



Business for Social Responsibility

111 Sutter Street
12th Floor
San Francisco
CA 94104 USA
T 415.984.3200
F 415.984.3201
www.bsr.org

Contact:
Eva Diemel
Communications Manager
Business for Social Responsibility
ediemel@bsr.org, +1 415 984 3233

BSR Expands Factory Women's Health Initiative to Egypt

SAN FRANCISCO – December 3, 2008 – To address the need for health education among women in Egypt's rapidly growing garment industry, [Business for Social Responsibility \(BSR\)](#) has partnered with Levi Strauss & CO. (LS&CO.) and the Levi Strauss Foundation to expand the [HERproject](#) peer health education training program to six factories in Cairo, Ismailia, Giza, and Port Said.

Egyptian exports of textiles and readymade garments to the United States have skyrocketed since 2004, and the country is becoming a critical sourcing destination for many BSR member companies. These growing factories employ thousands of women—many of whom are foreign contract workers from South Asian countries who often lack access to Egyptian public health services. These women lack general and reproductive health awareness, are at risk for disease, and do not possess the knowledge to adequately protect themselves or their children.

“Companies are eager to build strong relationships with new suppliers in Egypt,” said Chad Bolick, Director of CSR Strategy at BSR. “Through HERproject, BSR and Levi Strauss & CO. can demonstrate the return on investment from women's health programs with factory management, and begin building the business case for broader CSR engagement.”

BSR's HERproject connects multinational brands and their suppliers with health educators who train women in factories to act as “health ambassadors” by teaching their peers about reproductive health, maternal health nutrition, disease prevention, and how to access health services. The project represents an important first step in improving workplace health and awareness programs in Egypt, and in ensuring that female workers' health needs are being addressed.

To demonstrate the business case for engagement in women's health issues at the factory level, LS&CO. will provide additional support for an intensive return-on-investment (ROI) study in one target factory. BSR will work with HERproject partner Extending Service Delivery (ESD), and a local Egyptian partner, to demonstrate that investment in factory-based women's health programs can improve worker-management relations, increase productivity, and reduce turnover and health-related absenteeism. According to a 2007 study conducted by ESD, factories reaped a return of US\$3 for every US\$1 invested in women's health training and services.

The Egypt project will begin in early 2009, and ROI results are expected in mid-2010.

About HERproject

Launched in 2007 in China, HERproject links multinational companies and their factories to local NGOs to create sustainable workplace programs that increase women's health awareness. Working with HERproject partner Extending Services Delivery, BSR also seeks to demonstrate the return on investment for factory-based women's health programs. HERproject is active in China, Egypt, India, Mexico, Pakistan, and Vietnam. Participating companies include Abercrombie & Fitch, Columbia Sportswear Company, Hewlett-Packard, Levi Strauss & CO., Nordstrom, and the Timberland Company. For more information about HERproject, visit www.herproject.org.

About BSR

A leader in corporate responsibility since 1992, Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) works with its global network of more than 250 member companies to develop sustainable business strategies and solutions through consulting, research, and cross-sector collaboration. With six offices in Asia, Europe, and North America, BSR leverages its expertise in environment, human rights, economic development, and transparency and accountability to guide global companies toward creating a just and sustainable world. Visit www.bsr.org for more information.

About Levi Strauss Foundation

Established in 1952, the Levi Strauss Foundation is an independent private foundation that provides grants to community-based organizations working to create meaningful social change. The Foundation funds programs worldwide that advance the human rights and well-being of underserved people where Levi Strauss & CO. has a business presence. Levi Strauss Foundation giving is guided by a belief in empowering individuals and communities; a resolve to address social biases and inequalities and their impact on people and communities; and a commitment to work with other funders and encourage the collaborative efforts of its grantees.

###