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Gloves and computers that hold for review

Can Sweden affect working conditions in other countries? Yes, two projects about the manufacture of computers and gloves are showing the way.

Through follow-up and cooperation, we can ensure that suppliers and contractors live up to human rights, says Pauline Göthberg, national coordinator of Sustainable Procurement.

A new [report](#) by [Electronics Watch](#), an independent monitoring organisation, give the Stockholm County Council praise for its follow-up of social demands of 13 IT vendors, including e.g. participating in two 3rd party factory audits on Dell-suppliers in China.

In early 2014 the National Network Social Responsibility in Public Procurement found out that there were violations of workers' rights in four IT factories in China. The factories supplied products to amongst others Dell, which is a major contract partner to many counties and regions.

After reminders, Dell has in 2014 and 2015 extended its work on social responsibility and working conditions in factories that manufacture Dell Products. Dell has sharpened the requirements on suppliers and intensified its Code of Conduct monitoring and efforts to ensure that non-compliances are being corrected.

The secrecy that previously characterized Dell and its suppliers have been replaced by openness and cooperation. Dell now provides Stockholm County Council with the information necessary to monitor the working conditions and other social conditions.

This shows that public procurement is an effective policy instrument for sustainable development. It is not enough to just make demands, you also have to follow up on the demands, Pauline Göthberg says.

However, there are still major social responsibility challenges in IT supply chains. Therefore Stockholm County Council work together with its suppliers on how to further strengthen respect for human rights and workers' rights based on an established corrective action plans.

Gloves in good hands

British Medical Association (BMA) has in a report pointed out the risks of violations of labour rights in the factories that produce surgical and examination gloves in Malaysia, Thailand and Sri Lanka. BMA also highlights good examples where it has been able to show results. A successful example is the Region Jönköping's audit of The Berners Brothers' supplier in Malaysia.

The results of the first audit revealed several discrepancies. The factory management had, among other things, seized the workers' identification documents in original, forced workers to pay their own recruitment and to work overtime without consent. In dialogue with the supplier Region Jönköping demanded vigorous effort.

The Berner Brothers paid for a follow-up audit on the spot. The subcontractor Ansell has since worked to get to grips with the deviations. The workers now have decent working conditions. The most important change is that Ansell takes all future costs for the recruitment of migrant workers, which means an end to the slave labor in which the worker is in debt to the employer.

The results from Jönköping County Council and The Berner Brothers is a good example of how we can create positive change in the factories that manufacture products for the Swedish health care system, says Pauline Göthberg.

Facts about the National Network Sustainable Procurement

Sweden's county councils and regions are working for a sustainable development and to ensure that the products and services purchased are produced under sustainable and responsible conditions. Many procured products are produced by subcontractors in poor countries, where there is a risk that human rights, safe working, and living conditions are disregarded.

Therefore, it is necessary to take one or several steps backwards in the production chain and monitor that the suppliers' subcontractors are following the requirements. By setting social and environmental standards in procurement, and by closely monitoring how the requirements are followed, the network sustainable procurement will contribute to a sustainable development.

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