



Committee: International Labor Organization

Topic: Regulating sweatshops to improve labor conditions

Chair: Viviana Del Bosque Lozano

Moderator: Gerardo Aguilar Dávila

Introduction

The International Labor Organization was founded in 1919 to enhance and create standards and regulations that are certain that human rights and principles are being respected at work. This organization was created as a component of the Treaty of Versailles after World War I, with the founding mission of “Labor Peace is essential to prosperity”. The organization was designated as a special agency of the UN in 1946 after World War 2. ILO is committed to improving social justice and labor and human rights worldwide. The International Labor Organization is establishing economic and working circumstances that provide employees and company owners a stake in long-term stability, success, and development. ILO’s founding members were Poland, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Japan, the United Kingdom, Italy, the United States, and Cuba.

The International Labor Organization has 187 country members out of 193 that are part of the UN. The ILO won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1969 and with more than 100 years of experience, this organization is known as “the world authority on the world of labor”. This committee has helped solve different issues and situations around the world. Delegates will let the committee know what your country suggests and what it can do to solve the following condition.

Sweatshops, also known as clandestine factories or workshops, are establishments where workers are subjected to penurious working conditions, low payments, and exceptionally lengthy workdays. People who work in these sweatshops are paid. Workers are forced between 70-100 labor hours per week, some receiving only 3 cents per hour and with delayed salaries. Enterprises make this just to take advantage of low-income people that do not have any option but to work in those kinds of factories and conditions. In this way, businesses spend less money on wages, equipment, and maintenance to end up making more money than regular factories. The money sweatshop workers make is barely enough for basic needs. In some of the most unfavorable cases employees are even imposed to labor for up to 72 hours with no breaks or a chance to rest. And there have also been cases of verbal and sexual abuse and physical harassment. One of the most worrying parts is that they have around 250

million children between 5 to 16 years old working without any break and being exploited in sweatshops all around the world according to the ILO.

Sweatshop criticism emerged in many forms throughout the nineteenth century. These factories were viewed by those reformers working to abolish them as foreign institutions with no place in the industry, which they believed should be based on massive factories. Sweatshops were also condemned for slowing down immigrants' integration into society. Due to the fact that they hired women who should have been caring for their homes and children, other critics considered sweatshops as threats to families. Plenty of other critics were concerned that the close quarters of the workers would develop diseases and that the clothing they created would spread those diseases, particularly tuberculosis, to middle-class people.

Body

This issue is not new at all, it has been a problem for years and needs to be solved as soon as possible. The first sweatshops were registered in 1850 in cities such as London, Paris, and New York after "The Industrial Revolution" when there were plenty of changes and innovations in manufacturing methods. The reason why these factories were initially created was to reduce the expenses of manufacturing and production. Also, because of the extreme need of people to work and earn a salary even if it was minimum.

150 out of 206 countries in the world have sweatshops. Asian countries like Vietnam, Cambodia, and China are the ones that have the most. China is the leader of the world when it comes to sweatshops, more than 480 million people, or 36% of the total population, live on less than \$2 per day. Some of the main countries that support sweatshops and benefit from them besides China are South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan. Current sweatshops operate outside the law, hiring both legal and unauthorized immigrants and disobeying workplace regulations. Sweatshops have been particularly prevalent in the clothing sector, much like in the century. They occasionally make news when federal immigration agents conduct raids on companies to apprehend unauthorized workers and find awful working conditions there.

"A 2015 survey of Los Angeles garment workers revealed violence, sexual harassment, lack of drinking water, poor ventilation, safety code violations, and wage theft in those workplaces, which were mostly staffed by undocumented workers." *Discovery.Ebsco*

It has also come to light that the government uses sweatshops in Bangladesh and Cambodia to dress a large portion of its workforce. These nations have underdeveloped governments that are unable to uphold their own labor rules.

There are two main perspectives on sweatshops: many companies think sweatshops are indispensable as they make money with cheap labor, and other people think that sweatshops are brutal since their conditions and wages are too poor.

This problem is bigger than it could be because of the lack of information about this topic, and they still buy brands that use sweatshops without even knowing. Some main goods produced at illegal factories are clothing, jewelry, shoes, and furniture, all of which are exported and sold in international markets, such as Asia, North America, and Europe. Most clothing produced worldwide, including many designer-brand lines, is created in secret workshops. Some of the most famous brands that use sweatshops in 2022 are Adidas, Nike, Victoria's Secret, Zara, Disney, Gap, H&M, Aeropostale, Asos, Forever 21, Primark, and more. Just to be clear, not all violate human rights.

There are some sweatshops in which people's rights are respected and kept in better conditions. But those are not the problem, if not the ones we previously mentioned.

People who normally work in sweatshops are immigrant women and children, being the most affected by these clandestine workplaces, since there are not many requisites to work in a sweatshop, it is easy to hire people with low resources as a way to earn money even if it is a small amount of money. The countries with the most sweatshops in their nation are located in Asia and Central and South America and are China, Bangladesh, and the Philippines.

Many sweatshops and factories were later unionized by the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, which also worked to improve the conditions of the workers. Sweatshops have persisted into the twenty-first century, despite union and legislative attempts to put an end to the working conditions.

These factories help tiny communities thrive economically by creating jobs that bring in money to the area's economy, while also boosting the GDP as a whole and the nation's general economic growth.

Conclusion

Most sweatshop conditions are considered inhuman and need to be regulated. It is crucial to address this issue as soon as possible, despite the different positions since everyone deserves to have basic human rights, which are being violated in different sweatshops worldwide. Employees' rights should be taken into consideration at every job and sweatshops can not be the exception. Some countries' economies rely on sweatshops so they can not be eliminated. As well as it would affect people who economically depend on sweatshops only. If these factories are completely abolished workers would be left without a job and without a salary which they rely on.

Delegates should find ways to control sweatshops so they respect the human rights workers have as people.

The objectives the committee has are:

- Reducing the time workers are forced to comply.
- Increasing wages in sweatshops.
- Improving conditions in sweatshops
- Not abolishing them completely

Before finding a solution, delegates should consider that all actions should be applied without affecting a country's economy and without eliminating sweatshops and that human rights are being violated.

Viable Solutions

- Demand shops and factories to comply with rules in order to be able to continue working: A legislation that demands that states and governments pay equitable wages, provide vacation time, and consider the health of their employees.
- Keep legalizing sweatshops with salaries with minimum wage: to not completely abolish sweatshops, but if they are still allowing them to continue working, they have to provide a minimum wage that is equitable and fair according to the hours of work people have.
- Provide a training program for employees: To advance within the organization and transition to better-paying employment, training helps employees gain new abilities. By doing this, workers wouldn't spend their entire careers in low-skilled positions.

We invite all delegates to get into the following links and investigate them since they will be helpful with your research.

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