

Worker Rights Consortium



WORKER RIGHTS
CONSORTIUM

Our Impact

Factory Workers Protected



702,100

total workers the WRC has helped directly through factory investigations

3,159,450

including the workers' children and other dependents

Owed Compensation Recovered



\$121,250,000

total amount of legally mandated compensation secured for workers, including back wages, severance, etc.

Wrongful Terminations Reversed



1,785

worker leaders reinstated after they were wrongfully fired in retaliation for exercising their associational rights

About the WRC

Founded by universities, international labor rights experts, and students, the WRC is a key partner to universities in monitoring compliance with their codes of conduct protecting the basic rights of workers producing university logo apparel and other goods.

With investigators in 12 countries and partnerships with hundreds of civil society organizations across Asia, the Americas, and Africa, the WRC conducts independent in-depth, investigations into working conditions in factories around the globe. The WRC's international worker rights expertise enables us to equip our university affiliates with the information they need to protect the rights of workers producing their logo goods and to manage the risks of international licensed apparel manufacturing. We provide detailed findings from factories producing university logo goods, identify necessary corrective actions and secure their implementation, and offer one-on-one support for affiliate universities in implementing their codes of conduct.

Together, the WRC and universities are protecting the rights of millions of workers around the world.

WORKERS' STORIES IN THEIR OWN WORDS

SUN SHUI SHING

CAMBODIA

Five women workers at Sun Shui Shing, a collegiate supplier to Vera Bradley, heard widespread complaints from coworkers about conditions at the factory. They began to organize workers to advocate for improvements. The factory responded with a brutal campaign of unlawful retaliation.



The women leaders were threatened, suspended, and ultimately fired. A senior manager made threats of sexual assault, telling them, “You are all women! Aren’t you afraid of getting beaten or raped?”

The WRC documented the factory’s violations of national law and university standards and identified the necessary remedies, including the reinstatement of the fired leaders. After extensive engagement and buyer intervention, we secured a commitment from the factory owners to implement the required remedies. The leaders were reinstated with back pay. The factory recognized the workers’ union and established a labor-management dialogue. Free to exercise their rights without fear, more than 1,200 workers have since joined the union.

We organized our union for fair treatment—like ensuring new moms get breacktime to nurse their babies. The factory fired us, but when we got our jobs back, we got back our hope that we can win these things.

- RakSmey, union vice president at Sun Shui Shing

BANGLADESH

NIAGARA TEXTILES

When we were finally paid, it was like my world went from dark to light. I started to cry, because I was overwhelmed with relief. I’ve been able to pay off my debts, [and] send my son back to school [...]

- Parul Begum, worker who was injured in bus crash, then fired

Truck and bus accidents on factory property, caused by grossly unsafe practices, killed one worker at Niagara Textiles, a collegiate supplier for Cutter & Buck, and injured dozens. The family of the worker who was killed received only a pittance from the factory. And the most seriously injured were denied reimbursement of medical costs, forced to resign, cheated of severance, and threatened with violence for complaining about it.

The WRC documented the violations, identified essential remedies, and engaged with Cutter & Buck to secure the factory’s compliance. Niagara agreed to act. The factory properly compensated the family of the deceased worker; paid the injured workers’ medical expenses, severance, and back wages; and offered them rehiring at the factory. The factory disciplined the manager who threatened workers and agreed to end its reckless practices.



STYLE AVENUE

EL SALVADOR

Now with the news of the payment, I feel a huge relief. My kids are saying to me, “Mom, you look different.” Now I know I can make my house payments...I feel so happy, truly happy.

- Elvia Yesenia Zelaya Burgos, worker who did not receive her legally owed severance when the factory closed



Style Avenue, a collegiate supplier to Outerstuff, shut down owing workers \$1.8 million in legally mandated wages and severance. The factory owner was bankrupt and there was no chance she would pay. Most workers were owed the equivalent of at least 18 months’ wages; many far more. After the WRC and universities engaged extensively with Outerstuff, the licensee agreed to pay the workers 100% of the funds they are due.

Getting the money they earned will mean vast improvement in the quality of life for workers and their families for years to come: better nutrition and healthcare, more access to education for workers’ children, and relief from crushing debt. This outcome upholds universities’ labor standards and reflects their enormous power to protect the rights and well-being of workers who sew collegiate apparel.