

AN ACTION ZINE FOR PEOPLE WHO CARE

JUST FASHION
MEANS FASHION
JUSTICE <3

Clean
Clothes
Campaign

**IT'S NOT JUST FASHION
WITHOUT WORKERS'
RIGHTS, LIVING WAGES,
CLEAN RIVERS, SAFE
FACTORIES AND JUSTICE.**

EDITOR'S NOTE

Poor living standards. Rising global temperatures. Extractive tech. Escalating wars. The biggest crises of our time are rooted in the exploitation of people and the planet for the profit of a few. Big Fashion billionaires are quite literally cashing in on our futures while their supply chains and the Earth are on fire.

The same capitalist system that represses garment workers' rights, pollutes the environment, and churns out mountains of textile waste is the same system that underpays retail workers, traps us on a treadmill of trends, and blames individuals for systemic problems. Fashion is a super toxic, destructive industry that touches the lives of us all.

Faced with endless tragic headlines and widening inequality, it's easy to feel hopeless right now. I get it! But feeling like we can't make a difference is one big inaction trap, carefully crafted by big corps who would much rather we paid them and shut up. Ummm, no thanks!

The truth is, we all deserve SO much better. Like a world where no one is exploited and the planet isn't wrecked for cheap clothes. The good news? We can make this happen — but only if we collectively stand up for our rights to a decent living and a liveable future.

Co-developed by young people, workers, Clean Clothes Campaign and allies, **our manifesto** outlines our shared vision for a just fashion system that protects dignified jobs on a healthy planet. In a word, just fashion means justice. It means delivering justice in all of its forms (social, economic, gender and climate) to everyone the fashion industry has ever wronged, and preventing future harm.

This zine is designed to be the manifesto's younger sister, bringing each point to life through a series of interviews, articles and games. It delves deep into some of fashion's most urgent problems but doesn't get lost in the doom and gloom. There's tons of insights and inspo from union leaders and young people, plus actions you can take in your daily life.

If you're also fed up with billionaires hoarding stolen wealth, buying our politicians, and pretending we're powerless to change this, you're in the right place. Keep reading for ways to speak out and show up — for garment workers, for the planet and for our communities. We might not be the problem, but we can all be part of the solution. Change starts with us.

Mel♥



Fancy listening to some tunes while you read? Scan for our playlist curated by our zine contributors!



WHO WE ARE

Made up of over 220 orgs and unions across 45 countries, Clean Clothes Campaign is a worker-led network fighting to improve working conditions in the global fashion industry.

**#1 DECENT WORK IS
GUARANTEED, NO
MATTER THE WORKER,
THE LOCATION OR THE
JOB.**

**Everyone benefits from decent work,
a high quality of life and equal rights.**

DEFINING DECENT WORK

By Helen Gimber, CCC Germany



DIGNITY: A job that respects you and helps you grow. You're treated like a human, not a robot. No exceptions.



EQUALITY: Same pay, same rights, no matter who you are. No discrimination. Your gender, race, or background shouldn't hold you back.



CASH: A living wage = enough to cover the necessities like rent, food and transport. It's the bare minimum, not a bonus.



EMPOWERMENT: Your voice matters. You can speak up about workplace issues, organise and demand better.



NO FEAR: Proper stability, contractually in your job and structurally where you work. No lax health and safety or sudden layoffs. Free from harassment and repression.



TOMORROW: Social protection - healthcare, pensions, parental leave - for your future self. Life happens. Your job should help, not make it harder.

Decent work isn't a privilege; it's a fundamental human right anchored in international law. Head to the International Labour Organization's [website](#) to learn more.

Q: who pays for cheap clothes?

A: Women do.

By Elena Čavlin, Youth Advisory Board (YAB) Serbia

“Out of sight, out of mind” is Big Fashion’s unspoken mantra. But behind cheap T-shirts lie the people who made them: the farmers who grew the cotton, the spinners and weavers who turned crop into fabric, the machinists who stitched the tee together and the textile recyclers who might later shred them. Many of these workers are women. The fashion industry hugely depends on their labour, and yet in return, women often receive the lowest wages, the least security and the heaviest burden.

This is the reality of the double work day: one paid shift, one unpaid shift. Globally, women perform nearly three times more unpaid care than men. After long, exhausting work shifts, domestic work often continues late into the night. Women cook, clean, care for children and older family members, and organise everyday life.

In ‘Women Speak’, women from Serbia describe this exact reality. They speak about pressure and silence at work and then returning home to another shift of responsibilities. Exploitation is not confined to the four walls of garment factories. It’s also found in the unpaid work that society expects from women every day.



Bangladesh Center for Workers Solidarity, 2019

This burden goes beyond time. It affects women’s health, rest, education and opportunities. Every hour spent juggling paid and unpaid labour is an hour that could have been used for training, political participation, organising in unions or much-needed rest.

Research by the Centre for the Politics of Emancipation shows that wages in Serbia’s textile sector fall far short of providing workers dignified lives. In 2025, the average monthly wage in the clothing industry was €521, while the estimated living wage was €1,232. For many women workers, this creates added pressure to financially support their families and manage the household.



Akota Garment Workers Federation, International Women's Day 2023

The climate crisis adds another layer of injustice. Rising temperatures and more frequent heatwaves are dangerous for garment workers in unventilated workplaces — especially for women who, due to cultural expectations, are often dressed more heavily and cannot undress like men. Heat stress comes with a variety of health risks, including dehydration, dizziness and exhaustion. These risks are greater for women during pregnancy, menstruation or menopause.

Meanwhile, many global brands celebrate women only through marketing. Every International Women's Day, they post messages about empowerment. But empowerment is not a pink campaign or a slogan on a T-shirt. Empowerment means living wages, safe working conditions, paid sick leave, maternity protection, childcare support and the right to organise.

If we want just fashion, we must first ask who carries the system on her back. Too often, the answer is women.

**JUST
FASHION
MEANS
GENDER
JUSTICE**

#2 UNIVERSAL SOCIAL PROTECTION ENABLES EVERYONE TO LIVE A DIGNIFIED, CLIMATE-RESILIENT LIFE.

We all have a safety net to fall back on in vulnerable times, increasing our collective resilience to social and climate disruption.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

A combination of labour protections, social security and public services designed to reduce and prevent poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion. This includes wages, working conditions, health and safety, sick pay, maternity and parental leave and pay, severance pay, a pension fund, unemployment benefits, education, health care and skills training.



TOO HOT TO HANDLE

Cool clothes should be made in air-conditioned factories.

Garment workers already struggling to get by are particularly vulnerable to income or job losses as their productivity declines in the heat; factories temporarily close or relocate; brands move orders elsewhere after extreme weather events; and healthcare and home cooling-related costs rise. With limited social protection (things like sick pay and health insurance), workers find themselves in an impossible situation. Taking time off means losing wages, forcing workers into unsafe, unventilated workplaces during punishing heatwaves.

There's nothing cool about garment workers fainting in deadly heat, but heat stress is only rising with global temperatures. Workers in countries as far apart as Indonesia, the Philippines, Pakistan, Uganda and Serbia are already feeling the strain of global warming in factories and at home.

The heat takes a physical and emotional toll, especially for women. Women's Centre Sri Lanka's Gayani Gomes explains that, "Sometimes, women in factories are forced to work long hours in extreme heat, often until they faint. In workplaces with metal roofs and little to no ventilation, they are made to continue without adequate breaks. As temperatures rise, incidents of gender-based violence and harassment also increase, adding to the daily struggles and risks women face at work."

So what's Big Fashion's role in all of this? Brands are big on pollution and lax on heat stress prevention. Workers struggle through long sweltering shifts without fans, cold water or regular toilet breaks. Meanwhile, brands, sheltered in faraway air-conditioned boardrooms, fail to provide workers with training, financing or support for climate adaptation.

It's time for Big Fashion to step up by reducing emissions **and** exploitation. Workers who contributed the least to the climate crisis shouldn't have to bear its financial and human costs. Brands need to 1) open up their wallets, 2) protect workers' rights and jobs and 3) prioritise heat stress as the urgent health and safety risk it is.

NOBODY SHOULD DIE FOR FASHION.

On 24th April 2013, the Rana Plaza garment factory in Bangladesh collapsed, killing at least 1,138 people in an entirely preventable disaster. Following the tragedy, many global brands finally signed The International Accord for Health and Safety in the Textile and Garment Industry - a legally binding agreement keeping factories in Bangladesh and now Pakistan safer.

The Accord ensures that factories supplying brands that have signed it are inspected and that identified safety risks are resolved. Crucially, it also holds brands financially and legally liable when things go wrong.

As global temperatures soar, The Accord provides a unique opportunity for addressing the effect of heat on workers. Brands need to use their leverage to ensure Accord engineers actively inspect hazards related to the climate crisis.



From top to bottom: A memorial for the tenth anniversary of Rana Plaza - photo credit: Bas Baltus. Protest photos of workers - photo credits: Bangladesh Center for Workers Solidarity.

“Hotter than Hell”

How soaring temperatures and floods are impacting Indonesian garment workers

By Paula Hiemer, YAB Netherlands

Imagine a garment factory. A big, somewhat shabby building, made from corrugated iron, bricks, aluminium and plywood. It has a few small windows and a big metal gate. Inside, there are rows and rows of work desks, shelves stacking rolls of fabric, and boxes full of buttons and zippers. The humid air is heavy with textile dust and the stinging smell of chemicals. Thousands of women workers are bent over desks, stitching quickly and precisely as the sound of hundreds of sewing machines rattle for hours on end. On the ceiling, fans hang idly.

This is how garment workers in Indonesia described it to me. Indonesia is among the countries most vulnerable to climate change, already seeing more erratic and torrential rain leading to devastating flooding. And every year, new record temperatures are reached in an already year-round hot country. While I was visiting the city of Jakarta, I was never allowed to enter a factory myself — management suspected I was there to spy on them for the brands they supply. Instead, I spoke to a group of workers who are members of a women-focused union. They told me not only about their incredibly precarious employment – think, constantly worrying whether you will still be able to feed your children the

next month or even week – but also about the heat at work, and what happens when factories are under water.

Have you ever tried to work on a really hot and humid day, and you just can't get your brain and body to function the way you want them to? Maybe you felt fatigued or dizzy? That's heat stress: your body's reaction to not being able to lower its own temperature. It can be dangerous. If you ignore the signs, you may suffer heat stroke. Garment workers, however, have no choice but to work despite the high temperatures. In the factory, the heat radiating from machines, lamps and hot irons combines with the warm, humid air from outside. There's no breeze, since the fans are usually turned off – except when there is an audit taking place. Workers said they hoped for audits every day. Then, at least, the working conditions would be bearable.

Otherwise, it is so hot that they are dripping with sweat, dizzy and nauseous, plagued by headaches and exhaustion. On top of this, supervisors constantly patrol the lanes, checking their work and shouting abuse at those who cannot keep up. Workers faint on a daily basis and are expected to go back to work when they regain consciousness. They fear losing their jobs if they do not meet their targets. Some workers take painkillers daily to be able to continue working. Some bring small, portable desk fans for a little respite. The union has repeatedly complained about the heat, but management keeps ignoring their demands and intimidates union members with threats of dismissal.

Now, place the factory I described to you in the middle of a flood-plagued megacity. Where clogged drainage pipes, sedimented canals and green spaces covered in concrete leave no room for water to flow. The yearly monsoon rains are far less predictable and much more intense due to warming seas. Just to get to the factory, workers have to brave flooded streets, navigating rain water mixing with toxic sewage. When the factory area floods, the first system to give in is electricity. The lights turn off and sewing machines stop humming. Workers have to wait until the power comes back on. If it doesn't, they are sent home. Any time that's lost results in pay cuts for them. And when water levels rise so high that it seeps into factory buildings or, in a flash flood, suddenly washes into the production space, workers have to risk punishment for attempting to evacuate. At a footwear factory producing for brands like Nike and New Balance, workers almost got into a physical fight with management just so they could leave and check on their families during a flood. Of course, management and brands will do anything to avoid paying workers for the days lost to cleaning up after the flood.

In sweatshops around the world, the climate crisis is disrupting factory life in similar ways. Workers are the ones who are made to carry the burden of environmental pressures. So, what's the solution? Their unions need the freedom to fight for better working conditions, wages, and protection from extreme weather. And brands need to take responsibility for both the exploitation in their supply chains and the consequences of a changing climate which their harmful business models massively contribute to.

COOL THE WORKPLACE!

"We rush to meet our target, yet when a natural disaster strikes, we must bear the brunt too."

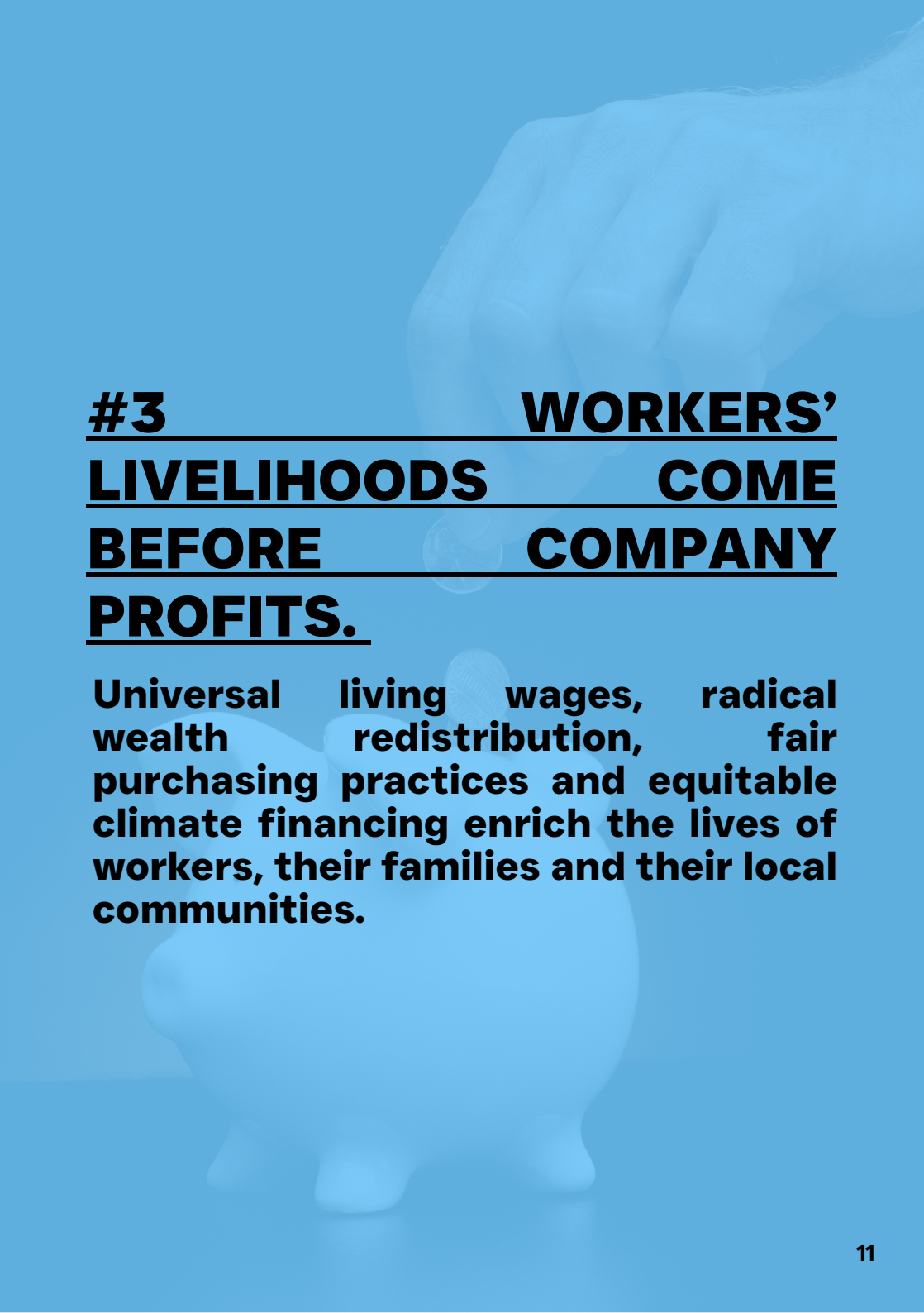
"It happens a lot, even when someone faints, when they wake up and we tell them to go home (...) they don't want to, because the work pressure is so extreme it makes them scared."

"I'll even say that the heat is even hotter than hell!"

"When it floods (...), the company still doesn't pay us for those days, even though it's a natural disaster, not something we want. (...) it's clearly not our fault."

Tangerang, Indonesia



A faint background image showing a hand dropping a coin into a piggy bank.

#3 WORKERS'

LIVELIHOODS COME

BEFORE COMPANY

PROFITS.

**Universal living wages, radical
wealth redistribution, fair
purchasing practices and equitable
climate financing enrich the lives of
workers, their families and their local
communities.**



LIVING WAGES ARE A WIN **FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET**

By Anne Bienias, Living Wage
Coordinator at Clean Clothes Campaign

If there's a version of a just transition that doesn't deliver living wages to everyone, we don't want it!! It might sound like a cute daydream, but living wages are actually a fundamental human right. We're big on the justice part of just fashion, especially wealth justice. See, billionaires are takers, not makers, who hoard wealth generated by underpaid garment workers' labour. They splash the cash on carbon-guzzling superyachts and space trips while workers struggle to put food on the table. Living wages are more than fairness; it's a social justice and climate justice solution. Here's why:

1) Living wages build climate resilience.

Garment workers struggling to get by are often hit the hardest by a changing climate; they make clothes in parts of the world prone to flooding, extreme heat and fires. Poverty wages make it virtually impossible to build savings, afford healthcare or pay for home cooling. As climate-related disasters increase

in frequency and intensity, living wages offer a safety net when the unexpected happens. A living wage, for example, means workers can afford to move into safer housing or (temporarily) relocate to safer regions without having to worry about missing a day or two at work.

WAIT, WHAT'S A LIVING WAGE AGAIN??

A living means the wage a worker earns in a standard working week (never exceeding 48 hours) is enough to provide for them and their family's basic needs, including housing, education and healthcare as well as some savings to fall back on. Sounds pretty essential, right? We think so too. It's why we created Living Wage Action Day, an annual awareness day that does what it says on the tin. This is your invite to get involved with the next one in September!



For Living Wage Action Day 2025, CCC teamed up with the Dutch trade union federation FNV to rename Amsterdam's busiest shopping street to "Low Wage Lane". Iconic!



For Living Wage Action Day 2024, the Center for the Politics of Emancipation, the the Serbian Living Wage Coalition and female drum troupe "Bubnjarke sa ulice" took the message to the streets.

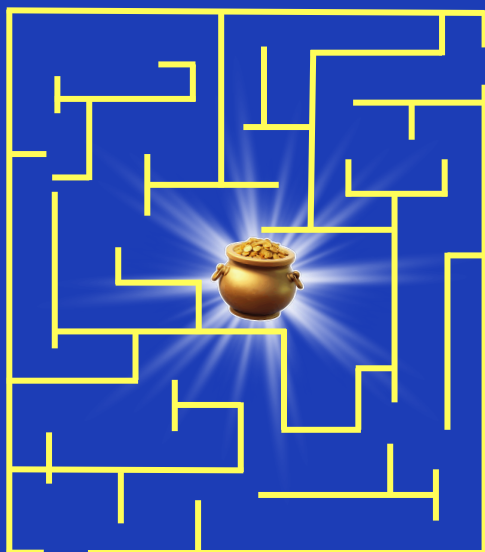
1) Low wages = high waste. Big Fashion thrives on extracting labour and planetary resources. SO many corporate climate strategies fall short of improving working conditions or actually leave workers worse off. But living wages are the foundation of just, climate action. If garment pricing reflected the true cost of labour and brands priced living wages into their purchasing practices (more on this on page 18!), they'd finally be forced to rethink their business model. Universal living wages would spark a decrease in daily quotas and overtime, and ultimately brands' production volumes (carefully planned and negotiated with workers, of course!). It's a win-win situation: workers are equipped to live dignified, climate-resilient lives and brands make smarter business choices that benefit the climate. There's no fashion on a dead planet, after all!

The whole game's rigged

What do Amazon's Jeff Bezos and LVMH's Bernard Arnault have in common? The future trillionaires (!) both cosied up to Trump at the president's second inauguration. Their brands might represent two opposite sides of fashion - fast and luxury - but they share more similarities than you might think. The truth is that luxury price tags don't come with inbuilt ethics. With overlapping supply chains, comparable carbon footprints, and a shared history of sweatshop scandals, these issues are truly systemic.

Turns out the whole system's rigged. Thanks, capitalism! It's not just (ultra) fast fashion brands scorching the planet and ignoring workers' rights. Big-name luxury houses, sportswear retailers and accessory brands are at it too. **Big Fashion** describes the powerful, multi-million dollar players dominating the industry. These brands and their filthy rich executives profit from a global imbalance of power and money. While they play with our future, play these games to see just how rigged the system is. Answers are on page 19!

Find your fortune



START



HINT: Keep reaching a dead end? Try finding the secret door that takes you straight to the gold centre. Did we forget to mention this door is only available to billionaires?? Oops, sorry about that!

(hugely inflated)

Know their worth

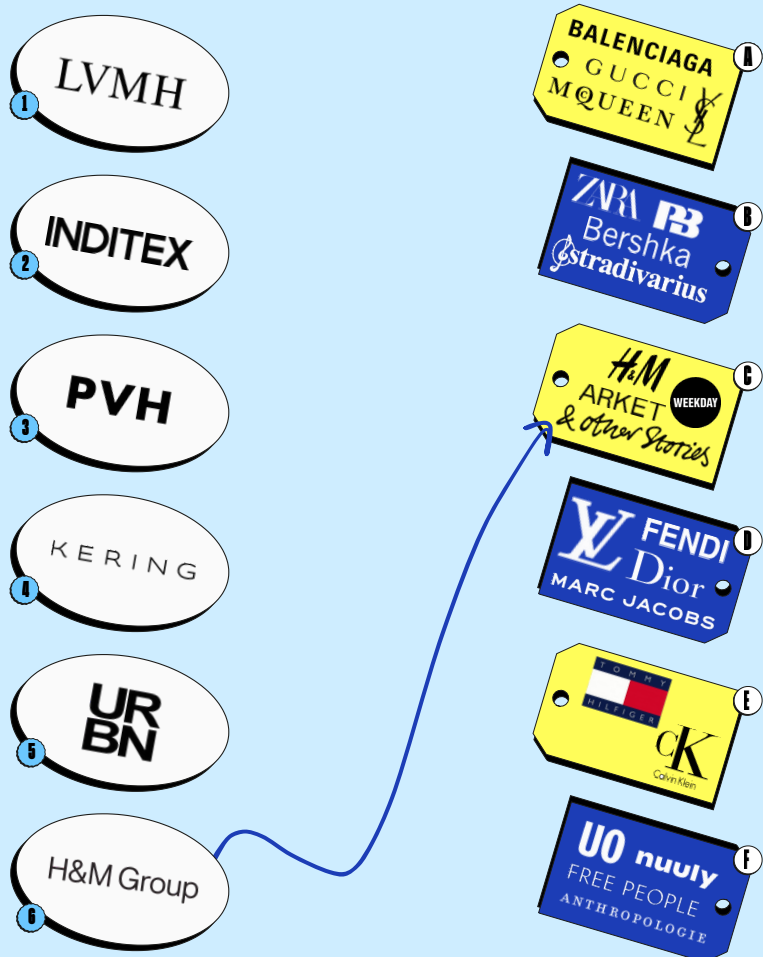
Match the billionaire to their brand and net worth* to see just how overvalued they really are!



*Correct as of early May 2026. [Search for their updated net worth](#) if you can stomach it!!!

Guess who!

A monopoly game come to life, Big Fashion is snatching up ALL the spaces on the board. Can you tell who's who? Match the retailer to (just some of) the brands they own!



Not so fun fact: the OG monopoly board - called 'The 'Landlord's Game' - was created by Lizzie Magie in 1903 to critique capitalism. That was until the patent was bought two decades later for just \$500. Today, the game generates billions and can be played on thousands of themed franchised boards. Ugh.

True or false?

You know
what to do!

1) 94.6% of major fashion brands aren't paying workers a living wage.

2) It would take a Bangladeshi garment worker earning the national minimum wage almost 123 million years to earn the same amount as the Zara founder's current net worth.

3) The richest 1% emit as much planet-heating pollution as two-thirds of humanity.

4) Garment workers earn on average 45% less than a living wage.

5) Almost half of the surveyed Cambodian workers said that they often go to work without eating enough.

6) Nike's quarterly profit would be enough to pay all Cambodian workers the difference between what they're currently earning and what they should be earning (and still have a lot of money left).

7) When the minimum wage in a garment production country increases, brands automatically adjust their purchasing prices to reflect that.

ANSWERS!

Find your fortune: Trick question! There is no way to reach the middle, unless you're a billionaire that is. **Know their worth:** 1) Victoria's Secret 2) Uniqlo 3) Kering 4) Zara 5) Nike 6) LVMH **Guess who:** 1) D 2) B 3) E 4) A 5) F 6) C. **True or false:** All statements are sadly true, except for number 7. Big Fashion really is the worst.

“Not our factory, not our problem”

Umm yeah, right!

Scroll long enough on a brand's website and you'll likely find a sentence that says “We don't own the factories...”. And it's true! From the 1970s, brands started to switch to overseas factories in search of cheaper wages and lax labour laws. Oh, and an excuse to hide behind when workers' rights are violated! Brands love to say “not our factory, not our problem”, ignoring all of the ways they call the shots.

Here's the thing: you can outsource manufacturing, but you can't outsource responsibility. When brands squeeze factories for the lowest prices and the shortest lead times, they 100% influence the working conditions. Brands' exploitative pricing drives down wages and safety standards. Their huge order volumes create a pressure pot of human rights abuses. And their demanding deadlines increase unpaid overtime and restrict toilet breaks.

Did you know you might be wearing a new item of clothing before the person who made it was even paid? It's not unusual for brands to pay months after an order is completed, make sudden order changes or demand backdated discounts. These poor purchasing practices - how brands engage with and buy from their suppliers - can translate into mass layoffs or wage theft.

A JUST
WAGE
SHOULD
NOT
BE A
LUXURY

Photo credit:
Savannah van den
Roovaart



Meanwhile, everything has become way more expensive over the last 20 years... for us at least. Who isn't paying more? Big Fashion brands, duh! Our latest research shows that brands pay nearly the same price for a cotton t-shirt as they did 25 years ago. Thanks to inflation, they're effectively paying around 50% less. When brands pay suppliers poorly, it's workers who pay the price. As one Bangladeshi supplier admitted, “We try to keep the workers' wage portion as low as possible.”

In solidarity with workers impacted by the Bangladesh Crackdown, CCC disrupted Zara's largest European distribution centre to demand that Zara dropped the trumped up charges filed against workers who dared to stand up against exploitation >>>

Brands' influence goes way beyond the factory floor; Big Fashion dominates the market. This deep-rooted power imbalance stops workers from speaking up, factories from negotiating a better price and governments from improving labour rights, out of fear brands will take their business elsewhere. We saw this clearly during the 2023 minimum wage negotiations in Bangladesh. Virtually zero Big Fashion brands backed the unions' demand for 23,000 taka or promised to absorb the costs – the bare minimum BTW! The result? Another poverty-level minimum wage, alongside state violence and criminal charges against workers who protested the outcome.

Brands are quick to distance themselves from public scandals or pretend that enabling living wages is an impossible task. It's really not. These brands are the primary profit-makers and power-holders. They could cut back on their huge marketing spend or stop throwing money at supermodel collabs. They could cap executive bonuses or close the huge gap between what garment workers and the C-suite are paid. It's a choice not to.

In short, we target brands because the garment workers leading our work call them out first. And they're right! If you set the terms, you accept the consequences. If you profit from exploitation, you will be called out. For tips on holding Big Fashion accountable, flick to pages 47-48.

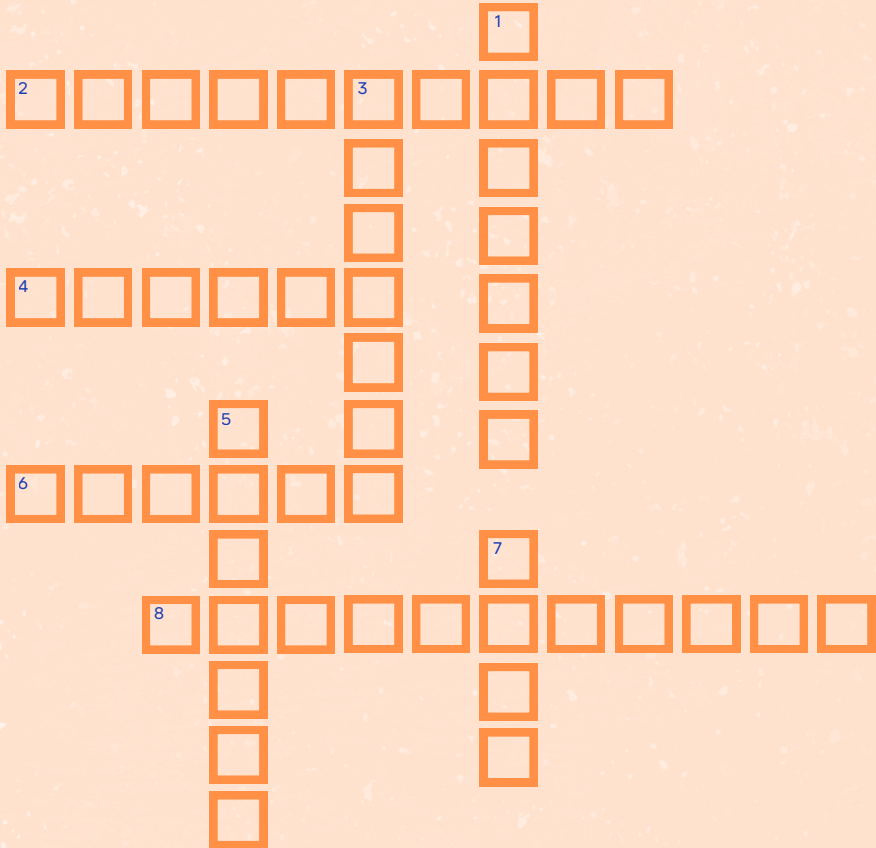


Photo credit: Savannah van den Roovert



CROSSWORD

Decipher the clues to complete the puzzle! Are you spotting a theme?



DOWN

- 1)** Money that is stored away for a later date
- 3)** Buildings that people live in
- 5)** The lowest legal pay rate
- 7)** Sustenance that nourishes your body

ACROSS

- 2)** Medical services that improve or restore wellbeing
- 4)** Entitlements and freedoms all workers are owed
- 6)** A fair wage for a decent life
- 8)** A greedy person with a ten-figure net worth

ANSWERS:
Down: 1) Savings 2) Healthcare 3) Housing 4) Rights 5) Minimum 6) Food
Across: 2) Medical services that improve or restore wellbeing 3) Buildings that people live in 4) Entitlements and freedoms all workers are owed 5) The lowest legal pay rate 6) A fair wage for a decent life 7) Sustenance that nourishes your body 8) A greedy person with a ten-figure net worth

#4 EVERYONE HAS A SAY IN THE DECISIONS THAT IMPACT THEIR LIVES.

The pathway to a just, green future is paved by workers' needs and expertise. Everyone is invited to speak up without fear or repression.

Who gets a say in the fashion industry?

Spoiler: it's not workers

When you think of a Big Fashion brand, who do you picture? Its billionaire founder or CEO? The merry-go-round of Creative Directors? The “sustainability ambassador” or celeb “designer” that snatches headlines? These people might be the face of the brand, but they're hardly the substance. The noise is a distraction, shifting our attention away from who really matters: the people who make our clothes.

We see it again and again. Big Fashion stays on the mic - at conferences and award shows, on podcasts, in press interviews - while supply chain workers are ignored. Brands speak on “sustainability” in the strictly environmental sense, as if their supply chains aren't on fire. The conversation skips over the very human side of fashion.

This exclusion also shows up on the factory floor, where workers are discouraged from speaking up. Freedom of association gives workers the right to form and join representative organisations of their own choosing in the workplace. Unionising is a fundamental human right but the reality is far darker.

Today, only a small percentage of global garment workers are actually unionised. Union busting is the norm,



incentivised by brands' pressure for factories to be cheap and flexible, and governments' desire to attract foreign investment. Major garment-producing countries like Myanmar, the Philippines and Turkey belong to the list of the 10 worst countries for workers to organise in. Countries like Vietnam or China have no independent unions at all.

When workers are best placed to advocate for their rights and needs, they deserve a democratic seat at the table. It's so simple!! Yet Big Fashion continues to choose performance over partnership. Take [H&M's Insights Board](#) - a “sustainability” advisory board co-created with Stella McCartney. The idea is to bring together “diverse voices” to exchange “different perspectives” on sustainability. Except the diverse voices are really just a bunch of celebs far removed from the struggles of garment production.

This invite wasn't extended to the people who actually make H&M's clothes. There's no representative for workers in climate-vulnerable countries or workers facing Big Fashion-fuelled ecological crises.

So here's two free insights, H&M:

1) Real change comes from worker inclusion, not celebrity clout.

2) We're well past the "listening and learning" stage. Words - action = meaningless!!

RuPaul really had the right idea when she said, "I don't want to see any f*cking H&M [taking up space in the convo with its empty words and even emptier actions. Ok, ok - that last part is our addition!]" What do we really want? To see workers at the centre of decisions that impact their lives.

PSA: JUST FASHION PUTS WORKERS FIRST



International workers day protest in the Philippines with Clean Clothes activists from across South East Asia

Transitioning to a low-carbon world is an opportunity to build something better. We don't want to fall into the trap of replicating the same systems of harm. This is a chance to reduce fashion's planetary impacts and ensure that **everyone** has a higher quality of life. That's where trade unions come in. They offer the most effective, legitimate way to establish a fair deal for workers. Unions provide a collective voice for workers who may be too intimidated to speak up alone.

It's no coincidence that the demand for a just transition was borne out of the trade union movement. Big Fashion's sustainability plans risk making workers' lives harder if unions aren't consulted. Championing climate solutions while overlooking workers' rights is like sticking a plaster over a big, gaping wound.

Research by Fair Action Italy highlights this contradiction. The LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification is now recognised as a global standard for assessing the ecological sustainability of buildings. As of early 2024, Bangladesh hosts 18 of the world's top 20 green factories. This doesn't translate to a collaborative or respectful work environment.



Analysis of 8 LEED-certified Bangladeshi factories making clothes for brands like Decathlon, Hugo Boss and H&M reveals a culture of silence. None of the surveyed factories has a trade union. Workers lack confidence and are afraid of retaliation if they raise problems. They cannot speak to auditors; only managers can. Without a union to advocate for them, workers are left with little protection. They also described intense production pressure, recurrent verbal abuse, forced overtime, inadequate ventilation, and dust- and heat-related health issues.

We sound like a broken record, but it's worth repeating for the Big Fashion brands sidelining workers' voices: social and climate justice go hand in hand. Fashion can never be sustainable if the people making our clothes can't sustain their livelihoods. Independent, worker-led unions should form the backbone of the industry to ensure that any and all transformations put workers' rights and environmental protections first.

BUSINESS
AS USUAL

SALE



A word from union leaders and organisers!

We asked labour organisers and union leaders in our network about their journeys into workers' rights activism, and to share their advice for young people who want to get involved but don't know where to start.



I started working in the textile sector as a child worker at the age of 15 and worked for years in denim sandblasting workshops in Türkiye. During that period, I developed silicosis, an incurable occupational lung disease caused by inhaling silica dust. Losing 46 percent of my lung capacity changed my life completely and pushed me to fight for safer and more humane working conditions in the garment industry. I started fighting for my own rights and the rights of other silicosis patients. Over time, I became involved not only as a former worker, but also as an activist, organiser, and advocate for better working conditions and ethical production in the global garment sector.

My advice to young people wanting to build a better future is to start by listening to workers and learning how the fashion industry works. Many people care about workers' rights, but they often feel powerless because the system seems too big to change. Real change begins with small but smart actions: supporting labour rights campaigns, asking brands for transparency, joining local solidarity networks, amplifying workers' voices, and educating others around you. I would also encourage young people not to see garment workers only as victims, but as people with knowledge, strength and leadership who just need your solidarity and strong voices. Even one person speaking out can help expose injustice and inspire collective action.

Bego Demir, organiser and labour activist from Turkey



I started working as a garment worker when I was very young, and I experienced firsthand the long hours, low wages, unsafe conditions, and discrimination many workers face – especially women workers. Those experiences shaped my life and my commitment to labour rights. For me, being part of CCC means being part of a global movement that prioritises workers' lives over profit. It also means knowing that garment workers in Bangladesh are not alone – that people across the world stand with us in demanding justice, safety and respect. My advice to young people in Europe is: do not underestimate your power. The clothes you wear are connected to workers' lives across the world. Learn where your clothes come from, listen to workers' voices directly, and support movements, not just brands' marketing campaigns. Real change comes from solidarity, collective action, and pressure on corporations and governments. You do not need to be an expert to join the movement. Start by staying informed, supporting worker-led campaigns, talking openly about labour rights and climate justice, and standing with workers when they speak out. International solidarity has helped workers win important changes before, and it is still urgently needed today.

Kalpona Akter, union leader and
labour activist from Bangladesh

My parents were both full-time labour organisers for national unions in the Philippines. I grew up spending my summer vacation coming with them to union offices, visiting workers' communities, and joining May Day rallies. My mom was an organiser at many garment factories. I remember visiting their picket line/protest camp regularly and supporting the small cooperative the workers founded to generate some livelihood for the displaced workers while still fighting for their case. This inspired me to focus my undergraduate thesis on the sportswear subcontractors in Marikina City and interview industry workers for that project. Many years later, in 2021, I joined the CCC as its regional urgent appeal coordinator for South East Asia. We can support garment workers in small, simple ways, such as helping CCC and garment workers spread our content and message on social media. A simple click to share a post tagging a brand, for example. Listen to the workers – there is so much to learn from their stories, from them talking about their plight and demands. Listening to the workers will spark endless ideas on how to contribute to the movement.

Niki Gamara, Urgent Appeals
Coordinator from the Philippines



**#5 CLOTHING
PRODUCTION MEETS
EVERYONE'S NEEDS
WHILE RESPECTING
PLANETARY BOUNDARIES.**

Production models are transformed to respect workers' rights, decent work and planetary boundaries. Natural resources are de-commodified. Clothing is rarely discarded.

BIG FASHION MATH IS DESTROYING OUR PLANET

How much land, water and fossil fuels does it really take to churn out billions of fashion products every year? How many human hours go into stitching, sewing, growing and transporting all of these clothes? War on Want and Research & Degrowth International ran the calculations, and the size of fashion's footprint is truly stomach-churning. In a single year, it takes the following resources to make fashion for the EU:



**THE LAND
EQUIVALENT
OF BRITAIN**

That's land that could have been used for food, housing or rewilding. This land is overwhelmingly extracted in Asia and Africa, underscoring the neocolonial power dynamics that shape the fashion industry today.



**FIVE MILLION
YEARS (NOT
HOURS!)**

In return for poverty wages and exploitative conditions. That's time that could have been spent on community and care work, practising agroecology, building flood defenses or rest! This labour is overwhelmingly taken from Asia.



**5.5 BILLION
CUBIC METERS
OF FRESH
WATER**

This water use is concentrated in regions already facing serious water shortages. Fashion production doesn't just steal water, it poisons it. Dye run off is so prolific, they say you can tell the next colour of the season by looking at the shade of the rivers close to dyeing facilities.



**40,976 KILO
TONNES OF
FOSSIL FUELS**

While fossil fuels make billions for fossil fuel companies, they are destroying the planet and creating job instability.

LESS IS MORE

Big Fashion-sponsored overproduction thrives on worker exploitation and environmental over-extraction. But what if we made clothes to meet everyone's needs, respect workers' rights and stay within planetary boundaries? What would they be made of? How would they make us feel? Fill in the blanks to reveal your just fashion vision!

Clothes are made out of _____
and made by people who _____

Clothes are designed to be _____

Overproduction is out. _____ is in!

Nothing is binned. Everything is _____

Our wardrobes meet all of our needs, like _____

The fashion industry's footprint is _____

Just fashion looks good on me, and makes me feel _____

THERE IS NO AWAY

Unravelling waste colonialism with F.Irene Lanyero

By Eva Meyermans Spelmans, YAB Belgium

Background Image credit: Abdul Jalil, Wrapped Up Media



Europeans are buying and throwing away more clothes than ever, but where do these clothes really end up? Only a small percentage is resold locally. The rest – typically lower quality garments – travel thousands of miles to faraway markets, landfills and rivers. It's a practice known as waste colonialism: where clothing worn in the Global North is mass exported to the Global South, burdening local communities with textile waste, pollution and health risks. I spoke with trade union leader F.Irene Lanyero to unravel the impacts this is having in Uganda.

EVA: What happens to clothes donated in Europe?

IRENE: These clothes end up on the markets around the country. In Kampala's second-hand market, it is mainly women and youth who work for very low wages and unsafe working conditions, including single mothers and older people. They sort the clothes according to quality and resale potential. This sorting process releases toxic substances, against which the workers are not protected. Afterwards, in the best-case scenario, the clothing is reused or recycled. However, local sorting facilities do not have sufficient capacity or infrastructure to process the enormous volume of textiles.

E: What happens if the clothes cannot be sold on the market?

I: If you don't sell it on that market, upcyclers or local designers can redo it in a different model. For example, they buy low-quality bundles of clothes and cut them into smaller pieces for babies or handkerchiefs to sell them again. The upcycler market is not very big yet, as around 20 percent of clothes are being upcycled. But the market is growing. Unsellable clothes can be used to stuff pillows, chairs or a couch. If clothes are completely damaged, they end up in the drainage systems or landfills.

E: Waste colonialism is having devastating consequences for the people and communities that are left to deal with it. What does this look like in Uganda?

I: A chain of events follows from the pollution coming from the Global North. There is an impact on labour conditions, the environment, the economy and society. Toxic air quality comes from the landfills, which means that people can catch different kinds of diseases, including cholera.

It also has an effect on the climate. The more open landfills that you have in society, the worse the situation of the environment will be in terms of extreme heat and flooding, because this comes with greenhouse gas emissions and clothing blocks the local drainage systems.

Image credit: Abdul Jalil, Wrapped Up Media

These weather events have an impact on workers who are already in precarious conditions. Young people, women, old people and vulnerable people are working without protective equipment, exposed to all weather conditions, as the infrastructure is lacking.

Economically, the discarded clothing coming from the Global North disrupts the possibility of a vibrant local textile industry. This local industry cannot compete with the large volume of second-hand clothing being imported.

E: It's clear that waste colonialism touches the lives of all Ugandans, and this is likely to increase in the context of the climate crisis. What impact has this already had?

I: There have been mass floodings in the city centre of Kampala. The second hand market has been completely flooded. There have been fires that raised down the market. Because of consistent rainfall, a tragic situation unfolded at one of the landfills - Kiteezi - where about 23 people lost their lives because of a landslide. People's houses were buried underneath.

E: How do we make brands responsible for what they make?

I: Alongside creating responsibility for brands, there is a broader role for policy and legislation to create awareness, increase protections for workers and ensure better health conditions. Transparency should be key to these policies because if you don't know the impact your product has, how can you act on it? It is important that brands are responsible for the entire lifecycle of their products, from raw materials to end of life. At the same time, financial



“It is important that consumers know that there is someone at the receiving end of the chain.”

F. Irene Lanyero

accountability for the harm that has been done is very important for me.

E: What message do you have for readers in consumer countries?

I: The entire global value chain is connected. From the design choices to the way consumers treat the garments to when it ends up as ‘waste’ in our countries. At the moment of design, a lot of the future environmental impact is already determined. It is important that consumers know that there is someone at the receiving end of the chain. Treating your garments with care is important to keep their value higher.

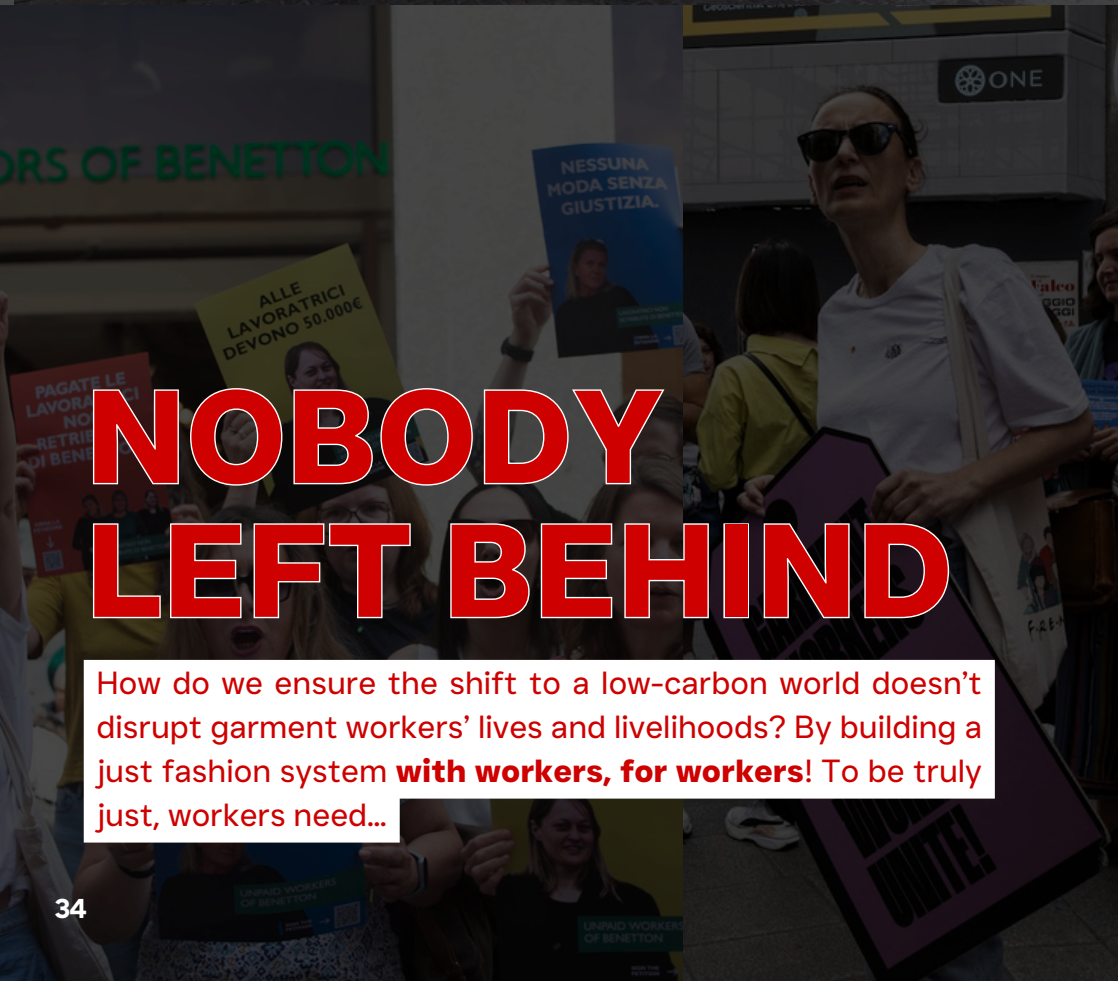
Overconsumption from the Global North creates a lot of destruction for the local industry. This is not only for Uganda but also for other countries like Zambia or Ghana. The efforts of local artistry to thrive are being undermined.

E: What gives you hope?

I: Being able to share these stories, however painful they may be, is important to raise awareness. I am grateful for the platform that has been given and the rise in interest to tackle the issues around waste colonialism.

#6 JOB SECURITY AND WAGES INCREASE AS PRODUCTION VOLUMES FALL.

Production is no longer driven by profit or growth. Workers now make less and work less hours but earn more. All reductions in production are carefully negotiated with workers. No one is left behind.



NOBODY LEFT BEHIND

How do we ensure the shift to a low-carbon world doesn't disrupt garment workers' lives and livelihoods? By building a just fashion system **with workers, for workers!** To be truly just, workers need...



CCC activists from 21 countries held a solidarity action outside a major Benetton store in Milan, pressuring the brand to pay Croatian garment workers who made their clothes. Photo credit: Alessandra Diconsoli.

1 FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Workers freely organise to improve their working conditions and demand local climate protections. With their unions, they carefully negotiate reductions in production volumes to prevent sudden job losses and factory closures.

2 RESPONSIBLE EXIT PLANS

When this is unavoidable, workers are given advance notice of workplace closures and alternative employment pathways. Accessible reskilling and upskilling opportunities offer workers safer, more climate-resilient employment.



3 SEVERANCE PAY

All workers are entitled to a financial package when their employment is involuntarily ended - something we're pushing for with our Pay Your Workers campaign. Check out pages 40-41 for more details!

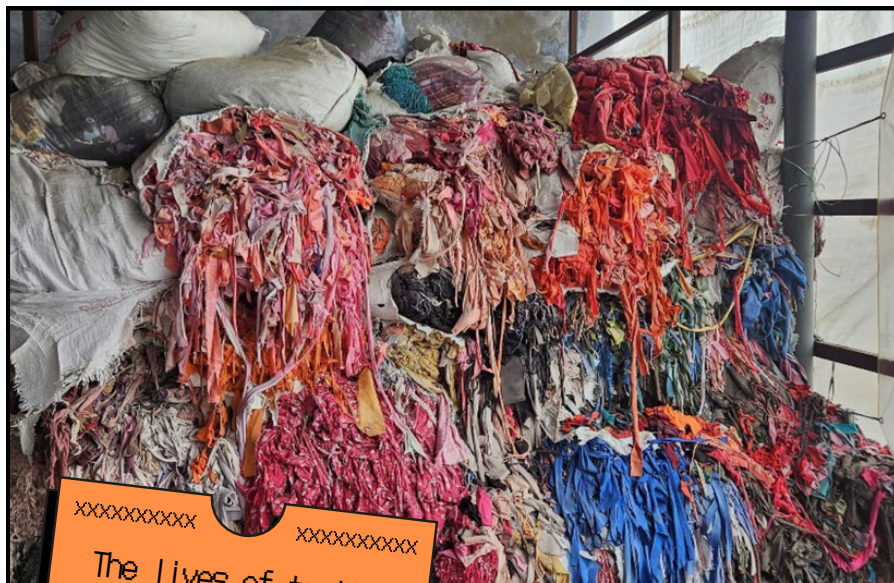
4 UNIVERSAL SOCIAL PROTECTION

Alongside severance pay, social protection measures provide workers with an additional safety net during times of hardship.

5 EQUAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES

To ensure new green jobs are fairly created across the globe, trade relations and international support equip major garment production countries to build up their own economic power in other sectors.

The dark side of textile recycling



XXXXXXXXXX
The lives of textile
recyclers in India
and Pakistan
XXXXXXXXXX

When we think of garment workers, we often think of the people who sew clothes, not the people who later recycle them. What does this job typically entail?

Take-back bins and recycling schemes are often sold as an opt-out from Big fashion, but testimonies from textile recyclers in India and Pakistan tell another story. Research by [Arisa](#) and [Labour Education Foundation](#) reveals excessive working hours, poverty wages, harmful health exposure and local pollution. We spoke to Arisa's Business and Human Rights Programme Officer, Diewertje Heyl, to learn more.

Textile recyclers carry out the largely invisible but essential work of transforming discarded clothing and factory offcuts into new materials. This is a complex, multi-step process: textiles are collected, sorted by colour, type, and size, stripped of buttons and zippers, then cut, bleached, shredded, and spun into new yarn. In some cases, materials are downcycled or repurposed into entirely different products.

Brands promote textile recycling as an environmental win, but it has a hidden human cost. What does this look like in India and Pakistan?

Despite the circular promise of recycling systems, working conditions remain far from sustainable. In Pakistan, tasks are typically repetitive and physically demanding, performed in hot, dusty and noisy environments, with limited access to protective equipment, long working hours and low wages. Comparable conditions are observed in India, where informal and semi-formal recycling units rely heavily on vulnerable groups, including migrant and home-based workers. The findings highlight persistent risks related to occupational health and safety. Instances of underage workers were also identified.

Various recycling processes are highly polluting, releasing dust, bleached water and air pollution into the local environment. Surrounding communities bear the costs for this, being exposed to all kinds of health hazards, and not being able to grow crops in the vicinity of the recycling units. In reality, this industry is far from environmentally friendly.

How do we ensure the transition to a more circular fashion system is just for workers?

A just transition requires embedding workers' rights in circularity from the outset, rather than treating them as an afterthought. Textile recycling workers should be recognised as integral to circular systems and treated accordingly. In practice, this entails providing formal employment workplaces, adequate protective equipment, reasonable working hours, and meaningful worker representation.

CIRCULAR FASHION

A closed-loop system where clothing is responsibly designed, produced and (re)used to be kept in circulation for as long as possible.

How can EU policy tackle textile waste and protect workers' rights?

It can play a key role by tightening controls on textile exports, ensuring that materials are suitable for recycling and do not end up in landfills or being incinerated. It should also require brands, sorters and exporters to take responsibility for respecting workers' rights throughout sorting and recycling processes. Environmental policies that promote circularity in the textile and garment sector must also incorporate a strong workers' rights perspective, to ensure that circularity measures do not simply shift pollution and labour exploitation out of sight.

What actions can we take to reduce textile waste?

Young people in Europe can make a meaningful difference by simply buying less, wearing their clothes longer, repairing and swapping items, and choosing second-hand over new whenever possible. Beyond individual choices, they can also support brands that are transparent about where recycling actually takes place and how workers are protected — because “recycled” does not automatically mean “responsible”.

A practical step is to ask brands direct questions. What happens to take-back clothing? Are their recycling facilities mapped? Are recycling worker protections included in their due diligence? These kinds of questions help push the industry toward greater accountability.

WORKER TESTIMONIES

Long hours, low pay

“Our work schedule is 12 hours per day, seven days a week, with only short tea and lunch breaks. This takes a toll on our bodies. The work is too much for us.”

“The wages are not enough to meet our expenses, even when working 12 hours per day.”

“We do this work for our survival.”

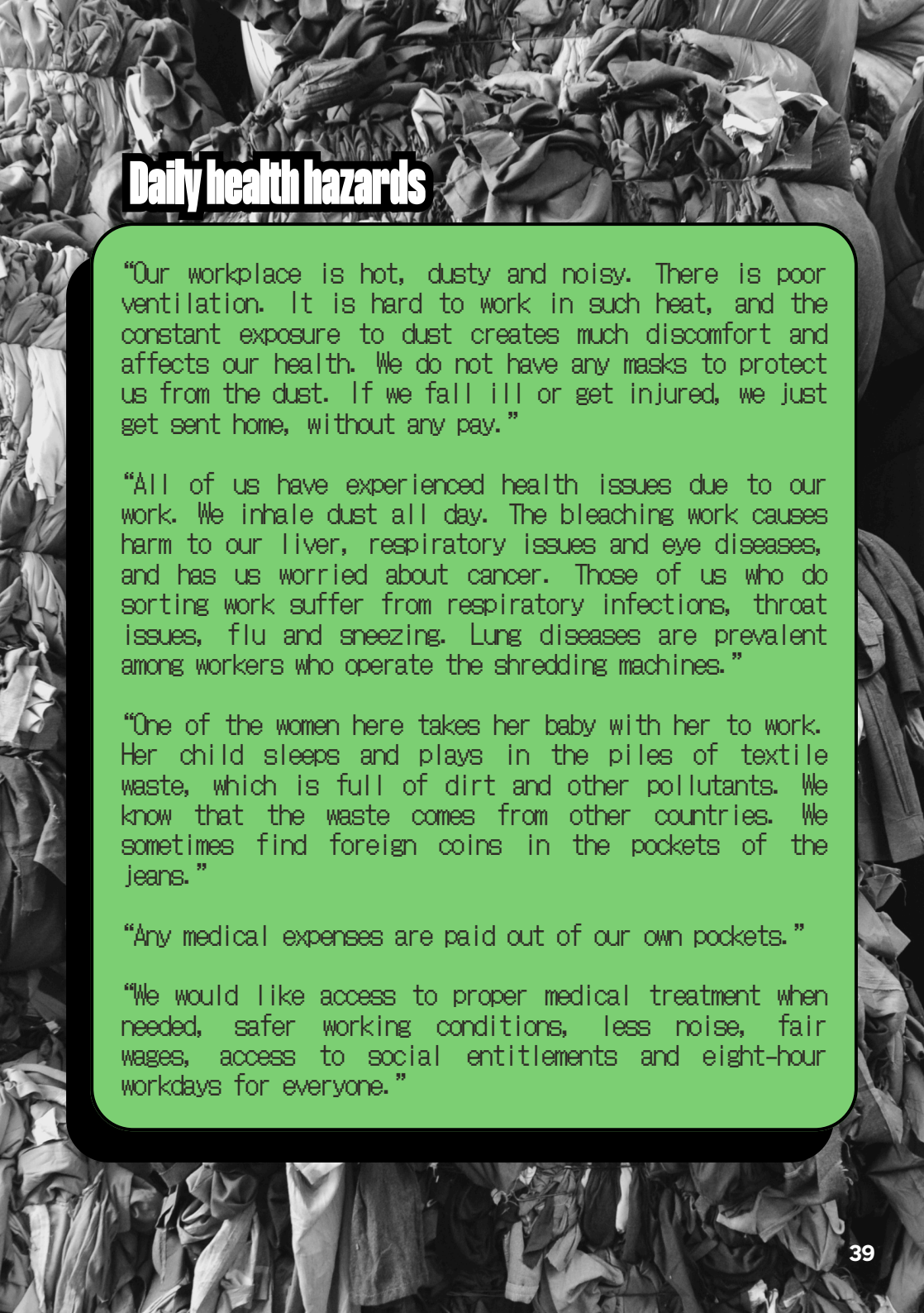
“We had to take on this work due to poverty, even though we do not want to do it.”

Informal work

“We are hired by contractors. We do not have any written contracts or other proof of employment. There is also no social protection arranged.”

“We do not know of any workers’ organisations or community groups in this area that could help us raise our voices.”

“We do not have any proof of employment. No appointment letter or pay-slips. We get paid in cash.”



Daily health hazards

"Our workplace is hot, dusty and noisy. There is poor ventilation. It is hard to work in such heat, and the constant exposure to dust creates much discomfort and affects our health. We do not have any masks to protect us from the dust. If we fall ill or get injured, we just get sent home, without any pay."

"All of us have experienced health issues due to our work. We inhale dust all day. The bleaching work causes harm to our liver, respiratory issues and eye diseases, and has us worried about cancer. Those of us who do sorting work suffer from respiratory infections, throat issues, flu and sneezing. Lung diseases are prevalent among workers who operate the shredding machines."

"One of the women here takes her baby with her to work. Her child sleeps and plays in the piles of textile waste, which is full of dirt and other pollutants. We know that the waste comes from other countries. We sometimes find foreign coins in the pockets of the jeans."

"Any medical expenses are paid out of our own pockets."

"We would like access to proper medical treatment when needed, safer working conditions, less noise, fair wages, access to social entitlements and eight-hour workdays for everyone."

@brands, pay your workers



Activists disrupt Nike's Paris Olympic advertising extravaganza with unpaid workers' demands.



Remember the Covid-19 pandemic? It's a time we'd rather forget, but thousands of garment workers are still reeling from the fallout. In 2020, countless big brands refused to pay for orders already placed or even produced. Overnight, factories closed, leaving workers without a job or severance pay. The impact was devastating.

The Pay Your Workers campaign was set up by a coalition of labour rights orgs and unions to pressure brands to, well, pay their workers. With the help of our global community, we secured over \$40 million in unpaid wages and severance stolen from workers during the pandemic. After two years of pressure, Victoria's Secret provided \$8.3 million owed in severance to Thai workers who sewed their lingerie – the largest case of severance theft ever at an individual garment factory.

And yet, brands like adidas, Amazon, Nike and Victoria's Secret are still refusing to remedy outstanding cases of wage theft that date back to the pandemic. Collectively, workers in Thailand and Cambodia who made products for these brands are owed at least USD \$10 million in stolen wages.

When public stunts, petitions and worker testimonies haven't moved brands into action, what will? A legally binding agreement preventing brands from being able to side step accountability.

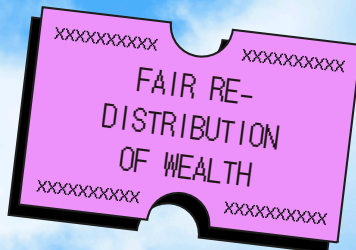
We're pushing for brands to sign the Pay Your Workers, Respect Labour Rights agreement to ensure that workers are never again left penniless when the unexpected happens. It consists of a global severance fund, paid into by brands and suppliers, to ensure workers receive their legally mandated severance pay and a grievance mechanism to investigate labour rights violations.

Not a single brand has signed on, but this agreement has never been more urgent. After the devastating earthquake in Turkey in 2023, brands again left factories without orders or financial support. Meanwhile, 2025 saw some of the deadliest flooding on record across Asia. With the climate crisis raging on, we're likely to see more and more catastrophes leading to factory closures and sudden changes in demand. The time to sign is now.

Support this campaign at payyourworkers.org!

THE GOAL? MORE HAPPINESS, LESS HARM

Decentering growth can sound scary, restrictive even. The point isn't to leave us worse off, but to improve the wellbeing of people and our planet. When carefully planned with workers, a just fashion system is designed to give us more, not less. Things like:





#7 COMPANIES ARE ACCOUNTABLE FOR ANY DAMAGE THEY CAUSE.

Companies take legal and financial responsibility for any social and environmental harm that takes place in their supply chain.

Soooo ethics aren't optional

Did you know that brands are not technically legally responsible for the safety and wellbeing of workers in their supply chain? That's right: in the vast majority of countries, upholding basic rights for workers is voluntary, meaning it's not mandated by law.

We'll be blunt. If corporate voluntary action actually worked, we would have seen a lot more progress by now. The reality is the opposite. Vague promises are made, PR is lapped up, progress updates are skipped, deadlines are missed, pledges are weakened or dropped. Forget clothes — brands are really out here recycling their commitments:

- 1) H&M promised to pay 850,000 garment workers a living wage by 2018 and then just... never did that?
- 2) Crocs pushed its net-zero goal back by a decade.
- 3) Nike partially laid off its sustainability team **after** pledging to slash its carbon emissions.

That's the problem with voluntary commitments. There's zero enforcement. It's like asking brands to mark their own homework, and then looking the other way when they inevitably cheat (ahem, policymakers).

Voluntary initiatives - where brands collectively pledge to take action on a specific industry issue - provide extra cover for brands lagging behind. ACT hasn't delivered living wages for millions of workers. Not a single member of The Microfibre Consortium is actively phasing out synthetics to curb microplastic pollution. SBTi membership hasn't led to drastic carbon cuts. You get the point. When policymakers are tricked into thinking the industry is voluntarily changing, regulatory efforts stall. These schemes won't bring workers justice; global laws will.

Any brand can make a claim. Few can back it up. Actions matter more than words. So the next time you see a brand make a fancy pledge, read the fine print. Is there an actionable roadmap? Have workers been consulted? Will there be progress check-ins? Or is it just more PR hype?

Brands or de facto policymakers?

Behind the weakening of the EU Green Deal

By Giuseppe Cioffo, Lobby & Advocacy Officer at OOO

Holding brands accountable isn't easy but someone's got to do it! At Clean Clothes Campaign, we work to make fashion brands answer for the harm they cause. This happens on two levels. The first is amplifying workers' struggles and pressuring brands to remedy specific rights violations. The second is pushing for system-wide solutions that 1) change brands' behaviour and 2) ensure that workers are compensated whenever injustice occurs.

The mistreatment of workers isn't an accident; it's what makes Big Fashion profitable. When brands are in the business of exploitation and pollution, we need robust laws, regulations, labour standards and international policies to keep them in check.

Sounds easy, right? We wish! Brands feel so threatened by regulation, they do everything in their power to prevent it. Corporate influence in our lives has become so strong, it sometimes feels like brands - not politicians - are calling the shots. Look at the media, and you'll see world leaders seated with corporate overlords, whether they're the megalomaniac CEOs of AI companies, tech billionaires or fashion executives. Our elected leaders seem to be increasingly forgetting about the voters' mandate that got them there in

the first place. They have no hesitation in handing the pen over to corporate lobbyists and letting them write their own rules.

We saw this recently with the weakening of the EU Green Deal, another blatant example of how brands have a say in these decisions. Launched in 2020, the Green Deal was the EU's main plan to fight climate change. It proposed a series of policies around carbon emissions, circularity and biodiversity, and had provisions to hold companies responsible when they harmed workers or the planet. Sure, it felt a bit cautious in places, but it was a long overdue course of change celebrated by activists, environmental groups, civil society, trade unions and even some progressive businesses.



Approved in 2024, the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) finally recognised what we have been saying for decades: brands share responsibility for the conditions of the people who make their clothes (flick back to page 18 for the refresh). It set out clear rules like the need to pay a living wage and ensure freedom of association, and proposed penalties for companies that didn't follow them. The CSDDD was a crucial piece in the puzzle to reform the global fashion system, and it had Big Fashion panicking.

As our friends at SOMO [pointed out](#), soon after the law was approved, large corporations reminded us who is really in charge. A nasty, aggressive campaign by business lobbies targeted high-level officials of the European Commission directly. Their strategy used all the tools in the book: spreading misinformation and fake news, holding secret lobby meetings with EU officials, discrediting activists and social movements, and building an alliance of far-right and centre-right parties in the European Parliament to sink the new law. They even managed to get the government of Qatar to threaten the EU to never again sell oil to the bloc if the law was not withdrawn or significantly weakened!

It worked. EU Commission officials immediately started to remove important parts of the law. The revised version targeted only a tiny number of companies, took away some big penalties and made it easier for companies to skip checking on their suppliers. By the end of it, the law was almost unrecognisable and no longer fit for its intended purpose.



Campaigners outside the EU Parliament in Strasbourg on the eve of the 11th anniversary of the Rana Plaza collapse and the day before the European Parliament voted on the CSDDD. Photo credit: Justice is Everybody's Business.

It's a disheartening story, but it also shows why binding legislation is so necessary for transforming the fashion industry. History shows us that change doesn't happen overnight. Thanks to union organising, we have an eight-hour workday, paid holidays and social security. Workers didn't do it alone; they teamed up with others who shared their values. There were no handouts from kind legislators. Workers fought hard for these wins, and now we need to continue this fight to ensure these same principles are applied to global supply chains!

Big Fashion HATES to see us coming



5 ways to hold brands accountable

By Giuseppe Cioffo

1 Demand more of brands:

Brands listen to their customers, so ask them if the people who make their clothes earn a living wage. You could send an email or DM, comment on their posts or ask the shop manager. Either way, it lets the brand know their customers won't stand for unfair treatment. They also take notice of repeat claims so get your friends to join in too!

2 Write to policymakers

Whether it's your elected representative, a member of government or your local city councillor, ask them what they're doing to tackle the negative impact fashion has on workers and the environment. Grab the snacks, gather your besties and organise joint writing sessions. It can be an effective way to get your voice heard, especially when they're campaigning for re-election.

3 Call out greenwashing

When brands care about their reputations more than their ethics, let's hit them where it hurts! Ask a brand to clarify their claim(s) over email or DMs. If they ghost you or send a copy-paste vague answer, take it public. Comment across their socials, leave a negative review, or pocket drop the labels on page 48 in store. You could also directly report brands to your country's Market and Consumer authorities. Regulators across the EU are clamping down on misleading marketing, so Big Fashion better watch out!

4 Stand with striking workers

Workers need your solidarity, so follow labour groups & trade unions and support workers who go on strike. You could reshare their posts, write to the brand or show up in person.

5 Support CCC

We're the biggest network of solidarity between workers and consumers. Through our Urgent Appeal System, we directly assist workers who have been wronged by fashion companies. Follow us on Instagram, share our campaigns, join a public action in your country or donate. Your support really makes a difference!

DROP IT LIKE IT'S HOT

How to pocket drop: cut out these faux clothing labels and discreetly place them in the pockets of clothing in Big Fashion stores.



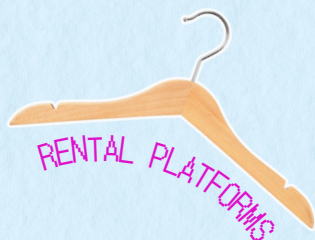


#8 CLOTHES HOLD VALUE AND MEANING, CONNECTING THE WEARER AND MAKER.

Fashion meets all of our needs, not companies' profit margins. We're more than consumers; we value garments as a form of expression and respect the labour that produced them.

SHARING = CARING

In our vision of a just fashion system, rewearing, repairing, reselling, swapping, upcycling and recycling are the norm. What could a flourishing sharing economy look like?



RENTAL PLATFORMS



COMMUNITY SWAPS

SECONDHAND SHOPS



REPAIR WORKSHOPS

CLOTHING CARE



EDUCATION



TAILORING SERVICES

RESOURCE LIBRARIES

**LIBRARY
CARD**

PUTTING SECONDHAND UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

By SÜDWIND-Institute

The secondhand market has exploded in recent years. It's amazing, or is it? For who exactly? Here is our answer.

While resale has done a lot of good, it can't fix the fashion industry's problems on its own...



Illustration by İrem Kurt

Positives

Secondhand purchases extend the lifespan of clothing, reduce waste, and conserve resources.

Resale promotes a more circular alternative to Big Fashion, keeping clothes in use for longer.

Thrifting is typically more affordable for those on a tight budget or facing social exclusion.

Limits

The thrifting boom hasn't improved working conditions or delivered living wages to workers.

Big Fashion still over-produces & uses the resale market to legitimise its exploitative business model.

People buy more secondhand clothes but then rarely wear them, or continue to buy fast fashion.

CERTIFIED GREENWASHERS™

6 “GREEN” FLAGS THAT ARE SECRETLY RED

Why put in the work when you can just pretend you are? That’s the essence of greenwashing: when brands claim to be eco-friendly but all their pollution, waste and exploitation say otherwise. While Big Fashion convinces us that everything is going to be just fine, billions of clothes are still being churned out – harming workers and heating the planet in real time. Once we get good at spotting it, we can call it out. Here are six red flags to look out for:

**GREEN
WASHING
ALERT!**



BUZZWORD BINGO

“Organic”, “carbon neutral”, “conscious”. Brands really said anything... until policymakers started to raise brows. Cue the industry’s hunt for new buzzwords. Sure, Primark’s plastic clothes might be “durable” but only because they’ll outlive us all!



50 SHADES OF GREEN

Everlane’s “clean luxury” campaign ticked all the visual boxes: an earthy colour palette, models posed in nature, literal grass trousers. And then it got bought out by the industry’s bigger polluter, Shein?? If it looks too good to be true, it probably is!



CIRCULATING LIES

When textile waste is visible from space, introducing a resale app, rental line or repair option without making less isn’t gonna cut it. Is it really circular if it doesn’t reduce overproduction? Also, beware of brands that make circularity a you problem, like the time Coach told customers “don’t chuck it, repair it!” while it was secretly destroying unsold bags.

The worst part about greenwashing? It erases workers. Brands love the phrase “people and planet”, but then completely forget about the people part. Greenwashing gets us fixated on pineapple leather or ocean plastic while the people who make these clothes stay underpaid, overworked and unprotected. That’s not our definition of sustainability. Also feeling fed up of Big Fashion’s lies? Send a message to brands using our faux clothing labels on page 48!



RECYCLED CLAIMS

From adidas to Patagonia, recycled polyester gets sold as the “better option”. Except it’s still a microplastic nightmare that never fully biodegrades and hasn’t actually reduced demand for the virgin stuff. Polyester production continues to climb!

QUIET LUXURY WHERE?

Brands like PrettyLittleThing are opting for the “quiet luxury” look – as if that could trick us into forgetting they’re still fast fashion! Big Fashion will really rebrand everything except its soaring emissions, waste mountains and worker exploitation.

PRETTY PETROCHEMICALS

Introducing the latest greenwashing trend: brand fabric ranges that *sound* natural but are really plastic in disguise. Like GAP’s cash grab CashSoft tee that contains zero cashmere. Or Lululemon’s (De)Lululinen, which is part oil, part forever chemicals.

The background is a solid yellow color with a collage of faint, semi-transparent protest signs. Visible signs include 'GARMENT WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!', 'WOMEN', 'EQUITY', 'JUST', 'WE DON'T WANT THE EARTH', and 'WHAT WE NEED.'.

#9 JUST FASHION **THRIVES ON GLOBAL** **SOLIDARITY AND** **COLLECTIVE ACTION.**

Solidarity is the thread that binds the people who make and wear clothes. Change doesn't start in boardrooms. It starts with us!

Students for International Labor Solidarity at Pittsburgh University



COMMUNITY IS ANTI-CAPITALIST

Neoliberalism has really done a number on our world. This ideology is an especially gross flavour of capitalism that took hold in the 1980s. It's big on the free market, the idea that governments shouldn't interfere and let private businesses do their thing. AKA a free pass to exploit!

Neoliberalism has a lot to answer for, especially:

1) Handing brands all the power: Regulations were ripped up. Public services were sold off and privatised. Historically strong union movements were crushed. The result? Companies are more powerful than ever. They have the ear of politicians, dodge regulation and shrug off accountability.

2) Promoting individualism as the norm: Community spaces disappeared. Collective liberation was replaced with personal empowerment. 'We' became 'I'. We're as divided as ever and brands love it! Distraction = inaction.

Like most bad things in the world, this is all by design. Unchecked corporate influence thrives on people being disempowered and disengaged. We're made to feel like we can't make a difference on our own. We get caught up in policing each other's actions or feel riddled with consumer guilt. It distracts us from the real villains: Big Fashion brands, their rich executives and the politicians enabling them.

Instead of uniting us, globalisation has added another layer of separation. The gap between the people who make clothes for brands and the people who buy them is huge. We don't see the poverty wages, the women fainting because of the heat in the ironing rooms, or the islands of textile waste polluting places like Chile. This invisibility curtain is what scholars in the past have termed 'alienation': of workers from the product of their labour and of consumers from the social conditions in which the goods they buy are produced. If we could see the suffering that goes into a cheap polyester top, would we still buy it so nonchalantly? Probably not.

But let's get one thing straight: we're all contradictions under capitalism. That's not an invitation for inaction or whataboutism. It just means perfection was never the point. If we only listened to people who'd never shopped at Zara or made an impulsive purchase, who would be left to speak? The 1% is responsible for the same amount of emissions as the poorest 66% of humanity. That's where the spotlight belongs.

Brands that profit from exploitation win every time we think we can't change things. We can!! This is your reminder that every individual action makes a difference, but we are stronger when we act together. Change doesn't start in boardrooms. It starts with us: clothes makers and wearers. Our collective future is ours to shape. There is power in regaining our agency within a system that tells us we have none. Let's start by punching up — not down or across. Let's organise in our local communities, reject individualistic narratives and come together in global solidarity. Check out our solidarity checklist on page 54 for inspo!

“Every day, I try to make the best decisions possible about what I create, what I consume, and who I collaborate with — but living in the world, participating in capitalism, requires moral compromise. I am not looking for purity; it doesn't exist. Instead, I'm trying to do the best I can, and take a stand when I think I can have an impact.”

– Roxanne Gay

Beyond the



THRIFTING IS COOL, BUT SOLIDARITY IS WAY COOLER

What's the secret ingredient behind every successful workers' rights campaign? Global solidarity. Not thrifting or buying less. Don't get us wrong: these habits are great for your bank account and personal style, but they're not enough to improve material conditions for workers. The way we see it, being a conscious consumer frees up energy for deeper change. When we're not stuck on the hamster wheel of trends, we can come together and push for greater accountability and action.

The union leaders in our network are clear: they don't want you to silently ditch fast fashion. They want you to speak up. When we collectively apply pressure, brands respond and workers get justice. This triangle of solidarity between workers, the CCC network and supporters like you has helped to make factories safer, win back millions in stolen wages and free union leaders from prison. It took years to get Levi's to sign the International Accord, but community perseverance pays off!

"My message to the people who buy clothes: instead of boycotting, support the demands of garment workers and their campaigns because without pressure from consumers, it is very hard to get justice. We have won [our case] but there are lots of other garment workers who are still suffering. They need your solidarity and support now more than ever!"

Mirjana Obradovic, former garment worker

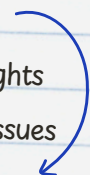


Your solidarity helps workers more than your purchasing choices ever could. Here are some ways you can support the workers' rights movement and push for long-term change:

SOLIDARITY CHECKLIST

- ☐ Follow worker-led organisations like ours
- ☐ Call out brands & governments — not each other!
- ☐ Join a union
- ☐ Amplify workers' struggles
- ☐ Swap silent boycotts for collective action
- ☐ Support striking workers
- ☐ Help investigations go viral (and tag the brand!)
- ☐ Sign & share petitions
- ☐ Ask brands to clarify their claims
- ☐ Report greenwashing and social-washing
- ☐ Take part in local store actions
- ☐ Leave the labels on page 48 in Big Fashion stores
- ☐ Support initiatives pushing for new & stronger laws
- ☐ Pressure brands to sign binding agreements
- ☐ Canvas for politicians who support workers' rights
- ☐ Write to your local representative on fashion issues

like the Accord or
Pay Your Workers
agreement!



THE JUST FASHION MOVEMENT NEEDS YOU! ARE YOU READY?

Quiz time! Choose the answers that feel the most “you” and tally up your As, Bs, Cs and Ds to reveal what role you could play.

A new #PayYourWorkers campaign drops. To amplify the message, you...

- A** Film a reel & tag the brand
- B** Organise an in-store action
- C** Handwrite a letter to the CEO
- D** Share the petition link in the GC

A garment worker union is on strike. You show your support by...

- A** Amplifying their demands online
- B** Penning a solidarity statement
- C** Stitching a solidarity banner
- D** Organising a mutual aid drive

Social-washing alert! You see a Big Fashion brand claim to be “ethical”. Do you...

- A** Research & share the receipts
- B** Get people to leave comments
- C** Pocket drop the labels on pg. 48
- D** Vent in an online forum

Living Wage Action Day is coming up. You get involved by...

- A** Designing a topical zine
- B** Planning a high street walking tour
- C** Making posters & placards
- D** Hosting a quiz night

MOSTLY As

EDUCATOR!

You're big on breaking through the echo chamber and inspiring action. No shame or guilt here! Whether it's in classrooms, the GC or on social media, keep on spreading the word.

MOSTLY Bs

ORGANISER!

The movement depends on people like you: the person who turns a brilliant idea into action. You've got the initiative to make anything happen! Why not start with a local event or action?

MOSTLY Cs

CRAFTIVIST!

Fed up with the state of fashion? Take creative action! Use your craft of choice - sewing, art, photography, you name it - to make a statement people (and brands!) can't ignore.

MOSTLY Ds

COMMUNITY BUILDER!

Oh, hey, people person. You know change starts with community, so you make sure everyone feels included and equipped to take action. Keep on building those connections!

Lightbulb moment!

I spent a year post-high school working as a retail associate at a Swedish fast fashion company (iyykyk), and the stuff I saw was NOT IT. Stock rooms packed with clothes no one would buy, and new collections dropping every season. They also let us buy stuff near production cost at the staff sale as a "cool perk". The markup is insane, and now I can't unknow that — also, it's definitely not the garment workers pocketing that markup! I quit and started working at a thrift store instead. And obviously buy pre-loved (except for underwear and the occasional shoe).

Vic Frånstedt, YAB Sweden



I think for me it wasn't one big moment, more like small things adding up. Talking to people who had worked in garment production and understanding how much time and skill go into making clothes. Then you see similar items sold for €20, it just doesn't make sense anymore. At the same time, I started noticing how much clothing we throw away, even stuff that still looks good. That contrast stayed with me. Since then, I've mostly tried to buy less and be more conscious, but also to get involved in discussions like YAB because it's clearly not just an individual problem.

Mohamed Chiheb Bida, YAB Belgium



We asked members of CCC's Youth Advisory Board to share their lightbulb moment: the time they realised that Big Fashion is exploitative and they wanted to opt out. What's yours???



My interest in fashion started at a very early age. But when I started my studies in fashion, I quickly found out about the industry's hidden, darker side. Suddenly, it wasn't as glamorous, but a world built on the exploitation of people and planet. For me, this was a complete turning point: I won't work in an industry that is built on bulk production and huge profit margins. An industry that creates a huge negative environmental impact and underpays garment workers. This isn't something that I support or ever want to be part of.

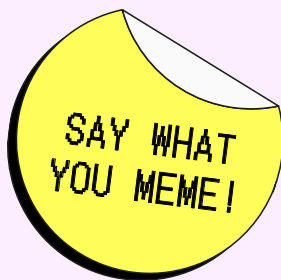
Esmei van der Kleij, YAB Netherlands

It wasn't an overnight realisation. There were several things that made me realise the fashion industry really stinks. My older brother was my biggest inspiration growing up, and he bought a lot of second hand clothes. So I did the same. I think I was 14 when I bought my first second hand t-shirt. I had it for years until it was so full of holes, it wasn't a shirt anymore. As a kid, I would hear stuff like "H&M uses child labour" and as I got older, I was exposed to more instances of human rights violations and pollution. Especially since social media became a thing. Overtime, that made me distrust the fashion industry. So I stay a true fan of buying second hand - those things already exist in the world. It's also more fun!

Caroline Meltzer, YAB Sweden



CAPTION THIS...



The world if Zara's CEO
never invented fast fashion



Fashion
marketing

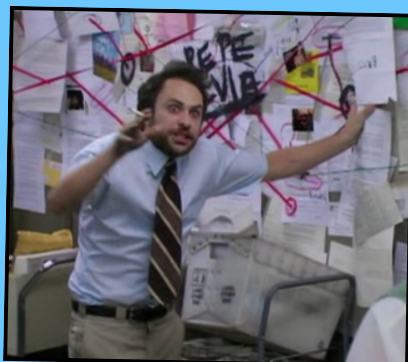


lululemon
PRIMARK
ZARA
SHEIN

The climate
crisis



Me at 2am plotting the



Recommendations

Want to dive deeper? Here are some recommendations to get you started!

PS: There's only so much we can say in one zine. Stay up to date with this and our other campaigns by following us on Instagram or signing up to our newsletter!

DOCS TO WATCH

- ▶ The Machinists
- ▶ The True Cost
- ▶ Trashion



SITES TO BOOKMARK

- 🌐 fashionchecker.org
- 🌐 greenwash.com
- 🌐 workerdiaries.org
- 🌐 anxiety.eco

THINGS TO READ

- 📖 The Anti-Capitalist Book of Fashion by Tansy Hoskins
- 📖 No Logo by Naomi Klein
- 📖 Fashioning a Just Transition Manifesto by CCC



THINGS TO LISTEN TO

- 🎧 Remember Who Made Them podcast
- 🎧 Articles of Interest podcast



This zine was a collaborative project co-created with members of the Clean Clothes Campaign network and our Youth Advisory Board (YAB).

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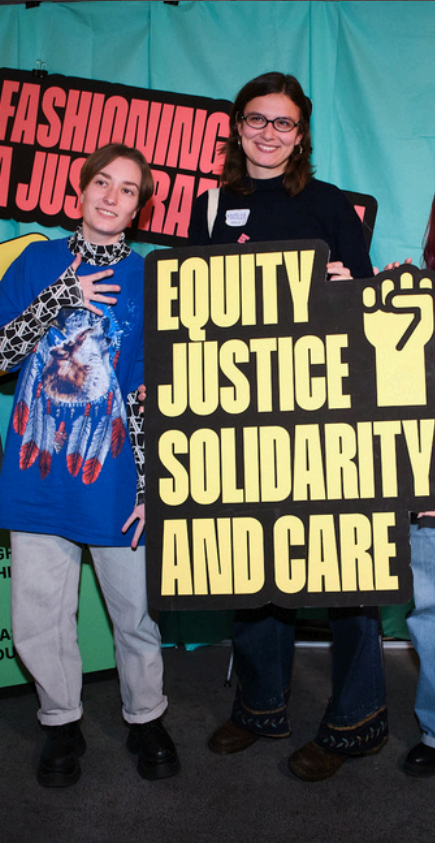
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JOIN THE
MOVEMENT

