



Photo source: YCP's Team in Semarang District



## EMPOWERING WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE:

# A POLICY BRIEF ON COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

### A. BRIEF CONTEXT

Addressing gender-based violence in the workplace is a key priority for the Indonesian government, as part of a broader agenda to empower women and promote gender equality. Under the 2020-2024 administration, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection has identified five priority areas, including reducing violence against women, increasing women's entrepreneurship, supporting mothers and families, decreasing child labor, and preventing child marriage. [i]

Women make significant contributions to Indonesia's economic development, comprising nearly 40% of the total workforce. However, gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, remains a persistent barrier to women's full participation and advancement in the workforce. This violence arises from underlying power imbalances and gender inequalities in society. Gender-based violence arises from power imbalances

between women, men, and individuals who do not conform to gender stereotypes. Inequalities that contribute to gender-based violence include: established norms and assumptions for gender identity; unequal access to power/resources/decision-making based on gender and/or gender identity; and condone/accept beliefs, attitudes, and norms that support violence. [ii]

National Commission for Women in its 2023 Annual Record Report (CATAHU) recorded 115 cases of workplace violence reported to them and 93 cases of workplace violence reported to other services units. For the record, the number of cases can be much higher if referring to various obstacles experienced by victims of violence, especially gender-based violence or sexual violence in the workplace. The number of victims can also be higher than the number of cases, because one case may have more than 1 victim or be a victim of more than 1 type of violence. While official data on

## A POLICY BRIEF ON COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

workplace violence may appear limited, studies suggest the problem is likely much more widespread. For example, a recent ILO survey found that over 70% of respondents had experienced some form of violence or harassment in the workplace, and over 40% of victims chose not to report it. Addressing this critical issue requires a comprehensive, strategic approach. [iii]

### B. KEY IMPROVEMENT

The Government of Indonesia has demonstrated longstanding commitment to advancing women's rights and gender equality in the workplace. This is evident through the ratification of key international conventions, such as CEDAW, as well as the enactment of domestic laws and regulations safeguarding the rights and protections of working women.

Existing labor laws, including the Manpower Act of 2003, enshrine principles of non-discrimination, prohibit hazardous work for pregnant women, and guarantee maternity leave, breastfeeding rights, and other entitlements. More recently, the Job Creation Law has further strengthened protections against workplace discrimination due to marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth.

To specifically address gender-based violence and harassment in the workplace, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (MOWECP) has taken proactive steps. In 2020, the ministry introduced regulations establishing Women's Worker Protection Houses (RP3) at industrial

and plantation sites. These RP3 centers serve as mechanisms for prevention, reporting, and support services for victims of workplace violence.

Building on this foundation, the MOWECP has recently revised the RP3 regulations to enhance the model. The updated approach places full responsibility on employers to establish and manage RP3 centers, with support from local government agencies and service providers. This strengthens the ownership and accountability of companies in addressing gender-based violence.

Complementing the RP3 initiative, the Ministry of Manpower has also issued new guidelines for the prevention and handling of sexual violence in the workplace. This demonstrates a coordinated, multi-stakeholder effort to tackle this critical issue.

These legislative and institutional reforms reflect the government's strategic prioritization of women's empowerment and gender equality in the world of work. By establishing robust legal frameworks, accountability mechanisms, and support services, Indonesia is working to fulfill the rights and protection of working women, particularly in addressing the persistent challenge of gender-based violence.

The recently enacted Law Number 12 of 2022 concerning Sexual Violence Crimes (TPKS) has introduced robust sanctions for corporations involved in or committing such crimes. These regulatory measures include financial penalties, confiscation of illicit



## A POLICY BRIEF ON COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

profits and assets, revocation of permits, public disclosure of court rulings, and even the suspension, closure, or dissolution of the offending corporate entities.

Despite these legislative advancements, the protection of working women and the fulfilment of their rights remain persistent challenges across various sectors, including key industries such as garment manufacturing and palm oil production, which are critical to Indonesia's economic landscape. Ongoing efforts are needed to holistically address the issue of workplace violence and discrimination against women employees.

### **BOX 1: EMPOWERING WOMEN IN THE PALM OIL SECTOR**

Indonesia's palm oil industry, a major contributor to the national economy, employs a workforce of over 16 million, with women playing a critical yet often overlooked role in various production processes. However, these women workers face persistent challenges, including lack of formal employment status, limited access to benefits and protections, and exposure to discrimination and violence in the workplace.

Research has revealed a concerning pattern of gender-based discrimination and exploitation within the palm oil industry. Women workers are frequently relegated to informal, low-wage positions, with their contributions deemed "invisible" despite their integral role in operations. Additionally, they are vulnerable to various forms of

workplace violence and harassment, as well as a lack of access to essential support services such as maternity leave and childcare.

In recognition of these issues, industry bodies such as the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) have taken steps to address gender-related challenges within the sector. The RSPO's updated Principles and Criteria now mandate the establishment of gender committees to raise awareness, identify concerns, and propose solutions to improve the working conditions and rights of women employed in the palm oil industry. These efforts represent a positive shift towards more inclusive and equitable practices in a crucial economic sector.

Moving forward, a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach is needed to further strengthen legal protections, enhance support mechanisms, and drive systemic change to empower women workers and promote gender equality throughout the palm oil value chain in Indonesia.

### **C. REMAINING CHALLENGES**

The Government of Indonesia has demonstrated a strong commitment to address critical issues related to women's rights and gender equality in the workplace. This commitment is reflected in the policy frameworks and tools the government has put in place to safeguard the rights of women workers, promote gender parity, and

## A POLICY BRIEF ON COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

prevent and respond to gender-based violence, including sexual violence.

However, significant challenges remain in the effective implementation of these initiatives. A closer examination reveals gaps and obstacles in several key areas that require strategic attention and action, including:

### **SYSTEMIC AND POLICY IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES:**

The effective implementation of the government's policies and regulations to protect women workers' rights and promote gender equality faces several systemic challenges that require strategic attention:

1. Capacity gaps: There are significant gaps in the understanding and technical capabilities of provincial and local agencies responsible for implementing these regulations. This hinders their ability to provide effective support and assistance to companies in establishing the required systems and processes.
2. Uneven service infrastructure: The availability and coverage of specialized women and children's protection service units, such as the Integrated Service Center for the Empowerment of Women and Children (P2TP2A), is uneven across districts and cities. This limits access to essential support services, especially in cases of gender-based violence.
3. Coordination deficiencies: The lack of effective coordination mechanisms between companies, government

agencies, and other relevant stakeholders creates confusion and challenges in accessing necessary guidance and assistance. This is particularly evident in the implementation of overlapping or complex policy requirements.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL BARRIERS:**

Companies, especially multinational enterprises, also face internal challenges that hinder their ability to fulfil their commitments and obligations:

1. Capacity constraints: Many companies lack the understanding and capabilities to effectively implement gender equality policies and measures to prevent and address gender-based violence in the workplace.
2. Coordination challenges: Companies often struggle to identify the appropriate channels and resources to seek guidance and support related to these requirements. [iv]
3. Policy interpretation difficulties: The complexity and potential overlaps in the regulatory landscape make it challenging for companies to interpret and apply the various mandates, leading to a perception of these as optional rather than essential.

## A POLICY BRIEF ON COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

### WORKER-LEVEL BARRIERS:

At the worker level, several factors impede the realization of their rights and the effective reporting of incidents:

1. Lack of awareness: Many workers, especially women, are unaware of their basic rights, including protection from all forms of violence in the workplace.
2. Fear of reporting: Workers are often hesitant to report incidents of rights violations or gender-based violence due to fears and concerns about the consequences.
3. Unclear reporting mechanisms: Workers and company management lack a clear understanding of the safe and appropriate reporting channels and procedures as per the regulations.
4. Trade unions have the potential to be critical partners in the efforts to eliminate gender-based violence and address other gender-related issues in the workplace. However, to effectively play this role, trade unions themselves require capacity-building support. This capacity development should not be limited to just workers' rights, but should also encompass a deeper understanding of gender equality and the specific rights and protection needs of women workers.

These multifaceted challenges require a comprehensive and strategic approach that addresses systemic, organizational, and

individual-level barriers to ensure the effective implementation of the government's policies and the protection of women workers' rights.

### BOX 2: THE GARMENT INDUSTRY: A GENDER EQUALITY IMPERATIVE

Indonesia is a major global player in the garment and textile industry, commanding a 2.4% market share and employing over 5.2 million workers, the majority of whom are women. However, this highly feminized workforce faces significant gender-based challenges, including widespread sexual violence and harassment.

Research has consistently highlighted the prevalence of gender-based violence experienced by female garment workers, with one study revealing that over 56% of 773 workers had faced sexual harassment, and an alarming 93.6% of victims did not report these incidents. This systemic issue undermines the rights, dignity, and wellbeing of women workers, posing a critical challenge to the industry.

Recognizing the need for change, some multinational fashion brands have begun to take proactive steps to address gender inequality within their supply chains. Increased consumer awareness and pressure have prompted leading brands to commit to policies and programs that advance gender equality and ensure their supply chains are free from various forms of violence against women workers.

Recognizing the need for change, some multinational fashion brands have begun to take proactive steps to address gender inequality within their supply chains. Increased consumer awareness and pressure have prompted leading brands to commit to policies and programs that advance gender equality and ensure their supply chains are free from various forms of violence against women workers.

One such example is Target's commitment to have 100% of its supplier-owned facilities implement gender equality policies and programs by 2025. This reflects a growing understanding that empowering women in supply chains not only improves the lives of workers but also enhances the long-term resilience and sustainability of the industry as a whole.

Addressing the deeply entrenched gender-based challenges in the garment industry requires a multi-stakeholder, strategic approach. This must involve collaboration between brands, suppliers, trade unions, and workers to develop comprehensive policies, build institutional capacity, and foster a culture of respect, safety, and equal opportunity for all workers, regardless of gender.

#### **D. LEARNING FROM BEST PRACTICES TO ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE: THE REVITALIZATION OF THE WOMEN WORKERS' PROTECTION HOUSE (RP3)**

The Women Workers' Protection House (RP3) is a critical mechanism for addressing gender-based challenges within the workplace, particularly in the plantation sector. The RP3 model established by PT Hindoli, which was officially inaugurated by the Minister of Women's Empowerment in 2020, serves as a best practice example of this approach.

However, an initial evaluation revealed that the RP3 was facing several operational challenges, including limited hours, accessibility barriers, and workers' hesitation to report incidents due to a perceived lack of the RP3's legitimacy as a company-owned grievance mechanism. Additionally, the Gender Committee responsible for overseeing the RP3 lacked the necessary capacity and understanding of gender-based violence and the technical skills to effectively manage the facility.

To address these issues, a collaborative process was facilitated by the Yayasan Care Peduli (YCP)-CARE Indonesia in partnership with the local Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Agency (PPA), the District Manpower Office, and other relevant stakeholders. This process involved mapping the existing modalities and roles of each stakeholder, aligning perceptions, and clarifying the management, financing, and referral mechanisms for the RP3.

## A POLICY BRIEF ON COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The outcome was a comprehensive agreement that defined the responsibilities of each agency in providing support and assistance to the RP3, which was now under the direct management of the company. This included coordinating the referral process and support for victims in cases of gender-based violence. The revitalized RP3 now enjoys increased worker trust and a demonstrable commitment from the company to ensure the safety and well-being of female workers.

Recognizing the success of the PT Hindoli RP3 model, CARE Indonesia has collaborated with the Ministry of Empowerment and Child Protection to implement Regulation of the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Number 1 of 2023 concerning Amendments to the Regulation of the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Number 1 of 2020 concerning the Provision of Women's Worker Protection Houses (RP3) in the Workplace by replicating this revitalization strategy in other industrial areas, highlighting the scalability and broader applicability of this approach.

The RP3 revitalization process underscores the importance of adopting a strategic, multi-stakeholder approach to addressing gender-based challenges in the workplace. By aligning the roles and responsibilities of key actors, strengthening institutional capacity, and fostering a culture of trust and accountability, the RP3 model has the potential to serve as a transformative tool for advancing gender equality and creating safer, more inclusive work environments.

### **E. ACCELERATING GENDER EQUALITY AND ELIMINATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE: A PROPOSAL FOR WAY FORWARDS**

Advancing the fulfilment of rights and protection of female workers from gender-based violence in the workplace requires a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approach. Key strategic recommendations include:

#### **POLICY COHERENCE AND ENFORCEMENT**

1. Consolidate and align strategic planning across relevant ministries and agencies, such as the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, the Ministry of Manpower, and the Ministry of Industry. Specifically, in the implementation of two key technical policies, namely the Regulation of the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Number 1 of 2023 regarding Amendments to the Regulation of the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Number 1 of 2020 concerning the Provision of Women's Worker Protection Houses (RP3) and the Minister of Manpower's Decision Number 88 of 2023 on Guidelines for the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence in the Workplace.
2. Establish robust coordination mechanisms between companies, business associations, and government agencies responsible for women's labour protection and broader labour issues.

## A POLICY BRIEF ON COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

3. Develop incentive structures to recognize and reward companies that demonstrate exemplary implementation of gender equality and anti-violence mandates.
4. Strengthen the capacity of provincial and district-level agencies to directly support companies in implementing relevant policies and regulations.

### TARGETED INTERVENTIONS

1. Conduct comprehensive mapping of companies in high-risk sectors with large female workforces and elevated gender inequality and violence.
2. Provide intensive technical support to companies, facilitating the synchronization and implementation of key policies, such as the Women Workers' Protection House (RP3) and the anti-violence task force.
3. Integrate violence prevention and response systems as a prerequisite for company licensing or as part of audit indicators.

2. Strengthen the capacity of key service providers, such as the police and health personnel, to effectively respond to gender-based violence cases in accordance with their mandates.

### MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

Encourage and facilitate partnerships between companies, the government, women's organizations, gender-focused civil society groups, and legal aid institutions with expertise in gender-based violence.

By adopting this strategic, multi-pronged approach, stakeholders can accelerate the fulfilment of rights and protection for female workers, creating safer, more equitable, and inclusive work environments.

---

[i] <https://www.kemenpppa.go.id/page/view/NDk0Ng>

[ii] Mitigating the Risks of Gender-Based Violence: A Due Diligence Guide for Investing, UNICEF, 2020

[iii] Semua Bisa Kena, ILO Report 2023

[iv] Catatan diskusi dengan pengurus RP3 perusahaan, YCP, 2023

### KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

1. Establish mechanisms to facilitate the sharing and replication of best practices among companies, local governments, and civil society organizations.



## References

<https://www.unicef.org/documents/mitigating-risks-gender-based-violence-due-diligence-guide-investing>

<https://www.genderduediligence.org/>

Integration Of The Human Rights Of Women And The Gender Perspective: Violence Against Women The Due Diligence Standard As A Tool For The Elimination Of Violence Against Women ,UN Economic and Social Council, 2006

<https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2022/04/09/mayoritas-perempuan-indonesia-bekerja-sebagai-tenaga-penjualan>

<https://www.mpr.go.id/berita/Partisipasi-Perempuan-dalam-Dunia-Kerja-Harus-Terus-Ditingkatkan>

Quantum Leap For Gender Equality, ILO, 2019

[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_674831.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_674831.pdf)

<https://betahita.id/news/lipsus/7269/buruknya-kondisi-kerja-bagi-perempuan-di-perkebunan-dan-perikanan.html?v=1648609789>

<https://www.dw.com/id/investigasi-ap-temukan-budaya-kekerasan-seksual-di-industri-sawit/a-55663891>

<https://rspo.org/id/international-womens-day--advancing-gender-inclusivity-in-the-palm-oil-sector/>

[https://www.ilo.org/jakarta/info/public/pr/WCMS\\_859321/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/jakarta/info/public/pr/WCMS_859321/lang--en/index.htm)

<https://kekerasan.kemenpppa.go.id/ringkasan>

<https://www.jalastoria.id/kekerasan-seksual-di-lingkungan-kerja-adalah-ancaman-nyata-bagi-perempuan/>

<https://pusdeka.unu-jogja.ac.id/artikel/wajah-pekerja-perkebunan-sawit/#:~:text=Adapun%20jumlah%20buruh%20atau%20pekerja,diperkirakan%20berjumlah%204%2C5%20juta.>

<https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2019/12/20/perkebunan-sawit-mampu-menyerap-442-juta-tenaga-kerja>

<https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/pekerja-anak-dan-perempuan-pr-besar-industri-sawit-indonesia-/6327670.html>

<https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/nestapa-buruh-perempuan-di-perkebunan-sawit/5693035.html>

<https://asppuk.or.id/2022/11/buruh-perempuan-rawan-alami-kekerasan-di-sektor-perkebunan-sawit/>

\*\*\*



Author:  
**Novita Anggraeni**  
Gender & Social Inclusion Specialist  
Yayasan CARE Peduli / CARE Indonesia

Photo source: YCP's Team in Musi Banyuasin District