

## **SEDEX GUIDANCE ON COVID-19**

### **Guidance for businesses on managing the impacts of COVID-19 on their employees and workers in their supply chains**

Sedex has developed guidance to provide practical steps to manage the impacts on workers in your business and supply chains. This guidance draws on the UNGPs and is meant for Sedex members, both buyers and suppliers, and Affiliate Audit Companies. Sedex will regularly review the content as the pandemic evolves. The guidance is broken into three sections:

#### **The businesses and people most vulnerable to health and economic impacts of COVID-19**

This will help your business understand who will be most affected by the virus and where support is most needed among their workforce and in their supply chains.

#### **Guidance for employers (buyers and suppliers):**

This details standards, requirements and responsibilities for businesses to protect their workforce from health and economic impacts of COVID-19.

#### **Guidance for employers: labour standards during COVID-19 and managing impacts of COVID-19 on your workforce**

#### **Considerations for businesses experiencing reduced demand for goods and services due to COVID-19**

#### **Guidance for buyers: managing the impacts of COVID-19 in your supply chain**

This details guidance on how businesses should work with their supply chain partners during the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery, to minimise the negative impacts on suppliers and people in their supply chains. It covers:

#### **Guidance for buyers: managing impacts of COVID-19 in your supply chain**

#### **Supporting your suppliers through purchasing practices**

#### **Managing audits and compliance programmes during COVID-19**

There are also Sedex tools and checklist for you to download and use in your workplace, as well as further reading and external resources on COVID-19.



**Worker health** – keeping workers safe from COVID-19. In many workplaces, close contact with others at work (or in worker accommodation) is normal and action must be taken to implement protective measures and ensure decent, safe work while workers remain in employment.

**Worker income** – protecting workers from the economic impacts of COVID-19. For many, poverty is a more urgent threat to life and health than the virus itself. Health measures can negatively impact income if economic safety is not accounted for.

## **COVID-19 Background**

The situation is changing rapidly and the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 will continue to spread, with severity increasing in countries with less resource and ability to manage the impacts. The millions of workers involved in supply chains and informal work will be significantly affected. The ILO estimates that up to 25 million jobs could be lost worldwide and 6.7% of working hours will be wiped out by June 2020, equivalent to 195 million full-time workers. 75% of people in least developed countries lack access to soap and water to maintain hygiene to help prevent the virus, and 55% per cent of the global population does not have access to social protection.

The economic impacts are expected to far exceed the 2008 global financial crisis. The sectors most at risk include accommodation and food services, manufacturing, retail, and business and administrative activities.

The United Nation Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) are more relevant now than ever. The UNGPs make clear that the primary responsibility for protecting human rights lies with the State – to protect its people and economies against the shock of the pandemic. This includes providing safety measures for the population, income security for those whose jobs or livelihoods have been disrupted, healthcare and social security.

However, not all governments have the ability to provide this safety net, particularly in more challenging contexts where many low wage suppliers are located. This means millions of people in low skill and low wage jobs are vulnerable to having no money to feed themselves and their families.

While it is not the role of business to plug the gap in state support, the UNGPs state that the private sector's role is to take responsibility for respecting human rights and for addressing the impacts that they may cause or contribute to. Many millions of people in global supply chains rely on businesses' continued support to continue to provide jobs, pay their workers and weather the crisis.

It is critical for global lives and livelihoods that companies honour their responsibility to both their employees and people in their supply chains.

**Source:** Sedex Information Exchange Limited

**Disclaimer:** The provided information here is for informational purpose and is in good faith only, however we make no representation or warranty of any kind, express or implied, regarding the accuracy, adequacy, validity, reliability, availability or completeness of any information on our mobile application.