



PROJECT ON FOOTWEAR SUPPLY CHAIN AND CHILD LABOUR RISK MITIGATION:

Action Planning in the Agra Leather & Footwear Cluster

January 2016 - December 2016

Towards a Cluster-wide Action Plan Built Through Consultation, Dialogue, and Consensus Building

BACKGROUND

Agra is one of the largest footwear manufacturing clusters in India, important for both domestic and export market (producing almost 25 percent of leather footwear exports from India). Footwear production is the second highest contributor to the city's economy after tourism. The cluster however is not free from social issues, such as presence of child labor; lack of educational infrastructure; and a high dropout rate from school amongst children who engage in home-based production units, particularly manufacturing for domestic market.

To understand the underlying causes and devise remediation strategies, Stop Child Labour (SCL) commissioned the Fair Labor Association (FLA) to conduct an independent assessment in the Agra cluster in association with its local implementing partner iMentor, based in New Delhi. The initial assessment, undertaken in 2015 in five communities in Agra, confirmed the presence of child labor, high dropout rate, and lack of educational infrastructure. Stakeholders' interviews highlighted that these issues can be effectively addressed with the shared involvement of government, suppliers, buyers, and civil society organizations.

Therefore, this project aims to complete a supply chain linkages assessment and child labour survey with root cause analysis, and then to convene relevant stakeholders to devise an industry-wide action plan to revitalize the Agra leather and footwear cluster.

ENGAGEMENT WITH COMPANIES

SCL and FLA reached out to a number of companies to assess their willingness to engage in this project, and discussed the potential for the FLA/iMentor team to access their supplier facilities to understand production patterns. Most companies who were contacted support the project and four companies have conducted preliminary consultations with their suppliers and are fully committed to this project.

FLA and SCL acknowledge the commitment of these companies towards this important endeavor and highlight that this commitment needs to be made by more companies sourcing from Agra to work on collective solutions. Attempts to involve more companies and suppliers will be made during the preparations of a broad stakeholder meeting being planned for 2017, at which the outcomes of the assessment and recommendations will be discussed.

OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this project is to work collaboratively with a select group of international and national companies and their Agra-based suppliers to increase awareness about child labour risks, with the goal of mitigating the underlying causes. The collaborative activities include;

1) Supply Chain Mapping: Engage with retailers to map their leather shoes supply chain in Agra;

Project Partners:



2) Supplier Engagement: Collaborate with suppliers based in Agra to chart their production practices and upstream supply chain (if any);

3) Stakeholder Mapping: Identify local organizations and stakeholders who could play an active and effective role in the research and implementation of the action plan.

4) Community Profiling: Understand underlying causes of child labour and conduct task and risk mapping of production processes in home-based units.

5) Child Labour Survey and Feasibility Study of Child Labour Free Zone: Test establishment of a follow-up project to eradicate child labour using the CLFZ approach.

6) Action Planning: Share research outcomes with stakeholders in a convening in Agra in 2016 and work with the companies, exporters association, and local government to design child labour risk mitigation strategies for the Agra leather and footwear cluster.

INTENDED OUTCOMES

The project will build a systematic approach to supply chain mapping that will support companies and suppliers in achieving greater insight into the challenges, possibilities, roles, and responsibilities of footwear production in Agra. This will help all stakeholders to understand the risks to children's rights and how to address and remediate those risks.

The draft report at the conclusion of the project will include the outcomes of the research, and recommendations will be discussed at a stakeholder meeting with the intention to develop follow-up plans. An action plan will be jointly developed with various (local) stakeholders who all can have a role in addressing the risks and issues related to children's rights in Agra. The joint action plan will prioritize remedial action for child labour and identify synergies between the different actors involved, including civil society, government, and international and Indian companies.

The project report will be published in combination with the action plan, highlighting both the issues and risks and also the agreed-upon steps to be taken by the sector and other relevant actors for a more sustainable, responsible, and child-labour-free footwear sector in Agra.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Fair Labor Association,
www.fairlabor.org

RICHA MITTAL, rmittal@fairlabor.org

iMentor,
www.imentor.in

AZIR UR REHMAN, aziz@imentor.in
SYED MOHAMMAD YUNUS, yunus@imentor.in

Photos: *The project aims to understand and to remediate the risks of child labour.*

