



# KEY WORDS

## **Code of conduct**

A set of rules outlining the responsibilities of or proper practises for an individual or organisation. A brand or retailer may have a code of conduct that sets out the way it expects suppliers to act, particularly with regard to workers' rights.

## **Decent work**

Decent work is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and protection for families (for example in case of illness). It gives people freedom to express their concerns and represent their interests through trade unions, and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

## **Ethical trade**

Ethical trade focuses on respecting the rights of workers within the global supply chain. It means that brands and their suppliers take responsibility for improving the working conditions of the people who make their products, and work together with trade unions and labour rights organisations to achieve this.

## **Fair Trade**

Fair Trade is concerned with the relationship between the buyer and producer. It enables producers, typically growers of tea, coffee, bananas and cotton, to get a better deal from trade by giving them an agreed, stable price and an additional premium to invest in their communities. This is a start, but trade unions would like all workers in the supply chain to be paid a living wage, and be involved in monitoring and improving their working conditions rather than this being done by outside Fair Trade certifiers.

## **Forced labour**

Forced labour is any work or service that people are forced to do against their will under the threat of some form of punishment, for example, workers being forced to work overtime and being threatened with losing their jobs if they do not.

## **Global supply chain**

A system of production in which clothing, food, souvenirs and many other items pass through a long line of factories, suppliers, buyers and warehouses before ending up on our high streets.

These 'supply chains' employ millions of workers and stretch all over the globe – from China to Kenya, Bangladesh to Manchester.

## **Living wage**

A living wage is based upon the actual cost of living in a particular place. It means that workers earn enough to provide their family with the essentials of life. This includes food, water, shelter, clothing, healthcare, education, transport and some income to spare.

## **Millennium Development Goals**

The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eight targets for addressing extreme poverty adopted by world leaders in 2000 and set to be achieved by 2015. They address hunger, income poverty, disease, education, lack of shelter and exclusion. They promote the rights of every person on the planet including the right to health, education, shelter and security, as well as decent work.

## **Minimum wage**

A minimum wage is, legally, the lowest amount of money a worker can be paid in order for them to sell their own labour to an organisation or firm. It is quoted at an hourly rate.

## **Sponsorship**

Supporting an event, activity or organisation by providing money or other resources that are of value to the sponsored event. This is usually in return for advertising space at the event or as part of the publicity for the event. Global sporting events offer big brands the chance to reach hundreds of millions of people through sponsorship deals.

## **Trade union**

People at work can join together in trade unions giving them a collective and independent voice in the workplace. As members of a trade union, workers have more power together than they do as individuals. This helps them negotiate better pay and working conditions with their employers. Trade unions also build relationships internationally to support better working conditions around the world.

## **Working conditions**

The conditions in which people work, including hours of work, degree of safety or danger, stress and noise levels, facilities available.



## FURTHER INFORMATION

### Where is sportswear produced?

Sports shoes are mainly produced in China, Vietnam, Indonesia and Thailand. Brands source their footwear from a handful of key suppliers. Yue Yuen is the largest branded athletic and casual footwear manufacturer in the world. It produces products for Nike, Adidas, Reebok and Puma.

The manufacture of clothing is more widely dispersed geographically. Nike produces clothing in around 35 countries, the majority in Asia. Adidas produces in around 65 countries, with production concentrated in China, India, Indonesia, Thailand, Turkey and Vietnam.

### What are the key issues for workers?

More than 15 years ago sportswear brands like Adidas, Nike, New Balance, Pentland and Reebok adopted codes of conduct on labour standards. Yet workers making their products:

- continue to be paid poverty wages
- may be intimidated or sacked if they try to join or form a trade union
- tend to be employed on repeated short-term contracts
- face extreme pressure to meet production targets
- may be forced to work overtime in excess of legal limits
- can be verbally and physically abused
- can experience threats to their health and safety.

### Why are workers expected to work so hard?

Usain Bolt and the Jamaican team's 4x100m relay record of 37.10 seconds may be staggering, but think about the 30.35 seconds that Nike expects factory workers to stitch a shoulder seam in! Every seam and section of work is broken down into targets of a few seconds.

When brands place last-minute orders with their suppliers, this puts workers under pressure to work long hours and they may not have a choice about working overtime. In these cases workers are often made to work 12–16 hour shifts. If they refuse, they risk losing their jobs. A seven-day working week is becoming the norm in the peak season, particularly in China, despite legal limits.

Production targets for workers are often unrealistic and, if they do not complete them, they may have to stay behind after their normal hours to finish off, but without payment. Workers may work through their lunch breaks and even take inadequate toilet breaks so they can meet their target – and get a bit extra on top of their usual low wage.

### What's the problem with short-term contracts?

The use of short-term contracts or casual labour has become widespread in the sportswear industry. By using short-term contracts, suppliers to the big brands can avoid meeting their legal obligations – like paying maternity cover or health insurance contributions. These types of contracts have been used to undermine workers joining or forming a trade union. Employing workers on short-term contracts gives brands and suppliers more flexibility to respond to quieter or busier periods, so workers can be hired or fired as and when needed.

### Why don't some workers join trade unions?

Being able to join a trade union and negotiate for better wages and working conditions is a human right. However, this is widely opposed throughout the garment industry, even though it may be included in a brand's code of conduct. Workers who try to join or form a trade union are often bullied and intimidated. Therefore, workers may decide not to join a trade union because they are afraid it could threaten their jobs.

### What's the difference between a living wage and a minimum wage?

Minimum wages are set by governments. They have to balance the interests of workers against the pressure from companies to keep wages low and remain competitive in the global market. As a result, minimum wages often bear little relation to the cost of living. In many garment-producing countries, the minimum wage leaves families well below the poverty line, and in some countries there is no legal minimum wage.

# FURTHER INFORMATION



A living wage is based upon the actual cost of living in a particular place. It means that workers earn enough to provide their family with the essentials of life. This includes food, water, shelter, clothing, healthcare, education and transport, and also some to spare.

Sportswear workers in Sri Lanka make products for Adidas, Nike, Speedo, Puma and Reebok. Their current wages (July 2011) can work out at just above the UN global poverty line of \$2 per day. The minimum wage in the sector is £44 per month, but the living wage is estimated at around £130 per month.

### **Why is it difficult for workers to get a better deal within global supply chains?**

UK sportswear sales were estimated at £4.5 billion in 2010 and the profits of sportswear brands like Adidas, Nike and Speedo are predicted to grow with sporting events like London 2012. Retailers such as Footlocker and JD Sports provide brands with access to consumers and have huge negotiating strength to push down the cost price of a product. Sportswear brands tend to retain high-profit inputs into a product, like design and marketing, but outsource the low profit parts, like manufacturing, to countries where costs are cheaper. Some brands use agents/trading companies to deliver the whole production package, which includes sourcing the raw materials, production planning and export.

Manufacturers are contracted directly by brands or through an agent/trading company. Some manufacturers are multinational companies like Yue Yuen, the largest footwear manufacturer in the world with factories in China, Indonesia and Vietnam. But there are many smaller manufacturers in low-cost producing countries, which have less power to negotiate prices and costs.

Workers manufacturing the goods may be employed directly by the factory, through an agency, as a home worker, or at a factory sub-

contracted to produce the goods. Because these workers are at the end of the supply chain, they have the least power to negotiate better pay and working conditions, especially if their right to join/form a trade union is not respected.

### **Forced labour and slavery**

Forced labour conditions or commonly slave-labour conditions can be defined according to a number of factors. According to the International Labour Organisation, if two or more of the following conditions are present, this is a strong indication of forced labour:

- threats of or actual physical and/or sexual violence
- restricted movement and being confined to a workplace or a limited area
- debt bondage: where workers work to pay off a debt or loan and are not paid for their services
- withholding wages, refusing to pay a worker at all, or significant wage reductions
- retaining a worker's passport or identity documents
- threats of denouncing workers to the authorities.

### **Child labour and the Beijing 2008 Olympics**

Children as young as 12 were involved in the production of official, Olympic branded stationery for the Beijing 2008 Olympics. Children hired by the Lekit Stationery Company in China were forced to work 13 hours a day. Their job was to group notebooks together, tie them up and place them in cartons. The usual schedule was starting at 7.30/8 a.m. and working until around 10.30 p.m. One reason for employing children was that they could be paid lower wages.

Lekit kept no records of the employment of these children, or any other factory workers, to evade its responsibility as a employer. There was no trade union in the factory to represent the workforce.

Source: No medal for the Olympics on labor rights (2008)



## FURTHER INFORMATION

Compulsory overtime above the legal limits can constitute forced labour when combined with the threat of a penalty. For example, if workers fear dismissal for refusing such overtime.

### **Uzbekistan forced cotton picking**

A case study to illustrate the use of forced child labour in the clothing supply chain is the Uzbekistan cotton industry. Uzbekistan is the third biggest exporter in the world. Government officials have closed down schools and forced children, some as young as nine years old, out of their classrooms and into the fields to pick cotton. One child says:

*“We’re really afraid of getting expelled from school. Every September 2, the first day of school, the Director warns us that if we don’t go out to pick cotton, we might as well not come back to school.*

*The school administration does everything to create the impression that the school children themselves are the ones who have decided to go out to the cotton fields. But just try to ‘voluntarily’ not go out to the harvest!*

*We’re all forced to obey this unwritten law. And moreover, the only way to get cash is to go out and pick cotton. It’s painful to see how kids knock themselves out in the cotton fields to earn this rotten money. Just think about it: in order to earn 50 sum (4 US cents), a kid who is barely 14 has to bend down to the cotton bush over 50 times. And his earnings from a day of this work won’t even buy him a pair of ugly socks.”*

Boy, ninth grade (14 years old), Kashkadaria province.

Source: Forced Child Labour in Uzbekistan’s 2007 Cotton Harvest: Survey Results by Group of Human Rights Defenders and journalists of Uzbekistan (Tashkent, 2008)

### **Building fair societies through decent work**

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has developed decent work as a strategy to build fair and inclusive societies. Decent work includes:

- equal access to employment without discrimination
- living wages for workers to allow them and their families to live with dignity
- social protection in case of illness, pregnancy or the normal ups and downs
- being free from exploitation
- allowing people to organise themselves to represent their interests collectively through trade unions and engage in genuine dialogue as citizens and workers.



## **Burston School Strike**

The longest strike in history was staged by the children of a small village in Norfolk, in 1914. In 1902 a Bill was introduced offering education to working-class children, but the conditions they were taught in were squalid. Teachers Tom and Kitty Higdon wanted these children to be treated with equal respect and objected to them being pulled out of school to be used as cheap labour. But Tom and Kitty found themselves at odds with the farm-owning managers of the school, and were dismissed, despite requests to the council from the NUT.

The new teacher was greeted with the message on the blackboard “We are going on strike tomorrow”. A group of children led by Violet Potter and assisted by parents marched with placards saying, ‘we want our teachers back’. Tom and Kitty set up an alternative Strike School, which had 66 of the 77 children from the council school. Parents supporting the strike were summoned to court for not sending their children to the council school and land owners sacked participating workers. However, with donations from the miners, railway workers unions and others, a new school was built and opened on 13 May 1917.

## **Playfair 2012: campaigning for a sweat-free Olympics**

The Playfair 2012 campaign calls on the sportswear industry and Olympic movement to ensure that the rights of workers making their products in global supply chains are respected, in line with internationally recognised standards and the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Playfair 2012 is coordinated by the British Trades Union Congress (TUC) and Labour Behind the Label, and is supported by more than 20 trade unions and non-governmental organisations.

As a result of the campaign, the organisers of the London Games wrote into contracts with their suppliers that they must meet the labour standards in the Ethical Trading Initiative base code. This means that workers supplying goods/services should have their rights respected and be paid a

living wage. The campaign also persuaded the organisers to develop a system so that workers in these supply chains can make a formal complaint if their rights are not respected and for these to be investigated and resolved. These are big steps forward and the first time this has happened for any world sporting event. But there is still more that needs to be done.

Pressure from the international Play Fair campaign (of which Playfair 2012 is part) resulted in a groundbreaking agreement between sportswear brands, trade unions and suppliers being signed in Indonesia, in June 2011. The agreement on respecting the right of workers to join/form a trade union will help ensure that workers will not be victimised for carrying out trade union activities and is an important step towards negotiating with employers for better pay and working conditions. Playfair 2012 is also working with trade unionists in Brazil to support their work to raise standards for workers delivering the Brazil World Cup in 2014 and Rio Olympics in 2016.

## **Sri Lanka**

In Sri Lanka, trade unions, garment workers and labour rights organisations ran a campaign to increase the national minimum wage in 2010. The Free Trade Zones and General Services Employees Trade Union in Sri Lanka educated workers about their rights and collected more than 20,000 signatures in support of the campaign, which they handed to their government. Following negotiations with the government, they successfully gained a 30 per cent (around £15) increase in their monthly minimum wage. They are now campaigning for a living wage of around £130 a month. The union also organised the first-ever meeting in Sri Lanka bringing together major players in the garment industry like Adidas, Nike, Next and Colombia Sports to agree to work together to address poor working conditions like low wages, long hours, unrealistic production targets and workers’ right to join a trade union not being respected. The British TUC supported this work through a joint project with the union.

# USEFUL WEBSITES

## The issues

- Playfair 2012  
[www.playfair2012.org](http://www.playfair2012.org)
- International Play Fair campaign  
[www.decentwork.org/play-fair.html](http://www.decentwork.org/play-fair.html)
- Labour Behind the Label  
[www.labourbehindthelabel.org](http://www.labourbehindthelabel.org)
- Unions into Schools  
[www.ebctuc.co.uk/](http://www.ebctuc.co.uk/)
- Fashioning an Ethical Industry  
[www.fashioninganethicalindustry.org](http://www.fashioninganethicalindustry.org)
- Ethical Trading Initiative  
[www.ethicaltrade.org/](http://www.ethicaltrade.org/)
- International Labour Organisation – Labour Standards  
[www.ilo.org/global/standards/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/standards/lang--en/index.htm)

## Human rights

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights  
[www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml)
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child  
[www.unicef.org.uk/Latest/Publications/Summary-of-the-United-Nations-Convention-on-the-Rights-of-the-Child/](http://www.unicef.org.uk/Latest/Publications/Summary-of-the-United-Nations-Convention-on-the-Rights-of-the-Child/)

## Stories

- 'The life of garment worker – Mizra in India'  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=muU3gAZW7tw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=muU3gAZW7tw)
- 'Hamdani's Story'  
[www.playfair2012.org.uk/2010/07/hamdanis-story/](http://www.playfair2012.org.uk/2010/07/hamdanis-story/)

## Learning resources

- Step into her shoes (16–18 years) Playfair teaching resources  
[www.playfair2012.org.uk/publications/education-materials](http://www.playfair2012.org.uk/publications/education-materials)
- Who wants to be a billionaire? KS3 resource by the Action Plan for Geography  
[www.geographyteachingtoday.org.uk/ks3-resources/resource/who-wants-to-be-a-billionaire/](http://www.geographyteachingtoday.org.uk/ks3-resources/resource/who-wants-to-be-a-billionaire/)

- Worldmapper, Countries re-sized by datasets  
[www.worldmapper.org](http://www.worldmapper.org)
- BBC Sport World Olympic Dreams – Assemblies  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport1/hi/olympic\\_games/world\\_olympic\\_dreams/9405838.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport1/hi/olympic_games/world_olympic_dreams/9405838.stm)
- Ethical Textiles – DVD from Pumpkin TV  
[www.pumpkintv.co.uk/dt/page2/page2.html](http://www.pumpkintv.co.uk/dt/page2/page2.html)
- Issues in Globalisation: How Fair is Fashion – DVD from Pumpkin TV  
[www.pumpkintv.co.uk/geography/globalisation/index.html](http://www.pumpkintv.co.uk/geography/globalisation/index.html)
- Get Set - the official London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games education programme  
<http://getset.london2012.com>

## Articles/reports

- *Working Conditions in Sportswear Factories in Indonesia, Sri Lanka & the Philippines*  
International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation (2010)
- Nike faces new worker abuse claims  
Karmini, N. and Wright S.  
Associated Press, 17 July 2011.
- China firm denies Fifa World Cup sweatshop claim  
BBC, 10 March 2010  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8560240.stm>
- Blood, sweat and tears: the truth about how your sportswear is made. Hickman, M.  
*Independent*, 1 October 2010  
<http://tinyurl.com/6dq84kp>
- *Missed the Goal for Workers: the Reality of Soccer Ball Stitchers in Pakistan, India, China and Thailand*  
International Labour Rights Forum (2010)  
<http://tinyurl.com/2eo57am>