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Toward a Better Life for Workers

To the Editor:

When it comes to improving conditions for workers in factories overseas ("Labor Standards Clash With Global Reality," front page, April 24), there are no easy solutions. Significant progress can be made only by companies bold enough to persevere when problems arise and to engage workers and communities in long-lasting change.

We interviewed thousands of factory workers in Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam and found that they want a real voice in improving their futures. They have a lot to say about workplace conditions and want to participate in shaping training and other programs that will enhance their long-term prospects.

If we want to make a positive difference in workers' lives, we must engage all stakeholders — including corporations, workers, factory owners, unions and nongovernment organizations — to spread the benefits of the global economy to those on the outside looking in. RICK LITTLE

Baltimore, April 24, 2001

The writer is chairman of the operating council of the Global Alliance for Workers and Communities.