

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

ICFTU OnLine...

151/251105

New Trade Union World Briefing (8 pages) - video portrait (4 minutes)

EPZ - Dominican Republic and Haiti: Taking on Grupo M

Brussels, 25 November 2005 (ICFTU OnLine): Spotlight on the day-to-day exploitation in the export processing zones of the Dominican Republic and Haiti, where workers produce clothing for leading international brands ... and are pioneering cross-border trade union action.

In the Dominican Republic, the end of textile quotas has led to thousands of redundancies and a worsening of the already dismal working conditions. "We have to dash from one machine to the other. Sometimes they only give us one chair. It's like a bottomless pit that we are never able to fill," explains Leonida Monegro, who sews Dockers(r), a brand developed by Levi Strauss.

In a bid to counter the ruthless competition on the international textile market, especially from China, Dominican industrialists are now looking to shift part of their production to Haiti ... for the simple reason that the labour there is even cheaper.

In spite of the crippling poverty, Haitian workers from the Ouanaminthe export processing zone have managed to wage any extraordinary battle against the anti-union practices of garment manufacturing giant Grupo M, with whom they are on the verge of signing their very first collective bargaining agreement.

They hope their example will spread to the factories of Port au Prince and the Dominican Republic. Over recent months, the Dominican union SITRAFMIN, based in Santiago, and, SOKOWA, in Ouanaminthe, Haiti, have been working on forming a common front to tackle Grupo M, which, on the Dominican side of the border, is a using yellow union, built on intimidation and bribery, to undermine the legitimate trade union at a factory producing for Levi Strauss. How can local action combined with international solidarity make all the difference in the fight against exploitation? Report, firsthand accounts and analysis in this new briefing.

-To download the Trade Union World Briefing "EPZs in Haiti and the Dominican Republic: Taking on Grupo M" (8 pages):
<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991223136&Language=EN>

- To view the video portrait entitled "Georges' Hope", the account of a worker who sews the hems of Levi jeans for just 15 euros a week and his appeal to consumers around the world:
<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991223109&Language=EN>

- To read the interview with Yannick Etienne (ESPMBO - Haiti)
"The workers' demands have been constantly backed by international solidarity":
<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991223116&Language=EN>

The ICFTU represents 145 million workers through its 234 affiliated organisations in 154 countries and territories. The ICFTU is also a member of Global Unions: <http://www.global-unions.org>

For more information, please contact the ICFTU Press Department on +32 2 224 0245 or +32 476 621 018.

You are currently subscribed to icftu-online as: Rainer.Gries@fes.de
To unsubscribe send a blank email to leave-icftu-online-167589G@forum.icftu.org