocoa is also Nigeria's third-largest export after crude oil and petroleum gas. The global cocoa product market is expected to be valued at over \$30 billion USD in the next five years. This creates a significant opportunity, not just for cocoa farming, but for cocoa processing as well ([How we made it in Africa](#)). The Nigerian federal government has disclosed that by taking advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), Nigeria has the capacity to export US \$3B worth of derivatives from cocoa and US \$300M from the sale of the raw unprocessed commodity. The AfCFTA provides Nigeria opportunities to build a diversified and sustainable economy with strong trade partnerships with its neighbors ([Farmers Review Africa](#)).

**Gender Equity:** The World Bank's ID4D initiative completed a qualitative research study with over 1,500 Nigerians to understand perspectives around needs and access to Digital ID across gender lines. The study found that one's knowledge of Digital ID, access to it, and its uses were unevenly distributed across men and women. In addition, poor and marginalized women face greater barriers in obtaining Digital ID due to high cost of transport, lack of documentation, and loss of income waiting in line compared to their male counterparts. Government officials believe digital ID will enable greater financial inclusion and infrastructure for accessibility and usability of digital financial services ([World Bank, Biometric update](#)).

## Tanzania

**Population** (2019): 58M<sup>14</sup>

**Employment in agriculture** (2014): 14.4M<sup>17</sup>

**Labor Force** (2020): 28.1M<sup>15</sup>

**Total Informal Employment** (2014): 19.2M<sup>18</sup>

**Labor Force, % Female** (2020): 48.1%<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> World Bank Open Data. [data.worldbank.org](https://data.worldbank.org)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> ILOSTAT – Employment by sex and economic activity (thousands) from Labor Force Surveys and Household Surveys. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>

<sup>18</sup> ILOSTAT – Informal employment by sex and economic activity (thousands) from Labor Force Surveys. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>

**Agricultural Economy:** Over the next five years, the government plans to invest in irrigation farming covering 11,700 hectares around Ngono River Basin in Kagera Region, a project which will help the country to have enough food reserves. Kagera is a strategic region for agriculture because it borders four different neighboring countries which are potential in agribusiness ([All Africa](#)).

- **Tea:** Historically, Tanzania has relied on the Mombasa Tea Auction in Kenya to auction and export its tea. The Tanzania Tea Board has set in book-form tea auction guidelines to establish an online tea auction platform at the Tanzania Mercantile Exchange in Dar es Salaam. While this original announcement of the platform was in September 2020, delays in regulatory approval led to a more recent confirmation in mid-April that it is on its way. Tanzania's tea sector is projected to produce about 40,000 tons of processed tea in the 2020/21 harvest season, up from the 37,000 tons in 2018/19 ([The Citizen](#)).
- **Coffee:** Tanzania is among the top three Africa coffee producing countries, producing between 30 and 40 thousand metric tons annually. Increasing local coffee consumption would benefit Tanzania's local economy, add local jobs, and boost income of coffee farmers beyond coffee exports ([All Africa](#)). Coffee farmers have been urged to produce quality coffee to comply with international certification, access more markets and earn good prices. The social and environmental concerns of brands and retailers in the coffee sector have also led to a stricter requirement for compliance with their codes of conduct further down the value chain. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation is offering trainings to farmers through the International Trade Centre's Market Access Upgrade Program – funded by the European Union. The trainings seek to provide farmers technical knowledge in certification standards education to meet coffee clients' requirements ([All Africa](#)).

**Gender Equity:** In Tanzania, cultural norms have hindered women from participating in coffee cultivation. Traditions in Tanzania often give women access to land either through their sons, fathers, brothers, husbands, or other men in charge of the land. Per a UN Food and Agriculture Organization 2018 report, only 15% of women solely own land compared to 45% of men and 40% that own land jointly. The gender gap in land ownership decreases agricultural productivity, particularly in coffee farming where women account for almost 80% of the workforce. International Management Systems (IMS) trainings in Moshi, Tanzania are trying to shift these norms. Equalizing women's access to agricultural inputs, including time-saving equipment, and increasing the return to these inputs is critical to close gender gaps in agricultural productivity ([Ventures Africa, FAO](#)).

**Labor Rights:** Tanzania's new President, Samia Suluhu Hassan, is taking steps to strengthen cooperative unions and improve the lives of farmers. She replaced cabinet appointments with new permanent secretaries, deputies and heads of public institutions to reform and invest in the coffee sector and made it mandatory for growers to sell produce through farmers cooperatives. It appears that farmers approve of the new President. The General Manager of the Kagera Cooperative Union made a public statement applauding the President's bold steps to revive the role of cooperative unions that had almost collapsed in recent years ([All Africa](#)).

## Uganda

Population (2019): 44.3M<sup>19</sup>

Employment in agriculture (2017): 4.2M<sup>22</sup>

Labor Force (2020): 17.4M<sup>20</sup>

Total Informal Employment (2017): 8.1M<sup>23</sup>

Labor Force, % Female (2020): 49.3%<sup>21</sup>

**Coffee:** Coffee earnings have hit \$50.5m USD (Shs187b), the highest performance in more than three years. According to a report by Bank of Uganda, coffee earnings in February grew by 21.4% from January ([All Africa](#)). The price of coffee has increased with both Robusta and Arabica beans trading in greater quantities from farmers to companies that stock coffee and supply to Kampala-based exporters. The rise in growth is attributed to supply. When there is more coffee on the market, this attracts buyers and hence push up prices ([Newvision](#)). Coffee is one of Uganda's leading agricultural commodities, and Mpigi is one of the country's main coffee-producing regions. However, climate change is increasingly affecting coffee crops as coffee-growing areas in Uganda have become drier and hotter over the past thirty years. To address changing weather patterns, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries launched the Micro-Scale Irrigation Program in 2020 to support smallholder farmers. The pilot program began with a group of 50 coffee farmers with intentions to expand in 2021 and beyond. This is a critical project as smallholder farmers make up 85% of all coffee farmers in Uganda with an estimated 1.7 million households growing coffee with a mean plot size of less than 1 acre ([Global Press](#)).

**Cocoa:** The Independent reports that a coordinator with the East African Business Council (EABC) has argued that a lack of accurate production data for cocoa is hurting the industry in Uganda. He cites that the lack of information regarding prices and capacity across the region impede international investment and harm farmers as well due to lack of transparency, coordination, and price control. He contends that many farmers fall prey to middlemen and suggests the government set up a warehouse system where farmers can sell directly to the govt stores and acquire advance payment to help them financially. Cocoa is Uganda's fourth biggest commodity after coffee, tea, and fish, but some feel it does not receive sufficient government investment and policy consideration ([The Independent](#)).

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<sup>19</sup> World Bank Open Data. [data.worldbank.org](https://data.worldbank.org)

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> ILOSTAT – Employment by sex and economic activity (thousands) from Labor Force Surveys and Household Surveys. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>

<sup>23</sup> ILOSTAT – Informal employment by sex and economic activity (thousands) from Labor Force Surveys. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>



# Country Deep Dives in Asia

## Regional

A recent World Bank study on the impact of Covid-19 on firms globally has found that firms in South Asia suffered disproportionately more than other low-income regions. The survey covered over 130,000 firms in 50 countries, looking at firm financial health, operations, viability, and access to assistance during Covid-19. It reports three key findings for South Asia: first, firms in the South Asia region suffered disproportionately more from the economic brunt of the pandemic. Second, even within the region, Covid-19 did not affect all firms equally. Although exporters remained resilient by some metrics, firms that are smaller, female-led firms and those in vulnerable sectors suffered higher rates of closure. Third, while digital technologies are taking the center stage as the pandemic continues to unfold, the South Asia region lags in the adoption of these technologies ([World Bank](#)). For detailed information, see the full report here ([World Bank](#)).

## Bangladesh

**Population** (2019): 163M<sup>24</sup>

**Employment in Agriculture** (2017): 24.7M<sup>27</sup>

**Labor Force** (2020): 71.2M<sup>25</sup>

**Employment in Garment** (2019): 4.2M<sup>28</sup>

**Labor Force, Female** (2020): 21.8M (30.6%)<sup>26</sup>

**Total Informal Employment** (2017): 57.6M<sup>29</sup>

**Garment Economy:** Export earnings rose six times year-over-year to hit \$3.13 billion USD in April 2021 thanks to the rebound of apparel shipment with the reopening of the US and European economies. Of the total earnings from the garment sector, \$13.99B came from shipment of knitwear items, registering a 15.34% year-on-year positive growth, while earnings from woven shipment fell 2.71% year-on-year to \$12 billion. The demand for casual knitwear items continued to increase ([The Daily News](#), [The Daily Star](#)). However, Bangladesh's earnings by exporting readymade garments to the United States in January-February of 2021 fell by 13.11% compared to the same period in 2020, as the consumption of apparel items still remains low due to the Covid-19 pandemic ([Newage Bangladesh](#)).

Bangladesh went back into lockdown as the country braced for another Covid-19 wave. The government sought to curve its impact and announced an initial week-long lockdown on April 3<sup>rd</sup>. The government proceeded to extend the lockdown on April 14 and then announced a third extension on April 27<sup>th</sup> until May 5<sup>th</sup>. In the first lockdown, garment factories could remain open with directives to operate at 50% capacity, implement social distancing and other sanitary compliances. In a letter to the labor secretary KM Abdus Salam, the BGMEA said that if factories ran with 50% of existing workforce as per the government directive, RMG exporters would miss shipment deadlines and incur

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<sup>24</sup> World Bank Open Data, Bangladesh. [data.worldbank.org](https://data.worldbank.org)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> ILOSTAT – Employment by sex and economic activity (thousands) from Labor Force Surveys and Household Surveys. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>

<sup>28</sup> Asia-Pacific Garment and Footwear Sector Research Note, Issue 8, October 2017. ILO.

[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms\\_581466.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_581466.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> ILOSTAT – Informal employment by sex and economic activity (thousands) from Labor Force Surveys. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>

huge losses ([Newage Bangladesh](#)). Industrialists, including garment manufacturers, have found it difficult to instantly implement emergency measures such as increased health safety measures and staggered shifts, while continuing the smooth running of manufacturing operations, after the government suddenly announced a nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of Covid-19 ([The Daily Star](#)). Upon the announcement of the second lockdown, government initially sought to close garment factories. A team representing the garment sector negotiated and pleaded the case in favor of keeping factories open to all key policy and decision-makers of the government, highlighting the potential financial impact of closing factories since factories are still responsible for paying worker salaries and festival bonuses, and concerns of meeting buyer deadlines; the government decided to permit factories to stay open with strict compliance to the 50% workforce restriction and Covid-19 sanitation measures. Meanwhile, public transportation has been curbed during the lockdown period, raising concerns around garment worker commutes ([Dhaka Tribune](#), [Dhaka Tribune](#), [The Load Star](#), [Daily Star](#)).

**Labor Conditions:** At the beginning of the first 2021 lockdown announcement the first week of April, the government provided no indication as to how garment workers will commute to and from factories in a series of specified directives ([The Daily Star](#)). Many workers and employees had to walk to factories on the first day of lockdown, due to a ban on public transport. Workers' leader Joly Talukder questioned the decision to keep the factories open amid a surge in the virus cases. She also said the transport shutdown made the lives of the workers difficult ([BD News](#)). On April 15, Dhaka Tribune's photojournalist Palash Khan captured hundreds of garment workers walking to their workplace. Many were travelling in crowded human haulers that were plying the roads. Very few buses arranged by garment factories were seen on the road. The workers claimed they had to pay up to three times higher fare as there were not many human haulers ([The Daily Star](#)). During lockdown, the Ministry of Labor formed 23 special crisis management committees to monitor the factories that will remain open during the lockdown, in order to ensure that these are adhering to the health and hygiene guidelines. The industrial police and local administration will assist the committees. while the BGMEA and BKMEA, will also monitor whether the health rules are being followed in the readymade garment factories. Some steps include a staggered schedule for workers, mask wearing, and social distancing. Factory owners were also urged to ensure timely payment of wages to workers during the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr ([The Daily Star](#), [Prothomalo](#)). The president of Bangladesh Garment and Industrial Workers Federation (BGIWF) said at least 20% of workers of a factory use public transport to get to work and that they have been suffering the most due to the lockdown. The government instructed factories to arrange transportation for their workers using their own resources, but not a single factory followed that instruction ([Dhaka Tribune](#)). As Bangladesh entered their third week of strict lockdowns with public transportation curtailed, Garment Worker Diaries surveyed 1,285 garment workers on their commute method to work. 76% of workers reported that they walked to work, following the reported trend across media outlets that many garment workers are walking to work. However, out of these workers, 92% reported that they had always walked to work, lockdown or not ([Garment Worker Diaries](#)).

**Garment Sustainability:** The BGMEA has partnered with the UN Program to launch a garment sector sustainability report that aims to consolidate the industry's approach to sustainability reporting ([Just](#)

[Style](#)). Despite uncertainty amid the pandemic, international clothing brands are confident that Bangladesh will remain a major source of apparels in the coming months, according to a new study from The Centre for Policy Dialogue. The study found that COVID-19 caused the sale of US clothing stores to decline by 79% in April 2020. Meanwhile, 76% of suppliers had to reduce export orders and the highest proportion of order reductions in Bangladesh at 93%, Vietnam at 80%, China at 74% and India at 61%. The study also found that the fiscal constraints of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka squeezed domestic capacity to support the apparels sector during the crisis and initiatives of sourcing countries were inadequate. The findings of the study were presented at a webinar on 'Recovery of the apparel sectors of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka: is a value-chain-based solution possible?' ([The Daily Star](#)).

**Government (& Third-Party Assistance) to the Garment Sector:** Leaders of different workers' rights bodies called on the government and factory owners to ensure health, food and job securities of the workers during restrictions imposed to contain COVID-19. They raised a five-point demand, including food and cash money for the workers, risk grants for the workers, free COVID-19 treatments for the infected workers and an end to layoff during restrictions. They also called on the garment factory owners to ensure safety of the garment factories during the COVID-19 situation, stating that the factory owners must take responsibility for treatments of the workers infected with COVID-19. They also called on the factory owners to refrain from sacking any worker during restrictions as they did at the beginning of COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 ([Newage Bangladesh](#)). Garment factory owners and industry associations are calling for another government stimulus to pay three months of salaries alongside festival allowances to workers. An emergency meeting was called amongst industry associations to discuss government asks as factories have struggled to maintain smooth operations during the month-long lockdown ([The Daily Star](#)). Meanwhile, the State Minister for Labor and Employment has directed garment factory owners to complete the payment of worker salaries and festival allowances by May 10. She also instructed factory owners to observe zone-wise holidays to avoid transportation crisis and help the workers maintain social distancing during their travel to village homes ([The Daily Star](#)). Banks will have to allocate around Tk 116 crore (\$13,694,449 USD) to carry out corporate social responsibility programs in the form of providing essential goods and medical equipment to the underprivileged affected by the pandemic. They have to set aside 1% of net profits earned this year to cater to people in dire need ([The Daily Star](#)).

**Digital Payments:** Swisscontact and Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) have signed an agreement to support apparel workers and factories that are still reeling from the disruptions brought about by the pandemic. The agreement will be carried out under Swisscontact's project Sarathi – Progress through Financial Inclusion. Through this collaboration, 400 garment workers will receive a portion of the wage subsidy digitally. Priority will be given to small and medium RMG factories, who are struggling to receive production orders amid the pandemic so that they can receive subsidies to retain their workforce. Sarathi engaged four commercial banks to digitize the wage payments of 49 garment factories ([Newage Bangladesh](#)).

**Garment Worker Unrest:** Several hundred garment workers from multiple factories continued to protest in April, demanding missing salary payments at Versatile Attire factory, Trousers and Land Limited and Tas Kit and Fashion Limited ([Bangla News](#), [Fibre2Fashion](#)). Intelligence and regulatory

bodies fear a possible labor unrest ahead of Eid (May 13) in at least 538 manufacturing units, including textile mills and apparel factories, caused by the uncertainty over payment of wages and festival allowance of workers of some factories affected by the pandemic. The Police Headquarters (PHQ) has instructed the Industrial Police unit to make a list of factories which are not capable of paying workers' salaries and bonuses so that steps can be taken to avoid unrest. The list would be sent to Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) seeking further action. The government has formed a crisis committee consisting the representatives of Department of Labor, Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments, BGMEA, Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association and labor organizations to clear the salaries and bonuses before Eid ([The Daily Star, Apparel Resources](#)).

**Shrimp:** Bangladesh has finally started to farm vannamei shrimp (white leg shrimp) on a pilot basis following pleas from exporters as locally grown black tiger shrimp and freshwater prawn are unable to compete with cheaper varieties in western markets. After purchasing 10 million vannamei shrimp from Thailand, the Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute is testing whether they can cope with Bangladesh's local environment ([The Daily Star](#)).

## India

**Population** (2019): 1,366.4M<sup>30</sup>

**Employment in agriculture** (2018): 156.2M<sup>33</sup>

**Labor Force** (2020): 501M<sup>31</sup>

**Employment in garment** (2018): 12.9M<sup>34</sup>

**Labor Force, % Female** (2020): 19.9%<sup>32</sup>

**Total Informal Employment** (2018): 319.6M<sup>35</sup>

*Note: We decided to shape the India section a little differently than the typical thematic categories to better illustrate the impacts of the surge of Covid-19 cases across the nation. We hope this provides a clearer picture of workers experiences across garment and agriculture as they faced an intensified public health crisis in April 2021.*

**Public Health Crisis:** In early April, India's populous states began to witness a rapid and deadlier resurgence of Covid-19 cases. Clusters of Covid-19 cases were springing up across garment factories, resulting in units shutting down for multiple days. A few instances include a garment export unit at Washington Nagar in Kannakampalayam panchayat that shut down for 2 days after 31 workers out of 165 in the firm tested positive for COVID-19 ([New Indian Express](#)); 2 clusters from the Kolar district where 33 garment workers from a factory of 1000 workers tested positive for COVID-19 ([The New Indian Express](#)). Throughout April, the number of cases continued to climb, peaking on April 30 at 401,993 new cases in one day across the nation ([New York Times](#)). India did not impose a national

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<sup>30</sup> World Bank Open Data, India. [data.worldbank.org](https://data.worldbank.org)

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> ILOSTAT – Employment by sex and economic activity (thousands) from Labor Force Surveys and Household Surveys. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>

<sup>34</sup> Government of India, Ministry of Textiles. "Annual Report 2017-2018"

<sup>35</sup> ILOSTAT – Informal employment by sex and economic activity (thousands) from Labor Force Surveys. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>

lockdown as they did in March 2020. Instead, lockdowns were decided upon and imposed by India's state governments. Between garment and agricultural value chains, garment has been the most affected due to its working environment in factories with large gatherings of people. India's main garment hubs include the states of Karnataka, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, and Maharashtra. All five states imposed a form of lockdown as they battled rising cases and death rates.

**Garment Economy:** In the state of Gujarat, the government imposed a night curfew of 8pm to 6am on 20 cities, including the textile city of Surat, as well as restrictions on public transportation and group activities since April 7 ([ZeeNews](#)). However, the night curfew and restrictions along with the rising cases of garment workers testing positive made many workers hesitant as they recalled the impacts of Covid-19 in 2020 —first due to the lockdown, and then by the migration of thousands of workers. According to the Federation of Surat Textile Traders Association (FOSTTA) president Manoj Agarwal, production is down by over 40%. Meanwhile, lots of workers have returned to their home states fearing another lockdown. As a result, workers' strength in factories has gone down by 25-30% ([Fibre2Fashion](#), [Fibre2Fashion](#)).

In the state of Tamil Nadu, migrant workers, who form a major portion of the workforce in the textile hub of Tirupur have decided to 'wait and watch' the turnout of the Covid-19 situation instead of returning home. Rather than going back like last year, some state they would rather overcome the pandemic staying put in the workplace, rather than endure poverty in their native villages ([DT Next](#)). In the State of Haryana, in Gurugam and Manesar, factory owners report that at least 15 to 20% of workers have left and they expect more to leave ([Hindustan Times](#)).

In the state of Maharashtra, the government imposed a curfew and restrictions that include the closure of non-essential appliance and apparel makers. However, all factories producing essential goods and services will remain operational at full capacity. Export-oriented units will remain open to fulfil their export obligations. Industries that require continuous manufacturing, too, can operate with 50% workforce. Relaxation has also been provided for factories that offer in-house accommodation. But all other factories must stop their operations for the next 15 days ([Business Standard](#)). A minister in BS Yediyurappa-led state cabinet said it was unlikely that the government will extend any financial assistance to residents who are facing the brunt of the second wave. The Garments and Textile Workers Union (GATWU) said they were yet to hear from the government on compensation for the loss of wages of over 500,000 people working in the garment sector ([Hindustan Times](#)).

In the state of Karnataka, that include the city of Bengaluru, home to one of the biggest clusters of garment manufacturers in India, the state government imposed a 14-day curfew with restrictions that initially included closing garment factories. Despite the risk of getting sick, many workers would prefer to see factories continue running, according to IndustriALL, fearing the effect the lockdown will have on their jobs and wages. After demands from industry associations, the government modified its earlier order to allow garment manufacturing units to operate with 50% of its workforce during the State-wide lockdown. The reversal of the order comes after the Karnataka Employers' Association (KEA) and the Apparel Export Promotion Council aggressively pitched for allowing manufacturing units to operate at 50% capacity ([The Business Line](#), [Quartz](#)).

Even prior to April, India's factory activity grew at its weakest pace in seven months in March 2021 as Covid-19 cases dampened domestic demand and output, resulting in a spike in layoffs. This is even after industrial production declined by 3.7% in February 2021. Despite foreign orders growing at a faster pace in March, overall demand has declined to its lowest since August 2020. Output also grew at its weakest pace in seven months. A survey indicated that factories intensified the rate of layoffs to its strongest in six months in March but did not provide any concrete numbers ([Reuters, Newslick](#)). With new restrictions in April, apparel manufacturers across various hub are working with around 30-40% capacity. A new report says that the full recovery for Indian apparel players will be prolonged and pushed back to 2023 ([RMG Banagladesh](#)).

**Job Loss:** The apparel retail and manufacturing sector is facing another round of job losses in the wake of the lockdowns imposed by several state governments. Amid the second wave, about 60-70% of manufacturing units have been forced to shut down due to cancellation of orders or manpower challenges. The lockdown in Maharashtra has particularly hit the industry as 18,000 units are located in the state and 10,000 in Mumbai alone. The Maharashtra government has allowed the manufacturing units to open on the condition that the workers inhabit the premises, and since most units do not have this facility, they had to cease operations ([Money Control](#)).

**Farmers Protest:** As of April 26, farmers continued the protest they began on November 26, 2020 regarding the new farm laws despite the rise in Covid-19 cases. The protest has entered its sixth month over laws that the government claims will modernize India's agriculture, but farmers are adamantly against. One protester said, "these farm laws are a bigger threat to us than corona." Many of the farmers question why the farm laws were approved amid a pandemic and without being discussed with farmers or opposition. Protesters say they will continue until the government revokes the laws and guarantees a minimum support price for crops ([Al Jazeera](#)). In the state of Haryana, thousands of farmers are protesting the heaps of toxic foam that are polluting potable water in villages. This toxic foam is linked to the phosphate content of detergents in the wastewater of cloth manufacturing units that are all over Haryana ([Aljazeera](#)).

**Cotton:** Despite the lockdown and restrictions, India's export of cotton doubled in 2020 (April-December) compared to the previous year over the same period, shows official data. The commodity plays a significant role in sustaining the livelihood of an estimated 5.8 million cotton farmers and 40-50 million people engaged in related activities such as cotton processing and trade, according to the Ministry of Textiles ([Money Control](#)).

**Tea:** The tea sector lost 140 million kg in 2020 due to Covid-19 and unfortunately, the sector continues to struggle due to weather concerns in Assam and North Bengal and restrictions in various states. Prices of tea had surged from May to September of 2020 and then began to fall and are not going up as expected ([CNBCTV](#), [The Economic Times](#)). Tea workers in the tea belt of Dooars and Terai region in north Bengal, comprising 12 constituencies organized to go to the polls during the month of April to vote in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly Election. Voting began on March 27 and ends May 2, 2021. The plight of tea garden workers is a major poll issue. The incumbent party Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) promised Rs 1,000 crore (\$136,478 USD) for development of tea gardens, while the Trinamool has housing schemes such as 'tea beauty' ([The Economic Times](#), [The Economic Times](#)).

## Indonesia

Population (2019): 270.6M<sup>36</sup>

Employment in Agriculture (2018): 37.2M<sup>39</sup>

Labor Force (2020): 136.7M<sup>37</sup>

Employment in Garment (2016): 2.24M<sup>40</sup>

Labor Force, % Female (2020): 39.3%<sup>38</sup>

Total Informal Employment (2019): 104.6M<sup>41</sup>

**Garment Economy:** Indonesia's chemical, pharmaceutical and textile industries are prepared to implement what the Indonesian government is labeling at the fourth industrial revolution or “Industry 4.0” that will boost efficiency and competitiveness, according to the Industry Ministry. The ministry has outlined various programs to implement the road map of Making Indonesia 4.0 in the sector, including the assessment of Indonesia Industry 4.0 Readiness Index (INDI 4.0), implementation and adoption of the Industry 4.0 technology in the textile and garment sector, improvement in the flow of materials in the petrochemical industry, and the establishment of textile and textile industry pilot project in Industry 4.0. The fourth industrial revolution is defined by the integration of resources in technology, machinery, and humankind ([Antara News](#)). Better Work highlights how the uncertainty of the pandemic has strengthened bonds amongst workers, factory managers and unions in Indonesia. These stakeholders had to work together to ensure strong occupational health and safety in Indonesian factories to ensure the survival of the sector. “Despite the incredible losses of the pandemic, the challenge has highlighted the strength and capacity of people cooperating for a common cause” ([Betterwork](#)).

**Agricultural Economy:** Indonesia's agriculture industry continues to demonstrate great resilience against Covid-19. Indonesia’s Central Statistics Agency recorded that agricultural exports went up by a little over 14% between 2019 to early 2021 with the food crop subsector has the largest contributor to growth ([Tech in Asia](#)). Indonesia is a major agricultural country globally, but technology is the key to additional growth in the sector. Agriculture employs nearly a third of the country's workforce, but these numbers are dropping with fewer young people entering the field. This could result in higher reliance on imports and lower incomes for farmers. Farmers chief concerns are capital, pest and disease management, and market access. Technology can mitigate some of the issues with automation for pest control, instant updates on soil conditions, crop cycles, and water need. Additional and more transparent market access using digital technology could increase production and lower costs in the sector. A recent survey by McKinsey and Company which reached 200 farmers in 80 villages shows interest is high and much of the tech is doable but underutilized. Additionally, young farmers are twice as likely to use online channels, all solutions need not be wholly digital and should be tailored to fit each farmer’s needs ([The Jakarta Post](#)).

- **Coffee:** Indonesia based cooperative Alko Sumatra Kopi (ALKO) intends to export 100 tons of specialty-grade Arabica kerinci coffee to China this year, paired with its blockchain

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<sup>36</sup> World Bank Open Data, Indonesia. [data.worldbank.org](https://data.worldbank.org)

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> ILOSTAT – Employment by sex and economic activity (thousands) from Labor Force Surveys and Household Surveys. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>

<sup>40</sup> Asia-Pacific Garment and Footwear Sector Research Note, Issue 8, October 2017. ILO. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms\\_581466.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_581466.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> ILOSTAT – Informal employment by sex and economic activity (thousands) from Labor Force Surveys. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>

technology. ALKO offers a traceability blockchain technology for coffee which collects data of the farmers, plantation site, harvest day, beans processed location, method, roastery, taste, and aroma profile. ALKO has a membership of 600 coffee farmers around Mount Kerinci area in Indonesia, helping them export their products. Currently, 95% of ALKO's coffee beans are exported to New Zealand, US, UK, Europe, Japan, Malaysia, Russia, and the UAE ([Food Navigator](#)).

- Palm Oil:** In Indonesia, the world's top palm oil producer, data from the Indonesia Palm Oil Association (GAPKI) showed that inventories fell to 4.04 million tons at the end of February. The market is estimating Indonesian palm oil production in March to increase by double digits while exports is seen increasing multi-fold ([Nasdaq](#)). According to research published March 25 in Nature Sustainability, palm oil yields on existing farms and plantations could be greatly increased with improved management practices. There is great potential to increase productivity of current plantations, especially in the case of smallholders' farms, where current yield is only half of what is attainable. This also reduces the need for expansion into rainforests and peatlands ([Eurasia Review](#)). Round table Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) says "local communities are the most vital parts in the success of the journey toward sustainable palm oil." However, they acknowledge that sustainable palm oil is not a familiar concept to many. Smallholder farms account for 40% of global palm oil production but currently lack the resources to harvest sustainable palm oil. A spokesman from the RSPO says communities need to be educated on sustainable palm oil and the benefits to their community as well as what technologies are available to them. RSPO has issued a roadmap outline for making sustainable palm oil the norm that includes a high level of community engagement. Pilot programs for engagement have shown success from trainings held 2016-2018 ([The Jakarta Post](#)).

## Pakistan

Population (2019): 216.6M<sup>42</sup>

Employment in agriculture (2018): 22.4M<sup>45</sup>

Labor Force (2020): 75.9M<sup>43</sup>

Employment in garment (2015): 2.27M<sup>46</sup>

Labor Force, % Female (2020): 20.5%<sup>44</sup>

Total Informal Employment (2018): 48.9M<sup>47</sup>

**Garment Economy:** Pakistan garment and textile exports from July 2020 to February 2021 (US \$9057.503 million) have almost recuperated to similar levels from July 2019 to February 2020 (US

<sup>42</sup> World Bank Open Data, Pakistan. [data.worldbank.org](https://data.worldbank.org)

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> ILOSTAT – Employment by sex and economic activity (thousands) from Labor Force Surveys and Household Surveys. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>

<sup>46</sup> Asia-Pacific Garment and Footwear Sector Research Note, Issue 8, October 2017. ILO.

[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms\\_581466.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_581466.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> ILOSTAT – Informal employment by sex and economic activity (thousands) from Labor Force Surveys. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>



\$9152.889). This is great news for the export garment industry with hopes of continued growth over the next period ([Business Recorder](#)).

**Agricultural Economy:** The Pakistani prime minister is pushing for faster distribution of Kissan cards to farmers with the goal of reducing poverty and corruption. Kissan cards consolidate farmer's information into one digital platform that enables farmers easier access to benefits from various government programs. Farmers will also be offered contracted trained professionals to apprise farmers of new technologies which are far underutilized. The government is focused on a Rs300 billion (\$2Bn USD) agriculture transformation package which will also address water shortages, seed development, and better means of storage. Pakistan also intends to double farmer access to general loans to increase productivity ([Pakistan Today](#), [Tribune](#), [PITB](#)).

**Cotton:** Over 8 textile exporters associations on April 12 demanded enquiry under judicial commission to probe and unearth the cotton yarn crisis facts through detailed investigations. They had learned that approximately 2 million bales had been sold without sales tax and invoices in the local market and sought to identify those behind the missteps. Exporters feel that the government is turning a blind eye to the cotton yarn crisis that is impacting the financial future of the textile sector and its exports. Internationally, cotton prices have decreased but the price in of cotton and cotton yarn in Pakistan have reached record highs (more than 40% increase from the norm) that are out of line with the global market ([Business Recorder](#)). The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of Pakistan has approved to withdraw customs duty on import of cotton yarn till June 30 to facilitate the textile sector, the Finance Ministry said. The top economic body took the step "to ensure smooth supply of cotton and cotton yarns to the value-added industry, while bridging the gap between domestic production and overall demand for the inputs" ([Siasat](#)). Keeping in view the government's approval of duty-free import of cotton yarn, exporters have demanded that the leadership open imports from India. They have also requested the government to extend incentives until the country achieves its yearly cotton production target ([The Express Tribune](#)).

**Worker Unrest & Gender Equity:** Nasir Mansoor, the Deputy General Secretary of National Trade Union Federation Pakistan (NTUF) reports that on 30 April, workers from International Textile unit 2, Korangi Industrial Karachi, went on strike demanding their wages, an end to the third-party contract system and equal wages for women ([Twitter](#)).

## Additional Recommended Reading

1. Dr. Khondaker Golam Moazzem, Mr. Kithmina Hewage, "[Recovery of the apparel sectors of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka: is a value-chain-based solution possible?](#)" Center for Policy Dialogue, Southern Voice, IPS. April 2021. Pdf.
2. "[Crying Out for Justice: Wage Theft Against Migrant Workers](#)," Justice for Wage Theft Series Volume 1, Migrant Forum in Asia. April 20, 2021. Pdf.
3. Arlan Brucal, Arti Grover, Santiago Reyes Ortega, "[Damaged by the Disaster: The Impact of Covid-19 on Firms in South Asia](#)," World Bank Group. March 2021. Pdf.
4. "[Barriers to the Inclusion of Women and Marginalized Groups in Nigeria's ID System: Findings and Solutions from an In-depth Qualitative Study](#)," World Bank Group, Identification for Development. April 2021. Pdf.
5. Marc Bain, "[Indian garment workers are caught between Covid-19 and lost wages](#)," April 27, 2021. Quartz. Web.

## About the Digest

This digest is produced by the Advisory arm of [Synergos](#), which provides strategic counsel, research, and insights for socially-minded organizations. If you would like to be added to the mailing list, please contact [advisory@synergos.org](mailto:advisory@synergos.org). All information is public and can be forwarded.

This digest is commissioned by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as a component of ongoing dialogue on the importance of wage digitization to accelerate financial inclusion and promote women's economic empowerment. You can learn more about responsible wage digitization by visiting: [ILO Global Centre on Digital Wages for Decent Work](#), [BSR HERProject](#), [Better than Cash Alliance \(BtCA\)](#), and [Microfinance Opportunities \(MFO\)](#).



## Appendix: Country Data Sources

Population, Labor Force, Labor Force (% Female): World Bank Open Data

Labor Force definition per World Bank: Labor force comprises people ages 15 and older who supply labor for the production of goods and services during a specified period. It includes people who are currently employed and people who are unemployed but seeking work as well as first-time job seekers. Not everyone who works is included, however. Unpaid workers, family workers, and students are often omitted, and some countries do not count members of the armed forces. Labor force size tends to vary during the year as seasonal workers enter and leave.

Employment in garment: mixed. See footnotes.

Employment in agriculture: ILO Employment in Agriculture (%); ILOSTAT – Employment by sex and economic activity (thousands) from Labor Force Surveys and Household Surveys

Total Informal Employment: ILOSTAT – informal employment by sex and economic activity (thousands) from Labor Force Surveys