

Pay garment workers a

# LIVING WAGE



They should be able to afford:



1 food



2 rent



3 healthcare



4 education



5 clothing



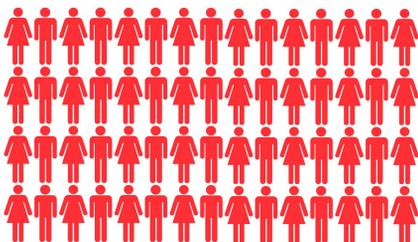
6 transportation



7 savings



A living wage is a human right, for **ALL** people, **ALL** over the world



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

## CAMPAIGN PRESS BRIEFING

Working alongside garment workers, trade unions, consumers and campaigners the Clean Clothes Campaign have launched a campaign calling for those working in the garment industry to be paid a living wage.

The garment industry is a major employer across the world – in Asia for example over 15 million people are employed by the industry.

With global brands making millions in profits every year this booming industry has come to rely on, and exploit, the cheap labour of millions of garment workers whose wages fall far short of a living wage.

The lack of a living wage means many garment workers are forced to work long hours to earn overtime or bonuses and cannot risk taking time off due to unsafe working conditions or ill health. The low wages mean that workers often have to rely on loans just to make ends meet and have no savings to use if they find themselves out of work.

**The CLEAN CLOTHES CAMPAIGN is calling for:**

- **Clothing brand and companies** to take action by setting concrete and measureable steps throughout their supply chain to ensure garment workers get paid a living wage.
- **National governments** in garment producing countries to set minimum wages at living wage standards.
- **European governments** to implement regulation that make sure companies are responsible for the impact they have on the lives of workers in their supply chain, including the right to earn a living wage.

The Clean Clothes Campaign works with over 200 partner organisations worldwide to improve working conditions and support empowerment of workers in the global garment industry. The Campaign has offices in 15 European countries.

People can support the Pay a Living Wage campaign by signing the petition, calling for workers to be paid a living wage, here: <http://www.cleanclothes.org/livingwage/sign>

## PORTRAIT OF A CAMBODIAN WORKER

At the age of 14, Om Sarorn, today 22 years old, had to start to earn money to support her family. It is eight years now that she has been sewing six to seven days a week at “Marachun”. Every morning she travels 1.5 hours on a truck to Phnom Penh and another 1.5 hours back after a long and exhausting day in the factory.



She is always tired and feels weak but still has to help her family on the farm on her day off. She hopes that the clothing companies will increase the minimum wage and the order so that she is no longer forced to work extensive overtime to have enough money for her family and herself. If she had a choice she would rather be a saleswoman than a sewer.

**Om Sarorn's portrait & story is one of a collection taken by German photographer Steffi Eckelmann. The whole collection is available for us by emailing [emma@cleanclothes.org](mailto:emma@cleanclothes.org)**

## PORTRAIT OF AN INDIAN WORKER

Ratna worked as a contract labourer in a garment factory in Bangalore, India. She was eight months pregnant and nearing her delivery date when she awoke in pain. Despite the pains she had to go into work as it was salary day, if workers are absent on the salary day they only end up getting their pay at the end of the month (25th). She had decided to take maternity leave after having taken her salary/wage.

By 10:30 am, she began having labour pains. She approached her supervisor to ask for permission to leave, who in turn told her she must ask the manager. For contract labourers it is difficult to approach a manager (or enter his cabin), so she asked one of the helpers to take ask the manager on her behalf. 2 hours of contractions and immense pain later she was finally permitted leave by the management at 12:30pm. Although on her way out she was delayed further by the security guards at the gate.

As she left the pain became unbearable and she sat down on the footpath and gave birth to the child. Although one of her friends who worked nearby saw her, got an auto and took her home, it was too late to save the baby. Without proper medical care the and the umbilical cord uncut, by the time she reached home her baby had died.

This issue was taken up by Garment and Textile Workers Union (GATWU) who wrote to the Chief of Operations at GAP, one of the buyers who were sourcing garments from Ratna's factory. This eventually led to the management giving Ratna compensation for her loss and today maternity leave begins from 8 months.

# QUOTES

INTERVIEWS ARE DEPENDANT ON AVAILABILITY, PLEASE CONTACT EMMA HARBOUR-emma@cleanclothes.org or 0031 637194219 FOR INFORMATION

## IMPORTANCE OF A LIVING WAGE

“A living wage should be earned before overtime and allow a garment worker to be able to feed herself and her family, pay the rent, pay for healthcare and education and have a small amount of savings for when something unexpected happens. Companies must take steps to ensure they are paying a living wage in the countries they source from. Governments must ensure that minimum wages are set at levels that allow people to live with dignity. While low labour costs continue to be exploited throughout the industry it remains impossible to argue that the garment industry is benefitting those who work within it.”

**Dr. Jeroen Merk**  
**Clean Clothes Campaign**

**Available for interview (English & Dutch)**

“Brands and retailers within the global garment industry have profited hugely from outsourcing production to low-wage countries, capitalising on poverty wages and benefiting from weak enforcement of labour law. They are fully responsible for ensuring the workers who make their products are paid a living wage.”

**Anannya Bhattacharjee**  
**International Coordinator Asia Floor Wage Alliance**

**Available for interview (English)**

## CONNECTION BETWEEN POVERTY WAGES AND HEALTH & SAFETY

'Workers in Rana Plaza did not want to enter the factories there on the day of the disaster, but were reportedly forced to do so. If they had earned a living wage, they could have refused the risk of stepping into an unsafe building, and of injury and death. Instead, as we know, over 1000 families have now been devastated, and we have seen how poverty wages exacerbate the impact of disasters.'

**Sara Hossain**  
**Supreme Court lawyer, Bangladesh**  
**Volunteer Director at the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST)**

**Available for interview (English)**

'Some workers were thrown out of families because they cannot earn a wage anymore and are using expensive medication after they got injured during the collapse. It is a shame that brands make these people, who often have lost beloved ones, stand on hold for six months now.'

**Amin Amirul Haque**  
**General secretary of the National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF)**

**Available for interview (English)**

# BROADCAST FOOTAGE, IMAGES AND FURTHER REPORTS AVAILABLE

## BROADCAST FOOTAGE

- A short film entitled 'A wage you can live from' is available to preview here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Z3otLe6aik&feature=plcp> Footage from this film is available on request from [klaus@cccck.org](mailto:klaus@cccck.org)
- Interviews with Anannya Bhattacharjee, International Coordinator of the Asia Floor Wage Alliance and of Amin Amirul Haque, General Secretary of the National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF) are available in English. Please contact [emma@cleanclothes.org](mailto:emma@cleanclothes.org) for copies.
- A short animation of why a living wage is important is available to view on the website – [www.cleanclothes.org/livingwage](http://www.cleanclothes.org/livingwage). Copies are available from [emma@cleanclothes.org](mailto:emma@cleanclothes.org)

## IMAGES

- Steffi Eckelmann's **Portrait of a Garment Worker** series of photos and interviews with 15 garment workers in Cambodia are available for use. A further selection can be viewed at [www.cleanclothes.org/livingwage](http://www.cleanclothes.org/livingwage)
- All the infographics in this pack and online are available for use. Credit: Clean Clothes Campaign/ Atomo Design.
- Images of garment workers across Asia are available.
- For high resolution images or graphics please contact Emma Harbour - 0031 637194219 [emma@cleanclothes.org](mailto:emma@cleanclothes.org)

## FURTHER REPORTS AVAILABLE

- Factsheets are available on the wage situation in Bangladesh, India, Cambodia & China as well as an overview of the Living Wage situation in Asia. For copies please contact [info@cleanclothes.org](mailto:info@cleanclothes.org)
- **Stitching a decent wage across borders** – an introduction to the Asia Floor Wage (2009) can be downloaded [here](#).
- **Shop til they drop – Fainting and malnutrition in Garment Workers in Cambodia** (2013) - report by Clean Clothes Campaign partners Labour Behind the Label is available [here](#).

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What is a living wage?

A living wage, means that the wage a worker earns in a standard working week (never exceeding 48 hours) is enough to provide for them and their family's basic needs - including housing, education and healthcare as well as some discretionary income for when the unexpected happens.

## What is the Asia Floor Wage (AFW)?

The AFW is a wage demand which puts a figure on a 'minimum living wage' for garment workers across Asia. It was calculated by an alliance of more than 80 garment workers' unions, worker representatives and NGOs from Asian garment producing countries, and is based on food basket and living cost studies. The figure is based on a methodology for calculating a minimum living wage, which assumes the number of dependents a worker has, and that in Asia food costs amount to half a monthly expenditure. The amount is calculated in Purchasing Power Parity\$. More information can be found here:

[www.cleanclothes.org/livingwage](http://www.cleanclothes.org/livingwage) **The current Asia Floor Wage is PPP\$725.** The following table shows the difference between the current figure in local currency and current minimum wage levels.

Country	Minimum wage	Asia Floor Wage
Bangladesh	3,000 taka	25,687 taka
Cambodia	336,000 Riel	1,582,668 Riel
China	1,450 Yuan	3,132 Yuan
India	4,334 Rupees	16,240 Rupees
Indonesia	1,246,151 Rupiah	4,048,226 Rupiah
Malaysia	850 Ringgit	1,566 Ringgit
Sri Lanka	8,970 Rupees	46,168 Rupees

## Why is the minimum wage is not enough?

Across garment producing regions, including Asia, government set minimum wage levels almost always fail to reach a living wage standard.

In Bangladesh, where an estimated 4 million people work in the garment industry, the current minimum wage is just €28.60 (3,000 taka) a month. This is 11% of the €259.80 (25,687 taka) the Asia Floor Wage Alliance calculates to be a living wage for the country.

Governments must set wages at a level that allows people to be able to live a decent life – and must not let brands and companies pressure them to keep minimum wages low.

## What do you want brands to do?

Clean Clothes Campaign is calling on brands and retail companies to ensure the workers who produce the clothes they sell are paid a living wage.

As major buyers they are able through their purchasing practices ensure that living wages are paid throughout their supply chain, that trade unions are able to collectively bargain on behalf of workers and provide conditions that at the very least should enable, rather than inhibit suppliers to be decent, law-abiding employers.

In order to move toward long term and sustainable payment of a living wage, Clean Clothes Campaign have 10 key recommendations that brands should take:

1. Endorse a living wage standard
2. Promote respect for freedom of association
3. Enter into dialogue or negotiation with a worker representatives to address poverty wages
4. Publicly endorse a living wage benchmark (Such as the Asia Floor Wage)
5. Amend purchasing practices to make a living wage a reality
6. Set concrete steps to implement a living wage at factories, involving suppliers and worker representatives
7. Write to sourcing countries' governments to advocate for the living wage
8. Act transparently – demonstrate the payment of a living wage
9. Do not work in isolation - collaborate with other companies
10. Present a road map with a concrete timeline for the achievement a living wage

More details about these steps can be found

<http://www.cleanclothes.org/livingwage/road-map-to-a-living-wage>.

## What can governments do?

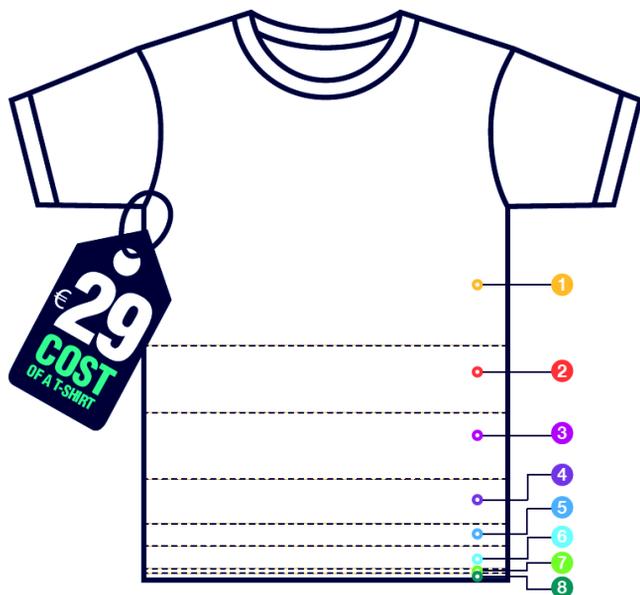
While most governments set minimum wages, these typically fail to provide enough income to maintain a family of four above the nationally defined poverty level. In order to attract investment, many garment producing countries have set legal minimum wages below the subsistence level

Governments must ensure that the legal minimum wage is at least a living wage, and is properly implemented and enforced. They should implement regulation that ensures companies are responsible for the impact they have on the lives of workers in their supply chains, including their right to earn a living wage.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much of the money I spend trickles down to workers? Won't 'clean clothes' be expensive?

## BREAKDOWN OF COSTS OF A T-SHIRT



\* Includes all costs at a retail level including staff, rent, store profit, VAT etc.

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

Source: Fairwear Foundation

The above breakdown is based on a fairly typical cost breakdown for an item of clothing – the worker usually receives somewhere between 0.5% and 3 % of the total cost of producing a t-shirt for example.

So even in an extreme scenario, if a worker's wages were to double and the cost was passed along directly to consumers, the item would cost less than 1% more – in the above example just 18cents.

Alternatively, companies could absorb this negligible increase themselves and the consumer price would remain the same.

### Is safety not a bigger concern for workers than pay?

While it is true in the last year we have seen a number of major disasters in the garment industry, and the garment industry continues to be notorious for bad working conditions, it must not be a choice between earning a decent wage or being safe at work.

In many instances it is the lack of a decent wage that means workers are unable to refuse work in unsafe buildings, or not work if they are sick. When as in the case of Rana Plaza workers are ordered back in a factory or risk losing the days pay – or their jobs – the reality of rent, healthcare costs, and no savings means they do not really have a choice.

## Should I boycott factories?

In one word: No. There are some exceptions, but in general we want a long-term solution to the problem, which will improve the lives of the workers.

One of the worst things that can happen when labour rights violations are discovered is for a company to 'cut and run' - to abruptly stop supplying from a factory or a country and put workers jobs at risk. We encourage brands and retailers to engage with their suppliers in a way that doesn't put intolerable pressure on workers to deliver clothes faster, cheaper, and under poor working conditions.

We want to see long-term, stable business relationships between buyers and suppliers. This will give factory managers the time and support needed to improve working conditions, and it will give garment workers more job security and decent work, including the opportunity to organise and negotiate for better conditions.

In very specific situations, and only after exhausting all other possibilities, we may ask a company to inform a supplier that it will no longer buy there unless labour conditions improve immediately. We expect such a withdrawal to be done in a responsible manner that minimises the impact on workers at the factory. For example, we would ask buyers to divert orders to a nearby factory that is willing to provide decent work and to give priority hiring to workers from the problem factory.

If there is a widely supported call from a particular country for a boycott to promote human and labour rights there, the Clean Clothes Campaign will respect this. For example, in 2001 the exiled Federation of Trade Unions - Burma (FTUB), together with a significant segment of Burmese society, called for support in their campaign to demand that Triumph International, a Swiss-based retailer of lingerie, pull out of Burma. The campaign was successful and in 2002 Triumph announced its withdrawal from the country.

## What should a consumer do?

The **Pay a Living Wage** campaign is calling on consumers to take action by signing our petition showing the depth of support for all workers to be paid a living wage.

We will also be calling on consumers to add their support to garment workers across the world when wage violations happen, and joining global days of action to call on brands to change their purchasing practices and governments to make policy changes.

To find out more about action consumers can take visit:

<http://www.cleanclothes.org/issues/faq/where-can-i-buy>