Company cases and cross-company initiatives
Working conditions improvement in Haiti

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Foreword

The ILO is executing a $1 million project in Haiti to improve working conditions in the garment assembly sector. The project, of which the implementing agency is the Haitian employers’ organization, ADIH, is funded by the US Department of Labor (USDOL) and at the end of the initial two-year period in June 2003 has been extended by a further year.

Allegations of sub-standard working conditions, amongst other factors, have been dissuading potential investors and buyers of Haitian goods from doing business with Haiti, the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. Employment in the garment assembly sector, which reached a peak in the 1980s of nearly 100,000 workers of whom the great majority were women, has fallen dramatically. The logic of the project was that, if allegations of poor working conditions in the assembly sector were hampering further investment in Haiti, then by helping to upgrade conditions, foreign investors might again be attracted there and new jobs would be created, while at the same time conditions for workers would be improved. The project originally included provision to develop an independent external system for monitoring working conditions in garment factories.

Technical assistance and training have been based around the ILO’s well-tested “WISE” (Work Improvements in Small Enterprises) approach, which provides simple, low-cost, practical ideas for improvement of working conditions that can help businesses to improve their productivity at the same time. The project has helped each of the twelve participating enterprises to evaluate its working conditions, conduct a detailed training needs analysis and develop an improvement plan. Training to improve working conditions was initially given to owners and managers. In-factory training on improving working conditions was then given in Creole to supervisors in each enterprise, which led to an intensification of improvement activity. Training was also provided to the on-site nurses, covering issues such as HIV/AIDS, maternity protection and sexual harassment as well as subjects covered by WISE. Many tangible improvements in working conditions have been made in participating enterprises. There is now a clear understanding of the crucial relationship between improvement in working conditions, a better working environment, increased productivity and quality.

To complement the assistance provided to the garment factories, some training was also provided to Haitian trade union representatives and to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MAS). An important pilot initiative was undertaken to support recruitment and basic training in working conditions and labour rights of factory workers. The project has received continuing advice and support from a tripartite Project Advisory Committee established within the framework of the project, comprising ADIH, trade unions and the MAS.

The one-year extension of the project is aimed at ensuring sustainability of the results achieved during the first phase. Recognizing that ADIH, the implementing agency, is at present unable to provide the necessary services to its members linked to improving conditions of work and employment, the primary aim of the extension is to ensure that the project is effectively transferred to its target group, particularly ADIH in a fully sustainable manner. For its part, ADIH is providing the necessary resources through having hired a new high-level staff member to work alongside the ILO project manager, with the aim of completely taking over operations after the completion of the project.

This publication is the result of a mission to Haiti by an international expert, Mr. Vittorio Di Martino, together with a national consultant, Ms. Soraya Filippi, and the ILO project manager in Haiti, Mr. Claude Loiselle. It is intended to report on some of the changes that have been taking place in Haitian garment factories as a result of the ILO-USDOL project. It highlights good practice on a range of issues: better ergonomics;
improved chemical safety; noise reduction; electrical and fire safety; improved workers’ welfare facilities; better awareness of workers’ rights and other concerns. These improvements are reported from the perspectives of those who received training through the project, the owners and supervisors of the participating factories. It does not include the perspective of the workers concerned, although this would be necessary in order to have a complete picture of the effect of the changes on working conditions. For example, the change in some factories to replace line systems of production by modular systems has been seen as beneficial for business and in many obvious ways, beneficial also for the workers concerned. However, other viewpoints exist which emphasise negative aspects of modular production systems for workers. Involvement of workers — and of representatives of workers — in planning and implementing changes in factories is one way to ensure that such different perspectives and concerns are recognised and dealt with. The factory owners and managers describe, in this publication, how they have involved the workers in the change process. At this time, trade unions are not present in the Haitian garment assembly factories.

The examples identified here do not constitute an ILO endorsement of all aspects of the working conditions in the participating factories. Rather, they demonstrate an important process of improvement that has been taking place and continues to take place in these factories.

William D. Salter,
Senior Adviser,
Conditions of Work and Employment Programme,
International Labour Office.
Preface

During the period 11 to 25 May 2003, in the context of the evaluation of ILO project HAI/99/M01/USA, I visited in Haiti the companies involved in that project to identify the progress made, and had extensive, repeated conversations with owners, managers and supervisors of such enterprises. I also analysed two cross-company initiatives within the scope of the same project. The results of this activity are presented in this report.

All company cases have been shown to and agreed upon by the entrepreneurs and/or managers involved. They have also given their own views of the improvements described in their case. A special effort has been made to quantify the cost of the initiatives undertaken and relevant information has been obtained for most of them. The rate of exchange for the Haitian gourde to the US dollar was, at the time of my visit, at around 40 gourdes for each dollar. The cases are illustrated by photos taken, whenever possible, before and after the intervention.

I witnessed a strong determination of several entrepreneurs to improve both productivity and working conditions in line with the spirit and goal of the ILO project. This positive change in attitudes can be attributed in my view to:

- An important generational change with daughters and sons of the owners progressively taking over managerial responsibility and introducing in their companies a new organization, a new way of dealing with and considering the workforce, and a new mentality altogether.

- The long-term impact of the ILO project acting in close synergy with other initiatives, such as WRAP (Worldwide Responsible Apparel Production Principles), a system of certification much sought after by Haitian garment producers, based on very similar ideas and messages.

At the time of my visit, a great number of improvements were underway. To take account of these developments, additional interviews were carried out, and updated information on the impact of the project collected, by Soraya Filippi in the months of August and September 2003, which have also been incorporated in this report. Claude Loiselle, the project CTA, has been of invaluable help in the identification and the elaboration of the company cases and the cross-company initiatives.

Vittorio Di Martino

Port-au-Prince, 25 May 2003
Geneva, 17 November 2003
Training for immediate action

WISE (Work Improvements in Small Enterprise) is one of the most powerful and successfully used ILO training and intervention methodologies. It makes the improvement of working conditions an essential part of the developmental process of enterprises.

A special version of this methodology addresses the specific needs of the garment industry, and it is this version that has been used as a key tool for the development of the ILO project (HAI/99/M01/USA) in Haiti. The project is directed at providing training and advice to voluntarily participating enterprises in the garment assembly sector and at supporting them in the process of improving working conditions and productivity. The participating enterprises are those covered by the Assembly Sub-commission of the Association of Haitian Industry (ADIH). Twelve enterprises have participated in the project, of around 35 members of ADIH in the garment assembly sector.

Within this project, a special initiative has been undertaken to address the special training needs of supervisors. In the months of March to May 2003, seminars for supervisors based on the WISE material specifically developed for the garment industry were carried out in all the companies participating in the project. Each seminar lasted three days, each day covering two of the following six subject areas: premises, proper lighting, practical workstations, efficient materials storage and handling, machine safety and welfare facilities.

One of the main strengths of the WISE methodology is that it is very adaptable to local situations. In Haiti, adaptability has gone very far. Since the WISE experience clearly shows that local adaptability is an essential precondition to the success of interventions of this type, the case of WISE for supervisors in Haiti deserves special attention.

The main novelty is that training was carried out directly at the workplace. Instead of moving the supervisors to a special training facility, they remained in a very familiar environment. This greatly facilitates their playing an active role in the training process. To further facilitate understanding and dialogue, all the material was translated into Creole, and training takes place in Creole as well. Every effort has been made to make the material easy to understand and user-friendly in presentation.

The very fact that training activities are not disconnected from the workplace allows immediate follow-up in terms of proposed action. At given moments during training, the participants leave their training place, go back to their workplace, check opportunities for immediate improvement and, working as teams, elaborate concrete proposals for action. This makes the participants aware that what they learn from training may be transformed immediately into workplace intervention to improve working conditions and productivity.

The key features of this training for immediate action are given below.
Based on WISE for the garment industry
Targeted at supervisors
Carried out directly within enterprises
During working hours
Training in Creole
Training material in Creole
Quite simplified
Very user friendly
Highly interactive
Targeted at immediate action

The training seminars have been evaluated very positively by the participating supervisors. They, however, expressed concern that their employers may not introduce the suggested improvements. In the Haitian garment industry, the employer usually keeps all decision powers, even for minor decisions. Delegation to supervisors is rare, although the situation is starting to change.

In order to verify the real impact of the training exercise in term of action, the enterprises that had already participated in the training seminars were visited again in August 2003. In many enterprises, a sort of cascade effect was detected, with hundreds of suggested improvements already implemented (see improvements under each company case). The appreciation of the supervisors participating in the WISE courses is reported below.

How was the situation changed after the training?

**The view of the trainees**

- Florence Musseau (Supervisor): Things have changed since the training. We (all supervisors) work better as a team and we are more tolerant with the operators.
- Romanès Augustin (Mechanic): Before the training, things were alright, but now that we have more knowledge, the organization is a lot better. We are now in a working ambience.
- Bien-aimé Gorrety (Stock): Before, I was careless with details, but now I am more alert and make sure little things like a twinkling light tube doesn’t occur. Creole: _Nou bay bagay yo plis valè_ (We give things more importance now).
- René Valière (Stock): There is now a place for everything and everything is placed respectively. There is now less waste.
- Mireille Duchemin (Quality): French: _Ils ont accepté les changements_ (The workers have accepted the changes). French: _Mais, avec les haitiens il faut toujours, toujours rappler; mais ils le font avec plaisir_ (With Haitians, we must always remind them; but they do it with pleasure).
- Sergot Beauzier (Supervisor): There have been a lot of changes made since the training. The safety and health of the operators has been the main target of improvement. The dust is no longer an issue, because we now have a group of cleaners come in before we start operating at around 6:20 a.m. In the cutting area, the men use their metal-chain gloves all the time. We even put up a sign to remind them.
- Dominique Pierre (Stock): We no longer have our raw materials lying on the floor. Now they are placed on wooden pallets. The company is much cleaner now. The employees that participated in the training are always trying to keep things in order, but it is hard to maintain.
• Elius Soné (Production Supervisor): We have more fans and water coolers. Before the training, I never drank a lot of water; I could go the whole day without water. But now I understand the importance of water and my body’s need for it. So I drink a lot of water. I have benefited so much from the tips and principles taught in the training.

• Victor Civil (Supervisor): The passages have been cleared as much as possible.

• Marie René Sairen (Finishing): The supervisors understand their work and purpose better.

• Joel Gédeon (Personnel): Before, there was a problem on the floor due to the lack of work received in the sewing area. Now the distribution of the bundles is right on time. This automatically elevates the productivity throughout the sewing plant. There is now more tolerance and care towards pregnant women. We treat them better. If the lady feels sick, now I find it useful to just let her leave and have her come back to work the next day if she is doing better.

• Pierre André Charles (Bundling): We were already aware of many of the principles discussed in the training, but we did not think that their application would have such benefits. Now we are more successful with their careful use.

• Pierre Guérin (Stock): After the training, the metal chain gloves were used obligatorily. The cutting tables were cleared and the passages too. Now you are able to walk around without tripping. We are always telling the sweepers to clean the cut-part waste, but they neglect this sometimes.

• Desgranges Rothchild (Trainer): We have added a footrest to all the tables that needed them. Now the operators work more comfortably.

• Lucas Boursiquout (Supervisor): After the training, I find that we are better oriented and prepared to do our work efficiently. Creole: Nou viv pi byen (Now we live better). Now the operators and fellow supervisors go home cleaner, due to the effective sweeping technique of sprinkling water on the dust.

• Aliette Laurent (Supervisor): There have been many changes, but there are many yet to be done. It takes time to get everything in order.

• Jameau Olmande (Administration): Signs for danger have been added.

• Tout Puissant Langlois (Trimming/Examining): The seminar has helped put the ideas in order.

• Lucien Denelus (Packing): Both major and minor changes have been made. We have received new machines.

• Marie Joceline Damis (Audit): Meetings are held more often since we had the training. The drinking water is distributed in supermarket shopping carts, so the operators do not have to get up anymore.

• Emile Maurissette (Assistant Chief Supervisor): Creole: Gran amelyorasyon ki fet (There is a big improvement). Spaces are distributed in a more productive way. Windows are kept open, clear and clean. The building floor is kept, as often as possible, clear and clean.

• Robert Joseph (Quality): It has done many things for us. I have learned so much. I apply the principles even at home.

• Jean Camille Derenoncourt (Human Resources): The training helped us put all the points to improve with their respective drawing in order. It was therefore easier for us to implement the changes.

• Charles Yvon (Chief of Personnel): Creole: Li te benetik pou nou, jiskaprezan gen restirasyon k ap fet tout kote. (We have benefited from the training; we are still restructuring everywhere). Offices have been added for a better organization.

• Junior Janvier Meres (Supervisor): Our way of working has changed.

• Marie Françoise Delice (Logo): I got everything I was missing for my work. We can see the needs more clearly after the training.

• Lucmanne Charles (Supervisor): Some changes have been made. We added shelves, the materials are no longer on the floor.

• Fritz Denojour (Supervisor): Protection devices for eyes included in the sewing machines are used more often. We added more trash bins in the toilets.

• Raphael Cinsurin (Chief Supervisor): There has been a change in lighting, more lights have been added. Some operators now can fix the minor problems in their machines.
The recruitment initiative

Despite tough global competition, the garment industry is expanding in Haiti as a result of a general development of this market. The search for qualified operators has therefore become a priority issue for Haitian companies in the garment industry. Competition for such operators among companies is consequently high and recruitment is increasingly a difficult exercise. The fluctuating volume of production depending on the seasonal nature of orders from clients further exacerbates the problem if operators have to leave the company when production declines and are then difficult to get back when the full volume of production resumes.

Companies tackle the problem in different ways. Whenever possible, qualified or semi-qualified operators are brought into the company usually, using the workforce informal network. If this is not possible because of the limited availability of qualified applicants, candidates without special qualifications are tested and trained on line, starting with the simplest operations. In a few cases, training is carried out in a more formal way, as the case study of P.B. Apparel illustrates.

Within this context, a joint initiative by ILO, ADIH (Association des Industries d’Haïti) and INDEPCO (Institut National du Développement et de la Promotion de la Couture) was launched in April 2003. The initiative is directed to facilitate the recruitment of qualified operators by companies voluntarily participating in ILO project HAI/99/M01/USA and to enhance enterprise cooperation, rather than confrontation, in this area.

INDEPCO identifies and selects candidates for the new jobs. Exams involve a series of tests on physical capacities, attitudes and technical skills to be completed in given periods of time. Once selection is completed and before the candidates are presented to the entrepreneurs for possible recruitment, such candidates are provided by the ILO with a one-hour session during which they receive information on their basic rights at work, including the quality of their working conditions.

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It is the first time in Haiti that a procedure of this type is introduced in the recruitment process. Making people entering new jobs aware of their rights in respect of conditions of work contributes to create a new workforce likely to consider the quality of working environment a basic right and to actively pursue the improvement of the working environment. In recruiting a workforce of this type, the employers show their engagement in the improvement of working conditions while benefiting from a much-needed recruitment service that can contribute to increase enterprise productivity and competitiveness.

Despite everything being in place at the date of the launching of the initiative, its implementation has proved more difficult than expected. In a system where the demand for
new operators is traditionally spread around by word of mouth, it was initially difficult to circulate information about the initiative. Five hundred flyers announcing the new job opportunity did not lead to great results, nor did a special press release issued for the same purpose. It was only when two local radio stations were actively involved that candidates started presenting themselves for interviews in a quite substantial number.

During the first three weeks of the project, 150 had presented themselves for testing, of whom 37 did not have the required profile. Of the remaining 113, 87 did not pass the test and were sent for further training. Of those who passed the test, 12 immediately found a job in a company; the others were exposed to the new recruitment procedure. On 23 May 2003, a first group of ten operators was introduced to their fundamental rights and soon after presented to the employers for recruitment. All candidates were immediately recruited.

Though the process was a difficult one with many failures and small final figures, the immediate success of the initiative shows that there is a potential for effectively linking labour market and enterprises’ needs in a more organic and coordinated way. It is now expected that the initiative will be continued and further developed on a self-sustained basis, with entrepreneurs meeting the costs of selection when recruiting successful candidates.

The view of INDEPCO

We believe that this project is of capital importance for facilitating access to work to those operators who are qualified, but cannot find a job due to the fact that they do not have a relative or a friend who already works in the garment industry. It also benefits the companies, because they can recruit a qualified workforce without having to meet the cost of unqualified candidates. For those who are unqualified, the project offers the possibility of being trained by a professional body and obtaining an official certificate that recognizes their working skills and guarantees their aptitudes to the specific job.
“In the last two years, we have changed our workplace by 50 per cent and these changes have greatly affected working conditions and productivity in our company”, says Abraham Felix, owner of Magic Sewing. Magic Sewing is his creature. Started more than 30 years ago, the company now employs a workforce of about 200 (80 per cent women) with a differentiated production of ladies’ nightwear (20 to 30 types of products for a total of 3,500 to 4,000 dozen per week), totally for the United States’ market. Quality is high on the agenda, with rejected items at 3 to 4 per cent.

Under the pressure of increasing global competition, company productivity has been declining in recent years and this has triggered a process of deep transformation of the company to regain, and if possible increase, market competitiveness. The ILO project has operated as a timely catalyst offering the opportunity and the tools to carry out such transformation.

Initial reticence towards imported novelty has given way to a progressive recognition of the importance of the ILO message linking enterprise efficiency and quality of work. In this perspective, the key role of the entire workforce in determining the company success has increasingly gained momentum. In the words of Mr. Felix: “Workers are my partners….. and we have to work together to achieve better results”.

How did you make your workers feel like partners? And to what extent are they partners?

Without them, Magic Sewing doesn’t stand. However if I tell them this, they won’t believe me. Haitians don’t like compliments; it means there is something fishy. It spoils them. They don’t listen anymore.

Therefore I keep it in my head. Ten to 15 years ago, I used to see them as bad people. And they felt the same about me. I learned that you must complement the people (in whatever they are missing).

If I can help them, I do not hesitate, without expecting anything in return. If we want them to see “us” with other eyes, we have to see them with other eyes.

As in many Haitian companies in this sector at the moment, a generational change accompanies this transformation. Karine Felix, Mr. Felix’s daughter, is now ready to take over managerial responsibilities and she is fully determined to continue and further develop the ideas and commitment of her father. In fact, she has already personally taken care of many of the changes that have taken place recently in Magic Sewing.

Two main developments are fostering such changes. On the organizational front a new, more flexible, way of working is emerging. In order to meet market fluctuations, and to effectively respond to the great variety of products demanded by clients, more and more workers are becoming multi-skilled. Increased workers’ qualification requires special attention to the area of training. Magic Sewing is devoting growing resources to this area, an investment in people that will pay back in the view of Mr. Felix. The only risk he envisages is in the fact that the augmented qualification of his workers may be particularly attractive to other companies in the same sector, who may offer higher wages without taking the burden of training and, as already happened in a number of cases, partially nullify his efforts in this area.

In this context, improved communication with the workers is actively sought. When necessary, the entire production is stopped for ten to 15 minutes and time is taken to inform the workers and discuss with them relevant issues. Stopping the entire production is again a costly exercise, but the benefits of this problem-solving practice are clear to Mr. Felix, who intends to further develop dialogue with his workers.
On the quality front, the company is engaged not only in satisfying to the maximum the current clients, but also in obtaining official recognition and certificates (such as WRAP: Worldwide Responsible Apparel Production Principles) that will open new markets, particularly in the United States. Such certification is conditional on a series of achievements in the area of labour protection and improved working conditions. In this perspective, the issue of a healthy work environment becomes central to the attention of the management.

A number of significant improvements have been progressively introduced during the two years of the project, based on the owner’s self-evaluation of the factory using the WISE checklist. These include:

**Better storage of dangerous substances**

Containers with dangerous substances needed for the production were left around the workplace in an erratic way at Magic Sewing, with significant risks for the health and safety of the workforce. Unprotected containers can be damaged and exposure to the chemicals contained therein can cause fatigue, headaches, dizziness and irritation to eyes, while contact or ingestion can produce even more serious consequences.

**Before: Disorganized and hazardous**

![Image: Disorganized and hazardous](image1)

With the help of ILO project HAI/99/M01/USA, the containers have first been gathered together in a designated area within the workplace ....
and eventually moved in a protected area outside the working premises.

**Improved lighting**

Local lighting has been reinforced and properly balanced to better control detail of production and quality requirements, thus contributing to increased productivity while providing better vision to the workers concerned. To achieve this, the height of lamps in respect of working tables was lowered and the walls painted in white to enhance the effects of illumination.

**Improved passageways**

A major effort has been made to clear and mark passageways. This has resulted in a significant gain in space.
Improved ventilation

Natural ventilation has been improved by opening impediments to air circulation. Additional fans placed in convenient positions have also improved local ventilation.

New toilets

At Magic Sewing, completely new toilets have been built. This is also the case in several other companies participating in ILO project HAI/99/M01/USA as part of a growing awareness among Haitian entrepreneurs that providing adequate sanitary facilities not only responds to legal requirements, but helps in reducing health problems to their workforce, contributes to the quality of the final product, enhances the morale and dignity of the workforce, and the very image of the company.

There are now separate toilets for men and women at Magic Sewing. The number of sanitary facilities is still not ideal in respect of the number of the workers concerned, but the improvement compared with the previous situation is an important one.
As the photos above show, the toilets are kept proper and clean. A person is on-site full time to provide hygienic paper and keep the toilets in order. Running water and washbasins are also provided. Ventilation is guaranteed by openings in the upper part of the walls.

**Better materials storage**

At the start of ILO project HAI/99/M01/USA, rolls of fabric were lying on the floor under working tables. It made them difficult to handle and they were exposed to the risks of accidental damage as well as to dust and dirtiness.

A low-cost solution was envisaged to improve the situation. As shown in the photo above, the rolls now lay on pallets, are easier to handle and are protected by plastic covers, while plastic curtains covering the sides of the table provide additional protection.
Other improvements

- Premises
  1. More fans have been added to the plant.
  2. The supervisors now strive to keep the extinguishers and exit doors clear, in case of an emergency.
  3. They have established an evacuation plan.
  4. The dust on the floor is controlled by sprinkling water before sweeping.

- Proper lighting
  1. The quality section now is careful to maintain a contrasting colour between the working table and the garments.

- Efficient materials storage and handling
  1. The mechanic shop is a bit better organized and in order.
  2. The employees that have to unload/load the containers now know how to lift with their knees to avoid any back sprains.

- Machine safety
  1. Very skilled operators have been trained to change broken needles and other minor repairs in each module.

Interviews with the supervisors and other workers

How do you see the relationship among operators, supervisors and management?

Florence Musseau (Supervisor): We take our time to explain things better to the operators.

Bien-aimé Gorrety (Stock): Now when I give an order, I am more strict and things are done better and quicker this way.

Rose-France Medenard (Checker): There is a feeling of partnership. We can always come and propose changes; we are also explained why some things cannot be done and why the management has chosen a certain issue to improve.

Romanès Augustin (Mechanic): Some staff members have been changed and now the relation between the management and us is a lot less tense.

What do you think about the progress of the company?

Ketty Achille (Checker): I have seen many changes being made, but there is still more to be done. For example: a cafeteria area. Creole: Bagay yo poko sa a (Things are still not perfect).
The entrepreneur’s view: Abraham Felix and Karine Felix

What improvements in terms of productivity and working conditions did you expect from the ILO project?
The improvement that I expected was a high quality volume in the factory.

Have these expectations been met?
Yes, these improvements have been met through hard work.

Which were the main difficulties encountered?
The main difficulty encountered was to get the workers to adapt to the new system.

How did the project help in achieving such improvements?
It helped by getting the workers to work better and to make good quality and work in a good environment.

How do you intend to pursue action in this area when the project finishes?
Even when the project finishes, I will do a follow-up of everything to make sure that the workers are doing what they are supposed to do.

When were changes initiated?
About eight to nine months ago.

Where did the idea come from?
Karine, my daughter, and the ILO. The ILO Project Manager, Claude, suggested choosing ten improvements if I wanted, from a report he had done for the company. It was the best I could do. I like the change.

Were the changes introduced at once or gradually by steps?
Step-by-step.

And how?
With Claude’s advice. And then among the ten improvements that we chose, we considered the most urgent: safety, productivity and comfort for the employees.

Were the supervisors involved?
Yes. The Filipino supervisors are particularly reliable and involved, but more effort was needed to ensure involvement of the Haitian supervisors.

What lessons have you learned from the process of change?
Someone from the outside has to come and pinpoint our flaws. To be more patient and tolerant. I allow the workers to have more time to learn. I am 50 per cent less nervous. I thought I could do everything myself. I forgot I was getting old. I thought I knew it all. I had trust only in myself. It was better when I started to delegate.
Martin Enterprise

Martin Enterprise is a ten-year old family company specializing in the production of uniforms for hospitals exclusively for the United States’ market. It has not always been so. The main production had been softballs in the past, but fierce global competition in this area had progressively reduced and eventually virtually eliminated this business.

Garment production has progressively emerged as a new business in this area and now constitutes almost the whole of production, with around 250 dozen items produced each day. This major process of transformation and renewal has brought dramatic changes within the company and in the way people work there.

From line to module

The 140 workers of Martin’s have been traditionally working on line, a system based on repetitive operations by individual workers not connected to each other in an organized production flow. The result has often been unbalanced production, especially for the production of more complex items, inactive operators and a high level of rejects. Faced with increasing competition, quantity and quality levels were increasingly appearing inadequate to the new challenges.

In March 2003, 36 of the best workers were put together to create the first enterprise module. Each one of these workers is now responsible for the entire finished output, and their salary is no longer calculated on an individual basis but on the results of the entire team. Other workers, such as those on checking or ironing, are also part of the team and are paid on team performance as well. A committee of five specially qualified workers from within the team has been created to serve as liaison between the module and management.

The physical organization of work has changed. In the new system, workers are no longer operating in rows looking at the back of co-workers, but are facing each other and more easily interacting when necessary. This facilitates communication, social dialogue and the building of a team spirit. Also, the introduction of a central common table, instead of a previous separating aisle, helps in activating a smooth production flow and in enhancing the perception of the new common work environment.
Most importantly, the new organizational system offers opportunities for individual development, as shown in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Module</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Production flow and output of operations on an individual basis</td>
<td>• Production flow and output of finished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Risks of unbalanced production and backlogs</td>
<td>product on a team basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No or little flexibility</td>
<td>• Favours more balanced production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Few opportunities for higher productivity</td>
<td>• Offers more flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Each worker skilled in one/limited task(s)</td>
<td>• More opportunities for improved productivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Workers are paid differently according to individual input</td>
<td>• Multi-skilled workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Limited worker responsibility</td>
<td>• Workers are paid equally on team output</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Limited, &quot;one-off&quot; training</td>
<td>• Increased worker responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Few opportunities for better wages</td>
<td>• Extended, continuous training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Little opportunity for job enrichment</td>
<td>• Opportunities for better wages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Workers may just be &quot;numbers&quot;</td>
<td>• More opportunities for job enrichment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Workers are recognized as &quot;people&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The introduction of the new working system has already brought significant benefits for the enterprise. Instead of 30 dozen hospital uniforms per day produced on the previous line, the module now produces 42 dozen. The productivity gain is calculated by the management at 20 to 25 per cent, while rejects from the clients have almost halved from 6 per cent to 3 per cent. Workers have their part of benefits. While individual pay per day for workers on line ranges from a basic 70 gourdes to a maximum of 85 gourdes, now all workers on the module are paid 100 gourdes. Also, those in checking and ironing activities, who were on basic salary when on line, receive 100 gourdes when working in a module, just as all other members of the team.
**Asking the entrepreneur about the module experience**

**How were the modules arranged?**

In the beginning, the “line” people were just arranged into modules. We chose the best operators we had for the pilot modules. Some people decided not to be in modules. Their rhythm was higher then the others, so they would rather work by themselves and make as much money as possible. On the fourth day, the operators were already reaching their quota. Team spirit was developed with time.

**How is the modular system spreading within the enterprise?**

It is steadier with modules than with lines, where an operator can affect the whole process and the chain is often broken by the absentees. Eventually I would like to keep the modular system.

We still have lines. One of the lines is not meeting my expectations. Maybe I will change it to a module. Two other lines are working very well. Financially it isn’t worth changing them into modules. In a module, it is more expensive to change the operators; also, you would be breaking it up.

---

**Better materials storage**

![Better materials storage](image1)

![Better materials storage](image2)

![Better materials storage](image3)
Better working tables

Making loading easier

In the storage area of Martin Enterprise, big rolls of fabrics were laying on the floor of the storage room and were handled exclusively by manual operations. Handling these rolls weighing a ton each in an increasingly limited space involved substantial risks, even to experienced workers, and the possibility of physical injury was a real threat. A lifting device was the obvious answer, but the purchase of a small crane or similar apparatus did not appear economically feasible.

Eventually a low-cost, but effective, solution was found. In order to gain space and simplify the loading and unloading of the fabric rolls, a new device was created. It consists of a metal bar to insert inside the roll, a steel rope, a hook in the ceiling and a very simple mechanism to lift the roll without major effort. Also, a trolley was built using scrap material that facilitates unloading and transport of rolls. The cost of this device was US$ 250.00, an affordable expense and one that greatly reduces risks for the workers concerned.
Other improvements

- Premises
  1. Nice plants were planted in front of the factory.
  2. Fans have been added. Now all windows are kept open at all times.
  3. The passageways are kept clear and are now painted.
  4. Extinguishers and exit doors are marked and kept clear.
  5. An evacuation plan has been established.

- Proper lighting
  1. The height of the light tubes has been adjusted for better lighting.
  2. Every Saturday a major clean-up and maintenance occurs.

- Practical workstations
  1. Operators are now more comfortable with their chairs. These have been adjusted to the workers’ needs.
  2. A sample of the work being done is placed in front of each module or line.

- Efficient materials storage and handling
  1. The supervisors try their best to keep the sewing area clean and all materials in their place.
  2. In the stock area, the raw materials are stored on shelves or on wooden pallets.
  3. The passageways are now defined by painted lines.
  4. The workers know how to use their knees while lifting raw materials.

- Machine safety
  1. Metal chain gloves are used when cutting the fabric at all times.
  2. Regular services are scheduled for all sewing machines.
  3. Selected operators were trained to assist the supervisors in each module. They are able to change broken needles and perform minor repairs.
  4. The floor is continuously being swept with a little water to prevent the dust from spreading again.

- Welfare facilities
  - A person is now in charge of cleaning the toilets all the time during the day.
The entrepreneur’s view: Soukaina Dupont

What improvements in terms of productivity and working conditions did you expect from the ILO project?

I had just started working and needed help in organizing production and in inventory control.

Have these expectations been met?

I have learned a lot. But the project was too broad and not targeted enough for the resources. It could have been more effective.

Which were the main difficulties encountered?

Getting operators to accept changes.

How did the project help in achieving such improvements?

M.P. (an ILO consultant) helped me with configuring the module when he worked at the factory.

How do you intend to pursue action in this area when the project finishes?

The WISE manual and the literature given will be invaluable resources in the future for continuing to improve working conditions and productivity.

When were changes initiated?

Two years ago.

Where did the idea come from?

ILO. It was a great opportunity and we chose to participate.

Were the changes introduced at once or gradually by steps?

Gradually.

And how?

Started with adjusting the table heights. Introduced modules. Changed the lighting system. We follow a “need-to-do” basis. We analyse the best way to act and then we do.

Were the supervisors involved?

Not really.

What lessons have you learned from the process of change?

Patience. Not to get upset when you have to repeat yourself endlessly. You have to be on top.

Have everything written down. You have to be there.

How did you get the workers to accept the change?

Explain the logic of things, a+ b =c, and show them.

What strategies were adopted in order to involve the workers?

Meetings. Talk to them on a one-to-one basis. When in groups, the people are afraid to talk.

And the dialogue process?

One-on-one. In each module, there is a committee of three operators. This helps in communication and the work is done better.
Interviews with the supervisors and other workers

**How do you see the relationship among operators, supervisors and management?**

Kettlie Cazeau (Quality): With the principals discussed in the training, we were able to inform the operators in a better way.

René Valière (Stock): Creole: *Kounye a nou met tèt nou ansanm, pou travay la fèt pi byen* (In my area, we now work as a team so that things are done better).

Cleophat Difficile (Chief Supervisor): We all work together. The supervisors together with the management. Creole: *Se yon fanmi k ap tarvay* (It is a family working together).

**What do you think about the progress of the company?**

Kettlie Cazeau (Quality): Now things are organized differently. We make sure that the passages are cleared and that the raw materials are used in an orderly manner. We have less waste of materials, by reducing their misuse.
P.B. Apparel

“We strive for excellence, customers’ and employees’ well-being”, says Charles Baker, production manager of P.B Apparel. With his 550 workers and a production of 60,000 items per week, he is competing hard on the global market. The strengths of the company are, in his own words, “proximity, price, quality and delivery”.

Proximity to the American market allows P.B. Apparel to deliver in a few weeks against the several months that can be necessary to its Asian competitors. However, labour costs have increased in Haiti over the last two years, and only by a substantial increase in productivity calculated at around 25 per cent has the company managed to keep previous competitiveness levels.

The big productivity increase has been primarily the result of the introduction of modular, instead of line, production. The module is now responsible for the entire production result, and each operator within the module does not work anymore in isolation, as was previously the case on line, but performance is evaluated and paid in function of the module output.

Quality is also now built in the module. Not only are those in charge of checking and auditing quality part of the module, but each operator is increasingly asked to participate in the everyday effort for quality control. In this perspective, workers become increasingly multi-skilled, capable of performing more than one operation on one or several sewing machines.

Training for jobs within the factory

The search for qualified operators has therefore become a priority issue for P.B. Apparel. However, as seen later under the case Enhancing inter-enterprise Cooperation: The recruitment initiative, the search for qualified operators has become a priority issue for all Haitian companies in the garment industry, to the point that being unable to find qualified operators is considered by some companies as their major weakness. Competition for such operators among companies is consequently high and recruitment is increasingly a difficult exercise.

In this context, B.P. Apparel has decided, with the help of the ILO project, to create a training school within the factory.

The school was started in November 2002 to meet the needs of the company in the absence of any outside school available. A special space was designated within the working premises to accommodate the new school, and better lighting in this area was provided. Twenty sewing machines and electricity connections were also put in operation.

Candidates are usually identified though the workforce informal network. Two trainers provide these totally inexperienced candidates with two to three weeks of training. Training includes the acquisition of technical skills using ILO training materials and also encouragement and motivation building.

At the end of that period, many of them are qualified to perform three to four operations on one machine, and are recruited by P.B Apparel or sent to work at sister companies. However, when they are first placed on a module, speed may not be there and another week or two may be required to fully integrate the newcomer in the working team. A total of around 120 people have been trained to date.
Learning at work

The cost of the initiative was US$ 60,000, a sum that the management of P.B. Apparel considers fully justified by the advantages obtained in having available a qualified, newly trained workforce that is in line with the company culture and immune from bad habits from previous jobs. The same management is determined to pursue the initiative and considers it fully sustainable in future.

Clearing and marking passageways

When ILO project HAI/99/M01/USA started two years ago the situation concerning passageways in P.B. Apparel was very poor. As shown in the following photograph, all kinds of objects and materials were lying on the floor, making circulation a dangerous exercise, impeding production flow, and creating a climate of insecurity and shabbiness.

Although the drawbacks of this situation were evident, they could not be seen by the people concerned and the problem was not even tackled. As the manager of P.B. Apparel put it: “The project operated as a catalyst in facilitating the understanding and implementation of a very low-cost solution that was at hand, but had never been considered before”.

The solution simply involved the removal of non-needed material and the opening and marking of the passageways. As shown in the second photograph, the situation has now completely changed. The passageways are not only opened and marked, but continuous maintenance helps keep them tidy and without impediments: an important
change towards increased productivity and quality of work, as well as the safety of the workforce.

Fixing electrical appliances

Wiring was repaired or replaced where necessary to improve workers’ safety.
Improving the toilet area

Before

After

Other improvements

- Premises
  1. Painted in red where the extinguishers are, and they have been placed at the appropriate height for easier use.
  2. Selected workers and supervisors are receiving a fire-fighting seminar.

- Proper lighting
  1. The windows, fans and light tubes are kept clean.

- Practical workstations
  1. Tables have been adjusted to the operators' height for more comfort.

- Efficient materials storage and handling
  1. All materials have a storage place and are kept off the floor.
  2. More shelves have been installed where needed.
  3. The floor has been painted with lines to divide each area and the passageways.
  4. The people unloading and loading the containers have been taught how to lift with their knees.

- Machine safety
  1. Selected operators were trained to perform minor repairs in the sewing machines.
  2. Fans have been placed in strategic places to blow away the toxic gases and heat.

- Welfare facilities
  1. More water coolers have been installed.
  2. The bathrooms have a janitor to clean and a lady to distribute toilet paper. This helps to reduce the waste of the paper.
  3. Selected workers and supervisors are receiving a seminar on HIV/AIDS.
The entrepreneur’s view: Charles Baker

*What improvements in terms of productivity and working conditions did you expect from the ILO project?*

We wanted to show to our workers that we care. With the school, we were looking forward to having workers with better working attitudes.

*Have these expectations been met?*

Yes.

*Which were the main difficulties encountered?*

No major obstacles.

*How did the project help in achieving such improvements?*

It helped to realize which problems we had and which remedies could be brought.

*How do you intend to pursue action in this area when the project finishes?*

Targeting at obtaining WRAP certification as a means to keep us focused on these problems that tended to go unnoticed in the past.

*When were changes initiated?*

Two years ago.

*Where did the idea come from?*

The ideas were there, but the fact of having positive criticism has helped trigger the changes. The ILO pinpointed them to us.

*Were the changes introduced at once or gradually by steps?*

Gradually, because of the amount of changes to be done.

*Were the supervisors involved?*

Some of them, especially the head supervisors.

*Was their contribution useful?*

More or less. They try, but their poor education is an obstacle.

*What lessons have you learned from the process of change?*

It costs a lot of money. Unfortunately, the buildings are inappropriate, there is not enough space to expand. We are limited. It would be great to have a place of our own to organize the space according to our needs.

*How was the change managed?*

I looked at the ILO project manager’s report and chose what I could do first. Delegated to each supervisor their responsibility and hired contractors.

*How did you get the workers to accept the change?*

They accepted, because they know that it is good for them. They had no problem in respecting the decisions of change.

*And the dialogue process?*

Open doors. Friendly talks.
Interviews with the supervisors and other workers

How do you see the relationship among operators, supervisors and management?

Mireille Duchemin (Quality): Amongst the participants there is a greater bond. They keep reminding each other of the improvements to be made.

Dominique Pierre (Stock): Our attitude has improved as well, we are more careful now. Sometimes we encourage the operators by telling them that we are expecting visitors, when in reality we are just maintaining.

Sergot Beauzier (Supervisor): The management has a talk with us about the changes, sometimes we are the ones that propose, and then management expects us to maintain them.

Are you aware of the changes to be made?

Sergot Beauzier (Supervisor): Changes are made directly by the management. They are well-aware of the necessary improvements. I just see them working hard and making things happen.
Confection et Emballage

A new canteen for the workers

When their work stopped at 11:00 a.m. every day for a 30-minute lunch break, all 300 workers of Confections et Emballage used to leave the factory, buy their food from small businesses in the neighbourhood and consume it where they could. Conditions for this exercise were far from ideal. The environment around the factory offers very little opportunity for eating and relaxing in a proper way.

The hot climate of the country makes rest and recovery particularly important after hours spent in a working environment where, despite ventilation, temperatures can be quite uncomfortable. This recovery is essential both for the workers’ health and safety and to maintain their level of performance at the required level.

Now the workers of Confections et Emballage have a brand-new cafeteria within the factory. It was built in two weeks using primarily scrap materials already existing in place. The iron bars used as a framework for the construction were laying abandoned in a side yard; the material for the roof had become available when a new roof had been installed over the working areas; only bricks, cement and labour had to be paid for. The total cost of the construction amounted to about US$ 1,000.00, an investment of only $10.00 for each of the 100 workers it can accommodate.

The new construction, inaugurated on 20 May 2003, offers a clean, healthier environment where workers can eat in shade, have a proper seat and the opportunity for more social interaction. More and better seats have already been ordered, and a second cafeteria is under construction to accommodate more workers.
Workers at Confections et Emballage work in hot premises most of the year. The hot climate of the country, together with the heat produced by the intensive lighting required for the special type of production, have a negative impact on the quality of the work environment. This was not originally conceived to facilitate natural ventilation. Structural works to address these deficiencies are considered too costly by the management and improved mechanical ventilation only partially contributes to alleviate the problem.

In search of low-cost, effective solutions, the management has opened a new cafeteria to allow workers to relax in a more comfortable environment during lunch breaks. It has installed five new water coolers in addition to the two already existing.

Now seven water coolers serve a workforce of 300 workers, one for every 40-45 workers, not an ideal proportion but certainly an improvement in respect of the previous situation. Higher availability of water coolers in proximity to individual workplaces have made their use very popular, and the management is in the process of introducing more of them to fully meet the demand.

Each water cooler is rented at about US$ 10.00 per month, while each tank of water (five gallons) costs little more than US$ 1.00. For each cooler, two water tanks are required each day, for a total of 14 water tanks at a total cost of about US$ 14.00.
In the view of Sabrina St-Rémy, Production Planning and Control Manager, this cost is largely compensated by returns in performance by the workforce. Lack of water and consequent dehydration not only has serious effects on the health of the workers, but also significantly lowers the level of attention and efficiency at work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other improvements</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Premises</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Windows are kept open throughout the day now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The passageways are kept clear, but when there is a lot to be shipped, the packing area is not so clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. They are in the process of improving the installation in the ironing area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proper lighting</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. In the finishing section, the ladies are no longer facing each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The contrast between the garments and the table has improved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. They have added light tubes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. They try their best to keep the windows, lights and fans always clean.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practical workstations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Supervisors make sure that the operators have all the tools needed at their workstation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A sample is now placed where the operators can clearly see it while they sew.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Efficient materials storage and handling</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. There is a group of people in charge of cleaning the sewing plant. They use water to keep the dust from going back into the air.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. They have removed the cutting area and storage from the main building into the one next door. This allows more control and order in this section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The management has carpenters putting together some extra shelves for more storage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. They now have more trolleys or carts to distribute the work and for storage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Machine safety</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The supervisors have chosen at least one skilled person in each module who is authorized to change a broken needle and undertake other minor repairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Welfare facilities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. One more toilet has been added.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A second cafeteria has been built for the employees.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The manager’s view: Sabrina St-Rémy

When were changes initiated?
One year ago.

Where did the idea come from?
ILO, foreign clients and auditors.

Were the changes introduced at once or gradually by steps?
Gradually.

And how?
The less costly changes first, and the most urgent. Our priorities were safety for clients; comfort for the employees; quality.

Were the supervisors involved?
Not really.

Was the workforce involved?
We listen to their complaints. We consider and evaluate them, then take action.

What lessons have you learned from the process of change?
Nothing is ever good enough for the employees. We try our best.

How was the change managed?
The workers are talked to. They are given advance notice of changes. They are involved in the process.

And the dialogue process?
Open doors. Personal talks.

Any other point you consider important in this respect?
The training should be longer, to take account of low general levels of education.

Interviews with the supervisors and other workers

How do you see the relationship among operators, supervisors and management?

Victor Civil (Supervisor): Many little details have been improved, such as the simple fact of making the operator feel more comfortable.

Marie René Sandaire (Finishing): I now try to solve problems without having to disturb the management, that before I would be too afraid to do.

What do you think about the progress of the company?

Victor Civil (Supervisor): Everything discussed during the training has helped us understand the work better.
SOHACOSA

Improving health and safety information

A big enterprise of 800 workers, specializing in casual, sports and children’s wear, SOHACOSA always had areas of danger signposted. However, indications of this type were relatively few compared to the size of the workforce, not always in the best places and not always clearly visible. In other words, they were not likely to effectively promote health and safety at the workplace.

In spring 2003, a major effort was made to make proper communication in this area flow effectively within the workplace. Right at the entrance, a series of self-explanatory posters clearly indicate the type of environment one is entering. It is an environment where discrimination, harassment, drugs, child labour and forced labour are not tolerated, and where the quality of the workplace is given priority. Announcements are in the local language, Creole.

Inside the workplace, new, highly visible posters indicate the location of fire alarms, fire extinguishers, first-aid boxes as well as the presence of dangerous substances or the risk of electrocution. Not only do the posters indicate the nature of danger or its location, but also a list of workers responsible for the different security areas is given.
New “Exit” lights have also been put in place: three for each of the three buildings of the factory.

The cost of providing these posters and signs was about US$ 1,200.00. The management is fully determined to pursue action in this area. They consider that sickness and accidents, with their related costs, may be reduced by this. Furthermore, performance in an environment where risks can be easily identified and workers feel more comfortable at work is likely to increase, with positive benefits for production and productivity levels.

Reducing the risks of dangerous substances

Reducing risks at work is, in the view of the management of SOHACOSA, a high priority issue within the company. They feel engaged in actively promoting a safe workplace, positively changing the attitudes of their supervisors and operators in this respect, and showing them that their management cares about their safety and health.

This policy is implemented on an on-going basis though a series of minor, but continuous, improvements that eventually contribute to the overall quality of work. Among such minor improvements — one concerning the handling of dangerous substances used to clean dirty or greasy spots on the fabric — was carried out in May 2003.

Cleaning such fabric involves spraying products on the fabric that may be dangerous to the health of the workers concerned. The table where spraying operations were carried out was located in a part of the factory with limited illumination and aeration. This increased the risks of handling such substances.

The table has now been moved near a window with full light and the availability of more air circulation: a simple, no-cost, preventive move that reduces the risks of the dangerous substances.
### Other improvements

**Premises**

1. Cracks in the floor have been repaired in one building.
2. The passageways and work areas have been marked and kept clear.
3. All electrical circuits have been checked and repaired.
4. More signs have been put up to identify fire extinguishers; exits; danger, etc.

**Proper lighting**

1. Maintenance is now managed with a checklist and a person is in charge of making the necessary changes.

**Practical workstations**

1. All materials are close to the operators to avoid a waste of time and effort and awkward reaching movements.
2. Tables are adjusted to the operators’ heights for more comfort.
3. Pregnant women are treated with more care and comprehension.

**Efficient materials storage and handling**

1. All raw material is now kept off the floor.
2. Tools in the mechanic shop are easier to find due to a better organization.
3. In the stock department, the workers know how to lift with their knees. Safety belts and gloves were given to them too.

**Machine safety**

1. Metal chained gloves are used in the cutting section.
2. Service and repairs are done regularly on the machines.
3. A ten-person committee was formed to perform minor repairs on the machines and to assist the supervisors in other issues.
4. Masks were given to workers in the stock department. Cloth masks were given to the people cleaning the toilets.

**Welfare facilities**

1. Toilets are kept clean by a janitor.
The management’s view: Meliza Sassine

When were changes initiated?
Last year (2002).

Where did the idea come from?
JC Penny, ILO, Sara Lee, WRAP.

Were the changes introduced at once or gradually by steps?
Introduced gradually.

And how?
We got help from a consultant. We targeted several points at once. First, the little problems were solved; and then, the major ones, since they take more time, work and money.

Were the supervisors involved?
Yes.

If yes, at what stage?
They propose, complain, maintain. Help and supervise with difficulties. They try their best.

Was their contribution useful?
Yes.

And how?
They say what is needed. They use a monthly checklist that is actually carried out. They are given time to fill it out and then they return it to the Human Resources Department and, in turn, to the person responsible for the maintenance.

Was the workforce involved?
Not really. But they also complain to the supervisors. They are told what to do or maintain by the supervisor.

What lessons have you learned from the process of change?
The factory is better, cleaner. The customers are happier. It gives us courage to continue. We get support from our customers and get more contracts, which makes us proud. We have learned to accept criticism in order to improve. We persevere with those workers who are not motivated to make improvements.

How was the change managed?
Communication is open. Subordinates are given instructions to make changes, but they can make suggestions.

How did you get the workers to accept the change?
Telling them that it would be to their benefit. We would have a better environment: more contracts, therefore an opportunity to make more money. They are encouraged.

What strategies were adopted in order to involve the workers?
Using the action plan and the advice from the consultant working for the WRAP certification. We have them get involved in the changes so that they feel part of it.

And the dialogue process?
Open doors for suggestions. We try to put ourselves at their level and have a friendly dialogue.
Interviews with the supervisors and other workers

How do you see the relationship among operators, supervisors and management?

Pierre André Charles (Bundling): Sometimes, the principles are not respected by the operators, and that is where we come in to make sure that things are done correctly.

Pierre Junior Guerrier (Stock): Since we have three buildings to take care of, it takes time to get everything into place. We are always receiving visitors, therefore we use this to pressure the workers to keep the company clean and in order.

Joel Gédeon (Personnel): I find that all operators are happier and more comfortable since the training took place.

Are you aware of the changes to be made?

Pierre André Charles (Bundling): The management is willing to make all the changes proposed by the ILO. But sometimes there is a financial barrier.

What do you think about the progress of the company?

Pierre André Charles (Bundling): We are missing a bit in the follow-up. We are trying our best to make things happen.
AG Textiles

New roof insulation

In October 2002, AG Textiles, a company with 300 workers specialized in the production of knitted wear, moved to new premises. It involved a major process of dislocation and reorganization, which is still underway. The new premises were better than the previous ones but, as for all Haitian companies, the problem of heat remained a major one.

The owner of the company was concerned about the impact of heat, both on the performance and on the health and safety of the workers concerned. However, the premises were only rented and this usually constitutes an impediment to making structural improvements in the working environment. Not in this case, where an agreement was reached between the owner of the premises and the owner of the company to share the cost of insulating the roof in a section of the workplace.

The owner of the premises paid for the materials, while the owner of the company met the cost of the installation at around US$ 1,000.00: a limited cost compared with the many advantages derived from the initiative. The section where the new insulation has been introduced is much fresher than the sections still with the original metal roof. This makes work easier and more effective. Insulation also contributes to reduce noise and, since it had been painted in white, it helps with illumination.

The advantages are so evident that the owner intends to extend this insulation to all the working premises.

New footrests

Footrests have been added to the tables, especially in the trimming and quality areas, to make it more comfortable for operators to work in a standing position.
Other improvements

- Premises
  1. In the near future, new fans will be installed all around the sewing plant. They will be facing one direction in order to optimize the air ventilation.
  2. In some places, the cracks in the floor have been repaired.
  3. Soon the passageways will be clearly marked.
  4. They are in the process of changing the entrance/exit system. Now all employees have a badge with a magnetic band to check in and out.
  5. An evacuation plan has been established.

- Proper lighting
  1. More fluorescent tubes have been installed, to increase the lighting and avoid eye strain.
  2. A more efficient system of maintenance is now observed. All windows, fans and lights are kept clean.

- Practical workstations
  1. The supervisors make sure that the operators have all the tools and materials needed for their work.
  2. Now all modules have a first-quality garment hanging in front of them as a sample.

- Efficient materials storage and handling
  1. In the storage building, all raw materials are now on wooden pallets or shelves.
  2. Shelves have been added in the bundling area.
  3. There is an improvement in the mechanic shop for the storage of tools.
  4. Now the workers know how to lift with their knees to avoid back sprains.

- Machine safety
  1. The supervisors have selected the most skilled operators to be their assistants. These operators have the ability to change broken needles, fix the tension in the machines and perform other minor repairs.
  2. The floors are now swept throughout the day while sprinkling some water on the dust.

- Welfare facilities
  1. A new nursing room has been built in the yard.
  2. Some benches have been installed for the workers to rest in the shade during their lunch break.
The entrepreneur’s view: Gilles Sassine

When were changes initiated?
In June 2002.

Where did the idea come from?
From Sara Lee, my own experience, and from the ILO, which helped me put the message out. Having an outsider come and pinpoint the improvements needed was of great help.

Were the changes introduced at once or gradually by steps?
Gradually.

And how?
With planning or sometimes the change was an emergency. First we make a list. Deadlines are not precise; they may vary. Both details and big problems are considered at the same time. Quality and production issues are a priority. Safety is considered as I move along. We try to make more money in order to continue with secondary changes.

Were the supervisors involved?
Yes, sometimes.

If yes, at what stage?
A few supervisors propose changes or improvements. These are later analysed. They help make things happen. They are my voice on the floor.

Was their contribution useful?
Yes, sometimes.

And how?
They help pinpoint a problem; set-up the machines. We take advantage of their experience.

Was the workforce involved?
Yes.

If yes, at what stage?
Communicating with other workers. They come to me and inform me about the problems that the supervisors overlook.

Was their contribution useful?
Yes.

And how?
Their information has helped me solve many little issues that would otherwise later cause a bigger problem.

What lessons have you learned from the process of change?
To take deep breaths. Not to jump to conclusions. Wrong analyses can be made if we don't take our time to look at things more calmly. Keep my cool. Take your time to figure the employees out.

How was the change managed?
The more people you get involved, the better. They need to be involved. I delegate as much as possible. The supervisors are my voice to the operators. I introduced a principle of early communication between the supervisors and the management.

How did you get the workers to accept the change?
Through monetary incentives in the payroll.

What strategies were adopted in order to involve the workers?

And the dialogue process?
Open doors. A spokesperson or representative of the line or module comes to me in case of a problem. At least two are named in order to get a larger view of the issue. A Human Resource person has been hired to help me in the areas where I lack experience and time to handle.
Interviews with the supervisors and other workers

How do you see the relationship among operators, supervisors and management?

Desgranges Rothchild (Trainer): The supervisors are now more understanding towards the operators. We listen more to what they have to say.

Lucas Boursiqout (Supervisor): Creole: Oparavan, sipevisè yo te gen ti bagay kache dan yo mem (Before, the supervisors used to keep things to themselves). Creole: Seminè a vin aprann nou travay anekip (The training taught us how to work as a team). Now, we work as a team and give each other advice and support.

Aliette Laurent (Supervisor): The supervisors have a better communication amongst themselves after the training.

Desgranges Rothchild (Trainer): We have weekly meetings with staff members, where we debate and share opinions.

Are you aware of the changes to be made?

Desgranges Rothchild (Trainer): Some changes are planned to be done in the short term, and others in the long term according to the cost and urgency.

Aliette Laurent (Supervisor): The management always has meetings to make us aware of any change.

What do you think about the progress of the company?

Lucas Boursiqout (Supervisor): Now I have the tools to present a proposal in a more efficient way. This, in turn, allows the management to respond rapidly.

Are you involved in the changes?

Desgranges Rothchild (Trainer): The management decides what needs to be done after listening to our suggestions and proposals.

Lucas Boursiqout (Supervisor): Personally, I have initiated the fire-escape plan. We have divided the plant and assigned an exit for each section. Now everyone is aware of the exit to use in case of a fire.
Supratex

Introducing a social programme

Rolf Berthold is the President of Supratex, a company specializing in the production of garments for women and children with a workforce of 300. He is very proud of what he defines as the company’s “Social Programme”. His wife is the engine of this programme and, in her own words, devotes much time and energy to the programme. Both recognize that this initiative found great inspiration from the ideas and advices generated by ILO project HAI/99/M01/USA.

The programme, which mirrors similar ones in operation in other Haitian companies in the garment sector, consists of a series of small initiatives targeted at improving hygiene and healthy behaviour at the workplace, as well as at providing practical help in many ways to the workers of the company.

Workers are initiated in the rudiments of how to drink and eat properly by making, for instance, use of a fork instead of their hands, which may be a vehicle of infection or ingestion of dangerous substances. Tables, chairs, and clean dishes and napkins are also provided every day to the workers eating within the company.

At the same time, workers are trained in personal hygiene, to such simple — but essential — things as washing their hands when they use a toilet. Clean hands not only contribute to the health of the workers, but also are essential to guarantee the quality of products that are often delicate in substance and white in colour.

The social programme also helps the company workers in a number of administrative requirements for social security, and provides them with access to basic food (like rice or pasta) at a better price than the retail price, by buying such food in large quantities.

The cost for tables, chairs, plates, forks, etc., amounted to US$ 1,200.00. Two workers volunteer to clean the dishes at an extra US$ 0.50 a day. Training in healthy behaviour is carried out with the help of the women supervisors. Rolf Berthold and his wife consider these costs fully justified in terms of returns both in quality of work and productivity.
Other improvements

- Premises
  1. The industrial park (SONAPI) planted more plants and supervise monthly.
  2. Windows are kept open and clear.
  3. Big industrial fans have been bought.
  4. A new boiler is being installed in the ironing station.
  5. The electrical circuits have been fixed.
  6. 'Danger' and 'Exit' signs have been put up.
  7. One more door has been opened as an exit.
  8. A group of operators and supervisors has been trained for a fire drill.
  9. An evacuation plan has been established.

- Proper lighting
  1. Changed the placement of the lines to avoid distraction.
  2. Lighting system is in the process of being changed.
  3. Windows, light tubes and fans are cleaned more often.

- Practical workstations
  1. The 'distributors' were trained to keep the work flow going. Operators never have to wait for the bundles anymore.
  2. Tables are now standard for the standing operations.
  3. The distances between the operator and the work are now reduced.
  4. New wood and metal chairs are replacing the old ones.
  5. Footrests were added to the tables that lacked them.
  6. Each line has a sample to follow that is hanging were it is visible to all operators.

- Efficient materials storage and handling
  1. All styles are now stored separately.
  2. A working table is being made for the mechanic shop.
  3. Shelves have been added in the mechanic shop for more storage room.

- Machine safety
  1. Five floor-boys have been reorganized to do the cleaning by sections.

- Welfare facilities
  1. Carts carry igloos with drinking water for the operators. They now do not have to get up to drink.
  2. More first-aid kits have been installed.
The entrepreneur's view: Rolf Berthold

**When were changes initiated?**
April 2002.

**Where did the idea come from?**
Seminars by the ILO, and from Regine (his wife).

**Were the changes introduced at once or gradually by steps?**
By steps.

**And how?**
We ask ourselves: How much will it cost? How much time will it take? Is it going to block the production? Can it be done in a short period of time or parallel to the production?

**Were the supervisors involved?**
Yes. Some ideas are theirs. The footrest idea was their initiative. They help maintain the change. Sometimes they take charge of the change. For example, the floor-boys are organized by one of the head supervisors. We always involve them.

**Was their contribution useful?**
Yes.

**And how?**
There is less charge on managers' shoulders when you delegate.

**Was the workforce involved?**
Yes.

**If yes, at what stage?**
Some ideas come from them. We keep an open dialogue.

**What lessons have you learned from the process of change?**
Hygiene and culture are important. Staff members and supervisors must be aware of the changes. The management meets with the head supervisors and staff to introduce a change; then the supervisors meet with their operators and pass on the information. Before, a change was considered to be ‘our change’, referring to the management. Now it is ‘their change’, referring to the employees.
Interviews with the supervisors and other workers

How do you see the relationship among operators, supervisors and management?

Jameau Olmande (Administration): The workers want the changes to be made, they also cooperate. The management is involved with the supervisors and workforce.

Marie Joceline Damis (Audit): We have a powerful team spirit. We use a special way to speak to our operators, in order for them to have a positive response toward the changes. We treat them with respect and humanity. We pay more attention to the distributors; they are the ones in charge of keeping the work flowing in the lines. The workers respect the changes because they understand that it increases their productivity; they therefore make more money. The supervisors give ideas to the management and then they take measures.

Jonas St. Fleur (Administration): We have full support from the management.

Are you aware of the changes to be made?

Chassagne Michelet (Administration): The ideas were made by the workers and suggested to the owner. We have a good response from the owner.

What do you think about the progress of the company?

Jameau Olmande (Administration): The ideas were there, but the training gave them a push. The changes have been made little by little, so that the production would not stop.

Marie Joceline Damis (Audit): Productivity and quality have increased. We are very happy with what has been done, but we still need more.
REC MFG

Improving air circulation

A large company with almost 1,000 workers, specializing in the production men’s T-shirts, REC MFG is concerned, as with other Haitian companies in the garment sector, with a too hot working environment that negatively impacts on the workers’ well-being and on the efficiency of operations.

The building where REC MFG is located has mobile shutters to enhance air circulation, but these were hardly used because of obstacles both inside and outside the external walls, and also because of lack of attention to the problem.

Following a suggestion from ILO project HAI/99/M01/USA, most obstacles were removed and a person is now in charge of opening and closing the shutters as necessary. In fact, it is the workers concerned in the different sections of the building that indicate when these operations must take place, balancing increased ventilation against the impact of direct sunlight at different times in the day.

This simple, no-cost improvement is very appreciated both by the workers and the management.
### Other improvements

- **Premises**
  1. More fans have been added and put in strategic places.
  2. The passageways are kept clean and clear of obstacles.
  3. The electrical installations are isolated and free of hazards.
  4. An evacuation plan has been established.
  5. The floor is less dusty with the use of water while sweeping.
  6. Fans in the cleaning area, where thinner is used to remove stains, have been moved to blow the toxic gases out of the building.

- **Proper lighting**
  1. The maintenance of the light tubes, windows and fans is a lot better.

- **Practical workstations**
  1. Footrests have been added to some of the tables.

- **Efficient materials storage and handling**
  1. Materials have a specific storage place and these are usually respected.
  2. More shelves have been installed.
  3. The mechanic shop is more organized. Tools are easier to find now.

- **Machine safety**
  1. Some operators have been trained to perform minor repairs on the sewing machines.
The manager’s view: Rachel Etheard

*When were changes initiated?*

2002.

*Where did the idea come from?*

ILO, WRAP and customers such as Wal-Mart.

*Were the changes introduced at once or gradually by steps?*

Gradually.

*And how?*

Quickly: we decide and then it is done. No planning. We targeted what was needed for the work to be done. Safety was always a consideration.

*Were the supervisors involved?*

Not really.

*What lessons have you learned from the process of change?*

It was hard to maintain. When you’re in a rush, the people forget to keep things in order. “We do it the Haitian way”, which means having no method to do things.

*How did you get the workers to accept the change?*

By talking to them. Meetings with supervisors. Supervisors talk to workers.

*And the dialogue process?*

Open doors. We talk at the same level. The people walk in at any time. The staff is always available for the workers to complain or talk.

*Any other point you consider important in this respect?*

Education is poor at all levels. You have to sit and talk for them to understand.

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Interviews with the supervisors and other workers

*How do you see the relationship among operators, supervisors and management?*

Lucmanne Charles (Supervisor): With workers, it is hard to maintain because of their lack of education. We try to make them more comfortable. Team work amongst the supervisors is very little.

Fritz Denojour (Supervisor): We explain more to the workers. In meetings, we propose. Supplies are provided when needed.
Team Manufacturing

Emergency exits

Early in 2003, Team Manufacturing, a company of 650 workers specializing in sportswear, moved to new premises. The situation there is still in progress but, in designing the use of the new workplace, special attention had been paid to an important aspect concerning workers’ safety.

The workplace was divided into three zones of activity, clearly signposted, and for each zone a separate exit, also clearly signposted, had been provided in case of emergency evacuation.

The solution is a very low-cost one. The cost was minimized because the initiative was undertaken in the design phase of organizing the new premises. The cost would have been much greater if this initiative had been undertaken at a later stage with installations already in operation. The case confirms the importance of early improvements and the diseconomy of procrastinating decisions in this area.
### Other improvements

- **Premises**
  1. Windows are kept clean and open.
  2. More fans were added.
  3. Some cracks in the floor were fixed.
  4. The floor was painted with dividing lines and passageways.
  5. The ironing station was placed next to a window for better air circulation.
  6. Exit doors and fire extinguishers are kept clear and with signs.
  7. A fire-drill seminar was conducted for several workers.
  8. An evacuation plan was established.

- **Proper lightning**
  1. Visual distraction was reduced by rearranging the workplace.
  2. Contrast is now kept between the working table and the garments.
  3. Maintenance is part of the workers’ daily tasks.

- **Practical workstations**
  1. The table heights were adjusted to the workers.
  2. A sample is placed in front of each module and line.

- **Efficient materials storage and handling**
  1. Raw materials have a specific storage place off the floor.
  2. More shelves were installed for storage room.
  3. The passageways and working areas are kept clear and marked.
  4. More fork-lifts were bought to reduce heavy manual handling.

- **Machine safety**
  1. Metal chain gloves were purchased immediately after an accident in the cutting area.
  2. Selected operators were trained to assist the supervisors and perform minor repairs on the sewing machines.
  3. The floor is always swept with a bit of water throughout the day.
  4. Chemical cleaners and toxic liquids are now a last resource to remove stains. They mainly use baby powder or washing machines.

- **Welfare facilities**
  1. There are more water-coolers, but it is still not enough.
  2. Benches under the trees are used during lunchtime as a cafeteria.
The manager's view: Maxime Condé

When were changes initiated?
Six months ago. We changed the layout. Each company sewn for is kept separate, to avoid confusion and mistakes. A safety programme (with two fire drills) was put in operation. The fire brigade is also operational. Fire alarms are being installed. Workers have been instructed to wash their hands after using the bathrooms and before coming to the sewing area.

Where did the idea come from?
ILO, WRAP (almost qualified) and customers such as Sara Lee and Rainbow

Were the changes introduced at once or gradually by steps?
Gradually. Improvement is an on-going process.

And how?
We provided the workers with proper equipment and drinking water. A water filter was installed for this purpose. Proper toilets and proper ventilation were also installed. Within the next six months, a cafeteria will be built.

Were the supervisors involved?
Some are.

If yes, at what stage?
The changes are made after having meetings with the staff and supervisors; they are evaluated on a daily basis. Supervisors make recommendations. They are given a time table, which is analysed. Discussions are held to adjust plans as necessary.

Was the workforce involved?
They are. We listen to their complaints. After considering the improvements suggested, an action plan is implemented.

How did you get the workers to accept the change?
By talking and insisting.

And the dialogue process?
Always open. We listen to them and usually refer them to their immediate superior.

Interviews with the supervisors and other workers

How do you see the relationship among operators, supervisors and management?
Robert Joseph (Quality): Sometimes you have the operators do or put things correctly, but then things go back to the way they were. So we have to be on top.

Sylla Calenis (Supervisor): Creole: Kolaborasyon tet ensanm, nomal (Collaboration and team work is our motto). There must be a balance between tolerance and application of the norms. Sometimes we must be understanding, and at other times, very strict. As with raising a child, you must discipline and also give love. Creole: Mwen pa gen pwoblem ak moun yo (I have no problem with the operators). Things must be done the right way with quality. This is where we must be strict.

Pierre-Garry Louis (Packing): Our team spirit has improved since the training. We give advice to each other. We understand that we all have common goals, so therefore we now work together. We have suggested many changes and they have been taken in consideration by management.
Palm Apparel

Palm Apparel is a completely new company with 700 workers, currently producing 2,500 dozen T-shirts per day. It is still in a phase of installation and development, but strongly committed to socially responsible manufacturing through WRAP (Worldwide Responsible Apparel Production Principles) certification, and the ILO WISE (Work Improvement in Small Enterprises) programme.

A safer electrical system

In the premises now occupied by Palm Apparel, pre-existing flying cables linked the individual machines to the electrical system. This solution involved clear risks to the safety of the workers concerned, and could be an impediment to movement and smooth production.

Before

The old cables are being replaced progressively by a new piping system, whereby a metal cover protects the cables and the entire structure is a stable, rather than a flying, one. The cost of the replacement is US$ 60,000.00. The management considers this an investment, and looks to the possibility of finding new clients and the opening of new markets as a result of their socially responsible policy.

After
A new mechanical workshop

When asked what return he expected for his US$ 5,000.00 spent in the construction of an entirely new mechanical workshop, Alan Villard, Vice-president of Palm Apparel, was almost offended by the question: “This will obviously facilitate maintenance of the workplace, contribute to a quality and timely production, and help in reducing the occupational risks of those operating in the workshop”.

The first photo shows the old workshop (or better, what remains of it now) as a very inefficient and dangerous place.

Before

The second photo shows the new workshop, a place where risks are reduced and the efficiency of production is increased. Those working in the new workshop are enthusiastic and proud of their new work environment, ready to show the improvements that have been made and to comment positively on the initiative.

After
Other improvements

- Premises
  1. Exit doors and extinguishers are kept clear.
  2. More signs have been put up for a better understanding, in Creole too.
  3. An evacuation plan is in process.
  4. More fans have been installed.

- Practical workstations
  1. Small boxes have been added to sewing stations for an easier access to the materials.
  2. Floor mats have been purchased for the standing workers.
  3. Tapes with different size measurements are renewed more often.

- Efficient materials storage and handling
  1. The floor is more organized now. Everything has an assigned place and is usually respected.
  2. Raw materials are stored on shelves or on wooden pallets.
  3. Shelves have been added for better storage.
  4. The mechanic shop is now very well organized.
  5. Support belts and gloves have been purchased for the workers that are in the stock department.

- Machine safety
  1. Selected operators are trained to be ‘utilities’. They assist the supervisor in their module and are able to perform minor repairs on the sewing machines.

- Welfare facilities
  1. There is a worker in change of distributing drinking water to all operators with an igloo on a cart.
  2. A cafeteria will soon be built for the employees.
The manager’s view: Raynold Et heard

*When were changes initiated?*
In October 2002. We are still in the process of organizing. Things take time in Haiti.

*Where did the idea come from?*
Our business plan, the ILO and WRAP. We still have a lot to do.

*Were the changes introduced at once or gradually by steps?*
Gradually.

*And how?*
As we go along, the changes are introduced. We are a new company, so everything is done for the first
time, always trying not to make the same mistakes other companies have made. We use their experience
to be the best we can be.

*Were the supervisors involved?*
Yes, very much.

*If yes, at what stage?*
They are involved in all the stages, meaning the development of an improvement or project; the action
plan; implementation; follow-up.

*Was their contribution useful?*
Yes.

*And how?*
Every Monday, they have meetings with the head people (chief supervisors in all areas). We review
production numbers, discuss how to improve. Meetings are also held on a daily basis.

*What lessons have you learned from the process of change?*
So many things. Try to understand their reasons and make them work. Be patient is number one. Open
dialogue. You have to give more than expected, at all levels.

Interviews with the supervisors and other workers

*How do you see the relationship among operators, supervisors and management?*
Charles Yvon (Chief of Personnel): The training has helped us keep our cool and temper in difficult
situations with the operators. Creole: *Nou gen yon metriz deswa* (We have more control of ourselves).

*Are you aware of the changes to be made?*
Charles Yvon (Chief of Personnel): We are part of all changes one way or the other. Most of the
participants in the training were staff members. So everybody is involved and aware of what is going on.

*What do you think about the progress of the company?*
Naomie Pierre (Office Manager): They are still in the process of growing and learning. They are striving to
be better day by day.
Global

With its 600 workers producing 600 dozen trousers and shorts every day, Global is located in the same buildings as Palm Apparel (in fact, the owner of Global is one of the co-owners of the new Palm). Vicinity means also a sort of positive emulation among the people operating in the two companies in improving productivity and working conditions in line with WISE and also with WRAP principles, since the owner is working towards WRAP certification.

New air ventilators

Within this context and following recommendations provided by ILO project HAI/99/M01/USA, Global has recently introduced 20 new fans, at a cost of US$ 2,000.00, in a workplace previously without any mechanical ventilation at all.

The result is a much more comfortable workplace with expected better performance and improved health and safety for the operators working there.

A new room for the generator

The old generator of Global is still there, extremely noisy, a serious nuisance for all those working in the factory.
Just a few meters away, however, a new house for the generator is being built, fully insulated to reduce noise to acceptable levels.

The cost of the entire operation is US$ 100,000.00, a major investment which reflects not only legal requirements, but also a clear sign of the new entrepreneurial concern for the quality of the work environment and the health of the workforce. The improvement also shows that, while low-cost initiatives are a powerful means to improve working conditions and productivity within enterprises, major, more costly changes may also occur when the process is well underway and the new ideas firmly rooted into managerial strategies.

**Improved welfare facilities**

Workers are now allowed the task of distributing cool water in an igloo, moved around the factory on a cart.
First-aid kits have been installed in the plant, and checks are made regularly to ensure that they are adequately stocked.

Other improvements

- Premises
  1. The area where the sun shone brightly into the operators’ eyes now has blinds.
  2. 20 new fans were installed in the sewing area.
  3. Additional fire extinguishers were installed in strategic places.
  4. The staff has established an evacuation plan and has scheduled fire drills.
  5. In the cleaning area, a fan has been positioned so that it helps to blow out the toxic gases.

- Practical workstations
  1. The operators now find all the tools and materials that they need for their work.
  2. Footrests have been added to those tables that were lacking one, for more comfortable postures.
  3. Stools have been made for the quality checking ladies.
  4. Samples are put in front of the modules for the operators to follow.

- Efficient materials storage and handling
  1. Everything now has a place and is almost always kept in its place.
  2. The floor has been divided into sections with passageways between them for greater organization.

- Machine safety
  1. The management has placed an order for metal chain gloves.
  2. Some operators are now able to change the broken needles in their module, as well as to repair minor issues.

- Welfare facilities
  1. 10 new toilets have been built.
  2. Workers now benefit from a cafeteria.
The manager's view: Serge Rosenthal

**When were changes initiated?**
I started myself with all the improvements eight months ago. Ten new toilets were built. Heat stress was tackled by installing fans. Fire extinguishers were installed and fire-drills conducted. A team was created for health and safety. Training for fire-drills was provided at the Red Cross.

**Where did the idea come from?**
K-Mart, Target, ILO and training for supervisors.

**Were the changes introduced at once or gradually by steps?**
Some at once and others gradually.

**And how?**
Safety first. The needs of workers were a priority, for example, in the installation of new fans. We study their suggestions and complaints. We look at cost, if it is not a safety issue. Mondays we have meetings with staff members and supervisors.

**Were the supervisors involved?**
Yes.

**If yes, at what stage?**
They are involved in everything. Workers too. The health and safety committee has workers too. Since the workers deal with safety issues, this encourages communication. Supervisors help us by keeping order when the operators go out to lunch. They make sure that the stairs are used correctly.

**What lessons have you learned from the process of change?**
Many things are missing. I take their advice. We listen more to the people's needs.

**What strategies were adopted in order to involve the workers?**
Talking directly with the workers. I am always on the floor.

**Any other point you consider important in this respect?**
I would like for the ILO to visit us more often and give us more advice to help us improve.

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Interviews with the supervisors and other workers

**How do you see the relationship among operators, supervisors and management?**
Antoine Harry (Supervisor): We try our best to understand the operators.

Yonel Ivera (Chief of Personnel): We have a very cordial relationship with management.

**How has the situation changed after the training?**
Jean Fernand Joseph (Mechanic): Before, we were missing tools and a table that we needed, and after the training we requested them and got them very soon. Creole: *Nan nivo shop mekanik la tout bagay anfomy* (Everything is great in the mechanic shop).
Conclusion

Some important changes have started to happen in the participating garment assembly factories in Haiti. The changes are, overall, benefitting both the workers and the employers. But the real value of these changes can only be assessed later, when it can be seen whether their implementation has been sustained, whether the process of improvement has taken root so that new improvements continue to be made, and whether more effective means of involving workers have been introduced.