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In Chinese Factories, Lost Fingers and Low Pay

By DAVID BARBOZA

GUANGZHOU, China — Nearly a decade after some of the most powerful companies in the world — often under considerable criticism and consumer pressure — began an effort to eliminate sweatshop labor conditions in Asia, worker abuse is still commonplace in many of the Chinese factories that supply Western companies, according to labor rights groups.

Workers from Chinese factories are getting worker abuse

There getting payed low money for dangerous jobs. The groups say some Chinese companies routinely shortchange their employees on wages, withhold health benefits and expose their workers to dangerous machinery and harmful chemicals, like lead, cadmium and mercury.

"If these things are so dangerous for the consumer, then how about the workers?" said Anita Chan, a labor rights advocate who teaches at the Australian National University. "We may be dealing with these things for a short time, but they deal with them every day."

There's factories that use these chemicals but not everyday like they are.

Younger kids usually do the most dangerous jobs. And so while American and European consumers worry about exposing their children to Chinese-made toys coated in lead, Chinese workers, often as young as 16, face far more serious hazards. Here in the Pearl River Delta region near Hong Kong, for example, factory workers lose or break about 40,000 fingers on the job every year, according to a study published a few years ago by the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences.

Making People work there hardest and not even giving them 55 cents an hour. Pushing to keep big corporations honest, labor groups regularly smuggle photographs, videos, pay stubs, shipping records and other evidence out of factories that they say violate local law and international worker standards. In 2007, factories that supplied more than a dozen corporations, including Wal-Mart, Disney and Dell, were accused of unfair labor practices, including using child labor, forcing employees to work 16-hour days on fast-moving assembly lines, and paying workers less than minimum wage. (Minimum wage in this part of China is about 55 cents an hour.)

In recent weeks, a flood of reports detailing labor abuse have been released, at a time when China is still coping with last year's wave of product safety recalls of goods made in China, and as it tries to change workplace rules with a new labor law that took effect on Jan. 1. There trying to call China on labor abuse. No company has come under as harsh a spotlight as Wal-Mart, the world's biggest retailer, which sourced about \$9 billion in goods from China in 2006, everything from hammers and toys to high-definition televisions.

In December, two nongovernmental organizations, or NGOs, documented what they said were abuse and labor violations at 15 factories that produce or supply goods for Wal-Mart — including the use of child labor at Huanya Gifts, a factory here in Guangzhou that makes Christmas tree ornaments.

There abusing labor in factories that they sell to Wal-Mart.

Ms. Yousafzai came to public attention in 2009 as the Pakistani Taliban swept through Swat, a picturesque valley once famed for its music and tolerance and as a honeymoon destination.

Her father became her inspiration for a change!
Her father ran one of the last schools to defy Taliban orders to end female education. As an 11-year-old, Malala — named after a mythic female figure in Pashtun culture — wrote an anonymous blog documenting her experiences for the BBC. Later, she was the focus of documentaries by The New York Times and other media outlets.

"I had a terrible dream yesterday with military helicopters and the Taliban," she wrote in one post titled "I Am Afraid." - Also awake!

The school was eventually forced to close, and Ms. Yousafzai was forced to flee to Abbottabad, the town where Osama bin Laden was killed last year. Months later, in summer 2009, the Pakistani Army launched a sweeping operation against the Taliban that uprooted an estimated 1.2 million Swat residents.

The Taliban were sent packing, or so it seemed, as fighters and their commanders fled into neighboring districts or Afghanistan. An uneasy peace, enforced by a large military presence, settled over the valley.

Ms. Yousafzai grew in prominence, becoming a powerful voice for the rights of children. In 2011, she was nominated for the International Children's Peace Prize. Later, Yousaf Raza Gilani, the prime minister at the time, awarded her Pakistan's first National Youth Peace Prize.

Mature beyond her years, she recently changed her career aspiration to politics, friends said. In recent months, she led a delegation of children's rights activists, sponsored by Unicef, that made presentations to provincial politicians in Peshawar.

"We found her to be very bold, and it inspired every one of us," said another student in the group, Fatima Aziz, 15.

Ms. Minallah, the documentary maker, said, "She had this vision, big dreams, that she was going to come into politics and bring about change."

That such a figure of wide-eyed optimism and courage could be silenced by Taliban violence was a fresh blow for Pakistan's beleaguered progressives, who seethed with frustration and anger on Tuesday. "Come on, brothers, be REAL MEN. Kill a school girl," one media commentator, Nadeem F. Paracha, said in an acerbic Twitter post.

PIG!
 disgusted!!!!!!

mother for a clean cloth, and used one she found without knowing it had lizard eggs in it. According to one of the Yatra outreach workers, the subsequent infection meant her uterus had to be removed when she was 13. She would be forever tainted as a barren woman, so that whoever saw her first in the morning had to take a bath to wash her stain away.

But beyond superstition and discrimination, many Indian women face the straightforward lack of clean, safe lavatory facilities. Back in my high school in England, we may have been embarrassed by our periods, as most girls are, but we had clean bathroom stalls in which to change our sanitary pads in privacy, and trash bins in which to throw them. *Same here*

Many students in India, where around 650 million people still lack toilets can't say the same. Most schools I visited had filthy latrines, used only because there was no alternative. Some had none at all. Students and teachers made do with fields and back alleys.

Concentrating on lessons when you are desperate for the bathroom is hard on anyone. It's nearly impossible for a girl who is menstruating and has nowhere to change or dispose of her pad. Girls grow tired of dealing with it. Often their families encourage them to stay home from school and get married. In one survey, 23 percent of Indian school-age girls dropped out of school when they reached puberty. *Period = NO School = no education = nothing*

"Girls suffer if they aren't empowered to manage their menstrual cycle without pain and shame each month," said Chris Williams, the executive director of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, which runs the Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab.

"Their health, schooling and dignity are in the balance." And the world suffers, too. Educated women are healthier, have smaller families, often earn more and have a positive impact on development.

It can take years, even generations, to change a taboo. But anecdotally, outreach workers note that the only girls who don't believe the superstitions about menstruation are those with educated mothers. So the best way to change the minds of future women is to keep girls in school today, and basic lavatory facilities are one of the easiest ways to do that.

Back in Ankita's schoolyard, something revolutionary was happening. Although many male teachers in rural India are terrified that broaching the subject of menstruation will be considered inappropriate or worse, one of Ankita's teachers was different. After attending a Yatra outreach session, he used 200 rupees (less than \$4) of his own money to turn a disused latrine into a simple incinerator, which girls could use to burn their dirty cloths.

It isn't perfect: girls still face the embarrassment of going to the incinerator with everyone knowing why. But this rudimentary construction, with its vent made from a discarded well-

Still embarrassing + putting pressure on girls, but sanitary is better.