

Clean Clothes

**Newsletter no. 23
May 2007**

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Editorial

This issue of the newsletter features several examples of just how high the stakes are for workers when they attempt to exercise their basic rights. Coming together, voicing their opinions about the conditions in their workplace, then organising collectively to demand improvements – these are big steps that carry big risks. Unfortunately, in the garment industry today taking steps like these can mean risking your life. It is with great sadness that we report on the murder of labour rights activists in both Cambodia and the Philippines. This violence against those who have dared to speak up about the injustices faced by the women and men making the world's clothes has largely been met with impunity.

The CCC strongly condemns these recent events and continues to press the government of these two countries to take steps to end the violence. We urge you also to add your voices to the international campaigns denouncing the killings and calling for justice (for more information on how to take action, see page 18). Let these workers – and their governments – know that people around the world are aware of what has happened and do not accept that this is the way it has to be.

Several articles in this edition of the newsletter point to other issues that are growing concerns for industry-watchers who care about labour rights. For example, the alarming rate of workers who are employed not as permanent full-time workers, but instead temporarily, on a contract basis or informally with no contract at all. [See page 15 for more on the Ethical Trading Initiative's research findings which also documents this trend.] These workers are often excluded from the benefits that permanent workers are entitled to. In addition to job insecurity, their pay and hours are usually not in keeping with good standards. When pushing companies to ensure good conditions for all the workers in their supply chains, it's these workers, whose positions are most precarious, who need to be considered.

Workers' status should not effect the respect for their human rights in the workplace – whether “informal” workers or migrant workers (as are many of the young girls in the Chinese jeans factory documentary “China Blue”, discussed on page 10). And when factories close down – always a possibility in this

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

highly mobile sector – the responsibilities to those who gave them life do not end. A discussion of the issues that industry needs to face up to when considering shutting down a workplace appears on page 12.

If reading about these issues makes you want to do something to push for positive change, we encourage you to join our urgent action network, which regularly informs members of action they can take to help make a difference. To sign up, please visit our website: <http://www.cleanclothes.org/action/index.htm>.



As always, 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.



The CCC supports the international campaign to denounce the ongoing violence against labour rights activists in the Philippines.

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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News from the CCCs

Italy: CCC Stronger than Ever

In Italy, the coalition of organisations working on CCC issues has been steadily growing stronger. Within a year they have managed to double the number of organisations involved, prompting them to decide to be officially named a Clean Clothes Campaign (Campagna Abiti Puliti).

In a recent meeting with the national unions FILTEA-CGIL, FEMCA-CISL, and UILTA-UIL, it was agreed that the partnership between the campaign and the unions should be strengthened. They will be cooperating on training programmes for union members and NGO activists, as well as on jointly handling urgent appeals cases.

More support has come from an unexpected quarter: the media. Responding to an innovative offensive to gather more resources for the campaign, several magazines have agreed to give free advertising space. Undoubtedly this will make the CCC Italy even stronger.

For more on the Italian CCC, see www.abitipuliti.org



Christmas in Spain and Sweden

In Spain, on the night before January 6 children go to bed expecting Los Reyes Magos (The Three Wise Men) to bring them presents. But, if the children have been naughty during the year, the Three Wise Men may bring them nothing but coal.

Acting in the holiday spirit, the Campaña Ropa Limpia (CCC Spain) and the SETEM federation of international solidarity NGOs in Spain decided to organise the final leg of Los Reyes Magos' journey. It was also the moment to bring to a close the Spanish CCC's recent campaign "What lies behind Induyco's clothing?" aimed at Spain's principal clothing importer (see also CCC Newsletter No. 22).

On January 9, activists dressed up as the Three Wise Men delivered three gifts to the Induyco headquarters. One was a big postcard symbolising the number of signatures (over 5,500) collected during the campaign, another was the CCC code of conduct, and the third was a big bag of coal.

The day started with the press being invited to the Spanish CCC's office to meet the Wise Men and to board the campaign bus. First stop was a store selling Tintoretto and Síntesis clothing, to encourage the press to link these brands with their parent company Induyco. Then more stores were visited, where the Wise Men made further appearances and the Spanish CCC distributed leaflets and spoke to customers.

The Wise Men's journey finally ended at Induyco's headquarters. Unfortunately, they were not able to hand-deliver the gifts, as no Induyco representative was willing to receive them. The day ended with a press conference.



The Swedish CCC action card to raise awareness among Christmas shoppers conveyed the message "hard working conditions behind soft gifts".



On January 9, 2007 Spanish CCC activists dressed up as the Three Wise Men to deliver gifts to the Induyco headquarters.

Meanwhile in Sweden, the film "China Blue", a documentary about young migrant workers in a Chinese jeans factory (see also page 10), received good coverage in the media just before Christmas, prompting pressure on companies from the general public shopping for gifts. So, Rena Kläder (CCC Sweden) ran a brief campaign with the slogan "Hard Working Conditions behind Soft Christmas Gifts". Activists stood outside shopping centres in five cities and distributed action cards to passers-by. Visitors to the CCC website could also take action.

For more information on these and ongoing activities of these CCCs, see www.ropalimpia.org and www.renaklader.org

Netherlands: Green Light for Clean Clothes

The Schone Kleren Kampagne (CCC Netherlands) has started a new "Green Light for Clean Clothes" campaign signalling the go-ahead for "cleaner" workwear for public transport workers. The campaign launch took place at the Central Station in the city of Utrecht on December 20, 2006. Campaign leaflets and coffee was handed out to transport workers under the slogan "You can get fair uniforms as easy as you can get fair coffee, you just have to ask for it". Unlike fair clothes, fair coffee is now widely available in the Netherlands.

The campaign aims to raise awareness among public transport workers about the sourcing of their workwear and to generate a greater demand for the right to work in clothes where the labour rights of the workers who made them are assured. The CCC wants to get a commitment from Dutch public transport companies to buy "clean" workwear and to put more suppliers under pressure to join the Fair Wear Foundation (FWF).

The campaign is working with the FNV trade union, which has agreed to distribute campaign material. Other campaign activities will include presentations at Works Council meetings, a campaign bus tour to win the attention of a wider public, and meetings with public transport companies, their workwear suppliers and garment producers. An interactive web portal will be set up for buyers (possibly with translation into French and English). On this website corporate buyers can get technical information about how to buy 'clean' workwear and how they can formulate ethical demands in communication with suppliers.



A Dutch CCC activist talks with a bus driver during the December 2006 action to launch the "Green Light" campaign for ethically produced uniforms.

News from the CCCs

The campaign will organise a bus tour in May to draw extra attention to the campaign and to raise awareness among transport workers and buyers from workwear companies supplying the Dutch transit sector. A bus converted into a sweatshop will visit the headquarters of the most important public transport companies.

For more on the Dutch CCC's Green Light campaign see www.schonekieren.nl

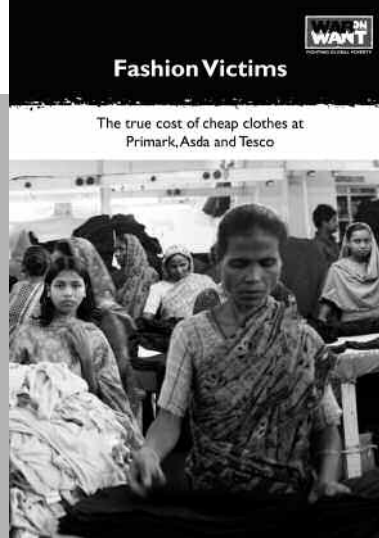
Sweden: Spotlight on Indiska

Following its work on the Swedish company H&M, the Swedish CCC (Rena Kläder) turned its attention to Indiska, a Swedish importer/retailer with 75 shops in Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland. In a report published in December 2006, the Swedish CCC says that Indiska has been successful when it comes to improving the visible working environment at its suppliers, but they have failed to implement workers' freedom of association and they do not pay a living wage.

Indiska has had a code of conduct since 1998 and has been doing social audits since 2003. The company does its own audits, however, and is not part of a multi-stakeholder initiative. The Swedish CCC is therefore recommending that Indiska starts working with other companies, unions and NGOs. At the time the report was written, Indiska had only one staff person working on these issues, and they did not indicate how their ethical activities have changed their buying practices. Compared to other Swedish retailers (apart from H&M), Indiska has made progress, but it still has a long way to go.

The report received extensive media coverage. All national newspapers and television stations carried something on it. In addition to the Swedish CCC's media efforts, one explanation was that Indiska had been highlighted a few months earlier in a documentary shown on Swedish TV about the garment industry in India, which is where Indiska sources.

The media blitz generated good public response. Many people telephoned, e-mailed, visited the Swedish CCC's homepage, and ordered action cards. Since the report, they have been contacted by a number of designers and smaller Swedish retailers. The Swedish CCC hopes that the report will generate further public awareness, and intends to follow up on Indiska's activities.



UK: "Let's Clean Up Fashion"

Following the publication of the booklet "Let's Clean Up Fashion" in September 2006, the UK CCC (Label Behind the Label) is continuing to focus on retailers in the UK who sell clothing at rock bottom prices. The campaign of the same name involves a coalition of organisations including War on Want, Tearfund, Ethical Consumer, No Sweat, Women Working Worldwide, the National Group on Homeworking, Central America Women's Network, Action Aid, Homeworkers Worldwide, and Community the Union.

A report published in December 2006 by UK CCC member organisation War On Want, called "Fashion Victims: the True Cost of Cheap Clothes at Primark, Asda and Tesco" received a great deal of media attention in the UK. The well-known TV comedy actress Meera Syal backed calls for regulation of these retailers, to make them shoulder their responsibilities for a living wage for the workers who make the clothes they sell.

The UK CCC has since developed the theme with the student campaign network People and Planet (P&P). P&P are broadening their trade campaign beyond fair trade to include workers' rights in the production of mass market clothing as well as environmental conditions in cotton fields. A P&P action day took place on 10 March targeting Primark, which specialises in cheap clothing. Leafleting and petition collection took place at stores around the country. In some towns, Primark responded by counter-leafleting with its own "ethical trading" policy but P&P said this only served to generate more interest among the public. The action got wide coverage in national and local news, but Primark refused to comment.

At the high end of the market, the UK CCC helped *The Ecologist* magazine produce a booklet for Estethica Fashion Week, the "ethical" bit of London Fashion Week, held in mid-February 2007. The UK CCC was also featured in the first edition of 2007 of the UK fashion industry journal *Drapers*, as one of the "Movers and Shakers of 2007".

For more on these activities see www.labourbehindthelabel.org, www.cleanupfashion.co.uk, www.waronwant.org/Fashion+Victims+13593.twl, and www.peopleandplanet.org/tradejustice/news/n3733



Frequently Asked Questions

Won't "clean clothes" be expensive?

No, clean clothes won't be more expensive. Sourcing companies may well say they will be, as a tactic to avoid implementing the labour standards that the CCC believes companies should meet and which are included in the CCC model code of conduct. But actually, this claim is ridiculous.

Total wages are never more than 5% of the total cost of an article of clothing. This means that, in an extreme scenario, if wages were to double and the cost of this was passed along to consumers, a pair of jeans that now costs 41 euros would then cost 43 euros. Also, there's certainly an argument that these costs should be borne not by consumers but by the brand name company or retailer who take the lion's share of the profit (at 33% and 50% respectively in the case of a sports shoe made in Indonesia, see "Price make-up of a 100 Euro shoe" at www.cleanclothes.org/faq/faq13.htm).

Beyond increasing wage levels just to a living wage, producers and their buyers should also bear the costs of better lighting and ventilation, meeting safety regulations, etc. But this still should not mean that "clean clothes" will be expensive to the consumer.

What seems like too low a wage for people in Northern countries may be okay in production countries, right? And they are paid the minimum wage!

The Clean Clothes Campaign doesn't consider a minimum wage to be enough as it is set at too low a level in some countries. We advocate a "living wage".

A living wage enables workers to meet their needs for nutritious food and clean water, shelter, clothes, education, health care, and transport, as well as allowing for some discretionary income. It should be enough to provide for the basic needs of workers and their families, to allow them to participate fully in society and live with dignity. It should take into account the cost of living, social security benefits, and the relative standards of other groups.

The CCC is in constant contact with partners in its network all over the world and therefore has up-to-date knowledge of wage standards and what those wages can buy in garment-producing countries. We don't compare our wages and inflation here with the situation of workers elsewhere.



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



Inside a National CCC: Switzerland



CCC-CH action targeting the brand PKZ in Zürich, April 14th 2005.

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, organisations in “consumer” countries where these garments are sold, an international secretariat (based in Amsterdam), and Clean Clothes Campaigns (CCCs) in ten 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, Italy, 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. Fourth in this series is the CCC in Switzerland: Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC-CH).

1999, a one-year campaign on the garment industry brought together the BD and two other organisations: Bread for All and Fastenopfer (Catholic Lenten Fund). It was a big budget campaign with a broad reach, and its postcard campaign was so successful that within one year the Swiss brands Migros, Switcher, and Veillon had agreed to adopt the CCC model code of conduct.

Since then BD has coordinated the CCC-CH. In addition to the core coalition of BD, Bread for All, and Fastenopfer, the CCC-CH has twenty other member organisations, including trade unions, plus some individuals. There is quite a strong link with church organisations. At least one platform meeting is organised each year, to discuss strategy and planning.

Switzerland is a country with two main languages: German and French. BD’s office in Lausanne coordinates CCC activities in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. The German and French language branches cooperate closely.

Focus on Swiss Companies

Lobbying companies to accept responsibility for working conditions in their supply chains has always been central to the work of CCC-CH. In 2000-2001, the CCC-CH joined with other CCCs in a campaign targeting Swiss-based Triumph (see www.cleanclothes.org/companies/triumph.htm). Triumph was then operating a factory in Burma, despite an international boycott called by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) because of that country’s extensive use of forced labour. BD created a motif of a barbed-wire bra, one that was used in many countries during the Triumph campaign. The campaign was successful and the factory closure was announced in January 2002, along with some CSR improvements for the other 35,000 workers in Triumph elsewhere.

CCC-CH

The CCC-CH is hosted by the Bern Declaration (BD) (or, in German, Erklärung von Bern, EvB), an organisation with its headquarters in Zürich. The BD campaigns on development issues, particularly the role of Swiss corporations, banks, and government agencies.

The BD started working on CCC-related issues as early as 1985, but things really got going in 1994, when a campaign on sports shoes was run with several other organisations. Then in

At about the same time, the CCC-CH focused on a pilot project on independent monitoring with three Swiss brands: Migros, Veillon, and Switcher. There were difficulties getting the first two companies to cooperate with the requirements of the project. However, Switcher did engage in monitoring and training in their supplier factories in a transparent manner. This pilot proved to be useful experience for a new initiative, the International Social Compliance Verification (ISCOM), which is a verification body for Swiss companies set up by Bread for All and the Catholic Lenten Fund.

For many years, the CCC-CH has published an overview of Swiss company performance. Since 2003, this has been done by means of a questionnaire sent out to companies. The resulting company scores were first published in the alternative fashion magazine *Prêt-à-Partager* in 2004, generating great interest from the media and the general public. This has also helped to push more companies in the direction of ISCOM.

From the beginning, the CCC-CH pushed for a strong link between ISCOM and a similar multi-stakeholder initiative in the Netherlands, the Fair Wear Foundation (FWF, www.fairwear.nl). On January 1, 2007, ISCOM became part of the FWF. Its member companies Switcher, Migros, and WWF Panda have been invited to join the FWF; so far Switcher has joined (see page 23).

In the summer of 2003, CCC-CH underwent a thorough evaluation. It was noted that the Swiss public and media are quite aware of the situation in garment factories. The campaign therefore now focuses not just on awareness-raising but on lobbying for more companies to get involved in participatory approaches to code verification, such as ISCOM and the Fair Wear Foundation. The CCC-CH also confronts companies and “shames” them if they are not prepared to acknowledge the standards that should and do exist.

The CCC-CH is well-known within the Swiss NGO-community. It has a good reputation, based upon what is seen as an impressive history, which also generates high expectations of what they can achieve. There are some other campaigns in Switzerland that similarly focus on company responsibility and working conditions in supply chains, for example the Multi-Watch campaign on Nestlé and the 2007 Lenten campaign on working conditions in the IT sector.

BD coordinates two other ongoing campaigns which have close similarities to the CCC-CH. One is aimed at improving working conditions in the toy industry and consists of a coalition of five organisations. The other is STEP, the campaign for better working conditions in the carpet sector. STEP is now part of Max Havelaar-CH; for the right to use this label participating producers have to be transparent and accountable, with verification by local groups. BD is also active in other networks such as Bank Track, Tax Justice, and Pesticide Action Network (PAN) as well as campaigns related to the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

What's Next?

Company evaluation – providing the public with information on Swiss brands' compliance with labour standards – and lobbying will remain at the core of CCC-CH activities. So, one priority will be to contribute actively to the building of a European database of company information, a project in which all CCCs will be sharing their knowledge.

The BD has long been involved in promoting fair trade, being the first organisation to bring fair trade coffee into the Swiss market. Now, the CCC-CH intends to promote organic cotton fashion, strengthening the mutual cooperation between the many fair trade organisations in Switzerland and the CCC.

Over the next few years, the CCC-CH expects to be fully involved in the two global campaigns that the CCC will be launching: the Play Fair campaign on the Olympics, and the Giants campaign on multiple product retailers.

A new area for which the CCC-CH would like to find resources is campaigning on ethical public procurement, something that other CCC groups are already working on. The CCC-CH hopes to become part of this exciting new movement and shake-up the Swiss public authorities.



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China Blue

Clandestine Film Tells it Like it Is

The documentary film "China Blue" gives an impressive and clandestine insight into the Chinese garment industry. It follows Jasmine, a fourteen-year-old girl, who leaves her village to find work in a jeans factory on China's east coast. Conditions in the factory are harsh. The young women workers have to work long hours of overtime to meet the deadlines. After months of employment, Jasmine still hasn't received any wages. Suffering from a chronic lack of sleep, she flees into her own fantasy world.

"China Blue" has won numerous awards since its launch in early 2006, notably the Doen/Amnesty Human Rights Award at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IFDA). Meanwhile, the China Film Bureau has put it on the list of films banned in the country. In September 2006 Chinese labour rights activists visited the CCCs in Austria, Belgium North, Belgium South, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden. Their tour coincided with the European release of "China Blue". In addition to organising screenings of the film the CCCs held panel discussions, press conferences, meetings, and seminars on working conditions in the Chinese garment industry, succeeding in reaching a wide audience, both via the media and the cinemas.

The film's director Micha X. Peled started out making movies for the US peace movement, and in 2000 made "Store Wars: When Wal-Mart Comes to Town". The story goes that he named his film company Teddy Bear Films so that if Wal-Mart were to sue him, the headlines would read "Wal-Mart Sues Teddy Bear". The Clean Clothes Campaign interviewed Peled during his visit to the Netherlands in September 2006.

CCC: What kind of documentary film did you want to make?

MP: I wanted to make one that clearly shows the effects of globalisation and gives the victims a face. "Made in China" is the most frequently used label. I wanted to show the reality behind this label. Of course the impact of globalisation can be seen all over the world. But, by focussing on production in China, nobody can deny the message of the movie – since we all wear clothes with the "Made in China" label on them.

CCC: Why did you choose a jeans factory?

MP: Jeans are a symbol of freedom, of a democratic lifestyle. Everybody likes jeans and everybody has them.

CCC: Chinese officials will not be pleased by the impression your film gives.

MP: The documentary was indeed made illegally. Shooting at production sites needs to be officially approved by the Chinese authorities; it is deemed "top secret". "China Blue" would obviously never pass Chinese censorship.



Filmmaker Micha Peled smuggled equipment into China to make his documentary about the lives of young garment workers.

Nor do the garment brands producing in China allow film shooting. All major brands put in their contracts that media in the factory is not allowed. So if they try to tell you that they are socially responsible I would ask: "What do you want to hide?" This is also the case for brands that pretend to be frontrunners and transparent, such as Nike.

So we smuggled the film equipment into China in parts, and approached the factory with the story that we wanted to make a documentary on young successful Chinese entrepreneurs. This convinced them.

CCC: Didn't the manager feel the need to hide some aspects of the production line?

MP: The manager was a former police officer. He was convinced that he runs a sound factory, which is true in some respects. In his factory, twelve women occupy one dormitory room with a toilet. Compare this to other factories where often forty women occupy a single dormitory room, with only one toilet at the end of the corridor. Imagine hundreds of people all getting up at the same time!

The documentary also shows workers from adjacent factories where we were not allowed to shoot. They told us they try to stay awake during the nightshift by clipping clothes pegs on their eyelids.

CCC: Doesn't the Chinese government do anything to improve working conditions?

MP: Theoretically workers' rights in China are quite good. There are ample laws to protect workers. But everybody knows practice is stubborn, slow to change. "China Blue" features an auditor telling how factory management in many ways deludes his team.

Good factory reports mean absolutely nothing. And there is of course the usual bribing and present-giving. When an auditor comes in, a pile of brand new jeans is waiting for him and his kids, all in the right sizes. In such an environment one can have the most beautiful legislation, but it will deliver nothing to the workers.

A unique moment in "China Blue" is the outbreak of a wildcat strike. This might well be the first time the Western public can witness a Chinese strike. For some of the factory girls it's the limit: when the salaries are finally paid, the wages of new workers like Jasmine are still withheld.

CCC: Didn't the workers feel exploited?

MP: I did not have the impression that the workers felt exploited by the system. They felt screwed when management breaks its promises and does not pay sufficient wages. The payment procedure is very unclear; there are all kinds of deductions for food, for the compulsory identity card, for falling asleep during work, etc.

CCC: Do you think "China Blue" will raise awareness among the Western public?

MP: So far the movie has been screened in sixteen countries and everywhere the reaction of the public was the same: "What can I do?" I hope NGOs like the Clean Clothes Campaign will use the documentary as a tool to inform the public about the problems in the garment industry.

CCC: How can labour conditions in Chinese garment factories be changed?

MP: Local organisations should be involved in audits, organisations that know the local customs. I would not ask for a boycott of Chinese products but, if you want to produce ethically, China is not an optimal choice.

The best opportunity to improve working conditions is producing in your own factories. This may sound ridiculous now, but keep in mind it is only five years ago that Levi's closed its last factory and completely shifted to outsourcing. This way, it has become "normal" in the garment industry to shirk your responsibilities.



CCC: What can consumers do?

MP: Major brands don't think consumers care but, if 20% want to buy ethically-produced clothes, that is already a very big niche market that brands will want to serve. Consumers have to express that they want their normal, regular clothes to be "clean".

Now, the big brands tell you that sweatshop-free apparel costs a lot of money. But how much will it really cost? Say the workers earn \$1 on the jeans you buy. Let's double their salary and add maybe another dollar for verification. So for a couple of dollars more you can have sweatshop-free clothes. It doesn't break the bank.



China Blue

Directed by Micha X. Peled
Produced by Teddy Bear Films
DVD, 88 minutes
www.teddybearfilms.com

How to order a copy of "China Blue":

The film can be purchased for personal use only and for use by "activist groups and religious organisations". For prices e-mail: chinablue@bullfrogfilms.com or see www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/china.html.

China Blue Study Guide

16-page study guide to use in facilitating discussions with groups after viewing the film.
By Eli D. Friedman, Department of Sociology, University of California at Berkeley.
www.bullfrogfilms.com/guides/chinaguide.pdf

Abandoned time card rack at PT Dae Joo Leports factory in Indonesia. More than 1,000 workers who made backpacks for VF and adidas lost their jobs when the factory shut down after production shifted to China.



Factory Closures:

Where's the CSR?

In 2006, the end of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA) really began to be felt. Now that these trade rules and quotas for the international garment sector were phased out, there were fewer incentives for brand name companies to source from particular countries. Their suppliers started closing down factories and ending contracts with subcontractors, shifting production to take advantage of cheaper costs elsewhere. Particularly badly hit were certain poor developing countries that had previously benefited from quotas for their garment exports.

But what were the companies' responsibilities to those they were leaving behind – particularly to the workers and communities who had become dependent on jobs in garment factories? In all these factory exits and closures, where was the "corporate social responsibility"? In 2006, this became a major preoccupation of trade unions and labour rights organisations, at the local and international levels.

Before the demise of the import quota system at the end of 2004, there had been some ideas but little action to mitigate the negative impact that this change would have on the industries and workers of certain developing countries. Governments, national garment industries, trade unions, and labour rights NGOs were generally unprepared. They were not in a position to challenge the restructuring of the global brands, retailers, and manufacturers. Rather, the response to closures was on a factory-by-factory basis.

Buyer Responsibilities

What might buyer responsibilities be in relation to factory closures, whether they are attributable to the MFA phase-out or not? One set of ideas was laid out in the "Collaborative Framework" of the MFA Forum (for more on the Forum, see page 23):

- Where feasible, maintain current country supply base and contain consolidation in-country;
- Monitor supplier adherence to payment of legally required social security/pension benefits;

- Prioritise employment opportunities for displaced workers in remaining garment and textile factories;
- Ensure that displaced workers received their full legal severance and other benefits;
- Seek to source from countries that support core labour standards;
- Source only from suppliers that provide decent work; and
- Align purchasing practices with labour standards compliance.

Certainly if all buyers implemented such principles the damaging effects of factory closures would be limited¹. Yet it is clear that the brands, retailers, and manufacturers have taken little notice of such a list as they shift their production. At most, brands and retailers prefer to talk in terms of humanitarian efforts to assist workers displaced by factory closures, rather than their own responsibilities to those workers and their communities.

But can exiting a factory and leaving workers and a community without viable alternatives – merely because bigger profits or market share can be achieved by producing elsewhere – ever be considered responsible or ethical? Shouldn't there be incentives or disincentives to motivate companies to act responsibly towards affected workers or communities? After all, didn't the workers themselves provide incentives to attract foreign investors in the first place?

Much more could be done to avoid closures by embracing responsible sourcing strategies, which need to address issues of pricing and lead-time as well as sourcing location.



Three years earlier, a similar campaign had helped to resolve a long and bitter dispute between factory management and the union. This led to a collective agreement being signed, and a new era of constructive labour-management relations at the Gina factory.

However, when the Clover Group decided to consolidate production in fewer facilities in 2006, it was the unionised Thai factory that was sacrificed, and buyers were either unwilling or unable to stop it from happening.

For more information on this case and CCC efforts to support the Gina workers, see www.cleanclothes.org/urgent/06-10-04.htm

Hermosa – El Salvador

The closure of the Hermosa factory in El Salvador highlights whether international buyers have a responsibility to ensure that workers receive their legal severance pay, outstanding wages, overtime pay, and health benefits, and to help with finding alternative employment opportunities when a supplier fails on its legal obligations.

Many buyers that had been sourcing from Hermosa were willing to work together to try to convince the factory owner to fulfill his legal obligations to the workers. However, they did too little, too late, and the owner failed to respond. They asked the Salvadoran government to enforce its laws, and to hold job fairs for the former Hermosa employees, but no jobs were found. What they were very reluctant to do was themselves compensate the workers for monies owed, for fear it might set a precedent for future cases.

The debate around factory closures is an ongoing and important one, as the industry remains mobile and workers suffer as a result – it is a given that this will be followed up with demands posed to industry on various levels by rights activists.

Examples of Corporate Social Irresponsibility

The CCC, Maquila Solidarity Network (MSN) in Canada, and Oxfam Australia have been tracking how well big buyers and producers are meeting their responsibilities towards workers and communities affected by their restructuring. Here are three examples of cases involving factory closures, all of which tell a sorry tale of CSI: “Corporate Social Irresponsibility”.

Gina Form Bra – Thailand

Factory workers and their union, backed by a major international campaign, engaged in determined efforts to stop the closure of the unionised Gina Form Bra factory in Bangkok, Thailand. High-profile brands came under a lot of pressure. Nevertheless, in October 2006, the Hong Kong-based Clover Group closed the factory and shifted production to China.

The campaign, and the intervention of the brand buyers, did achieve better than usual severance pay for the laid-off workers. But it was unsuccessful in protecting the workers’ jobs or their union.

Eventually, some buyers did agree to contribute to a special “emergency fund” set up by the Fair Labor Association (FLA). However, by the end of 2006, total contributions only reached \$36,000 – 4% of the \$825,000 owed to the 260 workers who lost their jobs, or only 20% of what was owed to a smaller group of 63 workers who had been actively organising and pursuing remediation. On December 29, 2006, \$33,000 was distributed to 57 of those 63 workers.

The CCC responded:

“While happy that the organised workers have received some relief during the holiday season, we are disappointed that the fund the FLA established is not intended to reimburse workers what they are legally owed, but consciously framed as a humanitarian aid gesture. It does not acknowledge that brands share responsibility for the current situation, where workers who for years were making their clothes are owed large sums of money. We’re also very disappointed that the initial amount distributed ... is so small compared to the amount legally owed to the workers.”

The last word should go to the workers in question. In a statement released on December 20, 2006, they said that they were willing to accept the offer “although it does not reflect in any way the hardships we have lived during this period, and it is not an indication of the goodwill of the brands in supporting our struggle. Rather, it is a reaction to our pressure and struggle against so many injustices. The amount, in our view, is



Workers from the Gina Form factory at one of many demonstrations in Bangkok in 2006. Despite their efforts to keep their workplace open, in the end the factory shut down and production was relocated to China.

miserable compared to the profits that the brands make based on the sacrifice of workers and on violations of human and labor rights.”

For more information on this case and ongoing CCC efforts to support the Hermosa workers, see www.cleanclothes.org/urgent/07-01-03.htm.

adidas-Reebok – Indonesia

Recent closures of sports shoe factories in Indonesia cannot be attributed to the end of garment import quotas. Yet the same questions of brand responsibility apply.

In November 2006, the PT Spotec and PT Dong Joe factories located in Tangerang, west of the capital Jakarta, closed, leaving a total of 10,500 workers without jobs. A third factory, PT Tong Yang, in the Bekasi industrial area to the east and employing over 9,000 workers, is also threatened with closure.

PT Dong Joe and PT Tong Yang had at least a 15-year relationship with Reebok, and then adidas when the two companies merged. PT Spotec has been producing for adidas for five years.

Adidas alleges that the closures are because all three suppliers have “huge and unsustainable debts due to gross financial mismanagement” but has provided no evidence to back this claim, according to Kelly Dent of Oxfam Australia. Trade unions at the three factories say, by contrast, that the debts are the result of upgrading of infrastructure that was carried out at the request of adidas, though adidas denies this.

For Dent, it is likely that adidas’ buying practices are one of the main reasons the factories had to close. Oxfam Australia is calling on adidas to work with all parties to find a way of allowing the PT Spotec and PT Dong Joe factories to re-open, and to increase orders at PT Tong Yang to full capacity so that it can continue operating.

“If that proves impossible, then adidas and factory management should ensure that these workers receive their full legal entitlements”, says Dent. “Adidas should also relocate the orders to other supplier factories in Indonesia, rather than to factories in other countries, and the company should take

concrete action to ensure that those workers who have lost their jobs are offered jobs in other adidas and Reebok supplier factories in Indonesia”.

William Anderson, adidas’ head of social and environmental affairs for the Asia Pacific Region, has replied that, as the adidas Group is not the employer, it has no legal obligation to the laid-off workers. “However, given the scale of these closures, and the hardship and insecurity being faced by the workers and their families, we have taken steps to help”, he says. This consists of funding of medical coverage for the workers and their families, and a request to the Indonesian government to “institute emergency measures to help the workers”. Anderson also reports approaches to other adidas suppliers, asking them “to consider applicants from these closed factories wherever there are job openings”.

Dialogue with stakeholders continues in these cases; for upcoming action requests see www.cleanclothes.org and www.oxfam.org.au.



¹ Note that though the MFA Forum foresees furthering this agenda through country-level program work (Bangladesh, Lesotho, Morocco, Mexico), it does not tie its member companies into any specific program of action. The Forum also does not oversee or verify the implementation of the principles mentioned in its “Collaborative Framework” in any way.

This article is adapted from “Are There Rules for Restructuring?” from the *Codes Memo*, No. 21, February 2007, published by the Maquila Solidarity Network. For more on factory closures as well as a broader discussion of the limits of CSR initiatives, please read the full text at: www.maquilasolidarity.org/resources/codes/pdf/codes_memo21.pdf.



Former outdoor eating area at garment factory, Indonesia.

“Do workers really benefit?”

The ETI Assesses its Impact

A three-year study to assess the impact of the code of conduct of one of the main multi-stakeholder initiatives active in the garment industry found that years of work with member companies has yielded some positive benefits for workers. Unfortunately, reaching all workers and making progress on important labour standards covered by the code, such as freedom of association, remains problematic.

The good news from the impact assessment study commissioned by the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) is that there has been progress in achieving healthier and safer conditions for the garment industry workplaces examined.

However, the study reveals the huge use of casual and informal workers, who are largely unaffected by any improvements, especially in getting a “living wage”. The fundamental rights of workers to join a union and negotiate collectively with employers are still far from respected. In other areas too, including discrimination and harassment, there has been little progress.

This brief summary highlights some of the findings of the ETI study, which will certainly be of interest to many readers who have also wondered about the positive impact of codes of labour standards. For more detailed information on the findings we encourage readers to see the study itself, available at www.ethicaltrade.org/Z/lib/2006/09/impact-report/index.shtml.

About the ETI

The Ethical Trading Initiative is a “multi-stakeholder initiative” – an alliance of companies, unions, and NGOs – set up in the UK in 1998. The ETI aims “to bring the combined knowledge and influence of relevant NGOs and the international trade union movement to work alongside these companies in identifying and promoting good practice in code implementation”. The ETI is active in the garment industry, but in other sectors as well.

The ETI has 29 member companies, retailers, and suppliers who sell clothing, food and other products in the UK market. Members in the garment sector include Gap, Inditex, Monsoon, New Look, Next, and Pentland; retailers include Debenhams, Marks & Spencers, Sainsbury, and Tesco.

Trade unions involved in the ETI are three of the Global Unions¹ and the British Trades Union Congress. There are 17 NGOs in the ETI. Some UK CCC member organisations are involved, though the UK CCC (Labour Behind the Label) itself is not a member.

When they join the ETI, companies commit to putting the ETI Base Code standards into their own codes of conduct, and then implementing them in their supply chains. Altogether, over

20,000 supplier companies – involving as many as three million people – now fall under the scope of the ETI.

The Scope of the Study

The ETI wanted to know: how exactly have member companies put this commitment into practice? Has their work on implementing the code really made any difference to workers, and if so, how? Do some approaches to implementation work better than others? How can impact be improved? To get answers to these questions the ETI commissioned the Institute of Development Studies in the UK to carry out an impact assessment study, which got underway in 2003.

Over 400 workers from 23 supplier sites around the world were interviewed; including permanent, migrant, and contract workers. Others interviewed included retailers, brands, agents, factory and farm managers, and unions and NGOs at international and national level. In-depth research was carried out on the activities of 11 member companies in five key sourcing countries. Case studies focussing on the garments and footwear sector were done in India and Vietnam.

India: 85% non-regular workers

The researchers looked at six suppliers in the Delhi garment sector, all 100% export-oriented, supplying up to 30 buyers each, including seven ETI member companies. They interviewed 150 of the 5,100+ total workforce, local unions, and NGOs. Workers’ opinions were gathered through interviews and on-site focus groups and, crucially, in their communities. For the employers, they spoke with supplier management, intermediaries, and ETI companies.

Health and safety was the area of greatest positive impact, with more fire exits, better ventilation and lighting, and so on. However, it turned out that positive changes applied mostly to the 15% of the workers who were regular/permanent workers.

Eighty-five percent of employees were either temporary or contract workers hired through third-party contractors. Researchers concluded that codes have done little to address the lack of regular employment.

Contract workers told of delays in wage payments and not receiving entitlements to state benefits; some are rotated between factories so that they do not become entitled. “Codes had done little to ensure payment of a living wage,” according to the study, and some workers are not even paid a minimum wage. Workers believe there is double bookkeeping, with a separate record kept for buyers and inspectors that indicates that workers receive benefits when actually they don’t.



Illustration: Michaël Pattiruhu

By and large, only permanent workers were aware of codes and then “did not seem aware that codes applied to management”. However, there was more awareness of labour legislation. One manager spoke of a deterioration in the relationship with workers due to code compliance because of “workers becoming more aware of their rights”. In none of the factories was there a union, however. All had “workers’ committees” but the nature of these is not specified, apart from not including non-regular workers. Workers reported lay-offs when managers noticed increased worker solidarity.

Suppliers experienced a wide range of monitoring activities. In the case of ETI companies, they seemingly announced their visits to the factory in advance, unlike some others.

All suppliers “expressed a growing concern that buyers were demanding adherence to standards, but were unwilling to reflect that in the prices they were prepared to pay”. Two called it a “contradiction”; one called it “hypocrisy”. They said effective implementation lay instead in “investment in a long-term, profitable business relationship with the buyers”.

Vietnam: Codes or Union Activity?

The Vietnamese study covered eight garment and footwear factories, supplying nine ETI member companies. But it was difficult to get some to participate; several gave contradictory information; and the researchers suggest “some use of double books”. At two, only managers were interviewed “as they did not want workers to be interviewed”. Others approached included representatives of ETI companies, two UK importers, Vietnamese government officials, the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour, international NGOs, CSR consultancies, and research institutes.

Altogether 102 workers were involved in focus group discussions and short structured interviews. Seventy-three percent were women and 69% on “fixed-term contracts of at least one year”, reflecting the composition of the workforce.

Again, “the only area of widespread positive impact was health and safety”. At two sites, however, workers said some improvements such as protective glasses were only for when buyers visit.

Working hours had been reduced, however, “there had not been any increases in basic wage rates as a result of buyer codes”. So, some were unhappy with the loss of hours, needing to do overtime to make ends meet.

Union representatives in two factories said they were more active as a direct result of buyer interest in labour practices. They, and managers, said more notice was being taken of the law, but also the unions felt more confident. In two others, the union was active in channelling complaints to management. In three, the union focused on social activities. Five factories had complaints boxes but workers said they were little used.

Two suppliers were now giving detailed payslips; two were complying with legislation on annual leave, maternity leave, and childcare entitlement. One gave more detailed contracts, (though two still gave no written contracts). However, there was a question mark over whether such improvements were due to codes or to greater trade union activity. In one factory, workers thought they were because there had been a strike. The researchers note that an ILO training programme for trade unionists would also be having an impact.

Only in two factories did the researchers find workers familiar with labour laws or codes. In one, they were shown a video prior to signing their employment contract, because the buyer requested it; in another they received a booklet on labour law, indirectly linked to codes.

As in India, in Vietnam, “Almost all management said it was hard to comply with code requirements due to short lead times and inflexible deadlines”. While brands had a more holistic approach to code implementation, “all companies had minimal integration of ethical trade with core business, rarely going beyond including compliance as a condition of doing business”.

Factors in Achieving Positive Change

The study says that over the years nearly all ETI suppliers had been informed that they were expected to comply with a code, and around 9,000 had been assessed for compliance at one time or another.

Positive change was found where ETI companies, their agents, and suppliers keep up communications about ethical trade; where there is regular assessment and feedback to supplier management; and where there is training for workers and supervisors on codes, and they have “multiple channels” for reporting non-compliance.

Improvements are more likely where there are direct and stable relationships between buyers and suppliers. In complex supply chains, unreliable attitudes among individual suppliers and agents come into play. Also, "the use of individual company codes instead of one common code and a lack of coordination between buying companies currently undermines this potential".

But, overall, it is the downward pressure on prices and lead times that most limit suppliers' ability to improve their labour practices, according to the study.

The main recommendations are:

- **Work collaboratively to maximise potential:** More coordinated activities among ETI member companies, such as joint training for workers and suppliers; code harmonisation; more collaboration with others such as the Joint Initiative on Corporate Responsibility and Workers' Rights (JO-IN).
- **Extend the reach of codes to all workers:** "More emphasis needs to be placed on more challenging aspects of employment, especially freedom of association and discrimination, and extending the reach of codes to all workers – particularly to migrant and contract workers". Brands and retailers should "develop a strategic approach" to these issues and ensure suppliers understand that the ETI Base Code applies to all workers. Auditing companies need to get better at assessing these aspects too, and interview all categories of workers, including contract workers. Governments should ensure the right to freedom of association.

The ETI commented, "We were not surprised to find in IDS' report that codes are bringing little benefit to the most vulnerable workers – for example, migrant and casual workers... What shocked us was the scale of the problem". They have made a commitment to do more.

- **Shift the focus of the ETI to sourcing countries:** The ETI has recruited a full-time representative in China and plans to have one in India during 2007.
- **Make ethical trade more central to core business practice:** Brands and retailers need to review their business practices to make sure they do not undermine compliance with the ETI Base Code; they could also provide incentives, such as preferential status, to suppliers that do comply.

The report authors also suggest that unions and NGOs could do more to raise awareness among consumers and investors of the negative consequences for workers of low-priced goods, and the need to use their purchasing power positively.



¹ The International Trade Union Confederation, ITUC; the International Textile Garment and Leather Workers Federation, ITGLWF; and the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations, IUF

Reflecting Upon the Study Findings

The ETI is to be commended for undertaking such a rigorous and independent impact assessment. After a decade of MSIs, it is crucial that others do the same. An even better study would be achieved, however, by asking questions further down the supply chain too, to get input from subcontracted factory workers and homeworkers.

Some outcomes are hardly surprising, for example, the low level of workers' awareness of codes. Other conclusions were perhaps less predictable, such as the improvements in health and safety standards, and in hours and wages for some. The study makes clear why some of these improvements were only achieved on a limited scale, for example codes had less of a positive impact on the payment of a minimum wage when workers were contract workers. This points to important areas for follow-up.

The study makes specific recommendations for companies, unions, NGOs, governments, and the ETI itself on how to enhance impact. If all these were implemented, no doubt more workers would see their rights met. The CCC and other labour groups can and should make use of these recommendations by holding ETI members and others accountable to them.

The need for brands/retailers to change their pricing and lead time practices towards their suppliers is mentioned – a pressing issue in the view of the CCC – however it is not clear how the ETI will encourage this. Brand/retailer profit margins are left untouched – a fundamental aspect that should be part of any lasting solution.

For now, it is not clear if the ETI itself will take on a stronger role in making their members live up to the agenda for ethical trade that they have developed. Will they, for example, set entry-requirements for companies that wish to join the ETI? Will there be stronger performance requirements for members, using the recommendations as benchmarks? Now that the ETI has a large base of non-UK companies, will it involve also non-UK based NGOs and additional trade unions? Will transparency be enhanced, allowing non-ETI members access to information provided by individual ETI company members so that comparisons are possible?

Urgent Appeals



March 26, 2007 demonstration at the office of the Philippine Economic Zone Authority to demand an end to the ongoing violence against workers and labour rights activists.

Sri Lanka: Disappearances on the Rise

Posters depicting trade union leaders as traitors and terrorists have appeared across Sri Lanka, calling for their arrest. Union leaders have been receiving death threats. Some have been abducted.

On February 6, three Railway Workers' Union members were abducted in the capital city of Colombo by unknown groups. They are now in government custody, held on suspicion of "collaborating with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam insurgents". Key trade union activists who participated in a protest rally outside the main railway station the day after the abductions have been publicly accused of being "covert terrorist operatives".

Those targeted include Anton Marcus of the Free Trade Zone and General Services Employees' Union (FTZGSEU). The FTZGSEU is affiliated to the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation and is a CCC partner. In October 2006, the FTZGSEU signed a collective bargaining agreement with Polytex Garment, the first in their history with a company outside the Free Trade Zones.

Others under threat are leaders of the Health Sector Trade Union Alliance, the Joint Railway Trade Union Alliance, and the Ceylon Teachers' Union. On February 21, 2007, the unions lodged complaints with the police, seeking protection for their lives and their right to continue their trade union activities. To date, law enforcement authorities have failed to take measures to guarantee their safety.

The spread of this gross abuse of human rights to the Sri

Lankan trade union movement reflects their strengthened position at present. In recent months the cost of living has increased enormously and there is high discontent among the working population, with many threats of strikes.


The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) warns that in Sri Lanka disappearances are now being used to deal with political opponents and trade unionists. The AHRC reports that one government minister recently wrote to the president expressing concern that a disappearance now takes place every five hours in Sri Lanka. Yet the government has taken no significant action to bring them to a halt.

The CCC has asked supporters to write to the president of Sri Lanka, urging him to take immediate measures to guarantee the safety of all trade unionists under threat and ensure an environment which is free of intimidation and is conducive to a normal development of trade union activities.

To take action in support of trade union rights in Sri Lanka, see www.cleanclothes.org/urgent/07-03-06.htm.

Philippines: Violence Continues

The Philippines is also experiencing ongoing political violence against labour organisers. According to the Ecumenical Institute for Labor Education and Research, 151 political activists were killed in 2005, of whom 31 were leaders,



organisers, or activists of trade unions and poor urban communities. Then, during the first four months of 2006, military, para-military, or police agents were suspected of killing five more workers.

The Cavite Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) is one of the violent areas. On April 28, 2006 labour leader Gerardo Cristobal was ambushed by armed men later identified as operatives of police intelligence in Imus, Cavite. Cristobal had received repeated threats to his life. In the ambush, he suffered gunshot wounds to his stomach, hip, and hand; two bullets remain lodged near his spinal column. The head of the police intelligence operatives in Imus later tried to blame Cristobal for starting the gunfight, but there has been no independent investigation.

Almost six months later, Bishop Alberto Ramento, a workers' rights defender and chairman of the board of the Workers Assistance Center (WAC) in the Cavite Zone, was stabbed to death in his church in Tarlac City. The bishop had been actively supporting the workers of Cavite since 1998. He had strongly criticised the ongoing extra-judicial killings of activists and was said himself to be on the military's Order of Battle, or hit list. The WAC has said it firmly believes that Bishop Ramento was murdered because of his vocal and unyielding political support for the poor.

Meanwhile, there have been repeated reports of the police of the Cavite Export Processing Zone and private security guards using excessive force against protesting workers. Despite the serious allegation of abuses, no one has been punished.

Early in January 2006, a three-month pregnant woman had a miscarriage and two other workers suffered serious injuries after they were violently dispersed from a picket line in front of Chunji International garment factory. The workers were attempting to prevent the Korean owner from shipping out equipment after the illegal closure of the factory, when severance payments and unpaid benefits were still due to the workers. On February 21, 2006, the workers filed charges of physical injuries and unintentional abortion against the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA), police, and security guards attached to Jantro Security Agency Guard. Chunji was producing for US companies, including retailers Wal-Mart and K-Mart.

During two strikes at Chong Won Fashion and Phils Jeon Garments, strikers have on several occasions reportedly been hit on the head with clubs and kicked. The Chong Won workers, on strike since late September 2006, have permission to strike under Department of Labor and Employment regulations. But food, water, and clothing deliveries to them have been blocked and their makeshift tents dismantled. At least 50 union members were injured following the violent dispersals. The protesters cannot leave the zone for fear of not being readmitted; others were prevented from entering. They have been threatened with blacklisting from every factory in the zone.

The Workers' Assistance Center says there is evidence that at Chong Won, where production was for Wal-Mart, management

has harassed and discriminated against union members, pressured workers to sign statements against the union, illegally fired two union leaders, and issued dismissal letters to 116 union members involved in a legal strike. They say managers called in the police to escort scabs into the factory, which then led to police assaults on the strikers. This is confirmed in a report by the Worker Rights Consortium (see www.workersrights.org/Freports/Chong_Won_Report_2-21-07.pdf).

In the case of Phils Jeon Garments, another Korean-owned garment factory in the Cavite EPZ, the lawfully elected union met a similar refusal by managers to start CBA negotiations, who instead questioned the legitimacy of the union. Phils Jeon was producing for US companies such as DKNY, Byford, Dream Station, Bobson, Hanes, and CNI Los Angeles. The Phils Jeon union has been demonstrating daily since July 2006. On August 12, union President Emmanuel Bautista was illegally dismissed, falsely accused of serious misconduct. By September 25, the Phils Jeon workers were also on strike.

On March 26, 2007, the striking workers at both factories renewed their protest actions by increasing the numbers on their picket lines. They want to highlight the role played by both the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) in turning a blind eye to the continuing atrocities and gross violations of labor rights committed against them.

To send a letter to the Philippine authorities in support of labour rights activists and striking workers, see www.cleanclothes.org/urgent/07-04-04.htm.

Cambodia: "They Need Justice"

On February 24, 2007, Hy Vuthy, president of the Free Trade Union of Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia (FTUWKC) affiliate at the Suntex garment factory in Phnom Penh's Dangkao district, was shot dead while riding his motorbike home after the night shift. The murder was reportedly carried out by two men on a motorbike.

According to local organisations, the 36-year-old union leader had received telephone death threats. Serious concerns remain about the safety of his wife and two young children, who were forced to flee after their home was pelted with rocks and later surrounded by a group on motorbikes.

Hy Vuthy was killed shortly after successfully negotiating a one-day holiday for Suntex workers for the Khmer New Year. The Suntex factory is owned by the Singapore-based Ocean Sky group, which reportedly produces for export, mainly to the United States for Gap. The company also names Sears, K-Mart, Eddie Bauer, Carters, Liz Claiborne, Phillips Van Heusen, Foot Locker, The Children's Place, Walt Disney, Primark, and Miles as among its customers.

Urgent Appeals

Sadly, this is not a lone case of violence against Cambodian workers seeking to exercise their rights to organise. In May, June, and July 2006 several unionists at the Bright Sky factory were attacked and one worker was shot.

In a well-known case, Chea Vichea, president of the FTUWKC, was shot dead in January 2004 while reading a newspaper at a roadside newsstand in Phnom Penh. Chea Vichea was well-known for fighting for better pay and conditions for Cambodian garment workers. He had received death threats but was denied police protection; police officers suggested instead that he leave the country because "a high-ranking government official wanted him killed".

To mark the third anniversary of the murder in January 2007, the FTUWKC renewed its calls for the release of two men it says were falsely convicted of his killing, and urged the government to launch a new, unbiased investigation.

Two men — Born Samnang and Sok Sam Oeun — were arrested for Chea Vichea's murder just days after the shooting and later were sentenced to 20 years in prison. However, the investigation and trial have been widely condemned as seriously flawed. Numerous reports state that Born Samnang was 60 kilometers away at the time of the murder.

The then Special Representative of the United Nations' Secretary General for Human Rights in Cambodia, Peter Leuprecht, denounced the criminal investigation and the court hearings as lacking any credibility. Amnesty International, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), and Human

Rights Watch have called for the release of the two men and a new investigation to bring the real killers to justice.

An appeals court upheld the convictions in April 2007, however the procedures were irregular and the campaign for their release continues. New evidence available includes a statement from the newsstand owner that the two convicted men bear no resemblance to the real killer, who visited her a month after the killing. Fearing for her life, she fled to Thailand.

A few months after Chea Vichea was killed, Ros Sovannareth, president of the FTUWKC-affiliated Trinungal Komara Garment Factory trade union, was also murdered. Then Luen Thai, president of another FTUWKC-affiliated union, was brutally attacked after attempting to organise a strike.

In 2005, Chea Mony, the younger brother of Chea Vichea and now the president of the FTUWKC, was arrested without charge by police. Though eventually released, another arrest warrant, charging him with libel against the government, was issued while he was out of the country, forcing him to remain in exile for a period.

For more information on the challenges facing those who seek to exercise trade union rights in Cambodia, see "Cambodia: Annual Survey of Trade Union Rights, 2006", available at www.ictu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991223973&Language=EN.

To add your signature to the CCC's online petition to Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, demanding the release of the two men unjustly imprisoned for the murder of Chea Vichea and requesting a new investigation into his killing, see www.cleanclothes.org/urgent/07-02-08.htm. Letters protesting the murder Hy Vuthy can also be sent from the CCC's website; see <http://www.cleanclothes.org/urgent/07-03-14.htm>, which also includes information on how to contribute to a support fund to ensure the safety of his widow and children.



Chea Vichea,
President of FTUWKC
Assassinated
January 22, 2004



Ros Sovannareth
Local President of FTUWKC
Assassinated
May 7, 2004



Hy Vuthy
Local President of FTUWKC
Assassinated
February 24, 2006



The CCC is circulating this action card to put pressure on Dutch jeans company G-Star to take action to improve conditions at FFI, one of its suppliers in India.

India: SA8000 Certification Queried after Gag Order

Fibres and Fabrics International (FFI), and its 100% subsidiary Jeans Knit (JKPL), both based in Bangalore, India, produce jeans for well-known brands such as G-Star, Armani, Gap, Ann Taylor, and Mexx. Workers' testimonies, collected by the local Garment and Textile Workers' Union (GATWU), document wide-ranging violations of workers' rights and human rights in FFI and JKPL during 2005 and 2006. The violations included harassment and abuse of workers, arbitrary termination of services without due legal process, and absence of proper safety measures. An independent fact-finding committee consisting of local human rights organisations and social activists has backed these claims.

However, instead of seriously engaging with these local stakeholders to improve working conditions, FFI and JKPL sought to gag them through a court order, alleging "slander". On July 28, 2006, and without seeking any input from the defendants, the City Civil Court of Bangalore issued a restraining order against GATWU, the union federation NTUI (New Trade Union Initiative) to which GATWU is affiliated, the labour rights NGO Cividep, and the Women Garment Workers Front Munnade. After several postponements, a first hearing for the defendants took place on December 15, 2006. However, despite their arguments concerning the fundamental rights of workers to form associations and freely express their opinions, the Court prolonged the gagging order until August 2007, when hearings will be resumed.

Meanwhile, as this case was unfolding the FFI/JKPL production units were audited for compliance with Social Accountability International's SA8000 standard; between October and December 2006 four of the five units were granted certification.

The CCC believes that with the restraining order in place, no meaningful consultation with local stakeholders could possibly have taken place, something that is required by the SAI standards for certification. Therefore the CCC, together with the India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN), officially filed a complaint with SAI on November 29, 2006, challenging their certification of the FFI/JKPL facilities. As this edition of the newsletter went to press, SAI indicated that unless FFI took steps to lift the gag order SAI certification of their production units would be suspended.

The CCC has also repeatedly called upon the companies sourcing from FFI/JKPL to adhere to their commitment to the right to organise and push for the withdrawal of the court order. Until now, the companies have responded in various ways, from starting remediation of violations with FFI management, to not responding at all. However, no local organisations have been involved in any remediation plans, making credible verification of improvements at FFI/JKPL impossible. There have been no improvements in the right to organise at FFI, and this is at the heart of the problem there. The effect of recent efforts by some brands to approach FFI management jointly with an urgent request to meet with local labour organisations to normalise labour relations, is not yet clear.

To contact FFI/JKPL management and the brands sourcing there, to urge them to remove the gagging order against workers' rights groups in Bangalore, and to start serious remediation of the violations of workers' rights there, see www.cleanclothes.org/urgent/07-01-10.htm



In Brief



Introducing: The European Coalition for Corporate Justice (ECCJ)

"It is time," says the ECCJ, "for companies to be responsible and accountable ...They are rarely held to account for the abuses they commit in damaging the environment, harming local communities, and forcing workers to accept unfair conditions and/or salaries. We are convinced that legally enforceable mechanisms based on internationally agreed standards and principles in the areas of human, social and environmental rights are necessary..."

The ECCJ, launched in 2005, is an initiative bringing together 16 member organisations from across Europe on the question of corporate responsibility and accountability. They include "corporate watch" groups, environmentalists, development groups, and a trade union. A number are also CCC member organisations. The CCC International Secretariat has also provided considerable input for a recent ECCJ position paper.

Their "Six Principles for Corporate Justice" include transparency of business activities, stakeholders' rights, mechanisms for redress when things go wrong, and responsibility/accountability throughout the supply chain.

ECCJ activities are targeted at European institutions and national governments. Their methods include direct lobbying, public campaigns, and denunciation of bad practices. They also want to build up "a European community of knowledge and experience".

The activities of the EU's Multi-stakeholder Forum (MSF) on CSR (launched in 2002 to promote a voluntary approach to CSR) are one of the coalition's major concerns. The most recent MSF meeting, in December 2006, was attended by 145

representatives of employers' organisations, governments, European institutions, and trade unions. But the ECCJ and many other organisations stayed away, objecting to the decision of the MSF to define CSR as purely voluntary. The ECCJ believes that the EU's Directorate General for Enterprise "has hijacked CSR for use in its push to improve European competitiveness without concern for social and environmental costs". The December MSF meeting failed to look for constructive ways to ensure compliance with internationally agreed standards, standardise codes of conduct, or ensure adherence to such codes, says the ECCJ.

The ECCJ's steering group currently comprises Friends of the Earth Europe, SOMO, IRENE, Hivos (Netherlands), CORE (UK), Forum Citoyen pour la RSE (France), Manitesse (Italy), Germanwatch (Germany), GARDE (Environmental Law Service, Czech Republic), and the Observatorio de RSC (Spain). It is funded primarily through a European Commission grant, as well as through member contributions.

For more information on the coalition and their recommendations to the European Commission and European Parliament, see www.corporatejustice.org.

Mexico: Jeans with Justice

The Lajat plant at Gomez Palacio in Mexico carried out the finishing phase of jeans production for Levi Strauss, Mudd, and other brands. In early 2005, after workers took up the question of working conditions and a threat of plant closure, Lajat fired their organising committee. The Lajat workers asked for support from the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras (CJM), a coalition of groups in Mexico, the US, and Canada that includes Sweatshop Watch, Global Exchange, and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers.



February 2006 demonstration in support of the Lajat workers, Levi Strauss corporate headquarters, San Francisco, California. Photos courtesy Sweatshop Watch

CJM began what was to be a year-long process of negotiations with Levi's, putting pressure on the company to enforce its own code of conduct. Levi's did initially force Lajat to rehire the fired workers, but in January 2006 Lajat closed the plant to avoid a union election.

CJM's Judy Ancel says "We made it clear to Levi's: we weren't going away as long as the workers kept fighting". About 50 refused severance and maintained a permanent demonstration in Gomez. That month, registration of their union was granted, the first independent union in north central Mexico. They started organising at another Lajat plant in Torreon.

Meanwhile, the US activists maintained their support. In February, a lively demonstration at Levi's Plaza in San Francisco made the evening news. The next day a Lajat workers' representative and CJM members met with Levi's executives and hammered out an agreement in which Levi's pledged to tell Lajat they'd cancel their contracts if Lajat did not engage in good-faith negotiations. Levi's promised to send two vice presidents to Mexico.

When negotiations began in late March 2006, 57 Lajat workers were at the table or demonstrating outside, along with their lawyer, plus CJM. It took several weeks of meetings and phone calls to complete the deal. Unfortunately, the workers didn't get reinstatement, but they kept their union intact. What they got was 100% of everything Lajat owed them: wages, overtime, severance pay, and contributions to state benefit funds. Lajat paid out some US\$374,000, dropped all charges against workers, and gave each worker a letter of recommendation.

Judy Ancel says the Lajat struggle wasn't enough to win the workers their jobs back or overcome the tactic of firing workers

and/or closing plants to avoid independent unions. It did, however, help establish a new independent union and strengthen cross-border solidarity.

For more information, photos, and video footage related to the campaign to support the Lajat workers, see www.sweatshopwatch.org/index.php?s=85.

European Companies Join the FWF

In early 2007 Sparkling Ideas became the first Belgian company to join the Fair Wear Foundation (FWF). The Belgian Clean Clothes Campaign sees this as a sign that companies are recognising that consumers increasingly want "clean clothes".

The FWF is a Dutch multi-stakeholder initiative that monitors and verifies compliance with labour standards in the garment industry. It involves the CCC, Oxfam Novib, FNV trade union federation, and other NGOs, plus business associations in the garment sector. Its member companies include a number involved in supplying company wear. Other recent new members include the Dutch company Mexx (a subsidiary of the US company Liz Claiborne), and the Swiss verification initiative ISCOM (see also page 8).

"We got more and more questions from consumers. Where are your products produced? What type of monitoring and verification do you use?" explained Bert Anthonissen from Sparkling Ideas, a company that sells garments and gadgets. "Two years ago we started asking for a declaration of intent from our suppliers. But sometimes when we asked them, they sent us a fax within a minute. This was not credible. So we started looking for some verification system and for garments we found the FWF; for gadgets we haven't found any so far. What we like about the FWF is that they work at grassroots level. Also, it's local people that do the audits. And finally, they make a management plan after the audit to improve the situation. We believe the Belgian market is getting more and more interested in this issue."

The Fair Wear Foundation is in the process of evolving from a Dutch into a European organisation. Recently Continental Clothing became the first UK company to join the FWF and the Swiss company Switcher also joined. The first non-Dutch company that signed up with the FWF was the German-based Hess Natur, in 2006.

For more information on the FWF see www.fairwear.nl

What is the MFA Forum?

The MFA Forum was set up in early 2004 to consider the impact of the phase-out of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA). The MFA had operated a set of trade rules and import quotas for the international garment industry since 1974. It was phased out on January 1, 2005 in the interests of "free trade".

In Brief

For some countries, it was likely that the consequences of the phase-out would be severe. Some least-developed countries (LDCs) had come to rely on the garment and textile industry for most of their income, employment, and foreign exchange. The MFA Forum was set up by major brand name companies and retailers in the garment sector, several NGOs and the International Textile Garment and Leather Workers Federation (ITGLWF) to identify the dangers facing LDCs as a result of the quota phase-out and to find solutions. The Forum identified the threats as:

- “(a) Foremost is the potentially negative impact on workers, communities and local and national economies.
- (b) The perceived culpability of business, as well as other institutions, in not preventing this negative impact, and the impact on their reputation.
- (c) The further erosion of trust in the broader agenda of development through trade.”

The Forum has grown into a network of over 70 organisations. Those involved include brands such as Gap, Inditex, Cotton Group, H&M, Jones Apparel, Karstadt Quelle, Levi Strauss, and Nike; retailers Asda George, Carrefour, Debenhams, Marks & Spencers, Littlewoods, Tesco, and Wal-Mart; the union ITGLWF; NGOs Care International, ICCR, MSN, Oxfam, and the Solidarity Center; multi-stakeholder initiatives ETI, FLA, and SAI; and multi-lateral institutions: the ILO, World Bank, and UNDP. The MFA Forum Secretariat is run by the UK-based organisation AccountAbility.

In its first year, the MFA Forum commissioned research and established the principles for how the stakeholders would work together and the key roles and responsibilities of each, set out in 'A Collaborative Framework for Guiding Post-MFA Actions', March 2005.

Shortly after, the MFA Forum set up two in-country groups, in Bangladesh and Lesotho. These were two LDCs identified as facing particularly serious difficulties in maintaining a sustainable industry in the post-MFA era and many MFA Forum participants also “faced direct challenges there”. The Forum believes it can be useful at the country level, helping to bring together all the local stakeholders including government, to encourage ‘home owned’ and ‘home grown’ actions to sustain the future of their national garment industry.

However, as the article ‘Factory Closures: Where’s the CSR?’ on page 12 shows, there has been little success in addressing the basic problem of the freedom that the ending of the MFA has indeed given to the major brands and retailers. As they

abandon certain countries and shift their sourcing elsewhere, they demonstrate little responsibility to the industries and countries they leave behind.

As this edition of the newsletter was going to press the MFA Forum was convening its third international gathering; for more on this and the Forum’s activities see www.mfa-forum.net.

Levi’s Leaves the ETI

On February 5, 2007, the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) formally announced that the jeans manufacturer Levi Strauss had resigned its membership. The ETI is a “multi-stakeholder initiative” in the UK, bringing together representatives of producers, brands, retailers, trade unions, and NGOs.

At issue was Levi’s refusal to adopt the “living wage” provision of the ETI Base Code. Levi’s maintains it cannot do so because it does not believe it can implement it with its suppliers.

Section 5.1 of the ETI Base Code states: “Wages and benefits paid for a standard working week meet, at a minimum, national legal standards or industry benchmark standards, whichever is higher. In any event, wages should always be enough to meet basic needs and to provide some discretionary income.”

The latter sentence is included, says the ETI, because even wages that conform to the legal minimum or prevailing standards can be insufficient to meet families’ basic needs. The ETI also says it is fundamental that its members commit to it, as a first step to getting their suppliers to implement it.

Levi’s own code, its Terms of Engagement, requires suppliers to pay wages that meet legal requirements or industry rates, whichever is higher. But the company refuses to include the living wage part of the ETI Base Code.

All ETI members have to adopt the Base Code in full; they are not allowed to pick and choose elements. In its statement, the ETI said, “Every member company faces the same difficulty in defining a living wage and in implementing it in different contexts. However this has not prevented any other member company from adopting this provision of the Base Code.”

The matter had been under discussion with Levi’s for two years; then came an ETI decision in December 2006 to suspend Levi’s membership for up to 12 months. Levi’s resigned two months later. The company wants further discussion on what defines the concept of a living wage.





New Resources

Falling Through the Floor: **Migrant Women Workers' Quest for Decent Work in Dongguan, China**

This report by *China Labour Bulletin* is based on a field survey of the working and living conditions of migrant women workers in Gongguan, Guangdong Province. Several dozen women tell how difficult it is trying to earn a decent living in the boomtowns of the Chinese "economic miracle". The report shows how women migrant workers are consistently denied their fair share of the economic rewards and highlights the wide range of unethical and unlawful practices used by employers.

China Labour Bulletin Research Series No.2, September 2006
Available at: www.china-labour.org.hk/fs/view/research-reports/Women_Workers_Report.pdf

Transparency Report: **How Hong Kong Garment Companies Can Improve Public Reporting of their Labour Standards**

In this report published in November 2006, Oxfam Hong Kong assesses how well 16 top Hong Kong apparel companies are reporting to the public on the labour standards and practices in their supply chains. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the conclusion is that the companies are failing to provide sufficient information.

Oxfam Hong Kong urges them to demonstrate a commitment to corporate social responsibility and change their practices.

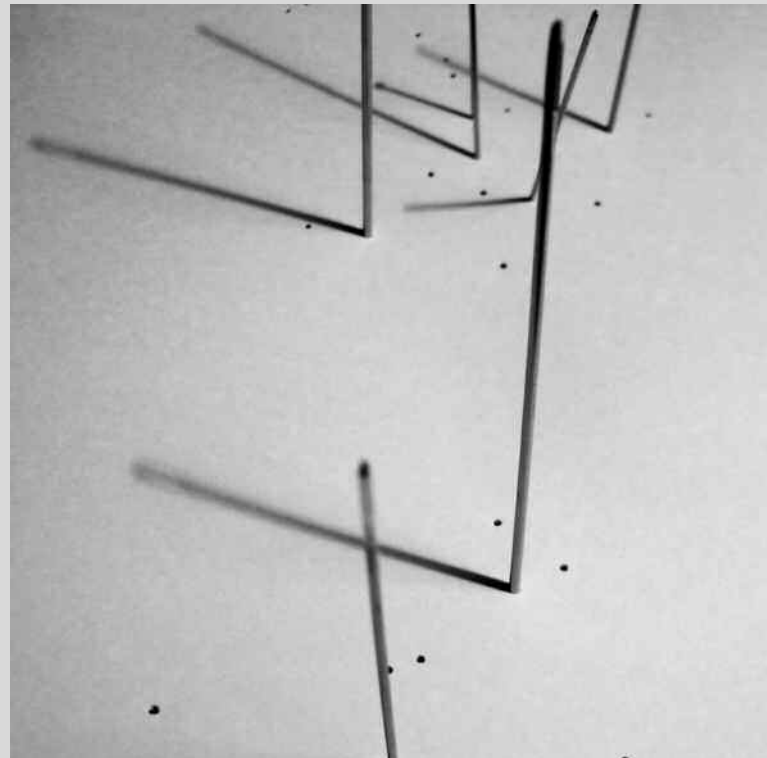
Available at:
www.maketradefair.org.hk/download/TransparencyReport-eng.pdf

Revealing Clothing: **Second ETAG Transparency Report Card**

The Ethical Trading Action Group (ETAG) in Canada released its second Transparency Report Card in December 2006, a follow-up to the first published in December 2005. It compares public reporting on labour standards compliance by 30 top apparel retailers and brands selling clothes in the Canadian market. They include Levi Strauss, Nike, adidas, H&M, Mountain Equipment Co-op, Roots, La Senza, and Reitmans.

The Report Card assesses each company's stated policies and programs to comply with international labour standards in their supplier factories and how transparently they are communicating these efforts to the public. ETAG says a central objective is "to encourage companies to disclose sufficient information to allow consumers and investors to evaluate and compare companies' labour practices and make ethical choices".

Available at: www.maquilasolidarity.org/campaigns/reportcard/report%20card%202006/pdf/Revealing%20Clothing.pdf



Stitching for South Africa: Taking Responsibility for Working Conditions in Garment Supply Chains for South African Retailers

Clothes are a growing, multi-billion rand market in South Africa. Yet there is little awareness among South African consumers of where their clothes are made, who has made them, and in what conditions. This booklet, published in December 2006 by the Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO), looks into what some of the major garment retailers in the South African market are doing about working conditions in their supply chains. Included are short profiles of several South African retailers, along with information on their policies and practices for ensuring that standards are met at their suppliers. Suggestions are also made for possible follow up action by both industry and civil society.

Available at: www.somo.nl/html/paginas/pdf/stitching_for_africa_jan_2007_EN.pdf

Global Campaigning and Local Action

In January 2006, the Clean Clothes Campaign and the Centre for Education and Communication based in New Delhi India jointly organised an international seminar in Faridabad. The aim was to identify potential areas of new research and advocacy, and improve campaigning strategies on labour standards in the garment industry. The 55 participants from 15 countries in Asia, Europe, North America, and Australia discussed a wide range of issues such as the role of purchasing practices, informalisation and flexibilisation of labour, and strategies towards the MFA phase-out. This document gives an overview of the discussions and outcomes of that meeting.

Available at: www.cec-india.org/leftlinks/03/folder.2004-08-19.7339670463/publications/CCC%20-%20CEC%20Report.pdf

Cambodia: **Women and Work in the Garment Industry**

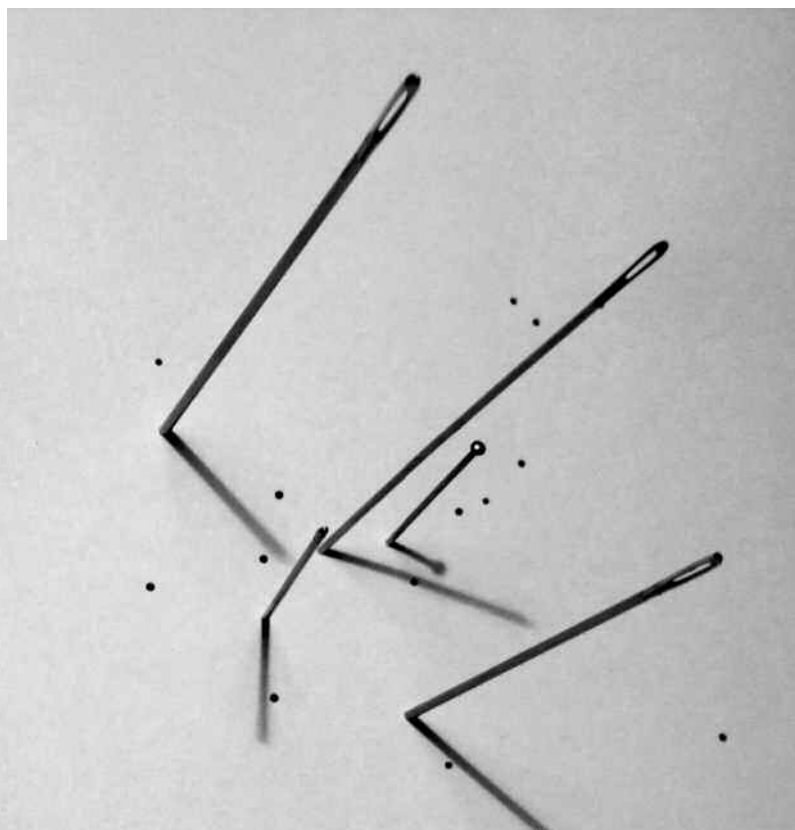
Over 90% of the 290,000 Cambodian export garment sector workers are women. So a gendered approach towards improving workplace issues is necessary. This study, commissioned by the ILO and the World Bank and published in December 2006, was designed to provide more detailed data on five critical issues of particular concern to women workers: health and nutrition, breast feeding and childcare, personal safety, harassment including sexual harassment, and workplace relations and dispute resolution. A total of 102 workers (including nine men) from 27 factories participated in the research. The study ends with a number of recommendations for policy and program development.

The study is available in Khmer and English. English version available at: [www.betterfactories.org/content/documents/1/Women%20and%20Work%20in%20the%20Garment%20Industry%20\(en\).pdf](http://www.betterfactories.org/content/documents/1/Women%20and%20Work%20in%20the%20Garment%20Industry%20(en).pdf)

Getting Smarter at Auditing

There is a continuing debate on the pros and cons of auditing for compliance with good labour standards ("social" auditing). Labour advocates have pointed to the many weaknesses in the dominant model of social auditing. To debate what the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) calls the "growing crisis" in social auditing, ETI members – including Debenhams, Marks and Spencer, Asda, Tesco and Next – met in November 2006 to discuss what could be done. This report discusses what goes wrong and why, and gives a number of recommendations on how companies can improve their auditing activities.

Available at: www.ethicaltrade.org/Z/lib/2006/11/smart-audit/index.shtml



“Sim Sweatshop”: Be a Virtual Sports Shoe Worker

Do kids care about how their clothes are made? To help get them thinking and acting, a group of artists called NOW in the British city of Nottingham have developed an online game called “Sim Sweatshop”.

“You are invited to enter the world of the sports shoe maker. Your wage will be \$6.05 for a full day’s work. A standard working day here is 12 hours. Work hard and you will be paid your full wage. If you make a mistake you will be punished accordingly.”

The clock ticks away while you frantically put trainers together. From time to time, you are asked if you want to buy food or drink to stop your energy from draining away. As tiredness sets in, the shoes become blurred and your productivity slows; you miss your quota of shoes for the day, and your wages are cut as a result. If you join the union, you lose your job.

To help kids understand the context, there are “What’s the Story” educational pieces taken from the UK CCC (Labour Behind the Label), the book *No Logo* by Naomi Klein, Oxfam, and others.

This game could be used as an awareness-raising tool in an educational setting where students also are provided with access to positive examples of solidarity action.

To play *Sim Sweatshop* see:
www.beherenow.org.uk/index.php/sweatshop

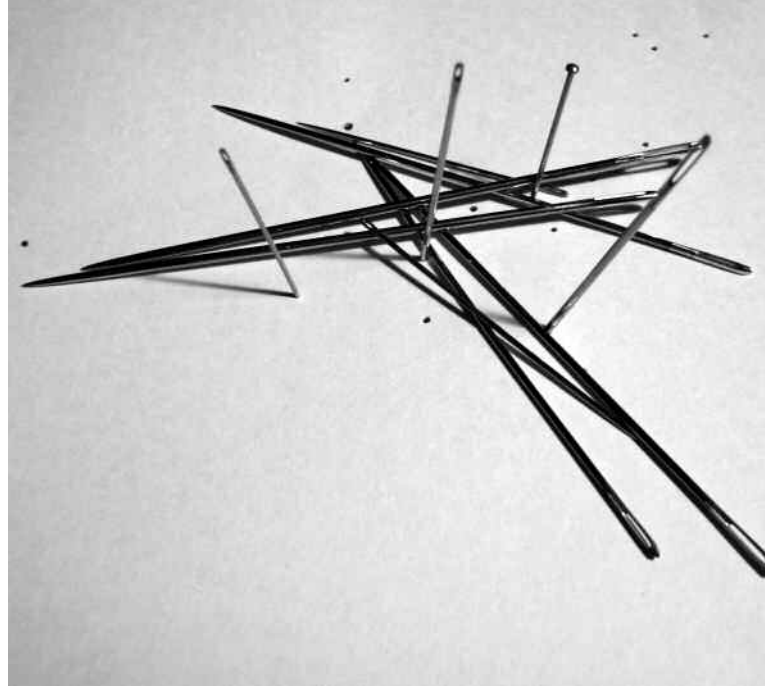
“City of Seamstresses” CD

Garment workers in Sri Lanka have launched a collection of twelve songs in a bid to change attitudes towards them. The CD, called “Sannali Puraware” (city of seamstresses), was launched in late 2006 by the Women’s Centre at Ja-Ela, which has long campaigned for the rights of working women, particularly in the Katunayake Free Trade Zone.

“These girls are treated very badly by our society. They are called all kinds of derogatory names”, Padmini Weerasuriya, the Women’s Centre Coordinator, told the journalist Dilshani Samaraweera. “But they are the people earning money for this country. Through the songs, we want to tell people not to treat them badly and we want to show people that these girls can do more than just sew.”

The Women’s Centre has also produced a street drama to generate public support against harassment of women in buses, roads and public places. The Centre says harassment has become a major obstacle to freedom of movement for working women, particularly in Sri Lanka’s free trade zones.

To order the “Sannali Puraware” CD or cassette, contact the Women’s Centre, e-mail: womenscentre@slt.lk.



Paper on Living Wage for Sri Lanka's Garment Workers

Sri Lanka’s garment industry is comprised of a 275,000-strong workforce – the majority young, unmarried, migrant women. As the cost of living spirals up, they deserve a wage that recognises their contribution to the industry and helps them live with dignity. The Sri Lankan organisation Apparel-Industry Labour Rights Movement (ALaRM) has done detailed research on wages, and here presents its case for a sector specific living wage for these workers.

Available at:
www.cleanclothes.org/ftp/06-ALaRM_LIVING_WAGE_sri_lanka.pdf

2006 Annual Report of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) has published their annual report of their joint programme, the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders. It documents acts of repression faced by 1,311 human rights defenders, as well as obstacles to freedom of association, in about 90 countries around the world. The writers observe, among other things, that 2006 saw the consolidation of a growing trend: systematic reinforcement of the legislative arsenal for the purpose of restricting freedoms of association, speech and peaceful assembly by states that consider an independent civil society as a threat to themselves.

Available in English, Spanish and French at:
www.fidh.org/article.php3?id_article=4108



