



India mill project

Southern India mill recruitment project **Community**

Implementing training programmes that engage workers and the communities in which we operate helps us improve conditions in our suppliers' factories.

In India, concerns have grown in recent years regarding labour rights violations around the practice of hiring young women into spinning mills in southern India.

Our Partners

For us to address these concerns we recognised the importance of collaboration, so partnered with retailers Next and Varner, along with local NGO, SAVE, to develop phase one of the project. The project's aim was to increase awareness and bring about positive change amongst three key groups; the community, agents and the mills themselves.

More than 8,500 people have been reached through our community programme, which was designed to raise awareness of issues affecting female mill workers, as well as their families and local communities. Village committees were established to ensure the protection of child rights and observance of labour laws, while families with young children took part in interactive sessions to learn about issues related to underage employment.

Other community activity included mass awareness days on gender equality and labour welfare, using digital content and actor performances. Young women aged 12 to 17 took part in sessions on personal development, health and life skills leading to the creation of an 'adolescent parliament'. In schools, teachers and students learned about child rights, labour laws and the negative consequences of leaving education early.



"In order for this programme to be a success, we needed the support of the local community. This required outreach and education beyond the limits of the factory walls. Establishing Village Vigilance Committees and working in local schools were key parts of this programme and supported us in delivering a better understanding of fair recruitment practices and a means for workers to access support" – **Carly Bilsbrough, Head of CSR, The Very Group.**



Agents

For the agents, we wanted to ensure the adoption of fair recruitment practices across five villages. Setting up agent coordination committees created an ongoing dialogue between agents, mills and the wider community. Having a preferred pool of ethical recruiting agents also raised the level of expectations for what is required from them if they are to successfully recruit into the mills in this area.

The Mills

At the Mill level, we worked to ensure better relationships between workers and leadership teams.

Across two mills over 1,000 workers have now received training and support to boost life skills, confidence and awareness of employment rights. This training has enhanced peer interaction, improved relationships between workers and managers, and supported in establishing better policies, procedures and grievance handling systems.

Purpose

Since the project was launched, we have reached over 8,500 people throughout the communities as a result of the training programmes and wider awareness building initiatives. 15 local agents have agreed to adhere to best practice recruitment guidelines. We have also managed to conduct grievance redressal and life skills training with over 1,000 workers.

We will continue to evolve this project, setting up community centres in the villages to support worker pre-departure training. We will also launch an app allowing workers and their families to raise grievances and seek remedy. We aim to build on the success of programmes like this and further our ambition to have a positive impact on all the communities we operate in.

8,500
People reached

1,000
Workers trained

15 Agents
Agreed to adhere
to Best practice
Recruitment