

 **CLEAN CLOTHES CAMPAIGN**

*Improving working conditions  
in the global garment industry*

[Urgent appeals](#)[Campaigns](#)[News](#)[Companies](#)[Publications](#)[Codes of conduct](#)

Dear all,

As you know, we are very much into evaluating and strategizing at the moment and have been bothering you with long questionnaires. Many of you have taken the trouble of filling it in or gave your time and ideas during an interview.

Thanks for this, and please find below the first paper to come out of this process, the EVALUATION paper. This will be followed end of January by a STRATEGY paper, so if all kinds of interesting ideas for the direction the campaign should take that you mentioned are not in here, do not worry, they will probably be in the strategy paper.

If there are any insights, additions or points of view that you feel would be useful for the evaluation or new things you think of when reading the paper, please send them to us so we can incorporate them in a final version, or an appendix, that will be circulated right before the Barcelona conference (March 2001)

We hope you enjoy reading the paper as much as we enjoyed reading your answers!

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## **Clean Clothes Campaign Discussion Paper: Evaluating the CCC**

### **Introduction**

The Clean Clothes Campaign has been in existence for 10 years. During that time the campaign has grown and the context in which it operates has changed. Many more individuals and organizations are now involved in the campaign, which has spread from the Netherlands to many European countries. Our network of partners and contacts around the world has mushroomed. For example, approximately 200 organizations participate in our international online mailing list and 2500 receive our English language newsletter. Our website receives 600 hits per week. CCC activities include not only demonstrations and rallies that call attention to labour rights violations in the garment industry, but also research and documentation of working conditions in various countries; educational initiatives; an urgent appeals system; the development of and participation in monitoring and verification

projects; international seminars, and local level workshops. We are engaged in an ongoing dialogue with our colleagues around the world to develop new ideas and better strategies to achieve our goal of improving working conditions in the global garment industry. For all these reasons therefore, at this juncture it seems logical to pause and reflect on what we have done thus far to reach our goal, and to evaluate our aims and activities.

We believe this evaluation process is crucial: making this effort to contemplate our past will produce insights that will better inform and facilitate our efforts to formulate strategies in the future. In June 2000 the CCC agreed to develop a questionnaire that would be used to compile evaluation perspectives (as well as strategy ideas), not only from organizations within the campaigns, but to seek information on how others perceive the campaign, its work, and its structure. Gathering information in this manner was seen as a preparatory step toward an international meeting to be held in Barcelona in March 2000 where CCC activities would be evaluated and strategies for the future discussed among members of the various CCCs as well as representatives of partner organizations from other parts of the world.

The questionnaire was circulated to all the CCCs in August. On Sept. 1st it was sent out on the CCC's international mailing list. At that time the questionnaire was also posted on our website with an invitation for all those interested to submit a response. E-mails, faxes, and letters were sent out to the groups and people who we have worked with the campaign in the past, encouraging them to participate in the evaluation process. The questionnaire was circulated a second time on our international mailing list. Individual groups were contacted with specific follow-up questions. In some cases, where possible, people were interviewed in order to get their input. And finally, the questionnaire appeared in the November 2000 edition of the CCC newsletter, with a call for responses. Information from the questionnaire would be used to form two discussion papers, this evaluation paper and a paper on CCC strategy. Both papers are then by definition incomplete -- the discussion is ongoing and are intended to generate more feedback and provoke new ideas.

What follows below is a compilation of the responses we received in response to the questions that dealt with evaluating the CCC. For the sake of brevity we have tried to present this information in the most concise format possible. First we will take a look at what people understand the CCC to be, followed by what they think it has achieved and what the strengths of the campaign are. Then we will look closer at the weaknesses of the campaign, in terms of activities as well as organization and structure, and finally draw some conclusions. We hope that this document will be used to provoke further thought and discussion on the campaign's actions and structure in the past and, in conjunction with the strategy paper due to appear by the end of January, will lead to informed steps to build a better, sustainable campaign for the future.

### **What is the CCC?**

We began our survey by asking people to describe the CCC. We felt that this would be illuminating - to see who and what people perceived the campaign to be. All the respondents seemed to have similar views on what the campaign is, seeing the campaign as focused on improving working conditions in the global garment industry and mentioned some of the specific activity areas which the campaign is involved in. Organizations outside of the European structure of the CCC acknowledged that the campaign exists in several European countries and noted that it operates as a coalition. It is noteworthy though that they described the CCC as made up of NGOs and/or consumer organizations, failing to recognize that trade unions are also an

important component of each of the CCC national level coalitions.

### **What has the CCC achieved?**

In general, it is believed that the CCC has helped to put the issue of labour rights on "the agenda." One CCC member said that there has been "a tremendous change in the quality of the public discourse with the corporations (from outright denial over the claim that they could not possibly take responsibility to the principle promise that they are in fact prepared to take responsibility." Members of the campaign (as well as respondents in North America and the South/East) felt that the CCC's work had resulted in a higher level of public awareness in Europe on labour issues in the garment industry (one Hong Kong respondent noted that this had an impact in Asia as well, and now there is interest there in a variety of consumer campaigns)(1), as well as an increase in institutional interest in corporate responsibility issues. Remarkd one of the CCCs: "We cannot claim credit for the level of awareness but we know we have contributed to it. Whatever companies have done in the past six years they have done as a result of consumer pressure and media exposure. Consumer pressure especially, media exposure to a lesser extent, are the product of campaigning activity." (Several Northern groups specifically cited the increased awareness and contact between workers' organizations in Asia and Europe, another called the CCC's work in Eastern Europe "pioneering"). (2)

*(1) Our Korean partners also responded with information on the consumer campaign that they had started up. They noted difficulties in reaching their target group of middle class consumers, a hesitancy on the part of people to criticize foreign investment during a time of financial crisis, and a need to monitor the implementation of guidelines (involving government and companies).*

*(2) Note that throughout this discussion paper respondents have been broken down into three broad groups: members of the CCC (meaning the European campaigns based in the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany and Austria); "northern" groups (referring to organizations in North America and Western Europe beyond those that are members of the national-level coalitions included in each of the European campaigns); and "southern/eastern" groups (referring to organizations in Asia, Africa, Central and South America and Eastern Europe). While we do not feel comfortable with labels, especially those that bring with them a vast number of stereotypes and generalizations (inhabitants of the north=rich, developed, privileged; south=poor, undeveloped, etc.) we felt the need to break down the responses we received based on position in relation to the campaign, so to more clearly present and understand the perspectives expressed.*

Some within the CCC believe that we have gotten companies to start working on these issues, and at the same time that we have earned their respect. Meanwhile, we have supported efforts in the South/East to improve working conditions. Some CCCers believed that the campaign had done a good job in promoting responsible consumption in developed countries.

Our work on pilot projects to develop knowledge on monitoring and verification was seen as an accomplishment, not only from within (the formation of the Fair Trade Foundation, for example, was also recognized by a representative of a northern group as an accomplishment, as was the signing of letters of intent in Switzerland and Sweden). It is seen as a way to work on alternatives and be part of developing solutions. For the CCCs this is important also because focusing only on the problems makes campaigning very difficult: "...to oppose one must propose".

Colleagues in the South felt that the CCC had helped workers to understand subcontracting chains and had forced companies to respond to the issues (though, "for the whole garment industry the impact is not so strong. When the CCC targets a company there might be some improvements at their subcontractors but not in the whole industry"). In one case, a respondent

(from Eastern Europe) said that by making them aware of the situation, the CCC had pushed them into action.

One respondent from Asia said that there had been better enforcement of labour standards, due to pressure on buyers. One African trade unionist reported that pressure from European consumers on the government and companies was very helpful -- the government pressured the companies to talk with the union and to work on a solution to the labour dispute. Another respondent said that while people at the grassroots level don't see any changes or experience any benefits, at least there is resistance and a way for worker's voices to be heard, and the companies are a bit restricted by the campaigns - "they are aware of the people and the movements that are watching them." One respondent said that in situations where the workers were unable and restricted from forming labour unions, the introduction of "social clauses" by companies due to CCC activities have allowed workers to experience a certain amount of freedom.

### **Positive aspects of the campaign: Usefulness and Strengths**

The CCC carries out a variety of activities; therefore we were interested in hearing what people specifically found to be useful about the CCC's work. What are the specific strengths of the campaign?

Respondents from within the European campaigns, from North America and from production countries in the South and East all saw the CCC as useful for its information provision (on companies and on codes, for example) and as a link to other organizations, individuals and networks. The CCC seems particularly valued for its function as a clearinghouse for information, contacts and for developing creative organizing and campaigning materials. CCC research was seen as reliable and usable. The CCC was seen as being a source of ideas, providing a critical analysis of both problems and potential solutions.

Organizations in Europe and North America found the CCC's work on awareness raising to be useful. The CCC message has broad appeal and provides an entry point for the public. The campaign was seen as creating possibilities for taking action on the issues, and organizations in the North valued the CCC for demonstrating that it is possible to do something. "The urgent appeals network is great. It's a fantastic source of information, networking and building solidarity," responded one North American campaign. Organizations in the South, meanwhile, also appreciated the CCC's work on protest letter writing and solidarity campaigns. The existence of the CCC was seen as providing leverage ("a bargaining tool") with factory management. One respondent who had worked with an Asian trade union noted that in their country action from the buyers was virtually the only means of labour law enforcement. The CCC played a vital role in getting the attention of and pressuring the buyers into taking responsibility for the situation in their subcontractors."

Coordinating our activities at the European level was seen as inspiring by European participants ("together we are a mass movement"). As a European network, participants reported that we functioned well, supplying information (and therefore cutting down on the amount of duplicate work) and access to a pool of experts. As a European-wide organization some respondents from within the campaign believed that we were more credible, taken more seriously, and more internationally recognizable. For the CCCs who operate within organizations that have multiple projects, the CCC was seen as a more successful project.

Southern organisations also saw the 'umbrella' as a strength "...by contacting one organization you contact many".

European participants in the campaign felt that the CCC draws its strength

from being a broad movement with many different organizations in the North, South and East, in combination with its narrow focus on the garment industry. The whole concept of sharing work and working in partnership with many different organisations was seen by some as the strength of the campaign. The focus on brand names and key industry players (since they hold the most power) was also seen as a source of strength from those within the campaign. Relying on our own strength as consumers and members of civil society was seen as important. The campaign conveys clear and appropriate messages. Providing international support in specific cases of workers struggles (providing them with bargaining power) was also seen as a strength.

According to some respondents outside the European campaigns, the CCC draws its strength from the tenacity, determination and commitment of its staff. One of the CCCs praised the Dutch/International secretariat for its grasp of the issues, and for being supportive, energetic, ready to take the initiative, willing to share information and the results of its work, and to provide access to Southern partners.

The campaign's strategy of outreach and networking was seen as a strength. The campaign is valued for being a broad-based one that is based on alliances between consumers, workers and trade unions. One Northern respondent noted the value of the thought the CCC puts into the relationship between campaigning and solidarity (organizing)/workers rights.

The CCC's strategic thinking and ability to straddle the activist-policy divide were seen as important strengths, as were the CCC's ability to mount particularly striking publicity campaigns ("that could be usefully copied by other movements in the 'industrialized' world", our creativity was also noted). Detailed knowledge and popular campaigns based on serious research were seen as the CCC's strengths by some of the Northern groups. One Northern group felt that the CCC drew strength from its emphasis on organizing to have workers' organizers from Asia speak in Europe, another praised the international seminars the campaign has organized. "More opportunities to meet and share experiences like the seminar in Germany would be great; the seminar brought together a broad range of organizations from many different countries."

Other successes cited by Northern groups were the campaign's work done to popularize the issue of a living wage and to encourage debate on the effectiveness of codes of conduct.

The CCC's southern partners believe that the campaign's international networking (and collaboration) has been a positive force for change and has supported workers' movements. The campaign's solidarity actions, consumer campaigns, pressure on governments and companies, work on developing monitoring systems, information exchange (for example, efforts to bring workers to Europe and also efforts to share information on consumers' reactions, as well as providing workers with information on company codes of conduct while they provided the CCC with information on product labels/working conditions) were all seen as strengths. "...as we are active with workers in the South on the same theme, we are interested in relations with the North, to help the workers communicate with the TNCs who are responsible for their situation". Also, helping people (workers and consumers) to understand that globalization is not "far away" but in fact touches their lives was seen as an important contribution by the campaign.

**The CCC's "fairly strong attempts to listen to workers from the South" was seen as one of the campaign's strengths.**

"...The fact that it is an alliance, where Western organizations and people can support workers' organizations in developing countries, without dominating them, is a very important feature. Developing country organizations do not

have the power to compete against the education and experience of the factory owners, who are well-educated business people (usually men, while the workers are women, which is another factor). CCC "lends" the workers' a good Western education and a Western-style network, which helps balance the scale," said one representative from a Southern organization.

### **Negative aspects of the campaign and weaknesses**

People were asked to comment on aspects of the campaign they found not useful. One respondent from the South felt that communicating with companies was a waste of time. Another respondent from the South noted a gap between consumers and workers. Campaigns should have more understanding of the different impacts in different situations of campaigning strategies (ex. attracting attention to child labour, kids lose their jobs, or boycotts mean workers lose their jobs). And strategies in general should have a more holistic approach (linking consumption and production).

When asked about weaknesses, two Southern organizations cited capacity problems, saying that the CCC demands too much from them and adds to their work. Some said that they would like the CCC to do more education on codes, while also questioning the appropriateness of codes. They want more links to northern labour movements, more pressure on governments (not just consumers and companies), better links with workers ("the voice, needs, and demands of the workers are very far away from the campaign"), and more education on globalization (specifically on the issue of lowering social standards for the sake of competitiveness). Environmental concerns were mentioned as an important area that should be considered by the campaign (specifically in relation to water pollution as a result of garment production).

Southern partners said that they had trouble maintaining e-mail contact (language and capacity problems) which made it difficult to take advantage of the work the CCC does. More personal and face-to-face contacts would build up trust and personal relationships, and would help improve communications. The importance of the issue of improving communications cannot be highlighted strongly enough. Face-to-face contacts do not necessarily help. An Asian activist who had recently spent time with the campaign in Europe and had knowledge of a CCC research project in the past cited as weaknesses that the campaign was not distributing information on the internet, and that there was no European level campaigning....

Other Southern groups felt that much more contact and joint work was necessary.

Another group noted that without regular communications, updates and links with labour groups in production countries it is difficult to monitor corporate practices at the factory level. "At the same time, it gives companies some kind of space to promote their improvement of labour practices but CCC cannot access the workers themselves to cross check what the companies report."

The campaign was taken to task by northern groups for not always making it clear that the CCC's focus is not only on conditions for workers in developing countries particularly Asia. One respondent noted that focusing on developing countries can reinforce an attitude that implies that there are no problems in Europe or developed countries. It is important for consumers to realise that the issues are also present here in Europe. In the experience of one of the international organizations that responded to the survey, it is also helpful to groups in, for example, Asia, when they hear that there are similar issues within the industry in Europe (bad conditions, low pay, etc.). Another respondent noted that it's important to link the experiences of those working in the northern economies to those in the south, and that this is of particular relevance to homeworkers. Related to this, it was noted that the campaign doesn't do enough to address the issues of informal sector workers and

production (ex. How do codes work for the informal sector?). One Northern respondent saw lack of cooperation with other "product-sector" campaigns as a weakness. (Note: this issue of changing/expanding the CCC focus/structure is taken up in the CCC strategy discussion paper).

Within the campaign, there was the feeling that capacity problems were causing an inability to follow up as thoroughly as necessary. One of the CCCs remarked, "Should we have set out earlier to increase our overall capacity? Or is now exactly the right time?"

People said that the CCC's presence "on the street" was not great enough, according to their partners (though some in Asia thought just the opposite), and that more speedy information exchange on working conditions is necessary so that we don't each have to do it for ourselves.

One of the campaigns mentioned the CCC's inability to develop "easy-to-use" consumer guides (i.e. rankings for shopping), which we are constantly asked to produce. "We have no choice but to communicate that each consumer has the responsibility to inform him/herself and that this is not possible without putting some effort into it. In other words, we need to foster a culture of consumers that is ready to accept that."

One of the CCCs felt that not spending enough time considering corporate responses to the campaign is one of the CCC's weaknesses. "We should take greater account of the strategies the companies have evolved to counter our activities when formulating our own strategies. For example, entering into a dialogue with NGOs..., companies terminating contracts with suppliers as a result of campaigns, etc." Has our work on codes of conduct given companies access to a new legitimacy and allowed them to whitewash their practices? "This is not to say that we should not have focused on codes or that we should end our focus on codes -- companies would be only too happy if we did," remarked one CCC. Other campaigns, in North America as well, were also very aware of the need to evaluate the code work every step of the way, to be sure that it was worthwhile. The work on the monitoring and verification projects was seen as very time- and resource consuming and not giving much results in terms of actual improvement of labour conditions or in terms of offering consumers a choice.

Although a start was made with work on legal issues and campaigning for more public regulations (ex. International forum on legal ways of implementing codes, resolution by European parliament, cities for ethical procurement) people felt this was not developed sufficiently and there should be more clarity on the interplay between these strategies and the work with codes.

One of the campaigns felt that the exchanges with companies were too far removed from the educational work with consumers, and they were not clear anymore what to tell consumers after a company has adopted a 'good' code and/or has become involved in a monitoring/verification project. One of the campaigns said that they would like to see the campaign do a better job at exchanging methods. Another said that cooperation with campaigns in other regions (the United States and Central America) should be strengthened. One other Northern organization said that they wanted to receive more news on CCC success stories.

We asked people what they thought the campaign should have accomplished, but did not. CCC respondents felt that we should have transformed labour conditions (while acknowledging that our partners recognize that what we do does help) and built an independent verification system. Within the campaign, people thought we should have been doing all our activities more and more in depth. Other Northern groups also called for a stronger, more active campaign, with some respondents noting that alliances and coordination could

be better and that the CCC could take on more leadership in the Nike campaign.

One Northern respondent felt we should have been able to forge better links with, and have our issues carried by, other international networks/campaigns. Specifically the environmental movement and the anti-globalization movement were mentioned, the last one did make Nike into a symbol of what is wrong with the global economy but are not very well linked to our campaigns.

More specifically, CCCers believed there should have been more follow-up on urgent appeals cases, more cooperation with consumer unions, and more cooperation with labour unions (though recognizing that this varies from country to country). In terms of content, one respondent felt there should have been more attention to the gender aspect of the issues we deal with (ex. Nike announced they are targeting European women, why aren't we? Why aren't there more women's organizations in our national platform?). Others felt we should have been able to get more done at the level of our national governments. One Northern respondent noted that more should have been done on the issue of homeworking (we could learn from the experiences of the Fair Wear Campaign in Australia). Several CCCs and Northern groups felt the lack of coordinated work, CCC as a whole, on environmental issues is a big weakness. Some active CCC groups work on environmental issues (ex. Biological cotton) but it remains isolated.

Southern and Eastern groups also noted failures in terms of the scope of the campaign -they believed that Eastern European organizations should have joined the campaign earlier, that there should have been more attention to the difficulties surrounding the issue of child labour, and that more attention should have been given to the harassment of women and pressure on women to move from the formal to the informal sector.

More companies should have signed onto the CCC code by now and there should have been the implementation of a monitoring system.

One Southern respondent said we failed to change TNC behaviour (but then added that it is unfair to demand that the CCC should accomplish that). Another said that buyers should have been forced to take a more comprehensive approach to their subcontractors so that there were more visible improvements in working conditions across the industry (buyers intervened primarily on specific problems rather than on fixing up conditions to prevent problems from arising). The CCC was not able to implement codes for all subcontractors, noted another respondent. Again, the usefulness of codes as a tool for improving labour conditions was questioned.

While one organization said they felt involved in strategy development, another said that there should have been more strategizing with local organizations and trade unions. "Trade unions are far away from the campaigns, they should be more linked to them. We need to fill the gaps between campaigns and trade unions." One respondent called for mobilization and more workshops to be held in Asia.

In terms of information provision, one Southern respondent believed that the CCC should have compiled a database to trace information on companies and subcontracting chains.

## Conclusions

- The campaign's main successes are seen to be raising awareness on the issues, networking, and information provision (though failure to communicate our successes).
- The CCC's urgent appeals network is seen as one of the campaigns strengths, both as a system for distributing information and motivating action.



But there is a feeling that the follow through on cases needs more attention (in terms of strategy, given that companies often "cut and run" when campaigning draws attention to labour rights violations at a particular factory, and in practical terms, i.e. how long do we continue to follow a case).

- The CCC is recognized for its contacts and cooperation with Asian groups - this is an accomplishment in itself, but points to the need to strengthen links with other regions (Africa, Central & Eastern Europe, Central America, North America). There is concern that the issue of violations of labour rights in developed countries have not been addressed enough.

- In terms of content, homeworking and gender issues were seen as needing more attention. There is interest in covering environmental concerns as well. Cooperation with other "product-sector" campaigns (ex. baby milk groups, toys) and/or the environmental movement or anti-globalization movement could be a way to strengthen the campaign.

- There were mixed messages on codes all around, as some respondents felt they were not appropriate or even a failure, and others felt they were one of the most important campaigning tools and strategically useful for creating space for debate, publicity and enable pressure. Most people are "...well aware of the dual nature of codes. On the one hand, they give TNCs an excellent public relations opportunity. At the same time they give us a leverage through which we can pressure companies to improve their workers' rights situation and hopefully create conditions that facilitate the right to organise and the right to collective bargaining".\*

\* (LARIC in Change, bulletin of HKCIC, July 1999)

- Capacity problems were noted at all levels (the CCC needs to do more, but we don't currently have the capacity to do so; we ask our partners to do more than they can, etc.) Capacity problems have an impact on other issues (for example capacity to expand communications between North and South -- communication problems slow down or limit effectiveness/participation in the urgent appeals system and other campaign activities/resources).

- Better links between North and South -- in terms of strategizing, input and awareness raising (should go both ways, ex. on globalization -- make connections between those working in Northern and Southern economies). Some Southern groups would like the campaign to do more education work (on codes for example). The relationship between trade unions and NGOs, within and outside of the campaign, deserves more attention.

- The interplay between codes (often voluntary mechanisms) and public regulation (local labour law or international legal measures) at different levels was mentioned as an area needing attention. Few people commented specifically on legal initiatives (though there was some mention of increasing our lobbying effort at the local/national level), though this is logical as it is a relatively new area of activity for the CCC.

