ACTION UPDATE

SUMMER 2014

Labour Behind the Label

Clean Clothes Campaign

Welcome

Welcome to your Action Update, where we update you with our recent campaign successes as well as plans for the coming months.

We have had an eventful year; not only have we achieved long lasting and impactful changes in the garment industry, we have also released research on the Living Wage, kept up pressure on brands sourcing in Rana Plaza in Bangladesh, and spent more time meeting our partners and supporters across the UK. We have invested in the organisation too, with a new office and staff, meaning more capacity to react quickly to cases that come our way, and making our fundraising more efficient.

We hope that you find this bulletin useful, and ask that once you have read it – please pass it on to someone who you feel would be interested in supporting our work.

Thank you for supporting us and making all of this possible.

The Labour Behind the Label team.

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Labour Behind the Label Limited supports garment workers' efforts worldwide to improve their working conditions. It is a not-for-profit cooperative company, registered in England No. 4173634. Labour Behind the Label's charitable activities are funded by the Labour Behind the Label Trust, which is a charity for tax purposes, HMRC Ref. EW02304

Front page photo © Heather Stilwell

Labour Behind the Label
AT A GLANCE

Labour Behind the Label is an NGO campaigning to support garment workers' efforts worldwide to improve their working conditions.

"We believe that everyone has a responsibility to improve working conditions"

We believe that everyone with a stake in the garment industry has a responsibility to improve working conditions - workers need to join together and demand better rights, consumers need to take ethics into account in the way that they shop and enter into dialogue with companies, governments need to step in and defend workers' rights through legislation, and companies, especially the big brands at the top of the supply chain, need to be accountable to their workers.

- **We raise public awareness** and mobilise consumers, empowering them to make decisions about their purchases.
- **We pressure companies** to take responsibility for workers' rights in the entirety of their supply chains.
- **We support workers** in their struggles for decent working conditions, including speaker tours and urgent appeals.
- **We campaign** for governments to take responsibility by legislating on corporate responsibility

We work together with similar campaigns across Europe and with partners in producer countries, through our members and the Clean Clothes Campaign, of which we are the UK platform.

LIVING WAGE

Dignity for Garment Workers

A living wage is a human right. Labour Behind the Label and the Clean Clothes Campaign believe that a living wage is the cornerstone of decent working conditions anywhere in the world. Together with the Asia Floor Wage Alliance and human rights campaigners from 15 countries in Europe, we are continuing to demand a living wage from major brands and governments.

Since the campaign for a living wage was launched in October in the UK, people across the country have joined us, taking a variety of actions demanding that the human right to a living wage is respected and upheld around the world. Together, people have signed petitions, organised events, spoken to government officials, and stood in solidarity with workers organising in countries like Cambodia. The momentum is building and we need to continue to stay vigilant and active to ensure that the global call for a living wage continues to crescendo. GET INVOLVED: Can you organise an event, or help distribute action cards? Run a stall or shop action? Get in touch with **ilona@labourbehindthelabel.org**

In depth: New Report Released, Tailored Wages UK

We surveyed top high street fashion companies to see what action is being taken to make sure that the workers making our clothes are paid enough to live on, and can support their families. Here is a brief preview of what we found.

Nothing to Say: Companies who declined to respond to our survey.
Armani, Asda, Benetton, Desigual, Diesel, Hugo Boss, Levi-Strauss, Replay

Dragging their feet: Doing next to nothing to ensure workers are paid enough to live on
Decathlon, Esprit, Gucci, Mango, Pentland (Speedo, Hunter, Mitre etc.)
Versace, WE Fashion

Could do better: Acknowledge the need for a living wage but doing little to make it a reality
Asics, Gap, G-star, New Balance, Nike, Next, Tesco

Some effort: Mention of work on living wages, but unconvincing so far.
Adidas, H&M, Primark, New Look

On the way: Work started to increase wages, but not enough yet.
Inditex (Zara etc.), M&S, Switcher, Tchibo

Adidas – Go ALL IN for a Living Wage!

As the football world cup comes into full swing, major sponsor Adidas, who has paid a whopping £62 million to sponsor the event, are under pressure to show that the workers that make their kit, in Cambodia and elsewhere, are paid enough to live on. Adidas have told us that, although they support the idea of wages in their supplier factories being enough to cover workers' basic needs, they aren't willing to define what this means with figures or measure it in their auditing. We say that failing to do this means the default minimum wage will keep the people producing their clothes in poverty.

TAKE ACTION: Sign our postcard and send it off today!

Cards will be gathered together and hand delivered to Adidas in July as part of a week long Speaker Tour of the UK with Eam Rin – an Adidas worker from Cambodia.

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN:

Demand Adidas Go All In for a Living Wage!

These 3 simple actions will have monumental impact:

1. Sign and mail the Adidas action card
2. Use the double hashtag **#allin for a #livingwage** on twitter to spread the word and use **@labourlabel**
3. Visit: **www.labourbehindthelabel.org/adidas** to sign our petition

Questions or want to get more involved?
Email: ilona@labourbehindthelabel.org

FOCUS ON

Cambodia

Crisis as MINIMUM WAGE fails to cover basic needs

Workers say enough is enough

This year the Cambodian garment industry has seen thousands of workers taking to the streets to demand better wages. Violent clashes between workers and police following a nationwide strike in January over the announcement of a new minimum wage left 3 or more people dead, many injured and 23 detained.

The new minimum wage of $100 US per month, announced in 2013, falls far short of the $160 US absolute minimum that unions have been asking for, and ever further short of the $395 US a month that the Asia Floor Wage predict to be enough to support a family to live with dignity.

Workers have reached the end of what they are willing to take. A worker called Lili, from Chak Angre Krom said: "Even $160 is not enough because my expenses are increasing every day. Only I myself spend a lot. If I have a wedding or ceremony, if I have grandparents, or mother or children, how can I support them also? Even if we eat all together in a small room and I collect the money from all others, we still can only spend a very small amount each because everybody always thinks "how are we going to be able to send money home to our families?"

Labour Behind the Label have been lobbying the Cambodian government and international brands sourcing from Cambodia to take immediate action to implement a living wage.

In depth: Fainting in Cambodian factories

Our report 'Shop 'til they Drop', written in collaboration with our partner CLEC in Cambodia, uncovers the truth behind the incidents of mass fainting that have taken place in factories in Cambodia in recent years. It reveals malnourishment in workers is a serious issue, as nutritious food isn't affordable on the wage they receive, and that mass fainting is likely to have this at its root. We found workers consume an average 1598 calories a day – around half the recommended amount for an industrial worker. Body Mass Index (BMI) figures gathered from workers indicate that 33% are medically underweight, and 25% seriously so, displaying figures that would be used to diagnose anorexia in UK. Workers earn just £59 a month as a minimum wage, when the recommended 3000 calorie daily diet suitable for a 10 hour day of industrial work for 1 person, would cost £48 a month. This leaves just £11 for all other costs, including looking after children, rent, travel, and utilities – a completely impossible task. A monthly living wage which could support a family, the report indicates, is more like £287.

Free the 23

In January, following massive living wage demonstrations and strikes in Cambodia, 23 union leaders and activists were imprisoned without trial. Labour Behind the Label immediately began advocating on their behalf calling on the Cambodian Government to drop all charges and unconditionally release "the 23". We launched an online photo solidarity action, and organized a demonstration outside the Cambodian embassy in London, adding to the global call for justice emanating from across the world.

The 23 have now been freed on suspended sentences but we continue to call on the Cambodian government to drop all charges, respect the right to freedom of association, and to establish a process for ensuring the minimum wage is revised. For more information on the case please **visit www.labourbehindthelabel.org**.

CELEBRATING SUCCESS

Bangladesh Update

We won the ACCORD, now its time for compensation

In our last update we reported on the incredible achievement of the labour rights movement in successfully persuading some of the world's biggest brands to sign the groundbreaking Bangladesh Accord on Building and Fire Safety. Over 150 brands have now signed on to this Accord and, after an intense few months, setting inspection standards and employing staff, the programme is now under way.

We will continue to work hard to ensure that the industry adopts policies and practices which will guarantee a safe working environment for all garment workers. Initial reports suggest that the vast majority of factories will need repairs and improvements to bring them up to international standards. Some may have to close temporarily – some permanently – others may have to reduce production capacity while work is undertaken. The past habits of turning a blind eye are no longer acceptable. Finding new ways to work together, to take responsibility for improvements and ensure changes are sustainable and long lasting will test everyone involved. It will be hard, but it is the only way to make this industry safe. Updates regarding the progress of the Accord and available actions you can take will continue to be posted on our website.

The Accord has been in an important step towards a safer industry but it does nothing to address the appalling consequences from those disasters that have already happened. The first anniversary of Rana Plaza collapse, which killed 1,133 workers, has already passed and the survivors and families of those killed continue to wait for compensation.

Since September we have been working closely with members of the multi-stakeholder Rana Plaza Coordination Committee to develop a comprehensive, independent,

For over a year we have been calling on the Scottish company Edinburgh Woollen Mill to pay compensation to the Tazreen victims. Hundreds of you have taken action by emailing and phoning the company and in November we teamed up with students from People and Planet and activists at Scottish Education and Action for Development to hold actions outside a number of their stores. The case was even featured in the BBC Panorama documentary "Dying for a Bargain".

The campaign has had an effect – the brand got in touch to discuss the case for the first time in September and in November they finally signed the Accord, one of the last UK high street brands to join. But this is just the start; we want compensation for the Tazreen victims. Until they pledge a sizeable contribution to a compensation fund the campaign will continue.

See http://tinyurl.com/tazreenewm to take action.

"The past habits of turning a blind eye are no longer acceptable."

and transparent mechanism for delivering compensation for the victims of Rana Plaza known as "the Arrangement." In January 2014, a Rana Plaza Donors Trust Fund was established to collect donations for compensation for the victim's families and survivors of the Rana Plaza collapse. Currently, we need to find £24million to cover every claim.

On the 24th February we launched our Pay Up campaign to ensure that every brand connected to Rana Plaza makes an immediate and significant contribution to the Fund. At the time of print, 22 brands have made an initial contribution to the Fund including, Asda, Loblaw, Mango, H&M, Mascot and Inditex (Zara), with the Fund totaling $17 million. This amount is far from sufficient and we continue to pressure such brands as Benetton and Matalan, who have yet to contribute a penny.

The Rana Plaza victims have waited too long.
To take action please visit www.labourbehindthelabel.org/urgent-actions.

Our SUPPORTERS

The Six Items Challenge

Fast Fashion is a relatively new phenomenon where brands change stock every 4–6 weeks to keep up with the latest fashion trends, at a price which makes clothes cheap and disposable. Products reach our high street shops faster and faster, to satisfy an insatiable desire for new trends, reflecting a growing drive to sell more, consume more, make more, and waste more. This drive has disastrous and even lethal consequences for the people who make our clothes.

This March saw supporters start a six week Fashion Fast, the Six Items Challenge, and raise over £2,700 for the Labour Behind the Label Trust. Participants had to choose 6 main pieces from their wardrobe and only wear those pieces (with unlimited underwear!) for the 6 weeks of Lent. Supporters used their experiences to explore their relationship with Fast Fashion, and blogged about their experience.

Top fundraiser Alexandra Murrell and most innovative bloggers from Stitched Up won ethical clothing donated to us by People Tree. **Thank you to all of our participants who made it to the end of the challenge!** Register for next year, contact: sixitems@labourbehindthelabel.org.

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union
The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of LBL and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.

Regional Coordinators

As soon as I saw the ad for Regional Coordinators for Labour Behind the Label I knew I wanted to apply. For a while I'd been desperate to do some hands-on campaigning around the fast fashion industry, especially after the Rana Plaza disaster happened – just talking about the issues suddenly really wasn't enough. Plus the co-operative which I co-founded with 5 other women, Stitched Up, were about to open a sewing café and workshop venue, and I thought it would be great to incorporate some campaigning work into the programme of events to be held at our venue.

The Regional Coordinators training was a great experience, and it was brilliant to meet lots of other people with the same drive as me to campaign for a fairer garment industry – it was especially good to meet another Regional Coordinator from Manchester, Louis. Soon after the training, we both organized a street action and an educational event for kids at the People's History Museum in Manchester. At the action we got around 90 signatures on the Living Wage petition, which felt like a good couple of hours work on Manchester's busiest shopping street!

> **"For a while I'd been desperate to do some hands-on campaigning around the fast fashion industry."**

Since then, between us we've attended a couple of events with Labour Behind the Label stalls, spoken at a book launch, organized an action at an Asda store and held a remembrance evening for the Rana Plaza victims. It's been great to feel like I'm actively doing something the cause of garment workers worldwide. I've long been a fan of the work Labour Behind the Label do, so working with them in person has been a great experience and they've really made all the Regional Coordinators feel like part of the team. I'd definitely recommend it to anyone passionate about upholding garment workers rights!

Bryony
Manchester Regional Coordinator

To support our campaign work with a regular donation please either visit www.labourbehindthelabel.org/donate. Donations made in this way are made to the Labour Behind the Label Trust.

www.labourbehindthelabel.org