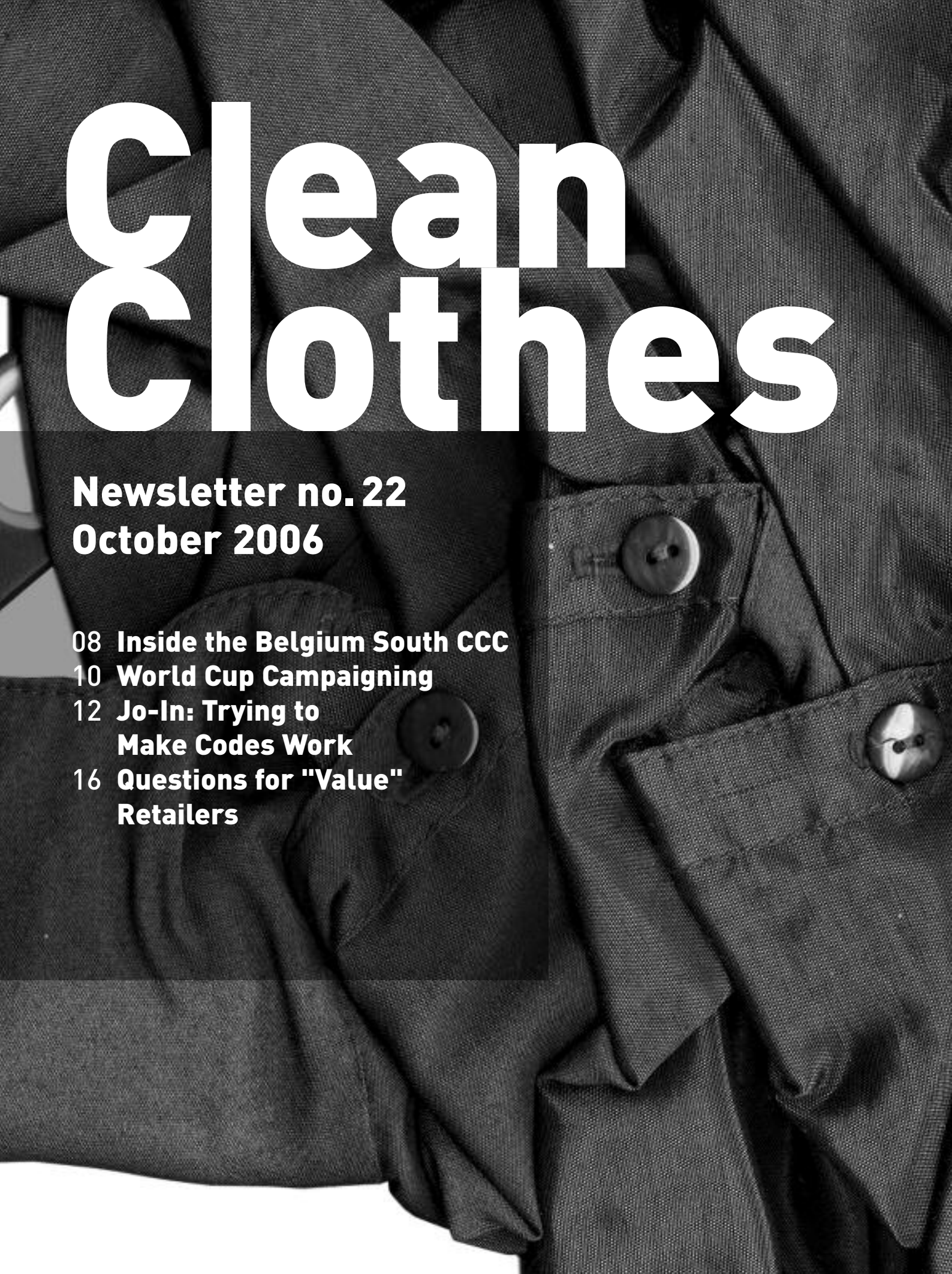

Clean Clothes

Newsletter no. 22
October 2006

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Editorial

This edition of the newsletter includes many examples of CCC supporters in action, with a variety of initiatives underway to mobilise people to push for better conditions for the world's garment workers.

CCC activists continue to keep busy gathering, translating and distributing information on the reality workers face in the workplaces where our clothes are made (see for example the New Resources on pages 25-27); pushing companies, governments and others to do the best they can for workers (see the Urgent Appeals cases highlighted on pages 19-22 for some concrete examples); and taking to the streets to make clear to the public that there's still a lot of work to be done when it comes to labour rights in the garment industry. In recent months CCC activists have donned inspection gear, run marathons (see right), and even ridden on a fire truck in various attempts to get this important point across.

Companies are also in a race, unfortunately this seems to be a race to the bottom – where costs are pushed as low as possible and profits are maximised at the expense of the quality of life for the people who actually produce the goods. Garment workers are being squeezed: low wages, long hours and ongoing repression of their attempts to organise to push for improvements. CCC supporters are on the street (and on the phone and in the meeting room) to remind the public (and companies of course) of the role they can and should play in stopping that race to the bottom. Featured in this edition of the newsletter are some basic questions people can ask the retailers they patronise (pages 16-18) and let them know that good bargains in the shops shouldn't come at the expense of workers. The growth in Clean Clothes Communities work (see page 4) is a positive example of people coming together where they live to do something to support garment workers. The report on the Jo-In project (pages 12-15) explains how the CCC has come together with the main multi-stakeholder initiatives to push for code compliance efforts to develop in a way that is most beneficial for workers.

While some CCC activities tie in with certain events, for example the World Cup held earlier this year in Germany (see page 10 for a report), others are more sustained, for example the plan in the UK to incorporate garment workers' rights issues into the studies of those being trained at fashion colleges (for more on this see page 4). Whatever form they take, these myriad CCC activities are our contribution towards what we hope will be lasting and positive changes.

We encourage readers to share, reprint or distribute any information found within this newsletter. A digital version can be found at www.cleanclothes.org/news.htm

CCC T-shirts and stickers were worn by 600 runners in Vienna's marathon in May, as part of the "Let's Run Fair" campaign organised by the Austrian CCC. A highlight of the day was an appearance by the world record holder for 24-hour barefoot running, Dietmar Mücke, in support of the CCC.
Copyright: www.nalogo.at

The Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) aims to improve working conditions in the garment industry worldwide and empower (women) garment workers. The CCC is made up of coalitions of consumer organisations, trade unions, researchers, solidarity groups, world shops, and other organisations. The CCC informs consumers about the conditions in which their garments and sports shoes are produced, pressures brands and retailers to take responsibility for these conditions, and demands that companies accept and implement a good code of labour standards that includes monitoring and independent verification of code compliance. The Clean Clothes Campaign cooperates with organisations all over the world, especially self-organised groups of garment workers (including workers in factories of all sizes, homeworkers, and migrant workers without valid working papers).

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Design: Roel Dalhuisen, www.alaskaontwerpers.nl/roel
Printing: PrimaveraQuint, Amsterdam
Printed on 100% recycled paper

News from the CCCs

Thirty Spanish CCC activists participated in Barcelona's annual street race in May this year to draw attention to working conditions in El Corte Ingles supply chains. El Corte Ingles, sponsor of the race, is one of Spain's largest nationwide store chains.

Spain: Focus on El Corte Inglés / Induyco

At the end of May, Induyco, the principal clothing supplier to Spanish retailer El Corte Inglés, came under pressure from Clean Clothes Campaigners. Its clothing is known to be produced in Bulgaria, Morocco, India and China, but the company is unwilling to engage with rights activists about working conditions there.

Therefore, Campaña Ropa Limpia (CCC Spain) is mobilising consumers to pressure Induyco through a postcard and e-mail campaign, with the slogan "¿Qué hay detrás de la ropa de Induyco?" or "What lies behind Induyco clothing?" They can also add their signatures at: http://www.ropalimpia.org/accionesurgentes/detail2.php?id_accion=4.

Induyco owns a number of brands that are well-known in Spain: Pilar Rueda, Mito, Sfera, Amitié, Tintoretto, Síntesis, Bus Stop and Cedosce. The campaign has been launched in communities across the country.

A briefing on Induyco, in Spanish, is available at: http://www.ropalimpia.org/noticias/detail.php?id=52"

UK: Clean Up Fashion

In the UK, Labour Behind the Label (LBL, the UK CCC) is launching a new website (www.cleanupfashion.co.uk) about British supermarkets and fast fashion retailers and their impact on attempts to get a living wage and freedom of association for garment workers. Consumers will be able to look up information on their favourite shops, learn more about where and how garments are made, find out about specific urgent appeals, and take action. LBL is providing profiles of the main UK companies, but there will also be blog space for consumers, activists (and companies) to share what they know.

LBL's Fashion College project, which works to embed ethics into fashion education, is coming to the end of a successful first year. For more information see the project's "Fashioning an Ethical Industry" website at www.fashioninganethicalindustry.org.

Clean Clothes Communities

CCC groups in various countries have been pushing ahead with campaigns aimed at persuading government bodies to buy their work wear based on ethical principles. Election campaigns are providing good opportunities for activists to question candidates on this issue and raise public awareness. Campaigns in several countries have also produced technical guides for use by government officers and activists.

Sweden: It's my tax money!

On May 13, 2006 the campaign "Mina Skattepengar" (It's my tax money!) was formally launched in Sweden, with activities, street actions and a special campaign website at: www.minaskattepengar.nu. The launch came after a series of meetings for activists across the country that has led to the formation of local campaign groups in seven cities.

It is intended that the campaign should be run at a local level, with citizens engaging their local politicians. To back this up, the Swedish CCC (Rena Kläder) has sent a questionnaire to all parties in parliament about their position on ethical questions in public procurement. They have also published a technical guide, aimed at government officers and politicians, to show that ethical procurement is possible and need not conflict with legal provisions covering public procurement.

The Youth Association of the Liberal Party has gotten involved, publishing a debate with the SKTF trade union body which is also a CCC platform member. During the annual "Politician Week" (a big politician/media event in Sweden) in July, representatives from both organisations joined the President of the LO union federation, as well as others from business (H&M) and a neo-liberal think-tank (Timbro) in a well-attended panel debate "Social Responsibility – what can the public learn from the private?" Thirty-five politicians from around the country participated in a Rena Kläder seminar on "Ethical Public Procurement for Beginners."

Belgium: More Municipalities Sign Up

After concerted lobbying and an action outside the city hall by CCC activists, Antwerp has now joined Brussels and about 70 other municipalities in Belgium North in passing a resolution to introduce ethical concerns into their purchasing practices. Meanwhile, in Belgium South, most candidates in the 20 municipalities where elections will be held in October now accept the principle of ethical sourcing.

A technical guide has been prepared for local government officials and civil servants, and the campaign is offering training. Local groups will be encouraged to help monitor progress according to a set of indicators suggested by the CCC.

Plus...

In **Austria**, the Enviromental Federation in the Vorarlberg region has agreed to include ILO Standards in their tender for fire-fighters' uniforms.

In **Spain**, the Spanish CCC, Campaña Ropa Limpia, is currently assessing the possibilities for ethical public procurement by the Catalonia Regional Government in the north-east of the country. Results are due in the first half of 2007. To help the process, they have produced a "Handbook for the introduction of social clauses in public workwear purchasing" in the region's language Catalan.

In Solidarity with Bangladesh Workers

Since April 2005, over 150 garment workers in Bangladesh died and hundreds more were injured in five factory disasters involving building collapses, fires and blocked exits. (See *CCC Newsletter* No.21, May 2006).

April 11, 2006 was the anniversary of the collapse of the Spectrum-Shahriyar factory in which 64 were killed, over 70 injured, and hundreds left jobless. To mark this day the CCC and partners participated in an International Action Day for Workers Health and Safety in Bangladesh to draw attention to the outstanding issues. In Bangladesh, there were demonstrations and a token hunger strike at the Central Shaheed Minar monument in Dhaka to demand "safe workplaces for the garment workers of Bangladesh". Over a thousand garment workers were joined by several of those seriously injured during the Spectrum disaster as well as family members of those who died. Around the world solidarity actions continued to put pressure on the Bangla-desh government and the global garment industry to bring an end to these tragedies.

In central Amsterdam on April 11, 2006, Dutch CCC "safety inspectors" entered shops, looking for clothes from Bangladesh and questioning managers about the health and safety conditions of the workers who made them.

News from the CCCs

About 100 activists from a wide range of organisations protested April 11th in front of the Embassy of Bangladesh in Brussels, calling for improved health and safety in the Bangladesh garment industry.

In Europe, the one-year anniversary of the Spectrum disaster was marked by pressure on the Bangladesh government through its embassies. In Belgium, Italy, Sweden, France and Germany, CCC campaigners turned up in person or engaged in e-mail/fax/letter/postcard campaigns demanding improvements in workplace safety. Good national newspaper coverage was gained in some countries and in the global labour media.

In Brussels on April 11, 100 activists from various organisations, accompanied by a fire engine as a reminder of the year's tragedies, arrived outside the Bangladesh Embassy. A six-person delegation was received by Faizul Latif Chowdhury, minister for commerce at the Embassy.

Two weeks later, the CCC met with the Bangladesh Minister of Foreign Affairs during his visit to Belgium. The Minister said that solving safety issues in the garment sector has highest priority, especially in this election year. He reported that the Joint Compliance Audit Scheme is visiting "each and every factory" and claimed "we will close each factory that does not comply". He made no specific commitments, however, and within weeks the county was gripped by riots among garment workers.

The action day also focused on pushing brands and retailers sourcing in Bangladesh to take responsibility for improving health and safety at their suppliers. In Italy, the Campagna Abiti Puliti particularly investigated Italian companies Frabo and Titanus, who were found on Spectrum supplier lists but deny involvement with the factory and refuse to disclose their supplier lists. The CCC campaign, working with Italian unions, is also in communication with Teddy, a development aid project supplied by Titanus.

In Austria, a CCC action alert was aimed at KiK Europazentrale and NKD Deutschland, both sourcing from Sayem Fashions, a Bangladesh factory where three died on March 6, 2006. In Belgium, the campaign focus remained on the Cotton Group that sourced at Spectrum. Also in the spotlight were 14 brands/ retailers in Germany.

The French CCC (Ethique sur l'Etiquette) is running a solidarity campaign that now involves 7,500 individual members and 190 local groups. As well as the Bangladesh Embassy in France, they have been putting pressure on French parliamentarians who have special links with Bangladesh. They have produced a new 12-page dossier "Bangladesh: Arrêtons l'Hécatombe" (Bangladesh: Let's Stop the Slaughter), available at www.ethique-sur-etiquette.org/docs/DossierBangladesh.pdf.

In North America various CCC allies contacted brands, retailers, and industry associations sourcing in Bangladesh to push for follow-up on the numerous outstanding health and safety issues in the sector. On April 5, Sweatshop Watch held a demonstration outside Vida Enterprise in Los Angeles, California. Vida sources from KTS in Bangladesh, where 64 people died in a fire on February 23. An attempt to present flowers to Vida's owner in memory of the victims was unsuccessful, but there was good local press coverage. In Canada, the Maquila Solidarity Network has been focusing on the Retail Council of Canada, lingerie retailer La Senza, and RD International which reportedly sourced at Sayem Fashions at the time of that factory's disaster (see www.maquilasolidarity.org/alerts/bangladesh-1yearafter.htm).

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Bangladesh erupts

Low wages and appallingly long hours lay behind widespread rioting among garment workers in Bangladesh in late May 2006. The serious situation caused the CCC to issue several Urgent Appeals for action, see page 20.

"Spectrum: One Year After the Collapse"

Released on the anniversary of the Spectrum disaster, this CCC report highlights the failures of the Bangladesh public authorities and industry at all levels to ensure safety at Spectrum and throughout the garment sector there. Available at www.cleanclothes.org/urgent/06-04-06.htm.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do these workers want you to campaign for them? They may lose their jobs, and now they at least earn something and have a job!

It is very important to the CCC that it is the workers' own choice to start a campaign. We only begin campaigning at their instigation and request.

Insecurity of employment is already one of the biggest problems that workers face, with or without international attention. The jobs they have are better than many alternatives. That is why so many depend on them.

But the fact that people are desperate is no excuse to exploit them. If the best an industry can offer is a slight improvement over absolute poverty then it is failing in its duties to its employees. Workers aren't getting their fair share of the benefits that they are creating for the big companies.

We welcome the fact that millions of people are earning a wage. However, this alone is not enough to lift them from poverty if employers can hire and fire at will, deny union rights, pay low wages that drive people to work inhumane hours just to survive, avoid paying sick leave and avoid observing maternity rights.

For many workers, these jobs bring hidden yet devastating costs, such as poor health, exhaustion and broken families, all of which are unacceptable and avoidable. Everyone wants a quality job that pays enough to be able to live from.

Shouldn't it be the government's job to make sure there are decent working conditions?

Yes. It is the task of governments to ensure good working conditions. Many garment-producing nations have good employment laws or endorse International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions. The problem is that they are not properly enforced.

A major reason is that many countries where garments and sportswear are produced have to meet the demands of international bodies such as the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to create an environment that is attractive to foreign investment. Clothing and other light industries (shoes, toys, electronics) are a first step toward the industrialisation of a country and often figure in the restructuring policies of these bodies.

Incentives to attract foreign investors include not only low wages but also the suspension of workplace and environmental regulations. If a government does attempt to enforce regulations, it is likely that many investors will quickly pack their bags for another country that is more accommodating to them. As a result, countries compete against one another based on the lure of bad working conditions.

But it is also wrong to assume that governments can have no control over foreign investments. Not all companies pack up and leave at the first signs of regulation. So it is worthwhile encouraging governments to put pressure on companies about their employment practices and to ensure compliance. But it's also true that one government's power against (large) companies is limited. Bad working conditions are an international problem that will not be solved at a national level alone.

For more FAQs about the CCC, please visit: www.cleanclothes.org/faq/index.htm

Inside a National CCC:

Belgium South

The Clean Clothes Campaign is an international campaign, consisting of a loose, informal international partner network of NGOs, unions, individuals and institutions in most countries where garments are produced, organizations in "consumer" countries where these garments are sold, CCC "project groups" in several garment-producing countries (Eastern Europe, India), an international secretariat (based in Amsterdam) and Clean Clothes Campaigns (CCCs) in nine European countries. These CCCs are autonomous coalitions consisting of NGOs (consumer, research, women's, fair trade and youth organisations, solidarity groups, churches, etc.) and trade unions, each with a coordinator and a secretariat. CCC coalitions can be found in Austria, Belgium (North and South), France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Although the European CCCs share a common aim and cooperate on joint projects, they each have their own flavour – due to their composition, history, cultural context and style. We'd like to share with you the workings of the different campaigns. Third in this series is the French- and German-speaking CCC in Belgium: **Vêtements Propres**.

Campagne
VÊTEMENTS PROPRES

Vêtements Propres, or VP for short, is an informal platform of 46 organisations in southern Belgium, where French and German are the main languages. Meeting around eight times a year, it serves as a think-tank, debating policy, exchanging ideas for action, and setting the parameters for "clean clothes" campaigning in the region.

VP also has a formal association to service the platform. This is administered by a board drawn from platform members, which meets at least three times a year, and a general secretary who is also the VP coordinator. They are responsible to a general assembly of member organisations meeting once a year. The association does research and analysis, coordinates actions by the members, and undertakes activities. The coordinator also represents the campaign at a national and international level.

When an organisation wishes to join the campaign, this is discussed by the platform. In fact, VP is in a deliberate process of decreasing the number of member organisations so as to strengthen ownership of the campaign by those groups which are actually active. It is also aiming to diversify its activities. There are two working groups within the platform: one on trade unions and one on companies – the second together with the Belgium North CCC.

The Belgian Context

VP is not the only CCC campaign in Belgium. The Flemish-speaking part of the country is covered by the Schone Kleren Campagne, otherwise known as the Belgium North CCC. Each was born from an autonomous process, and this is the normal way of doing things in Belgium, where there are two main communities. The two structures are quite different, as is their way of campaigning. In recent years collaboration has much increased, bringing together very complementary abilities. The national working group on companies, for example, is entering into a very constructive phase.

The German-speaking part of the campaign also has formed a separate informal platform of five organisations (Frauenliga, Landfrauenverband, Miteinander Teilen, Weltladen, Verbraucher-

schulzzentrale). This has recently been successful in gaining good media coverage (for example on the Spectrum case).

VP is somewhat unusual in Belgium by being a permanent "single-issue" campaign. Also, it is one of the few to make direct demands on companies; public campaigning in the country is usually aimed at government to introduce legislative change.

How VP Developed

In the mid-1990s, particularly after the "Made in Dignity" campaign carried out by fair trade groups such as Oxfam Magasins du Monde (World Shops), Belgian NGOs saw a need to work more on issues of employment in the developing world. They also wanted to collaborate more with trade unions and others. At the same time, the CCC was trying to expand its campaigning across Europe. An informal consultation was held, and the campaign in Belgium South kicked off in 1996 – exactly ten years ago.

They started with a postcard campaign, demanding answers from garment retailers and brands in Belgium about codes of conduct and implementation. Then campaigning took place around the 1998 soccer World Cup and later EURO 2000. From then on, VP started to work systematically on sportswear, taking the opportunity of important international sport events. Also in 1998, VP hosted the Permanent People's Tribunal on "clean clothes", the first ever international forum of the CCC.

In 2001, the campaign to get the lingerie multinational Triumph to leave Burma was taken up, in collaboration with the Belgium North CCC. In one action, 1.2 km of bras were strung up in the Triumph office garden, an action that received a lot of media attention.

At the end of 2002, VP joined international partners in pushing for better conditions in the global toy industry. In Belgium, this presented an opportunity to build closer links with family and consumer organisations, introducing questions about (over)consumption and proposing alternatives for consumer behaviour.

By 2004, VP took part in the "Play Fair at the Olympics" campaign, geared towards the Athens Games. This proved to be a strong campaign, with more than 90,000 signatures gathered and an international Olympic forum held. In 2006, VP followed this up with an action in Brussels, in cooperation with the Belgium North CCC and Brussels City Council, around the Turin Winter Olympic Games. Brussels city authorities used the occasion to announce that they will now include social standards in their procurement of work wear.

Also in 2004, VP started working more on CCC urgent appeals cases. By 2005, support for the Spectrum workers in Bangladesh entailed VP developing much deeper cooperation with trade unions, particularly with delegates from the Carrefour retail chain, which Spectrum supplied, who went to Bangladesh to investigate.

VP has also tried to influence the implementation of the new European law on public procurement which came into effect in 2004. In October 2006, local elections in Belgium will give VP the opportunity to approach candidates on this issue. It aims to work closely with a few communities, supporting them with tools such as a technical guide, so they can buy more responsibly. Also, VP will be working on a pilot project on work wear companies together with the Fair Wear Foundation.

VP is now working to secure a more stable financial basis and to motivate organisations to be more active. Another of VP's goals is to become more attractive to young people. Last, but certainly not least, VP is in favour of opening up the campaign to similar industrial sectors, as it has done with toys.

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Belgian CCC action demanding that lingerie multinational Triumph stop production in Burma, 2002.
Photo: Tineke D'Haese - Oxfam Solidarité

CCC action at the World Cup in Berlin.

2006 World Cup: **CCC Demands Justice for Sportswear Workers**

CCC campaigners used the World Cup in Germany this year as another opportunity to raise awareness of conditions in the sporting goods/sportswear industry among football supporters and to put pressure on those who run the sport and make the sporting goods.

Sponsorship deals with major sporting brands bring in lucrative revenue for national football associations and their international body FIFA. Meanwhile, global sporting events such as the World Cup generate huge sales for the major sporting goods brands. The official sponsor, the German company adidas, did especially well out of the World Cup 2006:

- Record football sales of over 1.2 billion euros, up more than 30% from 2005.
- A record 3 million replica jerseys sold, including 1.5 million of the German national team.
- Over 1 million pairs of +Predator® Absolute football boots and 750,000 +F50 TUNIT football boots sold.
- Over 15 million +Teamgeist™ World Cup footballs sold worldwide.*

Since the World Cup ended, adidas has secured an extension of its sponsorship deal with FIFA worth 280 million euros.

With the games being played on their home turf, German activists took the lead, supported by those in neighbouring Austria. Their campaign slogan "Fair P(l)ay" was a play on FIFA's own "Fair Play" code of conduct, whose "ten golden rules" include No.10 "Use football to make a better world":

"Football has an incredible power, which can be used to make this world a better place in which everyone can live. Use this powerful platform to promote peace, equality, health and education for everyone..." **

German and Austrian CCCs took up the FIFA challenge with a focus on the true working conditions behind the advertising slogans. Claims of poverty wages, poor working conditions, and lack of respect for trade union rights in factories making football goods were backed up by research in different continents by two German organisations: the Christian Initiative Romero (CIR) in El Salvador and Honduras, and the SÜDWIND Institut für Ökonomie und Ökumene in Indonesia (see sidebar).

Two cases of labour rights violations taken up by the CCC reinforced the point: the Hermosa factory in El Salvador and PT Panarub in Indonesia. Adidas sourced shorts and shirts at

Koln, May 19, 2006: German activists hold an "unfair football match" in the city centre as part of a nationwide day of action during the World Cup being held in their country.

Hermosa and its famous football boots, promoted by the likes of David Beckham, at Panarub (for more info see page 20).

In the month before kick-off, Estela Ramirez, a representative of the Hermosa workers, toured Germany, speaking to local groups and the media. Altogether, she addressed over 600 people at 13 meetings. She was joined on one panel by Manfred Schallmeyer, president of the ITGLWF Global Union Federation for garment workers, who backed the workers' demands.

The annual shareholders' meeting at adidas headquarters in southern Germany on May 11 was targeted by CCC supporters, dressed in red and bearing the slogan "Ich bin Rot vor Wut!" (I am Red with Anger). Twelve campaigners managed to attend the meeting, with four speaking out about poverty wages and labour law violations, especially at the Hermosa factory.

On May 19, Ramirez joined in a nationwide day of protest, beginning with a press conference in Köln/Cologne and including street actions there and in other cities like Hanover and Dortmund.

Three days later, Estela met with adidas' Global Director of Social Affairs, Frank Henke. However, the meeting produced no concrete outcome. Henke refused to pay into a fund for the dismissed and blacklisted Hermosa workers.

Actions continued up to the end of the World Cup, with street theater around Berlin and groups making their presence felt in the stands and supporters' areas at matches in Berlin and Dortmund. Overall, tens of thousands of signed postcards were collected during the World Cup Campaign. Some were handed over to adidas CEO Herbert Hainer during the shareholders' meeting in May. The rest will follow later in 2006.

Activists were encouraged to take part through a special website for the World Cup campaign (www.inkota.de/wm2006). A short video (available from INKOTA) targeting the sporting goods industry was shown to the public throughout the Berlin subway system as well as in cinemas across Germany.

Press and media interest was high in the days before the first kick-off. The campaign gained some national radio and television coverage, as well as many articles in local and regional newspapers.

** Source: www.adidas-group.com/en/News/archive/2006/2006_06_28.asp*
*** Source: www.fifa.com/en/fairplay/fairplay/0,1256,12,00.html*

Football-related Resources

Offside! Labor Rights and Sportswear Production in Asia (Oxfam International, May 2006)

The results of a year-long survey by Oxfam of conditions at Asian suppliers to 12 major sportswear brands including adidas, Puma, Reebok, Nike, Asics, Umbro and Pentland, with an analysis of the "ethical" record of each.

Full report available at :
www.oxfam.org/en/files/offside_labor_report/download
Summary:
www.oxfam.org/en/policy/briefingnotes/offside_labor_report/

Sweet FA?: Football associations, workers' rights, and the World Cup (TUC and Labour Behind the Label, UK, 2006)

Highlights the role that football associations can and should play through their contracts with sportswear licensees that supply national and replica kits. Available at www.labourbehindthelabel.org/content/view/118/56/.

The Life of Football Factory Workers in Thailand (Thai Labour Campaign, June 2006)

Thai women who put together adidas Teamgeist footballs at Molten, a Japanese/Thai joint venture company, earn the equivalent of 3.6 euros per day. Just three basic meals cost 77% of their wages.

Available at: www.cleanclothes.org/01/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=40&Itemid=9).
For adidas' response to this report, and a joint TLC/CCC reply, see www.cleanclothes.org/01/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=45&Itemid=9.

Lohnsituation bei Sportswear-Zulieferern in Honduras und El Salvador (CIR, May 2006)

Germany-only report on the wage situation at sportswear suppliers in Honduras and El Salvador.

Available at: www.ci-romero.de/seiten/kampagnen/ccc/studien/CIR_el_ salvador_honduras.pdf.

Wages in adidas supplier factories and the cost of living in Indonesia in the period February 2005 – February 2006 (Ingeborg Wick, SÜDWIND Institut für Ökonomie und Ökumene, 31 March 2006)

Available at:
www.suedwind-institut.de/0eng_sw-start-fs.htm

Jo-In: Trying Codes

Over the past decade there has been a proliferation of initiatives on the responsibilities and accountability of garment and sports shoe companies for working conditions in their supply networks. Some have their own codes of conduct that specify labour standards to be met where their goods are produced. Some have come together to promote a particular version of "corporate social responsibility". Then there are "multi-stakeholder initiatives" (MSIs) bringing together companies, NGOs and unions/workers' networks to take up these issues. There is also a new industry of "social auditors", with various ways of verifying that codes are being implemented.

The CCC has spent a lot of effort on evaluating the different approaches, to see which ones might bring actual benefit to workers in terms of their pay, conditions and organising rights. And on the ground, individual clothing factory managements and workforces are faced with a bewildering array of sometimes conflicting demands from the different codes of their customers. It is not uncommon to see a range of code notices up on the office wall, and auditors arriving one after another to inspect how well each one is adhered to. This can set up a "cat-and-mouse" game between suppliers and brands — with little benefit to workers.

The **Joint Initiative on Corporate Accountability and Workers' Rights** — or **Jo-In** for short — was set up in 2003 to try to find some common, workable approaches, some order out of the chaos. The idea is to replace the duplication of effort that currently occurs and, where approaches differ, to find out how they can be made more compatible for the best way forward. A key aim is to agree on what best practice is for the implementation of codes of conduct — and thereby make a real difference to the conditions for garment workers and their families. In the first stage, the project runs to the end of 2007.

Who is in Jo-In

Jo-In was founded and is steered by six major organisations in the field, including MSIs and the CCC. They are:

> Clean Clothes Campaign	www.cleanclothes.org
> Ethical Trade Initiative	www.ethicaltrading.org
> Fair Wear Foundation	www.fairwear.nl
> Fair Labor Association	www.fairlabor.org
> Social Accountability International	www.sa-intl.org
> Worker Rights Consortium	www.workersrights.org

To keep the scope of the project manageable, it was decided to undertake a trial in one country. Turkey was chosen because it is a large exporter of textiles and garments to global markets, particularly to nearby Europe, thus far the various initiatives had not yet developed a serious presence there, and there were trade union and civil society partners to work with. Also Turkey has incentives to improve because it wants to join the European Union. Later, it is hoped to take the lessons learned in Turkey to other countries.

Eight multinational brands that are sourcing goods in Turkey have agreed to take part in the trial project. They are adidas, Gap, Gsus, Marks & Spencer, Nike, Otto Versand, Patagonia and Puma.

Fifteen of their suppliers in Turkey have been invited to join in. They were chosen by the project's steering committee to reflect a range of sizes, types of relationship to the brands, quantity of orders, whether unionised or not, geographical location, and so on. To date, six have come on board. At this stage, the suppliers' names are withheld from the public.

to Make Work

Representative of Turkey's Ministry of Labour contributing to a discussion at Jo-In's training seminar for Turkish NGOs and trade unions in Istanbul, July 2006.

Other organisations in the host country have also been identified as project stakeholders. They include industry organisations such as the Turkish Chamber of Commerce, plus trade unions, labour-related and women's NGOs and community-based organisations, as well as government bodies such as the labour inspectorate, and also the ILO office in the country.

The early consultation process took some time. At first, the organisations in Turkey were not willing to meet as a group and insisted on separate consultations. It was not until October 2005 that a project seminar was held with all international and Turkish stakeholders present. Now the Turkish organisations have formed a "local working group" that will meet several times a year to provide input into the project.

At an international level, there are also the umbrella organisations of trade unions — the Global Union Federation ITGLWF and the European ETUF/TCL representing garment workers, as well as the ICFTU and WCL international union confederations. There are labour-related NGOs such as Oxfam too. The Global Unions specifically requested a stronger and more official role in the project, and so an "advisory panel" also including representatives of brands and NGOs is being set up.

Others such as academics, auditors, and the local staff of international organisations, can make important contributions to the project as consultants or service providers but have not been identified as "stakeholders". The project's steering committee has also decided to set up an "independent observer group" whose role it will be to monitor and evaluate the project impartially.

Keeping everyone properly informed and consulted takes some care, time and effort, of course. All stakeholder organisations have to consult their own internal structures and networks too. It is also true that some in the project were unclear about the nature and role of other stakeholders, and so training events on "who's who" have had to be held. Improving stakeholder involvement — learning how to do it well — is one of the project's aims.

It is agreed that all partners and stakeholders meet twice per year at the Jo-In stakeholder and participants forum in Istanbul.

Jo-In's Action Plan

In 2005, a draft Jo-In Code of Labour Practice was drawn up through a process of consultation. It is not the project's aim to produce yet another code. However, a common starting point was needed, and the result is an amalgam of best practice on codes from among the six partners. Now the focus is on implementing the draft Code, and the best methods of verifying, enforcing and evaluating this. Readers are invited to contact Jo-In or the CCC with their comments on the Jo-In Code.

It is the role of the brands to introduce the Jo-In draft Code to their suppliers and encourage implementation. Where the Jo-In draft Code has higher standards than an existing code used by the brand, they and their suppliers are asked to make a commitment to reaching the higher standards.

Illustrations: Michaël Pattiruhu

The trial in Turkey is not dealing with a wide range of elements normally found in a code of conduct. Instead it is focusing on certain key questions: freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, wages, and hours of work. These elements were chosen after extensive consultation, and because they are the areas of most difference between the six partners.

Brands, suppliers and some trade unions also requested more explanation of what the project means by a "living wage". The explanatory note can be found on the project website.

Beginning in mid-2006, supplier factories in the trial are due to go through an initial assessment on the three chosen issues, carried out by a Jo-In appointed team of experts. The baseline survey outcomes will be collected, and then presented to the stakeholders locally first, this November, for discussions on what the remediation "menu" should look like on these topics.

Armed with the assessments, the project will then focus on the best methods to achieve improvements, what is termed "remediation" — steps that will make a real difference for the workers at each of the Turkish suppliers. A remediation plan, with a timeframe for action, will be drawn up for each supplier, involving also the multinational brand that it supplies and the MSI to which the brand is affiliated. The plan may include training (for managers, supervisors and workers), better worker participation and dialogue with management, changes in buying practices by the brands who place the orders, and technical assistance (for example money, productivity improvements, advice on production, capacity building in broad) or any combination of these.

Later, the Jo-In project will assess progress at each supplier. In doing so, they will also study the merits of different assessment methods such as social auditing with and without worker interviews and of different types of complaints mechanisms. They will also focus on what is sometimes the missing link in the chain: how to make sure corrective action is actually taken after a social audit or a complaint has revealed a need for it.

It is another of the Jo-In project's aims to build more effective complaints/grievance procedures and this is the subject of a special study. A point of departure for the project is that every effort should be made to resolve differences between workers and management at the plant level.

All suppliers in the project should have a complaints procedure because they are producing for buyers for whom this is an obligation under their own code or MSI membership. If by some chance they do not, then the Jo-In Draft Code requires it. Examples of factory-level complaints/grievance mechanisms include, but are not limited to, collective bargaining agreements, worker/management grievance panels, and mediation or arbitration through outside bodies.

There is also a separate Jo-In complaints procedure, for when there is an issue at one of the participating factories and the brands or MSIs concerned do not move quickly or satisfactorily enough.

Some of the Challenges

The Turkish suppliers have been consulted since 2004 but there has been resistance among them. At the time of writing, only six have signed up to the project's "terms of engagement".

Many are hesitant about being required to show increased compliance with the three key elements. They say the Turkish

textile and garment industry is going through a difficult period, facing changing competitive conditions in the world market, an over-valued Turkish lira, increasing costs and decreasing prices and orders from customers. Some are worried that the focus on freedom of association will lead to the formation of a trade union in their factory.

Of course it is true that the competitive market — at home and abroad — in which the Turkish suppliers are situated is characterised by a high use of unregistered, low-paid workers, obliged to work excessive hours and denied union rights (see box on the situation in Turkey). That is the context and rationale for the project. There has been a lot of discussion about how the project can encourage more suppliers to come on board. Should brands really be pushing suppliers to join, but then risk that they will not be constructive participants? Or what about giving suppliers incentives (ex. better prices and long term relationships) to join? This "push" or "pull" debate is ongoing.

The project should, of course, try to encompass the whole supply chain. With about 80 percent of Turkish garment production taking place in unregistered workplaces, the suppliers in the project may well be contracting out to workshops or homeworkers, or employing workers on contracts that put them outside the formal economy. It is not realistic to expect the suppliers to identify their own unauthorised activities. So this is the subject of a community-based research project, starting in mid-2006, being carried out by university researchers.

The CCC recognises that this project will not solve all problems related to code implementation (it is also important to remember that it is not the CCC's position that code implementation should be our only goal). However the CCC continues to believe that participation in Jo-In is worthwhile because this is an opportunity to harmonize initiatives involved in the implementation of good labour standards upward. If there is a thinning out of initiatives (as is anticipated since everyone with a stake in these issues feels that the multiplicity that currently exists needs to streamlined) it is important that the efforts that actually involve workers/their organisations are the ones that survive. The CCC welcomes the opportunity to work closely with our Turkish partners every step of the way throughout this project to see that they have power to influence the shape of this trial project.

Jo-In is an opportunity to focus on issues that the CCC and partners have agreed are key areas: living wages, freedom of association, and hours of work. The project provides a clear channel for the CCC to influence strategic players on these topics and to learn more ourselves.

For more information see the project website at www.jo-in.org/giris.htm

The Garment Industry in Turkey

From almost nothing, in two decades Turkey has become one of the world's top ten clothing exporters. Its products go largely to Western Europe and the US. It is strong in knitted and woven apparel and also produces goods made from cotton grown in the country.

Much of the garment industry in Turkey is unregistered. Estimates vary but there may be as many as three million workers employed in 44,000 workplaces. Most of the industry is in and around Istanbul and neighbouring cities. It is a highly unregulated labour market, with many workers hired and fired according to when factories receive orders and obliged to work excessive hours to meet deadlines.

There are also said to be many undocumented migrant workers in the sector, largely from the Balkan states, former Russian republics, and the Middle East. According to the DISK-affiliated textile workers' union, the sector also uses the labour of 180,000-200,000 children. Under Turkish labour laws, union membership is restricted to registered workers, and so organising in the garment sector is very difficult. Unsurprisingly, violations of Turkish labour legislation as well as international labour standards are reportedly rife.

CCC has taken up several cases of violations of trade union rights at Turkish garment factories, most recently this June against the US-based company Paxar. Paxar's Turkish factory produces labels, prints logos, designs and texts on garments for clients such as Marks & Spencer, Next, adidas, Wal-Mart, Levi Strauss, Puma, Disney, Gap, C&A, OTTO, Esprit, Nike, S.Oliver and Tommy Hilfiger. The company has violated Turkish law and corporate codes of conduct by attempting to destroy trade union organising. It stands accused of firing worker activists, pressuring union members to renounce their membership, and failing to negotiate in good faith with a trade union that was lawfully authorised to represent workers at the factory. For more information on this case please see www.cleanclothes.org/urgent/06-06-20.htm.

For more on the garment industry in Turkey, see:

Basic Information on Labour Conditions and Social Auditing in the Turkish Garment Industry
Fair Wear Foundation, July 2004, available at www.fairwear.nl/tmp/Background%20study%20Turkey%2007-2004.pdf.

Garment and Textile Production: Focus on Turkey
SOMO Bulletin on Issues in Garments and Textiles, Number 3, SOMO, Netherlands, November 2003, available at www.cleanclothes.org/publications/03-11-somo.htm.

Made in Turkey
CCC Newsletter, No.16, February 2003, available at http://www.cleanclothes.org/news/newsletter16-16.htm.

Five Questions Low-Cost Retailers Must Answer

Low-cost retailers are doing big business in the UK, reports Martin Hearson, coordinator of the UK CCC (Labour Behind the Label) in a recently released report, but are garment workers being left behind? Some pressing questions for the shops that profit from the these bargain purchases.

Introduction: Fast Fashion is Big Business

The UK CCC's new report "Who Pays for Cheap Clothes: Five questions the low-cost retailer must answer", highlights the growth of bargain clothing retailers.

In the UK women's clothing prices have fallen by a third in ten years, while the "value end" of the market (where prices are low) is booming, doubling in size in just five years to snap up £6 billion of sales in 2005. UK shoppers now buy 40% of their clothes at "value" retailers *(Sources: The Guardian (2006): "Going Cheap", February 28th; Mintel (2005): "Value Clothing Retailing – UK"; TNS Worldpanel (2006): Fashion Focus issue 29, online at www.tns-global.com/uk)*.

As prices fall, consumers have responded by buying more clothes, and by changing the way in which they buy them. Where high street stores used to change their collections just twice each year, the pressure is now on to have something new in stores every month, in response to rapidly changing trends. Such "fast fashion" gives shoppers the latest styles just six weeks after they first appeared on the catwalk, at prices that mean they can wear an outfit once or twice and then replace it.

In the UK the charge has been led on two fronts: by bargain chains Primark and Matalan and by supermarkets, led by Tesco and Asda-Wal-Mart. But low-cost retailers and supermarkets that sell clothes are phenomena known in other countries as well — think of Aldi, Lidl, Scapino and Zeeman. Therefore we are reprinting the questions the UK CCC suggests activists and consumers alike pose to low-cost retailers. Evidence from years of research in the garment industry suggests that the way in which "value" retailers demand ever lower prices and ever reduced lead times is driving down working conditions from what is already a very poor starting point. It's not just campaigners who say this, but also labour rights auditors, supply chain management consultants, and even some companies. These questions cut right to the heart of the impact this trend is having on workers' rights and challenges these retailers to ensure that workers are not paying for our cheap clothes with their human rights.

1. How much are the people producing the clothes you sell paid?

Clothing retail prices in the UK are falling, as the "value" sector of low-cost retailers expands. It is certainly not the case that workers producing more expensive clothes are necessarily paid any more than those producing for the low-cost retailers. That said, low-cost retailers achieve their low prices by squeezing suppliers hard, in ways that can often see the costs passed on to workers in the form of lower wages and other abuses of their rights. Low-cost retailers need to demonstrate that their price-breaking purchasing practices do not create conditions that make the payment of a living wage impossible, or force already low wages down yet further.

2. What hours do they work?

Low-cost retailers seek to reduce lead times and place smaller and smaller orders, with less certainty over future orders and deadlines. This takes place either to fulfill the requirements of such "lean production" or because these retailers' appeal is based on the "fast fashion" concept. Making smaller, more frequent orders with shorter lead times can lead to a pattern of feast and famine in factories, with periods of excessive overtime for workers, replacement of permanent jobs with casual temporary work, and subcontracting to less visible suppliers. Low-cost retailers need to demonstrate that workers are not subject to excessive overtime or poorer terms of employment as a result of the way they place orders with suppliers.

3. Can workers defend themselves?

Respect for — and promotion of — the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining is not only an end in itself, but also a means to empower workers to defend their own rights, such as to earn a living wage. Yet low-cost purchasing practices aim to successfully screw down prices as low as possible, and the supplier trapped between the "rock and the hard place" often turns against workers who try to unionise because a militant workforce means a less compliant one. Low-cost retailers need to reassure us that workers in their supply chains have the right to freedom of association, in practice as well as in theory. They need to demonstrate that they support suppliers whose workforce is unionised, even when this has an undesirable effect on prices and lead times.

4. Do suppliers take you seriously on workers' rights?

Sourcing by low-cost retailers is characterised by pressure to lower prices and increase flexibility, which sends a mixed message when brands also adopt ethical criteria. Fickle relationships with suppliers and threats to move elsewhere, as well as the tendency to place smaller orders and to change suppliers frequently reduce the incentive for suppliers to make real efforts to comply with the brand's ethical standards, and the leverage the brand has over suppliers on working conditions. Just moving away from a supplier when problems are detected is a common knee-jerk reaction, but it helps no-one – least of all the workers who may lose their jobs. Low-cost retailers need to demonstrate that suppliers who do not meet their ethical standards are encouraged and obliged to improve. That also means integrating ethical concerns throughout the sourcing process.

5. Are you really sure what's going on?

The auditing systems used by low-cost retailers (along with the rest of the high street) are not comprehensive enough to reassure us that working conditions are OK. Given the evidence that their purchasing practices push working conditions down, this kind of reassurance is especially important from low-cost retailers. Effective studies of working conditions and the impact of purchasing practices need to be conducted in collaboration with the local organisations that know what life is really like for workers, and aren't afraid to say so. Low cost retailers need to demonstrate that they have gone beyond standard auditing systems, and that they have studied the impact of their purchasing practices on workers' rights. They need to make this information independent and public, along with the steps they have taken on other issues highlighted in this report, so that consumers concerned about the ethics of buying cheap clothes can shop easy.

"Who Pays for Cheap Clothes: Five questions the low-cost retailer must answer", was written and produced by Martin Hearson, with contributions from Sam Maher, Chantal Finney, Maggie Burns, Jaqui Mackay, Steven Liu, and Belle Moore-Benham. To read the full report see www.labourbehindthelabel.org/images/pdf/low-cost-retailers-070706.pdf.

Urgent Appeals

Bangkok, June 2006 - Lek Yimprasert (middle) flanked by members of her legal team, Siriwan Wongkietpaisarn and Sorakrai Sornsri, after the lawsuit against her was dropped.

"Your 'click' makes a difference"

A libel lawsuit against Junya Lek Yimprasert, coordinator of the Thai Labour Campaign (TLC), was withdrawn in June 2006 after international campaigning.

Yimprasert had been charged by Publicis Thailand with "defamation by propagation" after the TLC website republished an article from CSR Asia Weekly about an unfair dismissal case filed by the company's employees. Publicis Thailand is the Thai subsidiary of French-based global public relations giant Publicis Groupe.

Campaigners around the world called upon Publicis to unconditionally drop the charges against Yimprasert. On June 20, Publicis lawyers withdrew the suit from Bangkok's Southern Criminal Court.

Reflecting upon her experience, Yimprasert said, "It is frustrating that we, who are directly in contact with workers that produce for the world and witness many rights violations, cannot bring the situation to the attention of the world without the risk of being sued. Furthermore, workers who report to us, of course, must face all kinds of pressures and risk being dismissed".

"I think that solidarity action has worked again in this case," she said. "To every supporter that helped us this time: I would encourage you to continue your solidarity in any of the future campaigns led by LabourStart, Clean Clothes Campaign and Reseau-Solidarité. Your 'click' is really making a difference in the producing world. I think that my case has been further proof of that".

For more information on this case see www.cleanclothes.org/urgent/06-06-22.htm.

"Hermosa? Not our problem"

Hermosa in El Salvador made sportswear for famous brands until it closed in May 2005, shortly after workers formed a trade union. The 190 workers were thrown out of a job. A year later, they are still owed outstanding wages and severance pay, as well as many benefits due under law. Some are on blacklists for defending their rights and therefore are unable to find new work. Some have lost their homes.

Hermosa had long been known as a problem factory. CCC had been reporting problems there to brands since 2000. The company also owes several hundred thousand dollars to government health and pension funds, including money deducted from employees which was never remitted. The owner, Salvador Montalvo Machado, is due to go on trial.

Following pressure after the 2005 closure, adidas, Russell Reebok and Nike, working with the Fair Labor Association, did carry out a detailed investigation. Others like Pentland and Wal-Mart, meanwhile, stood back and waited.

Under dispute are not the facts but whose responsibility it is to resolve the workers' desperate situation. Companies say it is up to the Government of El Salvador to make the owner pay up. This is true. However, workers are appealing for an emergency fund to help them in the interim.

A representative of the Hermosa workers, Estela Ramirez, toured Germany in the run-up to the World Cup (see pages 10 - 11). At that time, and again in August, the CCC issued urgent

action requests — it is hoped that ongoing public pressure will help focus the minds of the brands on taking some responsibility for the workers who used to make their goods but are now seriously struggling to make ends meet.

For more on this case see www.cleanclothes.org/urgent/06-08-10.htm.

Adidas Drags its Feet in Indonesia

The PT Panarub factory outside Jakarta, has been supplying goods to adidas for over ten years. The factory's 11,500 workers produce sports shoes, including top-of-the line football boots, such as the Predator Pulse line promoted by England's David Beckham and France's Zinedine Zidane and the +F50.6 Tunit promoted by Alessandro Del Piero (Italy), Arjen Robben (Netherlands), David Villa (Spain), Djibril Cisse and David Treze-huet (France), Hernad Crespo (Argentina) and Ze Roberto (Brazil).

Following a one-day strike in October 2005, 33 members of the Perbupas union at the factory were sacked. However, adidas has refused to help them get their jobs back.

Panarub has a history of poor wages and working conditions and failure to respect labour rights. An investigation by the US-based Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) in January 2004 identified serious health and safety issues at the factory. Employees in the hot press section had to inhale melting rubber fumes throughout their shift, and many operating the hot glue machines had scars or fresh burns on their hands. The WRC also documented systematic discrimination of members of Perbupas, one of the unions at the factory. The case was raised during the "Play Fair at the Olympics" Campaign in 2004.

To its credit, adidas responded positively and worked with factory management and local organisations, including both unions in the factory, to improve conditions and end discrimination against Perbupas.

But now adidas' support for workers' rights at Panarub is again in question. Panarub management refuses to reinstate 30 of the Perbupas unionists sacked in October 2005. Strike demands included a call for an increased annual bonus to help cover dramatic increases in workers' costs of living. Paiman, a Panarub worker, told a researcher from Oxfam Australia, "My salary is not enough to provide necessities for my family so I had to take out a loan".

For a while adidas waited on the outcome of legal proceedings, but in April the National Human Rights Commission made it clear that Panarub does not have a case for the sackings. Adidas' code of practice requires its suppliers to respect workers' right to freedom of association, including the right to strike. Adidas should uphold its code, not drag its feet. The 30 sacked unionists must have their jobs back.

For more on this case see www.cleanclothes.org/urgent/06-06-12.htm.

Garment Workers Take to the Streets in Bangladesh

Rioting broke out in industrial areas across Bangladesh in mid-late May 2006. The protests erupted following reports that police had shot a worker from the FS Sweater factory in Dhaka. FS workers were on strike for the release of three colleagues arrested after they demanded fairer piece-rates. The factory produces, amongst others, for Auchan, H&M, Gap, M&S, Inditex, Tesco and Next.

Estela Ramirez speaking during her tour of Germany in the run-up to the World Cup to raise public awareness of the workers at Hermosa, an adidas supplier in El Salvador, who were dismissed for forming a union. The case is still not resolved.

The unrest spread as thousands of garment workers seized the chance to express their anger and frustration, particularly about low wages. The legal minimum wage for the garment sector was last set in 1994 at just 930 taka (less than 10 euros per month), since then the cost of living has risen massively. Meanwhile Bangladeshi garment industry exports are now worth US$7 billion a year.

As over a hundred factories were allegedly ransacked or torched, thousands of police and paramilitary units were mobilised to crush the protests using tear gas, batons and even live rounds. Two workers were confirmed dead (reports speak of five) and hundreds injured. By June 3, all factories in the Dhaka Export Processing Zone were closed for four days and workers barred from entering the Zone.

Sources reported that up to 4,000 people faced arrest for their alleged role in the riots. Among the hundreds seized were officials from the Bangladesh Independent Garment Workers Union Federation (BIGUF) and the Garment Workers Unity Forum (GWUF). Though later released, they continue to face multiple charges.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) agreeing among other points that workers should receive one day off in seven, appointment letters, that there should be no barriers to freedom of association and collective bargaining (as per the labour law), and that a minimum wage board should be reformed was signed on June 22 by 16 Bangladeshi unions and industry. A wage board was been set up to determine new pay scales for the sector, with the unions proposing a basic wage of 3,000 taka per month (33 euros). However, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) is offering less than half this. So stoppages and demonstrations continue.

Also in late July, Minister of Commerce Hafizuddin Ahmed gave garment owners licence to open fire on workers who attack their factories. At a meeting of the BGMEA he was quoted as saying, "Sometimes you have to be tough. You can wait for one or two incidents and then straight fire on the attackers to save your factories" (quoted in *Daily Star*, July 25, 2006).

The CCC has posted several urgent action requests in relation to the situation in Bangladesh, for more information see: www.cleanclothes.org/urgent/06-05-31.htm and www.cleanclothes.org/urgent/06-05-25.htm.

Still No Progress at A-One Factory

Korean-owned A-One in the Dhaka Export Processing Zone was one of the factories reportedly targeted by rioters in Bangladesh in May 2006. Over 250 employees dismissed, terminated and forcefully removed by A-One cannot get their jobs back. The case shows what lies behind the long-standing frustration felt by garment workers in the country.

Garment workers in Madagascar, 2005

Settlement in Madagascar

After nearly two years of trying to get her job back, the illegally-dismissed workers' representative Sabine Razafindranisa ("Nisa") has settled her case with the Cote Sud factory in Madagascar.

In September-October 2005, 255 A-One workers were unlawfully dismissed and forcefully removed from the site. They included workers' representatives who had been elected to form a Workers Representation and Welfare Committee under the 2004 laws governing EPZs in the country. A number of them received death threats. Nevertheless, the A-One workers tried to deal with their grievances through proper channels.

Brands sourcing at A-One included the German companies Tchibo and Miles, the Italian companies COIN and Tessival, the Dutch retailer C&A, and US-based Target/AMC. During late 2005/early 2006, CCC groups in Europe and the Solidarity Center in the US were in contact with these companies. Some buyers (notably Tchibo) made an effort, and requested A-One to reinstate all dismissed workers. Meetings were held between A-One management, some of the brands, workers' representatives, Bangladeshi unions supporting them, and the garment workers' global union ITGLWF.

However, the Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority (BEPZA) continued to collude with A-One management to prevent the 2004 EPZ law from being implemented. Unfortunately, buyers have tended to give great credence to BEPZA and the notion that a legal process is in place to handle disputes. They have repeatedly used this to delay acting themselves.

In the month after the riots, and with the sacked A-One workers still not reinstated, the CCC issued a public request for action.

For more information on this case see www.cleanclothes.org/urgent/06-06-01.htm.

Worn down by the struggle to be reinstated and compelled by financial need, Nisa, a mother of four, opted to accept payment for the salary owed to her. She has also been promised retirement compensation of 20,000 Ariary per month (about 7 euros).

Cote Sud management refused to reinstate her despite intervention by the Ministry of Labor and the Jones Apparel Group (US). Cote Sud supplies Gloria Vanderbilt, part of the Jones group. International pressure pushed Jones into action, but their efforts were too little, too late.

Outstanding issues at Cote Sud include: dismissing workers when they are sick or pregnant, refusing sick workers permission to seek medical care, misuse of temporary contracts, compulsory overtime, and extremely low wages. Although Jones has stated they will work for improvements at Cote Sud, local management has this time succeeded in keeping an organiser out of the workplace.

First reports are that the agreed-upon retirement payments have not been made for Nisa. The CCC will continue to monitor the situation to ensure that the terms of Nisa's settlement are fulfilled and that outstanding issues at Cote Sud are addressed. The CCC has requested that Jones provide more information on what concrete steps they will take to improve respect for workers rights at Cote Sud, given the repressive context that currently exists in the wake of Nisa's illegal dismissal.

For more information on this case, see www.cleanclothes.org/urgent/06-06-21.htm.

In Brief

SweatFree Communities in the US

SweatFree Communities was set up in the US to encourage the exchange of resources and information and build a national "sweatfree" movement there. Their conference in Minneapolis on April 7-9, 2006 was attended by around 150 activists and organisers from the US, as well as Haiti, Mexico, Hong Kong, Nicaragua, Spain and the Netherlands, all keen to exchange experiences on campaigning, strategising and organising.

Workshops were held, amongst others, on "Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives", fair trade and ethical trade, organising in the age of CAFTA (Central America Free Trade Agreement), and the marketing of local and sweatfree products as a campaigning tool. The CCC International Secretariat gave a presentation on ethical public procurement campaigning in Europe (see also page 4).

The 74-page conference report has chapters on "The Strategy of Sweatfree Organizing", "Connecting Consumers to Empowered Workplaces', and "Worker Organizing and International Solidarity". It can be found at:
www.sweatfree.org/docs/conferencereport2006.

Brazil: What fashion is this?

The well-known Brazilian labour research body Instituto Observatorio Social has accused the Dutch-based retailer C&A of knowingly sourcing clothes from clandestine sweatshops in Brazil that exploit undocumented illegal immigrants.

In the latest edition of their magazine, the Social Observatory reports that C&A, which has 113 stores in Brazil, has known for about a year how its contractors sub-contract out to unregistered workshops. Here, many migrants from neigh-bouring countries work in highly degrading conditions, brought in by people-smugglers known as "coyotes". At least 100,000 Bolivians are said to be in this situation in the city of São Paulo.

The report draws on investigations by the Brazilian Public Labor Ministry into clandestine sweatshops, where police found hundreds of C&A labels. Under Brazilian law, C&A can be deemed the principal beneficiary of illegal conditions and be held responsible.

C&A representative in Brazil, Vladimir Almeida Ramos, admitted to a Sao Paulo city council investigation in October 2005 that C&A only checks its suppliers, not their subcontractors. The Dutch CCC will be following this up with C&A; a meeting will take place between C&A, the CCC and other Dutch stakeholders to discuss the situation.

"Que moda é essa?" (Portuguese)
Observatório Social Em Revista, 10th edition, May 2006
www.os.org.br/download/er10/c&a.pdf

"What fashion is this?" (English)
www.cleanclothes.org/ftp/06-05-Is%20this%20in%20fashion.pdf

MicroRevolt

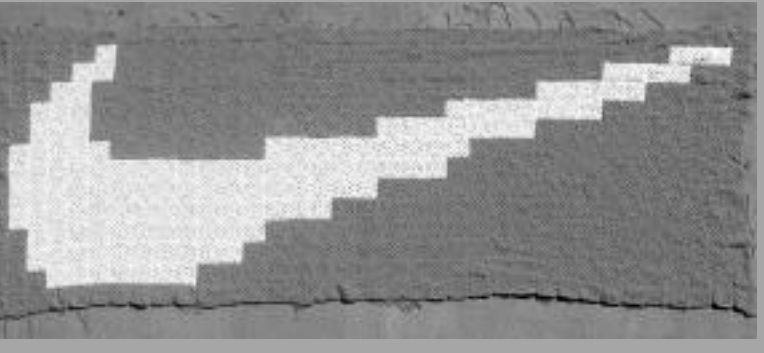
An international collective of knit and crochet hobbyists has stitched a 14 foot wide blanket of the Nike Swoosh to act as a petition for fair labour policies for Nike garment workers. The initiative, started off in the US by microRevolt, has brought together hand-made squares and virtual signatures from over 20 countries.

So far the blanket has been shown across the US and in the UK. Another microRevolt project, Knitoscope — "a knitted animation of labour activists" — has been to Brazil and Russia, and later this year will go to Italy. MicroRevolt is looking for more opportunities — from museums to labour/community groups — for the Swoosh blanket and Knitoscope.

The campaign's website also contains "knitPro", a web application that translates digital images into knit, crochet, needlepoint and cross-stitch patterns — potentially for use with other logos.

After its journeys in early 2007, the Nike Blanket Petition will be delivered to Phil Knight, chairman of the board of Nike Corporation.

For more information see www.microrevolt.org, or e-mail inquiry@microrevolt.org.



The micoRevolt blanket.

Singapore: Stitch Initiative Against Sweatshops

Stitch Initiative Against Sweatshops was formed by young professionals and students in Singapore in May 2005. It is targetting young consumers with messages about the sweated labour behind the clothes they wear.

Founder Amin Suwari explains:

"Consumer culture is a lifestyle amongst many young Singaporeans. We think it is important to bring the voices of the sweatshop workers to their hearts and minds. Youth represents our future, and as consumers they have more power than they think to shape the things to come.

As youth is our main target, we use 'cool' designs to decorate our booths, reading materials and posters. We also design our own merchandise such as buttons, stickers and locally-made shirts as a more ethical alternative.

It is difficult to stage a protest in Singapore, and so we have to think creatively to get our messages across. We just organized a mini film festival called 'Underneath The Radar', or UTR for short, showcasing documentaries that highlight the effects of corporate globalization on developing nations. We talked to UTR filmgoers about sweatshops and the effect on our neighbours like Thailand, Indonesia and Cambodia, as well as other parts of the world. Highlighting these issues couldn't come at a more important time as in September the World Bank and the IMF are holding their meetings in Singapore.

We would like to make UTR an annual event, to get more activists/filmmakers to showcase their work to Singaporeans, opening more minds to a different world altogether. We are also hoping to hold an art exhibition in 2007, involving local artists/activists to express their concerns on human rights issues like sweatshops and poverty. We are looking for local or international partners to work with us on this exhibition."

For more information see www.stitchinitiative.org or contact Amin Suwari at amin@stitchinitiative.org.

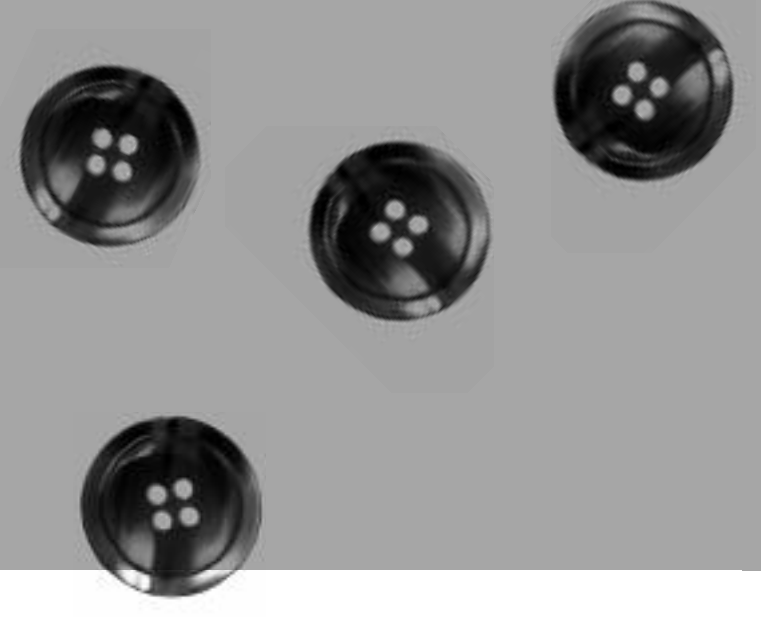
STITCH INITIATIVE AGAINST SWEATSHOPS

New Resources

"The Bittersweet Working Life in Shenzhen" videos

US-based Sweatshop Watch has produced a collection of worker-made videos as a public education tool for students, workers, and consumers to learn about the lives of factory workers in China. The video's present a first-person perspective of Chinese workers; audiences witness where the workers live, what food they eat, moments of fun, and ultimately are exposed to what they call a bittersweet life. The videos may be watched individually or as the complete series (total running time is 20 minutes). The videos are in Mandarin, with English and Chinese subtitles and are accompanied by a facilitation guide for use during workshops.

Available from sweatinfo@sweatshopwatch.org, suggested donation $US 10



Threads of Labor: **Garment Industry Supply Chains from the Workers' Perspective**

Threads of Labour consists of 10 essays on working conditions, economic structures and organising strategies related to the global garment industry. The book reports on an action research project, coordinated by Women Working Worldwide, linking ten different organisations in nine countries (Bangladesh, Bulgaria, China, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri-Lanka, Thailand and the UK). The research sheds light on the structures of the global garment industry and the scope for resistance in those countries. The various chapters provide information on recent major trends in the sector, ranging from supply chain management to the phase-out of the MFA. Importantly, this book explores ways in which workers might begin to develop new forms of organisation suited to securing rights within this context.

Edited by Angela Hale and Jane Wills, published by Blackwell Publishing, UK, 2005. ISBN:1405126388

Quick Fix – Die Suche nach der schnellen Lösung: **Was bringen Sozial-Audits den Näherinnen der Sweatshops?**

In November 2005 the CCC released a report — Looking for a Quick Fix: How weak social auditing is keeping workers in Sweatshops — that critically assessed the workplace social audit system adopted by brand-named companies and retailers. Now available in German, this report, draws upon the social auditing experiences of approximately 40 factories in eight countries and suggests a number of ways through which the monitoring of codes of conduct can be improved.

Available from INKOTA-netzwerk, Greifswalder Str. 33a, 10405 Berlin; tel. (030) 42 89 111; e-mail: hinzmann@inkota.de; www.inkota.de

Does Monitoring Improve Labor Standards?: **Lessons from Nike**

This academic study, written by Richard Locke, Fei Qin, and Alberto Brause (MIT Sloan Working Paper, No. 4612-06, July 2006), uses Nike's database on factory audits to explore whether or not monitoring for compliance with corporate codes of conduct actually leads to remediation in terms of improved working conditions and enforced labour rights. The evidence presented suggests that notwithstanding the significant efforts and investments by Nike and its staff to improve working conditions among its suppliers, monitoring alone appears to produce only limited results. Instead, this research indicates that monitoring need to be combined with other interventions focused on tackling some of the root causes of poor working conditions.

Available at: http://www.reports-and-materials.org/Does-Monitoring-Improve-Labor-Standards-July-2006.pdf

Meaningful Change: **Raising the Bar in Supply Chain Workplace Standards**

This reference paper, prepared by Roseann Casey and jointly published by Harvard University Kennedy School of Government and the Friderich Ebert Stiftung, covers the code monitoring initiatives in the apparel, toy, footwear and electronics industries. One conclusion is that while "monitoring is an essential and valuable tool, monitoring alone has not proven to cause positive change for workers at the factory level." The report further argues that monitoring should be "part of a larger compliance process which must be based on legitimate international law and standards and underlying principles, and must include creative and effective remediation strategies."

Available at: www.fes-geneva.org/reports/BangkokJuni2006/BackgroundStudy.pdf

Haiti - Dominican Republic Export Processing Zones: **Taking on Grupo M: EPZs in the Dominican Republic and Haiti**

This ICFTU Briefing (Nov. 2005, No. 15) focuses on the day-to-day exploitation of workers in the export processing zones of the Dominican Republic and Haiti who produce clothing for leading international brands. The briefing reports on the anti-union tactics used by manufacturers such as Grupo-M to repress workers. Much attention is given to the Codevi FTZ factory that produces garments for Levi Strauss and Sara Lee. In 2004 an international urgent appeal was issued to support Codevi workers in their long struggle to win union recognition. Union members faced violence and illegally dismissed, but in the end negotiations between SOKOWA (trade union) and management took place. The briefing details how local action combined with international solidarity can make all the difference.

Available at: http://www.icftu.org/www/PDF/LMSDossier15-05HaitiDomre.pdf

Fair Wear Foundation Background Study: **Bangladesh**

This January 2006 study from the Fair Wear Foundation (FWF) is part of a series on countries in which the FWF and their (prospective) member companies operate. Earlier studies cover China, India, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Tunisia, and Turkey. The Bangladesh study provides an overall context to assess the limits and possibilities to improve labour standards. This includes an overview of current legislation and relevant court cases regarding the labour standards, health and safety laws and regulations and an inventory of the stakeholder organisations that could be asked to participate in the partner network (part of the FWF structure for verifying compliance with labour standards). The main body of this text was written by Khorshed Alam, from AMRF Society, Alternative Movement for Resources and Freedom Society.

Available at:
www.fairwear.nl/tmp/Background%20study%20Final%202006.pdf

ETI Homeworker Guidelines

In developing countries, as many as 300 million people — more than half of them women — do paid work at home, making a significant contribution to household incomes among predominantly poor families. But despite their importance, few homeworkers have legal status as employees and many are vulnerable to exploitation. The Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI), a UK-based alliance of companies, trade unions and NGOs, has just produced guidelines for responsible corporate practice in the area of homeworking. All companies with homeworkers in their supply chains are invited to test these guidelines and give ETI their feedback.

Available at: www.ethicaltrade.org/d/homeworkers

ICFTU's Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights

Every year the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) publishes a detailed report on union violations around the world. In 2005: 115 trade unionists were murdered for defending workers' rights, while more than 1,600 were subjected to violent assaults and some 9,000 arrested, according to the Survey. Nearly 10,000 workers were sacked for their trade union involvement, and almost 1,700 detained. Many of these violations concern workers in the garment and sportswear industries and include a number of cases taken up by the CCC.

Available at: www.icftu.org/survey2006.asp?language=EN

Is Fair Trade a Good Fit for the Garment Industry?

The first in a series of discussion papers from the Maquila Solidarity Network exploring critical issues, challenges and debates in the labour rights movement. This paper examines ethical trade and fair trade, fair trade certification and fair trade clothes and other important issues involved in the debates around fair trade in the context of the global garment industry.

Available at:
http://www.maquilasolidarity.org/resources/codes/pdf/Discussion%20Paper%201.pdf