

Retail & Labour: Regulatory Frameworks and Institutional Responses

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Fair Labour Association is a multi-stakeholder initiative (MSI) which works closely with clothing and footwear retailers within the apparel industry retail supply chains. It has an interest in unpacking the efficacy of voluntary forms of regulation vis-à-vis collective bargaining resolutions.

Even as FLA recognizes that unions have been unable to respond effectively to new and complex global supply chains in clothing and footwear, they also suspect that in the context of minimal and uneven state regulation, such chains have often been associated with low wages and poor working conditions. As such, outsourced chains make the implementation of labour codes and corporate responsibility challenging. The aim of this research is to understand the diverse outcomes of voluntary forms of regulation which has appeared in the sector, the conditions under which they are most effective and how/whether working together with collective worker associations enhances the potential for collective bargaining agreements and what alternative forms of wage bargaining emerge.



The research project will aim to address the following questions:

- Is the intervention by non-state actors undermining state regulation of labor markets?
- Are the involvement of NGOs and their allies and partners undermining the organization of workers by trade unions?
- Is the intervention by non-state actors, legitimate, far-reaching in scope and scale, accountable and sustainable?
- Of all the improvements brought about by non-state actors, wages has not been among them. Under what conditions are non-state actors able to impact upon wages?

This research, sponsored by Fair Labour Association, will further our understanding of conditions of work at the production end of the apparel retail sector.