

How will JO-IN conduct its assessments? A Guide to the JO-IN Assessment Protocols for Suppliers

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Preamble

This document has been prepared to address the specific concerns of some suppliers for more information regarding the form and manner in which the JO-IN factory assessments will be conducted.

THE PROCESS OF DRAFTING DOCUMENTS RELATED TO THE ASSESSMENT

This project focuses specifically on three of the more complex and controversial topics in modern social audit practice: freedom of association and collective bargaining, hours of work, and wages. In order to ensure that all related issues will be assessed properly, the Jo-In Steering Committee has drafted an assessment and an interview protocol to guide the assessors in their work. This process included extensive consultation and review.

The Jo-In Steering Committee has also drafted the explanatory note on living wage in response to requests by brands, suppliers and some trade unions to clarify the project's treatment of the living wage provision of the Jo-In draft Common Code. This note has been circulated and feedback was received from key project stakeholders.

Jo-In staff prepared an information protocol describing how the project will treat sensitive information in response to requests by some of the participant brands. The information protocol informs brands and participating suppliers about the process for collecting and sharing data in the project. This also responds to anti-trust concerns relating to the sharing of information about factory costs and income.

Jo-In staff gave written answers to all the concerns/comments/questions raised by some of the participant brands about documents related to assessments. .

The explanatory note on living wages and the information protocol have previously been sent to suppliers. The assessment and the interview protocols were not. The protocols are intended only as a guidance tool for use of the assessors in their work during trials, not as a standard as such. However, since this is a high-profile research study, it is also important to demonstrate to independent observers that interviewees cannot have been specially prepared in advance of interviews.

It was noted in the assessment protocol that *“any questionnaires to be used for the assessment shall not be disclosed in advance of the study, but a copy shall be given for information to management and union representative (if any) at the opening meeting.”*

THE SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT PROCESS WITH REFERENCE TO THE RELATED DOCUMENTS

The Jo-In Project seeks to learn more about the application about wage practices, hours of work and freedom of association in selected factories in Turkey, especially in light of the varied treatment of these three issues by the 6 organizations participating in Jo-In. The assessment protocol has been developed to help assessors collect data and gain a better understanding of factory practices and processes -and the way brands, suppliers and workers (organizations) understand these and are involved in them- as they relate to freedom of association, wages and hours of work. *It is important to re-iterate that the assessment protocol is intended only as an internal tool for use in the Jo-In trials in Turkey and is not a standard-setting document.*

Once data is amassed, local and international stakeholders will be invited to participate in discussions about assessment findings. The assessment findings will be discussed with local and international stakeholders without disclosing factory names (*as is also indicated in the supporting 'information protocol'*)

Discussions will focus both on “good practices” that are already in place in factories and on remediation strategies where further improvements are identified. The remediation plan will seek to develop ways in which factories can improve their compliance with the Jo-In code of conduct while remaining competitive (or, better, improve their competitiveness) in today’s global economy.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

1) PRIOR TO THE SITE VISIT

Background research will be conducted prior to the factory visits to provide contextual information for the Jo-In assessors. Off-site factory interviews are also planned in order to compare and support the in-factory interview process and to test the effectiveness of different methods of worker interviews in surfacing key issues.

1.1) BACKGROUND RESEARCH FOR THE ASSESSMENT¹

This research will be managed by Jo-In staff. When necessary, a research assistant bound by a confidentiality agreement will be accessed.

Research will be conducted through consultation with brands, local trade unions, NGOs, academics, community organisations, religious groups, women’s groups, newspapers/journalists and local Labour and Social Security Departments.

¹ As suppliers were informed previously by a letter sent on 24.05.2006, which explained that: “Prior to and after the assessments, when consulting with trade unions, NGO’s, and other stakeholders, neither Jo-In staff nor the Jo-In assessors will disclose the names of the participating factories. Instead, prior to the assessments, information will be sought regarding all factories in the geographical area.” But, obviously the name of any factory where a TU is organized will be known by this TU, as union representative will be invited to the opening and closing meetings.

1.1.1) Contacting / consulting with brands' representatives

The Jo-In assessors will review previous audit reports and reports from brands to familiarize themselves with previous compliance history at the facility and will note any past, ongoing, and planned remediation relating to wages, hours of work and freedom of association and collective bargaining as well as other code elements. This is especially relevant in the case of facilities that are striving to improve compliance in these areas in cooperation with a brand or through SAI certification. Details about previous situation and support offered by brands or others (financial or in-kind) to achieve greater compliance will be particularly noted.

1.1.2) Consulting with TUs and NGOs

One or more local trade union(s) will be contacted to review the history of freedom of association in the geographical area where the factory is located.

The trade unions will be requested to provide access to all relevant collective bargaining agreements (CBAs). If the facility is unionized, details will be noted about the terms of the factory CBA relating to wages (including all benefits) and hours of work. The trade union will be consulted about the application of relevant clauses. If the facility is not unionized, the terms of the CBA active in a nearby factory (if present) will be reviewed for purposes of local comparison.

1.1.3) Gathering information from other sources

Some organizations and individuals (e.g: academics, community organisations, religious groups, women's groups, newspapers/journalists) who are likely to have information on the factory concerned will be contacted to provide possible background information to the current situation regarding freedom of association, hours of work, and wages.

1.1.4) Contacting/ consulting with Turkish Labour and Social Security Department

The Turkish Labor and Social Security Department will also be consulted prior to the assessments in order to give their perspective on use of flexi-time, payment of social security, reporting on overtime payments, etc. Any data, such as past application for trade union recognition or the status of any collective agreement, as well as information on official payroll figures, etc. may be gathered.

1.1.5) Contacting / consulting with the factory management

The factory management also will be requested to make available a list of employee names and contact information (where possible and with the agreement of the workers). This information will help assessors to make a random selection from the list to interview some workers prior to the factory visit. If, for any reason, this information cannot be made available, the JO-IN assessment team will use other alternative methods to make contact with workers for the purpose of interviewing them outside the factory environment. The management will be also asked to provide employee wages levels across different departments for the previous three months. This information should ideally be collected in advance of the factory visit, as it will assist the assessors when conducting the worker and management interviews. It will also enable the assessors to gauge wage levels across factories, data which will be used in the aggregate for living wage discussions.

1.2) OFF-SITE WORKER INTERVIEWS

One goal of this project is to learn about the comparative effectiveness of different methods of interviewing workers. I.e. what achieves the best quality of information and under what circumstances? It is therefore important that the project systematically report both the methods applied by assessors and evaluations of the results of the interviews. The assessments should also lead to conclusions regarding the effectiveness of specific interview methods at the reporting stage.

Off-site interviews are crucial to the assessment. These interviews will serve two project goals: to test different methods of worker interviews and to give depth to the on-site interviews. Assessors may come across information through off-site interviews that they would not have found out by other methods.

It is preferable to conduct the off-site interviews before the in-factory assessments, so that any externally-derived information can be cross-checked. Nonetheless assessors should be able to go back and forth from documents to interviews and vice-versa to verify information if needed.

The assessors will always retain autonomy in selecting which workers to interview. Random samples will be taken from the list of employees to be interviewed. The workers should work in different departments (cutting, sewing, packing etc.) and in different units in the workplace (when there are different units). It is important for the interviews to be gender balanced (in accordance with the gender division in the workplace).

Contact with workers in order to arrange interviews shall be made either by project staff or lead off-site interviewers. Interviews will be conducted by Jo-In assessors who specialize in off-site interviews.

At least 5-7 interviews (unless there are demonstrably valid reasons why this would not be possible) should be done before the assessment, outside the factory.

2) ASSESSMENT VISIT ARRANGEMENTS

2.1) Arrangement of the date and plan for the site assessment visit

Q: Who will arrange?

A: Turkey Coordinator and factory management; Availability of the team members to be foreseen.

Q: What will be arranged?

1. The date and plan for the site assessment visit will be arranged by prior agreement with the participating factory: This will include clear communication regarding the numbers and nature of interviews to be undertaken and the time required for the assessment.
2. Any questionnaires to be used for the assessment shall not be disclosed in advance of the study, but a copy shall be given for information to management and union representative (if any) at the opening meeting.
3. The scheduled visit shall not occur during low season and it is recommended that at least one subsequent (short) visit should ideally be scheduled during a peak production run/period.
4. The availability of senior and line management is important in planning the visit.

3) SITE VISIT

3.1) Opening meeting

Q: Who will attend?

A: Turkey Coordinator and the Assessment team together with

1. Senior management
2. Trade union representatives (where present) and/or worker representatives (if a system is in place).

Note: Where possible, both should be present at opening meeting when the assessment process is discussed and at the closing meetings when the findings will be discussed.

3.2) Confidential worker interviews

Q: Who will conduct the interviews?

A: Assessment team members

Q: How will the interviews be conducted?

A: In groups and individually.

Q: How will workers be selected?

A: The assessment team, shall select workers for interview at random directly before interviews take place. Selection should reflect:

1. The different processes,
2. Work lines,
3. Shifts
4. Balance of gender,
5. Age and
6. Ethnicity.

Note: While it is recommended that at least 5% of the workforce should be interviewed, this may vary depending on the amount of information gathered from previous audits and other sources.

3.3) Options for confidential worker feedback/communication

Q: What are the options?

A:

1. Questionnaire: A maximum of ten questions requiring only a 'Yes/No' or checkbox tick response, except for the final question, which shall be "Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about working at this factory?"
2. Email: Email address of Jo-In will be used for this purpose: info@jo-in.org, and also Jo-In website address (www.jo-in.org) will be given to the workers to learn more about the project.
3. Telephone: A telephone number will be provided for this purpose by Jo-In. Any worker who wishes to convey any confidential communication, will be able to leave a message to the answering machine with their names, telephone numbers time availability to call them back etc. The project assistant will consult with them to find out the source of the communication. Any serious communication determined by the project assistant will be considered by Turkey Coordinator. The deadline for using the Jo-In telephone number will be November 2007.

Note:

1. Consideration shall be given by the assessors to explore options for confidential worker communication.
2. If a questionnaire is used, it shall be briefly introduced and distributed to workers by the assessors to all workers. The completed anonymous forms will be posted by workers themselves in a securely locked box placed and indicated by the assessment team. Responses will be confidentially analyzed during the assessment by the assessment team.
3. During interviews, Jo-In assessors will provide workers business cards of Jo-In with related information above (2,3). Also factory management may be asked to post introductory notes about the project including contact details of Jo-In on bulletin boards. Also, at the opening meeting, workers' representatives will be asked to inform workers about the project.

3.4) Confidential interviews with the senior trade union representative/ workers representatives

Q: Who will conduct interviews?

A: Assessment team members

Q: How will the interviews be conducted?

A:

- If there is a trade union present in the workplace, confidential interviews should be held with
 1. The senior trade union representative at the site and
 2. Worker members of any joint committees.
- If there is no union at the facility, but there is some form of worker representation mechanism in place, interviews should be held with post-holders in that structure.

Note: These interviews should be additional to the random worker interviews.

3.5) Management interviews

Q: Who will conduct interviews?

A: Assessment team members

Q: Who will be interviewed?

A:

1. Senior management and
2. The personnel responsible for payroll,
3. Human resources and/or
4. Compliance officers

Note: Prior to the visit, the Jo-In assessment team should confirm that the responsible officers mentioned above are available for interview.

3.6) Assessment of all written records

Q: Who will conduct interviews?

A: Payroll assessor

Q: What will be assessed?

A: A thorough assessment of all written records, including

1. Wage slips,
2. Working time records,
3. Apprentice records,
4. Social security records,
5. Human resource policies,
6. Bonuses and deductions in pay.

4) IMPLEMENTATION OF LIVING WAGE STANDART

Q: How will Jo-In assess the living wage standard?

A: With a special focus on *how* to implement this standard, the Steering Committee has agreed to use a “wage ladder,” which is a tool that can be used to illustrate monetary values of various wage standards.

During assessments, assessors will use the wage ladder as an analytical tool. Factory wage levels will be charted on the wage ladder, based on information collected during assessments. As such, this information provides insights into wage realities in Turkey. This means the project will not compare current wages against any specific pre-determined wage level, but rather against *various* levels currently used or aspired to by the Jo-In organisations. The Jo-In project does not demand from the participating suppliers to raise the wages to a specific LW level set by Jo-In within the lifespan of the project, nor does it require the participating brands to require this from the suppliers concerned. The project does, however, ask participating brands and factories to make good faith efforts to engage openly in discussions that will include the aspiration to improve wage levels alongside other relevant criteria, such as productivity gains and pricing policies. *For more info, please see the Explanatory Note on the Treatment of the Living Wage Code Element During the Jo-In Pilot Project in Turkey's Garment Industry 2006-2007*

5) INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM FACTORY ASSESSMENTS

Q: How will Jo-In collect and protect this sensitive information?

A: Factories are allocated an anonymous code number by which they will be known throughout the project. Information will be collected by Jo-In assessors and shall be held in the strictest confidence and in trust for the benefit of JO-IN and/or participating suppliers. The Assessor shall take all necessary precautions to secure any Confidential Information, and disclosure of such information shall be restricted solely to JO-IN Staff. JO-IN has drafted the information protocol to re-assure factories that none of the information they voluntarily provided will be shared publicly in any way that can be linked back to their factory. Also, the assessors and JO-IN staff have duly signed confidentiality agreements to ensure that they will not share this information with anyone else. An example of this confidentiality agreement was sent to all participant factories.

Q: If the factories do not want to share this information, what will be the reaction of Jo-In?

A: Due to the voluntary nature of the project, the factories may consider some sensitive information described in the information protocol as being too confidential for them to share with JO-IN. If factories do not want to share this information that JO-IN cannot and will not insist that they do so. Nevertheless, Jo-In would urge factories to consider this request positively in order to help the project to gain a more complete understanding of the current situation.

6) ASSESSMENT TEAM

Q: Who are the team members? Will factories be informed about the members of assessment team?

A: 3 experts who have significant background and experience in the areas related to the social compliance as well as in related roles and duties concerning the assessments will form on-site assessment team and 6 interviewers who have considerable skills and experience in conducting interviews will undertake the responsibility of off-site interviews in turns. When necessary, one of the members of the off-site team may also join the on-site assessment team by replacing one of or in addition to the team members to conduct interviews (provided that the said interviewer did not conduct any of the off-site interviews for the factory being assessed). A summary of bios of all team members and a briefing note about their responsibilities will be sent to the factories prior to the factory visit.