

h&m The Report From Labour Behind The Label

Tuesday 24 September, 2013

Worker's health and safety in our supplier factories is of high priority to H&M and we take the reports about mass illness very seriously. Read about different projects we run in order to strengthen the dialogue at our suppliers in Cambodia.

Recently the organisation Labour Behind the Label released a report about many Cambodian workers being ill. We received the first reports about mass illness at a number of garment factories, not only at H&M supplier factories, in Cambodia in 2011. As soon as we received information about incidents we immediately started investigations at our suppliers. It is important for us to understand the reasons to these incidents in order to secure the workers' health, wellbeing and safety at our suppliers' factories.

After the investigations action plans have been developed and many changes have been implemented at the concerned factories. For example, environmental health and safety committees (EHS) have been set up in the factories, involving unions, workers and management.

We have also developed a "Workers Calendar" together with Better Factories Cambodia and other brands which addresses health issues such as food and nutrition, the need to drink enough and how to avoid heat stress by not wearing multiple layers of clothes. The calendar has been handed out to over 100 000 textile workers in Cambodia.

We also supported Better Factories Cambodia in working with the TV channel CTN, which dedicated their comedy show to address the same health issues. This is a very popular TV show in Cambodia and during the spring 2013 factories showed the comedy during working hours. A total of 52,598 workers viewed it in the factories during that time.

Communication and dialogue is challenges in Cambodia with most of the factories being foreign investments and where management in the factories are often foreigners.

To address and improve the issue of grievance and dialogue between workers and management H&M has since 2012 run a Production Management Program. The aim is to train Cambodians in production management and to have local management in H&M supplier factories.

To further improve industrial relations in Cambodia's textile industry, H&M and one of Sweden's largest unions, IF Metall, are collaborating on a unique project. We will work to strengthen the dialogue between factory management and their employees and teach them the importance of cooperation and collective agreements. Our goal is to create opportunities for dialogue and strengthen the textile workers' influence. It is important to understand that neither H&M, nor any other buyer, can be responsible for the negotiations between the factory management and their employees. What we can support them in is the importance of negotiations skills, conflict resolution and signing contracts. This will eventually create a stable labour market and a sustainable model for wage development.

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