

Plan A

Press Release

17th September 2013

M&S SIGNS DEAL WITH GOOD WORLD SOLUTIONS

M&S to communicate directly with 22,500 workers in clothing supply chain

Four surveys a year planned on topics including working conditions and financial literacy

Marks & Spencer (M&S) has signed a one year deal to work with social enterprise technology provider [Good World Solutions](#) to facilitate direct communications with workers in its clothing supply chain via mobile technology.

M&S will use [Labor Link](#), technology that returns anonymous, quantitative survey results to M&S direct from supply chain workers. Workers listen to questions on their mobile phones in Hindi, Sinhalese, or another local language, and respond using their touch-tone keypad.

As part of its [Plan A](#) programme, M&S has already tested the technology with 13 suppliers in India and Sri Lanka, surveying over 2,000 workers as part of M&S' financial literacy and health and nutrition Plan A training programmes.

With the support of its suppliers, M&S will now roll out the service to 30 factories and 22,500 workers in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, gathering feedback on subjects such as working conditions, job satisfaction and training. Four surveys are planned a year. There is no cost to the workers to use the technology and a minimal cost for the M&S suppliers to receive the summary data.

Fiona Sadler, Head of Ethical Sourcing at Marks & Spencer, said: “This is an innovative breakthrough for us and moves workplace communication into the digital era. It’s not about checking up on our suppliers, it’s about making sure we’re doing the right things for the workers in our supply chain and giving them a voice.

“We don’t directly employ workers in the factories, but they make Marks & Spencer products, take part in Marks & Spencer training programmes and have a stake in our brand. It’s important to know whether we’re getting things right. The real time data Labor Link can deliver for us will be invaluable in shaping our policies and programmes.”

Heather Franzese, Director of Good World Solutions, said: “As the first UK company to give workers a voice through mobile technology, M&S is really taking a leadership position. There are 4.5 billion mobile subscriptions in the developing world. This is a truly disruptive innovation in ethical trade – enabling workers and buyers to connect directly.”

Trial results

M&S completed two successful trials using Labor Link in South Asia last year.

In India, factory workers completed a 12-question survey on banking, savings, and insurance, ahead of a scheduled Plan A training course on financial literacy. The pre-training survey included questions such as “Do you have a bank account?” and “What will happen to your savings after you die?”. Findings included:

- 59% of survey participants have their own bank account. That compares to 95% of adults in the United Kingdom;
- 56% of those surveyed do not have savings. By comparison, only 22% of adults in the United Kingdom have no savings.
- Those with savings typically choose to keep their money at home (43%), rather than at a bank, microfinance institution (MFI) or other location;
- 18% of workers surveyed do not know what happens to their savings when they die, and another 12% believe the bank or MFI where savings are kept get to keep the funds.

In Sri Lanka, workers completed a 12-question survey on health, balanced diet, and disease prevention before and after M&S “Healthy Week” training program. Pre-and post-training surveys included questions such as “Can you spread a disease by coughing or sneezing on someone?”. Findings included:

- Worker understanding about how disease is spread and how it can be prevented increased 50% from the pre-training to the post-training survey;
- Data shows almost universal improvement in the understanding of health and nutrition principles among trained workers.

Ends

Notes to editors

Plan A

Plan A is Marks & Spencer's eco and ethical programme that aims to make M&S the world's most sustainable major retailer by 2015. Launched in 2007 and extended in March 2010, it takes a holistic approach to sustainability focusing on involving customers, involving all areas of the business and tackling issues such as climate change, waste, raw materials, health and being a fair partner.

About Good World Solutions

Good World Solutions is a non-profit social enterprise that develops affordable and scalable technology to improve the lives of workers globally. Labor Link, its flagship tool, leverages 4.5 billion mobile subscriptions in the developing world to connect the workers that produce our food, clothing, and electronics with the companies that buy them. By increasing transparency in global supply chains, Good World simultaneously gives workers a voice to report on conditions and gives companies actionable, real-time data to drive ethical and sustainable sourcing. Find out more at www.goodworldsolutions.org.

Further information

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