

**Until Apparel Brands Reform their Sourcing Practices, Industry Labor Codes Will  
Be of Little Value to the World's Apparel Workers**

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**Abstract**

After a decade and a half of corporate codes of conduct, abusive working conditions remain the norm in global apparel supply chains. The basic problem is straightforward: the pricing and sourcing practices of brands and retailers ensure that their contract apparel factories operate in an environment of intense price pressure. This environment is anathema to efforts to achieve and maintain respect for worker rights. As a result, labor rights violations remain widespread, despite the proliferation of private codes of conduct and monitoring regimes. Unfortunately, while the problem is well understood by most labor rights advocates, it is often obscured in professional and academic discourse about corporate social responsibility. Reform of industry sourcing practices is essential to any meaningful effort to achieve respect for worker rights in global apparel supply chains and this issue should be at the heart of any discussion of corporate labor codes. Responsible supply chain practices are also a prerequisite for the success of any social labelling program.