



WORKER SURVEY

RESULTS FROM A MULTI-ORGANIZATIONAL EFFORT TO IDENTIFY COMMON ISSUES IN WORKING CONDITIONS ACROSS GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS

Description

This paper shares the findings of a joint worker survey conducted from October 2021 – March 2023 in labor-intensive manufacturing facilities in exporting countries. The project was a collaboration of six nonprofit social compliance organizations. Workers surveyed worked primarily in Bangladesh, Vietnam, India, Italy, and Turkey. The industries represented include electronics, apparel, toys, textiles, and food & beverages.

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Summary

In 2020, amid the pandemic when worker safety and healthy working conditions were top of mind, a group of leaders from organizations addressing social compliance in multiple industries came together with a common goal: to speak to the workers responsible for making the products in the facilities participating in their programs.

With limitations to on-site visits, travel, and human interaction, a technology solution was the most effective way to communicate with workers around the world; to wit, a worker survey.

Together the group covered half a dozen industries, including electronics, apparel, toys, textiles, and food & beverages. The initial assumption, which would be tested, was that all industries that manufactured in the same region faced the same social challenges.

If this assumption were true, all of the participating organizations could be more effective at addressing the problem together than any one organization could be alone. With this simple principle in mind, the leadership of these organizations came together to offer resources, expertise, and technology to create a global, multi-industry, worker survey.

Over the period of 18 months, the organizations collected data from workers in 10 countries with 14,739 workers participating. Questions focused on worker health and wellbeing, worker satisfaction and engagement. The survey was voluntary, and each question was optional. At the end of one year, a comparison was made of the responses by country and by industry. As expected, the hypothesis proved to be true. Common areas of opportunity were voiced by workers in the same region, regardless of industry. The top two issues were excessive working hours and insufficient wages. Among the countries examined in detail in this report, the results attain a 95% confidence level, +/- 2.5%. With the results being representative of the manufacturing sector in the regions surveyed, a conclusion could be reached that there is a significant benefit for the participating organizations to work together on projects to improve conditions in the regions we share.

This report presents the results of this survey and discusses the future possibilities that exist when organizations come together to address common issues.

Introduction

Working conditions are top of mind for most global brands, regardless of industry or country. Improving conditions for the people who make their products is a socially responsible action that buyers take seriously, and is often also a legal obligation. Social compliance verification organizations collaborate with buyers and suppliers to improve and verify worker conditions in global supply chains. As the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted workplaces in early 2020, there was a recognition that new ways of working had to be developed.

Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production (WRAP) – whose mission as a nonprofit is to promote safe, lawful, and humane workplace conditions in sewn products and related industries – was already a proponent of collaboration with likeminded organizations to enhance outcomes. WRAP called this approach “[Symphonization](#).” The pandemic presented an opportunity to evaluate the model.

In August 2020, WRAP reached out to various leading social compliance organizations to discuss ways they could work together to advance the interests of global workers under the unique challenges of COVID-19. Six organizations came together around a shared common view that environmental, social and governance issues (ESG) cut across all industries and that pandemic conditions were putting a unique strain on global supply chains and working conditions. The group began meeting to identify projects that could leverage their collective resources in support of their shared organization goals of improving working conditions in global supply chains.¹

The organizations were [WRAP](#), the [Responsible Business Alliance \(RBA\)](#), [Social Accountability International \(SAI\)](#), the [ICTI Ethical Toy Program \(IETP\)](#), [amfori](#), and the [Global Seafood Alliance \(GSA\)](#). The group serves industries including electronics, toys, sewn products, textiles, and food & beverages. The principals of these six organizations assigned high-ranking representatives from each organization and challenged this cross-sectoral task group (Team) to identify a project that would advance their individual missions, collectively.²

After several months of discussion, the Team recommended the development and deployment of an anonymous and voluntary worker survey to assess from the worker’s perspective working conditions in factories. One of the organizations, the RBA, had previously invested in a mobile platform tool for use by its members with their suppliers. The RBA was capable of comparing data from workers in other industries to the electronics industry and offered to use its tool for the collaborative project.

¹ The principals included: Carmel Giblin, CEO and President, Ethical Toy Program; Wally Stevens, interim CEO, Global Seafood Alliance (GSA); George Chamberlain, President (retired from GSA in 2022), GSA; Christian Ewert, President, amfori (Linda Kromjong took over as President of amfori in January 2022); Richard Teply, Vice President Services, amfori; Jane Hwang, President & CEO, Social Accountability International (SAI); Rob Lederer, CEO, Responsible Business Alliance (RBA); and Avedis Seferian, President & CEO, Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production (WRAP).

² The task group members included: Anita Lo, ICTI Ethical Toy Program; Erika Sok, Service and Programmes Expert, amfori; Rochelle Zaid, Senior Director, Social Accountability International (SAI); John Brookes, Executive Director, Social Accountability Accreditation Services (SAAS); Avery Siciliano, GSA, (departed GSA in 2022); Deborah Albers, Chief Operations Officer, Responsible Business Alliance (RBA); Mark Jaeger, Vice President Stakeholder Engagement, WRAP; and Aimee Dobrzeniecki, Vice President Administration, WRAP.

Drawing on work by the RBA, the Team developed a 20-question survey³ designed to assess issues that have previously been identified in audits as critical areas of interest to gauge whether workers were being treated in accordance with local laws and international norms. The questions were designed to prevent personal data from being collected. Responses were classified using the Likert Scale⁴, which would allow analysis of the aggregate data (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree). The questions focused on worker health, job satisfaction, hours worked, worker engagement, and workplace safety.

Workers were directed to scan a QR code with a suitable electronic device either in their workplace or off premises. The QR code would take the worker to the 20-question survey, and it could be completed in 5-10 minutes. The technology was designed to use the language already being used on the electronic device, so the Team also translated the survey into five languages based on where the participating organizations planned to deploy the survey. The QR codes were provided along with posters and other communication materials that explained the purpose of the survey in local languages. The individual organizations approached facilities in different ways to request their cooperation in allowing workers to take the survey.

By design, worker names and any personally identifiable information regarding a worker or factory (other than country) were not captured. This approach helped gain facility cooperation and encouraged workers to be candid when completing the survey. The Team was interested in identifying country and industry trend data. The worker survey was not connected with an audit and was not attempting to identify individual operator concerns or issues at a specific location.

The Team considered the worker survey to be a first phase, in a longer partnership between social audit schemes. Based on the results of the survey there could be additional projects that would be pursued.

Worker responses were received and aggregated by RBA's data analytics team. The Team received monthly reports showing aggregated results by country, industry, and organization. The first survey was conducted in October 2021. The Team worked through all technical and deployment challenges. By March 2023, the total number of workers who completed the survey was 14,739 from five main countries covering six languages.

Objectives

The principals' objective was to determine if there were worker-voice related initiatives that could be more efficiently completed by working together with other organizations. The principals recognized that in some cases, collecting data could be more effectively accomplished by working together.

The Team objective was to identify a specific joint project that would be supported by the principals, completed by the Team working together, and that advanced and aligned with their respective organization goals.

Each of the organizations already included worker onsite surveys as part of their social compliance verification process, usually in conjunction with onsite interviews during an audit. Onsite worker interviews have been a well-recognized tool to assess worker treatment at facilities undergoing a social compliance audit. There was also recognition that more could be done to listen to worker concerns and identify and inform areas of focus for audits.

³ The questions were originally developed by the RBA in partnership with internationally recognized third parties including [Ulula](#) and [Impactt](#).

⁴ [Likert](#) scaling is a bipolar scaling method, measuring either positive or negative response to a statement.

The Team was interested in enhancing worker voice and felt a survey of a larger number of workers under controlled circumstances could be informative. The Team recommended to the group a worker survey as the project. The Team realized it was important to manage the level of ambition but at the same time ensure there was sufficient data collected to meet the project objectives.

This took multiple meetings to plan and execute a survey leveraging each organization's different business models. For example, WRAP has an independent board and a network of accredited monitors that it could work through to roll out the survey. Amfori, as a membership organization, needed to work through individual members to gain permission to run surveys and then also work with auditors and facilities to gain approval to conduct the survey.

Different countries have different approaches to data collection. Even though personally identifiable information was not being collected from workers, the Team decided that it would not conduct surveys in China, as China's data privacy laws were new and evolving and there was some uncertainty over how the new laws would be enforced.

Based on the positive interaction between the organizations, the common issues identified across industries, and the functionality of the tool, the Team is considering future partnerships that would allow for worker surveys at the factory level to improve audit focus and promote worker engagement.

Survey Methodology

Technology

The RBA expanded its investment in worker survey and grievance technology in 2020. A mobile platform was developed to provide additional support to a robust due diligence program, which is required by some laws. The program was reviewed by an independent third-party and recommendations were made to bring it into alignment with OECD expectations.

The tool is an application that can be downloaded from any major app store or accessed via a QR code without having to download the app. The app offers the additional features of free on-demand training for workers (personal and professional), filing a grievance, and worker surveys. For the purposes of this multi-industry program, a QR code was issued. Each participating organization was given a custom QR code for use among their suppliers.

As the workers completed the anonymous survey, their responses were recorded and aggregated. On the first day of each month, the Team was provided with analytics, graphs, and the raw survey data.

The survey was deployed in 10 countries with five countries collecting enough data to be representative. The Survey was made available in multiple languages; thousands of workers (n=14,739) responded to questions regarding working conditions, wages, health and safety, and emergency preparedness – a total of over 280,000 data points. Among the countries examined in detail in this report, the reported results attain a 95 percent confidence level with a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percent.

Survey Questions

Based on their experiences interviewing workers, the Team shaped 20 questions that would provide trackable insights on key areas of interest. The questions were developed in English, translated into five languages, and tested by native speakers to ensure the meaning of the questions were maintained in the translation.

Select Country of Work _____

1. *I paid a fee to my employer or a recruitment agency in the process of getting my job. (FEES)*
2. *I can pay my bills with my current salary, without borrowing extra money. (LIVING WAGE)*
3. *I usually work 60 hours per week or less. (WORKING HOURS)*
4. *I usually get one day or more off per week. (CONSECUTIVE DAYS OF WORK)*
5. *I have a good working relationship with my supervisor. (WORKER SATISFACTION)*
6. *I can refuse to work overtime (any hours above the regular hours outlined in my contract or Collective Bargaining Agreement) (OVERTIME)*
7. *I can raise concerns at work without fear of retaliation. (RETALIATION)*
8. *I am trained on health and safety in a language I understand. (HEALTH AND SAFETY)*
9. *In the past 30 days, my maximum weekly working hours was __. (WORKING HOURS, LAST THIRTY DAYS)*
10. *I am paid at least the legal minimum wage for regular hours worked. (MINIMUM WAGE)*
11. *I am paid a premium for overtime. (PREMIUMFOR OVERTIME)*
12. *My workplace treats people from different backgrounds equally (Examples: race, age, gender, nationality, religion, disability, etc.) (NON-DISCRIMINATION)*
13. *I am able to join a trade union (or alternative formal group representing workers) if I choose. (TRADE UNIONS)*
14. *I have seen children working at the factory. (CHILD LABOR)*
15. *The employer or the recruitment agent withholds my ID card, passport, or bank card. (FORCED LABOR)*
16. *I know who my worker representative is. (COLLECTIVE BARGAINING)*
17. *I know how to voice my concern or ideas in my workplace. (WORKER VOICES)*
18. *I know what to do in an emergency. (EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS)*
19. *I wear the protective equipment necessary to do my job safely. (PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT)*
20. *I have a work contract in a language I understand. (EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT)*

Results

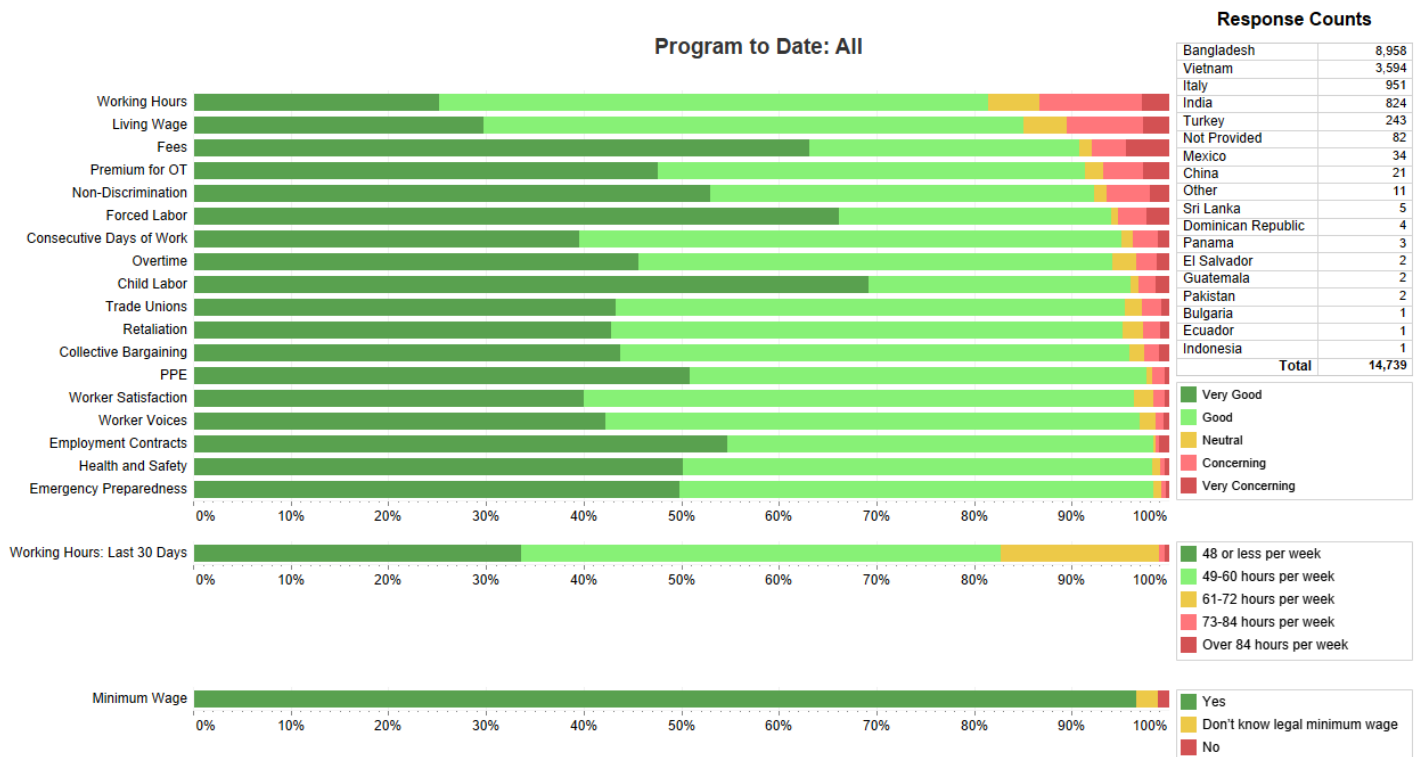
Aggregated results on specific topics are reported and summarized below. Each response was converted to a 0-100 percent scale and then color-coded dark green to bright red to show the extent to which workers responded positively or negatively to the question.

For example, the second question in the survey asks workers to agree or disagree with the statement, “I can pay my bills with my current salary, without borrowing extra money.” The question was designed to probe whether workers are receiving a living wage.

The percentage of workers who strongly disagreed, (dark red), and disagreed, (red), were graphed. The dark red percentage was coded as “very concerning” and the red percentage was coded as “concerning.” The responses were sorted most negative to the most positive.

The data is presented below, beginning with the “All-Countries” chart, and then showing individual charts for each country.⁵

All-Countries Data

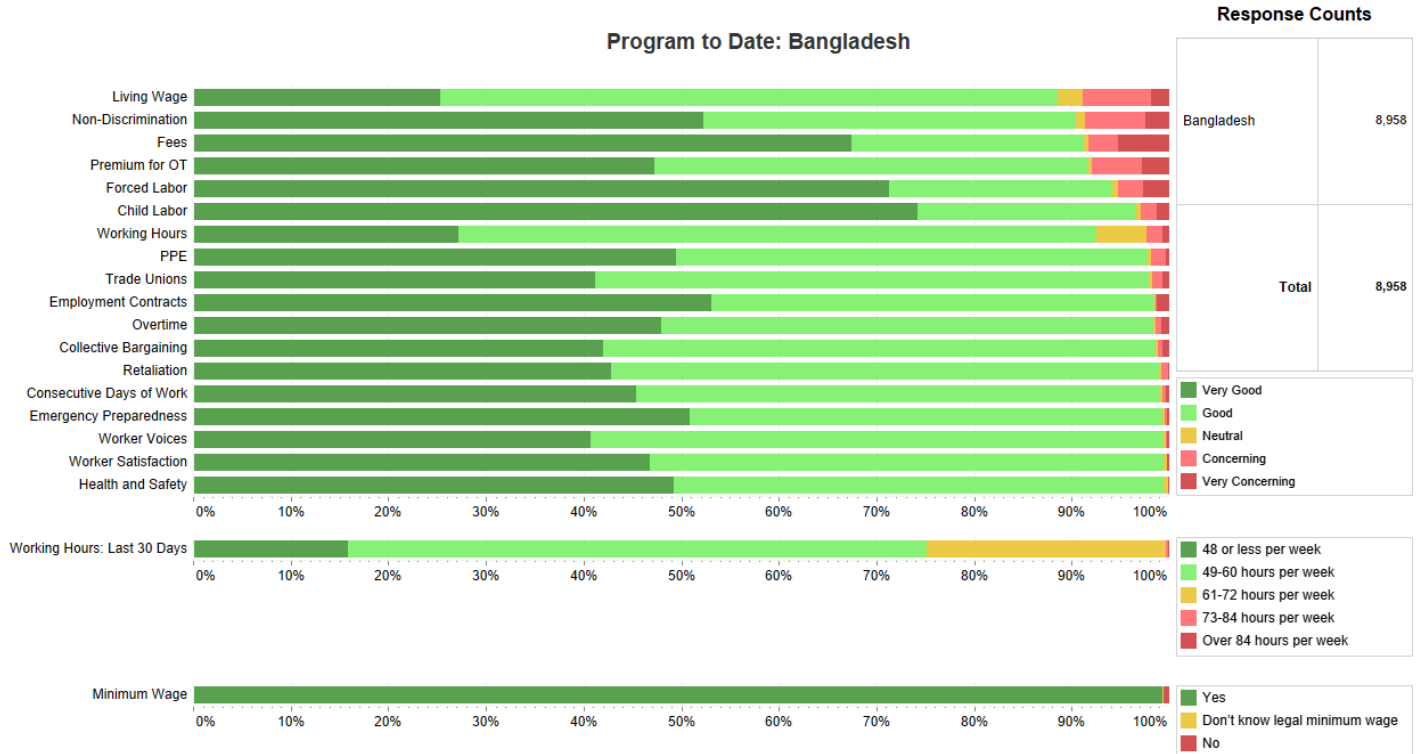


Looking at the data for the All-Countries chart, it shows the top four issues are:

1. Working Hours
2. Living Wage
3. Fees
4. Premium for Overtime

With working hours, there was also a question examining hours worked in the last 30 days; hours over 60 per week are denoted as yellow, over 73 as red and over 84 as dark red. For the All-Countries graph, 20 percent of workers surveyed reported concerns about the hours worked. Moreover, 16 percent of workers reported they worked over 60 hours per week, 1.5 percent reported working over 73 hours per week, and a 0.5 percent reported working over 84 hours per week.

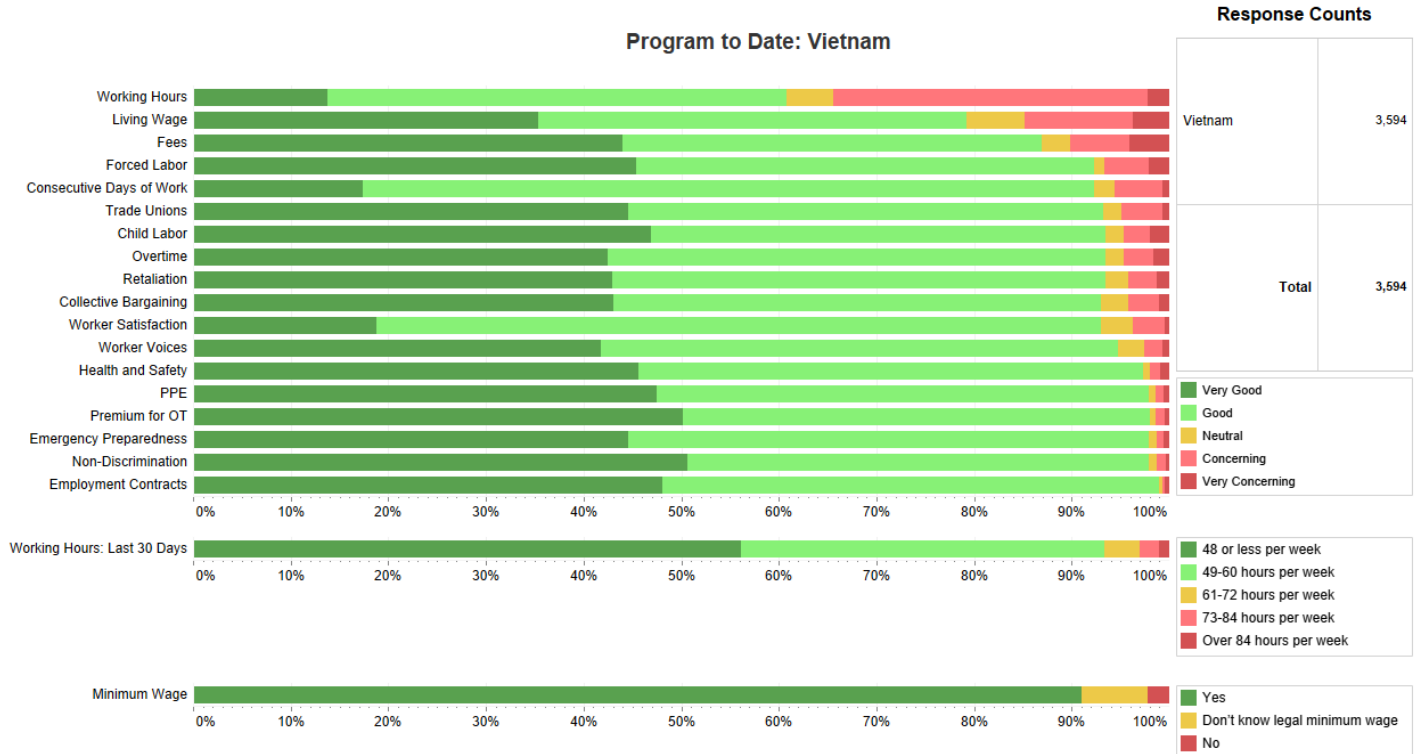
⁵ Note: the top five countries had the most worker survey responses and are the focus of this paper. The other countries were tests for the survey in the development stage.



Looking at the data for Bangladesh, it shows the top four issues are:

1. Living Wage
2. Fees
3. Premium for Overtime
4. Non-Discrimination

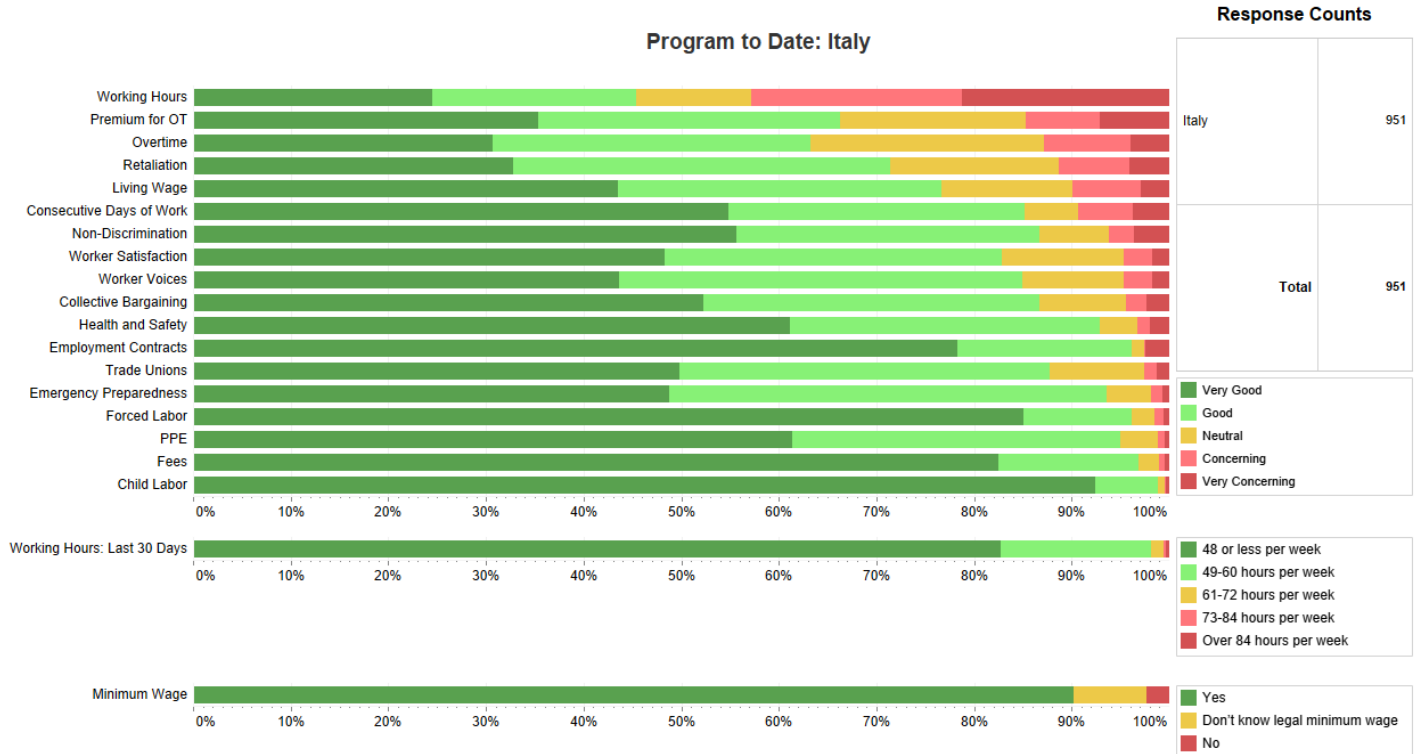
Working hours ranked 6th; 10 percent of workers raised concerns. Twenty-seven percent of workers reported working over 61 hours per week and less than one percent reported working over 73 hours per week.



Looking at the data for Vietnam, it shows the top four issues are:

1. Working Hours
2. Living Wage
3. Fees
4. Forced Labor (withholding worker identification documents)

With regard to working hours, 40 percent of respondents raised concerns about hours. Of these, four percent of workers reported working over 61 hours per week, two percent reported working over 73 hours per week, and one percent reported working over 84 hours per week.

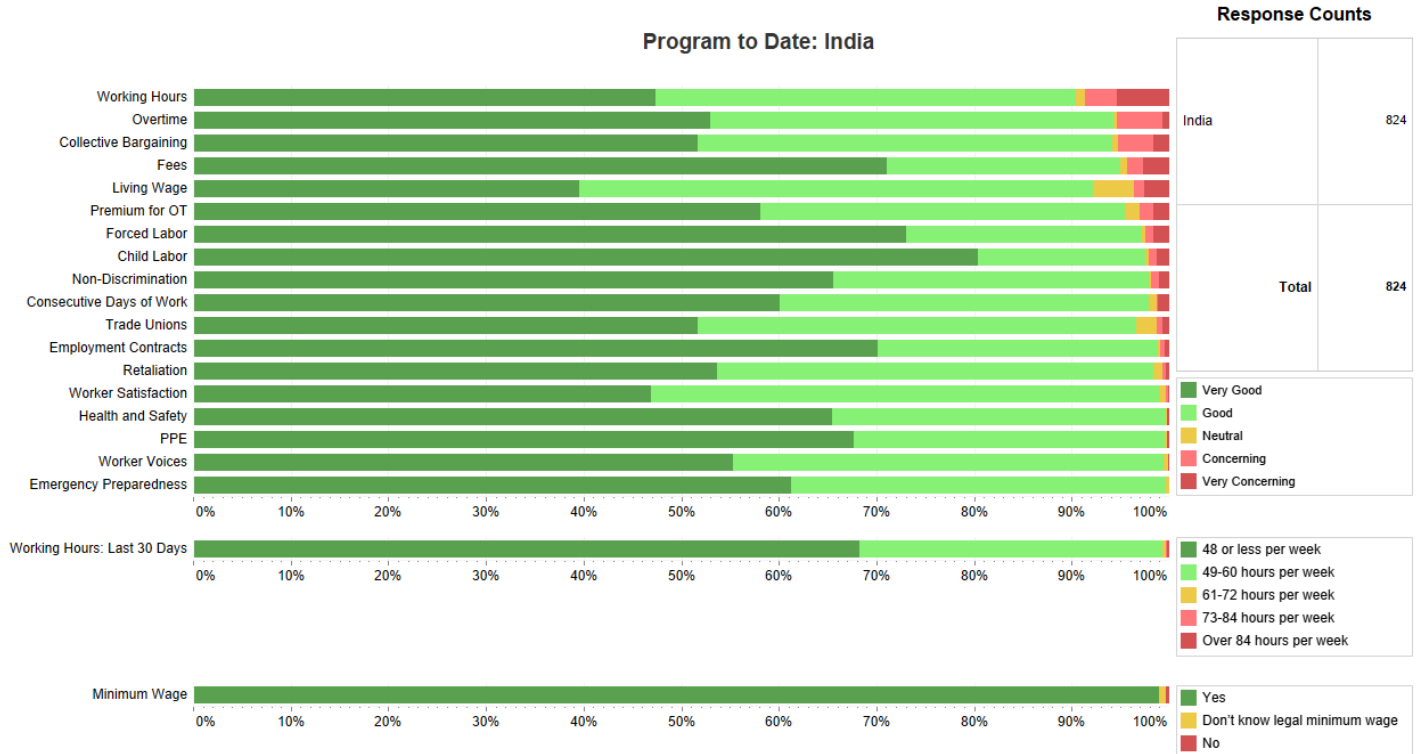


Looking at the data for Italy, it shows the top four issues are:

1. Working Hours
2. Premium for overtime
3. Overtime
4. Retaliation

Fifty-five percent of Italian workers surveyed identified working hours as the top concern. However, only 16 percent of Italian workers reported working over 49 hours per week, 1.5 percent of workers reported working 61 hours per week and 0.5 of workers reported working over 73 hours per week.

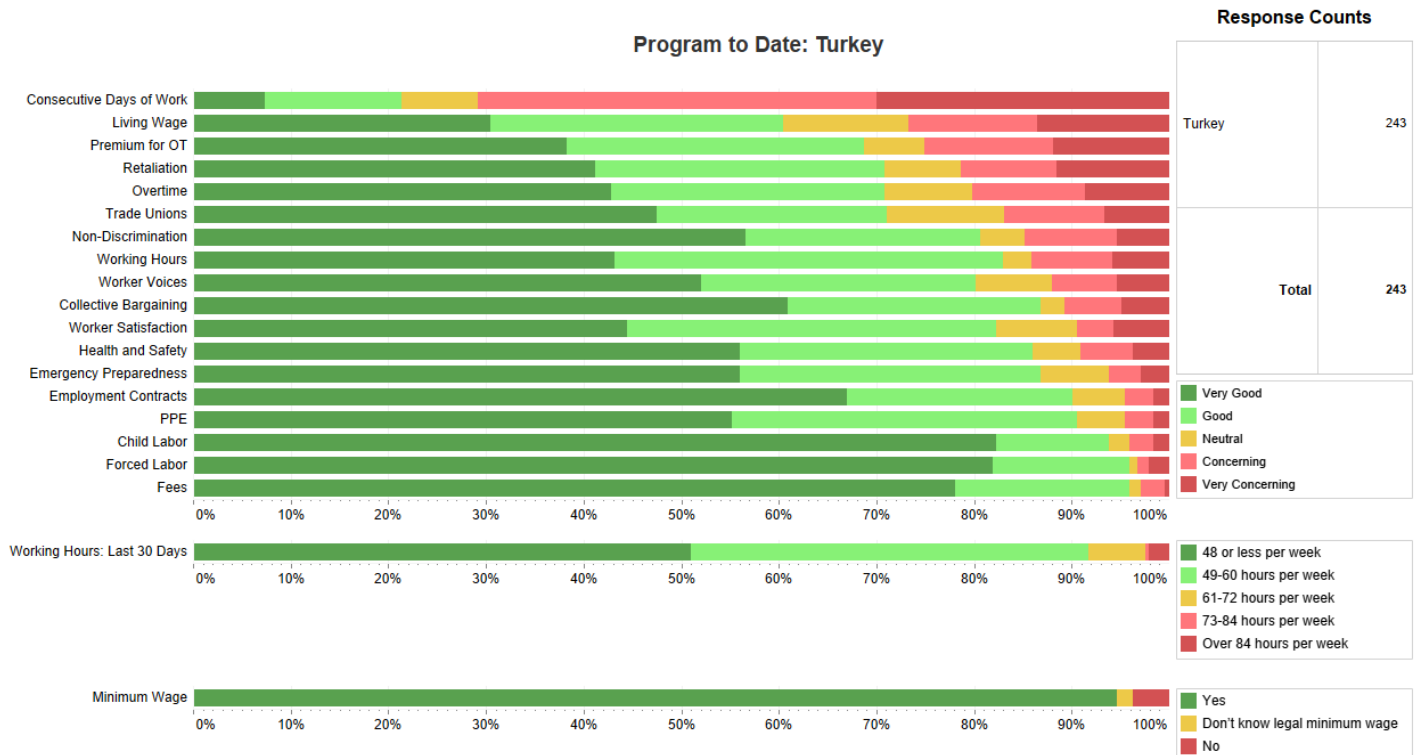
By comparison, in the All-Countries chart we see that 48 percent of workers reported working over 49 hours and 18 percent reported working over 61 hours.



Looking at the data for India, it shows the top four issues are:

1. Working Hours
2. Overtime
3. Collective Bargaining
4. Fees

Twelve percent of workers complained about the working hours. Thirty-one percent reported working over 49 hours per week and one percent reported working over 61 hours per week.



Looking at the data for Turkey, it shows the top four issues are:

1. Consecutive Workdays
2. Living Wage
3. Premium for Overtime
4. Retaliation

Eighty percent of workers surveyed noted a concern with consecutive working days; the lack of one day of rest in seven.

One issue with the Turkey data is the small sample size. Still, it is interesting to note that, at least in the locations surveyed, there was high concern over consecutive working days followed by living wage.

Observations

Working hours

Working hours are the overall first concern amongst surveyed workers and are also the first concern in four of five countries, as reported above. Interestingly, even though 27 percent of workers reported they worked 61-72 hours per week in Bangladesh, they did not identify working hours as a top concern.

Contrast this with Italy, where over 55 percent of workers complained about working hours, yet 82 percent of workers reported they worked less than 48 hours per week.

This shows a contrast between worker hours in developing countries versus developed countries, and in worker perceptions of what constitutes excessive hours. This likely also shows a difference in industries where the majority of workers surveyed in Bangladesh were garment workers, an industry with a long history of working long hours.

Wages

Living Wage was the second All-Countries concern, the top concern for workers in Bangladesh, and the no. 2 concern for workers in Vietnam. Of the countries surveyed, the [World Fact Book](#) in 2022 ranks them on GDP per capita in USD as follows:

<i>Country</i>	<i>Ranking</i>	<i>GDP per capita</i>
Italy	49	38,300 USD
Turkey	75	27,000 USD
India	152	7,200 USD
Vietnam	155	6,900 USD
Bangladesh	172	4,200 USD

With Bangladesh showing the lowest relative GDP per capita, it is not surprising that living wage is a major concern for its factory workers.

Fees

Fees are the no. 3 concern of workers overall, no. 2 concern for Bangladesh, and no. 3 concern for Vietnam. Fees are increasingly a concern for more vulnerable workers and are also one indicator of forced labor. In some cases, a high fee to an intermediary to obtain a job can put a worker into a situation where they cannot afford to quit work and, depending on the terms, it may take an extended period to repay the fee.

Premium for Overtime

This shows up as the no. 4 concern overall but is a higher concern for workers in Bangladesh and Italy and a lower concern for those in Vietnam and India. Wages and benefits are an important part of any social audit and this variation of concern around overtime premiums being paid is a helpful indicator to auditors to focus more closely on legal requirements and proof of payment of overtime premiums in Bangladesh, in particular, but also in Italy.

Current Program Approaches

The top worker concerns voiced in the survey were:

1. Working Hours and Premium for Overtime
2. Living Wage
3. Fees

Individual organizations have taken steps to address some of these concerns.

Working Hours and Premium for Overtime

Excessive working hours in global supply chains and in developing countries that export high volumes of manufactured goods are not surprising to the organizations that worked on the worker survey project. One challenge as supply chains were extended globally over the last 20+ years is the lack of infrastructure at the federal and regional governmental levels to adequately protect workers, enforce laws and regulations on the books, and to improve worker protections consistent with international norms and standards.

The global gap in worker protection is the main reason organizations like those involved in this project were started and why they continue to make valuable contributions to improving worker conditions. In fact, the organizations in some cases have established individually or with likeminded partners approaches and solutions to the worker concerns flagged in this survey.

For example, WRAP faced a challenge common to social compliance programs: that some factories were deliberately faking records to report worker hours in accordance with local laws. Recognizing that an accurate hour count is the first step towards ensuring workers are paid for the hours they work, including applicable premiums for overtime, WRAP developed and implemented a novel approach six years ago; the Working Hour Action Plan (WHAP).

WRAP determined it was better to get accurate hours reported on workers and instructed its network of monitoring firms to complete WHAPs with facilities that showed excessive hours. Facilities were advised that in return for accurately reporting all of the hours worked; paying wages, overtime, and benefits for those hours; and committing to reduce excessive hours under an agreed plan, WRAP would report the information in its audit finding, but would also permit facilities that otherwise met WRAP standards to become WRAP-certified. Buyers from those facilities would see in the audit report the hours worked. They would also see that workers were properly paid wages, overtime, and benefits, and that there was a plan in place to reduce hours below the legal limit. Buyers could then make their own informed decision on whether to place orders at the certified facilities.⁶

⁶ In 2022, Chinese facilities seeking WRAP certification submitted 832 Working Hours Action Plans (WHAP), Vietnam facilities submitted 233 WHAPs, Bangladesh manufacturers submitted 211 WHAPs, Cambodia facilities submitted 21 WHAPs, and Indonesia factories submitted 20 WHAPs. Obtaining actions plans that commit to making working hours reductions by 40% of the facilities that obtained WRAP certifications in 2022 demonstrates the success of this approach with facility managers who are focused on making real changes to increase their working hour social compliance.

Wages

Wages, fair wages and living wages are challenging topics. As shown in the survey results, insufficient wages were the number 2 concern. Unfortunately, the solution is not as simple as mandating a higher minimum wage at the country or city level as currencies can quickly devalue and lower the standard of living for workers, despite higher nominal wages. Also, employers must return a profit, and if wages are too high, they will not be competitive, and orders and jobs will go elsewhere. Much of the debate around living wage centers on what is a fair profit for employers and the discussion often turns into value judgments on equitable distribution of profits between, government, employers, workers, and buyers.

One organization, SAI, has done work in the area of living wage and includes a requirement for payment of a living wage in its SA8000 Standard. SAI has worked with the [Anker Research Institute](#) which has developed a methodology for calculating a living wage for a given location and publishes annual updates for a growing number of locations worldwide.

SAI utilizes a widely accepted definition of “living wage” provided by the [Global Living Wage Coalition](#) (GLWC):

The remuneration received for a standard workweek by a worker in a particular place sufficient to afford a decent standard of living for the worker and her or his family. Elements of a decent standard of living include food, water, housing, education, health care, transportation, clothing, and other essential needs including provision for unexpected events.

For the past decade SAI has worked with GLWC and Anker Research Institute to increase the global coverage of Anker living wage estimates and to advance due diligence and progressive improvement approaches, including worker-centric management systems, responsible production, sourcing and purchasing practices, and government policy. Further details may be found at SAI’s [Global Living Wage Coalition Benchmark Reports](#) page.

Fees

Some countries depend on migrant labor to meet production requirements. Third parties who help connect workers with available jobs for a fee can provide a valuable service, provided the fees are paid by the employer. Historically, however, most workers have been expected to bear fees and expenses associated with job placement. This burden can quickly become oppressive for workers if the fees are high or if the worker is charged interest until the fees are repaid. Excessive fees can rise to the level of “debt bondage,” which is one indicator of forced labor according to the ILO.⁷

Each of the organizations involved in the worker survey project have enhanced their audit protocols to help identify fees and to mandate the employer pays principle.

SAI has been working closely with the [International Organization for Migration](#) (IOM) since 2017 to develop the [International Recruitment Integrity System](#) (IRIS) to minimize forced labor and human trafficking risks by promoting ethical international labor recruitment, including the [Institute for Human Rights and Business](#) (IHRB) ‘Employer Pays’ recruitment fees principle.

⁷ “Debt bondage is another way many workers end up in a situation of forced labour. Debt bondage exists when labourers (sometimes with their families) are forced to work for an employer in order to pay off their own debts or those they have inherited. [International Labour Organization (ILO), Business on International Labour Standards, Business and Forced Labour - https://www.ilo.org/empent/areas/business-helpdesk/WCMS_DOC_ENT_HLP_FL_EN/lang--en/index.htm].

In December 2022, IRIS announced the first IRIS-certified labor recruiters and IRIS-accredited audit company. As scheme manager, Social Accountability Accreditation Services (SAAS), a division of SAI, has been appointed by IOM and tasked with the monitoring and approval of audit companies and auditors. The IRIS Certification Program will help protect vulnerable workers and provide brands, employers, and others with a tool to fulfill due diligence obligations related to outsourced labor risks in supply chains.

WRAP also has addressed fees. WRAP audit protocols help identify placement fees and ensure that such fees are paid by facilities, not workers. If fees are imposed by a third party, WRAP requires the employer to develop and implement a plan to reimburse the fees directly to the affected workers. The reimbursement schedule must be over a reasonable period of time, not to exceed three years from when the fees were imposed.

Challenges with unique production models

The GSA was an active supporter of the worker survey project. GSA's work, however, includes fishing vessels that are by their nature mobile and therefore not easily accessible for worker surveys. GSA is working on creative approaches to address this challenge in their verification program, the Responsible Fishing Vessel Standard, a global assurance of crew rights and welfare onboard certified fishing vessels.

GSA carried out a global research project in 2022 to understand expectations of best practice relating to worker voice for fishing crew. The final report will be made public in May 2023. Outcomes suggest that preparation of crew during the recruitment process, including by providing workers with information on how and who to contact if issues arise is important. Trade unions may not be legal or accessible to all (due to national regulations or cultural issues) so crew representatives on board the vessel and third-party organizations at ports can be important to help crew effectively address issues. Skippers may also need training and support to adopt appropriate procedures, given their skills are more related to fishing and vessel operations.

Due to the nature of fishing, where vessels may be at sea for weeks, months or even years, access to Wi-Fi on the vessel is important. Further, where foreign workers are a part of the vessel crew, access to worker voice should take into account cultural and linguistic differences. Recommendations include the development of a code of best practice model for worker voice on fishing vessels to be developed by global collective of stakeholders that could be implemented by vessel owners, fishing companies, standard holders, and regulators.

Worker surveys and grievance tools

The RBA worker survey tool was developed to also allow RBA members to work with individual locations and deploy location-specific surveys to gauge detailed information on a range of issues, including worker mental health, coping skills, and life skills. The RBA and other organizations have extended this technology to also provide worker-specific mobile training after recognizing that workers often lack basic life skills and are interested in affordable and accessible ways to develop those skills.

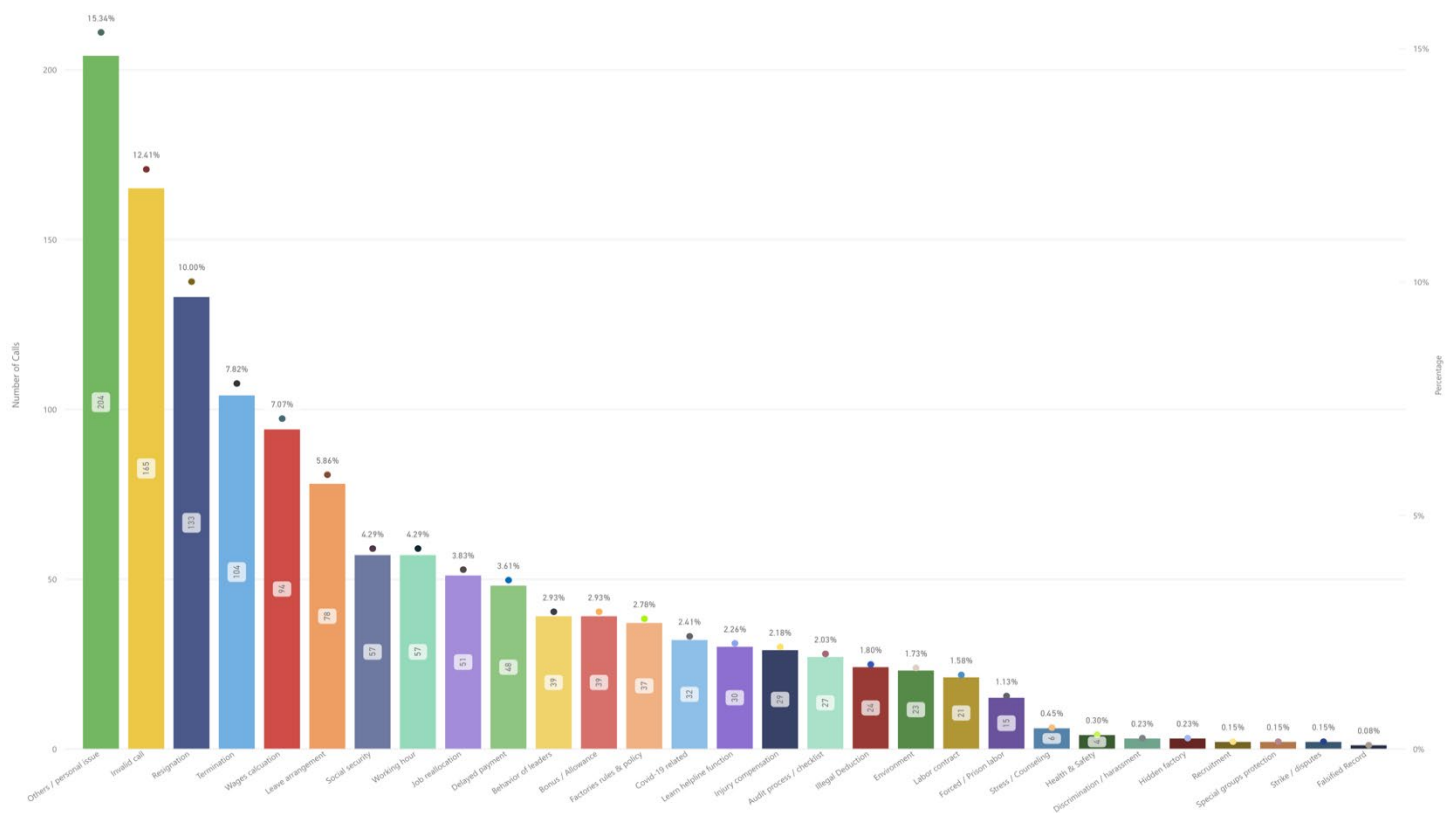
The organizations are also aware that the trend towards mandatory human rights due diligence (mHRDD) in Europe will likely result in supply chains establishing worker grievance mechanisms. These could be tools provided to facility managers to receive worker concerns and track and report to buyers their responsiveness to these concerns. These could also include tools whereby organizations work together to establish an external grievance monitoring and response program.

One organization, the ICTI Ethical Toy Program (IETP), put in place such a service for its members in 2010. IETP’s Worker Helpline is staffed by specially trained IETP staff operating the grievance support lines, recording individual grievances, and working with facilities to find a resolution.

IETP has operated the Worker Helpline service for over 13 years. The Helpline is a trusted and confidential grievance mechanism which has received over 19,000 cases since launching in 2010. The Helpline is staffed by IETP personnel specifically trained to provide support and detect when a caller is being evasive or untransparent. Every call made to the Helpline is fully investigated and closed. As well as proving to be an effective grievance mechanism tool, the Helpline has become a clear communication channel and emotional support outlet for workers.

In 2022, the most common reason for a worker calling the helpline was due to personal reasons or determined as an invalid call, the second most common reason for calling was resignation and third was to discuss a termination. IETP uses Helpline data to develop specific capability building training for factories when spikes in specific types of call inquiry occur- indicating a lack of understanding by workers and management. The Helpline is proven to stop issues developing into non-compliances.

Types of enquiries made to the IETP Helpline in 2022:



Another organization, amfori, has launched a supply chain grievance [mechanism](#) in Vietnam in 2020. Rollouts in Turkey, Bangladesh, and India are planned for later this year

Collaboration and Next Steps

The nearly three-year effort by the Team and the principals of the six participating social compliance organizations successfully demonstrated the potential for collaboration to advance individual organization goals that led to a deeper understanding of global working conditions. This understanding has helped shape ongoing activities for each of the organizations involved in the worker survey project. WRAP and potentially other organizations plan to formally integrate a worker survey tool into their audit protocols. In addition, the RBA has opened the door to other organizations to participate in grievance mechanisms recognizing that collaborative solutions will be more efficient.

As noted, this survey exercise clearly demonstrated the benefits of working together to explore workers' concerns across several industries. One benefit realized by the participating organizations has been to bring greater awareness to worker issues in common, as well as learn about initiatives – both those being developed and those already in place – among social compliance programs to address those worker concerns. Based upon this positive experience, the organizations involved remain open to exploring other avenues of collaboration in non-competitive areas that advance their common mission of promoting safe and ethical working conditions. The individual program approaches presented earlier in the report represent areas of mutual learning and potential future projects to consider.
