

The Unequal Impacts of Covid-19 on Global Garment Supply Chains

Evidence from
Ethiopia, Honduras,
India, and Myanmar

Authored by
Genevieve LeBaron
Penelope Kyritsis
Perla Polanco Leal
Michael Marshall



Department Of
Politics &
International
Relations.



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WORKER RIGHTS
CONSORTIUM

How has Covid-19 affected garment workers' vulnerability to forced labor?

DATASET

Our research compiled a new primary dataset between September 2020 and April 2021, consisting of:

- A multi-country quantitative digital survey of workers in Ethiopia, Honduras, India, and Myanmar (N=1140)
- Interviews with workers in Ethiopia, Honduras, and India (N=60)
- Expert interviews, including with business, social compliance industry, and international organization representatives (N=20)

WORKER RESPONDENTS

1140 workers from
302 factories and
4 countries
(Ethiopia, Honduras,
India and Myanmar)

Among the 1140 workers we surveyed:

- **72%** remained employed at the same factory during the pandemic
- **17%** found another job
- **11%** are currently not working

BRANDS REPORTED BY WORKERS

Honduras

Ethiopia



India

Myanmar

RESEARCHING FORCED LABOR

Our study uses a wide-angle lens to working conditions that includes:

1. metrics relevant to labor exploitation and unfair treatment
2. metrics that capture ILO indicators of forced labor
3. compound measures of vulnerability to forced labor that capture vulnerability across several metrics

ILO Indicators of Forced Labour:

- Abuse of vulnerability
- Deception
- Restriction of movement
- Isolation
- Physical and sexual and living conditions violence
- Intimidation and threats
- Retention of identity documents
- Withholding of wages
- Debt bondage
- Abusive working
- Excessive overtime

FINDINGS: DECLINING INCOME AND WAGES

- Among all respondents currently working, average monthly incomes have fallen by **11%**
- Among the workers who lost their jobs, **16%** are owed wages
- Of the 145 who were terminated, **nearly 80%** were not paid the full severance pay legally owed to them and **over two-thirds** were paid nothing at all

“I wash clothes for people after my garment work and in the weekends. My [garment work] salary covers only rent.”

- Garment worker from Ethiopia

FINDINGS: UNFAIR TREATMENT & FORCED LABOR

“Even if I am [practically] enslaved and exploited at the factory, without my job I can’t feed my children.”

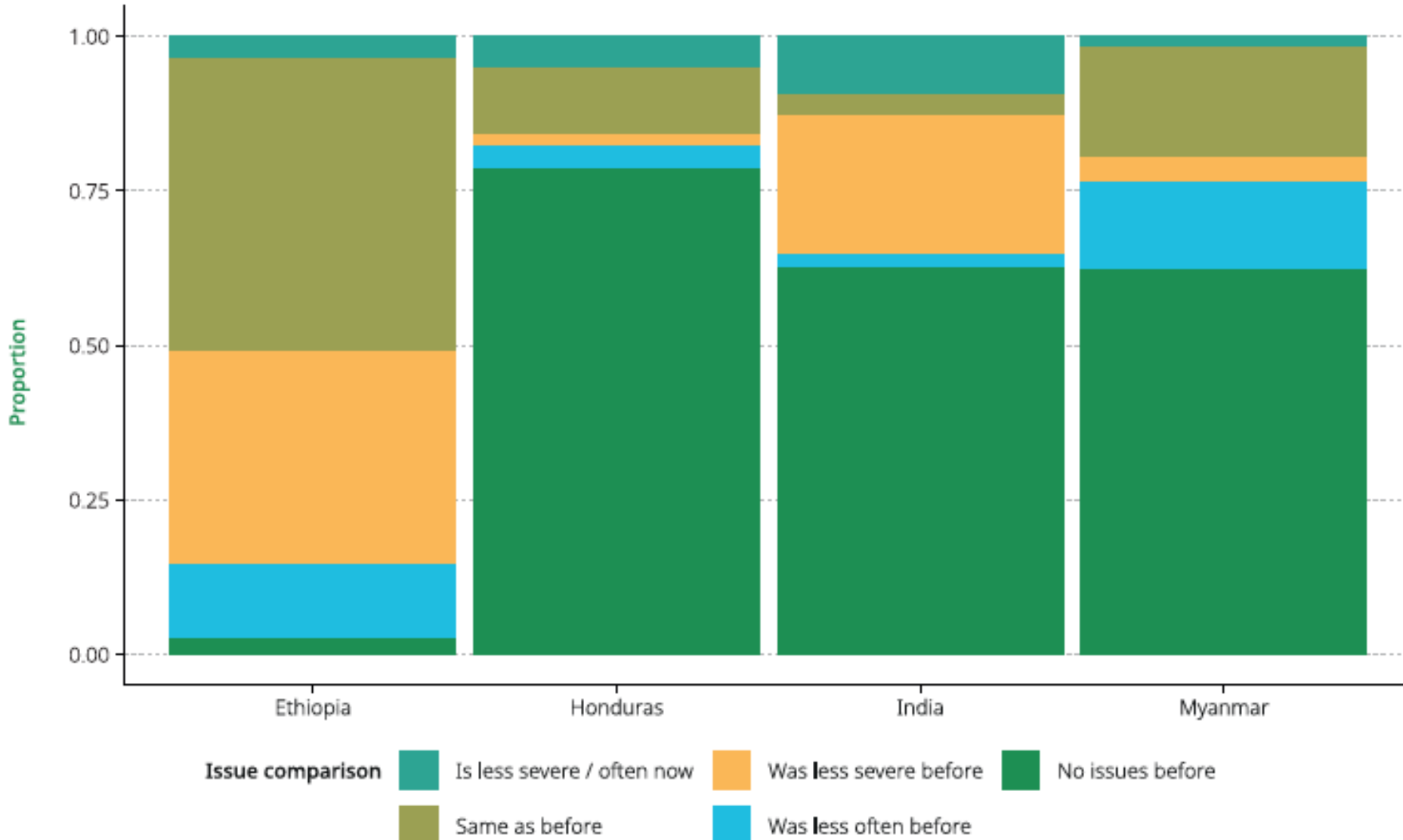
- Garment worker from Honduras

Among the 1019 current workers in our survey:

- **35%** reported verbal abuse
- **24%** reported threats and/intimidation
- **22%** reporting receiving unfair wage deductions
- **19%** reported restricted access to water and the toilet
- **39%** reported a lack of PPE and social distancing

FINDINGS: UNFAIR TREATMENT & FORCED LABOR

Figure 12. Comparison of forced labour indicators with pre-pandemic



FINDINGS: GROWING INDEBTEDNESS

- Across all worker respondents, average levels of savings have fallen by **25%**
- Over **60%** of the workers in our survey have had to borrow money during the pandemic
- The most common reasons for borrowing were to cover the costs of **food, housing and medicine.**

“I have decided to leave the industry because the debt has become unbearable. If I stay here, the debt is going to kill me.”

- Garment worker from Ethiopia