

Workers Rights and Strategies in China

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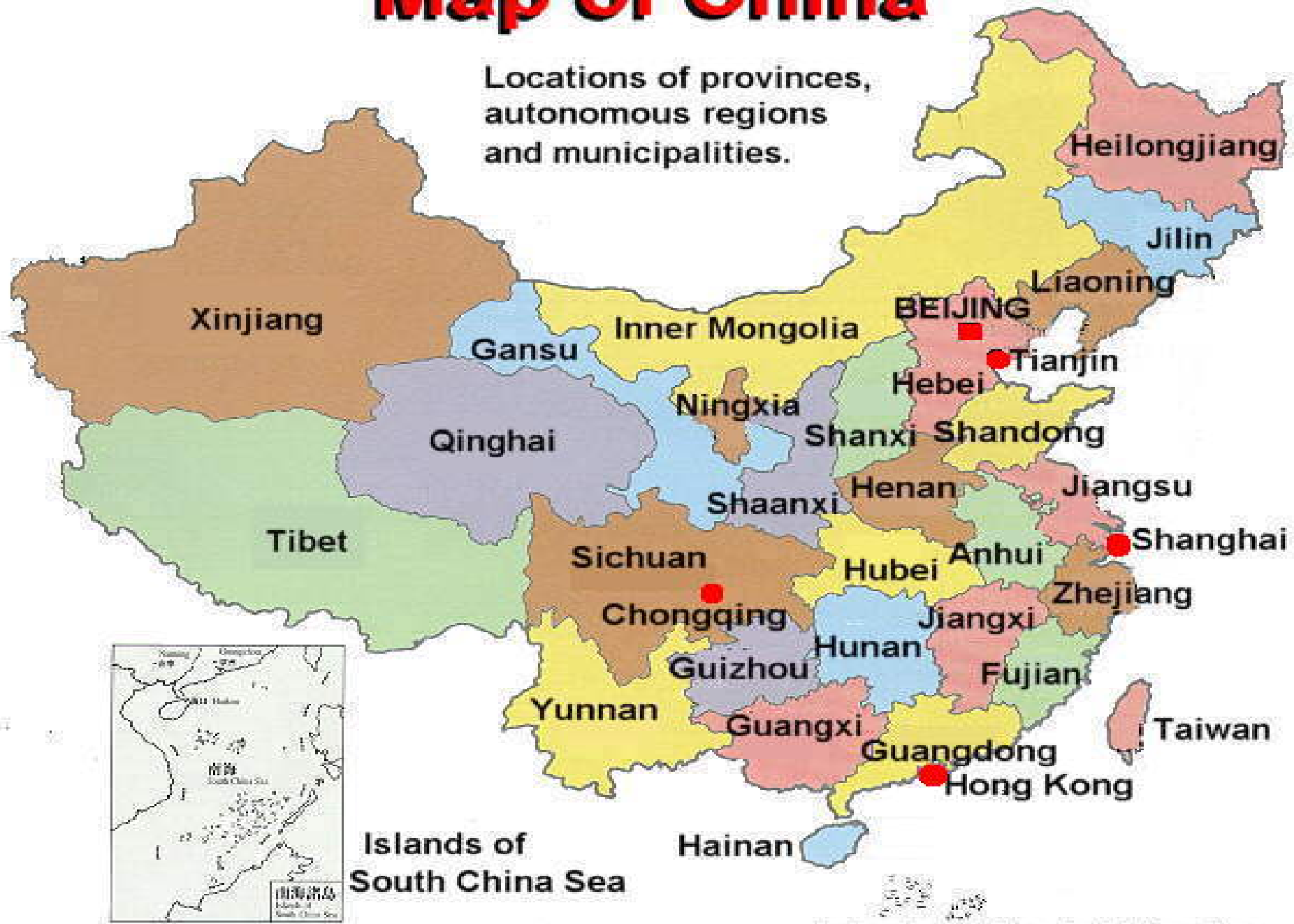
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Map of China

Locations of provinces,
autonomous regions
and municipalities.



Changes of worker status in state sectors after opening up

- ★ Workers under “socialist” system
 - SOE/Collective workers
 - master of the society
 - protected “from cradle to grave”
- ★ Workers under market economy
 - ---lay offs in SOEs/Collectives (30 millions)
 - ---Lost all basic protection ie health, social security, pension, subsidies...
 - ---social class at the lowest strata



Rural migrants going to
cities to find jobs



The new working class in FDI factories in China

- ★ Since the early 80s, mobile population becomes the major workforce in the EPZs/FTZs in manufacturing sector in China. 100 million (whole China) and 23 million (Guangdong) which in many industrial zones outnumber locals. Another 100 million is coming...
- ★ Young (16-25), single, in-experienced and unskilled, finished 9 year education
- ★ Most women(>80%) engaged in light industries for export: Toy, garment, footwear, electronics, etc.
- ★ Both produce for local manufacturers and international brands (both for local & international markets)



Unenforced labor law and awful Working Conditions

- * No labor contract
- * Low wages (USD 60-100/month) and delayed wages for months
- * Hours of work & excessive Overtime (14-16 hours/day)
- * No or little OT payment
- * OSH – chemicals, workplace related injuries and diseases
- * No Insurance schemes (maternity Leave, pension, medicare, unemployment, work-related injuries)
- * Crowded dormitory (12-16/room) by shifts
- * No holidays and leave
- * No pre-job Training
- * No effective communication, organising and negotiation mechanisms, eg. FOA & CBA
- * Physical & verbal abuses and sexual harassment
- * No social and economic upward mobility
- * Discrimination (ie Household Registration System)



Anti-Chicco Campaign (1993-2001)

Died in Zhili fire while producing toys for foreign brand (Chicco). The fire killed 87 and injured 47 and most of them were young women and girls.



Code and CSR Campaign (1993-2001)

- ★ 7 year Campaign against Chicco before getting compensation for Chinese workers
- ★ Start Code Movement in HK:
 - Kadar Fire and US brand in Thailand(1993)
 - Toy Campaign in HK, Asia & Europe (1998-2001)
 - Master Toy and HK brand in Thailand(2001)
 - Mattel (Barbies) & Disney in China (2001)
 - McDonalds' child labor (2001)



Recent CSR Campaigns

- ★ Stella International, Computine (2004)...
- ★ Campaigns with work-related diseases:
Gold Peak (GP), Lucky Gem(2004-06)...



Who protect labor rights in China ?

- ★ Workers themselves
- ★ Pro-labor Lawyers
- ★ Self-help paralegals
- ★ Legal Centers at Universities
- ★ Labor groups in mainland China
- ★ Labor groups in HK
- ★ Brands (?)



New challenge: Critical engagement with Brands on pilot training in China plants

- ★ 2001 OSH Training in supplier factories
- ★ 3 Brands: Reebok, Nike and Adidas
- ★ OSH Committee set up after the training
- ★ Goal of the model:

OSH Training → elected OSH committee →
communication mechanism between
workers and management at plant level

<http://mhssn.igc.org/China3.htm>



Same model with more attempts after 2001...

- ★ More attempts with individual brand in Toy sector
- ★ Multi-stakeholder Initiatives (European based tripartite body: retailers, unions and ngos, and government on OSH Training in supplier plants)
- ★ Such as ETI (UK), AVE/GTZ (Germany, Holland and BSCI (Europe)



More progressive CSR contents

- ★ Other than training:

- Shoe brand Reebok tried to union reform 2 supplier plants with official unions (2003)

- SAI (Social Accountability International) tried with 2 ngos on project end up having election of workers' representation (2005-6)

However, all these projects were not successful at the end due to intervention of the Chinese government...



Why we engage with brands?

- ★ Space for educating workers
- ★ Ensure suppliers' comply with codes and local labor standards
- ★ Try to create effective communication mechanism between workers and management in factory level
- ★ Develop effective bottom-up direct complain mechanism for workers in factory where rights are abused.



Obstacles identified so far ...

- ★ OSH Committee got too little power and resources to make real changes in plants
- ★ Resistance for change from management at supplier plants
- ★ Lack of sufficient follow up & support from the brands
- ★ Government's intervention



A case study --GP

- ★ A CSR case with combine strategy—
Gold Peak and Cadmium piozon

