ACTION

UPDATE

SUMMER 2018

Supporting garment workers worldwide
Welcome

2018 marks five years since the devastating Rana Plaza building collapse in Bangladesh, and this issue takes a look at which brands have yet to sign the Transition Accord for Bangladeshi workers safety, and marks campaign success as Next, Sainsburys and Debenhams sign up to protect their workers. We are celebrating a transparency campaign win as fast-fashion clothing giant Primark caves to pressure and discloses their supplier list. There is information on H&M’s forgotten promise to pay a living wage to their garment workers, a message to the England football team as they return home from a strong World Cup performance, and a celebration for the acquittal of Cambodian workers rights activist Tola Moeun. Thank you for your continued support – without you our work wouldn’t be possible. Whether you stand with us outside shops, attend demonstrations, donate, sign petitions or fundraise for us, it all helps to make change happen.

In solidarity,
Caroline, Dominique and Anna
The Labour Behind the Label Team

Labour Behind the Label

Labour Behind the Label campaigns for garment workers’ rights worldwide, supporting garment workers in their struggle to live in dignity and work in safety. We believe that everyone with a stake in the garment industry has a responsibility to improve conditions – workers need to join together and demand better rights, consumers need to take ethics into account in the way that they shop and enter into dialogue with companies, governments need to step in and defend workers’ rights through legislation, and companies, especially the big brands at the top of the supply chain, need to be accountable to their workers.

In this issue

3 Labour Behind the Label at a glance
4 Remembering Rana Plaza
6 Transparency win
7 H&M’s broken promise
8 Cambodian activist acquitted
9 Red card for workers rights
10 LUSH event
11 Invisible Threads: Art auction

Labour Behind the Label at a glance

Labour Behind the Label Limited supports garment workers’ efforts worldwide to improve their working conditions. It is a not-for-profit cooperative company, registered in England No. 4173634. The Labour Behind the Label Trust is a separate organisation that raises funds for the organisation’s charitable activities, registered charity number 1159356.

info@labourbehindthelabel.org
0117 941 5844
@labourlabel
labourbehindthelabel

Labour Behind the Label, The Easton Business Centre, Felix Road, Easton, Bristol, BS5 0HE

Labour Behind the Label Limited supports garment workers’ efforts worldwide to improve their working conditions. It is a not-for-profit cooperative company, registered in England No. 4173634. The Labour Behind the Label Trust is a separate organisation that raises funds for the organisation’s charitable activities, registered charity number 1159356.

Produced with the financial assistance of LUSH Cosmetics.
The views expressed within do not represent the official opinion of LUSH workers or consumers.
Remembering Rana Plaza: Five Years On

2018 marks five years since the devastating Rana Plaza building collapse in Bangladesh, in which 1,134 garment workers were killed. It remains the deadliest disaster the global garment industry has ever seen.

In the wake of Rana Plaza our campaign for factory safety garnered global attention, and under the watchful eyes of the world the Accord on Fire and Building Safety (Accord) was created. An unprecedented safety agreement, the Accord holds clothing brands legally-accountable for the safety of their workers in the Bangladeshi factories they source from. This landmark agreement places credible, transparent factory safety inspections and renovations at its core, and was signed by over 220 garment brands. It has successfully improved the safety for more than two and a half million Bangladeshi garment workers so far, eliminating more than 97,000 identified hazards across more than 1,600 factories.

Although poverty pay, enforced overtime and workers rights abuses are still vital issues, the success of the Accord for improving workers safety should not be downplayed. The Accord was a five-year agreement, so to ensure conditions continue to improve a 2018 Transition Accord, set to run until 2021, has been signed by over 175 brands and covers more than 1,300 factories. It took hard work, public pressure and behind-the-scenes campaigning to get 175 brands to sign, and it was only with your support and active campaigning that brands including Next, Sainsburys and Debenhams signed the new Accord.

One major difference between the two agreements is that the previous Accord only protected garment workers yet the Transition Accord also covers textiles and home furnishing workers. This is good news for textile workers, however Ikea, the largest home furnishings company in the world, has refused to sign instead citing their own code of conduct, ‘The Ikea Way’ (IWAY), as sufficient. IWAY lacks transparency, provides little to no public information on factory safety inspections and is a voluntary programme without any legal recourse. This allows the company to remain accountable only to itself. The garment and textile industries operate in a pyramid-like structure where brands employ agents who source main suppliers, or brands may work with their main suppliers directly, and these then subcontract out to smaller factories.

Tell brands including Ikea, Abercrombie & Fitch, Gap, and North Face to take responsibility for all of their workers by signing the Transition Accord immediately.

Many major clothing brands still refuse to sign the new Accord, putting their workers lives at risk. Global clothing giants including Gap and Levis, as well as North Face, Timberland, Wrangler and Lee, all operating under the VF Corp umbrella, are yet to sign. Abercrombie & Fitch, who signed the original Accord, have since refused to sign up to the extension, thereby undermining their previous efforts at worker safety. These brands instead site their own schemes as viable alternatives, but these fall dangerously short of protecting workers. No-one should die for fashion. It is vital that brands become legally-accountable for the safety of their workers. Your voice can make the difference.
In February, Primark, the fast-fashion retail giant, finally caved to campaigning pressure and published a list of its suppliers in an important step towards transparency. We worked closely with Clean Clothes Campaign activists across Europe, Human Rights Watch campaigners and the International Labor Rights forum, among others, to call on brands including Primark to release information on their supply chains. Previously Primark cited competition as their reason for keeping supplier lists secret, yet your support for our transparency campaign, including over 10,000 signatures from our #StepUp petition, has shown Primark that consumers truly do care about who makes their clothes.

With complex global supply chains, transparency is necessary to hold brands accountable for their workers. It helps to protect the human rights of workers, allowing garment workers and campaigners to alert brands to human rights abuses that take place in their supplier factories, as well as advancing ethical business practices.

Brands going public with information on who their suppliers are is an essential step towards greater transparency across the industry, but brands must not stop here. Transparency throughout every stage of the garment-making and selling process is necessary in order to ensure all workers human rights are respected.

Primark joins a growing list of clothing brands who have responded to our transparency campaign by publishing their supplier lists. We now know that Primark sources from over 1,000 factories in over 31 countries, including 550 factories in China, 173 in India, 89 in Bangladesh, 78 in Turkey and 16 here in the UK. Their published list includes information on the number of employees in each factory and the gender split. 98% of the factories producing for Primark also produce for other brands, and by making this information public we hope that brands will begin to work closer together to ensure the safety of their workers and a living wage for all.

In 2013, H&M declared that by 2018 they would be paying a living wage to 850,000 of their garment workers, ensuring they could live in dignity and escape a cycle of poverty. It is now 2018 and their ‘Roadmap towards a fair living wage’ has so far failed to appear. In fact, figures released by H&M themselves show their garment workers in Bangladesh, for example, earned on average $95 per month in 2017. The Asia Floor Wage benchmark for a living wage in Bangladesh is $448. Having benefitted from the media fanfare surrounding their ethical promises, H&M’s garment workers continue to be paid poverty wages, working long-hours of overtime simply to survive.

Now H&M is hoping that the world will forget their promises, however having won consumer support for their so-called ‘ethical’ positions it is now vital that they live up to their reputation. A living wage is a human right and the key to ensuring workers have a way out of poverty. One major flaw with H&M’s 2013 ‘roadmap’ was that they never defined their benchmark for a ‘living wage’. Without a clear standard to aim for, such as the Asia Floor Wage, they made achieving their promise virtually impossible.

Please sign this petition and take to social media to show @hm we remember their promises, and that they must now take action to make them a reality. #TurnAroundH&M act.wemove.eu/campaigns/Living-Wages-HM
Cambodian Activist Acquitted

A key Cambodian workers rights defender and activist, Tola Moeun, who had been facing up to three years in prison and a heavy fine, has had all criminal charges against him dropped by the government. Tola’s arrest ten months ago was politically-motivated, and a clear move by the government to try to suppress the workers rights movement.

Tola is the Executive Director of the Center for the Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL), who are one of our partners in Cambodia. He is one of three prominent activists, all of whom have been critical of the government, who were detained and charged with ‘breach of trust’ for allegedly misappropriating funds raised for assassinated political activist Kem Ley’s funeral. The charges had no grounding and no evidence was brought against him. They were an attack by the ruling party against the trade union movement and human rights defenders who speak out critically against the government.

The Cambodian government is keen to portray themselves outwardly as democratic and with an independent judiciary system, and worldwide attention on this case helped to ensure justice for Tola. It is due to your help and a successful international campaign, which included putting pressure on brands to use their leverage in defence of human rights advocates, that Tola is now free and acquitted of all criminal charges.

No Goal for Garment Workers

Billions of people worldwide watched the World Cup, cheering on their favourite teams and tuning in to see France become the world champions. However, whilst the footballers on the pitch earn upwards of £40,000 per week playing in the Premier League, the garment workers who make their kits earn poverty wages for the clothes they stitch. As the England team return home to crowds of supporters, proud of a well-played fourth place, it is now time for them to hold their heads high as defenders of human rights and urge their sponsors to pay a living wage.

Two of the World Cup’s biggest sponsors, Nike and Adidas, spend millions on sponsorship and marketing, and between them they sponsored 22 of the 32 teams that played. Nike, for example, pays a whopping £34 million per year to be the official sponsor of the England team. Yet the women who make their clothes still live in poverty, earning 45%–65% under a living wage. These brands are profiting directly from the hard work of women trapped by a cycle of low wages.

England captain Harry Kane won the coveted Golden Boot award, presented to the top goal scorer of the tournament, and supporters can buy Kane’s number 9 World Cup shirt for over £60, yet the workers who made it will earn less than 1% of this. If Kane and his teammates were to publicly support the women who made their strip, big brands such as Nike and Adidas would be forced to take action.

We call on the England team to stand up for the women who made their kit. Tweet the England captain @HKane and ask him to score a goal for human rights.

#livingwageisahumanright #fairplay #redcard #sweatshopfreesports
LUSH Supports Labour Behind the Label

As part of a series of events to remember Rana Plaza and commemorate the lives of the 1,134 people who were killed when the building collapsed in Dhaka, Bangladesh on April 24th 2013, we were invited to the Bristol Lush store to share our campaigns for garment workers rights with Lush shoppers. We received a very warm welcome by Lush employees and shoppers alike as we spent April 14th and 15th sharing our campaigns for garment workers rights with Lush shoppers, many of whom actively choose ethical brands and were keen to learn more about workers rights.

Through Lush’s support we gained valuable signatures to our petition calling on Next, Sainsburys and Debenhams to sign up to the Transition Accord to protect the safety of their Bangladeshi workers. We are delighted that this petition has been successful in putting public pressure on these brands who have since signed the Accord. We also raised over £500 from the sale of Lush Charity Pots over the weekend, which will go directly to supporting our vital campaigning work so please bid generously. Without your support we cannot continue to hold brands accountable and campaign for garment workers rights worldwide. If you are unable to join us on the night then do not worry, you still have the chance to bid for one of the beautiful artworks available via our online auction. We will provide you with a link when the lots go live. If you bid online we will represent you in the public auction and the highest bidder will win.

Invisible Threads Art Auction

We are thrilled to announce that Invisible Threads, our fundraising Art Auction, will take place on 6th October 2018 in a central Bristol location. Many talented artists have responded to our call out and the auction will feature work donated by renowned textile artist Alke Shmidt amongst others. There will be a variety of art available and in different forms. Some artworks have been a personal response from the artist around issues concerning garment workers rights, such as women’s rights, human rights, the effects of fast fashion, or worker/consumer solidarity.

Each artwork will be a personal response from the artist to issues concerning garment workers rights, such as transparency, women’s rights, human rights, the effects of fast fashion, or worker/consumer solidarity. All money raised will go directly to supporting our vital campaigning work so please bid generously.

Date: 6th October 2018
Address: The Space, The Peoples Republic of Stokes Croft, Bristol BS2 8JW
Time: 2pm – 10pm, with the auction starting at 7pm
Tickets: Free and available at bit.ly/InvisibleThreads

We will be in the York LUSH store on 29–30 September, in Manchester on 27–28 October and London on 23–25 November. Come and see us!
Join the movement for a fair and decent garment industry, where workers are treated with respect and consumers aren’t kept in the dark

Signing up for a regular donation is the best way to ensure that we can continue to fight for the rights of garment workers.

Donate either **£3 a month** or **£36 annually**

Become a supporter by signing up online at [labourbehindthelabel.org/donate](http://labourbehindthelabel.org/donate)

Or request a form/more information by 💌 Emailling us at info@labourbehindthelabel.org

✉️ Writing to us at **Unit 52, Easton Business Centre, Felix Road, Bristol, BS5 0HE**

📞 Calling us on **0117 954 8011**

As a supporter of the campaign you will receive our biannual Action Update and the opportunity to take direct action on our campaigns.