

Report of stakeholder consultations in Turkey
Joint Initiative on Corporate Accountability and Workers' Rights
2 – 4 November 2004

1. Introduction

Representatives of the Joint Initiative on Corporate Accountability and Workers' Rights held consultations with various interest groups in Turkey between the 2nd and 4th of November 2005.

The representatives involved in the consultations were: Susan Hayter - Joint Initiative (JOIN), Anne Lally - Fair Labor Association (FLA), Scott Nova - Workers Rights Consortium (WRC), Dan Rees - Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI), Sjef Stoop - Fair Wear Foundation (FWF), Alice Tepper Marlin - Social Accountability International (SAI), Rut Tufts - Fair Labor Association (FLA) and Ineke Zeldenrust - Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC).

The purpose of the consultations was to:

- gain a better understanding of the context in which the project was being carried out;
- introduce the Joint Initiative (see annex 1) to the key interest groups in Turkey and get their feedback on what they saw as the priority issues that should be addressed in the Turkey project;
- gain an understanding of the extent to which the different interest groups wished to participate in the project and their capacity to do so;
- identify ways in which the project could reinforce efforts underway to enhance the competitiveness of enterprises, while simultaneously ensuring respect for workers' rights and contributing to improvements in working conditions in the garment producing sector in Turkey.

This report highlights issues raised by the different interest groups. The names of the persons consulted with are attached as annex 2. It is circulated to all those involved in the consultations and will form the basis of the design of the project in Turkey.

2. International organizations

Representatives of the Joint Initiative met with the ILO and GTZ in Ankara, Turkey on the 2nd November 2004.

ILO activities relevant to the project include a joint management / worker training project on core labour standards (the second phase of which will be implemented in the coming year), a research project on social auditing, an IPEC programme on child labour and a project on social dialogue. The ILO stressed the importance of freedom of association and was concerned with what was seen as "cherry picking" among the core labour standards in codes of conduct. They highlighted as a pressing issue that of unregistered work and workplaces. Future negotiations for accession to the EU provided a significant incentive for labour law reform. To allay concerns about the interests driving the implementation of code of conduct in Turkey, it would be important to show that improvements in labour standards and enterprise competitiveness go hand in hand.

The GTZ has convened a National Round Table in Turkey on Social Standards under the auspices of the AVE (the Foreign Trade Association of the German Retail Trade). It has met four times and includes most organizations that have an interest in the implementation of codes of conduct. The AVE model is based on the SA8000 standard. The focus in Turkey is largely on the textile and garment sector. While the AVE/GTZ project will come to an end in 2005, the Round Table is likely to continue beyond that date possibly expanding its scope beyond the AVE initiative. For many interest groups participating in the Round Table, it is the only available forum on codes in which they all sit at the same table.

Both the ILO and GTZ expressed interest in the project and wished to discuss proposals for working together with the Joint Initiative in Turkey.

3. Public sector

Representatives of the Joint Initiative met with the Department of Labour and Social Security and the Undersecretariat for Foreign Trade in Ankara, Turkey on the 2nd November 2004.

The Department of Labour and the Undersecretariat for Foreign Trade expressed concerns about the interests that lay behind the implementation of codes of conduct. Both raised the question of the impact of code implementation on the competitiveness of enterprises. They stressed the importance of the universal application of the standards contained in most codes.

The Department of Labour expressed particular concern over the training and quality of private auditors and considered this to be an issue that needed to be addressed by the project. They were also concerned about codes of conduct that imposed standards that are higher than the ILO.

4. Trade and business associations

Representatives of the Joint Initiative met with TISK, TGSD, ISO and ITKIB in Ankara and Istanbul, Turkey between the 2nd and 4th of November 2004.

TISK expressed concern about the impact of codes on the competitiveness of enterprises and stressed the importance of the universal application of the standards contained in most codes. They offered to facilitate a future meeting with the textile employers association.

ISO introduced their draft code of conduct and reported on their auditing activities. They were interested in being accredited as a social auditing body able to certify enterprises. They expressed interest in working together with the Joint Initiative to facilitate consistency among the different approaches and to learn from 'best practice' elsewhere.

ITKIB described their efforts to support enterprises to implement environmental and social standards, thereby increasing the competitiveness of the Turkish economy on world markets. Part of this was to assist enterprises to be certified as compliant with the standards set out in codes of conduct. They stressed the importance of the universal application of the standards contained in these codes, without which they would not be seen as credible efforts to improve working conditions. They also highlighted the importance of coherence between the different approaches to code implementation, citing examples of multiple standards, multiple audits and stakeholder fatigue with repeated consultations by brands, multistakeholder initiatives and other associations involved in code implementation.

The TGSD provided an overview of the garment and textile sector in Turkey. They discussed their involvement in the development of specific policies to promote investment in less developed parts of the country. They thought it important to move toward a minimum wage that was differentiated regionally and were interested in sharing knowledge on methodologies for calculating a 'living wage'. They confirmed the need for a more consistent and coherent approach among brands, multistakeholder initiatives and other associations involved in code implementation.

ISO, TGSD and ITKIB stressed the need for the Joint Initiative to coordinate its activities with the GTZ/AVE Round Table, commenting

on their positive experience with the dialogue that took place in this forum.

5. Trade Unions

Representatives of the Joint Initiative met with TEKSIF, TEKSTIL and OZ- IPLIK-IS in Istanbul, Turkey on the 4th of November 2004.

All three trade unions spoke of a general anti union policy on the part of suppliers and complained that freedom of association was systematically denied. They were concerned that the cost of social benefits associated with registering workers acted as an incentive for employers not to register part of their workforce and fuelled informality.

All saw codes as a resource to their efforts to improve working conditions. More work was needed on translating what the provisions and standards meant in the Turkish context. It was also important to reward good practice by ensuring fair competition and protecting those suppliers that were complying with code provisions. They highlighted the importance of transparency in the supply chain and the value of a complaints mechanism which would enable them to report code violations and seek remediation.

All mentioned the need to coordinate with the AVE/GTZ initiative and the ILO joint management / union training project. They thought the project should concentrate on medium sized producers, including some that were supplying more than one brand. They stressed the need for open cooperation with a feedback mechanism and regular reporting.

6. Non government organizations

Representatives of the Joint Initiative met with representatives of the Working group on Women Home-based Workers in Turkey (Support Group), the Women Home-based Workers' Cooperative and TUKODER in Ankara and Istanbul between the 2nd and 4th November 2004.

The Working Group and the Women Home-based Workers' Cooperative raised the issue of the invisibility of home-based work in public policy. Both had lobbied to bring about changes in the legislation so as to recognize this category of worker. Issues identified included discrimination, girl child workers, weak alliances with trade unions and difficulty with securing a stable flow of orders (relating to purchasing practices and intermediaries between the supplier and home-based worker). They see the implementation of codes of conduct as one way of recognizing work undertaken by home-based workers in the supply chain. More research was needed to map supply chains and examine the conditions and constraints home-based workers faced. Capacity to undertake this was limited.

TUKODER raised the issue of child workers, unregistered workers, unregistered companies and the non-implementation of labour law by the government. In the implementation of codes of conduct they highlighted the importance of independent verification by organizations representing consumers, and the training of factory managers on the content of codes and on good practices.

7. Suppliers

Representatives of the Joint Initiative held an information sharing session with interested companies on 4th November 2004. The meeting was attended by 54 suppliers and local representatives of brands. The list of those that attended is attached as annex 3.

A number of issues were raised during the question and answer session. Some expressed concern over the level of the common code being developed and that this would be higher than existing codes. Questions were raised about the role of NGOs and trade unions in the project and the scope of the project (whether it would include home-based workers). Others were concerned about the multiplicity of audits and were confused about the standards being applied. There was broad endorsement of the need for consolidation and cooperation among organizations implementing codes of conduct.

8. Conclusions and follow-up

From the round of consultations it is clear that a number of factors make this a particularly good context within which to jointly examine how the different approaches to code implementation, monitoring and verification support constructive industrial relations and efforts to improve working conditions. These include: the commencement of EU accession negotiations; potential reform to labour law; technical assistance being provided on labour standards; and participation by the social partners in a round table set up to support an initiative which has adopted a model based on the SA8000 standard (since this is one of the approaches to code implementation being examined by this project).

Issues that need to be looked at in the course of the project include:

- how to implement codes given the challenge of unregistered workers and workplaces;
- ways to address workplace standards on discrimination, wages, and freedom of association through code implementation; and
- the effect of code implementation on firm competitiveness.

All stakeholders consulted confirmed their interest in achieving more consistency among the codes and coherence in approaches to their

implementation. They were interested in learning from best practice elsewhere, but also in developing guidelines to code implementation (and best practice) in Turkey which would then have universal application.

The next step will be to develop the project and plan the elements to be tested. The project plan will be presented to the different stakeholders in January 2005.

Annex 1: Joint Initiative on Corporate Accountability and Workers' Rights

Background

Codes of conduct have been an important part of efforts to improve labour standards in global supply chains. Over the last ten years these codes and systems for their implementation have proliferated. Brands and retailers are faced with multiple industry standards and suppliers are confused by the numerous codes and initiatives. Local organizations are frustrated by the many initiatives making demands on their time. Better co-ordination and co-operation is essential to address this confusion. It is also important to develop a shared understanding of the ways in which voluntary codes of labour practice and their implementation result in better working conditions.

The Joint Initiative is the first effort to bring together key organizations different aspects of code implementation and/or enforcement in a programme of collaborative work. These are: Clean Clothes Campaign, Ethical Trading Initiative, Fair Labour Association, Fair Wear Foundation, Social Accountability International and Workers Rights Consortium (referred to in this document as "the organizations"). Each of these organizations is involved in the global effort to improve working conditions in global supply chains.

The aim of the initiative

The initiative is seeking to maximise the effectiveness and impact of the work of all the organizations by ensuring that resources are directed as efficiently as possible to improve the lives of workers and their families. The initiative is also seeking to explore possibilities for closer co-operation between the organizations and facilitate shared learning on the manner in which voluntary codes of labour practice contribute to better workplace conditions in global supply chains. One outcome, for example, may be a Common Code of Labour Practice.

The Turkey Project

The organizations are participating in a pilot project in Turkey to test the variety of code implementation strategies and approaches. The pilot will involve European and US companies and their garment suppliers in Turkey, as well as trade unions, NGOs, industry and employers' associations and other interested parties. The pilot will run over 30 months with two phases of implementation and testing.

The objectives of the pilot are first, to improve working conditions and the observance of international labour standards in participating garment factories in Turkey, second, to develop a shared understanding of the ways in which codes of labour practice contribute to this end, and third, to generate viable models for ongoing co-operation between the organizations.

Having tested the various approaches in the pilot, the Joint Initiative will develop guidelines that can support other efforts to improve working conditions through the implementation, and use of, codes of labour practice. It will disseminate these guidelines, together with learning gained on the pilot of the implications for policy.

Funding and Governance

The Joint Initiative has received funding from the European Commission (DG Employment) and the US State department. An International Steering Committee consisting of representatives of the six organizations meets quarterly to provide strategic direction, make policy decisions and assess progress.

Annex 2: Persons and organizations consulted

1. International organizations	
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2. Public sector	
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3. Trade and business organizations	
<p>TISK Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations</p> <p>Bülent Pirlir Secretary General Me_rutiyet Cad. No: 1 / 4 06650 Kızılay Ankara gensec@tisk.org.tr</p>	<p>ISO Istanbul Chamber of Industry</p> <p>Mr Korkmaz Yıldırım President of the Industry department kyildirim@iso.org.tr</p> <p>Mr. Mehmet Cavdar Director of the Capacity Branch mcavdar@iso.org.tr</p> <p>Mesrutiyet Cad. No. 118 80050 Tepebasi Istanbul</p>

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5. Non- government organizations

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Annex 3: Attendance of consultation with suppliers
Armada Hotel, Istanbul
4th November 2004

Panel

Alice Tepper Marlin, SAI
Sjef Stoop, FWF
Laksmi , GAP
Rut Tufts, FLA

Chair

Susan Hayter, Joint Initiative

Observer

Juliet Edington, ETI

Hasan Gumus	Adres Textile
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Irfan Dal	ATK Textile
F.Bala Canseber	ATK Textile
Ahnet Aytemiz	Aytemizler Textile
Alan Phillips	Castleblair Istanbul
Utkan Ulucay	Castleblair Istanbul
Hamzi Fatun	Delta socks Israel Q.A
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Ercan Gulseren	Dinateks
Ilknur Ozturk	Ebru Textile
Akif Gok	Ebru Textile
Rustu Ertekin	Fetih Textile
Gungor Kesci	Gals A.S
Melike Marim	Gama Textile
Gunsan Cetin	GAP inc
Fuat Ozveri	GAP INC
Melih Kilic	Gorkem Giyim
Meryem Basbug	Hey Textile
Ali Sahin	Imteks San. A.S
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Eylem Yilmaz	Li and Fung Trading ltd

Halil Celik	Li and Fung Trading ltd
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Sylvia Dayi	Marks and Spencer
Orkun Darnel	Marks and Spencer
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Yonca Kaya	Puma
Stefan Dienesch	Puma
Levent Demirtas	Retro Textile
Hakan Bas	TAD Textile research journal
Sefa Yuksel	TAD Textile reseach journal
Coskun Badir	Taha Textile
Hulya Cetinkaya	Talu Textile
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Yilmaz Kandis	Tesco
Burcin Dursun	Topkapi Iplik
Seher Akinci	Topkapi Iplik
Nihal Koksal	Topkapi Iplik
Kaan Erman	Topkapi Iplik
Selin Gur	Tubas Konfeksiyon
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Halil Uysal	Uniteks
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Yasemin Basar	Yesim Textile