Best for Workers
Worker well-being programs to support parent workers in the toy supply chain
2020
The Ethical Toy Program is the ethical supply chain program for toys and children’s products.

Our mission is to build better lives for workers and a stronger industry through the ethical production of toys.

Ethical Toy Program worker well-being programs support thousands of front-line workers employed at toy factories around the world.

This document outlines the benefits of these worker well-being programs and explains how your company can participate.

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China’s left-behind children: a supply chain issue

Domestic migrant workers make up a substantial percentage of the workforce in China’s manufacturing industry. Estimates suggest there are 247 million migrant workers in the country. These workers often originate from towns and villages hundreds or thousands of miles away from the factories where they work.

One of the key challenges faced by China’s migrant parent workers is finding ways to have an active presence in their children’s lives.

Millions of children are ‘left-behind’ in the countryside when their parents migrate domestically to find work thousands of miles away in big cities. These workers are forced to live apart from their children and many only see them once a year.

The separation results in a significant strain on relationships, parent well-being, and children’s development. Estimates suggest there could be as many as 61 million children left-behind children in rural communities in China. This amounts to one in five of all children in China and one in three children in rural communities.

Some domestic migrant workers are able to bring their children with them, but many may then face difficulties accessing childcare. According to a study conducted by the Center for Child Rights

61 million left-behind children

88% of migrant parent workers say they don’t spend enough time with their children
and Corporate Social Responsibility (CCR CSR) on migrant parent workers in China, 24% said they leave their children at home unattended.

Children who are left behind are often cared for by their grandparents, who may not have the physical ability or financial means to raise the children adequately. These children have increased vulnerability to becoming victims of human trafficking, and suffer a higher rate of depression than other children.

Migrant parents with left-behind children struggle to communicate with them effectively from a distance while those who are able to live with their children face issues making time for them and securing childcare during working hours.

Both scenarios can negatively impact workers’ mental health and well-being, whilst also effecting levels of staff turnover and productivity rates at factories.

Supporting domestic migrant workers in the toy supply chain

Migrant workers form a substantial proportion of the workforce in China’s toy factories. The level of support available to these parent workers has a direct impact on their job satisfaction as well as performance and retention.

The toy industry can take a sustainability leadership position by supporting migrant parent workers and their children. Through well-being programs which ensure that toys are manufactured in a way which is consistent with the values of the industry.

1 in 5 of all children in China are left-behind

31% of migrant parent workers have left a job before to take care of their children

63% of toy factory workers only visit their children once or twice a year

84% of toy factory workers feel guilty for being separated from their children
Programs to support families

The Ethical Toy Program has developed three projects to support migrant parent workers at toy factories in China:

**Family-Friendly Spaces (FFS)**
to reunite migrant workers with their left-behind children during the summer months

**After School Centers (ASC)**
to provide year-round after school care for the children of workers who live with them

**Migrant Parent Training (MPT)**
to help workers build relationships with their left-behind children

These projects are delivered with in partnership with the Centre for Child-Rights and Corporate Social Responsibility (CCR CSR).

The number one reason parents leave their children behind when they migrate for work is not having anyone to look after them when they are at work.
Family-Friendly Spaces

Factory-based child care facilities for workers' children during the summer school holidays

Family-Friendly Spaces (FFS) enable left-behind children to spend time with their parents during the summer months, a time when they are most vulnerable to being left unsupervised. The factory-based facilities allow migrant workers' children to play in a safe and stimulating environment throughout the day whilst their parents work. FFS are run by trained staff who, in addition to ensuring the well-being and safety of the children, also organize activities and day-trips to broaden children’s horizons and strengthen parent-child relationships.

Benefits

- Reduces separation between migrant workers and their left-behind children
- Creates safe spaces for children to play and learn during summer months
- Prevents children from being left unattended or straying into production areas
- Relieves workers’ anxiety and stress during work hours
- Improves workers’ trust in management and satisfaction towards the factory
A worker reunited with his daughter for the summer when she attended the FFS at the factory where he works in 2019
“Without any hesitation, I will bring my sons to the FFS again if our factory opens it next year. After spending quality time together, we’ve developed a strong bond with each other!”

A worker whose two sons attended FFS

Impacts of FFS

- 182% increase in employee satisfaction rates
- 58% increase in employee-management trust
- 13% increase in worker retention rate

Sustainable model with long-term benefits – all participating factories committed to continuing to run FFS

results from 2019

“I think Family Friendly Spaces is a really great project. When workers know that we care about them and their families, their relationship with us improves. Our production efficiency has significantly increased. We believe this project will have great impact on the factory in the long run, so we have decided to run the project in the coming years.”

General Manager of a factory participating in FFS
After School Centers

Year-round factory-based child care facilities for workers' children

Much like Family-Friendly Spaces, After School Centers (ASC) are factory-based facilities where the children of workers are taken care of after school until their parents finish work.

Unlike FFS however, ASC stays open all-year, providing ongoing support and relief to parent workers and allowing more families to live together on a year-round basis.

ASC are offered as both a continuation of FFS or as a stand-alone service.

"He was an introverted boy and lived with his grandmother when he was quite young. But after joining Family-Friendly Spaces, he became more talkative and was proud to show us his drawings and other handicrafts... When FFS was about to close we decided to let him live with us. I know it’s not going to be easy, but we will try because we want to stay together as a family."

Father working in a participating factory who migrated from Yunnan province
Benefits

Extends benefits of FFS beyond summer months to provide a sustainable, long-term and low-cost solution to migrant parent’s childcare struggles

Allows more families to live together on a year-round basis & promotes stronger commitment to the factory

Increases workers’ satisfaction and trust in the factory

Increases worker retention

Allows families to spend more time together and alleviates workers’ feeling of guilt for spending too little time with their children

Encourages workers to worry less about their children and concentrate on work

Positive impact of ASC on workers and factories spread over long-term

Factories build the capacity to run ASC without external support after the first year. Voluntary refresher online courses are available to all participants running ASC
Migrant Parent Training

Workshops to help workers build relationships with their left-behind children

Migrant Parent Training (MPT) complements FFS by providing training and support to help migrant workers overcome the stress and challenges associated with being separated from their children. The half-day MPT courses strengthen remote parenting skills and improve workers awareness of the importance of personal well-being.

Migrant Parent Training is focused on:
– increasing workers' sense of value as a parent
– improving communication with children from a distance
– understanding the needs of their children
– recognising signs of distress
– improving workers' ability to support and protect their children
– helping parents make the most of their time with their children
“Caring about left-behind children is extremely meaningful and communication is the key. It enables workers to understand their children better, to communicate with them regularly, and to enhance their relationship with their children.”

Human Resources Manager of a factory participating in MPT

Benefits

MPT is targeted to address problems faced by toy factory workers: 65% of these workers had difficulty communicating with their children before participating in MPT.

63% of workers are only able to visit their children once or twice a year.

MPT increases workers’ sense of value as parents and encourages them to lead happier and healthier lives.

Workers learn about the rights and needs of children at different stages to better support their children.

Workers also develop effective remote communication skills with their children to build closer relationships.

The training helps reduce workers’ guilt for being separated from their children.

“No one told us about such parenting things before…In the past I never saw parenting as something that required learning, but today I changed my mind.”

A worker who took part in the training
Impacts

After the training, the percentage of parents feeling more confident in educating their children from a distance increased by 117%

Increased awareness among workers in importance of personal well-being

Improved relationships between workers and their children

Increased commitment to stay in the factory for longer

Levels of trust between workers and management increased by 27% after MPT

“I know I’ve done many things wrong with my children, but I just didn’t know what was right. I therefore really needed this kind of training and it’s turned out to be very useful!”

A worker who took part in Migrant Parents Training
Benefits at the factory level

Family-Friendly Spaces:
182% increase in employee satisfaction rates
58% increase in employee-management trust
13% increase in worker retention rate
29% increase in workers reporting being more efficient at work following FFS

Migrant Parent Training:
27% increase in workers trusting factory management
Increased commitment to stay in the factory for longer

Adding value to the toy industry

Supporting our left-behind children program demonstrates your company’s commitment to promoting worker well-being in the toy supply chain. Funding these projects is an effective way of integrating child right’s into your corporate social responsibility strategy and meeting other commitments such as those related to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

This project helps to create a toy industry where children’s products are made by workers who are supported in their role as parents thereby ensuring that toys are manufactured in a way that is consistent with the values of the toy industry.

FFS and ASC programs at toy factories encourage development and skill-building through play, activities and learning, thus helping to nurture future generations and to deliver supply chain enhancements which reflect the values of the toy industry.
Get involved

Over the last few years our we’ve run left-behind children pilot projects at 33 toy factories in China, delivering benefits for hundreds of toy factory workers and their children, whilst also driving tangible business benefits for participating toy factories.

These initial pilots have proved themselves to be very successful and enjoyed high satisfaction rates, even as high as 99%.

We now want to move beyond the pilot phase to scale-up the projects to reach thousands more workers and their children, and deliver important business benefits for more factories in China.

In 2021, we aim to run 50 FFS at factories in China and Vietnam, whilst also expanding our ASC and MPT programs to reach more workers.

Your funding will enable us to achieve these goals.

“Our programs to support migrant workers are one of the achievements I am most proud of, the positive impact they have on parents and their children is clear to see and the fact that factory management also see business benefits means we are building a truly sustainable program”

Carmel Giblin, President & CEO, ICTI Ethical Toy Program
Benefits of participating in the Left-Behind Children Program

Demonstrate your company's commitment
By directly sponsoring the implementation FFS, ASC or MPT at your supplier factories, your company is playing a leading role in creating family-friendly supply chains and enhancing worker well-being.

Increase your supply chain resilience
These programs increase retention rates, improve worker-management relationships & trust, and increase worker efficiency in your supply chain. As well as building stronger parent-child relationships and easing the burden of separation felt by many toy factory workers.

Short-term investment, long-term rewards, demonstrable results
We equip participating factories with the tools and expertise to run FFS and deliver lasting benefits for workers over the longer-term.
"I usually live with my aunt, uncle and cousins. I only see my mom and dad 2 or 3 times a year. Last summer, when my aunt and uncle went to work, I spent the whole day at home by myself. I didn’t run around, I watched TV or played with the telescope.

Now I live with my parents. I like to come here every day because I like my friends and the teacher here.

My biggest wish is to see my parents and play with them more often."

7-year-old boy who attended the Family-Friendly Space at the factory where his parents work
Support the projects

Get involved by sponsoring one or a combination of the worker well-being programs:

**Family-Friendly Spaces (FFS)**

to reunite migrant workers with their left-behind children during the summer months

**After School Centers (ASC)**

to provide year-round after school care for the children of workers who live with them

**Migrant Parent Training (MPT)**

to help workers build relationships with their left-behind children
Get in touch

Contact Carmel Giblin to discuss how you can bring the Ethical Toy Program worker well-being program to your factories: carmel.giblin@ethicaltoyprogram.org