

Case Study: Freedom of Association in Mexico

Levi Strauss & Co. (LS&CO.) originally placed production with a Mexican supplier, Tarrant, in May, 2003. In August of 2003, LS&CO. received a communication from a Mexican nongovernmental organization (NGO), Centro de Apoyo al Trabajador (CAT). CAT alleged that Tarrant's Ajalpan facility, the only Tarrant facility producing for LS&CO. at the time, was in violation of various provisions of our Terms of Engagement (TOE) including our Freedom of Association provisions.

As a member of the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI), LS&CO. was approached by the Central America Women's Network (CAWN), an ETI member NGO, to address these issues. Over the next several months, LS&CO. worked with CAWN, CAT, other NGOs, factory management, workers and governments to investigate and attempt to address the issues raised.

The case was particularly complex and challenging. Many lessons were learned that LS&CO. and the NGOs involved agreed should be shared publicly. A [detailed description](#) of the Tarrant case including NGO reports, LS&CO. letters to the Mexican and U.S. governments regarding freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively, and other supporting documents can be found on the [Ethical Trade Initiative's](#) Web site.