

GRI Transcript Ep 3

How to protect workers – online and on the ground – in our changing world

[00:00:00] **Ayanda Charlie:** Every day we move nearer to reaching the global goals of ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring that all people can live in peace and prosperity by 2030. But how close are we, really? Welcome to the SDG Insider, the series that helps bridge the gaps between corporate reporting and the sustainability agenda from the Global Reporting Initiative.

[00:00:24] **Ayanda Charlie:** We hope to help businesses navigate the 17 Sustainable Development Goals with resources and guidance for taking action. In episode 3, we take a closer look at the landscape of labour. In our ever-changing world, the need for due diligence – and guidance for businesses on performing and reporting it – is constantly growing.

[00:00:44] **Ayanda Charlie:** We'll hear from three labour experts, Janine Berg, Jason Judd, and Christy Hoffman who will help simplify some of the complex issues for employers and employees, online and in the real world. I'm your host, Ayanda Charlie. Zoom business meetings that connect professionals across the planet. Home offices that give employees more work-life balance.

[00:01:08] **Ayanda Charlie:** AI tools that can complete mundane tasks instantly, giving us more time for creative and strategic work. These are the benefits of the digital working world. Technology can improve the way we work, learn and interact with one another, but there's a downside, too. Emerging tech and labour practices must be governed properly if we are to address their impacts and potentially damaging consequences.

[00:01:28] **Ayanda Charlie:** I wondered about how technology is already impacting the workplace, so I asked Senior Economist from the International Labour Organisation, Janine Berg, to explain more. What

are your thoughts on the future of work and how technology will affect workers in general, and especially those whose jobs are less secure?

[00:01:52] **Janine Berg:** Technology is a tool, and how technology as a tool affects workers really depends on the way it's designed, the way it's used, the way it's incorporated into the workplace. Um, so most of the discussion on technology in the future of work, you know, there's been this, uh, incredible focus on, you know, possible, you know, job loss and, and perhaps a future without work.

[00:02:13] **Janine Berg:** I mean, that's, that's usually the big discussion. But the bigger effect tends to be really about job quality. Um, and when you think about how technology affects, affects workers, it's really about, you know, to what extent do workers have a say in the design of technology and in its implementation? Um, are they in a position where they can give feedback to management? If they are in that more secure environment at work,

[00:02:40] **Janine Berg:** Then they are more easily, more likely to be involved in this design and its implementation and in the feedback. Whereas if they don't have, you know, very secure contracts, if they don't have a union representing them, it's very difficult for them.

[00:02:54] **Ayanda Charlie:** In the gig economy, which is a labour market featuring a large portion of short-term contracts or freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs, it makes sense that people might choose to be independent, with the freedom to set their own hours and terms.

[00:03:08] **Ayanda Charlie:** But some companies have become notorious for classifying their workers as independent contractors and not official employees as a fundamental part of their business model, seemingly to avoid having to give them certain rights. For example, drivers for rideshare service Uber are classified as contractors, and as such may lose their jobs without fair process,

[00:03:30] **Ayanda Charlie:** are not entitled to paid leave, and are not subject to restrictions on hours of work. What sets Uber drivers apart, is that they do not enjoy the freedoms usually associated with being independent contractors.

News Clip: Drivers can work for around 30 hours before they start making any money for themselves. It come to a stage where I was no longer able to provide for my family. The model actually relies on people that are desperate and they're grateful they got a job, so right. So we, we will see people, you know, um, [00:04:00] Willing to work for two pound an hour, three pound an hour, people will do it and Uber will say, look, people are willing to work for us and they don't want this, uh, worker status, or they wanna remain independent but the fact is, it's wrong.

[00:04:10] **Ayanda Charlie:** Over the years, this classification of drivers has been challenged in countries including New Zealand, South Africa and France. In February 2021, the United Kingdom's supreme court dismissed Uber's appeal against a landmark employment tribunal ruling that its drivers should be classed as workers with access to the minimum wage and paid holidays.

[00:04:35] **Ayanda Charlie:** But in March 2023, a state appeals court in the US ruled that app-based ride hailing and delivery companies like Uber and Lyft could in fact continue to treat their California drivers as independent contractors, allowing the tech giants to bypass laws on worker protections and benefits. I asked Janine to tell me more.

[00:04:56] **Janine Berg:** You have some workers that are on, on fixed term contracts. [00:05:00] Uh, now you've had the rise of gig workers. You have workers who, um, might be self-employed, but really actually in a dependent employment relationship. So you have all sorts of different, uh, work arrangements and the problem is that people don't have the same security depending on these employment relations, and they also don't have the same access to voice in the workplace.

[00:05:21] **Janine Berg:** You know, if they're not being represented by a union. But more importantly, and this is, you know, a real fundamental problem is that you have all of these distinctions in what their rights and benefits are that are legally created. I mean, there's no reason why workers in different contractual arrangements, uh, should have this, the different rights and benefits.

[00:05:42] **Janine Berg:** Um, you know, these are, these are very much legal constructs that that can be changed.

[00:05:47] **Ayanda Charlie:** And is the different treatment of platform workers a manifestation of discrimination?

[00:05:51] **Janine Berg:** There's no reason why a platform worker has to be classified and you see this actually in, in the court battles that [00:06:00] we've been seeing.

[00:06:00] **Janine Berg:** You have some jurisdictions that are saying, well, these people are actually employees because of, you know, these reasons or some jurisdictions that are saying like, well, they're actually self-employed. But if you, if you just think about it more as, you know, these are workers and they need some basic protections regardless of what their contract says, then they could all be on a more favorable playing field.

[00:06:19] **Janine Berg:** Now, whether that's a manifestation of discrimination, I mean, the problem is that what you're, what you're seeing is that a lot of the workers who have, who have turned to gig work of many of them are, are migrant workers. They're people who, you know, couldn't find other opportunities in the labour market.

[00:06:34] **Janine Berg:** Um, maybe lower skilled workers. So what happens is that, because it tends to be, you know, certain groups that tend to be in these jobs, they end up being discriminated upon because they're, they're, they're overrepresented in those jobs. The platform work in itself doesn't need to have this discrimination if it had actually the rights and benefits, um, the of, of other employment relationships.

[00:06:56] **Ayanda Charlie:** So it's a battle that continues to be fought. In the workplace, AI and other algorithms are already adopted in workflows. But the lack of proper research and regulation of AI tools is raising concern.

News Clip: One of the things that I think really struck me is the cycle of development to release seems very, very quick in machine learning and AI. It feels like we're all subjects in some large uncontrolled experiment. A lot of good might come out of this but a lot of unintended consequences might come outta this too.

Ayanda Charlie: In March 2023, nearly 3000 people, including heavyweights such as Apple co-founder, Steve Wozniak and AI pioneer

Yoshua Bengio, signed a petition calling for a six-month halt on all AI development until we can better understand its profound risks to society and humanity, which include anything from flooding the internet with disinformation to automating away jobs. They want to know: have we taken appropriate steps to protect the workplace from harm? I asked Janine to tell me more.

[00:08:04] **Janine Berg:** The focus on AI has been very much, I mean, I say up until recently part with the, with the launch of chat GPT, it's been very much focused on, on consumer and, uh, kind of citizens and information in general and less of a focus on, on the world of work.

[00:08:23] **Janine Berg:** So, to a certain extent, I don't know so much it, I would say that it's been given a pass, but there's been certainly a, a lag between the very fast pace of technological development and the regulatory responses. So there needs to be, you know, in the beginning of our conversation, we were talking about, you know, this, this, this potential for voice, uh, and feedback, uh, in the design of, of technology and in its implementation.

[00:08:49] **Janine Berg:** All those things are really important for AI as well. So there needs to be that space where workers can have a say in how the AI is being used now, if it's being [00:09:00] used to do surveillance, for example, in the workplace, there needs to be, um, some safeguards put in place in the workplace to ensure that lines aren't crossed and that these things don't happen.

[00:09:12] **Ayanda Charlie:** Janine's current area of focus is on transformations in the world of work, including digital labour platforms and algorithmic management. I wondered what issues she was noticing. Janine, lastly, in the work that you've been doing, what's come out of your research?

[00:09:27] **Janine Berg:** With some colleagues we've recently published a study on the effects of generative AI in the world of work looking both at the quantity and the quality, what the potential impacts are.

[00:09:40] **Janine Berg:** What we've found is that, you know, the potential impact is much greater in high income countries. Um, this is not surprising. This is primarily due to the composition of jobs, uh, in high income countries versus, uh, lower income countries. So there's more

jobs that could be potentially affected by this new technology in higher income countries.

[00:10:00] **Janine Berg:** But it's also because of constraints in lower income countries to, to access the technology either because of, uh, electricity, uh, broadband connections, uh, skills shortages, all of these, all of these reasons. So we look first at what the potential effects are on the potential automation effects. Um, we see mainly that it's really something that's gonna affect clerical tasks.

[00:10:24] **Janine Berg:** And so as a result, while many jobs will be, well, the tasks of many jobs will be affected by ai. It doesn't necessarily mean that the jobs would be automated. We don't find huge effects in terms of automation, but what we also discuss, um, are really what the potential could be for job quality. So there's this real concern about, you know, What will be the job quality of the new jobs that are gonna be created?

[00:10:51] **Janine Berg:** And also, how is AI for those people who remain in their job, how is the AI gonna be used? Is it going to lead to more work [00:11:00] intensity? Um, is it gonna lead to greater surveillance? Those are all really important questions and that's why it's really important to have those, you know, that potential for, for workers to have voice and say in the way that technology is being used in the workplace.

[00:11:16] **Ayanda Charlie:** Switching to the other side of the computer screen, I want to turn my attention to those who now work from home, a trend that has boomed since the pandemic. It seems there are further privacy concerns for employers and employees alike.

News Clip: Upping up worker tracking or so-called tattle-ware or surveillance software. That is supervisors monitoring daily activities through company issued devices, including keyboard usage, screen time clicks, and more. A recent New York Times investigation found eight of the 10 largest private employers in the US track the productivity metrics of their workers, many of them in real time, leading to many employees being subject to scores, trackers, idle buttons, and more which can lead to lost wages and [00:12:00] in some cases even terminations according to The Times.

[00:11:58] **Ayanda Charlie:** So laws should distinguish between the data that employers can legitimately collect and that which should not be

accessible to the employer. While the digital landscape of work continues to evolve, we can't take our eye off traditional labour issues in areas such as agriculture or the textile industry either.

[00:12:20] **Ayanda Charlie:** Governance of global supply chains is increasingly under scrutiny. In fact, companies are facing new regulatory challenges. For example, the European Commission has proposed a legislative framework to oblige companies to conduct due diligence to protect the environment and human rights not only in a company's own operations, but also those of their subsidiaries, business partners, suppliers and anyone in their value chains.

[00:12:46] **Ayanda Charlie:** Listen to episode 1 of SDG Insider to find out more from experts on that topic. Labour is a big component. Under due diligence policies, companies would have more legal responsibility. I asked Jason Judd, executive director at Global Labour Institute at Cornell University, to unpack this in more detail.

[00:13:07] **Ayanda Charlie:** So, Jason, your work includes research on the future of labour governance in global supply chains. What are your thoughts on mandatory due diligence as it relates to labour issues?

[00:13:19] **Jason Judd:** Well, the alternative to mandatory due diligence is what we've had for 30 odd years. It's private regulation companies setting their own standards, collecting their own data, telling their own stories.

[00:13:30] **Jason Judd:** And private regulation is by design opaque, hard to see in and, and unaccountable and some firms in global supply chains have made big investments in this, but many firms hide or just make nominal investments. So in the end it's voluntary for firms to do it or they don't, and labour abuses in their supply chains are, the lead firm may score these as risks, these labour abuses as risks in their [00:14:00] supply chains, but they're not treated in the end as the the lead firm's responsibilities.

[00:14:06] **Jason Judd:** And there are some, you know, there are some modest checks on this. One of them, probably the most important is collective bargaining, but there's by unions bargaining directly with the employer but there's little of that still at the global level. So it's not a, it's

not an effective check along most, most supply chains. Think the apparel industry or food.

[00:14:28] **Jason Judd:** A lot of, a lot of production and sourcing in supply chains is done in places where the right to organize the right for workers to, to get together and bargain with their employer is not a real thing. The freedom of association is not legal as in China or it's effectively suppressed in places like Bangladesh.

[00:14:46] **Jason Judd:** So in the end, we're left with mandatory due diligence, those requirements and the reporting requirements that go along with them. To us at Cornell, the shift in the public regulation seems, seems inevitable, [00:15:00] overdue, and it's its legal liability for those lead firms, for the harms in their supply chain.

[00:15:07] **Jason Judd:** Things that are, uh, done by their, by their suppliers, things that the lead firms should know about or does know about and should be preventing, should be fixing. We know the regulation looks serious this time because you get some, some giant firms, some lead firms calling for regulation. They wanna level the playing field.

[00:15:26] **Jason Judd:** And then, you know, it's serious because some of these, some of these lead firms are lobbying furiously, uh, in Brussels, in elsewhere, uh, to try to limit the scope and impact of new rules.

[00:15:38] **Ayanda Charlie:** With that, do you think it'll be more challenging for some sectors than others?

[00:15:43] **Jason Judd:** We do, uh, agriculture and food seem especially difficult to us because, uh, because 'cause there's so much informality in those supply chains and lack of basic protections for agricultural workers, for example. [00:16:00] We know fishing best at at Cornell in the food supply chains and there is literally no controlling authority out there in international waters. Mining seems another obvious candidate.

[00:16:13] **Ayanda Charlie:** And would you say that the further away you are from the end consumer, the more vulnerable you will be as a worker?

[00:16:20] **Jason Judd:** Yes and commercial fishing is a good example of that - The further away the worker or the work, the work is, the process is the greater the risk.

[00:16:30] **Jason Judd:** But that also all aligns two important points. One is that great uses can be happening next door. I've read a, a whole raft of stories in the UK press about forced labour and serious labour abuses happening on farms that are, you know, within spitting distance of the tier one producer and the retailer.

[00:16:51] **Jason Judd:** So that's one thing. And another is the reference to the end consumer or the customer is important because, uh, for us, that's hardly the place to make a serious [00:17:00] stand. If you wanna combat forced labour, for example, you need, uh, workers need real rules and serious consequences for the, for the lead firms, not a QR code for shoppers, so that they can learn the story of the worker who, who picked their apples.

[00:17:16] **Ayanda Charlie:** Looking at history, it's reasonable to assume that labour intensive sectors that in addition, often rely on cheap labour, may find these new due diligence policies to be quite disruptive. I asked Jason to shed some light on this. Would you say that it's mandatory or is mandatory due diligence going to deliver significant progress on labour conditions and what data do you use to assess working conditions?

[00:17:43] **Jason Judd:** Well, it's hard because, I said at the top, private regulation, which, which rules the roost companies setting their own standards, taking their own measure of things is what we've, we've had for 30 years. So there's, there's, there's too little data available to us to research centers like ours and audits [00:18:00] generate lots and lots of of bad data.

[00:18:03] **Jason Judd:** So for the lead firm, it's intelligence that they need not simply yeses or nos, ones and zeros in an audit report and getting high quality intelligence about what's happening, uh, to workers, uh, and what's the nature of work in the places they're buying is gonna require bigger investments, not not smaller ones, and, and better built partners.

[00:18:26] **Jason Judd:** And importantly, for the, for the lead firm, sourcing people in charge of the, the decisions about price and uh,

delivery, production process, et cetera. The sourcing staff inside the firm have to be bound by the company's values, which presumably include regard for labour rights and significant improvements in working conditions, or we just stop wondering why company X which talks about, its its profound commitment to workers' issue.

[00:18:57] **Jason Judd:** Why? Why are they still [00:19:00] buying from places and importantly, paying prices that make it clear that they don't really care about that issue, that that is not a value the company holds dear? And that's down to the sourcing choices.

[00:19:10] **Ayanda Charlie:** What are your thoughts or even recommendations for making due diligence work for all parties in this new landscape?

[00:19:18] **Jason Judd:** One of the elements is It has to go all the way to the end, and that seems to be embedded in the legislation in the European Union meaning not just, not just a look at what's happening in, in tier one, where the product finally comes together, but all the steps along the way but important too to keep the focus on the, the lead firm and not, not just the, the upstream actors.

[00:19:42] **Jason Judd:** Who are often just responding to market conditions. If the price that's on offer for their product is below the cost of production, then they may engage in, in bad practices, and we can blame the, we can blame the supplier who's just trying to maintain a modest margin, or we can look at the lead firm [00:20:00] and their, their, uh, their constant downward pressure on price.

[00:20:04] **Jason Judd:** That's, that's typically where the problem starts. The EU or, or regulators anywhere, can't bear the burden of all the sussing out supply chains to the end and policing all the practices. So the burden will have to fall on on firms and one of the questions that, that these regimes, these regulators will have to ask is, uh, why the firms are buying in these places.

[00:20:28] **Jason Judd:** And, uh, what is it we expect the firm to know about its supply chain? And how are they solving problems? And if they're unable to solve problems, why are they, why are they still engaged in these places? And the requirement in the legislation that the lead firms are not just reporting on their due diligence effort, but in the end have

some share of legal liability for harms done to workers. That'll, that'll, that seems to me that'll change the, the calculus inside the firms.

[00:20:55] **Ayanda Charlie:** And finally, Jason, can you tell me how you see the future of work developing in [00:21:00] the next few years and what you think policy makers need to do to stay up to date in developing legislation that reflects this continually changing landscape?

[00:21:09] **Jason Judd:** One thing they need to do is focus on these hard measures of outcomes. What's happening in workers' lives at the plant level, at the farm level, and in the aggregate in the supply chain of a lead firm? So, measures of of labour outcomes. That's crucial. And the second is one that's coming fast. It's climate breakdown.

[00:21:29] **Jason Judd:** The focus for these lead firms has to be twofold. Not just mitigation efforts, but also adaptation so that workers in Bangladesh making garments for H&M and others, for example, are not working in 40 degrees Celsius temperatures inside, uh, with humidity at 60, 70, 80%, or wading through flood waters and risking illness to get to work. That's gonna be increasingly, uh, an important part of due diligence.

[00:21:57] **Ayanda Charlie:** If all this seems like a lot for business leaders to think about, there is a place to start. I spoke to Christy Hoffman, General Secretary of the UNI Global Union. So GRI has a number of labour-related topic standards, which will enable companies to publicly disclose their most significant impacts on workers and how they are managing those impacts on workers and how they're managing those impacts. Christy, in a digital world where technology substitutes more and more employees, what is the role of unions?

[00:22:25] **Christy Hoffman:** Well, it's interesting because this question of technology substituting for employees, first of all, we, there are plenty of workers around. We haven't really seen the reduction in employment owing to technology.

[00:22:36] **Christy Hoffman:** But beyond that, I think the main question I would say is that, and one that we're working on quite a bit at uni, is that unions are really more essential now than ever to negotiate around the impacts of technology. And this is where we're putting our focus not to stop technology, but in fact, to be at the table to negotiate both health

and safety protections, privacy, you know, reduction and the, the pressure to work harder that you see through some of the algorithmic management and job security.

[00:23:05] **Christy Hoffman:** And these are things that unions have negotiated around for decades in connection with technology. We can't forget that the UAW had big fight about the introduction of robotics into factories. Not to prevent the robotics from being introduced, but to make sure that the workers, the auto workers shared and some of the increased efficiencies from those technologies.

[00:23:27] **Christy Hoffman:** So that's where we as service workers and more of the white collar workers who are more heavily affected now that unions are really important in this discussion.

[00:23:37] **Ayanda Charlie:** How do you address the issue of different treatment of employees versus contractors and subcontractors?

[00:23:44] **Christy Hoffman:** Contractors are a reality in many industries and we, at uni, we represent many workers who are contractors, where cleaners, uh, security officers, call center workers.

[00:23:55] **Christy Hoffman:** So our position is, you know, and of course I would mention the [00:24:00] Bangladesh Accord, which really affects the contractors of the big garment brands. The lead employer has the responsibility to make sure these workers, whoever employ them, whether it's the, they are direct employees of the lead or, or subs, that they have access to freedom of association, that they have access to decent work.

[00:24:20] **Christy Hoffman:** And I think that's really the key question we're getting at today, is around due diligence and the supply and the value chain. And make sure that the peak employer, I'll call it, I'll use that word, the peak employer, the one that really has the biggest, um, economic stake that they take responsibility.

[00:24:38] **Ayanda Charlie:** What are the existing regulatory gaps to protect workers who are not considered to be employees or or who aren't full-time? And how can regulations step up to address the current labour issues?

[00:24:50] **Christy Hoffman:** Well, I think the erosion of the employment relationship is really one of the most damaging trends for workers over the past decade. And [00:25:00] even beyond that, I mean, legislators everywhere. That's a gap.

[00:25:03] **Christy Hoffman:** We need to close that gap and make sure that we end this bogus self-employment. That is just a farce that this many workers are self-employed. So that's important to me. It's a really critical thing that needs to happen. A lot of legislators are trying to close that gap everywhere. There is the other, you know, approach, which is to put in minimum standards for the self-employed.

[00:25:25] **Christy Hoffman:** You know, I think that's important that everybody has the right to organise. It's still unclear to me who you organise with if you're technically not employed and you know, I think that is happening in many places. There's kind of groups and minimum wages for gig drivers, for example, in many cities.

[00:25:43] **Christy Hoffman:** I think that those are, um, you know, at best, you know, partial steps, but we really need to get rid of this, you know, fake self-employment that I think is a critical fight that we have. In Geneva where I live, the Geneva courts have ruled that Uber is an [00:26:00] employer and many other courts around Europe have taken that position, and it is possible to do that.

[00:26:06] **Ayanda Charlie:** Companies really need to stay on top of regulations and expectations in this changing landscape. I continued talking with Christy about corporate accountability. For large companies that have contractors and subcontractors and so on, new rules are a big game changer.

[00:26:22] **Christy Hoffman:** We have already seen significant progress when it comes to employers recognizing their responsibility from the point of view that,

[00:26:30] **Christy Hoffman:** They no longer put their head in the sands and say, that's not my problem, that's somebody's problem in Bangladesh or, and we used to say 10 years ago, big employers, multinationals would say, it's not my problem. What happens to my own direct employees in another country? That's the local management and they, whatever local rules are, that's what they follow.

[00:26:51] **Christy Hoffman:** We don't hear that as much anymore. I think culturally there's been a big shift. Accountability and actual legal responsibility for what [00:27:00] happens in the case of those workers has to be improved upon. The German due diligence law has a lot of promise for being enforceable and I think the French was more about reporting.

[00:27:12] **Christy Hoffman:** And reporting is not the whole story, and if that's all you have to do is report, that's not gonna really change things. There has to be that you have to not only identify your risk, you have to remediate your risks. You have to, you know, solve the problems that have, you know, have taken place. So it's the full cycle of the UN guiding principles.

[00:27:32] **Christy Hoffman:** It's not just conducting due diligence to know and show that you know where the problems are. You've gotta really address those problems. So I think there's a lot of, a lot of promise. We consider it to be a policy priority to push for mandatory due diligence. At the same time, you know, it could turn into a tick the box exercise and just a reporting exercise if there's not enough very rigorous enforcement [00:28:00] and the mechanisms that make that happen.

[00:28:03] **Ayanda Charlie:** So far we have spoken a lot about inconsistencies in how companies manage impact on their employees. But I also wondered what the 'good' can look like, when companies show their commitment to doing better. So let's say I've just woken up right to my new responsibilities. I'm a company and I realized that one of the members of my value chain is not respecting labour standards. What are my next steps?

[00:28:25] **Christy Hoffman:** They should, first of all, avoid multiple layers of subcontracting. They should avoid situations where they're engaged you know, bringing on bogus self-employment workers in bogus self-employment. They have to communicate very clearly to contractors what their expectations are, and then follow up with credible inspections.

[00:28:44] **Christy Hoffman:** Not audits in high risk countries in particular. And so I think it's about, you know, communicating requirements, but also paying special attention, uh, depending on the industry and the location.

[00:28:57] **Ayanda Charlie:** So how should companies proactively handle the [00:29:00] employment arrangement to avoid labour issues?

[00:29:02] **Christy Hoffman:** You know, lower pay is what motivates many companies to contract, but that's not the only reason and if your commercial model is based on only seeking out the lowest pay, then that's not really a viable long-term model. Contracting out or using others in your supply chain that's, you know, viable and sustainable. Where, you know, one, your contractor can provide some greater efficiency, but not necessarily based on a race to the bottom and you're just gonna go to the cheapest.

[00:29:31] **Christy Hoffman:** And that's something that we have to turn around because, and we know that extremely low wages are also linked to violations of labour standards whether it's freedom of association, the right to organise health and safety, payment of wages, proper payments. So we want these practices to end in order to clean up our supply chains.

[00:29:53] **Christy Hoffman:** Does that mean that wages go up? We hope so, because wages are too low in so many industries, which really [00:30:00] compete on wages. And when we look at the garment industry, for example, you know, you can just see that, you know, the companies will say, well, if you bump up your, you know, your costs by a tiny bit in Bangladesh, we'll move to Cambodia or vice versa.

[00:30:14] **Christy Hoffman:** I think the reality is it's not so easy to move everything around on, uh, you know, but, but it is to some extent. There is this competition on, on wages, which we need to, um, you know, stop that trend. So, you know, I've seen some of the contractors that we represent, whether it's cleaners or call center workers in a market, and wages are, you know, we need sectoral bargaining for wages in a lot of these industries.

[00:30:41] **Christy Hoffman:** We have to take the wages out of competition, but have wages that are living wages, that are respectable wages and that's kind of our objective when we're looking at, um, you know, a labour market. We know that if we're organizing security guards, One company is not gonna be 20% more expensive than all the others. We've gotta lift the [00:31:00] whole market.

[00:31:02] **Ayanda Charlie:** Thanks to Christy, for giving concrete guidance to companies. I also appreciate that Janine and Jason could spend some time with us on this topic. So, it seems that whether you're navigating the landscape of remote or hybrid work or the more traditional models of working - there is a growing number of considerations from a labour point of view that still need to be made.

[00:31:22] **Ayanda Charlie:** Thank you for tuning into Episode 3 of The SDG Insider. Join us again for more topics related to the Global Goals and be sure to click the subscribe button so that you don't miss any upcoming episodes. For more information on the Global Reporting Initiative, visit www.globalreporting.org. Until next time.

[00:31:42] **Ayanda Charlie:** This podcast is produced by 2Stories for Mediclinic, written by Nicci Collier, produced by Carol Williams with audio editing, engineering, and sound design by Kozi Mzimela and Jordyn Toohey. For more information on references used in this episode, please refer to the show notes.