



An Experiment with
Factory Training to Enhance
Social Dialogue in

TURKEY



For Fair Wear Foundation, lasting improvements in workplace conditions are impossible without strong industrial relations systems in place. And yet in many countries where garments are made, there are legal and cultural barriers to thriving social dialogue.

‘Social and legal barriers to freedom of association are a massive challenge in many garment producing countries,’ says FWF’s Margreet Vrieling, who manages FWF’s work in Turkey and is point person for FWF’s Workplace Education Programme.’

‘So if we want workplace improvements that endure despite these impediments to the organic development of social dialogue, the only hope is finding new ways for these institutions to grow.’

THE NEED TO BOLSTER SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN TURKEY

In Turkey, the need to support social dialogue is particularly pronounced.

FWF verification audits in Turkey for nearly a decade have revealed persistent, systemic restrictions on freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively. Turkey’s national law runs afoul of international labour standards for freedom of association (this has been the subject of ongoing efforts by the ILO and EU to see the law changed), and the country’s political and cultural legacy has contributed to highly adversarial relationships between most trade unions and businesses.

As a result, workers and managers in most garment factories simply do not have access to the skills and knowledge needed to implement, and benefit from, social dialogue in the workplace.

With regard to social dialogue, FWF verification audits in Turkish garment factories have generally revealed:

- Limited awareness of labour standards and workers’ rights among workers, supervisors, and managers
- No functional grievance systems or worker committees
- No trade union presence
- Where worker representatives exist in factories, they are not freely- and/or democratically-elected

WHAT IS SOCIAL DIALOGUE?

Social dialogue essentially amounts to clear communications, open consultation, and /or fair negotiations between employers and workers (and government, where relevant).

The term pertains to a wide range of activities – from problem-solving discussions between workers and managers at the factory level to collective bargaining at the national level or even international level. According to the International Labour Organisation, the goal of social dialogue ‘is to promote consensus building and democratic involvement among stakeholders in the world of work’ (ILO, 2008).

In the context of this report, we are referring mainly to social dialogue activities at the enterprise level – that is, in factories.

A WAY TO JUMP-START SOCIAL DIALOGUE?

It is abundantly clear that social dialogue is far from thriving in Turkey's garment factories. So what action can be taken to reverse this trend in factories?

In keeping with EU and ILO calls, action must be of course taken by the Turkish government to align Turkey's labour legislation with Conventions 87 and 98. But if we deal with the current reality in Turkey, is it possible to harness FWF's independence – and the influence it possesses through its member brands – to help jump-start social dialogue at the factory level? And, if solid foundations for social dialogue are laid – e.g. effective communication, functioning channels for grievances and conflict resolution – is this enough to support ongoing improvements for social dialogue locally?

With funding from FNV Bondgenoten, FWF set out on a two-year project (2011-12) to pilot a training programme designed to answer these questions. This report summarizes the project approach, its outcomes, and key takeaways that can help shape future efforts to support social dialogue in Turkey.

SECTION ONE: WHAT WE SET OUT TO DO

A. THE TRAINING WE DESIGNED

In developing this project, we worked with partners in Turkey and at the international level to identify good practice in terms of factory training, with a special focus on training for workers. Training was designed to:

- **Provide the knowledge needed**

With the help of trainers who work closely with workers, we developed materials to meet workers where they are. We developed a set of eight interactive modules that started from the beginning and progressively covered:

- FWF Code of Labour Practices
- Workplace Communication
- Grievance mechanism
- Role of worker representatives
- Conflict resolution and negotiation
- Barriers to efficient communication and representation (e.g. discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, intimidation)
- Meeting skills and effective committee work
- Stress management

- **Take a participatory approach**

Each module lasts two hours and involves role-plays, small group work, and large group discussions. By taking a very participatory approach, workers could practice what they learned and make it their own.

- **Tap trade union expertise in developing and delivering training**

In countries with mature national-level industrial relations systems, trade unions play a key role in training workers with regard to workplace communication, committees, grievance systems, etc. Yet in Turkey, most trade unions cannot get through the door at most garment factories. In designing this training, we envisioned trade unions helping to shape training content and helping to deliver modules pertaining to workers rights.

- **Collaborate with management to select a representative sample of workers for training**

Removing a sample of workers from the workforce for a solid two hours every week or two can wreak havoc on workflow and delivery times. So management must be involved in selecting workers to participate with minimal impact to production. Management would also need to have a voice on timing trainings to align with low production periods.

Taking these points into consideration, we worked to select a cross section of the workforce, seeking a sample that could be representative of the workforce in terms of gender, seniority, skill, and department.

- **Invite selected workers to opt in or out of training**

It would contradict FWF's principles to involve workers in training involuntarily. What's more, training is most effective when participants are enthused to be there. So selected workers would be invited, but not required, to participate.

- **Pay workers for their time in training**

A requirement of factories that participated in the project was a commitment to pay workers their average hourly wage for the time they participate in trainings.

- **Ensure a safe space for worker learning**

Given FWF's inclusive approach to all of its work, it is unusual for FWF to request a stakeholder group steer clear of a meeting. But the guidance for management was not to attend worker training in order to ensure workers could feel comfortable sharing experiences and practicing new skills.

- **Keep management 'in the loop'**

While FWF requested managers to avoid the trainings themselves, they were provided with all of the training materials in advance. And trainers would provide informal guidance for management in parallel to worker training rollout in order to help them develop their own social dialogue skills.

'We have no interest in fostering secrets in worker trainings,' explains FWF trainer Ceren Işat. 'We aim to ensure that managers learn about all of the problems that workers raise during the sessions. But we want workers, themselves, to convey these to management – in a constructive manner, using the factory's grievance mechanisms.'

- **Inform the entire workforce**

Because only a sample of the workforce would participate in trainings, real change in levels of awareness and behaviour would require training participants to relay to co-workers key information about grievance mechanisms, communication, and workplace standards. FWF hoped training materials would lend themselves to sharing with co-workers.

For more detail on the Implementation of the FWF Code of Labour Practices, see Appendix 2 for details on local laws relevant for the FWF Code of Labour Practices.

B. THE OUTPUTS WE EXPECTED

In developing the training pilots, we matched training design and expected outputs. Key anticipated outputs include:

- **Awareness of workplace standards**

FWF audits in Turkish garment factories generally find that workers have very limited awareness of their rights. Such awareness is a critical starting point for grievance systems, since all parties need to have a common understanding of the 'rules of the game.' We hoped training would result in a jump in workers' awareness levels.

- **Capacity among workers to clearly state grievances and propose solutions**

Key to effective social dialogue is the capacity to clearly communicate problems and engage collaboratively to find solutions. The project hoped to see by its end that workers would adjoin practical potential solutions to the grievances they communicated to management.

- **Basic, functioning grievance mechanisms**

Many Turkish garment factories have suggestion boxes in place, but in most cases, these boxes remain unused. As a result of the project, we hoped to see practices and procedures in place for receiving, processing, and responding to grievances. For the sake of accountability and trust, we also hoped to see worker representatives playing a role in opening grievance boxes, discussing potential solutions, and posting grievance outcomes.

- **Knowledge of grievance systems**

A critical component of any functional grievance system is knowledge among the workforce that such systems exist and how to make use of them. As FWF's Margreet Vrieling explains, 'If workers don't know how to access a system, it is virtually meaningless.' Through training, FWF sought to measure a noticeable jump in factory awareness about these systems.

- **Free, democratic elections of worker representatives**

Some factories have some form of 'representatives' in place already, but it is common for workers in such factories to be unaware of the individuals or the responsibilities of the job. The training was designed to support freely elected worker representatives. FWF sought trade union advising on these processes.

- **Open, collaborative dialogue between workers and management**

Appreciating that the training project was just the first step in a much longer process to develop healthy systems of social dialogue in factories, an important outcome of training would be for workers and managers to take a collaborative approach to dialogue whenever possible. Experience of the benefits of such dialogue would encourage continued efforts to build more robust systems for social dialogue.

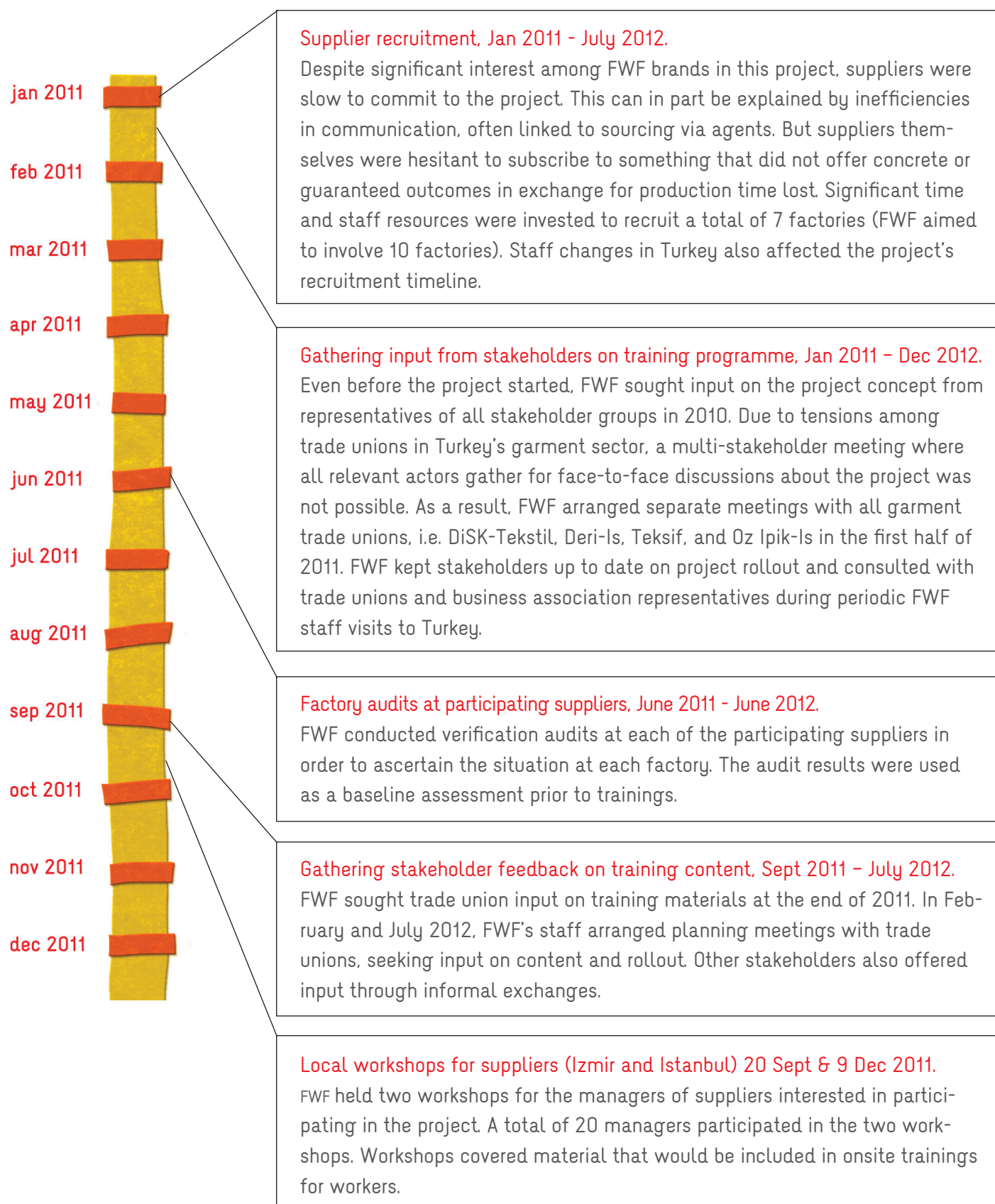
- **Tangible improvements in factories**

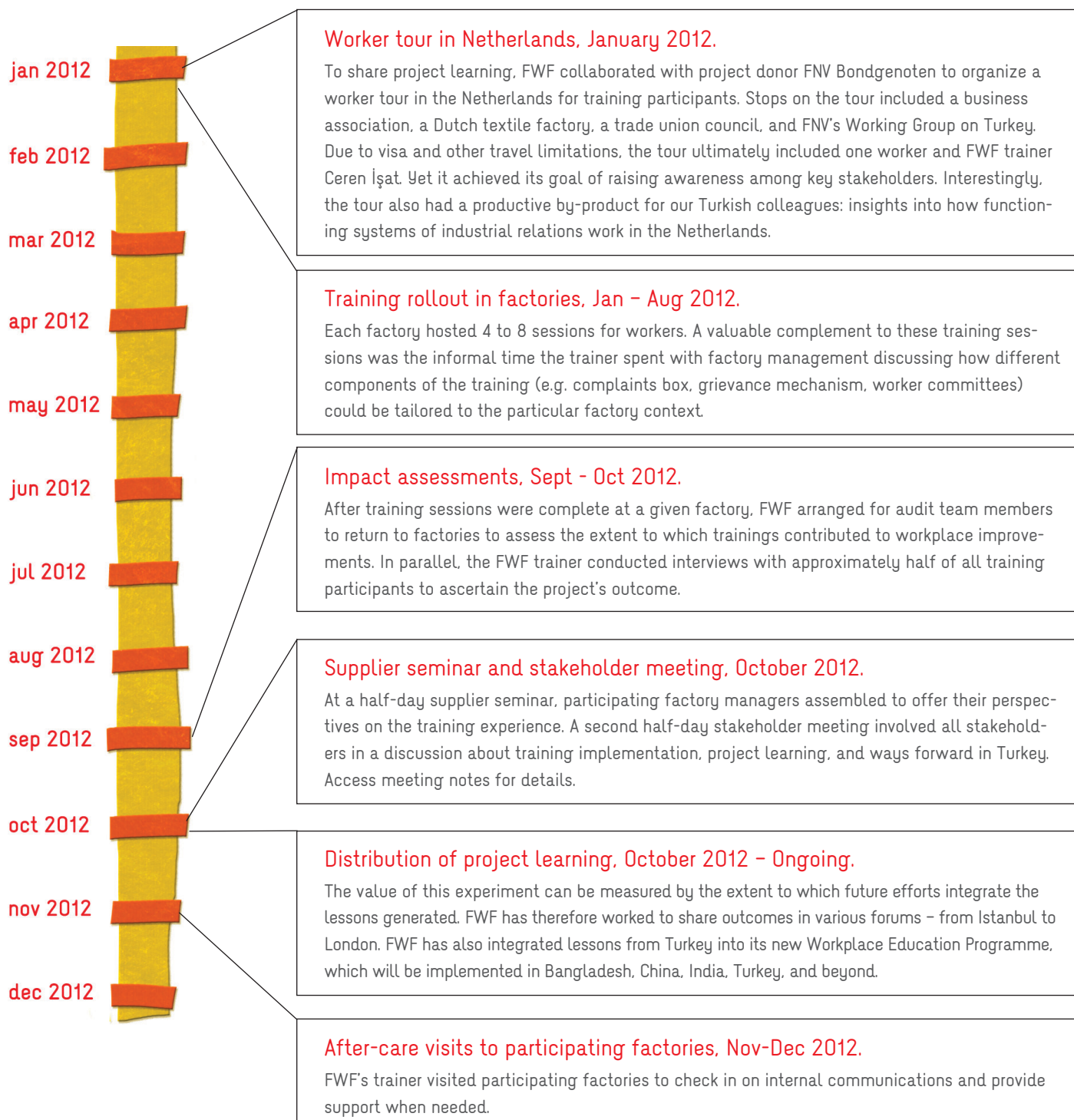
FWF's approach to trainings was very practical, using real factory issues as a starting point for practicing new skills. So, with each step in the training, management and workers would have opportunities to work together to find solutions to real-life problems in factories. FWF hoped to see concrete improvements in factories following trainings.

- **Illustrated business benefits from improvements in workplace communication**

Effective social dialogue enhances trust and cohesion in workplaces, which is known to have knock-on effects for business in terms of improved information flows; worker loyalty and retention; and improved productivity rates. FWF hoped to see examples of business improvements that were linked to trainings.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES












SECTION TWO: PROJECT SCORECARD







HOW THE RESULTS STACK UP





In some cases the outcomes met our goals, and other cases were quite different in practice from what we envisioned. Below we offer some observations about the experiment and its outcomes.

Expectations met 	Unmet expectations 	
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The training we designed:






		Provide the knowledge needed and take a participatory approach Only two of the seven participating factories completed all eight modules as they were originally designed. Due to production pressures, the other five factories required truncated trainings – where all eight modules were condensed into four to six sessions.
		Take a participatory approach Trainers worked to maintain an open and participatory approach in all trainings. However where trainings were truncated, opportunities for participatory exercise were cut. Outcomes were best in factories where workers had more time to discuss and role-play.
		Tap trade union expertise in developing and delivering training A surprisingly large portion of the project's staff time was invested in collaboration with trade unions in Turkey. Unfortunately, however, tensions among local trade unions in Turkey ultimately made it difficult for FWF to involve them as actively as it had envisioned in training implementation. For a large portion of project rollout, the trade unions were unwilling to assemble in the same space to discuss the training, and ultimately would not officially collaborate together on the same project. Despite such infighting, FWF managed to consult with trade unions one-on-one in order to integrate their input into the training materials. This did mean, however, that trade unions did not participate in training delivery. We discuss FWF learning from this experience below.





		<p>Collaborate with management to select a representative sample of workers for training</p> <p>FWF's trainer had considerable success in terms of collaborating with management to select workers to participate and ensure a good gender balance. Yet, participation proved one of the most challenging aspects of training rollout in factories. Thanks to work schedules, worker participation was very spotty. Often workers who started the training at the beginning missed consecutive sessions because the training time did not coincide with their shift. In other cases, workers did not attend because they could not be spared on the work floor.</p> <p>In many cases, management would then send other workers in place of absent workers. This further complicated training rollout. For example, if nearly all of the workers attending the fourth session of training were new to the training, the trainer faced a choice between continuing with module 4 materials or returning to module 1 materials in order to ensure some basic level of understanding among all participants. Consistent participation remained a challenge throughout project implementation.</p>
		<p>Invite selected workers to opt in or out of training</p> <p>According to interviews with workers following trainings, participants were in trainings because they wanted to be.</p>
		<p>Pay workers for their time in training</p> <p>During post-training interviews, all participants said there were no wage deductions for participation. There was one isolated incident where workers attended a session held during non-work hours and so were not being paid for time in training. FWF trainer Ceren İşat learned of this situation during the session and redressed it with management that day.</p>
		<p>Ensure a safe space for worker learning</p> <p>During training implementation, certain managers or supervisors insisted on participating in worker training sessions despite FWF's advice against it. Even in cases where the managers or supervisors who participated were open to the issues raised by workers during training sessions – and in some cases redressed those issues workers' raised – this interfered with one of the main training objectives. We aimed to equip workers to exercise their newly developed communication skills outside of the training context and to experiment with using factory grievance systems.</p>

		<p>Keep management 'in the loop'</p> <p>Managers participated in supplier workshops that were held before training began in factories. The aim was to introduce the training to management, address their questions, and help them feel comfortable with the process ahead of them. In addition, trainer Ceren İşat provided ongoing informal support to management as they developed grievance systems and addressed complaints.</p> <p>Interviews with management and workers after the trainings indicate, however, that management would have benefited from additional formal training to parallel worker training. Workers also cited the need for their supervisors to receive training since they are the factory authority workers most frequently encounter.</p>
		<p>Inform the entire workforce</p> <p>Based on interviews with workers, in only one instance did a factory provide a room for trained workers to convey to other workers learning from trainings. In general, however, it does not seem that workers shared training learning with co-workers. Trained workers instead tended to share their learning with friends or relatives who work in other factories.</p>

Training outputs :

		<p>Awareness of workplace standards</p> <p>There was a noteworthy increase in awareness about the FWF Code of Labour Practices and relevant labour law among training participants. All of those trained workers who were interviewed were able to cite various labour standards and pertinent contents. Nearly all respondents recited a fairly detailed level of knowledge of standards pertaining to hours of work. Many others were also able to discuss legal limits on overtime and how to calculate overtime wages. Other commonly cited standards related to annual leave, health and safety, child labour, and living wages.</p> <p><i>'Compensation, minimum wage, overtime. Everybody asks about these standards but nobody ever knows. But now I do.'</i> – interviewed worker</p>
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		<p>Capacity among workers to clearly state grievances and offer proposed solutions</p> <p>Improved communication capacity among some workers was a clear outcome of training. Many workers conveyed that they now communicate better with co-workers, as well as family and friends.</p> <p>'I solved my communication problem with my colleagues, husband, children, supervisor, manager... I was aggressive, but not anymore. I realized that I was communicating like fighting before. But now I explain my demands in a suitable way... I learned not to yell at people.'</p> <p>Not all workers parlayed these new skills into improved communication with management, however. Less than half of the workers interviewed reported using new skills to discuss problems with management. Perhaps not surprisingly, workers' inclination to communicate with management was considerably less in factories that offered fewer training sessions and interrupted workers' steady participation.</p>
		<p>Basic, functioning grievance mechanisms</p> <p>By the end of the trainings, workers used grievance boxes in all but one factory. Managers were generally responsive to grievances received.</p> <p>Only three of the factories have put in place clear systems for reviewing and processing complaints, however. These three have established that worker representatives together with management open grievance boxes at regular intervals (e.g. every 15 days). In one factory, these grievances are brought to the worker representative committee, which meets once a month. There the committee and management seek to find redress for grievances.</p> <p>Even in the factories where basic systems for reviewing and redressing grievances are in place, it is clear that these are still nascent. Further support seems critical to ensure the systems become fully-functional and ensure that accountability is weaved into these systems.</p>
		<p>Knowledge of grievance systems</p> <p>Interviewed workers were generally unaware of worker representatives and their roles. While some were aware that a grievance box was in place, these workers were not aware of whether the box was checked regularly and whether anything would result from its use.</p> <p>Workers that participated in the training reported that they now know about grievance boxes. In the three factories where systems had been put in place for processing grievances, they reported knowing how the systems worked. Trained workers were similarly aware of worker representatives and their roles. On the other hand, workers who did not participate in trainings – or only joined one or more sessions – tended to have less knowledge about these systems and generally were not aware of how they worked. Notably, awareness among all workers was considerably greater in factories where elections had taken place.</p>

1		<p>Free, democratic elections of worker representatives</p> <p>Prior to the trainings, none of the factories had representatives that were elected by workers. Four of the factories had management-appointed representatives.</p> <p>By the end of trainings, two factories had elections in which worker representatives were nominated and elected by workers. Three other factories had some other form of representation, but these representatives were not freely nominated and elected.</p>
		<p>Open, collaborative dialogue between workers and management</p> <p>In all of the participating factories, it is possible to cite at least one instance of collaborative dialogue between workers and managers. Yet there is a wide spectrum of circumstances in which such dialogue took place.</p> <p>Three of the factories have established mechanisms for regular meetings between workers and managers. Indeed, one factory has established several committees that meet regularly: health and safety, discipline, and worker rights committees. The other four factories, however, relied on circumstances created by the trainings to provide opportunities for dialogue (e.g. sitting in on discussions during worker trainings or ensuing FWF audits). In those factories, structures for ongoing dialogue were not established yet.</p>
		<p>Tangible improvements in factories</p> <p>In all but one factory, there were examples of grievances that were effectively communicated by workers and redressed by management. Some examples from various factories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved access to drinking water on the work floor • No overtime work during Ramadan • Preparation of a praying room for workers • A shift in lunch break time for added convenience of workers • New uniforms for workers
1		<p>Illustrated business benefits from improvements in workplace communication</p> <p>In the post-training supplier seminar, several participating managers credited the training with a change in atmosphere and collaboration in their factories. One manager said this change in atmosphere has facilitated a dialogue in which workers suggested changes in workflow to enhance productivity. Another manager observed that the speed and quality of production increased when workers felt they were being listened to.</p> <p>Not all managers cited such improvements, however. Business seemed most likely to benefit in those factories where workers participated in all, or nearly all, of the eight modules. These were also the factories where management and workers invested in building systems for grievance handling and worker representation.</p>

SECTION 3: KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR TRAINING DESIGN AND DELIVERY

In many ways, project takeaways support FWF's understanding going into the trainings. Yet the project also generated new learning. All will all be helpful moving forward with efforts to build social dialogue in Turkey and beyond. Below are some of the areas where FWF will undertake further development to enhance training design and delivery.

- **How many modules is enough?**

FWF audits in Turkish garment factories generally find that workers have very limited awareness of their rights. Such awareness is a critical starting point for grievance systems, since all parties need to have a common understanding of the 'rules of the game.' We hoped training would result in a jump in workers' awareness levels.

- **Parallel training for workers, management, and supervisors**

This project targeted social dialogue through formal training for workers and informal support and guidance for management. Training results indicate that managers also need a training programme akin to the one rolled out for workers. Likewise, it is critical to provide training targeting supervisors, since they are the authority figures workers tend to encounter during the workday.

- **Training for newly elected workers**

All workers who bore the title of 'worker representative' at the start of trainings were invited to participate in training sessions. However, because elections took place in the factories as part of the training process, a new crop of worker representatives was generated mid-training. Impact assessments indicate a discrepancy between worker representatives who participated in the full training and those who did not. The former were better equipped to engage management in constructive dialogue and reach mutually-agreed solutions. With this in mind, it may be wise to include in the training programme a 'crash course' for worker representatives following elections.

- **The need for improved knowledge-sharing among workers**

FWF was surprised by the very low rate of workers sharing training knowledge with their co-workers. As a result, awareness levels across factory populations did not rise as quickly as FWF expected. Workers instead indicate that they shared learning with friends and family outside of the work environment. In future training rollout, FWF will work to integrate into training design actions to support more post-training sharing. In the meantime, FWF will clarify why workers did not share: Is this about a lack of time or opportunity in the workday to share information? Or is it a lack of skill or interest among workers? Worker interviews indicate that distributing to all workers a handbook that covers the key concepts covered in the training might be a valuable tool in this regard.

- Ongoing capacity support following initial training

Workers interviewed after the training consistently cited the need for more workplace training – for all workers. And, as noted above, even in the highest performing factories, there is still great potential for raised awareness and trust for grievance systems among the general workforce. FWF will experiment with follow up training and ongoing support to keep momentum going.

- The importance of trusted, balanced trainers

Trainers tend to be selected for their skills. They must possess knowledge of the subjects covered, as well as special skills to convey (sometimes detailed) information in ways that can be understood by their target audience. And they must inspire trainees to change their behaviour accordingly. Yet, perhaps most importantly for social dialogue training, it is critical for trainers to bring true balance and neutrality to training. If either management or workers fail to trust the trainer, they will not be open to change. The clear balance that FWF's trainer Ceren Işat brought to the training was vital to the outcomes of this project. This has helped FWF hone its approach to trainer selection.

SECTION 4: PROJECT CONCLUSIONS

'What set apart this project's approach to social dialogue was the fact that FWF could combine the potential of member brand influence, FWF's independence, and local trade union expertise... What other organizations of this kind can boast equal representation in leadership between business associations and trade unions? And that is critical: it means FWF is approaching stakeholders to participate in this project without a hidden agenda... The only goal here is social dialogue, which is good for everyone.'

Jacob Plat, FNV Bondgenoten

FWF set out in this pilot project to test the extent to which training and capacity building in Turkish factories could jumpstart social dialogue there. Pilot findings indicate that the project did make important strides in this regard. All factories showed improvements with regard to workers' awareness of their rights and communications skills. They also all showed at least some improvements to workplace conditions.

In a portion of factories we saw that training had a more far-reaching effect – with the election of worker representatives, the development of functioning grievance systems, and concrete steps taken by workers and management to engage together to find solutions. In a couple of factories workers across departments reported a dramatic shift in atmosphere thanks to better communication, and one factory has approached FWF to pursue additional capacity support to keep improving social dialogue.

So while there are various areas where FWF will modify and tailor its training approach, pilot findings indicate that such training does indeed hold great potential to offset forces that are limiting the spontaneous growth of social dialogue in Turkey.

'In a context where trade unions cannot get through the door in most Turkish factories, this project was an experiment in using training to open doors and minds with regard to social dialogue. And then stakeholders together can take it from there.' - Margreet Vrieling, FWF

Yet the project also showed that the success of such training requires inputs that reach beyond FWF's immediate influence. As noted elsewhere in this report, real improvements are closely correlated with management buy-in and brand support. Management needs to be willing to incur some short-term production delays for the sake of middle- and long-term gains from enhanced communication and social dialogue. Managers also need to be open to building new mechanisms for engaging with workers to redress problems. For their part, brands need to create incentives for management participation – e.g. by linking future buying decisions to improvements in workplace communication and social dialogue.

Trade unions also have an important role to play in efforts to lay foundations for social dialogue. But, thanks to tensions among trade unions in Turkey, their role in this project was limited to input on training materials. For FWF, this is unfortunate because we had hoped to experiment with trade unions partially delivering the training in factories. Rather than being some covert effort on the part of FWF to help trade unions organize factories (in accordance with ILO standards, FWF itself takes a non-interference approach to organizing), it seems obvious that trade unions should be involved in such training. Trade unions possess particularly specialized skills pertaining to social dialogue, and FWF's multi-stakeholder approach means that we seek to build on the strengths that each stakeholder brings to the table.

The fact that management would be wary of trade union involvement is exactly why trade union involvement could be so beneficial in such a project. The barriers to social dialogue that are built on Turkey's cultural and political legacy can only be overcome by improved understanding between businesses and trade unions. And such understanding only comes through engagement. Indeed, this is what lies at the heart of social dialogue.

In this sense, the second question that this project set out to answer – i.e. whether the foundations for social dialogue that are laid through training can support ongoing improvements in social dialogue – remains an open question. We will need to observe what happens in the future in the factories where these foundations have been laid. We will also engage with our trade union partners to determine ways forward that ensure fuller trade union participation in training rollout.

FWF is currently in discussions about what the next stage of trainings in Turkey will look like as part of FWF's Workplace Education Programme. Whatever happens next in Turkey and beyond, FWF is committed to applying learning from this pilot and looks forward to forging ahead in continued collaboration.