Collaboration, commitment and constructive action are critical to eradicating sweatshop labor. The challenge of sweatshop labor is extensive and complex. It spans concerns about working conditions, human rights, freedom of association, as well as the need to encourage government enforcement of labor laws.

Unique among organizations committed to ending sweatshop labor and improving working conditions, the Fair Labor Association (FLA) is made up of colleges and universities, companies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who share a commitment to protecting workers’ rights around the world. The FLA’s collaborative approach recognizes that the most effective solution is one that brings all concerned parties to the table to encourage dialogue and spur constructive action.

The FLA Workplace Code of Conduct, based on internationally recognized labor standards, provides a clear set of guidelines outlining fair labor practices for factories in the U.S. and overseas. By adopting the Code, FLA affiliates commit to rooting out and correcting unfair labor practices in the manufacturing supply chain.

Helping your campus end sweatshop labor

www.fairlabor.org/oncampus

The Fair Labor Association brings together colleges and universities, NGOs, and socially responsible companies, represented equally on its policy-making board of Directors. The FLA has learned that the most effective way to curb labor abuses is through a process that involves all stakeholders. The cooperation, commitment and compliance of companies is especially important when national governments fail to adequately enforce labor laws. Companies, which are held accountable by the FLA to its Code of Conduct, have a strong influence on factory management and help to ensure that workers receive fair treatment from their employers.

Colleges, universities and students can make a difference

Higher education institutions and their students are a potent force for positive social change.

Goods bearing the logos of universities are manufactured in factories around the world. Universities affiliated with the FLA require that companies supplying their products comply with the FLA Workplace Code of Conduct. The Code is enforced through comprehensive, independent and unannounced audits of factories around the world.

Nearly 200 universities are currently affiliated with the FLA. All FLA university affiliates are encouraged to actively participate in the FLA’s work through the University Advisory Council.

"It has been a priority for us that products bearing our name are made in factories that treat workers fairly. That’s why we affiliated with the FLA, because it has the expertise, understanding, and global reach required to hold companies and the factories they use accountable.”

— CRAIG WESTEMEIER, SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE VICE PRESIDENT, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

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To be sustainable, solutions must address root causes of labor problems. The Fair Labor Association’s innovative, collaborative approach has created real, positive change and improved the lives of workers in all parts of the world.” —MICHAEL H. POSNER, PRESIDENT, HUMAN RIGHTS FIRST

HOW DOES THE FLA PROTECT WORKER RIGHTS?

Fair Labor Association members adopt the Workplace Code of Conduct. By working with their suppliers to ensure implementation of the Code, member companies are improving the working conditions for hundreds of thousands of workers around the world.

The Fair Labor Association protects workers by...

...Requiring internal monitoring. With Fair Labor Association oversight and review, member companies must establish internal systems for monitoring working conditions and maintaining Code standards.

...Conducting independent unannounced inspections. Fair Labor Association-accredited independent monitors have conducted more than 600 unannounced inspections in the last four years throughout the world, including 346 last year alone. All violations are publicly reported and flagged for immediate corrective action.

...Creating sustainable solutions. When monitors find labor violations, the Fair Labor Association works with each company and factory to develop long-term solutions that promote continued compliance with the Code.

HOW TO REPORT VIOLATIONS

Anyone—worker, advocate, company, or individual—can contact the FLA to confidentially report Code violations at a factory supplying products to a member company. All third party complaints are rigorously investigated. When violations are confirmed, the FLA publicly reports them and works with all stakeholders to correct the problem.

THE FLA’S LONG PARTNERSHIP WITH COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

The public discovery in 1996 of sweatshop labor violations by American manufacturers spurred President Bill Clinton to challenge a group of apparel industry companies and others to address the problem. This group formed the Apparel Industry Partnership (AIP) and set about to meet his challenge for improving working conditions around the world and providing the public with information to make better informed purchasing decisions. The AIP continued to grow with the addition of more socially responsible companies, human and labor rights groups, consumer advocates, and universities and colleges. The group subsequently became the Fair Labor Association (FLA).

Higher education institutions, because of their connection to the manufacturing process for products bearing their logos and their students’ concern for human rights, were active participants from the very beginning of the FLA. They play a central role in formulating policy and carrying out the mission of the FLA, requiring companies who manufacture goods bearing their names to participate in the FLA, and supporting the worldwide efforts of the FLA to improve working conditions and protect workers’ rights.