

# THREADS

Newsletter of the Clean Clothes Campaign

Number 26 | Autumn 2008



**THIS ISSUE:**

# Job Security

# CONTACTS

## Clean Clothes Campaign Contacts in Europe

### Austria

Clean Clothes Kampagne  
cck@cleanclothes.at  
www.cleanclothes.at

### Belgium

Schone Kleren Campagne  
campagne@schonekleren.be  
www.schonekleren.be

### Campagne Vêtements Propres

info@vetementspropres.be  
www.vetementspropres.be

### Central & Eastern Europe (including Turkey)

Bettina Musiolek  
bemusi@web.de

### Regina Barendt

oreginally@yahoo.de

### Denmark

Clean Clothes Campaign Denmark  
mail@cleanclothes.dk  
www.cleanclothes.dk

### France

Ethique sur l'étiquette  
contact@ethique-sur-etiquette.org  
www.ethique-sur-etiquette.org

### Germany

Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung  
ccc-d@vemission.org  
www.sauberekleidung.de

### Italy

Campagna Abiti Puliti  
coord@cnms.it  
www.abitipuliti.org

### The Netherlands

Schone Kleren Kampagne  
info@schonekleren.nl  
www.schonekleren.nl

### Norway

Kampanjen Rene klær  
info@reneklaer.no  
www.reneklaer.no

### Spain

Campaña Ropa Limpia  
info@ropalimpia.org  
www.ropalimpia.org

### Sweden

Natverket Rena Kläder  
info@renaklader.org  
www.renaklader.org

### Switzerland

Clean Clothes Campaign  
Erklärung von Bern  
ccc@evb.ch  
www.cleanclothes.ch

### Clean Clothes Campaign

Déclaration de Berne  
info@cleanclothes.ch  
www.cleanclothes.ch

### United Kingdom

Labour Behind the Label  
info@labourbehindthelabel.org  
www.labourbehindthelabel.org



# CONTENTS

## 4 CCCs IN ACTION

## 6 PLAY FAIR: BEIJING AND BEYOND

## 8 JOB SECURITY: A KEY DEMAND

## 10 URGENT APPEALS

## 12 PARTNER PROFILE

## 14 NEWS FROM THE GLOBAL NETWORK

## 15 GUEST COLUMN & NEW RESOURCES

## 16 LOOKING AHEAD

## Colophon

This newsletter is a Clean Clothes Campaign publication.

ISSN: 1387-9944

Editors: Marcella Kraay, Celia Mather and Paige Shipman

Design: Annelies Vlasblom, www.anneliesvlasblom.nl

Cover Photo: Raoul Kramer, Hollandse Hoogte

Printed: on FCS certified paper by PrimaveraQuint

The Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) is dedicated to improving working conditions and supporting the empowerment of workers in the global garment and sportswear industries. Since 1989, the CCC has worked with trade unions, NGOs and workers across the globe to help ensure that the fundamental rights of workers are respected. We educate and mobilise consumers, lobby companies and governments, and offer direct solidarity support to workers as they fight for their rights and demand better working conditions.

# EDITORIAL

The Beijing Olympics came to a close in August, but some of the organisations involved in Play Fair 2008 already have their sights on 2010 and 2012. The Olympic organisations and the sportswear industry still have a lot of work to do to ensure respect for workers' rights, but the Clean Clothes Campaign is encouraged by the plan to form a joint working group with representatives of sportswear brands, trade unions and NGOs to consider steps to promote trade unionism and collective bargaining, as well as improve wages, across the entire sector.

One of the principal demands of the Play Fair campaign was to eliminate the use of precarious employment in sportswear supply chains. As we reported in *Clearing the Hurdles: Steps to Improving Wages and Working Conditions in the Global Sportswear Industry*, unions and labour rights organisations across the globe have observed an alarming increase in the use of successive short-term contracts and third-party employment contract agencies. Short-term contracts profoundly undermine the security of workers and are often used to deny them basic protections and benefits while undercutting their organising efforts.

Play Fair 2008 challenged the sportswear industry's addiction to flexibility and insisted that freedom of association and protection from discrimination are more likely to be realised through the development of long-term, stable contracts with suppliers.

Meanwhile, the Clean Clothes Campaign and Oxfam Australia have been reinforcing that same point in a call for sector-wide solutions in Indonesia's garment and sportswear industry.



Dutch CCC at Play Fair 2008 information table.

Indonesia is the CCC's leading source of urgent appeals for solidarity support, so we teamed up with Oxfam Australia, unions and labour rights groups in Indonesia to identify concrete solutions to address pervasive labour rights violations. As is the case elsewhere in the garment industry, the trend toward short-term contract labour was revealed as one of the fundamental issues facing Indonesian workers, who commonly find themselves in factories where 50% or more of the workforce do not have permanent contracts, despite years of dedicated service.

In its forthcoming campaign aimed at the new breed of giant retail stores (see back cover), the CCC and its allies will continue to push companies to systematically address this problem not only by monitoring suppliers' employment contracts with workers, but also adjusting their own buying practices and supporting, instead of lobbying against, positive legal reforms that curtail the abuse of short-term contracts. ✂

## Financial contributions to the Clean Clothes Campaign:

**Account holder:** St. SKK/Clean Clothes Campaign

**Bank and account number:** Postbank 3927802

**IBAN number:** NL35PSTB0003927802

**BIC/Swift number:** PSTBNL21

## International Secretariat Clean Clothes Campaign

P.O. Box 11584, 1001 GN Amsterdam the Netherlands

T + 31 20 412 27 85

F + 31 20 412 27 86

E [info@cleanclothes.org](mailto:info@cleanclothes.org)

W [www.cleanclothes.org](http://www.cleanclothes.org)

# CCCs IN ACTION



Swiss CCC's fair fashion t-shirt features the portrait of seamstress Sasi Rekha.

## SWISS CAMPAIGN FOR FAIR FASHION

---

**Earlier this year the Swiss CCC and Switcher, the first fashion retailer to have joined the Swiss Fair Wear Foundation (FWF), produced 3,000 model t-shirts – and in less than a month sold them all.**

The t-shirts, made at the Prem Groups factory in Tirupur, India, incorporate sustainability, transparency and justice. They were produced under conditions of fair trade and fair labour in the cotton fields and factory. They're also produced organically and are CO2-neutral.

The campaign wanted to show the hidden faces of the workers who make the clothes. Sasi Rekha, who sewed the right-hand seams, gave her name to the women's t-shirt and her portrait is on one sleeve. The men's t-shirt is named after Muthu, a fabric cutter at the Prem factory.

Filmmaker Matthias Stickel documented the making of the t-shirt. His film **Das Revolutionäre T-Shirt** (The Revolutionary T-Shirt) is available with French or German subtitling.

The campaign website includes video clips, posters, petition forms, buttons and banners.

As part of the campaign, the Swiss CCC organised street actions in eight Swiss cities where 17,000 people signed a petition demanding that the 51 other retailers in Switzerland get moving on ethical production.

They called on the companies to adopt the CCC code of conduct, join the FWF, and produce more organic clothing. As a result, 19 companies are now in dialogue with the CCC, and three are set to join the FWF. Rapid sales of the t-shirt have shown that Swiss consumers demand 'fair fashion'. ✂

[www.fairemode.ch](http://www.fairemode.ch)

## COLLABORATION WITH LATIN AMERICA

---

Garment production is on the rise in Latin America and several brands familiar to us here in Europe – including the retailers C&A and Inditex – have an increasingly large presence there. It was high time for the CCC to learn more about working conditions in the region, so Albert Sales of the CCC in Spain (Campana Ropa Limpia) took a trip to Argentina in June.

Albert visited the Argentinian capital Buenos Aires to strengthen contact with organisations from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, México and Perú that are working on garment workers' rights. In garment factories in Buenos Aires, migrants from Bolivia are working in slave-like conditions.

Links between Europe and Latin America are growing. The Latin American groups are interested in how the CCC has organised its network and what we know about European-based corporations. The Dutch research group SOMO is working with three Argentinian organisations, Interrupción, Fundación El Otro, and la Alameda, to study the relationship between European brands and sweatshops in Buenos Aires. With the support of the Spanish CCC, they will be producing the publication **Tras la Etiqueta** (Behind the Label). ✂



Labour rights activist May Wong visited Europe to speak about conditions in Chinese garment factories.

## TOUR OF CHINESE ACTIVISTS IN EUROPE

---

In May 2008, the CCC brought labour activists from Hong Kong and China to Europe for a tour aimed primarily at students and teachers of fashion. Media interviews and lobbying helped raise public awareness about workers' rights in China.

Fashion College students are the future decision-makers in the fashion industry. The aim of the Fashion Colleges Project, a collaboration of CCC network members in Austria, the UK, Poland and the Netherlands, is to educate fashion college students on labour rights issues.

Staphany Wong of the Global Unions' International Hong Kong Liaison Office (IHLO) and Pui-Lin Sham, a garment worker and an Executive Committee member of the Hong Kong Clothing, Clerical & Retailing General Union, visited four fashion design schools and spoke to 550 students in Austria. They met with the Chancellor of Austria and Sports Minister, who issued an official statement supporting them and had his photograph taken with them. The two also participated in discussions with parliamentarians and the public.

Staphany and Pui-Lin then went on to Poland, meeting with students, NGOs and the media. In conjunction with a film festival in Warsaw, the campaign showed the film **China Blue** and held a discussion with the audience about the

consequences of everyday consumer decisions. In Olkusz, Staphany and Pui-Lin spoke to high school students and in Cracow they took part in a debate and screening of **We shop. Who pays?**

Meanwhile, May Wong, coordinator of the Hong Kong-based 'Globalisation Monitor', spoke with British fashion students at colleges in London and Nottingham and visited Bristol to speak alongside a screening of **China Blue**. She then travelled on to the Netherlands and spoke to over 60 fashion students at the Utrecht Academy of Arts and the Amsterdam Fashion Institute. ✂



By the time the Beijing Olympics' opening ceremony hit our TV screens in August, no fewer than 168 organisations in 35 countries had signed up to the Play Fair 2008 campaign.

# Play Fair

## Beijing and Beyond



Speakers at the Play Fair 2008 Worker Organisers' Exchange in Bangalore, India.

**P**lay Fair 2008 calls on sportswear brands and manufacturers, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), National Olympics Committees, and national governments to take steps to eliminate the exploitation of workers in Olympic supply chains. The campaign is organised by the CCC, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), and the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation (ITGLWF).

As the Games drew near, activities stepped up across the globe. Virtual 'torchbearers' were mobilised to sign a message to the IOC and send the flame onwards via Bluetooth, SMS and e-mail. By May 1 the Play Fair virtual flame reached China, and on June 10 the CCC handed over to the IOC the signatures of over 12,000 'torchbearers' from 99 countries.

In April, the campaign issued its report **Clearing the Hurdles**, showing how violations of worker rights are still the norm in the sportswear industry. This includes workplaces producing for adidas, the sponsor of the Beijing and London Games and numerous national Olympic teams.

The Play Fair campaign followed up on the report in July, when nearly eighty trade union, NGO and company representatives met in Hong Kong. The meeting included labour activists from important Asian sportswear producing countries. The main sporting goods companies were also present, along with Yue Yuen, a giant manufacturer of athletic footwear that supplies several of them. Representatives from multi-stakeholder initia-



150 Play Fair activists from CCC Belgian South participate in a 20k marathon in Brussels.

tives like the Fair Labor Association (FLA) and industry bodies like the World Federation of Sporting Goods Industries (WFSGI) were in attendance as well. Some of the brands, among them Nike, adidas, New Balance, Umbro and Speedo, agreed to join a working group, with the aim of improving labour conditions by promoting union organisation, collective bargaining and social dialogue. The first meeting of the working group is scheduled for November 2008.

Play Fair partners and CCC representatives met up with workers and unionists in India as part of a worker organisers' exchange. Participants had the chance to visit different garment production centres in India, including Tiripur, Bangalore, Mumbai and Calcutta. The visits enabled participants to see working conditions in different parts of the garment supply chain and in a wide variety of contexts. Organisers also had the chance to discuss effective strategies and common obstacles to union organising. The workers' exchange included a workers' rally and a cultural event organised by the local unions.

The Play Fair 2008 campaign signed off just days before the Games opened. Events took place in various countries around the world. In French-speaking Belgium, over 100 volunteers from 15 organisations were out in full force at the Esperanzah world music festival, where 8,000 people signed the petition to the Belgian Olympic Committee. In Hong Kong, a wide coalition of local unions and labour rights groups carried out street activities and confronted the International Olympic Committee for its failure to act on the exploitation of workers in the manufacture of Olympics-branded products. Finally, with due ceremony, the Hong Kong campaign passed the torch on to the next phase of Play Fair, heading for the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, Canada and then on to London in 2012. ✂

**Clearing the Hurdles: Steps to improving working conditions in the global sportswear industry, Play Fair, April 2008 can be downloaded at [www.playfair2008.org](http://www.playfair2008.org). It is available in seven languages.**

## Shameful stonewalling by the IOC

*Five years have passed since we first called on the IOC to stand up for the workers who make Olympics products, but it is still business as usual for them. Once again, money is pouring in to the coffers of the Olympics movement, but the workers who create the wealth are still being ripped off.*

Guy Ryder, General Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)

For years, the IOC has been under pressure to deal with sweatshop labour in the production of Olympic-branded goods. Alongside our in-depth reports, Play Fair produced a 'road map' with concrete suggestions for action the IOC could take.

The campaign also demonstrated worldwide support for fair and decent working conditions. Nevertheless, the IOC failed miserably, refusing to commit any staff or resources to the task or to engage in proper dialogue. The CCC has heard that reference to ethical supply chain issues may be included in choosing the host city for the 2016 Games, but no details are yet available. There is no sign of substantial IOC action around the Vancouver, London or Sochi Olympics in the coming eight years. So many of the participants in Play Fair 2008 are determined to continue the fight.

[www.playfair.org](http://www.playfair.org)

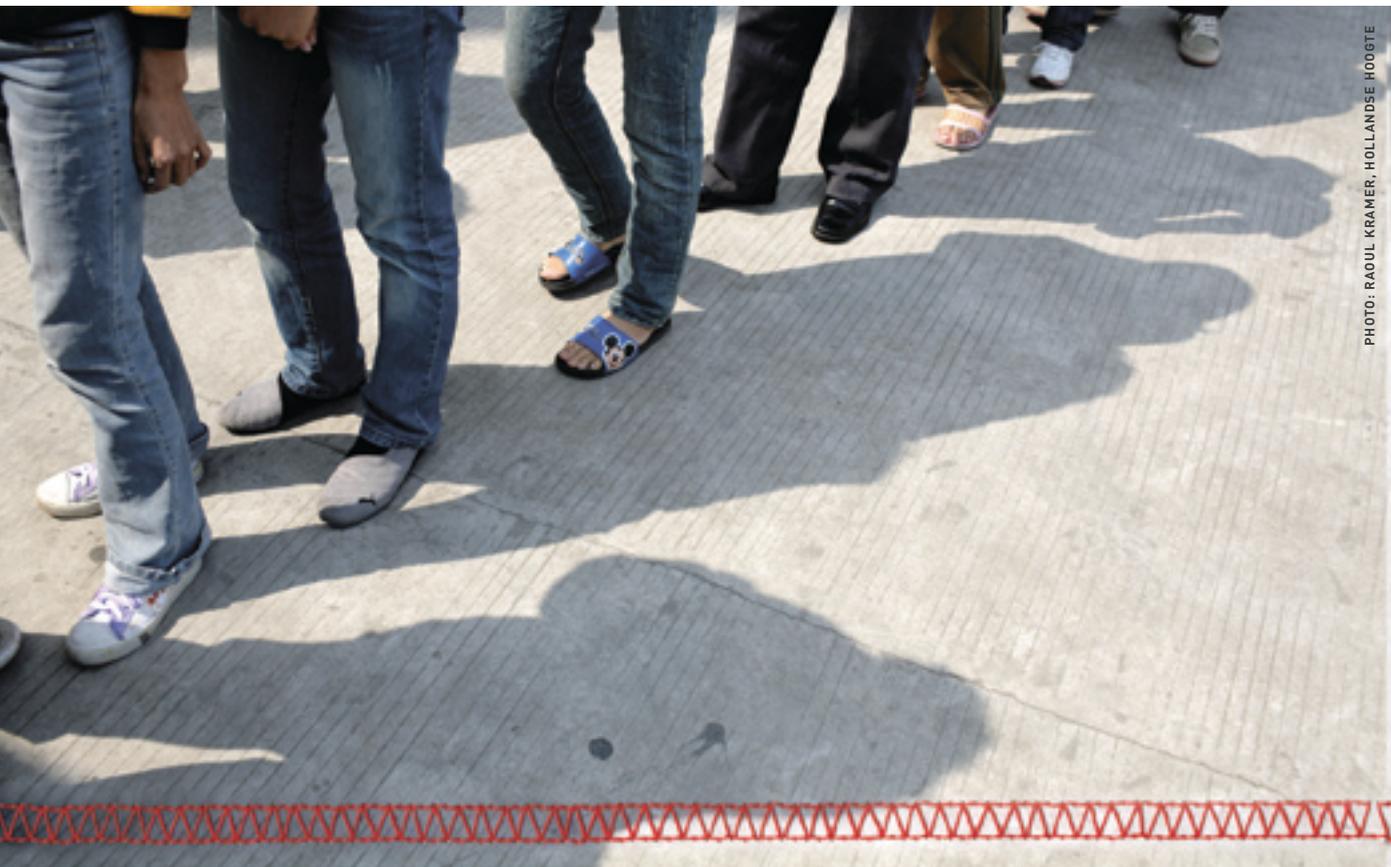


PHOTO: RAOUL KRAMER, HOLLANDESE HOOGTE

# Job Security: A Key Demand

**All over the world, in every industry, more and more workers are being hired on anything but permanent contracts. Garment workers are no exception.**

**I**n the worst cases, garment workers are hired on a day-to-day basis. Others have only temporary or short-term contracts. Employers may give the same worker a short-term contract over and over again, which proves that her work is actually a normal part of the company's operation and not temporary at all. In other cases, employers call their employees 'seasonal', even though the workers are not performing seasonal production. Still others hire so-called 'probationers' or 'apprentices', but the workers never get the chance of promotion implied by these terms.

Then there are the workers hired through a third-party, a labour agent or broker.

Some workers have to pay the agent a fee to get a job, putting them in debt before they even begin working. These workers may never become the employees of the principal company and are paid through the agent. It can become very unclear who their employer actually is.

Despite the variety of terms and conditions, all of these workers share a precarious employment situation: they and their families have no financial security, and little way out of poverty.

Employers are using precarious forms of employment relations to dodge their legal responsibilities towards perma-



nently employed workers, such as paid holidays, maternity leave, and other social benefits. Insecure work arrangements make it more difficult for workers to organise into strong trade unions. Without a secure contract, workers are more vulnerable, and it is more challenging to organise workers when they are not in one workplace with a clearly defined employer.

How do we overcome the challenges posed by the increasing complexity and diversity of employment relationships? The CCC has decided on an approach that acknowledges the possibility of flexible working terms, but only within certain limits. In no case shall short-term contracts and labour agencies be used for a company's principal day-to-day work, and any workers employed in these ways must have the same working terms and conditions, and union rights, as permanent workers.

The CCC demand for job security and our policy on precarious employment (see box for full text) will be included in forthcoming campaign and discussions with brands, retailers and governments. ✂



## A Trend Toward Insecurity

In **Indonesia**, some companies are including a clause in the employment contract of short-term workers saying that they are not allowed to unionise; this violates workers' fundamental right to organise.

In **India**, the Ministry of Textiles wants to promote more 'flexibilisation' and proposed a new clause in the labour law that allows employers to guarantee only 100 days of employment for textile and garment workers.

**South Korea** has changed its labour law to counteract the casualisation of work: contract workers now automatically become formal workers after two years. But employers are ignoring the intent of the law by laying off workers within the two year period.

## CCC Policy on Precarious Employment

**The growing use of precarious employment such as short-term contracts, day workers and third party agencies is denying workers their social security and other legal entitlements, discouraging worker organising, and undermining the enforcement of labour regulations, which too often do not apply to non-permanent workers.**

- ▷ Workers undertaking a factory's principal work should have the right to permanent employment.
- ▷ The use of these forms of precarious employment can only be justified for work that is clearly exceptional or out of the ordinary day-to-day work of the factory.
- ▷ Precarious forms of employment should not be used to undercut the legal rights and benefits to which permanent employees are entitled.

This means that:

- ▷ Any use of fixed duration contracts should be in response to a clearly defined plan justifying their use.
- ▷ All precariously employed workers should be provided with at least the same salary and benefits accorded to permanent workers performing the same work.
- ▷ A short-term employee should have the automatic right to permanent employment if employed by the same

employer for two years, or upon entering into a third contract with the same employer after two fixed-term contracts.

- ▷ Labour-only contracting arrangements or false apprenticeship schemes should not be used to avoid fulfilling obligations to workers.
- ▷ All precariously employed workers should have the right to join the trade union of their choice, including any union organising permanent workers at the factory in which they work.
- ▷ National labour law should reflect the above, and should be well enforced.

# URGENT APPEALS

Striking workers call on Triumph subsidiary to reinstate their union president.



Despite the odds, garment workers across the globe are bravely laying claim to their rights, including the right to join and form a union. The CCC supports them by offering solidarity support in urgent cases of labour and human rights violations. For more information and to take action, go to the Urgent Appeals section of [www.cleanclothes.org](http://www.cleanclothes.org).

More than two thousand of her co-workers, mostly women, walked out of the factory, demanding her reinstatement. The Triumph International Thailand Labour Union is one of the strongest in Thailand. Ms. Kotshadej's dismissal came not long after the union successfully negotiated a collective bargaining agreement.

The CCC took up the case with the Swiss headquarters of Triumph International, one of the world's largest underwear producers. After several contradictory responses, the company agreed to take back the striking workers without punishment and to implement its own Code of Conduct. In an agreement to end the strike, Triumph's subsidiary insisted on letting the Thai courts decide the case instead of reinstating Ms. Kotshadej. The striking workers, fearing for their jobs and under high pressure because of a lack of financial resources, had no other option than to sign the agreement. The Clean Clothes Campaign remains concerned about the company's commitment to uphold its Code of Conduct, which explicitly includes freedom of expression and freedom of association.

Wanphen Wonsombat of the Triumph union and Premjai Jaikla of the Thai Labour Campaign toured Europe in the end of September to press Triumph to ensure compliance with their Code of Conduct and international labour and human rights standards. ✂

## TRIUMPH SUBSIDIARY SACKS UNION PRESIDENT

***One worker has been fighting for many years in support of thousands of workers at the factory. So now we are fighting for that one worker.***

**Workers who were on strike at Triumph International, Thailand**

On July 29 2008, union president Jitra Kotshadej was dismissed from a Thai subsidiary of Triumph International for wearing a t-shirt with the message:

'Those who do not stand are not criminals. Thinking differently is not a crime'. It referred to the right not to stand up during the royal anthem, and the suppression of political opposition using a law that prohibits disloyalty to the king. Ms. Kotshadej was taking part in a TV debate on women's reproductive rights in her private time and did not claim to represent the views of Triumph or its subsidiary.

# FASHION BRANDS IGNORE VIOLATIONS IN INDONESIA

In 2007, workers at the PT Mulia Knitting Factory in Jakarta, Indonesia, formed a union (SBGTS-GSBI) to fight for their rights to pregnancy and miscarriage leave, and for transport for women on the night shift. Other grievances included the lack of mandatory health and pension benefits, poor safety equipment, and keeping workers on temporary contracts. The factory supplies such major brands as Phillips van Heusen, Polo Ralph Lauren and Tommy Hilfiger.

## COURT CASES WITHDRAWN

After mediation by former Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers, the CCC and the India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN) agreed to end the campaign against the Indian clothing manufacturer Fibre and Fabrics International and its subsidiary JKPL (FFI/JKPL) and its major buyer, G-Star.

In late January 2008 an agreement was reached whereby FFI/JKPL would withdraw the court cases it had brought against the CCC, the ICN and their internet/ADSL-providers Antenna and XS4ALL, as well as the Indian labour rights organisations GATWU, Cividep, NTUI, and Munnade. The agreement stipulates that an ombudsperson shall handle complaints from FFI/JKPL employees, find solutions acceptable to all parties and regularly report. A Committee of Custodians, with Lubbers a member, will advise the ombudsperson and make sure all parties adhere to the agreement.

FFI/JKPL employees can become union members. The local union GATWU and other Indian groups involved can speak freely again.

The CCC extends its gratitude to all the organisations that supported our partners and us throughout the case. ✂

Managers moved swiftly against the new union. They suspended the president and dismissed three officials. Fifteen other officials and members were given a choice: renounce the union or be transferred to PT Spindo Mills, a factory 60 kilometres away. The workers continued to report to PT Mulia but were dismissed for not showing up at PT Spindo. Management also filed cases against the union for using the factory's address on the union's letterhead (a common practice in Indonesia) and asked the Labour Ministry to remove the SBGTS-GSBI from the official register.

In return, the union filed cases with the Labour Ministry and the Indonesian National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM). In April 2008, the Commission concluded that union rights had been violated. But the local Labour Department disregarded this and decided in favour of the company.

The situation went into deadlock. The company refused to meet with the union, and went ahead with severance payment for the 19 dismissed workers.

The CCC asked the three buyers to take action. Phillips van Heusen responded positively for reinstatement of the union organisers. Polo Ralph Lauren failed to do anything. Tommy Hilfiger merely referred to an audit that did not include input from the SBGTS union.

The CCC is calling on supporters to contact Tommy Hilfiger and Polo Ralph Lauren to ensure that their supplier respects freedom of association. Demands include: reinstating the 19 workers and payment of their outstanding wages and social benefits, recognition of the SBGTS-GSBI and meeting with the union to resolve outstanding labour issues. ✂

Activists from CCC Norway with Wanphen Wongsombat of the Triumph International Thailand Labour Union.



# PARTNER PROFILE

## Cecilia Tuico

### From Workers' Assistance Center The Philippines

**Workers' Assistance Center (WAC) supports the workers of the Cavite Export Processing Zone in the Philippines. We asked WAC's International Relations & Campaign Program Officer Cecilia Tuico about WAC's activities.**

#### **What is the history of the Workers' Assistance Center?**

**T**he Center began in 1995 as part of the social-pastoral work of the Most Holy Rosary Parish and Father Joe Dizon. But the workers really needed to be unionised and, as a church, we couldn't do that. So we became an NGO in 1997.

#### **Does the organisation still have a religious aspect?**

Father Joe is still the Executive Director, and our work includes raising awareness about workers' issues among the religious and professional sectors - to encourage them to support the workers. When priests and nuns speak up for striking workers, the public and the government are more likely to listen.

#### **How did you become involved?**

I have known Father Joe since I was a student activist. I became involved in WAC's research team in 1996. I learned that workers' issues aren't just about wages or economics. You can't just ask for an increase in wages; you have to change the wage system and the political system. Even when workers are aware of their rights, they don't know how to fight for them because they are scared of losing their jobs. It became a challenge for

me to see how I could help in a little way and make workers aware of their rights.

#### **Most of the workers you're organising are women. Does that pose special challenges?**

Our society doesn't look upon women so well, but it's changing. Even when women are working in the factory all day, they have to go home and do the housework. Some husbands don't agree with wives being in the union or being union leaders. So we have to convince the rest of the family that what their mother or wife is doing is good. We encourage them to bring their husbands along to our seminars.

#### **What do workers think about being part of an international network?**

They get to meet a lot of international visitors who come to learn about their conditions. I show them copies of protest letters sent from international groups to our government. The workers really appreciate it. Some can't imagine that there are people so far away who are concerned about their rights.



**After more than ten years with WAC, what changes have you seen?**

When I started, I heard a lot of stories about 'no union, no strikes' in the Zone and the whole province. A lot of workers are still afraid, but some will go far and beyond to fight for their rights. The challenge now is that they may succeed in forming a union and getting certified, but they have to strike to get a collective bargaining agreement.

**What has the government done about the violence against workers?**

Gerardo Cristobal, the former President of the Solidarity of Cavite Workers (SCW), was shot on April 28th, 2006 and our Chairperson, Bishop Alberto Ramento, was murdered on October 3rd, 2006. But the government still refuses to address the issue of violence against workers. During meetings we talk to workers about the political crisis and we mobilise them to take action.

**What goals does WAC have for the future?**

We would like to create a health centre for workers with occupational health problems. We see a lot of garment workers suffer-

ing from lung and respiratory illnesses, and from urinary tract infections caused by not being allowed to go to the bathroom or having to make up quota in order to get permission. The workers give their lives to these companies, but they don't get any help from them to deal with health problems. I tell them: if you have a union and a collective bargaining agreement, you can get help.

**What do you envision for yourself in the future and what keeps you involved?**

If I had the time and money, I would study law. There are so many legal cases that aren't pursued because the workers don't have the money to pay for litigation. The workers are very inspiring. For example, the women workers who were recently attacked on the picket line have been traumatised; but even with the violence, they want to go back on the picket line. That kind of determination is truly inspiring. ✂

**The Clean Clothes Campaign congratulates the Workers Assistance Center for receiving the 2008 Justice and Peace Award from the Tji Hak-soon Justice and Peace Foundation based in South Korea.**

# NEWS

## FROM THE GLOBAL NETWORK

### US SWEATFREE CAMPAIGN TAKES AIM AT GOVERNMENT PURCHASING

SweatFree Communities, a US network of campaigns that promote fair and decent working conditions in apparel and other labour-intensive global industries, has recently formed the SweatFree Consortium.

The SweatFree Consortium will help states, cities, counties, local government agencies, and school districts enforce their commitments to stop purchasing from sweatshops. Involving both state and local governments, the SweatFree Consortium will facilitate sweatfree purchasing policy enforcement by pooling resources, sharing knowledge and expertise, and coordinating standards and code compliance activities.

SweatFree Communities published a report this summer showing how public bodies are using millions of US taxpayer dollars to buy workers' uniforms from companies engaged in serious human and labour rights violations. The report's launch, alongside actions in eight cities, won widespread media attention.

#### ***Subsidizing Sweatshops: How Our Tax Dollars Fund the Race to the Bottom, and What Cities and States Can Do,***

included case studies of 12 factories in nine countries that produce public employee uniforms for nine major uniform brands.

SweatFree Communities held its annual summit to coincide with the National Governors Association Centennial Meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Activists took advantage of this opportunity to bring the message of worker justice directly to US governors. Activists participated in a weekend of training, strategy, and action.

[www.sweatfree.org](http://www.sweatfree.org)

### CAMPAIGN FOR AN ASIA FLOOR WAGE

Unions and labour activists in Asia have begun formulating a campaign to focus on wage levels in the global garment industry. Discussions began in India, expanded across Asia, and now involve an international alliance, including the CCC.

The campaign aims to stop the 'race-to-the-bottom' in which companies relocate as workers organise for better wages and conditions. To prevent this kind of competition between Asian countries, the campaign is focusing on demands for a floor wage, one that will buy the same set of goods and services in all Asian garment producing countries. The campaign has launched a website, [asiafloorwage.org](http://asiafloorwage.org), and is working on developing its demands and strategies.

[www.asiafloorwage.org](http://www.asiafloorwage.org)



Activists from SweatFree Communities take to the streets to say 'No to Tax \$\$ for Sweatshops'.

# New Resources

## **Who Pays for Our Clothing from Lidl and Kik?**

**Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung (German CCC) and partners, 2008.**

Available in German and English. This report looks at the German retail market, focusing on the big discounters Lidl and Kik and how they affect Bangladesh, a leading garment-producing country whose people are among the poorest in the world.

## **Key Feminist Concerns Regarding Core Labour Standards, Decent Work and Corporation Social Responsibility**

**Anja K. Franck, WIDE Network, 2008.**

Women workers are the backbone of global production, but Ms. Franck finds that the issues that concern them are often missing in core labour standards and codes of conduct. Most standards fail to cover the vast majority of women who work in the 'informal' economy.

## **The Structural Crisis of Labour Flexibility: Strategies and Prospects for Transnational Labour Organising in the Garment and Sportswear Industries**

**CCC, 2008.**

**Available in English, French and Spanish.**

Despite 15 years of codes of conduct, the CCC receives daily reports of workers' rights violations. This paper examines how the structure of labour flexibility prevents workers from organising and points to future campaign strategies.

**Copies of new resources can be found in the publications section of [www.cleanclothes.org](http://www.cleanclothes.org).**

# GUEST COLUMN



## **Esther de Haan**

### **Farewell after Fourteen Years**

I can't believe it: fourteen years working for the CCC. But what's worse: I can't believe I'm leaving the campaign. It has become part of my life, and a large part of my commitment and struggle for change.

The campaign has developed a lot since I began. We started in the attic of an organisation producing a small magazine. We were four people, all working a few hours per week. Gradually we moved to bigger offices, worked longer hours, employed more people and became the vibrant organisation we now are. Meanwhile other national campaigns joined the Dutch campaign and the international network has grown exponentially. The CCC really took off in 1996 with a hilarious but very good month-long bus tour with organisations from Asia.

During my 14 years, I have visited several garment producing countries, especially in Africa. I vividly remember my first research visit in 1997, which included Madagascar and Kenya: the burned-out building where workers were still making socks, talking to workers from

different factories and hearing about their experiences.

We have grown from a rebellious action organisation into a still rebellious campaigning network: a network to be reckoned with, a network that was and still is inspiring to me and many others. I truly believe we have been able to make changes: influencing individual cases, raising awareness and getting companies to take labour rights more seriously.

I will remember the commitment, the friendship, the laughter, and the great meetings we organised together. As for the future, I will continue working for the multinational research organisation SOMO and for the improvement of labour conditions. We will be seeing each other, I am sure. >✂

**Esther de Haan**



## Looking Ahead: **Giant Change**

The Clean Clothes Campaign will soon launch an international campaign to focus on the policies and practices of the new breed of retailers. These retailers all have large market shares and exercise enormous buying power – they are truly giants in the field of retail.

Although they sell many different products from a range of sectors, they have profound and ever-increasing power in the garment retail market. The CCC will give special attention to giant retailers because they lag behind other companies in taking responsibility for working conditions in their supply chains. Workers' rights violations in their supply chains are commonplace and their emphasis on discount prices are contributing to the race to the bottom in terms of working conditions. These

retailers urgently need to take responsibility for the impact of their purchasing practices on labour conditions.

The ultimate goal of the campaign is to improve labour conditions at all levels of supply chains of the giant retailers. Campaign demands will echo CCC's standard demands related to codes of conduct, freedom of association, secure employment and living wages. In addition, the campaign will focus specifically on fair purchasing practices that must translate into better working conditions on the work floor.

**Be on the look out for the campaign's web page and research report when the campaign takes off in 2009. Interested in getting involved? Contact [info@cleanclothes.org](mailto:info@cleanclothes.org) for more information.**