**Walmart response to Public Eye Award nomination re working conditions in supply chain**

10 Dec 2014

We invited Walmart to respond to the following materials:

* Public Eye Award 2015 website with list of nominees: <http://publiceye.ch/>
* Walmart’s section on Public Eye Awards: <http://publiceye.ch/case/Walmart/>
* “Press release: Public Eye Lifetime Award and The Yes Men Mark Farewell from Davos”, 19 Nov 2014, Berne Declaration & Greenpeace, <http://publiceye.ch/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/141119_MM_Peye15_Launch_EN.pdf>

Walmart sent us the following response:

"Thank you for giving us an opportunity to respond to Human Rights Watch.  We have a focus on positively impacting our global supply chain, and we care about the men and women who work in it.  As you may know, Walmart is a founding member of the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety,  which launched the Bangladesh Worker Safety Initiative, a binding,five-year undertaking with the intent of improving safety in Bangladesh’s ready-made garment factories.  The collective support and work of numerous stakeholders, including the Government of Bangladesh and brand~~s~~ and factory owners, is driving change aimed at preventing fire and structural tragedies like those in the past. The Alliance has completed safety assessments at more than 600 factories.  As a result of these inspections, factories have installed important fire and safety equipment like fire doors, alarm systems and sprinklers in many factories.  The Alliance also has trained workers to be empowered to protect themselves during an emergency. In addition, Walmart has arranged $50 million in access to capital to fund factory safety improvements.  We have worked closely with Standard Chartered Bank to develop a financing program offering low-interest local currency loans for our suppliers, which has been approved by the Central Bank of Bangladesh.

You mention the Accord—the Alliance and the Accord have a common goal: to improve the lives of garment workers in Bangladesh by upgrading factory fire and safety conditions.  These are essentially parallel paths forward that bring considerable resources to the country.  The Alliance’s Bangladesh Worker Safety Initiative provides the opportunity for retailers to come together and promote concrete solutions to issues that impact the retail and garment industries. Its mission and actions are intended to complement those of the Accord.  Together, both plans will help to elevate safety and protect workers in the Bangladeshi garment industry.  In fact, the Alliance formed its safety standards together with the Accord and will continue to actively seek opportunities to collaborate with the Accord on goals and other actions.

In addition to being a founding member of the Alliance, Walmart made a $3 million contribution to BRAC’s Bangladesh Humanitarian Fund.  The Humanitarian Fund was set up to provide assistance in three categories: **(1)** provide compensation to Rana Plaza victims and their families through the ILO Rana Plaza Trust Fund; **(2)** provide support for BRAC’s rehabilitation and livelihoods initiative; and **(3)** to establish a reserve fund to support relief efforts for other factory tragedies, including Tazreen.  To date, according to BRAC, more than 5,000 bank accounts have been opened by the Dutch-Bangla bank related to claims received.  In addition, professional counselors from BRAC’s University’s Institute of Educational Development were dispatched to provide counseling to victims and their families.

This underlines our focus on positively impacting the men and women in our global supply chain as well as driving continuous, systemic improvement both by further raising our own standards and by working with other stakeholders to improve the standards for workers across the industry. We know the garment industry is important to Bangladesh, especially to women, so we are furthering our commitment to the industry with the Women in Factories program.  Partnering with CARE in Bangladesh, our Women in Factories program trains women  in the types of skills needed to be successful in the workplace, at home and in their communities.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to respond.  Please don’t hesitate to contact us if we can provide more information.

Links for your review:

Alliance Website:  <http://www.bangladeshworkersafety.org/>

Factory Assessment Report:  <http://corporate.walmart.com/global-responsibility/ethical-sourcing/in-depth-factory-assessments>

Globe News Wire – [New Findings Indicate Major Progress](http://globenewswire.com/news-release/2014/09/19/667125/10099296/en/New-Findings-of-Independent-Review-of-Alliance-for-Bangladesh-Worker-Safety-Indicate-Major-Progress-in-Efforts-to-Improve-Safety-in-Bangladesh-Garment-Factories.html)

Wall St. Journal - [Alliance Sets Up Plans to Finance Factory Upgrades](http://blogs.wsj.com/frontiers/2014/12/08/alliance-sets-plan-to-finance-bangladesh-factory-upgrades/)"