

Threads

Newsletter of the Clean Clothes Campaign

Clean
Clothes
Campaign

International Secretariat

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This Issue

Unrest in Asia

Protests for Higher Wages
Expansion of CCC Network
Interview with Jasna Petrovic
and more...

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Colophon

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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

In despair because of their continuing low wages and under pressure of increasing prices for staple foods, workers across Asia have taken to the streets, and the last months have seen massive demonstrations and strikes. In China, Bangladesh, Birma, Cambodia, and other countries there have been protests against the terrible conditions under which people are forced to work, many of the demands focusing on higher wages.

The response from those in power to these actions has been harsh. Demonstrations were attacked, workers were beaten, and union leaders were arrested and molested in jail. Workers and their organisations have refused to be silenced, however, and the protests have forced governments to respond with more than just repression. As a result of the actions minimum wages were increased substantially in Bangladesh and in parts of China.

A group of Thai garment workers that was dismissed from a Triumph factory last year decided to take matters into their own hands and started a workplace. Their Try Arm factory joins other worker cooperatives like Dignity Returns in Thailand and the Argentinian La Alameda in showing that producing garments without exploitation is possible.

Despite some changes for the better, major labour rights violations persist in the global garment industry. The negative effects of the economic crisis bear down heavily on workers, increasing their vulnerable and insecure position in the supply chain. As elsewhere, workers rights are under pressure in Croatia where a new labour code proposed by the government threatened to undermine the process of collective bargaining and deny workers some of their rights. In this case too, unions took action and succeeded in collecting so many signatures of people opposing the proposed code that the Croatian govern-

ment was forced to retract it. The question is what the government will do next.

Working together on workers' rights remains both necessary and effective, and the Clean Clothes Campaign continues to be dedicated to facilitating international cooperation on these issues. With the expansion of our European network with new national coalitions in three more countries, CCC will have more capacity to carry out its task. We also forge ever more links with our growing global partner network. The Clean Clothes Campaign International Forum, taking place in November 2010 in Turkey, will bring together 250 labour rights activists and is meant to give us the opportunity to exchange, discuss, plan, and build bridges. This way the CCC network will be strengthened further, enabling us to work together better to reach our common aim of improving working conditions in the global garment industry.



Cambodian garment workers at a sit-down strike in September

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CCCs in Action



Happy faces at the launch of Clean Clothes Campaign Finland

CCC Network in Europe Expands

In the past year Clean Clothes Campaign coalitions got together in three more European countries. As is the case with the already existing coalitions, each of the new European CCCs has its own dynamic and flavour, while all subscribe to the vision and goals of the larger network.

The first to join the existing European network was Clean Clothes Polska in December of 2009. With a presentation at a large corporate social responsibility conference at the Copernicus University in Torun, Poland, the first ever Eastern European CCC came into being.

The Polish national CCC coalition is made up of organisations working on gender rights, social and economic justice, environmental issues, and human rights, and works together with the women's and international solidarity departments of national unions. "In the past years Poland has become more of a clothing consuming country, while part of the production of garments has moved elsewhere," says Clean Clothes Polska coordinator Joanna Szabunko, "The possibilities for consumer action is growing, this made it a logical step

for us, after some years of working on CCC activities, to form a CCC coalition ourselves."

On March 8, 2010, International Women's Day, it was the turn of Clean Clothes Campaign Finland to be officially established. The driving force behind the founding of the Finnish CCC is SASK, an NGO for trade union solidarity. After already participating in the Play Fair campaign around sportswear, SASK succeeded in finding Fair Trade Finland, Changemaker and the Finnish textile – and retail unions, willing to commit to working together on labour rights in the worldwide garment industry. According to Jukka Pääkkönen of CCC Finland "The approach and the themes of the CCC fit very well in the way we work here. Our main focus initially is awareness raising among Finnish consumers

and companies about the problems in the garment industry".

The most recent addition to the European CCC family is Clean Clothes Campaign Ireland. After some months of preparations the Irish coalition went public on October 7, 2010, the World Day for Decent Work. "We are very excited about the opportunities that working with the CCC network presents to us. It seems like the time is right for us here in Ireland to make this step," says Rosie O'Reilly of Re-dress, an organisation that works on issues around sustainable fashion, and that will be hosting the secretariat of CCC Ireland. Besides Re-dress, the Irish CCC consists of Comhlámh, Irish Congress of Trade Unions – Global Solidarity (ICTU-GS), Mandate, and Trócaire.

With the launch of the CCCs in Poland, Finland, and Ireland, the number of national coalitions in the European network comes to 16. ✂

www.cleanclothes.pl
www.puhtaatvaatteet.fi
www.cleanclothescampaign-ireland.org

Keen for more info, a student checks out publications of Clean Clothes Polska



Outdoor Brands Pay Low Wages

Recently the CCCs in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, together with Fair Trade Czech Republic, published the outcomes of a survey about self-perception and reality in the outdoor clothing sector. Despite the positive image of social and environmental responsibility of outdoor brands, workers are producing expensive outdoor goods for starvation wages.

To bring the results of the survey to life, the Christian Initiative Romero (CIR), a member organisation of the German CCC, organised a series of information events about working conditions in the outdoor clothing industry. The main speaker at the events was Jeaneth Pineda from El Salvador.

For the last sixteen years, Ms Pineda has been working in the garment industry. She is a union organiser and did many interviews with workers producing for outdoor brands like The North Face, Patagonia and Marmot. From September 13th to 17th Ms Pineda visited five German cities where she spoke about the daily struggle for survival that is a consequence of the low wages paid in the sector.

In the coming period outdoor brands will continue to receive special attention from the CCC in various European countries. >✂

Jeaneth Pineda



Fashion Colleges Project in Spain

It's been an exciting year for Campaña Ropa Limpia, the Spanish CCC. The launch of the project "Moda EstÉTICA" introduces teaching on the ethics of fashion and workers' rights into fashion schools across the country.

By reaching the future professionals of the sector, there is a real possibility for change from within the industry. With the Spanish textile giant Inditex employing 10,000 predominantly young people every year, it is vital that these (and all) graduates embark on their careers with the tools and knowledge necessary to make informed decisions and understand the human impact these will have.

Activities are aimed at teachers and students of all fashion-related disciplines from design to business, marketing and even journalism, and began with a graphic design competition at the European Institute for Design in Madrid to create the branding of the initiative in Spain, and have gone on to include the cross-schools event "Tacking Ethical Fashion in Spain" (sounds better in Spanish!), bringing together students and teachers from some of the most important design schools across the country to receive training from experts from Spain and the UK, and participate in the "Style Wars" competition.

The second edition of the Fair Fashion Show organised by SETEM in Valencia showed that serious fashion and style can be created from second hand materials. Check out the blog! >✂

www.dondecomprasturopa.org
www.modaestetica.org



Swiss Campaign: 10 Cents for a Decent Life

When CCC Switzerland first learned of the Asia Floor Wage (AFW) Campaign, it was clear to them that this alliance has a huge potential and that they wanted to support the AFW. The big challenge was bringing a complex message to a broad audience. CCC Switzerland decided to focus the message on the additional money needed if paying the AFW-living wage instead of the legal minimum wage.

The campaign “10 Cents for a Decent Life – Living Wage for All” started on 2nd August 2010. The website was the central campaigning tool. A short clip explained the problem of the legal minimum wages. Then people were invited to send their protest to the companies and call upon them to pay a living wage.

Each week 4 to 6 new companies that don't commit to paying a living wage, were presented, and CCC Switzerland sent a weekly newsletter to supporters in which they were encouraged to revisit the campaign website. Each targeted company got digital protests during 7 days, between 600 and 1400 messages. The campaign clip was shown in cinemas around Switzerland, reaching hundreds of thousands of people,

raising awareness around the issue of payment of living wages. The “10 Cents for a Decent Life” campaign had a large Facebook community that followed the activities and helped to spread the message.

Besides the successful campaign website with the clip, CCC Switzerland also produced a campaign flyer that was distributed to 160.000 people. From 26th to 30th September, three representatives of the Asian Floor Wage Campaign came to Switzerland to participate in campaign activities. There was a round-table discussion for Swiss clothing companies around the issue of living wage. Also the representatives met with the International Labour Organisation and attended a public event for consumers.

The interest of the companies and the public shows that this campaign hit a nerve and CCC Switzerland hopes to get clear commitment from companies to engage in pilot projects with the AFW.

The Swiss “10 Cents for a Decent Life” campaign was just a start. CCC Switzerland will keep working on the issue of a living wage, because a decent wage is the corner stone of a decent life. >✂

www.10rappen.ch



The Clean Clothes Campaign Network:

Who and How?

That the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) is dedicated to improving working conditions and supporting the empowerment of workers in the global garment and sportswear industries, is surely something that most readers of the Threads know. CCC educates and mobilises consumers, lobbies companies and governments, and offers direct solidarity support to workers as they fight for their rights and demand better working conditions.

Who is part of the CCC network, and how it is organised, is maybe less widely known.

Since its first activities in the Netherlands in 1989, CCC has worked with trade unions, NGOs and workers across the globe to help ensure that the fundamental rights of workers are respected. The Clean Clothes Campaign is made up of the International Secretariat and 16 autonomous national CCC coalitions in Europe, and works closely with a loose, informal international partner network of more than 200 organisations, including unions, in countries where garments are produced. CCC also cooperates extensively with similar labour rights campaigns in the United States, Canada, and Australia.

The European CCC coalitions share the CCC aims and principles, but, within the areas of work of CCC, chose their own priorities and activities. Members of these coalitions include trade unions and NGOs covering a broad spectrum of perspectives and interests, such as women's rights, consumer advocacy and poverty reduction. Representatives of each coalition meet three times a year to make joint plans and share experiences. Decisions at these European CCC coordination meetings are taken by explicit consensus.

CCC relies on its partner network in producing countries to identify local problems and objectives, and to participate in the development of campaign strategies to support workers in achieving their goals. Representatives from this broader international network meet at the regional or global level every few years. In between the larger meetings matters are discussed and decisions are taken within working groups and steering committees, and at thematic meetings. In this way CCC can include a variety of perspectives without losing its flexibility.

The CCC International Secretariat (IS) receives guidance from the international network. It plays a coordination and facilitation role in relation to the CCC's main areas of work and in consultation with the network will take a leading role in selected activities. One important task of the IS is organising the thematic, regional and international meetings that bring together the members of the CCC network to exchange experiences, discuss issues and develop strategies on common activities. One such meeting will be taking place in Turkey in November 2010 (see the back page of this newsletter). On the agenda will be the structure of the CCC network, how it functions and what it should look like in the future. ✂

Garment Workers in Asia

Standing up for Higher Wages

This year has seen a remarkable number of worker protests across Asia. The demands range from higher minimum wages in Burma, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka to better working conditions in industries in China. Brutal police crack-downs on protesters in Bangladesh went around in the global media and shocked the general public worldwide.

Governments and manufacturers associations in the producing countries have reacted with concerns as well as brutal measures to intimidate the workers. In various countries, union leaders were hit with legal action or arrest, while the workers were warned “not to be misled” by “selfish interests” and “enemies of the country”.

“As if workers demanding a wage that can provide them with mere basic needs can ever be ‘excessive’,” commented Ms. Anannya Bhattacharjee of the Society for Labour and Development in India. “The governments and labour ministries generally support factory owners, and do their part in trying to intimidate workers. A repressed minimum wage can only be achieved if union rights are repressed as well.”

After garment workers protests were violently suppressed by the police in Bangladesh, the governmental NGO-registration authority withdrew the license of the Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity (BCWS), a CCC partner. Shortly afterwards, one of its leaders was briefly held in a police cell and beaten, then two others were also arrested citing serious allegations. The three have been released on bail, but the allegations and judicial cases against them still pend.

“A repressed minimum wage can only be achieved if union rights are repressed as well”

As we write this piece, thousands of Cambodian workers and union leaders are being threatened with legal measures and arrest for organising a strike that was supported by at least half of all the garment and shoe workers in the country. In a report published at the time of the strike, the UN’s Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Human Rights in Cambodia recommended sweeping changes to a court system that he said fails to provide justice to the poor and vulnerable.

For years, an increasing amount of production by Asian and global industries has seen clothing and shoes manufacturing become one of the foremost foreign-exchange earners. As long as there were endless reservoirs of needy and desper-

This year’s massive May Day protests in Cambodia



ate labourers, the expansion provided local elites and foreign customers with fantastic opportunities to enrich themselves. However, orders from abroad have been going down as a consequence of the global economic malaise. Concurrently, climate change and other factors are causing severe food shortages and general price levels to rise.

“Employees are much more vocal than a few years ago”

The garment workers, who were already the most vulnerable in this neo-liberal scenario, see themselves forced with their backs against the wall. The women who form the overwhelming majority of production-floor workers and who often support households of four or more, can't provide school fees, housing or even essential foodstuffs anymore. In August, Cambodian media reported about dozens of garment workers who had fainted at work due to a combination of bad working conditions and malnutrition.

Despite these conditions, and the governmental and industrial suppression of the labour force, workers and unions are raising their voice to express their despair and anger. Networking

amongst women's organisations, unions and labour-rights NGOs have helped a lot to increase international solidarity and exchange strategies and ideas. “Employees [in Asia] are much more vocal than a few years ago. That is in part due to the rapid development of the Internet in those countries,” commented Mr. Maarten van Klaveren, researcher at the Amsterdam Institute for Labour Studies, recently in the Dutch newspaper *De Telegraaf*. “It is like a rolling stone, and the resistance is bound to multiply.”

Manufacturers and trade ministry officials in production countries seem to fear that any structural price increases in Asia will lead the global garment producers to withdraw orders from their countries. In order to take away local manufacturers' fears that wage increases will necessarily lead to such an exodus, the Asia Floor Wage Campaign – in which the CCC is an active participant - proposes regional income parity: a generalized level of minimum income within the Asian garment industry that is guaranteed by foreign buyers.

One way to ensure that Asia can continue to be the garment industry's “workshop of the world” and that the global garment industry can fully profit from the relatively high levels of infrastructure and skilled workers is to make sure that the industry is set up in a sustainable fashion. Ensuring that the women and men on the factory floor have a reasonable income and are happy and proud in their place of work is essential if the industry is to survive in Asia. ✂

Protesting the new minimum wage – Cambodian garment workers demand salaries that can support their families



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.

Factory Fire Shows Structural Problems in Bangladesh

Trade unions and labour-rights NGOs in Bangladesh, and the CCC, call upon international buyers to ensure a proper compensation for the families of garment workers who died in a fire at the Garib & Garib factory in February this year.

Eight months after the tragic fire that cost the lives of 21 and hospitalised 6 workers, no compensation has been provided for the loss of income to the families concerned.

Bangladesh garment factories are notorious for their unsafe conditions, yet factory owners, the Bangladesh government and garment companies have thus far not taken sufficient steps to protect the basic rights of workers to work in a safe environment. The CCC and other international labour rights organisations together with the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation (ITGLWF) have called upon garment companies sourcing from Bangladesh to improve safety in the industry, and to ensure that workers can report and challenge health and safety violations by supporting the right to organise. ✂

Labour Rights Activist Abducted and Beaten in India

'Social dialogue' came to an all time low in India recently, when the management of the Viva Global garment factory in Gurgaon, just outside of New Delhi, setting an example ordered the beating of sixty employees who had been protesting illegal, degrading and dangerous working conditions at the factory.

Viva Global is one of retailer Marks & Spencer's major suppliers in India. When the women arrived for work on August 25, they were beaten by a gang of thugs that had been hired by the management. One of the factory union leaders was forcibly taken away by the thugs, and severely beaten and threatened while being held.

Our Indian partner in this case the Society for Labour and Development, the CCC and other international allies quickly launched urgent appeals and asked supporters to send emails to the Indian police, the Viva Global Manager, and Marks & Spencer. The same night,

the union leader was safely released near to his home. His colleagues continue their actions in front of the factory.



Abducted union leader after his release



Action Moves Nike and Gap to Compensate Workers after Unfair Dismissals

In two separate cases, Nike and Gap set important examples by ensuring that unfairly-dismissed garment workers eventually received financial compensation.

In July, the *Central General de Trabajadores* in Honduras and Nike announced a ground-breaking agreement that will provide a US\$1.5 million fund for workers that formerly produced Nike apparel. They will also receive a year's access to the healthcare system, training and priority hiring.

Over 2000 workers at the Hugger and Vision Tex factories were laid off last year, leaving them unemployed and owed over US\$2 million in unpaid wages and severance compensation.

The agreement comes after intense pressure was put on Nike by the US students campaign USAS, that had convinced some universities to end lucrative licensing agreements with Nike.

In a similar case, fashion brand Gap ensured that one of its supplier firms paid compensation to workers in Cambodia who had lost their jobs in 2009, when the PDC factory in the capital Phnom Penh closed down unannounced,

leaving over five hundred workers stranded without jobs, three months salary arrears and no severance compensations. After months of correspondence with global companies that had outsourced production at PDC, Gap eventually managed to arrange for a compensation deal for a large part of the dismissed workers.

Both developments set strategic examples for future cases. It will now be easier to put pressure on global companies that outsource production in countries where the rule of law is weak. This brings upholding the rights of workers who unfairly lose their jobs one step closer. ✂

PDC workers receive their long awaited severance compensation



Success for Union in Indonesia

After almost three years of campaigning, a conflict between an Indonesian garment factory and the independent union GSBI ended with success for the union. It had been a “classic” case of “union busting”, where all factory-based union leaders and suspected members had been fired.

When GSBI Secretary-General Emelia Yanti Siahaan came to Amsterdam in February, the Dutch CCC put pressure on one of Mulia's major foreign buyers, Tommy Hilfiger, to meet with her. Initially, they had refused such a meeting, but after a street protest in front of their global head office in Amsterdam Emelia had an one-hour meeting with the Chief Operations Officer. Following the meeting, Tommy Hilfiger decided to increase the pressure on its supplier, and threatened to withdraw orders if Mulia would not come to an agreement with the union. Finally, an accord was reached in May, whereby the right to organise the workers was explicitly recognised.

The agreement doesn't cover all the concerns that the union originally raised, such as pregnancy leave, a failure to offer safe transportation for female workers after night shifts, and other demands. However, with the union now firmly established at the factory, hopes are high that these issues will be resolved through regular social dialogue between the union and factory management. GSBI is currently monitoring to see if the factory management adheres to the agreements made. ✂

Partner Profile

Jasna Petrovic

From Union of Autonomous Trade Unions of Croatia (UATUC)

The Union of Autonomous Trade Unions of Croatia (UATUC) represents mostly industrial workers and has both a textile union and a retail union among its members. Jasna Petrovic is UATUC's Vice President of the Women's Section and former International Secretary. *Threads* spoke to her about about the federation's history through the years of war and the challenges of Croatia joining the European Union.

Can you tell me a little bit about the history of UATUC and about how you got involved?

I was a journalist during socialist times. At that time I wrote about workers' rights issues. I wanted to support workers, but that was not so easy at that time, I had a lot of troubles and was taken to court several times.

When the Berlin Wall fell there were different unions in Croatia. I wanted to promote a merging of old and new unions, so we started the Union of Autonomous Trade Unions of Croatia (UATUC) in May of 1990, not long before the war started. In many other former East Bloc countries there were old unions that were associated with the socialist time and new unions that were funded by solidarity funds in the US and so were associated with America. We wanted to include everybody in our union confederation and avoid this divide between old and new unions. In 1992 I became the International Secretary of UATUC.

During the war it was difficult to do our work and some of my colleagues were actually killed. In the areas of Croatia under

Croatian rule we faced the right wing government of Tudman and its yellow unions, while in the other war-torn areas it was not easy to organise workers, although we did try to organise strikes.

During the war there were many women that were active in the unions in Croatia. Women were given more space to act. This was because some men were away fighting or were afraid to become involved in union work, because they could be sent to the front as punishment. This gave women a chance to come more to the forefront. In 1991 we started the women's section of UATAC and I have been the Vice President until today.

What are the main issues you face right now?

Three major issues that we are dealing with here in Croatia are unemployment, changes in the pension scheme and the new labour code. All these issues are in some way related to the economic recession, which is putting workers' rights under pressure. To deal with these issues we have for instance made a proposal for the pensions that looks at the number of working years instead of the age of the worker to determine when



someone can retire. The new labour code proposed by the current right wing government threatened to weaken the system of collective bargaining and cancel some of the rights of workers. To stop that development UATUC started collecting signatures in June 2010 for a referendum about this proposal. We managed to collect around 711.000 signatures, which is more than 15% of the total Croatian population. The government was shocked at this success and for now have retracted the proposal for a new labour code.

Croatia is planning to join the European Union in 2011. How do you think this will affect the position of workers in your country?

UATUC is an internationally recognised union federation and we have encouraged the joining of Croatia in the EU, despite that we think the EU is not good in every way. The reason is that I think it could be good for vulnerable groups of people, including workers. Adhering to European standards could improve the position of vulnerable groups of workers, for instance women workers and their rights around maternity leave.

How does being part of a large international network like CCC help you in your work?

It helps us in making cases international and has taught us to bring issues and campaigns to the international level to increase pressure. It gives us inspiration and strength, and is a place for education and the exchange of best practices. I believe in international networking, especially for women. We have more allies internationally than we think sometimes. ✂

News

From the Global Network

Protest Underwear Provides a Living for Dismissed Seamstresses.

Around 30 women who were dismissed by underwear and lingerie producer Triumph in Thailand last year set up their own swimwear and underwear line in a new cooperative factory.

They made headlines in the Thai press: around two thousand women who had been working for Triumph took action to protest against their dismissals. For months, they demonstrated around the factory, in the streets of Bangkok, outside of embassies, and in front of Triumph shops in Europe.

“The closure [of the factory in Bangkok] was just one way of getting rid of a factory that had well-established unions and employees who know their rights,” said Jittra Cotshadet, a former Triumph union leader in a telephone interview with *Threads*. Jittra and many of her colleagues occupied the open-air ground

floor of the Ministry. With machinery that they had taken out of the closed Triumph factory departments, they continued to produce underwear inside the Ministry compound, as a sign of defiance and continued protest.

Branded “Try Arm” - in Thai the name resembles “Triumph” - the name sounds like a militant call to resist worker exploitation. After several months, the government offered them space for rent in a suburb of Bangkok. The new “Try Arm” cooperative now employs over 30 women, all former Triumph unionists. The daily production is currently at around 200 pieces of underwear, lingerie and swimwear.



It is truly a cooperative in the sense that there is a form of participatory management where all the major decisions are taken by all the women, and any profit that is not being invested in growth will be distributed amongst all workers equally. “At the moment our salaries are less than they were at Triumph. The women here make around 250 *baht* [approximately 6 euros and just over 8 US dollar] per day. That is way above the legal minimum, but also far less than the average of 307 *baht* we made at Triumph.

Less pay, but more say for workers in their own factory



Working as a cooperative certainly has its advantages too. “All can initiate new ideas, there is a better atmosphere. We check on each other but don’t control each other, and there is more flexibility with things like sick leave, maternity [leave], etcetera.” said Jittra. ✂

www.tryarm.org and
www.tryarm-eng.blogspot.com

New Resources

Women Working in the Shadows

Südwind Institute for Economics and Ecumenism and the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Bavaria, 2010.

This publication examines areas of women's work in the world economy which have been largely ignored by labour market statistics, media headlines and research projects. It provides basic information on the informal economy and export processing zones and looks at the development of women's work in the context of globalisation and the prevailing gender order.

Download:

www.suedwind-institut.de/downloads/2010-03_SW_Women-Working-in-the-Shadows.pdf

Corporate Accountability for Human Rights Abuses

International Federation for Human Rights, 2010.

A guide on recourse mechanisms in cases of corporate-related human rights violations. In all parts of the world, human rights and environmental abuses are taking place as a result of the direct or indirect action of corporations.

With this guide, FIDH seeks to provide a practical tool for victims and their representatives, NGOs and other civil society groups (unions, peasant associations, social movements, activists) to seek justice and obtain reparation for victims of human rights abuses involving multinational corporations.

Download:

www.fidh.org/Corporate-Accountability-for-Human-Rights-Abuses



Erica van Doorn

Director of the Fair Wear Foundation

In early September of this year, revelations about the Sumangali scheme in the Indian garment industry – amounting in most cases to bonded labour – caused a media scandal, targeting two large retailers who were found to be sourcing from a so-called Sumangali factory.

The ensuing media coverage reinforced the common perception of garment companies on the one hand and labour rights organisations like the Clean Clothes Campaign on the other as sworn enemies. Yet while the CCC's campaigning keeps businesses alert and enhances public awareness of the exploitative, dangerous and often degrading conditions in the garment industry, improving these conditions must ultimately be a cooperative process.

An excellent example was the recent round-table on living wage, organised by the Dutch CCC to bring companies up to date and discuss with them

how to proceed. Fair Wear Foundation presented its new wage ladder methodology, which makes the gap between actual wages, minimum wages and living wages visible by country, and guides companies on how to increase wages step-by-step.

The board of Fair Wear Foundation, which was founded - and is still governed - by the CCC, business associations, trade unions and others, forms a unique platform for this kind of cooperation. Board meetings can certainly be animated at times – especially after a CCC-fuelled media uproar. However, the stakeholders on the FWF board have managed to let their common goal – fair workfloor conditions – prevail over any differences. ✂

Looking Ahead

CCC International Forum November 23-26, 2010

The CCC International Forum (IF) will be a four-day “bottom-up” event that will bring together activists and worker organisers from over 30 countries to network, share skills and experiences, strategise together, and develop activities and campaigns for the coming years.

The IF will take place in Turkey - at the crossroads of Asia and Europe and home to a multi-billion euro garment industry. Approximately 150 workshops will be organised during the International Forum. Participants will play a key role in developing the content of the workshops. While the majority of workshops will be developed in advance, there will also be time and space reserved to accommodate new workshops that people might want to organise on the spot. Workshops will range from sessions on organising migrant workers, how and why to set

up a blog, and good facilitation techniques to women’s self-defence, writing a great project proposal and how to be an effective lobbyist.

By creating a space where workers and activists from all parts of the world discuss, share and strategise together we hope to create an even more dynamic and stronger network. Collective timeslots at the beginning and end of the Forum where the whole group comes together will directly inform CCC strategies for the coming 5 years. ✂