

Report on Jo-In Training Seminar Held in Istanbul, Turkey ~ July 2006

Jo-In hosted two training seminars July 18-20, 2006, which sought to provide an introduction to the six organizations that founded Jo-In: their approach to Codes and implementation, with special emphasis on their complaint systems. The training also briefly reviewed the purpose and structure of the Jo-In project.¹

The training seminar was offered in two separate sessions in response to requests from stakeholders, particularly business participants, many of whom expressed interest in a consolidated one-day seminar. The seminar for business participants was held on July 18 and included representatives of factories, brands, and manufacturing/trade associations. A separate seminar was held on July 19 and 20 for trade unions, NGOs, and government labor authorities. While the subject matter of the two seminars was the same, the seminar for NGOs and trade unions allotted more time to practical discussions about the use of the six organizations' complaint mechanisms.

Participants:

- *July 18 seminar:* 23 people attended, including representatives of TCMA, ITKIB, adidas, Gap, Marks & Spencer, Nike (half-day), four factories participating in the project, and members of the Jo-In assessment team.
- *July 19 and 20 seminar:* 27 people attended, including representatives of the Turkish Labor Ministry, Teksif, Tekstil/DiSK, Ozipiklis, TUKODER, the Women's Rights at Work Association, the Homeworkers Working Group, and the Avcilar Homeworkers' Cooperative.

Benan Vey was the trainer for both seminars. Ayse Ozver (Jo-In Turkey Coordinator), Basak Tugsavul (Jo-In Assistant), Anne Lally (Consultant/Training Author), and Devrim Duman (Translator, July 19-20) attended the seminars.

Seminar structure:

The seminar covered the following topics:

- Introduction
 - The global context leading to Codes of Conduct
 - A terminology review
- The 6 organizations that founded Jo-In
 - Their membership, Approach, governance
 - Code contents
 - Auditing and remediation processes
 - Disclosure and public reporting
- Jo-In and its pilot project in Turkey
- Using complaints systems (including practicing use of complaints systems)
 - Local grievance systems (factory, trade union, labor authorities)
 - Brands' complaint processes
 - MSI complaints systems
 - Jo-In dispute resolution

¹ For more on the Jo-In project, participants are directed to the "Jo-In Pack" which gives in-depth information about various aspects of the project.

Key points raised by participants: (with some responses noted in *italics*)

Due to the interactive nature of the training, there were various opportunities for discussion among participants. This section of the report summarizes some of the key points raised by participants with regard to Jo-In. These are reported in the spirit of transparency and to help Jo-In respond more effectively to local stakeholder concerns.

July 18 seminar ~ business participants:

- Turkish stakeholder input in the project: Various participants reported that they would have liked to have been more involved in designing the project, particularly in drafting the Jo-In draft Code. They considered that it was not realistic to try to implement a Code that was the “highest standard” among the six. *It was explained that the Code was drafted at the international level for the purposes of experimentation during this project. If adopted at the end of this project, it would be applicable internationally. Turkish stakeholders will join international stakeholders in final discussions at the end of the project regarding the question of the adoption or revision of the draft Jo-In Code, based on project outcomes.*
- Living wage: Business representatives were especially concerned that Jo-In would try to apply a living wage in Turkey. They pointed toward the economic situation in Turkey and the challenges involved in competing with countries where wages are a fraction of what they are in Turkey. When defining the living wage, they advised that the project consider differences in cost of living in various regions within the same country (for example, the different regional costs of living in Turkey). *Representatives of Jo-In highlighted that this training was an introduction to the project, followed by many more forums on defined topics, such as living wages. At a meeting to be held later this autumn, stakeholders will begin very concrete discussions about wages, such as ‘What would a living wage in Turkey look like?’ or ‘What does a factory need to be able to pay a living wage?’ This includes discussions of issues such as productivity and pricing. The trials offer the opportunity to collect the data to begin answering these questions through multi-stakeholder dialogue.*
- Globalization, competition, and what Jo-In offers Turkish producers: In the context of globalization, participants called upon Jo-In to investigate the role that government can play to prevent a loss of business to global competitors. Others wondered whether Jo-In could serve to enhance the competitiveness of Turkish producers. One participant said she thought Jo-In served brand interests, rather than those of businesses in Turkey. *Jo-In does not claim to offer a simple solution to challenges posed to Turkey’s apparel industry by the global economy. Instead it can be seen by Turkish stakeholders as one tool of many in their effort to improve the Turkish apparel industry’s competitiveness based on Code compliance. Among other things, the project can serve the larger apparel industry in Turkey through increased multi-stakeholder collaboration and social dialogue around pressing Code issues in Turkey. The models of good practice that will hopefully emerge from these trials should also be of use to other factories in Turkey, further enhancing the potential to gain a competitive edge through compliance. Indeed, due to the involvement of six leading international Code organizations and various well-known brands, the Jo-In project in Turkey is likely to receive considerable attention globally.*
- Suppliers concerns about Jo-In project: Suppliers requested clarification about the commitment of the brands participating in the project to the participating factories. While the brands have committed to maintain a relationship with suppliers throughout the project, they did not commit to maintain the level of orders to the factories. This was troubling to participating suppliers, who observed that serious cuts in orders from participating brands could have implications for their ability to uphold Code standards or to stay in business.

The project has discussed this with brands, and was not able to secure commitments to guarantee future orders to participating factories. Nonetheless, most brands have orally communicated that it is not their expectation to cut orders to participating facilities in the near future.

- Suppliers and complaints mechanisms: Suppliers wondered whether they can use complaints mechanisms vis-à-vis brands or one another. They suggested another system by which they could issue complaints about those brands that move orders to lower-price, less compliant factories, or to complain about brands with prices that require lower working standards.

While some systems provide the means for management to complain about the quality of an audit, current complaints processes are generally focused ensuring a safety net for workers to access international mechanisms if they are not available in the factory or through the brand. As noted in the training, these systems most often require local groups to be knowledgeable about these six systems in order to be able to channel workers' complaints to the appropriate organization. This is one of the reasons for the training seminar and its focus on complaints systems. While the idea for a complaints mechanism for factories has not discussed to date, participants may want to consider the concept in future forums. The importance of effective local labor authorities and court systems is also important to remember in this discussion.

July 19 and 20 ~ Non-business participants:

- Unregistered work and home work in Turkey: These topics arose on several occasions during the training. Various participants highlighted the need for changed government policies relating to unregistered work. They called on the government to protect the rights of these workers and penalized those employers who fail to register their workers. Others focused on home work and their desire to make home-based work visible in Turkey. There were numerous calls for improved cooperation among trade unions and homemaker groups to address the homemaker issues in Turkey.
Jo-In will touch on these topics during its study on subcontracting and the informal sector. This research process will rely on leadership from stakeholder groups to improve the quality of information gathered.
- Trade unions vis-à-vis MSIs: One trade union participant highlighted the need to show care in dealing with MSIs. Even though they claim not to replace trade unions, it was still not entirely clear to him that this is the case. Others were interested in differences that may exist among the six Codes with regard to freedom of association.
The six are careful not to usurp the role of trade unions and commit to uphold workers' freedom of association. As reviewed during the training, differences do exist between the Codes. However, for freedom of association, the differences are only nominal.
- Labor situation in Turkey: Some participants discussed the government's approach to workers rights, citing a lack of labor law enforcement. Some called for fiscal incentives to encourage businesses to employ more registered workers. The legal barriers to trade union organizing were also described. The government representative responded to these points, highlighting the government's efforts to enhance Turkey's labor law.
Jo-In looks forward to contributing to social dialogue in Turkey to improve workplace conditions.
- Cooperation through Jo-In: Participants reported that they considered Jo-In to be taking a good step towards helping to improve cooperation between trade unions, NGOs (at the international and national levels), government, and business. They considered Jo-In to be making a contribution to social dialogue in Turkey.
Hopefully, dialogue through the project will only increase as the local working group develops and other forums for exchange are created through the project. Such dialogue will be molded according to local stakeholders' input.

Project learning from training:

- There were several lessons that emerged from this training seminar. In some cases, lessons related to the substance and style of the training. For example, the training for businesses will be reorganized in the future, so that it is shorter – with less time spent on complaints. For non-business participants, more time will be allotted to scenarios as requested by participants. Changes will also be made to clarify some of the terms used in the training. These changes will be integrated into the final training pack, which will be made available on the Jo-In website and circulated globally.
- Based on feedback from stakeholders and staff, it would have been even more helpful if the training seminar were offered last year. Still, gaining a fuller understanding of the six organizations in Jo-In helps to motivate various local stakeholders to become more engaged in the project.
- There are various points of agreement among many participants in the project, such as: 1) Collaboration and social dialogue is seen by many as the most valuable foreseen outcomes of the project. 2) Capacity-building is one of the most important (some say ‘*the* most important’) activity of the Jo-In organizations. There is a need for training for all stakeholders in order for workplace conditions to improve. 3) Academics and experts should be involved in Jo-In and other efforts to improve workplace conditions. Sociologists and other experts can offer valuable insights relating to the local and international context, as well as ways in which workplace issues can be addressed.
- There are also important differences among local stakeholders’ views of Jo-In. For instance, while business participants seemed to agree that a Code based on the “highest standards” was not practical, most of the non-business participants considered this the best approach to drafting a the Jo-In draft Code.
- This was the first Jo-In event conducted entirely in Turkish. It reinforced the importance of Turkish-language events and forums.

Next steps:

- The Jo-In Local Working Group will hold its first formal meetings in September (dates to be announced). As stressed during the training, participants in the Local Working Group are encouraged to work with other groups to develop a longer term strategy for compliance in Turkey, viewing the Jo-In project as one tool among many to implement that strategic vision.
- The Jo-In website is currently being drafted in Turkish. In the near future, all project documents will be available online in Turkish and English. See www.jo-in.org for more.
- Trials will be underway by the summer’s end. Research studies will start this autumn, when a meeting involving local and international stakeholders will take place in Turkey. Discussions about living wages will be held then. The project staff will be sending details in coming weeks.