

BEYOND T-SHIRTS?

THE HAITIAN APPAREL SECTOR

MATS LUNDAHL
&
BENGT SÖDERLUND



The present book began its life as a contribution to a festschrift to a leading Haitian social scientist. During the course of that work we found that enough material existed to make it possible to expand the festschrift chapter into a short book and that the material was interesting enough to make the effort worthwhile. The main reason for this is of course the importance of the apparel sector for the Haitian economy. The sector has for several years accounted for some 85-90 percent of the country's exports and it constitutes a possible stepping stone on the path towards an industrialized economy.

The need for structural change is strong in Haiti. The country is the poorest one in the Western Hemisphere and many observers have nourished strong hopes that the apparel sector would be able to create hundreds of thousands of jobs and incomes that are higher than what most Haitians earn from agriculture. Unfortunately, this, by and large, has amounted to wishful thinking. The apparel sector employs less than 55,000 people and, even though people are queuing for jobs in it, in absolute terms it is a low-wage sector.



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