ACTION UPDATE

AUTUMN 2013

Labour Behind the Label

Clean Clothes Campaign

Welcome

Hello and welcome to our biannual publication, celebrating the successes that you have helped us achieve over the last 6 months, resulting in impactful, long lasting change in the garment industry.

In this issue we focus on factory safety and especially our work in Bangladesh. Our Urgent Appeals Coordinator, Sam, shares what the life of a campaigner looks like, and we hear about our victory for Cambodian garment workers.

We include an action card to add your name to the campaign, as well as a donation form. These are the two most significant ways that you can help us to continue our work. You can also help us to reach more supporters through spreading the word on social media and signing up to receiving newsletters via email.

We hope you enjoy the bulletin, thank you for the support which has helped to bring this all together.

Sam, Anna, Ilana and Bec

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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. The Labour Behind the Label Trust is a separate organisation that raises funds for LBL's charitable activities.

Front page photo © Heather Stilwell

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Labour Behind the Label AT A GLANCE

Labour Behind the Label is a campaign that supports garment workers' efforts worldwide to improve their working conditions.

> **We believe that consumers must take ethics into account when they shop**

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 have four strategic aims:

- **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.

CELEBRATING SUCCESS

VICTORY for Indonesian garment workers

In January 2011, 2,800 Indonesian garment workers sewing apparel for Adidas and NIKE at a factory called PT Kizone, were shocked to discover that their factory was being shut down and their jobs gone.

Nearly half a year's wages were left unpaid by the factory bosses, amounting to around $3.3 million in legally owed severance pay. Without this money the workers struggled to pay debts, rent, living costs and school fees.

Labour Behind the Label and the Clean Clothes Campaign worked together to coordinate actions all over the world and lobby for this to be brought to the attention of consumers and put pressure on adidas to pay up.

On the 23rd April this year, 2,800 campaigners and the Indonesian workers finally got the news they had been waiting for - Adidas had agreed to pay a substantial sum towards the $1.8 million they owed.

The victory reaches further than these 2,800 workers. This is the first time that adidas have ever agreed to contribute to the severance pay of workers made redundant from one of their supplier factories.

This not only sets an important precedent within the garment industry, it also shows workers the world over that a strong, united and determined group of workers, combined with international solidarity really can take on one of the world's biggest brands. And win!

Much of the credit for the victory must go to the many supporters from the US and UK, including students who took the fight to their campuses and hit adidas where it really hurt.

Seventeen universities and colleges in the US cut lucrative contracts as result of the violations at Kizone. At Newcastle University, where adidas were attempting to negotiate a sponsorship deal, students took up a campaign to keep adidas out. The campaign has inspired a whole new generation of anti-sweatshop activists, great news for the fight for decent work both here and around the world.

We won this campaign thanks to you, our supporters and activists. When it seemed as though big brands simply would not listen, you stuck with us. This is a celebration not just for the workers in Indonesia but for each and every one of you who got involved. Thank you.

Life on a ROLLER COASTER

Samantha Maher, our Urgent Appeals Coordinator, allows us an insight into her work following the Rana Plaza factory collapse in Bangladesh last April.

"On 23rd of April I was at a meeting with partners from Asia, Europe and North America when I got the call I had been waiting for: adidas had finally agreed to pay severance to 2,800 Kizone factory workers we had been supporting for over a year. We had won!

"The bravery of the Kizone factory workers and the inspiring solidarity of students and activists around the world had forced one of the biggest brands in the world to finally pay up.

"Our celebrations were sadly short-lived: the next morning we received news that a factory had collapsed in

Bangladesh. It was looking bad. The disaster we had been predicting for so long had actually happened.

"By the time I got back to the UK my phone had already started ringing non-stop. The team back in the office had started calling the brands, speaking to the press, putting together calls for action and posting all the information we could through our social media sites.

"The next few weeks seem a blur now. Endless rounds of media calls, sorting through the piles of information coming in from Bangladesh, trying to track and record everything we could. The idea that the industry would carry on as before was unthinkable.

"For over a year we had campaigned for brands to sign up to an agreement that would actually address the root causes of Bangladesh's terrible safety record. We knew we had to make the most of the public attention generated by Rana Plaza to get as many brands to sign up as possible; it could be our only chance to have the world's attention and we needed to make it count.

"The week before the deadline was nerve wracking. The brands were simply not budging; then two days before the deadline H&M finally signed, then Primark, then Tesco, then more and more.

"We had done it. The pressure of over 1 million people taking action to call on these retailers to sign, the hard work done by the unions and by campaign groups, and the weight of the world watching to see if things could change, had finally made the difference we had been working towards for so long.

"We couldn't have done all this without you. Many of our supporters have been with us for years, clicking buttons, raising money and leafleting outside shops. Others have just joined the movement, believing that no worker should have to live in poverty or die like this. By sticking with us and taking part in our campaigns every one you of makes a difference.

"I have worked at LBL for over ten years. Now, more than ever, I feel honoured to do this work, and I am constantly inspired by the acts of solidarity, small and large, we are lucky enough to witness every day. These victories belong to the all workers who have fought so hard for them. They also belong to you. Thank you for all your support."

Samantha Maher
Urgent Appeals Coordinator.

"I'm asked all the time if this Accord would have prevented the deaths of the workers killed in Bangladesh. I believe it would have done. We can't do anything to get these lives back – but this Accord can and will prevent similar tragedies in the future"

FOCUS ON

THE ACCORD on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh

Our supporters will know that we have been busy campaigning for retailers sourcing in Bangladesh to sign an agreement on building safety. After years of campaigning to make these factories safe it has been devastating to see the worst fears of labour rights activists, trade unions and workers come true.

The scale of the tragedy at Rana Plaza meant that our efforts to get retailers to sign a binding agreement concerning factory conditions were suddenly front page news, and within a month we finally forced some of the world's biggest brands to sign up.

This has been a landmark victory. But what is this agreement, and what is the real impact of big brands signing up to it? This pioneering Accord is a legally enforceable contract between over 70 apparel brands and retailers and international and local trade unions, which commits international buyers to take responsibility for the safety of workers making their clothes.

An intensive schedule of inspections and repairs will take place, in part funded by the retailers, to make sure the buildings are safe.

Worker safety trainings will be run by trade unions, with a complaints mechanism available to allow them to raise concerns; and significantly, workers will have a guaranteed right to refuse to enter a dangerous building, without fear of reprisals. Workers who are left without work while renovations are taking place will continue to receive their salaries.

If the factory owners resist these changes, the buyers are committed to pulling out, and investing instead in factories prepared to make changes. Brands are also obliged to help any workers affected by any resulting factory closure, to find alternative work.

Transparency is key element of the programme. Information about the problems and the steps being taken to resolve them at every factory involved will be publicly available to consumers, journalists, and most importantly, the workers themselves.

"The pioneering Accord is a legally enforceable contract between over 70 apparel brands and retailers and international and local trade unions."

Photo © Gordon Welter

Finally, and most importantly, if the retailers try to pull out of their responsibilities, the unions can resort to legal means to enforce the agreement.

So what now? Does this mean the UK consumer can know that the clothes they buy are made in safe conditions? Not just yet. With over 70 brands now signed up, the Accord covers a significant proportion of the Bangladesh garment industry. However some key players remain outside the process.

At the time of going to print, Walmart (Asda) and GAP still refuse to join the Accord. Arcadia too have decided not to join.The Accord has the potential to transform the garment industry – but it is early days and there is much work yet to be done.

We have no doubt that by the time the Accord is completed in five years time it will have saved lives.

So how should this affect your shopping habits? Well, the Accord won't change the fact that workers receive poverty pay or are forced to work long hours. But you do have a choice to reward those companies that have signed up for a safer industry in Bangladesh.

THE ACCORD IN BRIEF

- Brands must assess and address urgent repairs within 9 months of signing
- Repairs already identified must be addressed immediately
- Brands must appoint independent Safety Inspectors and Director
- The Accord will be governed by a committee representing unions, NGOs and companies

Ways to **SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN**

Get your local community involved

Labour Behind the Label are recruiting dedicated regional organisers to work within their local communities to campaign for garment workers rights worldwide. We are looking for people living across the UK who are interested in this exciting opportunity to work with the leading garment workers rights organisation. Could it be you? Get in touch with ilana@labourbehindthelabel.org and see our website for more details.

Photo © Tekla Balfour

Host a launch event for our new campaign

After new revelations about slum living conditions and malnutrition in garment workers, we're gearing up for a big push on fashion companies to address wages. Now is the time! Watch out in October for more news and new resources, and sign up to our e-newsletter online to be the first to hear about the campaign.

Clear out your cupboards

Clothes swapping is lots of fun and is a great opportunity to get people to sign action cards and talk about where our clothes come from. You can also raise a bit of cash to help us fight for better conditions for workers in sweatshops around the world. See our website to download a how-to pack or get in touch with rebecca@labourbehindthelabel.org

Become a regular donor

It will come as no surprise that running these campaigns, lobbying brands and creating materials, costs money. We have recently set up a Charitable Trust to help us make your money go further, through Gift Aid. If you pay tax in the UK we can claim tax back on your donations. For more information on making the most of your donation, talk to rebecca@labourbehindthelabel.org.

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Please pay the **Cooperative Bank plc**; Account number: **6561 9313**; Sort code: **08 92 99**; for the account of **Labour Behind the Label Trust**.

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Dear Mr Wright,

I am shocked to hear that ASDA are refusing to sign up to the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, which all of your major competitors have now joined.

Real action from ASDA on fire and building safety is long overdue. The death toll of the Rana Plaza collapse now exceeds 1,100 garment workers, making it the deadliest industrial disaster in a manufacturing facility in recorded history. This adds to the 112 workers killed at Tazreen Fashions last November. Your parent company, Walmart, had relationships with both of these factories and failed to use its influence to make these workplaces safe.

It is shameful that, even after such horrendous loss of life, ASDA is refusing to make binding commitments to prevent future disasters. Please take action now and sign the Accord on Fire and Building Safety. I look forward to hearing ASDA is finally doing the right thing.

Name:

Email:

Signature:

Affix Stamp Here

Paul Wright
ASDA George
Asda House
Southbank
Great Wilson ST
Leeds
LS11 5AD

Support our campaign by becoming a REGULAR DONOR

Campaigning and lobbying on a range of levels – company, government, public and educational – can achieve long term, sustainable global change.

You can help us achieve this by becoming a friend of the campaign. The easiest way to manage your donation is by visiting our website, **www.labourbehindthelabel.org/donate**.

Alternatively you can fill out the standing order form opposite and return it to: Labour Behind the Label Trust, 10–12 Picton Street, Bristol, BS6 5QA.

We suggest a minimum monthly donation of £5 or annual donation of £60.

If you are an organisation such as a Trade Union body or NGO and would like to show your support for our campaign, please consider becoming an affiliate.

Labour Behind the Label Limited is a not-for-profit cooperative that supports garment workers' efforts worldwide to improve their working conditions. Donations made using this form will be made to the Labour Behind the Label Trust, which raises funds for LBL's charitable activities.

I believe this Accord would have prevented the deaths of the workers killed in Bangladesh. We can't do anything to get those lives back – but we can, and must, prevent similar tragedies in the future...