WEST PRINCIPLES
Worker Engagement Supported by Technology

WHITE PAPER: REALIZING THE BENEFITS OF WORKER REPORTING DIGITAL TOOLS

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www.westprinciples.org

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Executive Summary

This white paper seeks to promote broader – and meaningful – adoption of digital tools (phones, tablets, and web sites accessed via SMS, smartphone apps, hotlines, polls, social media, or other methods) used to gather information from workers in global supply chains about their needs, working conditions and experiences. The use of technology exposes workers to risks as well as opportunities which need to be clearly understood and acted upon. Technology enables better data relating to worker issues, and in some cases better communication between workers and their employers, but is not a solution in itself. An environment where institutions and people are open and prepared to negotiate improvements provides fertile ground for turning information into tangible labor improvements. In other words, the tools do not 'solve' any identified problems; solutions emerge when those receiving this information respond effectively and in a timely manner. The opportunity or risk likes in how technology interventions are designed and deployed.

This paper takes the principles developed by the WEST (Worker Engagement Supported by Technology) community and uses a series of case studies to illustrate these principles in practice. We introduce WEST's Principles and provide anecdotal examples, gathered from technology providers themselves. Most of these cases are drawn from workplaces in global supply chains. We acknowledge that uptake and implementation of the WEST Principles are at an early stage, and hence attempting to measure the impact of the Principles would be premature. We thus focus here on illustrating the Principles, sharing a series of lessons to bring them to life, and inspiring others to join the WEST community and begin putting these Principles into practice.

Harnessing advice from practitioners and researchers, the following preconditions are identified as enabling technology interventions to reduce risks and deliver benefits to workers. According to the cases included here, it seems that risks to workers are more effectively managed and the benefits are better enabled when:

1. The overall purpose and mission of the technology intervention are oriented to improve outcomes for workers.

2. Local stakeholders are engaged, including public authorities, to help ensure technology interventions are locally responsive, appropriate, and able to have positive impact.

3. Workers are included in the assessment, design, and implementation processes. User-centered design is used and accessibility by vulnerable or underserved people is assured.

4. Employer ownership helps drive better worker participation and leads to a greater likelihood that the information provided will inform improvements for workers.

5. Privacy is recognized as a fundamental human right and data ownership, sovereignty, and access are defined using a de minimis 'do no harm' approach before any data are collected.

6. Credibility depends upon institutions being prepared for urgent and serious response to grave problems.

7. Seeking to collect data never precedes a clear strategy to use the data. Data, combined with the willingness to act and the aspiration to improve working conditions and worker wellbeing, enable genuine systemic change.

Technology users and providers are invited to employ a checklist tool in Section 5 to guide the development of future programs. Lastly, recognizing that broad adoption of these Principles is a continuous process, we would like to advocate for broader collaboration within the current and the future community of practice.

The following questions show where knowledge sharing, experiences, and insights are needed to help guide and drive programs that use technology to engage workers:

1. How can we strengthen technology's purpose of improving the experience and wellbeing of the workers who use it?

2. How can we bolster meaningful worker inclusion?

3. What works to build buy-in and ownership by the employer?

4. How can we best integrate privacy as a human right into digital interventions such that the principles of 'do no harm' and 'informed consent' govern all engagement with workers?

5. How can we build stronger linkages between data usage and the opportunity for broader system changes?

6. How can the impact of technology-enabled worker engagement best be measured and monitored over time?

Recognizing that technology enables insight to drive improved working conditions and worker wellbeing, this paper seeks to promote well-considered and responsible approaches to the development and implementation of digital initiatives and usage of the data they provide. We seek to broaden interest in joining with the WEST community to discuss and answer some of the questions about how this all gets done and how workers, at the center of this sector, can be safely and impactfully engaged.

Introduction

The development of technology to enable worker reporting across global supply chains has flourished in the past several years as new methods to harness information from workers have been introduced – often, though not exclusively, via mobile phones. Most of these new technologies are predicated on the notion that each individual worker has a unique experience which can be understood and incorporated into an improvement process that will result in better, safer, and fairer employment. However, not all tech-enabled interventions in the supply chain are the same. In some cases, the information is analyzed and summarized for a global buyer, to help assess which suppliers might need additional oversight or support in creating better working conditions. In other cases, workers who get engaged via technology will receive relevant information in return, such as labor law data, safety information, cultural information for arriving migrants, or be linked directly with remedy channels. Some technologies seek to shift power to workers by making business practices more transparent. There are also interventions that work toward both ends – offering businesses due diligence while also empowering or educating workers.

While technology offers to improve transparency and increase accountability within supply chain institutions, it can also open the possibility of increased agency by workers themselves. Nonetheless, its usage raises urgent questions about accessibility, data integrity, individual privacy and security, worker empowerment, and access to remedy.[1] The risks and opportunities lie in how the technological interventions are designed and implemented to reach all workers including the most vulnerable, how these can serve local contexts, and how the results of these interventions can best be used for worker benefit.

Attempting to reflect and harness these opportunities, the WEST Principles were launched in June 2017. The Principles are the output of a collaborative network of companies and organizations working together to "align all actors around a set of guidelines that will ensure that technology is leveraged for good." They seek to provide a common point of reference for the effective design and implementation of technology interventions and the use of the data to improve workers' lives. The Principles were developed in consultation with a number of technology providers alongside other stakeholders across supply chains including brands, employers, NGOs, industry leaders, and labor rights experts.

The Principles reflect the current practices and aspirations of the WEST endorsers (16 organizations). Yet we recognize that further refinement and field lessons are necessary to capture the full range of services that exist (or are under development) globally, to maximize their potential positive impact on future programs.

The WEST Principles community initiated this inquiry to learn how and where current technologies might be illustrating the Principles. The intent is to uncover insights from existing efforts, even those in a pilot mode, knowing that final impact assessments might not yet exist. This insight is sought for two purposes: (1) to enable the potential market for worker-centered technologies to understand what is possible and how to operationalize the Principles, and (2) to identify for WEST endorsers and other technology users the opportunities for collaboration and opportunities to develop further guidance.

This paper offers editorial commentary designed to drive WEST implementation by showing current and future practitioners some examples and some steps they can take towards better design and deployment of technology interventions. This is an invitation to learn about current practices, to inspire collaboration on best practices, and to encourage further discussion about the Principles in practice across the WEST community.

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1. For more information see: Bassina Farbenblum, Laurie Berg and Angela Kintominas, Transformative Technology for Migrant Workers: Opportunities, Challenges and Risks (Open Society Foundations, 2018). While focused on digital platforms that facilitate migrant worker engagement, it seeks to harness benefit from transferable lessons across a diverse range of platforms that engage with workers.

WEST Principles

There are 8 WEST Principles and their implementation occurs in four phases: Design, Engage, Analyze, & Utilize Data.

Design

1. Start with Integrity & Purpose

2. Use Worker-Centric & Inclusive Design

3. Build Trust with Workers

Engage

4. Facilitate Uptake & Ownership

5. Manage Security & Risk

Analyze

6. Analyze Engagement & Impact

7. Inform Decisions & System Changes

Utilize Data

8. Collaborate & Share Learnings

03

Examples & Lessons from the Field

Our goals in presenting these cases are:

- To share practical examples for how worker-oriented technology can be used;

- To offer early glimpses into potential areas of worker benefit;

- To illustrate some ways to think about the responsible use of technology espoused by WEST; and

- To stimulate conversation around mutual challenges that require further exploration.

We present the following examples from the field to illustrate important lessons and principles that are useful for designing programs that rely upon worker-oriented technology to enable worker engagement across global supply chains. The language comes from technology providers or their users, and while it risks being promotional in nature, it offers useful lessons on how the Principles show up in practice.

We contacted organizations globally to invite their participation in an interview for this review (the 16 WEST endorsers plus other technology providers, users, and labor rights experts). Those who responded and were willing and able to participate within the timeframe available are profiled here. Some interviewees were not linked to a specific project but were willing to comment generally on their observations of this developing practice.

It is important to note that while many technology interventions can 'relate' to the Principles, few illustrate all eight in one program. Hence, the authors selected the particular Principle in each case that was most clearly illustrated in that case. The cases that are profiled offer key lessons and relate to one or more Principles, with additional details provided that may be useful to the reader. Please note, however, that some of these cases are NOT formally affiliated with WEST.

Lessons on opportunities, risks, and challenges in these technology interventions are identified with each new application. We hope that the growing body of programs and experiences will inform reflection both within and outside the WEST community. We urge technology users to cooperate with researchers who seek to independently study and identify the uses and impacts of these tools.

Amader Kotha

'Our Voice' Helpline operated by a partnership between Clear Voice, a project of The Cahn Group, Laborlink by ELEVATE, and Phulki, a Bangladesh nongovernmental organization. (Bangladesh)

Objective:

Provide Bangladesh garment workers with a safe, effective channel to report and resolve safety and other concerns.

Unique features:

The helpline offers the option to workers about whether they wish to be identified to management or not. It reports back to the caller about actions taken as a result of his or her report and closes issues when workers are satisfied with actions taken. Factory management is notified of all concerns. Brands are notified in urgent cases. Phulki's local presence enables Amader Kotha to exert influence at the local level and build worker trust in the helpline. Moreover, Amader Kotha measures its success empirically and publishes the data in quarterly newsletters.

Key lessons:

The Amader Kotha Helpline's success is underpinned by three core operational principles: awareness (in-factory trainings, test calls), accessibility (24/7, toll-free), and accountability (clear protocols for reporting concerns to responsible parties and public transparency). All three have proven critical to maintaining the helpline's success.

WEST Principle demonstration:

This program demonstrates Principle 3 to Build Trust with Workers by reporting back to all workers who request follow-up. It demonstrates Principle 7 to Inform Decisions & System Changes and Principle 8 to Collaborate & Share Learnings in a couple ways; it builds factory management's capacity to resolve problems and it reports publicly on the volume and types of issues which are reported to it.

Program description:

This helpline started in 2014 as a program of the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety and, after 4 years of operation, became independent and available to the entire garment sector of Bangladesh in mid-2018. Amader Kotha works through a mix of two communications technologies: live calls and interactive voice response (IVR) surveys and is available toll-free, 24 hours a day throughout Bangladesh. Workers learn about the helpline during in-factory training. Currently, over 500 substantive issues are received each month from over 1,000 trained factories and nearly 70% of those are made when workers are outside their factories. Cases are closed with a worker satisfaction rate greater than 80%. Callers have the option to leave their name or not (92% of workers trust the system enough to share their identity), and they may elect to get called back with a report on their issue. The helpline reports to factory staff and interacts with designated managers and worker representatives to learn about actions taken. There are also technical experts available where needed, should any serious safety issues require intervention. Select participants are surveyed by IVR to learn about their satisfaction with the helpline and how to do better.

&Wider

South Africa

Objective:

Work with a value clothing retailer to embed an infrastructure for monitoring working conditions across 60 supply sites in South Africa. The retailer needed a diagnostic system for identifying which suppliers might require support to improve conditions and when and where measurable improvements had been made.

Unique features:

The project involved working not only with the client, but also with a tier of design houses or intermediaries (i.e., the first tier) with direct relationships to the suppliers (the second tier).

Key lessons:

Suppliers remain the drivers of change when it comes to improving working conditions and yet many suppliers are initially fearful, dismissive, or reluctant to cooperate with a new initiative. Willing and enthusiastic suppliers (first adopters) were essential in triggering wider adoption among their peers. When the design houses recognized the power of the system to enhance their own supplier management systems, they also ensured good cooperation from suppliers. Without that, supplier engagement would have been negligible. Lastly, the role of a support team focused exclusively on convincing, onboarding, and supporting suppliers (and intermediaries) throughout the project has been impactful. The project's ultimate success was due to the radical transparency and trust underlying the collaboration between the retail client, intermediaries, suppliers, and &Wider.

WEST Principle demonstration:

Principle 4 of Facilitate Uptake & Ownership was demonstrated by the use of both a support team and business-to-business leverage to enroll the key participants (suppliers) in the work.

Program description:

The project covered 60 sites, using both surveys and an anonymous feedback channel, and was designed to deliver quarterly diagnostics to the intermediaries and the buyer, as well as feedback to suppliers. Client collaborated with &Wider to co-design the survey, which was tested with a small cohort of sites before the wider roll-out. A tiered implementation model was applied, such that early adopters were leveraged to encourage remaining suppliers into the system. The client scaled up the project after the first year, due to the progress that had been made in a landscape where cooperation and communication between the buyer and its second-tier suppliers was challenging.

&Wider

Americas, Caribbean, and Africa

Objective:

Partner with a fast-moving consumer goods brand to establish an infrastructure to measure the changing working conditions, business literacy, and business economic health of micro-retailers selling the client's products over an 18-month pilot period.

Unique features:

This project targeted micro-retailers on the sales side of the value chain to establish a baseline and measure impact and change over time, using a panel design (i.e., tracking individuals at different points in time). The project guaranteed anonymity in spite of tracking individual retailers, which posed a particular challenge on retailer retention for the same reason.

Key lessons:

The provider learned that when its partnership with the country teams was effective, then uptake, retention, and results were much stronger compared to countries where the partnership was weaker. Participant retention in a panel study is always fragile, so a clear line of communication both with the participating retailers and the country teams tasked with training and encouraging them proved to be a strong predictor of success. An innovative induction and incentives for retailers proved to be essential.

WEST Principle demonstration:

WEST Principle 4 of Facilitate Uptake & Ownership was shown by the care taken by both the provider and the client country teams to maintain active contact with participating retailers throughout the 18-month cycle. Principle 6 of Analyze Engagement & Impact was illustrated by the project's impact measurement framework, which required results and dashboards to be further developed to enable easy comparison of the relative performance and relative uptake and response rates of the different countries.

Program description:

The project was a panel impact study which involved tracking the working conditions, business health, and business literacy of micro-retailers across 8 countries: 5 countries in North and South America and the Caribbean (Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru) and 3 in Africa (Ghana, South Africa, Tanzania). This involved 5 call cycles over 18 months, with results feeding into the business case for continuing the training program beyond the initial pilot. The client's management team led the training program of micro-retailers. &Wider's support teams worked closely with all participants to deliver induction, incentives, and results to retailers, country teams, and the client's head office. The client's positive attitude to partnership – summed up by the catch phrase, 'one team,' which was often used in conference calls – meant that the intricate nature of this program was balanced with a strong desire to deliver.

APPRISE

by the Mekong Club, in partnership with United Nations University Institute on Computing and Society (Thailand, Vietnam, and Southeast Asia)

Objective:

Enhance the opportunity and ability of front-line responders (NGOs, police, social auditors) to screen potential victims of trafficking and labor exploitation.

Unique features:

Aimed at identification of possible victims of trafficking/forced labor, using local language and audio information to gather data that indicate vulnerabilities.

Key lessons:

Determine end uses of the engagement or tool. Recognize and support local, linguistic or cultural differences. Include methods that allow access by vulnerable populations. Use interviewees' inputs to inform immediate and concrete next steps and follow-up actions.

WEST Principle demonstration:

Principle 2 of Worker-Centric & Inclusive Design is illustrated in its approach to the problem of illiteracy using audio rather than a written questionnaire. Principle 7 on Inform Decisions & System Changes is shown by the app highlighting potential red flags in a consistent way for immediate response, eliminating the need for personal judgment or interpretation.

Program description:

A frontline responder (NGO worker, police officer, or social auditor) is equipped with the app loaded on smartphones or tablets. The app presents an audio questionnaire to interviewees, who can then pick their own language by tapping on a flag representing the country where the language is spoken primarily. Audio questions in the potential victim's selected language then prompt the person to tap yes or no on the device in response. Responses are logged and a vulnerability rating is calculated and displayed at the end of the questionnaire. The app is available in two versions and can provide either: 1) an individual summary of responses, or 2) a summary of several interviews performed in one day. The app is currently being tested in Thailand and Vietnam and offers screening questions adapted to four contexts: forced labor in manufacturing; forced labor at port/at sea; forced begging; and sex trafficking. Besides Thai and English, questionnaires are available in 13 languages widely spoken in Southeast Asia, including dialects.

EFI 24/7

is a project of Equitable Food Initiative (Mexico, United States)

Objective:

Generate data, which would normally not be available through other channels, to be used at the farm level by management, the EFI Leadership Team, and the workforce to maintain a professional, safe, dignified, and collaborative work environment as required by the EFI Standards.

Unique features:

Worker-management Leadership Teams defined and designed the pilot implementation on their farms. Each farm will own the information generated, own the processes for understanding and investigating the information, and own the resolution. While EFI has mechanisms in place to act as a check and balance, e.g., unannounced audits, the technology was primarily designed to provide value to workers and management.

Key lessons:

Engage workers at the planning stage to ensure whether they see the proposed technology, and its uses, as having value to them and placing no additional risks on them. This affects whether they will use it. Pick a technology solution that is already in use by workers or providing benefit to employers; it is easier to establish a common purpose with its extended application for labor. Ensure capacity, knowledge, and mechanisms at the farm level to own and act upon the data.

WEST Principle demonstration:

Principle 3 of Build Trust with Workers is illustrated by the extensive use of consultation with workers in the design process. Principle 4 of Facilitate Uptake & Ownership is illustrated by the use of worker-management teams as collaborators in the design and deployment of the tool, and as the main change agents to identify problems and solutions resulting from the data.

Program description:

The EFI assurance model includes several on-farm options for workers to communicate and seek resolution for conditions, events, or practices that are nonconformant to the EFI Standards. To augment these channels, EFI originally piloted mobile technology for ongoing worker messaging, reporting, and polling about their conditions, opinions, and needs. But the response rates to the IVR technology were low, largely due to a lack of a mechanism that could instantly reimburse workers for associated mobile costs. To overcome that barrier, both in terms of cost of use and familiarity with the technology, the program transitioned to using WhatsApp. The WhatsApp group function became a popular tool for the Leadership Teams, however, there was not broad adoption by the workforce. Consultation with workers revealed that there was insufficient knowledge about EFI to overcome the risks workers felt in reporting difficult issues. Based on that, EFI refocused on developing deeper relationships with workers through in-person and video meetings and the extensive use of social communities, such as closed Facebook groups. This created a user base for the technology. It also created a direct communication channel to solicit design advice for the new EFI 24/7 system that is founded on the trust, knowledge, and shared interests of the workers, management, and EFI. EFI 24/7 launches in early 2019 and workers can use a mobile phone to communicate, in a language and mode familiar to them, information related to the ongoing conformance of the farm.

Gajimu Garment

sponsored by the Wage Indicator Foundation (Indonesia)

Objective:

Create labor market transparency.

Unique features:

The collected worker survey data is publicly accessible in factory profiles; the web site provides a resource library of labor laws, compliance rates, and collective bargaining agreements. Information on working conditions is gathered by workers, for workers (in Bahasa Indonesia and English), posted publicly, then used for negotiation purposes with apparel factory management.

Key lessons:

The top lesson is that more communication is needed to launch successful worker engagement. It requires a lot of communication to prepare people, to interest them, to answer their concerns, and to report back. In addition, building local capacity is a critical element to ensuring that positive impact can continue to be realized; for example, if there is a trade union, then union representatives can become an ongoing support structure for transparency and sharing lessons. Lastly, expect that one barrier to implementation (at all levels for all types of participants) will be an attitude of not wanting to try something new; hence, be ready to address that.

WEST Principle demonstration:

Principle 1 of Start with Integrity & Purpose is demonstrated by Gajimu's understanding of the local landscape and decision to work with trade unions to ensure a sustainable, long-term engagement. Principle 3 of Build Trust with Workers is illustrated by the process that workers experience; they share information directly to another worker and they have constant support if there is a trade union. Principle 8 of Collaborate & Share Learnings is illustrated by Gajimu's transparency methodology and how it allows workers to see and compare their working conditions to the law and to those of other employers. Employers are motivated by transparency to make positive changes that can be reflected in a public forum.

Program description:

Gajimu is an apparel industry program that collects labor law compliance data from Indonesian apparel workers and publishes results in an online portal. There is a minimum amount of data required prior to publication (i.e., sufficient surveys). The factories that are involved are not required to have a trade union, however the presence of a union will assist the follow-up process. The primary route of data collection is via worker interviews with one worker inputting the data into an app on a tablet. A secondary (less common) route is via an online survey. A worker can find his or her employer's profile on the web site and compare the results to Indonesian labor law as well as to the aggregate results of data from approximately 50 other garment factories. The profile pages show the factory address, brands produced, trade union contact information, collective bargaining agreement, and survey results from workers. The purpose of the intervention is to maximize the knowledge and information of workers. As a result of having objective data, trade unions can be more effective in their own efforts to promote social dialogue. A secondary benefit has been that factories have improved their labor compliance and requested follow-up audits so that their improvements can be publicly recognized.

Ganaz

(Mexico and the United States)

Objective:

Ganaz is a workforce management platform for agriculture that addresses shared pain points between workers and employers so that both parties thrive. Ganaz builds tools which improve communication and transparency in recruiting and employment and helps employers understand how they need to improve in order to attract and retain the people they need.

Unique features:

Workers send and receive messages via SMS (free of cost) and companies use a web interface to send messages and create surveys.

Key lessons:

Learning from experience and changing course rapidly are essential for meeting workers' needs. Be prepared to amend the approach as often as necessary, especially early on, to ensure successful communication and engagement.

WEST Principle demonstration:

Principle 3 of Build Trust with Workers is illustrated via having a personal touch in communications with workers. Communications are designed to be professional, friendly, courteous, and culturally appropriate. Trust is the principle value that informs every aspect of the service.

Program description:

Ganaz offers an enterprise-level solution to assist large agricultural employers with communicating directly with their labor force before, during, and after being employed. Employers are located in Mexico and in the US and use a mix of local and migrant workers in both locations. Employers use Ganaz to contact experienced workers while they are in their home villages, to reduce dependence on recruiters and middlemen. Once on site, the workers have an ongoing communication channel that shares daily updates about work, such as overtime or shift cancellations, and allows workers to report illness or other concerns. The platform also allows for post-employment surveys to understand what motivates workers to change (or return to) their jobs.

Just Good Work

(East Africa and Qatar)

Objective:

Give jobseekers the data to make good decisions about overseas employment, enable them to access jobs without taking on debt, and give employers visibility into workers' recruitment.

Unique features:

Designed by workers and publicized through community (including faith) networks.

Key lessons:

Obtain user feedback to improve design and follow principles of good practice for worker-focused technology. Ensure functionality and design are directed at the needs of the workers rather than platform providers or data users. Test usability for workers and their environment.

WEST Principle demonstration:

Principle 2 of Worker-Centric & Inclusive Design is illustrated by the close collaboration of the app designers with workers returning from Qatar, as well as participation during the beta testing of workers in both Kenya and Qatar. Stakeholders in Qatar, including public officials and the office of the International Labor Organization, were consulted and have endorsed the goals of the app.

Program description:

This is an app that was piloted in 2018 with Kenyan workers seeking employment in Qatar (approx. 250 beta testers). It will formally launch in March 2019 and provide multi-lingual information to Kenyan jobseekers to help them understand recruiters' claims and ask the right questions about their proposed jobs in Qatar. The app provides legal information, the names of resource agencies in the destination country, and guidance on adjusting to life in Qatar. Jobseekers can enter anonymous data that helps employers, governments, and other stakeholders understand the practices of recruiters. The app will eventually help ethical employers get connected with jobseekers. Future expansion plans: incorporate jobseekers from other countries in East Africa (and internationally) and employers from multiple destination countries.

Impact Measurement by Fair Trade USA

(Americas and Asia)

Objective:

Assess the impact of the Fair Trade Certified ™ Program on producer household prosperity, considering factors such as individual and community wellbeing, income sustainability, and education.

Unique features:

Technology (e.g., mobile and ODK platform) are being used specifically to help assess impact.

Key lessons:

Technology itself is not a guarantee of high-quality information; hence, it may need to be supplemented by human researchers. Focus on the integrity of data collected, not just the quantity. Be aware that the type of industry and local cultural norms will determine the best way (where, when, how) to approach people for information. Baseline data is helpful to assess impact and should be obtained whenever feasible; where a baseline might be a challenge, considerations of qualitative, contextual information from non-technology sources may be necessary.

WEST Principle demonstration:

Principle 6 of Analyze Engagement & Impact is illustrated by the focus on quality and reliability of information obtained. Although human researchers are costlier than technology, they are employed side-by-side to validate the data and to identify any potential problems with it. Fair Trade continues to refine its methodology and will refine it further in 2019 to reflect experiences with fishing and factories.

Program description:

Fair Trade USA initiated its first impact assessment in 2014 with agriculture and has added selected new industries each year since then. Information is collected in two ways, by mobile survey technology and by human researchers on tablets in some locations. Feedback to survey participants is done via the Fair Trade relationship manager (i.e., the contact point between producers and Fair Trade) and the data is shared with producers, co-op leaders, factory management and the brand in many cases for holistic learnings. Interviewers are also part of the feedback channel, where they are used, for FTUSA to continually improve its data collection model. Fair Trade seeks an outcome of producers gaining more understanding about the Fair Trade business model while driving long-term impact towards more sustainable and empowered livelihoods.

Laborlink Bangladesh Collaborative

(Bangladesh)

Objective:

Drive workplaces towards better compliance with legal and ethical employment standards.

Unique features:

This was a multi-brand collaboration to conduct baseline and follow-up. surveys across 40 factories.

Key lessons:

Target female workers to hear their experience; lack of confidence with technology and general deference to men tend to be major reasons for the under-representation of women. Research that lacks a purpose or any meaningful follow-up will create problems for others, later, that want to interact with the same population. The Labor Lab at Tufts University conducted a USAID-sponsored randomized controlled trial of Laborlink and found that both the surveys and the educational messages are independently effective at raising worker awareness and engagement.

WEST Principle demonstration:

Principle 2 of Worker-Centric & Inclusive Design is illustrated by the program making targeted efforts to include representative (female-majority) samples of workers and to empower women through a female trainer and female-focused posters.

Program description:

Laborlink is a mobile platform that allows for large-scale worker surveys and grievance reporting via a mix of technologies including interactive voice response (IVR), mobile phone-based surveys, and WeChat. Three leading brands partnered with Laborlink to survey factory workers at their suppliers' factories in Bangladesh from 2016 – 2017. The program used mobile technology to collect anonymous feedback from 53,203 workers across two separate survey modules: Workplace Safety and Workplace Communications.

Approximately 121,673 workers at 40 factories were introduced to the Workplace Communication survey and 71,800 workers at 24 factories were introduced to the Workplace Safety survey by Laborlink trainers who visited factories to demonstrate the mobile platform to management and workers, distribute instruction cards, and display outreach materials. Factors of job satisfaction, worker-management relationships, and workplace safety were analyzed using correlational analysis for factories that conducted baseline and follow-up surveys.

Ulula Human Rights Landscape Assessments

(India and the Democratic Republic of the Congo)

Objective:

Leverage a bottom-up, community approach to gathering labor and human rights impacts at scale beyond tier one.

Unique features:

The two projects (textiles in Tamil Nadu, India, and minerals in DRC) tested a community-based or 'landscape' approach to data collection and analysis to reach a large population of workers and develop better understanding of labor and human rights impacts on a broad scale. Survey was co-designed by Ulula and partners with strong on-the-ground presence: 1. ASK and READ (community-based NGOs in India) and 2. International Peace Information Service (IPIS) and corporate partners in the DRC. Labor experts and workers validated the survey instruments. The outside-the-factory approach enabled key actors to gather labor and human rights risk data representative at a regional level, a methodology especially fit for assessing risks deeper in the supply chain, in production zones where suppliers do not participate actively, where worksites are not clearly defined (informal mining), and in highly challenging regions.

Key lessons:

Build buy-in and a partnership approach with local stakeholders. Incentives help increase study participation and participants should be informed of results to demonstrate that a user's contribution has been helpful to the community. Each person has less risk when part of a large data pool. Community-based method may encourage employers and brands to join dialogue about the results and catalyze effective and collaborative engagement.

WEST Principle demonstration:

Principle 1 of Start with Integrity & Purpose is illustrated by the collaboration of various partner agencies, who co-created the methodologies and then vetted them with experts to ensure proper fit. Care was taken to involve community leadership via existing local institutions and partnerships.

Program description:

All workers in a targeted community are invited to participate in an anonymous survey about their work experiences. In DRC, the program focuses on mining sites representing over 115,000 workers; in India, the project focuses on workers from Erode and Tirupur districts in Tamil Nadu. The collected data offers insights on endemic labor risks in the regions and is evaluated according to key performance indicators (KPIs) on issues such as wages, debt bondage, freedom of movement, child labor, health and safety, and other work-related themes. In the DRC, survey instruments included KPIs related to environmental and health and safety impacts, like mercury use, or the presence of institutional corruption and violence. The program also links to another initiative leveraging Ulula's platform to collect anonymous grievances related to mining with direct partners on the ground to address problems – enabling data to turn into action.

The project in India continues to gather data which will be made public and shared with industry, including employers and buyers in the region. Results from the DRC will be published by the partners, and greater mobilization efforts by industry can result in a scaling of the project in collaboration with other electronics companies. The advantage of the landscape approach in evaluating human rights risks is that it is not 'finger pointing' at specific businesses or employers, but rather it showcases general conditions and generates ideas for improvements across the sector.

Responsible Sourcing Advisory Program (RSAP)

by Target (Bangladesh, China, Guatemala, India, and Vietnam)

Objective:

Understand which interventions may improve workplaces and/or worker wellbeing, to inform improvements in health and safety and grievances processes, and ultimately improve supply chain resilience and factory competitiveness.

Unique features:

Multiple sources of information are used to paint a holistic picture of factory performance and improvement (e.g., audit results, management system assessment, worker survey, and quantitative data). The initial baseline survey included nearly 11,000 workers at 41 factories. The brand supervises a process of ongoing on-the-ground local engagement among workers and factory management.

Key lessons:

Technology is a complementary tool and it needs other resources or approaches to enable a factory to dive into improvement opportunities and act on them. There are multiple ways to gather information and they should be used to create a comprehensive picture of workers' experiences. One method alone does not reveal everything that is pertinent to making the right type of improvements.

WEST Principle demonstration:

Principle 2 on Use Worker-Centric & Inclusive Design is demonstrated via the use of multiple approaches to reach low-literacy or illiterate workers, such as speech-based or animated surveys that allow workers to watch or listen to the question/answer options. Principle 4, Facilitate Uptake & Ownership and Principe 7, Inform Decisions & System Changes, are both illustrated by the role that factory management has in understanding and carrying through on improvements to its workforce's wellbeing.

Program description:

Target uses multiple data points to analyze the performance of its vendors, who are held accountable for responsible sourcing performance in the facilities that they use for Target owned brand production. Target has initiated a multi-pronged program that reviews factories to understand their management systems and effectiveness and worker wellbeing. Worker surveys (via mobile phones and tablets) are one of the tools used, first to conduct a baseline assessment and then for end-line impact validation. Results are provided to the vendor and factories to inform them about improvement opportunities. As gaps are identified, factories are encouraged to undertake necessary improvements to create a better workplace. A key focus of implementation is on training. The trainings are aimed at addressing health and safety, grievance mechanisms, and supervisory skills, to add factory-level capacity to solve problems that are identified in baseline assessments.

WOVO

by Workplace Options (Asia)

Objective:

Provide employers with actionable data that helps them manage employee grievances, and deliver education and services for worker wellbeing.

Unique features:

Employers can achieve measurable improvements in their own management systems and reduce turnover.

Key lessons:

Try to identify a locally-available and known communication method to maximize participation. Use technology that is being used by most workers in their daily lives.

WEST Principle demonstration:

Principle 6 of Analyze Engagement & Impact is illustrated by this technology's ability to give employers real-time feedback about their workers' experiences, based on anonymous reports. Senior leadership has a more granular and urgent view on what is really happening, without the filters of middle management reporting.

Program description:

This is an employer-managed direct messaging app that permits anonymous submissions from workers and has a two-way feature that allows for a response to the submission. The volume and immediacy of the data lead to faster resolutions and employers can improve their response times. One of WOVO's case studies documented an increase of 70 times more messages to this grievance channel than the prior one after implementing a 2-way, anonymous communication channel. The factory went from receiving an average of 21 messages per quarter on its hotline to receiving 1,417 messages in one quarter (344 of those on grievance issues) via WOVO. Another factory had a department with higher-than-normal turnover and after using the app to uncover concerns, the factory reduced that turnover by half.

Photo Credit: Amader Kotha

04

A Pathway to Planning and Operating

We are increasingly guided by the views of other leading thinkers looking at the responsible and ethical use of data. An analysis of the examples above, and recommendations made by members of WEST and those interviewed for this paper, provide insight into what conditions enable these technologies to be inclusive, secure, and impactful for workers. Those interviewed were asked to provide advice that they would offer to anyone seeking to deploy technology to enable worker reporting across global supply chains. In some cases, the advice was based upon important principles they had found useful, while in other cases, they recognized that a gap in their program's structure could be avoided. We summarize the recommendations here and, following, offer a checklist to help plan future programs with these ideas in mind. In the Conclusion section, we highlight where there are opportunities for future collaboration on effective implementation of the WEST Principles.

The following conditions were proposed as critical enablers to ensuring these technologies are leveraged for good:

1. The overall purpose and mission of the technology intervention are oriented to improve outcomes for workers.

An impactful intervention is not something that espouses 'technology for technology's sake,' but instead fulfills a purpose: it sets a higher standard of practice, or provides the right information, or establishes a functional communication channel that will make it possible for workers to access the support they need to realize their legal rights and human rights. From its inception, a clear vision must be established of the desired outcomes to be achieved and how a technology intervention will serve the achievement of those outcomes and therefore the needs of workers. Worker-oriented reporting tools are powerful technologies but can't solve every problem and those gaps need to be filled with services, whether from the community, public institutions, or the employer. Investments must be made to clearly define overall goals, anticipate how technology will help achieve them, and prepare for gaps. Documenting a 'theory of change' (i.e. the necessary pre-conditions to cause the desired outcome, or a logic framework of steps that lead towards an eventual goal) is one potential avenue to understand how and why workers benefit, how technology helps, and which conditions will enable the realization of the intended goals.

2. Local stakeholders are engaged, including public authorities, to help ensure technology interventions are locally responsive, appropriate, and able to have positive impact.

Well-designed initiatives and digital tools consider the structures and needs that exist in the community where the tool will be deployed and seek to understand and engage networks of trust and influence in the ecosystem. At least three of the programs rely extensively on local community organizations and one relies upon trade unions, which appears to increase participation rates (however, significant comparison data is pending). The local context and existing landscape for workers, employers and local organizations should be fully researched and understood so that local and/or international norms are followed, local actors are incorporated if appropriate, and communication methods are appropriate and do not intimidate, coerce, or otherwise raise alarm with workers. To facilitate access to remedy, recruit and encourage employer participation and align the program with existing grievance systems and worker representation channels, where available. Engagement or coordination with local stakeholders, including public authorities, serves to learn what initiatives exist (and what has previously worked and not worked) in the ecosystem, to avoid duplicating efforts, to promote innovation and to integrate with existing

technical systems more easily, and to provide key connections and distribution mechanisms that increase impact. Encouraging early, direct, and sustained collaboration with the workers and their community increases the local relevance, utility, and sustainability of the intervention. Equally importantly, efforts must be made to understand the legal, regulatory, and political environment.[2]

3. Workers are included in the assessment, design, and implementation processes. User-centered design is used and accessibility by vulnerable or underserved people is assured.

Successful digital tools are rooted in an understanding of user characteristics, needs, and challenges. Understanding whether and how workers access digital technologies is critical to designing appropriate interventions. User-centered design starts with "getting to know the people you are designing for through conversation, observation and co-creation."[3] Technology must be easy to use, and programs seeking fast uptake use technology that is being used by most workers in their daily lives. They also strive for inclusivity, for equal access to the technology across the full diversity of the workforce, and to ensure the tool is sensitive to and considers the needs of the traditionally underserved and includes avenues for reaching vulnerable populations. Workers should be included in design to help determine if a digital tool makes sense for their situation, and if it would address their underlying needs. By designing 'with' workers, instead of 'for' them, digital tools better address the specific context, culture, behaviors, and expectations of workers. Moreover, it is critical to engage workers to identify new improvement opportunities and leverage their feedback when designing, implementing, and measuring improvement actions. Finally, worker agency is important; a well-designed intervention can make it more feasible, or easier for, workers to lead their own improvement.

4. Employer ownership helps drive better worker participation and leads to a greater likelihood that the information provided will inform improvements for workers.

Worker impact and systemic change must happen in collaboration with entire value chain, particularly the employer. Technology is no different. These interventions must motivate, encourage and empower employers to determine their own purpose, goals and outcomes in the use of the technology. To be certain, buyers do have a critical role to play in enabling supplier ownership; however, it is only suppliers who can develop solutions that best meet their business priorities and are thus best positioned for real success. When employers become participants and consumers of the data generated by technology, and when they consequently 'own' the resulting intervention, the program is more sustainable. However, in the digital era, the human aspect of commitment can be easily lost. It is important for suppliers — and supplier executives in particular — to clearly demonstrate personal support for the deployment of technology and the improvement of working conditions from the data it generates.

5. Privacy is recognized as a fundamental human right, and data ownership, sovereignty and access are defined using a de minimis 'do no harm' approach before any data is captured.

Technology interventions must be framed to ensure the basic protections that come with the recognition of workers' data rights, including the right to ownership of personal data, and the right to be forgotten. This is a minimum standard of practice. Investments are necessary to define in advance how workers' digital data is to be acquired, treated, stored, shared, and actioned (among employers, buyers, workers and third-parties) and who owns the data and decides what to do with the data. A risk-benefit analysis must be conducted in advance to determine whether technology is appropriate for the engagement, taking into consideration all the possible risks to workers, and the potential harms and unintended consequences, both now and in the future. Responsible practices might include but are not limited to: consideration of any political sensitivities to the data being collected; awareness of local laws; transparency about how data will be

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2. For example, when dealing with cross-border application, such as migrant worker situations, it is important to introduce the program to relevant authorities at both the sending and receiving locations, to obtain and document some measure of acceptance or approval; this allows the program to be accurately calibrated to the legal context of migrant workers, and is also a preventative measure should someone attempt to block the program's operation.

3. See https://www.ideo.org/approach , accessed on Feb 13, 2019.

collected and used; minimization of the amount of personally identifiable information collected; creation of security policies and practices that protect individuals' privacy and dignity; a post-project data management policy; and information security training. The privacy practices should conform to international norms and clearly communicate about the desired uses, outcomes, and impacts of the data. Informed consent is real and not merely 'window dressing' that continues or exacerbates historical lack of power and information within vulnerable groups.

6. Credibility depends upon institutions being prepared for urgent and serious response to grave problems.

While technology providers provide useful insight, material impact is possible only when the institutions and companies receiving the results have the capacity to respond urgently and constructively when needed. A clear plan and path forward must be in place for effective response/action in the event that a worker is harmed, or potential harm is identified. It is critical to understand how the data collector and user will handle grave situations (i.e., discovering extreme abuse, receiving requests for urgent assistance, information constituting evidence of a crime, etc.) and the process should be prepared for referral to appropriate support services (e.g., legal, mental health, social services) in advance.

7. Seeking to collect data never precedes a clear strategy to use the data.

Data cannot produce impact if they sit outside of decision-making structures; use of technology must be integral to a careful strategy to positively change working conditions. Employers and institutions that seek a significant improvement to their operations will use good quality real-time (or timely) data to support decision making, improve programming for workers, and inform business strategy. They define in advance which data are needed for decision-making, in what format, and which data sharing approach is to be taken with buyers, employers, workers, and other third parties. They channel the data from workers into a functional mechanism for pulse checking, remediation, or continuous improvement. Proactive programs design their interventions so that impact can be measured continuously and incrementally,

focusing on outcomes, not just outputs. Trust comes from results, not marketing; there is a view that worker participation is something to be recruited or obtained by making promises. However, companies themselves don't just extend trust to potential partners based on promises; they extend trust in increasing amounts based on delivery and performance. The same can be said for workers; they will extend trust based upon demonstrated performance. Programs that build on proven results should expect to see more trust over time. Some grievance systems barely function, while others succeed, based upon whether people get real results and vouch for that fact to their peers. appropriate support services (e.g., legal, mental health, social services) in advance.
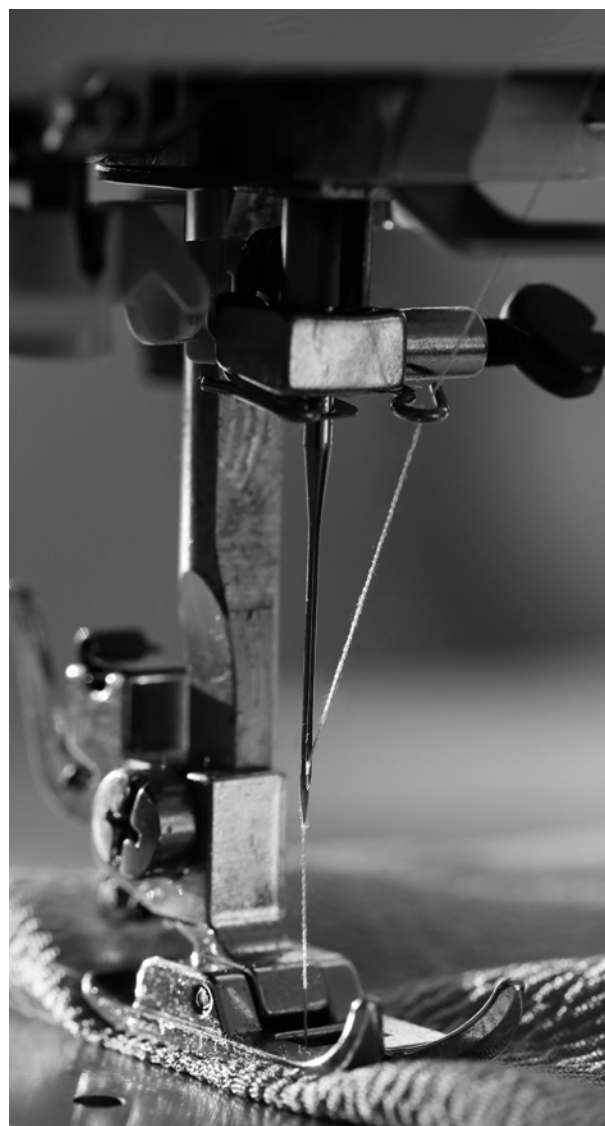
05

Operations Checklist

The WEST Principles represent the early consensus of some practitioners and observers. Meanwhile, a global community of practice is burgeoning and new and valuable research (noted in the bibliography) is shedding light on disparate types of needs that workers have, based upon their geographies and experiences of migration. Hence, it is still a confusing time to identify the best type of technology to fit the context of a global company, or a local employer, or a group of workers looking for assistance. We seek to create a sense of urgency in figuring this all out, and in driving the operationalization of the Principles.

The challenge of moving forward towards the integration of technology is the inspiration for the below planning checklist that helps to define the parameters for the work that is envisioned. Key questions guide designers and users of worker-oriented technology to explore the opportunities and the risks of capturing worker feedback and data. This checklist is built on the guidelines offered in the WEST Principles, combined with insights from others' research in the field and the advice offered by participants in this research. Users are encouraged to review and address as many questions as possible either prior to, or in conjunction with, a technology tool provider.

Planning Checklist: Digital Tools for Worker Reporting

1. Define the project purpose and mission

- How will the collection of workers' data benefit those who provide data?

- What is your strategy? Your theory of change?

- What are the current and future needs/wants this data collection is trying to address?

- What information gaps exist between current knowledge and desired knowledge? Which information is most critical to obtain to build knowledge?

- What is the anticipated behavior change? How might the data lead to action or change?

- What are the minimum data points necessary to drive the change you seek (i.e., what to, and what not to, collect)?

- Does this require technology? Are there other alternatives that are better, i.e., safer or more effective? What are the trade-offs between data quality and quantity?

2. Understand the local context and acceptance

- Is the service provider licensed to operate in the location of the program? Is that license inclusive of the services to be provided?

- Are the anticipated worker engagement efforts lawful in the jurisdiction of operation?

- What other digital interventions have been implemented with this workforce? If so, what were their results, and is there a risk of creating fatigue and skepticism among workers?

- If migrant workers are involved, have public authorities been informed in advance in both the sending and receiving communities and have they given evidence of acceptance of the program?

- Have local NGOs and workers' organizations been identified? Have they been made aware of the program in advance?

- What types of worker empowerment programs or systems exist in the community/workplace?

3. Establish a mechanism for remedy

- How will you respond to emergency situations such as discovering extreme abuse?

- Is there a clear plan and path forward in place for effective remedy of workplace harms identified?

- Is there a clear plan and path forward in place for effective response/action in the event worker harm is caused by the technology and/or the intervention?

- Are relationships in place with effective 'champions' in the local environment who can help to drive action and remedy through remedial mechanisms or through their influence with employers?

- Do project partners have the technical capacity to drive and guide remediation?

- Have local legal, mental health, and social services been identified if any serious case is discovered during the program which might require a referral to such resources?

4. Verify a safe and enabling environment

- What are the possible ways that harm can be done to workers?

- What mechanisms exist to monitor new risks or unintended consequences as they arise?

- What has been done to prevent or avoid retaliation being brought against participants?

- What has been done to prevent or avoid the risk of defamation charges being brought against participants?

- Is the data collected discoverable under local law?

5. Verify accessibility for vulnerable groups

- If ethnic, racial, religious or other minorities are present, are they going to be incorporated in a way that does not exacerbate any disadvantage, real or perceived? (i.e., with respect to language capacity, cultural norms, etc.)

- What digital applications and tools do workers already know how to use?

- Do you have a plan for getting a representative sample of the workforce using the technology? Will you reach vulnerable groups through this plan?

- What experience does the technology provider have in reaching vulnerable populations and gaining worker trust and use of their tool(s)?

6. Assess and mitigate privacy risks

- Is there a thorough risk assessment?

- Have you clearly defined what personal data is held by the provider?

- Are all possible uses of the data documented?

- Have you clearly defined who owns the data? Who else can make decisions about how worker data gets processed, shared, or used?

- Which entities are receiving which data?

- How does the data collection and storage system used by the technical provider ensure anonymity or confidentiality? Does the provider foresee any limitations to their ability to maintain confidentiality and/or anonymity?

- Does the provider have a security policy and implementing procedures that are in line with applicable laws?

- Has the data security compliance program undergone third party review or certification?

- Has there ever been a data breach and, if so, how was it remedied?

- Are protocols in place across project partners on how data breaches will be reported, investigated, and handled?

- Are there policies and training materials that explain data security procedures to both IT and other employees?

- Who has access to the raw data and are all other persons effectively locked out?

- If or when workers use social media to report data, how will their identifying information be treated by the service provider (i.e., quarantined, maintained, discarded, or other)?

- What is the legal and other review process in the event of a government request for information?

7. Develop a plan of action for getting informed consent

- How can you be clear and honest with workers about the benefits and risks of their participation?

- Do the provider and the employer have a plan in place for obtaining consent from workers that is freely given, specific and informed, and unambiguous? Does this plan include going back to workers to confirm consent as new risks emerge in the process?

- What is the protocol for informing participants about their data use and whether any personally identifying information is preserved?

- How will the provider demonstrate how and when consent was sought, obtained, and/or withdrawn?

- How are workers informed about the results of the use of their data?

- Has the program been designed to effectively communicate these ideas with persons who have low education, low literacy, or other barrier to understanding the purpose and method of the data collection?

- Do the persons who will interact with workers have the requisite language and communication skills to be effective? Are female communicators being used to reach female participants?

8. Create opportunities for ownership

- How can workers' input into the design ensure that the intervention accommodates their own personal needs and comfort levels?

- Will this intervention make it more or less likely, easier or harder, for workers to lead their own improvement?

- How will worker representatives at the employment site be identified? How will they be made aware of the program? How will their role as representatives be incorporated into the engagement strategy?

- What type of worker-management systems exist at the workplace? Unions, collective bargaining, committees, grievance mechanisms? Will data be shared with these systems?

- How will employers' engagement and ownership be encouraged?

9. Define how results will be used and shared

- How will information be channeled to lead to improvements on the ground?

- Does the employer / supplier / local community have a plan for how to share results with participants and their representatives?

- What type of permanent record will be created for institutional memory?

- How will lessons from the experience be communicated to senior leadership of the employer / supplier / buyer, including at the board of directors' level?

- Do participants want to present the results in public forums and, if so, does that desire create any specific expectations around transparency, timing, or other aspect of the program?

- What new communication pathways can potentially emerge from this work; how to support these?

For a printable version of this checklist click here.

06

Conclusion

In communities that supply the global marketplace, digital technologies are increasingly in the hands of people who can benefit from them. Technology, when coupled with responsible policies and practices and uses of data, can achieve improvements that workers engage in and recognize – and from which they benefit. However, broad adoption of the WEST Principles is still a work in progress, more than one year after their launch. While many technology interventions relate to the Principles in some fashion, they do not necessarily illustrate all eight of them at one time. Recent independent research in this space identifies many risks associated with the use of worker reporting digital tools.[4] We must therefore be vigilant and acknowledge that even well-meaning interventions pose the risk of further marginalizing the workers whose vulnerability these platforms originally sought to alleviate. Broader collaboration is imperative to help guide, and drive accountability for, the implementation of the Principles.

The WEST Principles resulted from an early collaborative effort by a few of the companies who were either using or providing technologies to enable supply chain workplace improvements. There are many institutions operating in this space today and many more will start up, as new business ideas and technology innovations are developed and funded. Lessons on opportunities, risks, and challenges in these technology interventions are identified with each new application.

Given continued worker vulnerability across supply chains, and the possibility that technology can either make it better or worse, industry stakeholders should set their minimum standards for technology interventions in line with the WEST Principles. Technology users and providers would be prudent to implement internal risk controls and risk management that allow them to demonstrate that they are ensuring their technology interventions are designed and deployed from a worker-centric perspective of security, inclusion, and benefit. Impact measurement, both for individual interventions and collectively, would also help us know whether the change we are striving for is, indeed, occurring. Key challenges in implementation and impact measurement do exist. Now is the time for this burgeoning community of practice to collectively develop a roadmap to operationalize the use of the Principles. Tool kits which provide guardrails for implementation and impact measurement are also needed. More practical examples that demonstrate

these ideas are needed as well.

Based on the experience of the WEST community practitioners, and other research in the field, we offer the following areas where knowledge sharing and collecting broader experiences and insights are needed to help guide and drive implementation of the Principles:

1. How can we strengthen technology's purpose of improving the experience and wellbeing of the workers who use it?

How can we drive limited data collection and use, only with a specified purpose? What tools are needed to help plan for how the achievement of purpose and goals informs the affected system(s) in the long term? What works best to drive the question of worker benefit at the outset?

2. How can we bolster meaningful worker inclusion?

How can we prevent unequal access to technology? How can we meet the higher burden to be transparent with the participants who create the data pool, and without whom none of the relevant improvements would be measurable? How can we quantitatively and qualitatively measure where trust genuinely exists? What works in getting workers directly involved in planning, creating, managing, concluding, or learning from the technology program? What works in planning up front for long-term worker representative support and maintenance of technology solutions? How can worker agency be bolstered?

3. What works to build buy-in and ownership by the employer?

What has worked and not worked in driving employer buy-in for the deployment of technology and the use of results to inform decisions that benefit workers? How can we motivate, encourage, and empower employers to determine their own purpose, goals, and outcomes?

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4. Risks include privacy and data security risks interpreted through data security laws and regulatory frameworks for migrant workers, and the financial and reputational risks to platform hosts and funders.

4.   How can we best integrate privacy as a human right into digital interventions such that the principles of 'do no harm' and 'informed consent' govern all engagement with workers?

What does meaningful 'informed consent' look like for this community? Given that technologies are being used to reach vulnerable workers, how might they be sufficiently educated to understand what they are agreeing to when they engage in the use of technology? What are some of the approaches taken to offer workers control of their data? How can we operationalize 'do no harm' principles in the context of tools used by exploited workers who might still be in the harmful environment or within legal proceedings? How can confidentiality and anonymity be assured in different operational contexts that might arise (i.e., legal proceedings, emergency intervention, etc.)? What are 'best practice' approaches to meeting the requirements of new consumer privacy rights legislation (such as advent of the European Union General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679)?

5.   How can we build stronger linkages between data usage and the opportunity for broader system changes?

What local resources exist in key operating countries and what partnerships might be created for emergency interventions? How can we make the linkages to access to remedy or justice more explicit? Which lessons do we incorporate from the UN Principles for Business and Human Rights? What can be done to gain understanding and engage networks of trust and influence in the ecosystems where we operate these interventions? What tools or processes are needed to enable sharing of information back into the local ecosystem? What works best to drive the question of sustainability at the outset? Where are more data needed to inform corporate due diligence or worker agency efforts? Where is scalability of technology a particular pathway for worker impact?

6.   How can the impact of technology-enabled worker engagement best be measured and monitored over time?

What opportunities exist for standardized worker survey questions to be deployed across interventions? What are the opportunities for standardization of performance indicators? Can we drill in and get more granular and specific about what 'good' or 'effectiveness' means? What criteria should be used to assess worker wellbeing? How can the use of technology be compared to other types of methodologies for improving workers' lives (such as access to justice, wellbeing programs, financial literacy, etc.)? What tools are needed to compare the full life cycle costs and benefits of digitally enabled approaches to development with more traditional approaches? What methodologies are needed, and what processes can be leveraged, for identifying, predicting, and evaluating the likely and actual impacts of digital tools deployment?

More research is needed, including gathering data directly from workers and their representatives, which has not yet been done, to develop a roadmap to operationalize the Principles and/or to help refine the WEST Principles. Future independent research is also required to formulate a complete analysis of workers' experience with technology. The questions above are a starting point on how to develop the WEST Principles in greater detail and offer initial areas for collaboration. There are many potential areas of exploration for those who might come together to discuss responsible uses of technology to protect workers' rights within global supply chains; while this paper offers some ideas, there are still many others.

Technology, while important, has impact only if it is part of a mindset of seeking genuine solutions. Despite the potential risks involved, if properly employed, accurate and transparent data has a significant potential to reduce worker vulnerability in global supply chains. There is now a strong possibility to scale and leverage technology to bring visibility and accountability to supply chains and increased agency for workers. The potential for unintended consequences exists and requires thoughtful consideration and collaboration to align all stakeholders in the direction of ensuring that technology is leveraged for positive progress.

Technology's transformative potential will ultimately be realized through responsible and well-considered worker-centric approaches that respond to workers' vulnerabilities, respect their agency, and drive worker inclusion and access to remedy. Through broad and effective dialogue, we can harness the power of innovation and lessons learned to support accountable standards for the use of technology.

About this White Paper

The information in this white paper emerged from individual discussions, email exchanges or interviews with digital technology providers, and organizations or multinational businesses who hire them, as well as a review of literature and publications in this area. This paper does not comprehensively identify all technology-driven efforts to engage workers in global supply chains. Participants were approached for interviews based on their participation in WEST or information about how their work intersects with one or more of the Principles, to provide an indication of the types of issues, developments, and views across a range of practices, and as a foundation for reflection and discussion of the Principles. While broader outreach was conducted, the case studies and lessons provided are limited to those who responded were able to participate within the timeframe available. We contacted 35 organizations globally to invite their participation in an interview: the 16 WEST endorsers plus other technology providers, users, and labor rights experts.

This is an editorial and informational white paper. It is not an independent, nor critical, evaluation of the WEST Principles and their implementation. There remains a need for independent research once the initiatives profiled in this report have been operational for a longer period of time (only three of these have more than two years of history). While there are some early learnings, we do not yet fully understand implementation needs, nor have enough data to document which methods of design or implementation work best.

We strongly recommend a review of the important studies that already exist; those that we consulted are listed in the Bibliography. Upcoming research will add to the catalogue of known resources. As various programs mature, and measure and share their impacts, there will be further opportunity to combine lessons from the WEST endorsers with those of other initiatives. Principle 8 commits WEST endorsers to participate in multi-stakeholder dialogue and learning.

Acknowledgements

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The following publications were used in this study to establish context, to inform the operational checklist, and to inspire key questions for future collaboration. We highly recommend this list for gaining a global view of worker-centered technology interventions.

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