

To: WRC Affiliate Universities and Colleges  
From: Tara Mathur and Ben Hensler  
Date: June 2, 2025  
Re: \$762,000 in Back Pay for Workers Making Collegiate Apparel in Haiti

This month, 1,600 former workers of Digner, a garment factory in Haiti that had been disclosed as a collegiate apparel supplier by the university licensee, MV Sport, will be paid more than \$760,000. This amounts to more than 3.5 months' wages per worker, which was legally owed to them since the factory closed more than two years ago. Before the factory closed, its primary buyer was the Canadian apparel company, Gildan Activewear, which is a supplier to many university licensees, including MV Sport. The WRC prevailed on Gildan to pay workers this legally owed severance, securing remediation of a violation of university codes of conduct that has been outstanding since the factory shut down in 2022.

After the factory's closure, the Digner Manufacturing facility was later looted and burned, as part of the ongoing gang violence and unrest that has plagued Haiti in recent years. Even though there was no way for the factory to reopen—and no way for the workers to resume employment—the factory's owner, the Palm Apparel Group, failed to pay workers the severance they were legally owed. Workers interviewed by the WRC testified that the nonpayment of the owed funds, after they already had lost their jobs, left them and their families unable to afford necessities like food, housing, schooling, and medical care.

After the factory's owner proved unwilling to pay the workers, the WRC contacted Gildan, which ultimately agreed to provide the funds needed to correct the violation, as university codes of conduct require in such circumstances. Even though the factory's payroll records had been destroyed in the fire, it proved possible, with the assistance of the Haitian labor authorities, to calculate the amounts owed to each of the former employees. Gildan committed to provide funds to ensure the workers are paid in full.

Gildan's commitment to ensure this remedy meant that the violation could be corrected without involving the university licensee, MV Sport, which had disclosed the factory as a college apparel supplier. The factory's more than 1,600 former workers will receive these payments through a distribution to be carried out in mid-June. The long-awaited payments will provide much-needed relief to the Digner workers and their families, an outcome which is particularly crucial given the ongoing crisis they, like Haiti's other citizens, are facing at this time.

Despite the very lengthy delay for workers in receiving these funds, and the hardships that this has caused them and their families, the WRC recognizes the important measures taken by Gildan to remedy this serious violation of university codes of conduct. The WRC will monitor the distribution of these severance payments to the factory's former employees.