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CIMCAW ALLIANCE

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN THE CENTRAL AMERICAN WORKPLACE

THE CHALLENGE

With China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the end of the Multi-Fiber Arrangement in January 2005, Central America is now at risk of losing its important apparel industry, which employs more than 400,000 mainly women workers, to lower-cost producers in Asia. This loss in jobs and foreign exchange stands to deeply impact the region's economic and social development. Unable to compete on price alone, Central American apparel manufacturers must build on their geographic proximity to the U.S. and speed-to-market advantage to gain a competitive edge as producers that uphold fair labor standards.



THE APPROACH

In 2004, the CIMCAW Alliance Partners launched a broad-based, multi-stakeholder alliance to help local suppliers in Central America meet the demand for high-quality apparel produced in working conditions that meet international standards. CIMCAW's multi-stakeholder approach builds factory capacity to foster continuous workplace improvement in labor standards, by working with all key stakeholders. Its focus is on joint worker and manager trainings that are solutions-oriented, integrate best practices into factory systems and yield improved working conditions, enhanced productivity, and competitiveness. The project also promotes a culture of compliance through social dialogue around the benefits of labor standards compliance. By involving major apparel brands, the project demonstrates to factory owners the incentive for improving labor standards.

PARTNERS

DAI, GAP, International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Foundation, Limited Brands, Social Accountability International, Timberland, Wal-Mart

RESULTS

- Trained 351 workers and managers in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic, representing factories with over 30,000 workers.
- Trained 336 inspectors and third-party auditors.
- Developed tailored worker-manager training programs and vetted them with key stakeholders in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic.
- Established multi-stakeholder (union, private sector and government) Consultative Committees in Nicaragua, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic that engender ownership and build a culture of compliance that endures.



Limited brands



WAL★MART