



## **American Apparel and Footwear Association (AAFA) Honored Reebok**

The American Apparel and Footwear Association (AAFA) honored Reebok on June 12, 2003, with AAFA's first-ever Corporate Social Responsibility Award. The new award recognizes companies' "Best Practices" in a variety of areas of social responsibility that positively impact employees, the business and/or the community. A distinguished panel of judges selected Reebok for its creative program, the Human Rights Exchange, to promote good workplace conditions in factories. Through the program, factory workers from Indonesia and Thailand travel to each other's countries to meet their peers, to observe leadership practices and to learn about new ways to improve factory conditions. The factories that participated in the program are now among those with the best workplace compliance record.

## **Human Rights Exchange Program**

Reebok continuously seeks ways to help the independently owned and operated factories making our products achieve compliance with our code of conduct. Since 1997, we have been facilitating the development of stronger grievance procedures, worker or welfare committees, and other worker representatives, to strengthen code compliance. Because company monitors cannot be in all factories at all times, we need allies that can assist in finding workplace problems and fixing them. Workers themselves are an underutilized resource in monitoring workplace conditions. We have observed that in factories where workers are organized and able to effect company practices, the need for company monitoring can be reduced, and the workplace conditions still improved.

To further this goal, we developed the Human Rights Exchange program in Indonesia that brings less experienced worker representatives to factories where there are more experienced representatives. In November 2001, worker and staff representatives from five Indonesian footwear factories traveled to Thailand and spent four days visiting factories and interacting with their Thai counterparts. In January 2002, the Thai workers and staff traveled to Indonesia, where, in addition to visiting factories and interacting with their peers, they observed a transparent, democratic election of worker representatives in East Java.

Encouraging workers to play a role in ensuring code compliance is often made difficult by the fact that workers in producing countries are not typically well informed about how to raise grievances and resolve problems through dialogue with management. The peer-to-peer interaction in the Human Rights Exchange helps new worker representatives gain valuable practical knowledge on how to be more effective in their own factories. The Human Rights Exchange boosts the capacity of workers to engage in more participatory and effective means of ensuring workplace conditions. We also encourage worker groups to share their knowledge with their colleagues so that they, too, can become actively involved in solving factory problems.

For more information on Reebok's worker participation programs, visit the Improving Conditions section of our Human Rights Website, at the following address:  
<http://www.reebok.com/x/us/humanRights/business/improving.html>.