

Border/Line Health & Safety

NEWSLETTER OF THE MAQUILADORA HEALTH & SAFETY SUPPORT NETWORK

Letter from the
Coordinator
page 2

Networking Notes
page 3

Acuña, Mexico: Fraud
and harassment taint
union representation
vote
page 5

New reports on work-
ing conditions in
global supply chains
page 5

Apple campaign
update
page 6

Samsung campaign
update
page 7

PTRC celebrates its
20th Anniversary
page 7

Quotes of the Month
from the Bangladesh
factory fire
page 8

Yet another garment factory fire in Bangladesh

Bangladesh may be the world's second-largest apparel exporter, but its track record for safeguarding the country's multitude of garment workers is among the worst. On November 24, a deadly fire spread through a garment factory outside Dhaka, Bangladesh, killing 112 workers and injuring another 150.

The Tazreen Fashions factory, which is known to produce garments for top brands such as C&A, Carrefour, KIK, Sears and Walmart, went up in flames while 1,150 workers were on site. According to investigators, the blaze started on the ground floor of the factory when stacks of yarn and fabric caught fire. A fire alarm rang, the power went out, and managers reportedly forced workers to continue working. A young female factory worker told the *New York Times* that workers were told by management



to ignore the fire alarm and were kept locked inside the building. But the fire spread quickly, traveling up the staircase and ultimately reaching the top floors of the building.

Preliminary reports show that clearly the deaths could have been prevented. But the safety measures at Tazreen Fashions factory were inadequate, at best, for the hundreds of

(See **Bangladesh fire**, page 4)

Award and electronics panels at APHA highlight Asian workplace health & safety activists

Worker health and safety activists from Asia made a big splash at the annual conference of the American Public Health Association (APHA) held in San Francisco, October 26th to November 1st.



Garrett Brown, Yuying Chen, and Sanjiv Pandita of AMRC

Chinese activist Yuying Chen received the International Award from the APHA's Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Section at an awards luncheon on October 30th. Chen's acceptance speech was translated by Sally Choi of the Asia Monitor Resource Centre (AMRC) in Hong Kong. Chen is the director of the "Self-Empowerment Service Center for Disabled Persons" in Chongqing City, China.

AMRC Executive Director Sanjiv Pandita joined a delegation of six activists from Korea led by Dr. Jeong-ok Kong of the SHARPS organization in a panel discussion also on October 30th on "Hazardous Chemicals in Electronics: Occupational health issues and policy recommendations to address design, production and

(See **APHA**, page 4)

Letter from the Coordinator

Words fail at times like this — another garment factory fire in Bangladesh; 112 dead and 150 injured; another round of despair and anguish for the workers and their families; another round of denials by international garment brands and retailers that they bear any responsibility; another round of promises by the brands and their contractors that they will “do better” while refusing to acknowledge that it is their “profits first and foremost” production system that has led to fire after fire after fire.

At least 600 garment workers have been killed — with hundreds more injured, some disabled for life — in factory fires in Bangladesh since 2006. In September 2012, 289 garment workers were killed in a garment factory fire in Pakistan, with scores more injured.

Yet everyone knows exactly the cause of these fires: large quantities of poorly-kept flammable materials; damaged or overloaded electrical systems; absent or completely inadequate fire suppression equipment; and non-existent or unimplemented emergency action and evacuation plans. But the people who control these supply chains — the brands — refuse to take any meaningful action to keep from regularly killing the people who make their products and their profits.

The root cause of these fires is a supply chain that places priority on the brands’ “iron triangle” of the lowest

price/the highest quality/the fastest delivery from contractors; at the same time that contractors are provided with ever-shrinking, razor-thin profit margins by the brands; while government regulation is made meaningless by corruption and lack of resources; and garment workers are so desperate for work that they cannot refuse any job, no matter how dangerous. Corporate greed and corruption literally kill.

The garment industry’s global supply chain of death-traps is a crisis for all involved — a crisis for workers, for contract manufacturers, for international brands, for the governments in the developing world, for the ever-expanding “corporate social responsibility” (CSR) industry, and for the occupational health and safety profession. See the extended “Quotes of the Month” for the perspective of each level of the supply chain.

It is a crisis for workers because they are forced by poverty and hunger to go to work every day knowing that they may be burned alive.

It is a crisis for the contractor manufacturers who are denied by their client brands the resources needed to upgrade their facilities, pay decent wages and still make an “acceptable” profit — so they take “unacceptable risks” with the lives and livelihoods of their work force.

It is a crisis for the brands because their reputations are, or should be, in tatters, and there will come a point when their customers will think twice about buying their products and any employees with a conscience will look for another employer.

It is a crisis for governments in the developing world where more and more of the world’s consumer products manufacturing is being done as they lack the resources (human, financial and technical) and the political will to protect their own citizens.

It is a crisis for CSR because the endless factory fires are proof positive that “corporate social responsibility” is a fake and fraud — all the codes of conduct,

all the “independent” monitors, all the “social audits,” and all the CSR consultants and conferences have failed completely in the global garment industry.

It is a crisis for the occupational health and safety profession because it is being drawn into “certifying” working conditions in global supply chains. The Pakistani garment factory that killed 289 workers had been “certified” as safe, including on OHS issues, by Social Accounting International-trained auditors. Apple supplier Foxconn, whose factories have had aluminum dust explosions immediately after inspections, boasted of “certification” under the OHSMS 18000 scheme.

As long as the OHS profession allows these charlatans to profit from meaningless certifications and the resulting worker deaths, the profession will bear an inescapable measure of responsibility. There is a growing recognition of this, such as the statement released by the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) after the Bangladesh fire.

“It’s not enough to condemn local factory owners for these conditions and to expect long term change,” declared Thomas Cecich, CSP, CIH, Vice President for Professional Affairs and chair of the Center for Safety and Health Sustainability. “The corporations that source supply chain products, as well as their stakeholders, have tremendous power to influence the conditions in which supply chain workers operate.”

As our Network has pointed out repeatedly for many years, the factory fires and unhealthy/unsafe conditions in global supply chains for garments, electronics, sports equipment and toys will continue unabated unless two things happen:

- (1) the near-universal “sweatshop business model” described above must change so that life safety issues and workers’ health and safety actually come first in deeds as well as in damage-control public relations statements; and

(See Letter, page 3)

Border/Line Health & Safety

is published by the:

Maquiladora Health and Safety Network,
P.O. Box 124, Berkeley CA 94701-0124
phone: 510-558-1014
e-mail: garrettdbrown@comcast.net

Editor: Garrett Brown

Design/layout: Heather Block

To subscribe to the Support Network’s electronic newsletter sent by email, please send a subscription request to Coordinator Garrett Brown at garrettdbrown@comcast.net

(Letter, from page 2)

- (2) workers must be incorporated into plant-level health and safety programs and be authorized, trained and empowered to play a meaningful role in identifying and correcting hazards — without reprisals and discrimination by their employers.

Perhaps the only ray of hope in this bleak panorama is the effort by a coalition of Bangladesh unions and international workers' rights organizations — outlined in our July 2012 newsletter [http://mhssn.igc.org/news_July2012.pdf] — to establish an independent, competent fire safety program that would be transparent, involve workers as key actors, and actually inspect and require hazard correction in garment factories.

Four brands are required to initiate the project in Bangladesh. Two have signed on — PVH (Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein and other brands) and the German brand Tchibo — but two more are needed. In September, after almost a year of negotiations, The Gap pulled out of talks and declared that it would set up its own program without several key elements of the program agreed to by PVH and Tchibo.

One way to remember the latest dead and injured in Bangladesh, and try to prevent more deaths, is to join with others around the world in demanding that the international brands step up to the plate with the proposed fire safety plan. Specifically you can add your voice in a campaign to convince The Gap to make good on its promises via the international letter campaign at <http://www.cleanclothes.org/urgent-actions/gap-appeal>.

For further information and background on the factory fires, please see:

- Clean Clothes Campaign: <http://www.cleanclothes.org/news/bangladesh-factory-fire-brands-accused-of-criminal-negligence>
- Workers Rights Consortium, “Background on Tazreen Fashions Fire and the Urgent Need for Safety Reform in Bangladesh,” <http://www.workersrights.org/press/Tazreen.asp>

- New York Times editorial, “Fire Safety in Garment Factories,” December 10, 2012: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/10/opinion/fire-safety-in-garment-factories.html?hp&_r=0
- Garrett Brown, Corporate Social Responsibility; What is it good for?: http://mhssn.igc.org/CSR_BangladeshFires_ISHN_May2011.pdf
- Garrett Brown, Fashion Kills: Industrial Manslaughter in the global supply chain: http://mhssn.igc.org/EHSToday_FashionKills_Sept2010.pdf

■ ■ ■

On the first of this month, Mexico inaugurated a new President for a six-year term in the midst of continuing “war on drugs” violence that has already killed 60,000 Mexican citizens in the last six years (the equivalent of 180,000 American dead). The new president is a member of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) that ruled the

country with a cruel and corrupt hand for 70 years in the 20th century. One of the last acts of the outgoing president was to sign a new labor law in Mexico that weakens wage protections for workers while leaving in place the system of corrupt and undemocratic unions.

Trying to protect the health and safety of Mexican workers — including the million-plus workers in maquiladora plants — in this context remains a huge challenge (see story in this newsletter). An excellent way to keep track of developments in Mexico and for Mexican workers is to stay abreast of the following two websites:

- Articles and major reports from the Americas Program of the Center for International Policy at <http://www.cipamericas.org/>
- Articles in the monthly newsletter “Mexican Labor News & Analysis” at <http://www.ueinternational.org/MLNA/index.php> ■

NETWORKING NOTES

- The Asian Network for the Rights of Occupational and Environmental Victims (ANROEV) released in November its latest issue of *Occupational Safety and Health Rights* newsletter, and it can be found at <http://www.anroev.org/2012/11/12/osh-rights-november-2012-no-26/>
- WIEGO — Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing released in October the latest issue of its *Occupational Health and Safety for Informal Workers* newsletter, and it can be found at <http://wiego.org/publications-resources>
- A “Chemical Hazard and Alternatives Toolbox” — called “ChemHAT” — has just gone on line with a new easy-to-understand and easy-to-use website on chemicals their toxicology. The site, a joint project of several unions and environmental groups in the United States, can be found at <http://www.chemhat.org/>
- The California Hazard Evaluation System and Information Service (HESIS) released in August a fact sheet on “Electronic Waste Recycling: Working Safely,” and it can be found at <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/hesis/Documents/eWaste.pdf>
- The “Business-NGO Working Group” released in December its latest version of “The Guide to Safer Chemicals” and it can be found at <http://www.bizngo.org/guide.php>
- The Playfair2012 Campaign focusing attention on the 2012 London Olympics released in October an end of project report titled, “How we made London 2012 the most ethical Olympics so far,” and it can be found at <http://www.tuc.org.uk/international/tuc-21506-f0.cfm>
- The Asia Monitor Resource Centre (AMRC) released in December the latest issue of *Asian Labour Update*, focused on the impact of extractive industries in Asia, and it can be found at <http://www.amrc.org.hk/taxonomy/term/list/328>

(Bangladesh fire, from page 1)

workers who tried to scramble to safety. The building had no ceiling sprinklers, no outdoor fire escape, and supervisors and workers had no training on how to react in the case of such an emergency. Investigators found that only a few fire extinguishers had been used. According to various accounts, several workers saw no way to escape the flames and jumped out of the eight-story building.

According to the Clean Clothes Campaign, more than 80 percent of all factory fires in Bangladesh are due to inadequate electrical wiring. The lack of a safety infrastructure only makes matters worse for the millions of garment workers toiling away in these factories. They are paid the lowest wages — earning about \$37-\$45 a month — in an industry that just last year exported \$19 billion in clothing.

But workers in Bangladesh refuse to



be silent and are demanding just working conditions. On December 4, about 10,000 protesters forced the closure of 50 factories for a day.

Garment workers in other countries — also working for international brands and retailers — face similar circumstances. On September 11, a deadly fire broke out at a denim factory in Karachi, Pakistan, killing 289 workers. According to Pakistani investigators, workers found themselves trapped inside the factory because managers had locked the emer-

gency exits.

But just a month before an international auditor had certified the factory, stating in a report that “primary exits and emergency exits are kept unlocked while employees are inside facility.” This incident has raised questions about the effectiveness of such inspections.

Meanwhile, an investigation into the cause of the November fire in Bangladesh is still underway and investigators are trying to determine whether reports that managers locked workers in to prevent them from stealing garments, and effectively trapping them in, are true.

For its part, the Clean Clothes Campaign and labor rights groups in Bangladesh are demanding that an independent investigation into the specific causes of the fire be carried out, and that full and fair compensation be paid to the victims and their families. ■

— Reported by Nancy López

(APHA, from page 1)

end of life.” Several U.S. health and safety activists and academics were also part of this panel, and part of a second panel that day on “Epidemiological Review of the Health Impacts in the Global Electronics Industry.”

Korean activists in SHARPS have been waging a valiant campaign to publicize the cases of workers at Samsung electronics factories who have died from work-related cancers, and to get the giant electronics corporation to better protect its employees and compensate the families of the workers who have died.

The Asian activists and their American colleagues were highlighted in a series of activities that surrounded the APHA conference. On October 26th, a panel discussion was held at the University of California at Berkeley, organized by the International Campaign for Responsible Technology (ICRT), on “The Struggle in Asia for Sustainable Electronics and Safer Workplaces.” Chen, Kong, Pandita and Taiwanese academic Yi-ping Lin spoke at the event

moderated by ICRT’s Coordinator Ted Smith.

On Saturday, October 27th, the Asian activists participated in a Health & Safety Policy Summit meeting organized by the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health (NCOSH). Pandita was featured in a plenary session on “workers voices” on jobsite safety in the U.S. and internationally. There was a break-out session on worker safety in global supply chains where all the Asian activists made brief presentations.

On Sunday, October 28th, the Asian H&S delegation was given a special introduction at the APHA OHS Section’s annual social hour, as they had received during a plenary session at the National COSH conference on Saturday.

On Monday, October 29th, Chen and Choi were interviewed by noted journalist David Bacon for a 25-minute radio interview that ran on KPFA radio and the Pacifica Radio network in November. The Hesperian Foundation also hosted an event for Chen at its pub-



Sanjiv Pandita & Dr. Jeong-ok Kong

lications booth at the APHA exhibit hall on Monday afternoon.

In addition, the Asian activists from China, Hong Kong and Korea met with a number of Asian community organizations, workplace health and safety advocacy organizations, and potential funders while they were in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The organizations that worked on the event-packed tour of the Asian activists included our Network, the Hesperian Foundation, ICRT, the Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP) at UC Berkeley, and Worksafe, a California job safety advocacy organization. ■

Acuña, Mexico: Fraud and harassment taint union representation vote

The Mexican National Miners' Union (*Los Mineros*) is challenging the results of a union representation election at the Finnish-owned PKC auto parts factory in Ciudad Acuña, Mexico.

According to the official count, *Los Mineros* narrowly lost the vote — 2,311 to 2,509 — to a “protection union” affiliated with the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) that was supported by the employer.

“If the process had been transparent and legal, *Los Mineros* would have won without a doubt,” says Julia Quiñonez of the Border Workers' Committee (CFO), which has been providing advice and support to the PKC workers.

She points to a number of anomalies on the day of the election, including the company listing approximately 2,000 workers “inactive,” allowing ineligible employees (engineers, administrative staff, supervisors) to vote, not allowing votes to be counted openly, and denying the union committees the right to review voters' credentials.

She also notes that the employer had rehired a number of workers two weeks to a month prior to the election in order to have their votes included. Now that the election is over, those workers are no longer employed by the company.

In addition these examples of blatant election-day fraud, in the months leading up to the vote, PKC management was actively and openly favouring the CTM and harassing and threatening *Los Mineros* supporters.

According to *Los Mineros*, CTM delegates were given free reign of the factory and allowed to hold captive-audience meetings with the workers, while representatives of their independent union were denied entry.

The employer openly expressed its support for the CTM, telling the workers that they should vote for the “official union” for their own good and for the good of the company. There were constant threats that the factory would close and workers would lose their jobs if *Los*

Mineros won the vote, threats that were repeated in all the local media.

PKC's lack of respect for freedom of association was confirmed in a Finnish television exposé in which its CEO Harri Soutari admitted that the CTM “probably is not a real trade union in the Finnish or European sense... but the employer can protect himself this way and it has been done.”

In response to the media exposé and to shareholder protests, PKC put out a press release explaining that “Mexican law allows unions to register as the employees' representative irrespective of the will of the employees....”

According to Quiñonez, “people did not vote for the CTM because they supported that union — the CTM has done

nothing to help the workers. Those who voted for the CTM did so because they were afraid that the company would close down; they were victims of the company's intimidation.”

Despite the fraudulent vote results, the union feels significant progress was made toward winning an independent union. In an Opinion piece in *La Jornada*, *Los Mineros* leader Napoleon Gomez Urrutia commented, “The workers have in no way been defeated. They are on the road to achieving dignity and union autonomy and eventually will be able to reverse these unfavourable results.” ■

— Article reprinted from the *Maquila Solidarity Update* newsletter, December 2012

New reports on working conditions in global supply chains

Working conditions in the global economy's supply chains remain hazardous to workers, the surrounding communities and the environment. Despite 20 years worth of “corporate social responsibility” programs and a \$60 million CSR “cottage industry” of consultants, monitors, and conferences, actual conditions on the factory floor have not improved to any significant degree.

Here is a selection of the latest reports issued by workers' rights, human rights and environmental organizations around the world:

Asia Monitor Resource Centre, Hong Kong

The Reality of Corporate Social Responsibility; Case studies on the impact of CSR on workers in China, South Korea, India and Indonesia. <http://www.amrc.org.hk/system/files/Book%20-%20The%20Reality%20of%20CSR%20-%20AMRC.pdf>

China Labor Watch, New York

An Investigation of Eight Samsung Factories in China: Is Samsung Infringing upon Apple's Patent to Bully Workers? <http://goodelectronics.org/publications-en/an-investigation-of-eight-samsung-factories-in-china-1/>

Clean Clothes Campaign, Amsterdam

Report: 10 Years of the Better Factories Cambodia Project: A critical evaluation. <http://www.cleanclothes.org/resources/ccf/working-conditions/10-years-better-factories-report>

Friends of the Earth, London

Mining for Smartphones: The True Cost of Tin: damage to forests and coral. http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/tin_mining.pdf

Globalization Monitor, Hong Kong

The Chinese battery industry: The truth behind the charge. <http://www.globalmon.org.hk/en/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/chinese-battery-industry-final.pdf>

GoodElectronics, Amsterdam

The Flex Syndrome, Working conditions in the Hungarian electronics sector. http://goodelectronics.org/publications-en/Publication_3902/

Apple Campaign Update

Labor rights groups and activists around the world have waited to see whether Apple — after joining the Fair Labor Association (FLA) — will implement the changes necessary to stop the abusive working conditions rampant across its supply chains. Will the electronics powerhouse finally exert its influence to protect the basic human rights of the people who make Apple products? Despite an FLA report released in August 2012 that says “yes,” other independent investigations and news reports show that “no” — Apple and Foxconn have not taken any meaningful action in truly remedying the problems that put workers lives in harms way.

The FLA report described Foxconn and Apple’s remediation plan as robust, saying that in three months time the two companies have come together and satisfactorily addressed problems with poor factory infrastructure as well as with workers’ pay and overtime. But perhaps the biggest gap between what Apple promised and what it will actually do is the issue of back pay. Apple and Foxconn had promised to ensure that all workers who had worked overtime and attended mandatory trainings with no pay would receive compensation for these hours.

This matter was not even mentioned in the FLA’s report and when asked by the Workers Rights Consortium (WRC),

the FLA acknowledged that workers had not received back pay and will not be receiving compensation anytime soon. Because Foxconn management had never kept any records of time workers spent doing overtime or participating in mandatory meetings and trainings, it is impossible — says the FLA — to compensate workers for these hours.

The advent of Apple’s most recent gadget upgrade — the iPhone 5 — has only further challenged the FLA’s claims that the company’s remediation plan is proving beneficial to workers. Production demand across Apple’s supply chains has increased and with it the production output expected from workers at Foxconn factories, according to a recent investigation by Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehavior (SACOM).

Notably, while it has been agreed that workers should work no more than 60 hours a week — as stipulated by Chinese labor law — the number of hours employees have had to work peaked at 100 hours per month as demand for the iPhone 5 increased. According to the FLA, Apple and Foxconn do not have to meet compliance with the 60-hour workweek until July 2013.

SACOM’s investigation also found that workers were getting one day off for every 13 days worked, as opposed to every seven days as stipulated by law. Then, to show the total lack of commitment to corporate responsibility by Foxconn, *Shanghai Daily* reported in September that thousands of students in China were forced to work at a Foxconn factory to produce iPhone 5. The students were forced into working six days a week, 12 hours each day.

Conditions remain so bad that labor unrest has steadily increased over the past couple of months. According to



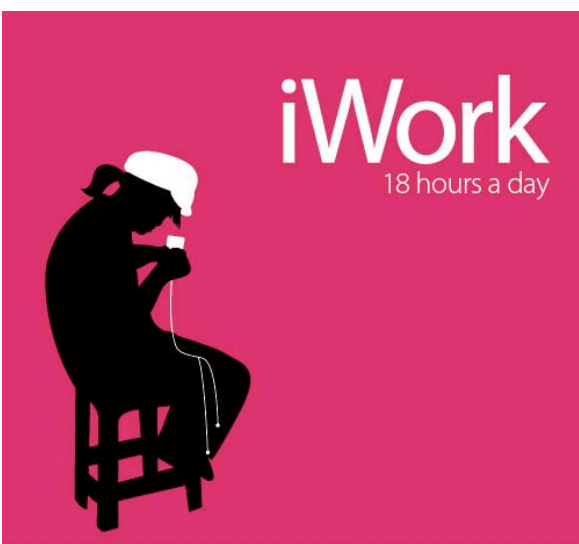
SACOM’s report in early September some workers who went on strike and protested poor working conditions were fired by Foxconn.

Clearly, Apple’s commitment to its own corporate social responsibility code is put into question by these independent reports, as is the FLA’s commitment to accountability. Perhaps the biggest shortfall to Apple’s remediation plan is that it only pertains to Foxconn factories, and not to all the other hundreds of suppliers contracted by Apple.

For more information on how Apple and Foxconn’s remediation plan fails workers, check out the links below:

- “Polishing Apple: Fair Labor Association gives Foxconn and Apple undue credit for labor rights progress;” report written by the WRC and Economic Policy Institute. <http://www.epi.org/files/2012/polishing-apple-fla-foxconn-apple-undue.pdf>
- “iPhone 5 produced under harsh working conditions still in violation of basic labor rights;” report written by the WRC and Economic Policy Institute. <http://www.epi.org/blog/iphone-5-produced-harsh-working-conditions/>
- “iPad Mini-mizes Labour Rights;” statement by SACOM. <http://sacom.hk/archives/966> ■

— Reported by Nancy López



Samsung Campaign Update

There is big news on the horizon for the hundreds of thousands of workers who assemble Samsung products and are constantly exposed to toxic chemicals.

In what has been a bold and unprecedented move by any public figure in South Korea, presidential hopeful Ahn Cheol-Soo recently endorsed a petition by SHARPS (Supporters for the Health And Rights of People in the Semiconductor Industry) to repeal a law that puts the burden on employees of proving that their illness was directly caused by hazardous working conditions in order to receive compensation from their employer.

To date, more than 50 Samsung factory workers have fallen victim to various cancers, including malignant lymphoma, acute leukemia, and aplastic anemia. The families of most of these deceased workers are still fighting to receive compensation.

While SHARPS is wary that Ahn Cheol-soo's endorsement may just be symbolic, he has essentially challenged the national debate by publicly coming out in support of Samsung factory workers. With the presidential elections fast approaching, this could put Samsung's problematic labor practices under serious scrutiny for once.

In December 2012, a Korean government agency, KCOMWEL, announced its recognition of the death of Ms. D.E. Kim from breast cancer as an occupational death from her work at Samsung Semiconductor plant.

This is the second recognition of occupational disease of Samsung

Semiconductor workers by Korean governments. The first case was aplastic anemia.

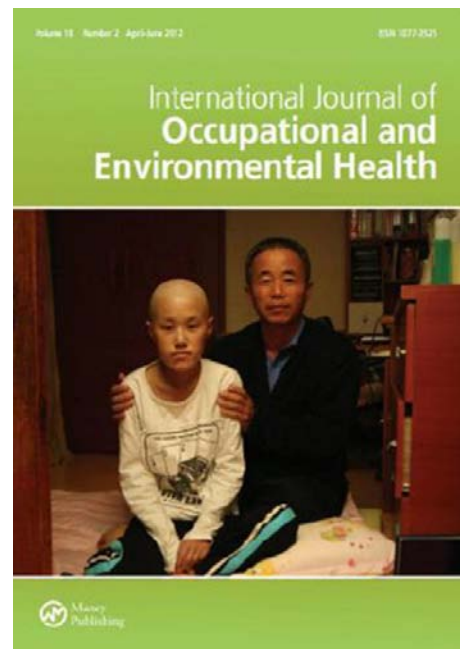
The decision of KCOMWEL to compensate for her death was made based on its recognition of work-relatedness of her cancer with exposures to radiation, hazardous chemicals, and shift work with night work which is classified as a probable human carcinogen by IARC.

Ms. Kim was born in 1976. She entered Samsung Semiconductor plant at Giheung in May 1995 at age of 19. She worked at the Ion Implantation, photo, and etching processes in the same factory until January 2000.

After leaving the factory, Ms. Kim married and became a mother of two children. In August 2009, when she was 33 years old, Stage III of breast cancer was found. Despite a mastectomy and intensive treatment, the cancer spread to her bones and liver.

SHARPS had supported her to prepare documents to demand workers' compensation to the government, but she passed away too early in March 2012 at her young age of 36. So now the compensation is for her family, including two young children, not for her treatment.

In other Samsung-related news, a China Labor Watch investigation this summer revealed that Samsung was making use of child labor at its Chinese supply chains. This prompted a reaction from Samsung and the company sent in more than 100 auditors to inspect 105 of its suppliers, which together employ 65,000 workers.



Inspectors found that employees were required to work up to 16 hours a day as well as pay fines for being tardy or absent from work. They also found that several workers were only given one day off a month and overtime reached up to 32 hours a week — or more than 100 hours a month.

Samsung said its Chinese factories would be given two years to comply with national labor laws. Samsung has also promised to set up hotlines for workers to anonymously report mistreatment at work or violations of labor laws.

For more information on the reports and continuing news, please see the organizations' websites:

- SHARPS:
<http://stopsamsung.wordpress.com>
 - China Labor Watch:
<http://www.chinalaborwatch.org/> ■
- Reported by Nancy López

PTRC Celebrates its 20th Anniversary

In November, the People's Training and Research Centre (PTRC) in Gujarat, India, celebrated its 20th anniversary of work with some of the most exploited and vulnerable workers in the global economy. The Centre, founded and led by Jagdish Patel, has brought occu-

pational safety and health information, technical assistance and campaign support to low-wage, high-exposure-to-hazards workers for two decades.

In addition to its ground-breaking work in India, PTRC and Patel have played a key role in the development

and growth of the Asian Network for the Rights of Occupational and Environmental Victims (ANROEV), which now has more than 20 affiliated organizations in 14 Asia countries and territories.

(See PTRC, page 8)

(PTRC, from page 7)

In celebration of its 20 years of work with workers in agriculture and many industrial sectors in northern India, PTRC had a public program on the morning December 2nd and then an educational seminar on the “Occupational Health Movement in India” through December 3rd.

Our Network sent a message of congratulations from Coordinator Garrett Brown to Patel on the occasion of PTRC’s anniversary: “On behalf of the 400 occupational health and safety professionals in Canada, Mexico and the United States who are members of our Network, I would like to send our

warmest congratulations to the People’s Training and Resource Centre for these 20 years of work.

“We are filled with admiration of your efforts to protect some of the most vulnerable workers in the world, to provide them with the knowledge and information they need to protect themselves on the job, and to assist them in their fight for compensation and treatment should they become ill or injured. We know that your work has helped to save lives and to reduce the pain and suffering of scores of workers and their families.

“The Occupational Health Section of the American Public Health Association recognized and celebrated

the work of the PTRC and Jagdish’s leadership in 2007, and I know that the efforts of the last five years has been even more praiseworthy and essential in light of the ever-more precarious nature of work in the global economy.

“On the occasion of this milestone year of so much achievement and exemplary work, allow me to pledge our continuing support for the efforts of the PTRC. We continue to draw inspiration and guidance from your example.”

Photographs of the two-day event can be seen at: <https://plus.google.com/photos/118356394018495228235/albums/5819060293053973985?banner=pwa&authkey=CKvB44Cti-DpngE> ■

Quotes of the Month from the Bangladesh factory fire

I won't believe Walmart entirely if they say they did not know of this at all. That is because even if I am subcontracted for a Walmart deal, those subcontracted factories still need to be certified by Walmart. You can skirt the rules for one or two odd times if it is for a very small quantity, but no decent quantity of work can be done with the client's knowledge and permission.

— Annisul Huq, former president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, quoted by Reuters news service on November 28, 2012.

The first problem is retailers and wholesalers are demanding more and more compliance and more and more protocol. However, they keep pushing everyone for lower and lower prices. You have one department of the company campaigning for fair wages, etc., but then in the very next room the sourcing department is asking for 10-20 percent cheaper. How do you do that?

— Edward Hertzman, *Sourcing Journal* trade publication, quoted in “Bangladesh factory fire reveals big brands’ shadowy supply chains,” Reuters news service on December 7, 2012.

The buyers write to us to improve working conditions. We asked them to raise prices by 25 cents per clothing unit that would go to workers' welfare. They refused, citing the financial downturn in their countries.

— Mikail Shiper, a senior official in Bangladesh’s Ministry of Labor and Employment, quoted in “Bangladesh: How rules went astray,” *The Wall Street Journal*, December 5, 2012.

It was my fault. But nobody told me that there was no emergency exit, which could be made accessible from outside. Nobody even advised me to install one like that, apart from the existing ones. I could have done it. But nobody ever suggested I do it.

— Factory owner Delwar Hossain quoted in the Dhaka, Bangladesh, *The Daily Star* newspaper, November 29, 2012.

These factories should be shut down, but who will do that? Any good government inspector who wants to act tough against such rogue factories would be removed from office. Who will take that risk? [Kalpona Akter, Executive Director of the Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity]... These factories should be closed, but it is not an easy task. We need to follow a protracted legal battle. Always there is pressure because the owners are influential. They can manage everything. [anonymous Dhaka fire official].

— quoted in “Bangladesh Factory Where Dozens Died Was Illegal,” Associated Press, December 7, 2012.

“We want the owner to reopen the factory as soon as possible or pay us a few months of salary because we have nowhere else to go right at this moment,” said Hasan, a worker who escaped the fire and uses only one name... “I need to recover soon. I need money immediately. We want at least four months of salary to just get by now and by this time, we will look for jobs in other factories,” said Dipa Akter, the 19-year-old worker who injured her leg escaping the fire and who has worked at the factory for three years. “Otherwise, I have to go back to my village, where I have nothing to do.”

— BBC News, November 30, 2012.