

**bULLETIN 35**  
sPRING/sUMMER 2011



**Labour Behind the Label**

Clean Clothes Campaign



## **FACES BEHIND THE LONDON OLYMPICS**

**Real life stories from workers producing adidas merchandise for the London Olympics**

The media is already whipping itself into a frenzy over the 2012 Olympics. Millions of pounds in sponsorship deals have been agreed as companies get ready to cash in on the games. But far away in Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh, a different reality is being woven. The Playfair 2012 campaign went to the Shen Zhou garment factory, a supplier for Adidas's 2012 rOlympics range, to meet the workers.



Inside the Shen Zhou Factory, Phnom Penh, Cambodia; an Olympics supplier.  
(Photo ©Will Baxter/LBL 2011)

Here we heard a different story. Factory-owned apartment blocks are filled with workers sharing a few small rooms; they hope one day to leave and move on to a better life. Many workers reported 11 hour days as a regular occurrence, and daily overtime as a necessity to earn enough to survive. Life is a struggle and the majority of workers live apart from their families and send money home to the provinces where children or other dependants are being cared for by relatives.

The cost of rice has more than doubled in Cambodia in the last 5 years, but wages have remained low. *"I want to save some money but having a family is quite hard since I have to send money home to my parents," one worker said. "I also give money to help my nephew pay for school!"*

Sorn Preynoun, a 30-year-old worker, lives in a room in a factory-owned apartment block with her sister, her sister's

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husband, and her nephew. The monthly rent for the room is £25. Before the monthly minimum wage was increased from £37 to £39 October 2010, the rent was only £19. "The price of the rented room always goes up when the fixed salary increases," she said. "It was £19 before last October, then it went up to £22 and now it is £25 per month."

Standard hours at the factory are 7 am to 4 pm with a 1-hour lunch break. Overtime is optional, but is taken by most workers, from 4 pm to 6 pm. These additional hours are vital in order to earn enough to make ends meet. There is no union at the factory, but representatives exist in the factory through whom workers can report problems to the management.

Every day Sorn Reab takes the transport truck to Kandal province. She wakes up at 4:30 am and arrives home after 8pm. The truck costs £6.40 per month, which is a sixth of her basic wage. "If I stay in the area and rent a room like other workers, I will have to spend money on housing, food and everything else here, and then I won't be able to save any money," she said. "I feel sleepy and tired all the time, but this is my job."

Workers typically spend 60 pence per day on food. In addition some get rice sent to them from their families in the provinces. One worker said, "The amount I spend depends on how much I eat and what kind of food. If I eat less,

*my health will not be good and I won't be able to work properly. But if I eat more, I won't have money."*

Ry Tola, another worker, said that conditions were generally good at the factory compared to others in the area. "I have heard about the problems with fainting in other factories, but it rarely happens in my factory because it has enough air coming in through the windows, and there are fans," she said. "A couple of months, one worker fainted, but that's because she didn't eat enough and so she was weak."

**You can watch a slideshow of fantastic photos showing life and work for Cambodian garment workers on our website here:**

**<http://bit.ly/up2IAC>**

**» Tell Adidas to pay a living wage.**

The Playfair 2012 Campaign is calling on retailers like Adidas to, among other things, commit to pay a living wage to workers producing their goods.

You can sign an action form asking them to do this too. Go to:

**[www.playfair2012.org.uk](http://www.playfair2012.org.uk)**

# LONDON GAMES ORGANISERS: ALL PAPER PROMISES, NO REAL CHANGE

The Playfair 2012 campaign has been lobbying the London Games organisers (LOCOG) to ensure workers making garments and merchandise for the Olympics have their rights respected. And on paper we've had reasonable success.

The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG) have adopted commendable sourcing requirements based on the Ethical Trading Initiative code. These require all suppliers and licensees to make sure, among other things, that all factories pay workers a living wage and allow workers the chance to join a union. They've also set up a complaints mechanism to allow workers to raise concerns about their rights and safety. LOCOG's sustainability report states that Adidas has managed '100% compliance' with the code and, so far, no complaints have been made to the mechanism. Which all sounds good.

The problems arise when we dig deeper. The complaints mechanism hasn't been advertised at all and details are hidden deep within LOCOG's website and to date are only available in English. LOCOG have 'asked their suppliers' to tell workers about it, but workers we've spoken to report that they haven't heard anything about it. When you think it through, this is hardly surprising. Asking suppliers

(who incidentally have to pay the cost of any complaint investigation) to inform their workers how to make a complaint isn't likely to result in it happening. Would you ask a fox to tell the chickens how to complain to the farmer if they are afraid for their safety? Probably not.

Furthermore, when we asked Adidas about how work was developing on paying a living wage, as per the LOCOG sourcing code, they refused to acknowledge that they were signed up to a living wage at all, and continue to promote compliance with a minimum wage.

So where to go next? Paper promises are all very well (and look good in sustainability reports) but the real question is whether they make any difference for workers in developing countries struggling to fight for their rights and make ends meet on poverty pay. LOCOG need to open their eyes to the reality of their system and start doing something to turn promises into a reality.

# UNION RIGHTS FOR INDONESIAN WORKERS: LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

Union intimidation has long been a tangible barrier to improved conditions in Indonesia. In June 2011, after 2 years of negotiations between sportswear brands, Indonesian trade unions, and major supplier factories, an historic protocol was signed that could see thousands of workers finally able to exercise their right to join a union.

The pact, if fully implemented, will directly improve organizing in sportswear supplier factories and protect unionised workers' rights to campaign for better conditions. It delivers some really practical steps which include: agreement that unions have access to factories, use of meeting and office space within factories; agreement to release union leaders from duties to fulfil union work and facilitate meetings within working hours; use of company vehicles; union flags to be displayed at the factory; and provision of notice boards for union announcements in prominent factory spaces.

Prominent Indonesian trade unionist Lilis Mahmudah said, *"This protocol is important because our law does not cover technical implementation of freedom of association. The agreement will ensure brands take responsibility to ensure respect for union rights."*

So far brands including Nike, adidas, Pentland, Asics, New Balance and Puma have signed up. Lotto, Mizuno, Polo Ralph Lauren, Next and Columbia Sportswear are still dragging their heels.

## » TAKE ACTION:

**Call on the laggards to sign the protocol by visiting this link:**

[wwwbit.ly/400days](http://www.bit.ly/400days)

# WHO'S THE KING OF CASTLE AND WHO'S THE DIRTY RASCAL OF FASHION?

Labour Behind the Label's Let's Clean up Fashion report 2011 brings you news of who's doing what to change poverty pay for garment workers producing for the UK high street.

Once again this September, we surveyed top high street brands to ask them what they were doing to ensure workers producing their clothes were paid a living wage. Once again none of the brands surveyed were doing enough to guarantee a living wage to workers in their supply chain, with no brand scoring higher than 3.5 out of a potential score of 5 – meaning that no brand has yet moved past pilot projects in a limited number of factories.

## See how the brands scored

Summary	Brands	Score
Doing the most.	Next, Inditex (owners of Zara), Marks & Spencer, Monsoon Accessorize	3.5
Some work but unconvincing so far.	Arcadia (owners of Topshop, Dorothy Perkins), Asda, Aurora (owners of Oasis, Warehouse) New Look, Primark	2.5 to 3
Not much work to speak of.	Burberry, Debenhams, Fat Face, French Connection, GAP, H&M, Levis, Matalan, Peacocks, River Island, Sainsbury, Tesco.	1 to 2
Doing nothing.	Hobbs, Jane Norman, La Senza, Paul Smith, Reiss, Republic, Superdry, White Stuff	0

The most interesting submissions did show some signs of brands recognising the need to challenge some of the root causes of poverty wages. This included work on labour costing models, to ensure that prices paid were sufficient to provide a living wage, and work to support freedom of association in supplier factories. Such actions were, however, woefully limited. The refusal of any brand to even provide benchmarks for what they consider to be a living wage also makes any real commitment to a living wage fairly weak.

Once again a large number of brands reported on efficiency improvements in factories as a route to improving wages, not all of them proving that such improvements were doing anything other than delivering higher profits for the employer.

Progress since the last report in 2009 has been dead slow. A number of projects, most notably those being carried out by Gap, had been scrapped entirely, whilst



others had totally stagnated. Although a few retailers could demonstrate wages increasing at a handful of their supplier factories, none were able to claim significant progress towards a living wage.

## Enough to feed your family: Too much to ask?

At the time of the report launch, Gap and H&M came under fire. Hundreds of you sent postcards to these fast-fashion giants calling on them to commit publicly to the living wage in their policies, and to develop measures to get this figure into garment workers' pay packets. Over 800 of you have also taken action online. Your good work hasn't gone unnoticed.

We met with Gap in October to discuss demands and raise our concerns. They said they have been receiving our messages. Gap are currently undergoing a review of their work on this topic, and are considering all the options, and promised to get back to us when they have revised their plan. (Sounds a little like stalling to us.)

H&M similarly thanked us for our cards. They told us that they have recently joined the Fair Wage Network to study better wages, but have no plans to sign up to the living wage any time soon.

» **Let's keep up the pressure! If you haven't taken action yet you can still do so by going to:**

[www.bit.ly/r3zw20](http://www.bit.ly/r3zw20)

# D&G HOLD OUT ON SANDBLASTING BAN

Following the launch of our Killer Jeans campaign in April, the majority of UK high street brands have now banned the process. All three of the brands that were targeted at the launch, Matalan, River Island and Asda, have issued statements declaring that sandblasting is no longer being used in their supply chains.

While the high street commits to sandblast-free production, the luxury market has proved more reluctant to change. During our Week of Action in May we asked supporters to target Versace, Armani and Dolce & Gabbana, none of whom would sign up for a ban. LBL supporters, along with supporters of Change.org and the Clean Clothes Campaign bombarded the email accounts and facebook pages of these three brands, with over 40,000 emails sent over two months.

In June 2011 Versace was forced to shut down public access to its facebook account in order to prevent Killer Jeans activists posting more messages. A month later it made a public statement committing to a ban. Armani followed suit with its own ban in September.

Dolce & Gabbana continues to lag behind its competitors and refuses demands to ban this deadly technique from

its supply chain. The arrogance of the top luxury brand was clear from the start: it told the Italian Clean Clothes Campaign in March that it had 'no interest' in banning sandblasting, despite conclusive evidence and numerous deaths demonstrating how dangerous the practice is.

## » TAKE ACTION:

**The campaign on Dolce and Gabbana continues. You can support the campaign by taking action now at:**

[www.change.org/petitions/dolce-gabbana-stop-the-killer-jeans](http://www.change.org/petitions/dolce-gabbana-stop-the-killer-jeans)



## WORKERS' RIGHTS CHAMPION:

## PROFILE



**Name:** Asalettin Arslanoglu

**Role:** Organising, for the Textile, Knitting and Clothing Workers' Union of Turkey (TEKSIF). He became interested in workers rights at a young age, getting involved in trade union activities while he was still at school. During this period trade unions were illegal in Turkey and by the time he finished

high school he had already been arrested seven times for participating in trade union demonstrations. After completing university Asalettin went to work for the education department in a Turkish textile union, before moving to TEKSIF to work overseeing organising activities.

**Description:** Organising workers in Turkey is extremely difficult, with most factories refusing access to union representatives. Intimidation, and even dismissal of workers who attempt to organise, is common. Without access to trade unions workers are unable to demand improvements, particularly in the area of wages and working hours.

Trying to address barriers to organising through the legal system is costly and time consuming and most of the brands refuse to engage seriously with trade unions, despite their public commitments to support freedom of association. For example, even in factories where the trade union exists, auditors and inspectors rarely speak to their representatives. To address the challenges to organising workers, Asalettin and TEKSIF work in local neighbourhoods, reaching workers by building relationships with local community leaders, imams and teachers who are sympathetic to protecting and defending workers' rights.

## THAILAND: LABOUR RIGHTS ACTIVIST FACING 30 YEARS IN PRISON FOR "OFFENDING THE KING"



Help support jailed human rights activist Somyot Pruksakasemsuk..

the Criminal Code, which he claims contradicts democratic and human rights principles.

Trial against Somyot has now begun and is scheduled to continue until May 2012. If found guilty he faces up to 30 years imprisonment. Somyot has been denied bail and has remained in custody since his arrest. LBL is deeply concerned that this could ultimately influence the outcome of his case. The continued denial of bail is also in violation of the guarantee for a right to bail under Thai law as well as the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

### » TAKE ACTION:

LBL, along with colleagues and supporters of Somyot around the world are asking people to pressure the authorities to allow Somyot the right to bail, drop the charges against him and other anti-*lèse majesté* activists and to repeal Law 112. **Take action to support Somyot by sending a postcard to the Thai embassy in London.**

Solidarity and support from the outside makes a real difference to prisoners, reducing the isolation they are placed in and letting them know their lives and actions are not forgotten. **Please use the card provided to send a message of solidarity to Somyot. (You need to use an international stamp 66p standard/76p airmail)**

Somyot Pruksakasemsuk is the founder of the Centre for Labour and International Solidarity Thailand (CLIST) and has worked with us on numerous workers' rights campaigns and Urgent Appeals. He was arrested on April 30th 2011 and charged with breaking the controversial *lèse majesté* law, or Section 112 of the Thai Criminal Code which states that "*whoever defames, insults or threatens the King, the Queen, the Heir-apparent or the Regent, shall be punished with imprisonment of three to fifteen years.*" Somyot's arrest came only five days after the launch of a petition for a parliamentary review to revoke Section 112 of

## LESOTHO: FIGHTING FOR A LIVING WAGE

On 15th August 2011 authorities in Lesotho fired water cannon and live ammunition at workers during a three day "stay away," which followed a breakdown in negotiations over the minimum wage for textile and clothing workers. Wages in the sector have dramatically decreased over the last five years and the legal minimum now represents less than half of a living wage.

In the following days seven trade union leaders, including one of the wage board negotiators, Daniel Maraisane of the Lesotho Clothing and Allied Workers Union, were arrested. The permit for a rally to support wage demands was refused by the police. Local unions launched an immediate campaign for the release of trade union activists and appealed to the High Court for the reinstatement of the permit. This was supported by international letters of protest sent to the government of Lesotho.

By the 19th August all the trade union activists had been released from detention and the court ruled that a new rally could be held the following Monday, 22nd August. The Freedom March turned out to be one of the biggest rallies ever seen in Lesotho, with an estimated crowd of 30,000 people. Negotiations have now restarted and will look at increasing the minimum wage and, crucially, changing the structures under which new wage increases will be negotiated in the future.

## INDIA: VIVA GLOBAL NEGOTIATIONS BREAK DOWN AMID NEW VIOLENCE

Ongoing talks between the former M&S supplier, Viva Global, and the Garment and Allied Workers Union broke down in July after five union members employed at the factory were attacked with a cane and a knife by a security guard employed by the company.

Hopes for a satisfactory conclusion to the case were raised when 42 workers were reinstated in May, several months after almost 100 workers were attacked and then locked out of their workplace in August 2010 (see Bulletin 34). GAWU and VG were engaged in talks aimed at reinstating a further 40 workers. Workers are now returning to the courts.

Attempts to involve M&S in finding a solution to the case have failed. Despite deciding to cut orders from the factory, M&S had stated that they intended to support a resolution to the dispute. However M&S now acknowledge that they have had no contact with the factory and have no intention of renewing their relationship again whatever the final outcome.



# SWEATSHOP RELAY – NOW IN A HANDY PACK!

After the success of the Sweatshop Relay organised in a school in Essex last year, LBL have now developed a Sweatshop Relay event pack that contains everything a school class needs to organise their own sweatshop day.

The Sweatshop Relay is valuable for hands-on experience of global citizenship and humanitarian issues while gaining confidence in teamwork and enterprise. It allows students to learn more about supply chains, business and working conditions in the garment industry by staging their own one-day sweatshop for charity, living through the experience of both organising and working in an exploitative garment factory in their own school. The funds raised from selling the products created go to LBL to help us make changes for workers who experience this life on a daily basis.



William de Ferrers school sweatshop relay .

Many students who took part in the Relay in Essex last year went on to write about the experience in their UCAS applications and a year later they still talk about what that day felt like.

The pack contains lesson plans, videos, information on sweatshops, and more. You can get it from the LBL website on:

<http://www.labourbehindthelabel.org/resources/item/919-sweatshoprelay>



## TOP FUNDRAISERS

Thanks to all our supporters who have generously contributed to our Christmas Appeal which coincided with the launch of our report, Taking Liberties, exposing the appalling conditions for workers in Gurgaon, India. You raised £1200! If you'd still like to donate, just go to [www.labourbehindthelabel.org/donate](http://www.labourbehindthelabel.org/donate)

Special thanks go to the keen and dedicated team at University of Bristol who held a spring Clothes Swap to fundraise for us. With some serious strategising and teams of steering group, cake bakers, clothes sorters they raised over £250 to help garment workers worldwide while having a lot of fun, refreshing their wardrobes and getting a great sense of achievement and satisfaction.

Bristol Uni swappers.



Many thanks also go to Motherwell Fairtrade Steering Group who held a concert during fair trade fortnight and donated £141 proceeds to LBL. Great stuff!

To become a Core Supporter, form a local group or get more involved in LBL activities - join our dedicated core mailing list and get monthly updates on how to take more action in our campaigns: contact the office using the details below.



LBL Activist training day Dec 2010

## 6 ITEMS OR LESS

Watch out for an exciting upcoming fundraiser by filmmaker Holly Wallace.

Using the '6 items or less' challenge - where participants agree to limit their wardrobe to a well-chosen 6 items of clothing for a whole month! - Holly is going to film a group of people using daily stills and diaries of the process and how it feels to cut our consumption and live on rationed clothing. Bee from the LBL staff team is taking part in the film. You can keep pace with the team's progress and find out more by joining the facebook group 'Six Items or Less - The Film.' You can also pledge to donate to the team's fundraising goal using the donate page on our website [www.labourbehindthelabel.org/donate](http://www.labourbehindthelabel.org/donate)



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