



# BRANDS AND LABOUR RIGHTS

How and when to engage with brands?

## ■ Municipal supplier

Some companies sell large amounts of clothing (primarily uniforms) to municipal or state governments (or provinces in Canada) for example to supply their firefighters, police, transit or hospital employees. Some of these governments have also instituted “ethical purchasing policies” which require their suppliers to meet minimum labour standards. Like the university licensees, the brands that supply these municipal or state governments may be forced to respond to complaints, or risk losing these large customers. A database of cities with these ethical purchasing policies, their suppliers, and the factories they use is available from the Sweatfree Purchasing Consortium:

[http://buysweatfree.org/linkup\\_search](http://buysweatfree.org/linkup_search)

## ■ Responded in past

Some companies have had more experience than others with labour rights organizations in dealing with specific cases of violations and, therefore, it is more likely that they will have developed a policy as to how to deal with these issues. These companies are more likely to respond when called to action. If you know of prior cases in which the company has taken positive steps to address violations, these can be mentioned and used as precedents and reference points in order to convince the company to do the right thing.

## ■ Member of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives (MSI)

The Fair Trade Association (FLA) and Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) are multi-stakeholder initiatives whose members include major brands and some manufacturers from the garment sector. These initiatives have mechanisms by which to receive and investigate third-party complaints, although their effectiveness is the subject of much debate. However, in some cases, they can be used as a potential tool to pressure companies to take action.

## ■ Global Framework Agreement

Global framework agreements are signed agreements between a Global Union and a multinational company. Such agreements commit the signatory company to ensure compliance with a set of labour standards in their own and/or their supplier factories. When the Global Union receives a report of worker rights violations from one of its affiliated unions, it can intervene with the company to pressure for the violations to be rectified. In the garment sector, the global union IndustriALL has signed two global framework agreements to date, the first with Inditex (Zara) and the second with H&M.

## ■ Discloses factories

A few brands disclose the names and addresses of the factories that make their goods. In those cases, it is much easier to link the brand to a particular factory. Links to the current lists of factories provided by these brands are included at the end of the chart, as well as links to other databases that link university licensees and municipal suppliers to factories.