



**FAIR LABOR**  
ASSOCIATION

December 13, 2011

**Update Regarding the Style Avenue Factory in El Salvador**

On October 18, 2011, the Fair Labor Association (FLA) issued a statement regarding allegations of workers' rights violations at the Style Avenue factory in El Salvador.<sup>1</sup> The allegations were contained in a report issued earlier that month by the Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights and a Salvadoran trade union, Federación de Asociaciones y Sindicatos Independientes de El Salvador (FEASIES).<sup>2</sup> The report alleged a range of issues in the factory, including harassment or abuse, forced overtime, long working hours, violations of freedom of association, contaminated drinking water, and very low wages.

Two licensees registered with the FLA – Outerstuff and College Kids – commissioned FLA-accredited monitoring organization, Grupo de Monitoreo Independiente de El Salvador (GMIES), to conduct an independent investigation of the allegations at Style Avenue. The companies agreed to develop a remediation plan to address all noncompliances and publicly release the GMIES report and corrective action plan through the FLA.

GMIES started its investigation on October 19 and completed it on November 17. In its investigation, GMIES identified noncompliances and additional risks of noncompliance, including:

- violations of the exercise of workers' freedom of association;
- harassment of workers;
- hours of work that exceeded the local norm;
- high temperatures in the workplace;
- water that did not meet the Salvadoran potability standard and was not apt for human consumption;
- delays in payment of contributions to the Social Security and Pension Funds Carriers system; and
- failure to grant paid vacations.

The full GMIES report is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.fairlabor.org/fla/Public/pub/Images\\_XFile/R495/StyleAvenue10.18.11.pdf](http://www.fairlabor.org/fla/Public/pub/Images_XFile/R495/StyleAvenue10.18.11.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The report is available at <http://www.globallabourrights.org/reports?id=0639>

Section V of the GMIES report contains the factory's corrective action plan to address the noncompliances identified in the report. Initially created by GMIES, the corrective action plan was expanded by Outerstuff, College Kids, and the FLA, with input from the factory owners. Style Avenue management agreed to implement at once the remediation plan aimed at creating sustainable improvement at the factory. So far, the factory has already:

- imposed disciplinary actions on some supervisors found to be verbally harassing workers;
- communicated – verbally and in writing – its non-harassment/abuse policy to all supervisors;
- provided formal notification to workers about when they will start taking their paid vacations;
- determined that henceforth all worker dismissals will go thru the Human Resources department; and
- deactivated a worker committee known as COMTRASA as an immediate step to address freedom of association concerns.

On December 6, Outerstuff, College Kids, Starland (a local company that acts as an agent for Style Avenue), GMIES, FLA and Style Avenue management (including its owners), met with representatives of the Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights, the Sindicato de Trabajadoras de la Industria del Vestir (STIVES) and FEASIES in San Salvador to discuss the investigation's findings and specific remediation actions. Emerging from this discussion was an agreement to establish a permanent monthly "dialogue table" between Style Avenue management and the STIVES/FEASIES unions to address workers' concerns. The factory has ratified this commitment and the initial dialogue meeting has been scheduled for December 14, 2011.

Going forward, the FLA will stay abreast of implementation of the remediation plan at Style Avenue. In approximately 6 months, the FLA intends to conduct an independent verification of the implementation of the remediation plan and will publish a report.