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New Report Proposes Strategies for Reducing Child Labour in Agra, India

Fair Labor Association and Stop Child Labour Recommend Creation of 'Child Labour Free Zone' and More Responsible and Transparent Supply Chains in Leather and Footwear Production

WASHINGTON, D.C. /The Hague (18 December 2017)

A new research study from the [Fair Labor Association](#) (FLA), [iMentor](#) and the [Stop Child Labour Coalition \(SCL\)](#) confirms the substantial prevalence of child labour in footwear production in the city of Agra, one of India's primary centers of domestic and export production of leather footwear (around 25% of the Indian export of shoes is being produced in in Agra). The research report '*Children's Lives at Stake - Working Together to End Child Labour in Agra Footwear Production*' is being published today.

To reduce the incidence of child labour in Agra, the FLA and SCL propose collaboration in Agra between buyers, suppliers, government, civil society, and communities to establish a "Child Labour Free Zone." In creating a '*Child Labour Free Zone*', participants focus not on a specific industry sector, but on eliminating all forms of child labour from a specific geographic area, whether children are working to produce footwear, in the tourism industry, or in some other sector. To support this endeavor, the report also includes numerous recommendations for how buyers and suppliers operating in Agra can collaborate to build more responsible and transparent supply chains free from child labour.

"A community-based approach to get all children out of work and (back) into school, as well as proper risk assessment and concrete measures by footwear companies to solve issues of child labour and other labour right violations in their supply chain, are both absolutely necessary," said Sofie Ovaa, co-ordinator of the Stop Child Labour Coalition. "The combination of a community-based approach to stop child labour in the sourcing and production areas, and top down policies and their implementation to improve labour conditions in the full supply chain, including paying fair wages, will lead to lasting results."

Researchers found that in the area of Agra they surveyed, only 55 percent of children were enrolled in school. Of the working children in the surveyed communities, half had never attended school at all, with many working at home, or in informal, small production units making shoes. Interviews with workers and other community stakeholders revealed that the root cause of child



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labour in the footwear industry can often be traced to low earnings from footwear production and a lack of educational infrastructure.

Because of very low wages that sometimes fall below the legal minimum, researchers found that parents alone are not able to earn enough from working in the footwear industry to adequately provide for their families. Meanwhile government high schools (for children 12 and older) do not exist in the communities visited by the project, and for children younger than 12, local primary schools are too few and not adequately equipped to provide children with a robust education.

“Curbing child labour in Agra requires the involvement and collaboration of multiple stakeholders. There is no one level of the chain or participant in the industry who working alone can erase child labour,” said Sharon Waxman, president and CEO of FLA. “The industry is incredibly complex, and our research shows that buyers and suppliers must work together in concert with community-based efforts supported by local governments, civil society organisations, and communities to be successful in reducing and preventing child labour.”

Although the research team documented no child labour in any export facility they visited, they found examples of subcontracting to informal workplaces, increasing the risks for international buyers seeking to source leather and footwear parts from this region. Companies are under increasing pressure – from governments, civil society, consumers, investors, and others -- to examine whether child labour occurs anywhere in their supply chains and develop a plan of action to address any risks they uncover.

The FLA and SCL outline a series of recommendations for companies to help mitigate child labour and contribute to responsible supply chains in Agra, including direct and regular collaboration with suppliers to build trust and obtain accurate information about subcontracting. Researchers advise buyers to conduct regular visits, focusing on indicators of unauthorized subcontracting, and to avoid purchasing practices that exert economic pressure leading to child labour. These efforts should be supported by a parallel community-based effort to work towards a child labour free zone – including actions to improve educational opportunities for younger children and vocational training for older students eager to enter the workforce.

With an [estimated 152 million children](#) currently engaged in child labour globally, multinational corporations will be challenged to confront this issue across many sectors and supply chains. The Fair Labor Association and the Stop Child Labour Coalition will continue to work to help companies identify these risks and build models to effectively mitigate them.



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Resources:

The full report is available online at the Fair Labor Association and Stop Child Labour websites.

To speak with a representative of the Stop Child Labour Coalition involved in the project, contact: Gerard Oonk at 00-31-30-2321340 or via email at: g.oonk@indianet.nl

To speak with researchers from the Fair Labor Association, please contact Andrew Korfhage at +1 202-386-7185 or via email at akorfhage@fairlabor.org or Jill Cashen at +1 202-776-7700 or via email at jcashen@westendstrategy.com

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Stop Child Labour Coalition

The Stop Child Labour Coalition is an alliance of six Dutch NGOs and trade unions working closely together with local organisations in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Stop Child Labour partners work with an area based approach that has proven to be an effective method to get all children in a certain area out of work and (back) into school. This enables the creation of ‘child labour free zones’: a specific area (village, neighbourhood etc.) where all stakeholders – community-based organisations, teachers, parents, children, local authorities and companies – work together around the norm that ‘no child should work – every child must be in school’.

<http://www.stopchildlabour.eu/>

Fair Labor Association

The Fair Labor Association promotes and protects workers’ rights and improves workplace conditions through collaboration between business, civil society, and colleges and universities. The FLA conducts transparent and independent monitoring to ensure that rigorous labour standards are upheld wherever FLA affiliates source their products, identifies root causes of non-compliances, and proposes solutions to workplace problems. The FLA is headquartered in Washington, D.C., and maintains offices in Geneva and Shanghai. <http://www.fairlabor.org/>