



Scaling and streamlining collaboration through better data sharing

This note was prepared by the Open Apparel Registry and does not necessarily reflect the views of the OECD.

Objective(s) of the session

- Demonstrate the tangible, positive impacts that better data sharing creates
- Encourage more organisations - brands, certifications schemes, MSIs and beyond - to disclose more information, more quickly, and in a consistent format, about their supply chains
- Tackle misconceptions that supply chain disclosure leads to a loss in competitive advantage

Background

What is the context?

At as basic a level as name and address information, the quality of supply chain data in the apparel industry is poor. With multiple variations for the name of one facility in existence and no globally agreed standard for address formats, confusion and inefficiency are rife. At a practical level, this can result in auditors visiting the same facility two days in a row, or improvement programmes inadvertently being run twice in the same facility.

Beyond name and address data, challenges surrounding types of data disclosure exist. Initiatives such as the Transparency Pledge or Fashion Revolution's Transparency Index have resulted in more brands than ever before disclosing key data points on their supply chains, including number of workers, gender splits and whether or not a factory is unionized. However little thought has been given to *how* this data is disclosed - until now.

There is agreement throughout the apparel industry that data quality is poor. Whilst this leads to a multitude of problems, on the flip side, tackling the issue of data quality presents enormous opportunities.

What are the challenges / gaps?

Although good progress has been made to date, the industry needs to move further, faster. Internal bureaucracies at large organisations remain a barrier to uptake; levels of technological sophistication vary wildly; and the gap between *talking* about transparency and taking *practical actions* to open up supply chains persists.

Discussion questions

- Does anyone use the data disclosed in the name of transparency anyway?
 - Share practical examples of how organisations are using this data, e.g. BHRRC using it

to speed up remediation in facilities; Dutch Covenant tracking data to identify projects and areas to invest in.

- What are the challenges, in the eyes of people in the room, in complying with a standard format for supply chain disclosure?
- How can multi stakeholder initiatives move at a pace on supply chain disclosure that satisfies all members?
- What is the most effective way to involve global unions in supply chain disclosure, to advocate on behalf of facilities?
- What's the role of legislation in scaling up supply chain disclosure?

For more information

- Open Apparel Registry (the map), <https://openapparel.org/>
- Open Apparel Registry (background), <https://info.openapparel.org/>
- Open Data Standard for the Apparel Sector, <https://odsas.org/>
- Transparency Pledge, <https://transparencypledge.org/>
- Fashion Transparency Index, <https://www.fashionrevolution.org/about/transparency/>

About The Open Apparel Registry

The Open Apparel Registry (OAR) is a neutral, open source tool mapping garment facilities worldwide and assigning a unique ID number to each. It is a systematized registry which facilitates greater collaboration and efficiencies for all stakeholder groups through a common ID and open data. It was created to establish one central “source of truth” for name and address information and unique identification information for the apparel industry.

About the Open Data Standard project

Together with industry partners, we are calling for an Open Data Standard for the Apparel Sector which will help the industry to move away from badly formatted data locked in silos in different databases towards being able both to sync across systems, and for data to be compared and analysed in practical, meaningful ways.

Industry-wide adoption of an Open Data Standard would:

Provide a level playing field: various stakeholders like academia, civil society, MSIs and consumer organizations can more easily use this data to provide accurate and up-to-date analyses, and allow brands to fulfill their due diligence obligations in a responsible, comparable way

Make data usable and current: with the ability to scrape from machine readable data, open source databases can update when a brand publishes an up-to-date list.

Create one common resource: organizations can collate supplier lists and make them accessible to users in easy-to use tools and maps

Save time: companies won't spend time or money publishing information which might not be used and organizations analyzing data won't spend time collating or trying to sync data

Make it easy to find factories and associations which contribute data to promote sustainable and transparent fashion

Industry-wide progress

Fashion Revolution has recognised the importance of how supply chain data is disclosed. In their 2019 Transparency Index, the organisation only awarded points to brands disclosing data in machine readable files (Excel or CSV), and in their 2020 Index they will be awarding additional bonus points for disclosure via the OAR, due to the additional benefits this tool brings.

The Transparency Pledge, meanwhile, now notes both whether or not a brand publishes on the OAR and also whether data is disclosed in compliance with the Open Data Standard.

Aside from the work of these civil society organisations, enlightened brands and MSIs have recognised the value that consistent data disclosure and synchronization can bring and have gone beyond merely disclosing in these formats themselves to also actively encouraging others to do so.