

Threads

Newsletter of the Clean Clothes Campaign

Clean
Clothes
Campaign

Number 28 Autumn 2009

International Secretariat

This Issue

Living Wage

Asia Floor Wage
CCC Action Week
Interview with Amirul Haque
Amin and more...

7



Asia Floor Wage

Contacts

Clean Clothes Campaign contacts in Europe, Southern & Eastern Europe, Turkey

Austria

Clean Clothes Kampagne
cck@cleanclothes.at
www.cleanclothes.at

Italy

Campagna Abiti Puliti
coord@cnms.it
www.abitipuliti.org

Belgium

Schone Kleren Campagne
campagne@schonekleren.be
www.schonekleren.be

The Netherlands

Schone Kleren Campagne
info@schonekleren.nl
www.schonekleren.nl

Campagne Vêtements Propres

info@vetementspropres.be
www.vetementspropres.be

Norway

Kampanjen Rene klær
info@reneklaer.no
www.reneklaer.no

Central & Eastern Europe (including Turkey)

Bettina Musiolek
ostwind-institut@email.de

Spain

Campaña Ropa Limpia
info@ropalimpia.org
www.ropalimpia.org

Regina Barendt

oreginally@yahoo.de

Sweden

Natverket Rena Kläder
info@renaklader.org
www.renaklader.org

Denmark

Clean Clothes Campaign Denmark
mail@ccc.dk.org
www.cleanclothes.dk

Switzerland

Clean Clothes Campaign
Erklärung von Bern
ccc@evb.ch
www.evb.ch

France

Ethique sur l'étiquette
info@ethique-sur-etiquette.org
www.ethique-sur-etiquette.org

Clean Clothes Campaign

Déclaration de Berne
info@cleanclothes.ch
www.cleanclothes.ch

Germany

Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung
ccc-d@vemission.org
www.sauberekleidung.de

United Kingdom

Labour Behind the Label
info@labourbehindthelabel.org
www.labourbehindthelabel.org

Contents

4 CCCs in Action

6 Asia Floor Wage

8 Living Wage Action Week

10 Urgent Appeals

12 Partner Profile

14 News From the Global Network

15 Guest Column & New Resources

16 Looking Ahead

Colophon

This newsletter is a Clean Clothes Campaign publication ISSN print: 1877-9905 ISSN online: 1878-0458 Editors: Paige Shipman and Marcella Kraay Design: Annelies Vlasblom Printed: on FCS certified paper by PrimaveraQuint

The Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) is dedicated to improving working conditions and supporting the empowerment of workers in the global garment and sportswear industries. Since 1989, the CCC has worked with trade unions, NGOs and workers across the globe to help ensure that the fundamental rights of workers are respected. We educate and mobilise consumers, lobby companies and governments, and offer direct solidarity support to workers as they fight for their rights and demand better working conditions.

Editorial

Events took place across the globe to commemorate World Day for Decent Work on October 7th. Not content with one day of events, the Clean Clothes Campaign organised a whole week of actions to focus the public's attention on the urgent need for garment workers to be paid a living wage.

With lively events and awareness-raising actions in 11 European countries, the CCC highlighted the important role of giant retailers and brands in ensuring that workers receive a wage that allows them to live in dignity. The message was clear: a job in the garment industry should keep workers out of poverty, not in it.

Despite being an internationally-recognised human right, garment workers are denied a living wage, and global buyers are largely responsible. It is their pricing and purchasing policies – the constant threat that they'll take their business elsewhere – that dissuades suppliers and governments from implementing a living wage and makes workers apprehensive about demanding one.

Substandard housing, lack of clean water, and insufficient food are a daily reality for garment workers. Yet most European consumers are largely unaware of this, and international brands and retailers are happy to keep it that way. The CCC's Living Wage Action Week aimed to make this reality known and mobilise people to demand that companies implement a living wage in their supply chains.

Global buyers need look no further than the Asia Floor Wage for a concrete formulation of a minimum living wage for workers in Asia, which accounts for 60% of garment production. As described in a new report, *Stitching a Decent Wage Across Borders*, the Asia Floor Wage is a unified, regional pan-Asian

demand for a decent and fair wage. The wage figure is different in each currency and country, but the purchasing power is the same: garment workers in one Asian country would be able to purchase the same set of goods and services as their colleagues across the border.

And as we all know, solidarity across borders wins successes. After more than a year of international campaigning, workers at the DESA factory in Turkey won a protocol agreement that includes recognition of the union and reinstatement of dismissed workers. After two years of international solidarity support for workers in the Philippines, the government was finally forced to accept an ILO high-level mission in September to investigate labour rights abuses.

These achievements are just a couple that we, along with the workers and partner organisations with whom we work, wish to celebrate as the first national Clean Clothes Campaign – in the Netherlands – celebrates its 20th year. ✂



20 years of the Dutch CCC

Clean Clothes Campaign

International Secretariat P.O. Box 11584 1001 GN Amsterdam The Netherlands

Tel: + 31 20 412 27 85 **Fax:** + 31 20 412 27 86 **E-mail:** info@cleanclothes.org **Website:** www.cleanclothes.org

Financial contributions:

Account holder: St. SKK/Clean Clothes Campaign **Bank and account number:** ING 392 7802 **IBAN:** NL83 INGB 000392 7802
BIC/Swift code: INGB NL2A

CCCs in Action

Outdoor Companies: No 'Peak' Performance

Clean, fair, sustainable – that's how most outdoor clothing companies present themselves. But are these companies really as responsible as their image suggests? The CCCs of Switzerland, Germany and Austria teamed up to find out. Unfortunately, the result painted quite a different picture.



The study focused on 15 international market leaders, including Patagonia, the North Face, Columbia Sportswear, Jack Wolfskin and Mammut. In addition, it examined 14 small and medium-sized companies that are headquartered in Switzerland. Individually, these smaller companies don't play as big of a role as the market leaders, but together they are an important part of the economy and their responsibility to workers is no less important.

The companies were sent a survey earlier this year with questions about transparency, codes of conduct, monitoring and verification of working conditions and production materials. From their initial reaction to the questionnaire it was already clear how much variation exists in their understanding of supply chain responsibility. Whereas Patagonia thanked the CCC for being included in the survey, Black Diamond claimed that it was not part of the target group. Salewa could not determine who within the company was responsible for dealing with such a survey, while Tatonka was not interested in participating and Schöffel did not even reply.

At the time of the survey, only four of the 15 market leaders made their code of conduct publicly available by publishing it. Of the codes that did exist, most were disappointingly weak. The codes were not precise about limits on working hours, and only Mammut and Odlo committed themselves to paying a living wage to workers who produce their goods.

Field research conducted in parallel to the survey showed the effect of buyers' lack of commitment to a living wage. A worker in El Salvador received just €0.66 for a North Face jacket that sells for €116. That's just one half of one percent of the sales price. To sufficiently provide for her family, she would need four times as much.

Only four companies (Helly Hansen, Mammut, Odlo and Patagonia) ensured involvement of all stakeholders, including worker representatives, in helping them implement their code of conduct by participating in a multi-stakeholder initiative.

The research showed an even more disappointing performance by smaller and medium-sized outdoor companies. Most were surprised to even receive a questionnaire, and only now have begun to realise how far their responsibility to workers goes.

The CCCs summarised the research by placing the 29 companies in three categories. While none of the companies obtained a "peak" rating,

the CCC's will continue to push for improvement. In July, activists of the CCC Austria, Germany and Switzerland attended the international outdoor fair in Friedrichshafen to call on companies to take responsibility for workers. Detailed results of the study are available in German and French. ✂

www.evb.ch/outdoor
www.evb.ch/fr/outdoor
www.cleanclothes.at



Tell Your Friends: New CCC Website

The CCC International Secretariat is proud to present a new and improved website. In addition to an eye-catching new look, the website makes it quick and easy for visitors to take action and share information about urgent appeals, campaigns and news. The website also emphasises the importance of CCC's Urgent Action Network.

Help spread the word to members and friends by linking to the CCC website on your website or social networking page today! ✂

www.cleanclothes.org

Rumana's 'Sweatsoap' Blog

Drawing the connection between the clothes we wear and the women and men who make them is one of the main objectives of the Clean Clothes Campaign. To that end, the Dutch CCC has launched a website featuring the blog of 23-year-old Rumana.

Rumana works at a garment factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh that produces clothes for Dutch brands and retailers. In her blog entries, she discusses not only her living and working conditions, but also what she likes to do in her free time (watch Hindi films) and her life history. Photos of her bed, kitchen and shared bathroom add to the blog entries, offering a concrete image of one garment worker's life.

The blog is intended to close the gap between a typical Dutch consumer and the 47 million workers like Rumana, who work in garment factories around the world. It is also a call to action: visitors are urged to send an email to Dutch clothing brands to demand a living wage for garment workers and they are invited to ask Rumana questions. Within days of the website's launch Rumana was asked whether her daughter would likely become a garment worker; if there were other job opportunities for her in Bangladesh; and what kind of clothes she likes to wear.

As yet, the blog is available only in Dutch. But if the first 'Sweatsoap' proves a success, stay tuned for more. ✂

www.sweatsoap.nl
www.schonekleren.nl



Trek een
schone
T-shirt
aan



Belgian CCCs Point the Way to a Clean T-Shirt

Perhaps the biggest buyers of t-shirts aren't individuals, but organisations. To promote an event or a conference or maybe the launch of a new campaign, they want a commemorative t-shirt.

Organisations often ask the Clean Clothes Campaign where they can order 'clean' promotional t-shirts or garments. To make the answer simple, the Belgian CCCs have introduced a new website that enables organisations easily and quickly to make contact with companies that are engaged with their suppliers to help ensure that their t-shirts are made under better working conditions.

The website, which is in French and Dutch, offers a form to request a price quote from retailers or producers that are members of the Fair Wear Foundation (FWF). Alternatively, organisations can contact other retailers with a specific request to purchase promotional t-shirts from FWF member companies. In this way, the Belgian CCCs hope to encourage these laggard retailers to follow the path toward greater respect for workers' rights and improved labour conditions in their supply chains. The website also features information about Fair Trade and

cooperatively owned producers such as the Solidarity Factory in Thailand.

The website targets associations, event organisers, trade unions, companies, public administrations. Through links to the Belgian CCCs websites, visitors will find information about the supply chain, labour conditions, commitments of the main producers, and possible alternatives for consumption and actions. The website also emphasizes the impact of end-buyer practices to promote good labour conditions. ✂

www.tshirtspropres.be
www.schoneshirts.be



On October 7, the Asia Floor Wage (AFW) Alliance launched its campaign to establish a floor on the race to the bottom in the Asian garment industry. With dozens of events around the globe and the release of a new report, *Stitching a Decent Wage Across Borders*, the Alliance put forth its demand for a unified living wage for Asian garment workers.

The report outlines the reasons behind poverty wages in the garment industry and describes the role of brand-named companies and giant retailers, who ultimately wield the most power in determining wages. Workers' efforts to increase wages often lead garment brands and retailers to relocate production elsewhere, sending the message that fighting for better wages can put jobs in jeopardy.

Meanwhile, governments fear that statutory minimum wages that meet living wage standards would make it more difficult to attract international business. Instead of ensuring that citizens are paid decently, governments seek to lure business by offering tax reductions, exemptions from labour laws, or freezes in the legal minimum wage.

The Asia Floor Wage seeks to remedy this problem by demanding a regional wage that eliminates competition between workers in different Asia countries, where 60% of garment production takes place.

Calculating the Asia Floor Wage

The Asia Floor Wage Alliance developed criteria for a living wage based on 3000 calories of food per adult and a ratio of 1:1 between food and non-food costs. The wage provides



Asia Floor Wage

Campaign Takes Off

enough for a standard family of 2 adults and 2 children. To calculate the living wage across borders, the Alliance relies on a hypothetical currency called 'purchasing power parity' (PPP\$). Rather than just convert currencies, PPP can be used to calculate how much money is needed for a person in one country to purchase the same "basket of goods" as a person in another country. (See table.)

The AFW Alliance includes a wide range of labour organisations from India, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, China and Hong Kong, as well as the Clean Clothes Campaign and other NGOs, unions, solidarity groups and researchers in Europe and the United States.

The launch of the AFW Campaign, which received international press coverage, included events in Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia,

and Hong Kong, among other places, and was mirrored by the CCC's Living Wage Action week in Europe (see pages 8-9).

TURC staff at AFW launch in Indonesia



AFW and Decent Work action in Hong Kong



Asia Floor Wage at 475 PPP\$ Converted into Local Currencies

Country	AFW (2009)	PPP\$ conversion	AFW in local currencies
Bangladesh	475 PPP	x 22.64 =	10,754.00 taka
Cambodia	475 PPP	x 1279 =	607,525.00 riel
China	475 PPP	x 3.45 =	1,638.75 yuan
India	475 PPP	x 14.67 =	6968.25 rupees
Indonesia	475 PPP	x 3934 =	1,868,650.00 rupiah
Sri Lanka	475 PPP	x 35.17 =	16,705.75 rupees
Thailand	475 PPP	x 15.93 =	7,566.75 baht

Action Week

For a Living Wage

Clean Clothes Campaign activists throughout Europe took to the streets in October to support garment workers in their demand to be paid a living wage. The International Living Wage Action Week, part of the CCC's Better Bargain campaign, sent a strong message to retail giants Carrefour, Tesco, Aldi and Lidl to take up the proposal for an Asia Floor Wage and ensure that garment workers in their supply chains earn enough

The Action Week included public debates, street actions, visits to corporate headquarters and film screenings – all focused on the urgent need for a wage increase for garment workers. The message was simple: a living wage is a human right and no matter how good a factory looks, if workers' wages keep them in poverty, their workplace is still a sweatshop.

Saleena Pookunju from the Society for Labour and Development and Kotagarahalli Ramaiah Jayaram from the Garment and Textile Workers Union (GATWU) in India participated in a speaker tour in Norway and Austria. Austrian activists held events in four cities, including a hilarious street performance in which activists representing consumers 'washed the minds' (a German expression for setting someone straight) of Lidl representatives. In addition to the performance, passersby were informed about working conditions at Lidl suppliers and urged to sign protest postcards.

New Reports on Wages and Company Policies

In Norway, the speaker tour helped highlight a new living wage report that focused on workers in the supply chains of 29 clothing brands sold in Scandinavia. Representatives from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise responded to the report. The Swedish CCC teamed up with Norway to present the report to the press, and urge the public to take action online. The Denmark CCC also issued a report, "The Wage Must Be Enough to Live On!", about the need for a living wage among companies in the Danish clothing market.

Leading brands and retailers in the UK and the Netherlands faced massive media attention with the release of new CCC reports there. The Dutch CCC presented its report about wages in September, focusing on factories in Bangladesh and India that produce for the Dutch market. The research found that Bangladeshi workers earned about 1/3 of what is necessary to live on. The research was coupled with the launch of a blog written by a Bangladeshi garment worker and translated into Dutch. (See page 5).

CCC action in Vienna



The UK CCC's "Let's Clean Up Fashion" report surveyed retailers and brands on their commitment to a living wage for workers in their supply chains, and found that none pays a living wage, nor has a systematic programme in place to raise wages to acceptable levels in the near future.

With an important election coming up, the German CCC took the opportunity to press Chancellor Angela Merkel to address labour violations in supply chains of giant retailers, including Lidl, KiK and Aldi. During the Living Wage Action Week in October, German activists took action at the headquarters of Lidl and KiK.

The Belgian CCC presented a documentary about garment workers in Indonesia. A clip was screened by 10 of 12 local TV stations in Belgium South, reaching an audience of approximately 375,000 people. The documentary was also shown and discussed in ten theaters.

Belgian CCC activists made use of the Decent Work campaign slogan, "Workers are not tools", as volunteers dressed up like nails to distribute information about the Asia Floor Wage. In Brussels, activists presented a "hammer and nail concert", and at the close of the Action Week, the CCC held a "Fair Hammer" street action, like those seen at fun fairs. Volunteers asked people if they would agree to pay Sahida €100 instead of €25 a month. The banner behind the hammer showed the levels of wages along the supply chain, from Sahida on the bottom to the boss of a retailer at the top.



CCC Action in Brussels

The CCC's Living Wage Action Week was mirrored by events in Asia highlighting the launch of the Asia Floor Wage Campaign. (See page 7). In reaction to the week's events, H&M issued a response in support of higher wages in Bangladesh, but stopped short of supporting the wage levels calculated by the AFW Alliance. Other brands reacted similarly.

The Clean Clothes Campaign will continue to push companies to make a concrete commitment to a living wage, using the Asia Floor Wage as a benchmark. ✂

Garment workers Hasina Akhter, 22, and her sister-in-law Joli Akhter, 19, are getting ready to leave the house. Dhaka, Bangladesh, Aug. 2009



Taslima Akhter/CleanClothesCampaign

Urgent Appeals



Despite the odds, garment workers across the globe are bravely laying claim to their rights, including the right to join and form a union. The CCC supports them by offering solidarity support in urgent cases of labour and human rights violations. For more information and to take action, go to the Urgent Appeals section of www.cleanclothes.org.

Giant Retailers Turn Blind Eye to Union Busting

Over the last few years, four workers at Menderes Textile in Turkey have died due to work-related injuries. In the most recent accident, on November 20, 2008, one employee was killed when he fell into the funnel of a coal boiler. Workers reported that the boiler had no safety measures to prevent such an accident. The management ordered three colleagues of the victim to climb into the funnel and retrieve the body. As a result, the three suffered respiratory poisoning and had to seek treatment in a nearby hospital.

In March 2008, the national textile workers union TEKSIF started organising workers at the factory. Menderes management then called the union leaders into their offices one by one, and gave them the choice of renouncing the union or losing their jobs. In other cases, workers suspected of being union members were assigned to new jobs for which they were not trained or qualified. If workers refused to renounce their union membership, management went so far as to harass relatives also working at the factory.

In August 2008, workers and union representatives started protests outside the Menderes factory. The protests lasted for 190 days and were aimed at gaining acceptance of the union. Despite these actions, the company has continued to harass union members and has refused any dialogue with TEKSIF.

The Clean Clothes Campaign has called on Menderes' buyers to stop delaying and take decisive action to ensure that their supplier respects workers' rights. Buyers include, among others, giant retailers Carrefour, Wal-Mart, and IKEA.

The union is demanding reinstatement of illegally dismissed workers, acknowledgement of TEKSIF's right to represent its members, a guarantee that the company will respect the right to organise and bargain collectively, and a review of occupational health and safety measures. ✂

Triumph Cuts Union Jobs

On June 29 Body Fashion Thailand, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Triumph, announced that around half of its 4200 workers would be out of their jobs by the end of August. Earlier this year, another Thai Triumph producer, Worldwell Garment Company, closed down on Labour Day (May 1) and the entire work force was sent home without their final wages or their legally required severance compensation. In the last years, Triumph has expanded production at a non-unionised factory in Northern Thailand.

In the Philippines, 1660 garment workers lost their jobs at the end of August when Triumph International (Philippines) Ltd. and Star Performance Inc. closed. The New Unity of Workers in Triumph International (BPMTI) reports that Triumph continues to produce clothes in the Philippines. But instead of union work, it has placed orders with a group of former factory workers who are now sewing Triumph bras in their homes.

Neither in Thailand nor in the Philippines did Triumph management conduct timely and transparent negotiations with the factory workers' unions as required by ILO Convention 158 and the OECD

Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. The guidelines call for companies to develop and negotiate a retrenchment plan with the union, and to provide detailed information supporting the business decision behind the plan.

Although Triumph cites the global recession as a reason for downscaling production, it is clear that Triumph's actions are aimed at eliminating union jobs. Triumph bras are still produced in both countries, but the company is closing the departments and factories where unions are strongest.

The Triumph International Thailand Labour Union (TITLU) and the BPMTI were established in the 1980s, and have fought long and hard for their unions. Last year, TITLU saw its president dismissed after she defended the right to freedom of expression on national television. More than two thousand workers laid down their work in support of her, and an international campaign confronted Triumph with their union-busting tactics. Since the announced retrenchments, both unions have been organising picket lines, demonstrations and other forms of peaceful protest against these dishonest practises.

Thousands of consumers have responded to the CCC appeal to write Triumph and the Thai Prime Minister to safeguard union rights. BPMTI presented the case to the ILO high-level mission to the Philippines (see page 14) when it visited to investigate anti-union practices in that country. ✂

Triumph workers protest in Thailand.



Striking workers outside the DESA factory in October 2008.

Victory for DESA Workers

The Clean Clothes Campaign is pleased to announce the closure of a year-long campaign against the DESA leather factory in Turkey following a protocol agreement signed by DESA and the Deri Is union.

The protocol stated that DESA would recognise Deri Is as the single authorised union at the factory and that the company would not engage in any positive or negative attitude to employees in regard to the union. On top of the six workers already reinstated, DESA

would reinstate another six more. Other dismissed workers would be given first priority in any new hiring opportunities. Finally, all employees would be given a document stating that unionisation is a constitutional right. For its part, Deri Is agreed to end the international campaign and positively support the factory in regaining its reputation and its customers.

The CCC has called on DESA buyers to stand behind the factory and ensure that DESA's decision to respect freedom of association is supported through increased orders and investment. The CCC will maintain contact with Deri Is to monitor the implementation of the agreement and to receive regular updates on the union's work. The early signs are positive that DESA intends to honour its agreement and build a better relationship with the union. We hope this develops into a proper system of industrial relations over the coming years.

Thank you to everyone who supported the campaign and to the DESA workers, who fought a long, hard fight in defence of workers' human rights! ✂

Partner Profile

Amirul Haque Amin From National Garment Workers Federation, Bangladesh

The National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF) has worked with the CCC on nearly 20 urgent appeal cases. We interviewed Amin, NGWF's General Secretary, about changes in Bangladesh and the effects of international solidarity.

When did you get involved with NGWF?

I've been involved since the founding in 1984. Before that, I was a student at Dhaka University. I was an activist in left progressive politics trying to change society - to change the society we needed to organise the workers. I was involved with another trade union in 1981, the Dhaka City Tailoring Workers Union. There was a strong tailoring movement under this union. During that time the garment industry began in Bangladesh. Many of the tailors went to work in the factories and they saw a lot of violations, so they decided to organise a national-level union for garment workers.

Many of the workers could not read or write and they needed someone to help them. The tailors knew and trusted me, so they asked me to help. In July 1984, they officially became the National Garment Workers Federation.

That means you've been working on labour rights issues for 25 years. What changes have you seen in Bangladesh?

In the 1980s there were a lot of labour rights violations and irregularities. Workers always had two or three months out-

standing wages or weren't paid for overtime. Now there are still a lot of violations, but not as frequent. In the 1980s there was no holiday. Now the workers enjoy a weekly holiday. May Day is a national paid holiday in the garment sector now. Now you see women workers getting maternity leave in many factories. Another fundamental change is that when we started in the 1980s there were only a small number of women workers in the factories. Now almost 60% of NGWF's members are women.

In the earliest days, workers didn't used to get appointment letters or any of their documents. There was no festival bonus, but now the majority of workers get a bonus.

You've worked with the Clean Clothes Campaign on many urgent appeal cases over the years. What do you see as some of the benefits or problems?

We need international support and solidarity. There are a lot of violations, especially of the right to organise and to bargain. Local manufacturers don't recognise the right to organise and workers wages are very low. We're fighting to improve this, but we need the support from consumers in developed countries.



The headquarters of the multinational companies are all in the developed countries and they are the key. We are simply producing the garments, but in the west there are consumers. We need their support. They should know about the conditions of the workers.

When was your first interaction with the Clean Clothes Campaign?

I first met staff of the CCC in 1995 when they made a short film in Bangladesh. After that, in 1996 there was a European tour. I went on a bus tour along with people from Sri Lanka, India and Indonesia to five European countries. Through the CCC, NGWF has met a lot of NGOs and trade union organisations. We've really built our network – we work with consumer groups, human rights groups, women's groups. CCC played a vital role in making this network.

CCC has also helped us resolve disputes in many factories, like Spectrum. Sixty-four workers died and another 85 were seriously injured when the factory collapsed. Many other workers died in fires in Bangladesh. In the Spectrum case, it was the first time that workers' families received compensation –

it was the first time in Bangladesh that multi-national companies took responsibility – providing support for families. This happened because of the work of the Clean Clothes Campaign and the ITGLWF.

What is NGWF's priority for the future?

We want to see garment workers get a living wage to cover their basic needs: food clothes, shelter, health and education. Until now, wages are very low and workers and their families cannot survive. We want workers to get a fair wage and for multinational companies to pay a fair price for Bangladeshi garments. ✂

News

From the Global Network

FTZGSEU Commemorates World Day of Decent Work

The Free Trade Zones & General Services Employees Union (FTZGSEU) in Sri Lanka commemorated World Day of Decent Work with the slogan “Ensure Decent Work By Paying a Living Wage”.

On October 7, members of the union organised a picket line in the Katunayake Free Trade Zone. Workers held the picket line for more than one hour, although police attempted to disperse them under the pretext that the area is declared a high security zone. In addition, the FTZGSEU’s affiliated trade union confederation held a joint seminar in Colombo to raise the awareness of the principals of Decent Work.

The FTZGSEU reports that employers are trying to use the global crisis to keep

the minimum wage as low as possible. The Board of Investments (BOI) of Sri Lanka, which is the governing body of the Free Trade Zone, has started discussions with manufacturers regarding the 2010 salary revision. The FTZGSEU has launched a campaign to pressure the BOI and manufacturers to increase wages so as to meet the basic requirements of workers. As a signatory union of the Decent Work Country Program, the FTZGSEU is spreading the message that Decent Work can only be provided with payment of a living wage. ✂

ILO Mission Visits Philippines

After more than two years of campaigning, the Philippine government finally accepted an ILO high-level mission that visited the country in September. The mission was prompted by a complaint filed by the Kilusang Mayo Uno Labor Center about extra-judicial killings, threats, harassments, and intimidation of unionists and labour rights’ advocates.

The Philippine-based Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR) recorded 70 killings and two cases of enforced disappearances in the labour sector from 2004 to 2008. The authorities, especially those from the military and the police forces, are widely seen as being behind these killings.

The mission’s aim was to obtain greater understanding of the application of ILO Convention 87 in law and in practice, and to provide detailed information about the trade union situation on the ground to the ILO supervisory bodies. In addition to testimony about violence and murder of workers and union activists, the mission heard from workers’ rights groups about the ‘No Union, No Strike’ policy in the economic zones.

The CTUHR and Workers Assistance Center (WAC) are hopeful that the mission will lead to broader awareness of the danger faced by union activists in the country, as well as abuse of the judicial system to repress activism.

The ILO reports will be issued in the first quarter of 2010. ✂



Guest Column

New Resources

Supply Chain Research Guide

Clean Clothes Campaign, 2009

Designed for CCC's global network, this research manual describes various web-based tools that can be used to identify business relationships and targets in urgent appeal cases. It provides examples of complex garment supply chains, a glossary of common industry terms, and detailed discussion of eight case studies. Available upon request only.

Video Series: Stories from the Garment Industry

Clean Clothes Campaign/Belit Sag, 2009

The first episode in a series of stories from the garment industry, the ironically-titled "You Can Safely Invest in Bangladesh" features Kalpona Akhter. At age 12, Ms. Akhter began working in the garment industry and went on to become an organizer. The video combines an engaging firsthand account of her personal experiences with useful background information on the working and living conditions of Bangladesh's garment workers.

Paying the Price for the Economic Crisis

Bethan Emmett, Oxfam International, 2009

This Oxfam discussion paper shows that the economic crisis is having a devastating impact on the livelihoods, rights and families of women in global supply chains. Women are often first to be laid off, with employers evading legal obligations to give notice and pay compensation, and governments turning a blind eye.



Jeremy Blasi

**Director of Research and Investigations
Worker Rights Consortium (WRC)**

Many of us had great hopes for codes of conduct. These hopes were reinforced in the early 2000s when workers – utilizing international networks and complaint mechanisms – began using codes to make real gains. Many readers will recall or were indeed involved in the efforts at factories like BJ&B in the Dominican Republic and PT Dae Joo in Indonesia to gain respect for the right to organize and collectively negotiate improved conditions.

But the honeymoon – if there ever was one – did not last long. These same breakthrough factories, the objects of so much time and hard work, began to shut down, one after another. More generally, despite codes of conduct, there has been precious little progress on labor rights throughout the industry, particularly on working hours, wages, and freedom of association. Violations remain pervasive.

What happened? There is a growing recognition that brand sourcing practices – particularly demands on suppli-

ers for price concessions – are largely to blame. Many a factory manager, told to cut prices by 10%, will assume the brand making such a demand is not serious when it also says it expects costly labor rights improvements. Given the inexorable price pressure on suppliers, it's no wonder wages haven't kept pace with inflation, much less reached anything close to a living wage level.

There is hope on the horizon. The WRC, for our part, is working on an exciting project in the Dominican Republic, which will establish the first factory in the developing world to pay a true living wage while making mass-marketed apparel. The brand involved, a major university licensee, has committed to paying a price sufficient to make this possible. The Dominican union federation, Fedotrazonas, and former worker leaders of the BJ&B plant are key partners. We believe there is also great potential behind the Asia Floor Wage initiative, which is discussed in this newsletter. The next several years will test whether codes of conduct can be rescued to deliver on their promise. ✂

Looking Ahead



The Birth of the Clean Clothes Campaign

In 1989 a group of Dutch activists came together to protest reported abuses of labour rights and abominable working conditions at factories supplying European retailer C&A. Little did they know that they were laying the foundation for what would become a global network with campaigns in 12 European countries.

On November 18, the first national Clean Clothes Campaign (or to be precise Schone Kleren Campagne) will celebrate its twentieth birthday. The Dutch CCC will focus attention on what has been achieved – and the important work that remains to be done – to improve working conditions and

ensure that workers' rights are respected across the globe. The event will feature a unique dance/acrobatic interpretation of the meaning of industrial work and special guests from the Dutch parliament and trade union federation, FNV. True to CCC style, those who attend will be asked to make their voices heard and take collective action in support of workers.

The anniversary event also marks the release of Liesbeth Sluiter's new book, *Clean Clothes: A Global Movement to End Sweatshops*. The book, which chronicles the history of the CCC and features the voices of many of you reading this newsletter, is available at www.schonekleren.nl. ✂