



UL RESPONSIBLE SOURCING

"An Interview with Tom van Haaren, ICTI Care's Senior Advisor - Responsible Sourcing"



UL Consumer and Retail Services (CRS) Responsible Sourcing team would like to thank speakers and guests joining us for UL's 12th Responsible Sourcing summit in Los Angeles on March 1-2, 2017. Speakers from the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety, Ropes & Gray LLP, Business for Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI), ICTI CARE, Richline Group, prAna, Textile Exchange, Landesa, BJ's Wholesale Group, Columbia Sportswear, MillerCoors, HP, Eileen Fisher, and the International Labor Affairs Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor gave insights in panels discussing "The Unintended Costs of Regional Responsible Sourcing Issues", "Success Stories – Positive Impacts from Responsible Sourcing Initiatives", "Product Traceability – Approaches That Can Be Applied from Agriculture to Jewelry", "Supply Chain Risk Segmentation – Where to Focus Your Energy" and "How Repair, Reuse, and Recycle Programs Can Enrich Responsible Sourcing Efforts".

If you were unable to join us for this event, UL shares a series of "An Interview With..." conversations with some of our guest speakers. This is our second blog from the event.

"An Interview with Tom van Haaren, ICTI Care's Senior Advisor - Responsible Sourcing"

UL Responsible Sourcing's Daphne Guelker sat down with Tom van Haaren about ICTI-Care's work to address problems arising from 'Left-Behind Children' in China.

Daphne Guelker: Tom, can you explain what 'Left-Behind Children' are and why this is a specific concern in China?

Tom van Haaren: The term 'Left-Behind Children' refers to the over 60 million children in China who stay behind in their native province while their parents seek work elsewhere. The children remain in the care of other family members, often elderly grandparents, and only see their parents once a year during the Lunar New Year celebrations. This separation negatively affects both the child at home and the parents in the workplace. In some cases, the guardian at home is ill-suited or ill-equipped to care for the child – exposing the child to greater risks of developmental issues or exploitation.

The large domestic migrant population makes Left Behind Children a particularly unique issue to China, it is estimated that there are 247 million domestic migrant workers. Children are often unable accompany their parents when they leave to find work due to the hukou system. This system means that workers and their children are only entitled to social benefits such as schooling and healthcare in their home province. As a result, parents are separated from their children by large distances with little or no meaningful interactions as a family.



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Daphne Guelker: So how does the phenomenon of Left-Behind Children impact the workplace?

Tom van Haaren: Beyond the anxiety and negative mental impacts of the separation, research shows that workers with Left-Behind Children are more likely to make mistakes while working and leave jobs earlier to return home. These distractions can lead to product quality issues and in some cases accidents and injuries. Factories that lack family-supportive policies also face higher worker turnover and difficulty recruiting staff during peak season.

These complications, compounded with the usual stresses of factory life, can lead to low worker morale, distrust in management, and other discord in the workplace. In addition, information on factories with poor reputations can be easily shared among workers via social media and services like WeChat.

Daphne Guelker: What can companies who are concerned about Left-Behind Children do? Can you recommend any specific resources?

Tom van Haaren: The first thing companies can do is to encourage their suppliers to adopt family-friendly policies and programs that address the needs of all parent workers. For many factories, the business case may not be entirely clear, so engagement from their buying customers goes a long way in helping convince the factory to help parent workers with Left-Behind Children.

As we realized that not all companies can devote time and/or resources to developing their supplier program, the team at ICTI CARE has worked closely with our implementation partners at CCR-CSR to build a program on behalf of the global toy & entertainment industry. This enabled toy companies of all shapes and sizes to either contribute funding directly to our [Left-Behind Children program](#) or support its work by becoming an [ICTI CARE Committed Brands](#) PLUS member. ICTI CARE is also committed to sharing high quality impact data about our work so that factories in other industries can start their own programs.



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Daphne Guelker: What are the long-term benefits of ICTI CARE's Left-Behind Children programs?

Tom van Haaren: Our Left-Behind Children pilot program launched in the summer of 2016. The program includes Family Friendly Factory Spaces which reunites workers with their children over the summer holidays. The spaces create safe environments – away from the factory floor – for children to learn and play while their parents work. Another key element of the program are the Migrant Parent Training sessions which help parents build relationships with their Left-Behind Children. The sessions provide practical tools to lessen the burden of workers' separation from their children.

Initial indications show that workers who participated in the programs were more likely to return to the factory and had gained a better sense of trust with their managers. In addition, they felt closer to their children and noticed a remarkable improvement in the way their child interacted with them.

In the long-term, we want to ensure that all participants in our [Left-Behind Children programs](#) have a memorable experience and a positive effect on their health and well-being as a family. We also want the participating toy factories that develop proactive policies & programs to be regarded as preferred places to work by families. We expect these benefits to translate directly into happier families, lower recruitment costs, fewer quality issues, and improved working conditions as a result of the increased trust in the factory.

Daphne Guelker: Do you think this program can be rolled out to other industries? How can interested companies get involved?

Tom van Haaren: The issue of Left-Behind Children is not unique to the toy industry – nearly every industry and their supply chain will have working parents separated from their children. The biggest challenge is finding factories that are committed to family-friendly programs and have adequate space on site to create a Family Friendly Factory Space (FFFS) or hold Migrant Parent Training (MPT).

The first step for companies is to reach out to their internal or third-party supplier education partners and see what the landscape in their supply chain looks like. ICTI CARE will publish a best practice guidance that documents the development of the FFFS & MPT program so that it can be used by factories across all industries that want to tackle the issue. The sheer size and scope of the issue means that every contribution towards improving working livelihood, no matter the scale, is worth the effort.



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About ICTI CARE:

ICTI CARE is the ethical supply chain program for the global toy industry. An independent, not-for-profit organization established in 2004, ICTI CARE works each day to improve working conditions at certified factories by implementing the ICTI Code of Business Practices.

ICTI CARE works with thousands of brands, retailers, suppliers, NGOs and other civil society groups to monitor, manage and fix social sustainability issues in the toy industry supply chain across the world, and to protect and improve labor standards.

ICTI CARE's [Left-Behind Children program](#) provides supply chain solutions for toy brands and retailers to help improve domestic migrant worker well-being in their supply chain in China. The program provides training programs to help workers build relationships with their left-behind children and creates safe spaces to reunite families. Find out more about how your company can get involved [here](#).

About Tom:

Tom van Haaren is the Senior Advisor - Responsible Sourcing at ICTI CARE and has been with the organization since March 2016. Tom is responsible for supporting our toy brands, retailers, and manufacturers in the strategic implementation of the ICTI CARE Process. Prior to joining ICTI CARE, Tom held several positions that included working for the U.S. government as well as Calvert Investments, a socially responsible investment firm. He was also the Senior Account Manager for North America at Sedex where he worked directly with companies to develop and implement effective responsible sourcing practices. He received a BA in History from Cornell University and a Master's of Industrial and Labor Relations the ILR school at Cornell.

To read more of UL's 2017 Responsible Sourcing Summit speaker interviews, please [click here](#).

About UL Responsible Sourcing:

UL is a leading global provider of responsible sourcing auditing and advisory services, which include supply chain monitoring, research, program development, and training.

UL's Responsible Sourcing team has the global footprint to provide services in several countries.

For more information on all the ways you can rely on UL to help you manage sourcing risk, contact RSinfo@ul.com