



up front

spring / summer 2012 waronwant.org

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ISN'T *WORK*

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SAVE SILWAN

**WAR
ON
WANT**

SIXTY YEARS
FIGHTING
GLOBAL POVERTY

WELCOME

With the London Olympics just months away, this issue of *Up Front* takes the opportunity to throw the spotlight on some of the Games sponsors that are not living up to the Olympic ideals. We expose the global sportswear brands exploiting garment workers to boost profit margins. We've also included updates on our informal economy work in Zambia, our campaign to save the Palestinian town Silwan from destruction and much more. I hope you'll find it an interesting read.



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Front cover image: AFP/Getty Images

SWEATSHOPS AND THE OLYMPICS

THE GLOBAL SPORTSWEAR BRANDS ABUSING WORKERS' RIGHTS AND OUR CAMPAIGN TO STOP THEM

As the Olympic Games come to London this summer, global sportswear brands like Adidas, Nike and Puma are competing to get the maximum exposure, and ultimately to boost their profits, from high profile sponsorship deals.

With an expected global television audience of around four billion people, sponsorship deals with athletes, national teams and the Games themselves offer an almost unrivalled advertising opportunity. Yet behind the multi-million pound advertising campaigns, the products they sell and the profits they make are based on the exploitation and abuse of workers in poorer countries.

Bangladesh is the fourth largest exporter of clothing in the world, for a very simple reason: the minimum wage for the lowest paid workers in the garment industry is just 12p an hour, making its workforce one of the cheapest in the world. To investigate whether Adidas, Nike and Puma are living up to the Olympic values of fair play and respect, War on Want interviewed workers in several factories in Bangladesh making those brands' products.

Our research found that all three brands had factories that did not comply with Bangladeshi minimum wage laws. At one of the factories supplying Adidas, the basic salary of the lowest paid workers was 2,200 taka a month, just 9p an hour. The average for all workers is 3,900 taka a month, 16p an hour. To put these wages in context, the average household we spoke to spends over 5,000 taka in one month

Rahima's story

Age: 21

Supplying: Adidas

Rahima grew up in a village where her father drove a rickshaw van to earn a living, but his income was not enough to provide for the growing family. Rahima came to the capital when she was 16 in search of a job to contribute to the family's income. In 2007, she started work at a factory and soon after married a rickshaw van driver and has one child.

The factory requires her to work for more than 12 hours a day, seven days a week and so she cannot spend time with her child. Working overtime is mandatory; her colleagues are beaten if they refuse to work more hours. Sometimes the factory does not pay the employees for three consecutive months, and if during this time a worker resigns they are not paid for that time at all. She says the managers constantly verbally and physically abuse the workers at the factory.



on food alone. Even those workers who received the legal minimum fell well short of getting a 'living wage': a wage that can cover the cost of basic essentials like housing, food and medical care. In fact, most of the workers live in a single room with their families, sharing a kitchen and toilet with their neighbours.

Workers have no choice but to work long hours of overtime to earn enough to survive. Bangladeshi labour law sets a strict maximum of 60 hours a week when overtime is included. But our research reveals a very different picture. All the factories we visited broke the law, illegally employing staff for over 60 hours a week. In one factory people were working up to 15 hours a day. In many cases overtime is compulsory, and imposed without warning. If workers refuse to work overtime after a full working day, they are often marked as absent and have their pay for the whole day deducted, or worse still, they are beaten.

The burden of long hours falls especially hard on women workers, who make up the vast majority of the Bangladeshi clothing industry. They carry the burden of unpaid domestic work which has to be completed before and after their shift. They also experience long periods of separation from their children and families, a particular concern for breastfeeding mothers.

Violence and abuse

It is a fundamental human right that all workers should be able to live and work free from verbal and physical abuse. Adidas, Nike and Puma all state that workers should be treated with dignity and respect. We found little dignity or respect for workers producing goods in Bangladesh.

Of those we spoke to, one in four had been verbally abused by their managers and one in five had been pushed, beaten or publicly humiliated while at work. Some of the workers we spoke to reported having been denied access to toilets and several reported having been locked in the toilets as a punishment by their managers. At one factory producing jackets for Puma more than half the workers we spoke to had been beaten, slapped, kicked or pushed intentionally by their managers.



War on Want works in countries like Bangladesh supporting exploited garment workers in their fight for better pay and decent working conditions. In 2010 our partner, the National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF),

won a major increase in minimum wages for the three million workers making clothes and sportswear for Western brands in Bangladesh, with the lowest paid now receiving 80% more each month. However, even after this wage increase, workers' pay is still well short of a living wage and many live in abject poverty.

Adidas, Nike and Puma will all be competing for the spotlight when the Olympic Games come to London this summer. War on Want aims to turn that spotlight onto the women who are making the brands' clothes: the exploited and abused workers that underpin the profits of these global companies. Manufacturing of the sportswear brands' products is outsourced to companies in countries like Bangladesh, with weak labour laws and low wages. Low production costs boost profit margins. But it is the workers who are paying the real price.

The London Olympics represents the ideal opportunity for War on Want to expose the global sportswear brands that are not living up to the Olympic ideals. This summer we will take the fight against sweatshop exploitation to the Games' sponsors to demand a fair deal for Bangladeshi workers. If companies like Nike, Adidas and Puma hope to associate themselves with the London Olympics to boost their brands and swell their profit margins, they will have to improve their practices or face opposition. Pressure from the public is vital if we are to force these companies to change their behaviour and ensure workers' rights are respected.

War on Want is calling on these companies to ensure that workers in their supply chains are paid a living wage and benefits such as sick and maternity pay, to end the practice of compulsory overtime, and to ensure that their suppliers create a safe and positive environment in which workers are freely able to join a trade union.

We must ensure that these companies are held accountable for the impacts of their actions throughout their global supply chains. To find out how you can join the fight against sweatshop exploitation and to read the latest news on the campaign go to waronwant.org/olympics

In order to protect her identity, Rahima's name and picture has been changed

Adidas



Sponsors: London 2012, Team GB, David Beckham, Andy Murray, Jessica Ennis

2010 profits: £475,000,000

Supplier factories: 1,200

Outsourced workers: 775,000

Workers' pay: Below living wage

Nike



Sponsors: Team USA, Paula Radcliffe, Mark Cavendish

2011 profits: £1,250,000,000

Supplier factories: 700

Outsourced workers: 800,000

Workers' pay: Below living wage

Puma



Sponsors: Team Jamaica, Usain Bolt

2011 profits: £169,000,000

Supplier factories: 350

Outsourced workers: 300,000

Workers' pay: Below living wage



Photo Credit: Issouf Sanogo / Getty Images

WHEN WORK ISN'T *WORK*

In the last three decades, millions of people in Zambia have seen devastating job losses and had their livelihoods taken from them. The destruction of secure jobs with regular incomes was the result of decisions made by Western governments on trade policies which forced the Zambian government to open their markets to private foreign companies, leading to factory closures and economic meltdown.

With no assistance to rebuild their lives, workers were left with no choice but to turn to the informal economy. Today in Zambia nearly 70% of the non-agricultural working population make ends meet in unregulated, informal work with no security, protection or recognition by the law.

Market traders and street vendors, peddling everything from food and clothes to handicrafts and books to consumers in the city, are now a visible feature of city life in Zambia. They work long hours, in the blazing sun, with no guarantee of making a sale. They have also faced harassment by the police, who force them to pay bribes to keep trading or confiscate their stock. This wipes out a trader's business, making it nearly impossible to buy new goods and start over. But in the eyes of the government this is not real 'work'.

War on Want's partner in Zambia speaks out for traders and vendors. The Alliance for Zambia Informal Economy Associations (AZIEA) has fought to improve the working and living conditions of informal workers on the ground in Zambia since 2006. With War on Want's support, they are educating

traders in their rights, teaching business skills and forging relationships with local government representatives to negotiate better labour conditions. Informal economy workers in Zambia put in long hours, in tough conditions, just to earn enough to feed their families. If this isn't work we don't know what is.

To find out more about War on Want's support of informal economy workers, download our leaflet *When work isn't 'work'* and help us demand social and economic justice for these marginalised workers. waronwant.org/work

What is the Informal Economy?

- The informal economy broadly covers any economic activity that is not formally recognised by the government, including people working as market traders and street vendors.
- The informal sector has grown rapidly in the past three decades as a result of decisions made by Western governments and financial institutions on trade, debt relief and aid, which incurred massive job losses forcing people to find alternative ways to make a living.
- Today over 80% of non-agricultural workers in Sub-Saharan Africa work informally. The majority are women, with many earning less than \$2 a day, making it nearly impossible to escape crushing poverty.

Comedy Gig 2012

War on Want's annual Comedy Gig returns on Tuesday 1 May 2012 at the O2 Shepherd's Bush Empire, London. **Tickets are selling out fast!** To buy yours and check out the line-up go to waronwant.org/comedy2012



Save Silwan

The Israeli authorities have posted demolition orders on several homes in the Palestinian town of Silwan (above), which lies just outside the walls of Jerusalem's Old City. This is the first step in the largest single mass demolition since 1967, the year Israel occupied the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. They want to knock down the homes of 1,000 Palestinians to make way for a tourist attraction. **Following a generous response to our Christmas appeal, War on Want is launching its Save Silwan campaign. Please take urgent action to help Silwan residents save their homes:** waronwant.org/savesilwan

Leaving a gift in your Will

Gifts in Wills have helped us achieve some incredible victories in the fight against poverty and injustice. For a chat about the steps involved in leaving a gift in your Will please call **Duncan on 020 7324 5043**. Or you can email legacies@waronwant.org or visit waronwant.org/legacy for more information.

The business of war



Private military and security companies (PMSCs) are the modern equivalent of mercenaries: armed civilians operating for profit in conflict zones. Through their use in Iraq and Afghanistan, the PMSC industry has rapidly grown. Yet more than four years after the massacre of Iraqi civilians by Blackwater mercenaries, PMSCs are not held accountable for such atrocities and face no effective regulation of their conduct. Given reports of PMSC involvement in Libya, the issue is far from over. War on

Want is launching its campaign to put tougher regulation of the industry and sanctions for PMSC misconduct back on the UK government's agenda.

To find out more go to waronwant.org/PMSC

Take action at
waronwant.org/action

Supermarket watchdog – the final push

Last year the government bowed to years of campaigning by War on Want and other allies and published a draft bill to create a watchdog to stop supermarkets bullying suppliers. Now we must make sure it actually gets passed into law. The government is working on a list of bills for inclusion in the Queen's Speech in May – these are the ones that will be considered by parliament over the following year. Supermarkets are doing everything they can to obstruct it.

Help us stop them!

Go to waronwant.org/queens-speech to press the government to include the bill.

Fighting fire with fire

In a groundbreaking case, the families of three Bangladeshi sweatshop workers killed in a factory fire and work-related accident have won compensation set at a historic level. War on Want partner, the National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF), campaigned tirelessly to secure long-term compensation for the victims' families and treatment for the 64 workers injured in the fire. They won compensation for each of the victims' families of 1,611,800 taka (approximately £12,000) – the equivalent of about 40 years' wages. While this is a notable victory for the families of those workers who died, the fight continues to ensure a safe workplace for all garment workers.



Album in a day

Huge thanks to Sheffield-based G2 Studios who recently recorded an entire album in just 24 hours with proceeds going to War on Want. **Download your copy from iTunes: Albuminaday 2011.**

Saddle up and get involved

We've got some amazingly dedicated supporters who are getting active and raising money for the fight against global poverty. Cyclist Hamish Haynes (above) will be racing thousands of miles across Europe in aid of War on Want, while Paul Cotterill is celebrating a landmark birthday by saddling up and getting sponsored to cycle from Land's End to John O'Groats!

Cycling thousands of miles isn't compulsory but if Hamish and Paul have inspired you to raise money for our work please do get in touch at support@waronwant.org or start fundraising at waronwant.org/sponsorship



Brazilian nut cooperative launched



The previous edition of *Up Front* featured War on Want's work in Northern Brazil supporting 300,000 women babaçu nut breakers. These women scrape a living by collecting, processing and selling the babaçu nut as well as relying on the babaçu as a vital source of protein. Our partner, The Movement of Women Nut Breakers (MIQCB), has since been granted cooperative status. The newly created and officially recognised Interstate Cooperative of Women Babaçu Nut Breakers means that the women are now better placed to get their products to market and break free from the control of the middleman. This move will help secure the livelihoods of thousands of women, making a huge difference to them and their families.

