



Ethical Trading Initiative

Statement re: allegations of environmental harm and worker abuse in Lesotho, 31/7/09

Abuse in the workplace in any form, whether verbal or physical, is completely unacceptable. By signing up to the ETI Base Code, our member companies have made a commitment to work toward the elimination of harsh treatment in their supply chains.

As a labour standards organisation we focus on improving the treatment and conditions of people at work. We do not ask our members to report to us on their suppliers' environmental practices or waste management systems, as this falls outside our funding remit and expertise.

However the impact of a company's supply chain operations on the living conditions, health and safety of local communities is clearly a core social responsibility, which we would expect our member companies to take seriously. Where these issues arise, we would expect a member company to engage with relevant stakeholders on the ground to put things right.

In our past experience of working with Gap on labour standards, it has been quick to respond and shown itself willing to deal with issues robustly and transparently. Gap has made a long-term commitment to Lesotho despite commercial pressures to source from cheaper countries.

It is vital that companies continue to source from this desperately poor country whose economy is dependent on its garment export industry. Where they find that their suppliers' operations are having a detrimental effect on local people, they must use their influence to resolve things.