

Border/Line Health & Safety

NEWSLETTER OF THE MAQUILADORA HEALTH & SAFETY SUPPORT NETWORK

**Letter from the
Coordinator**
page 2

Networking Notes
page 3

**"Communist" China:
Poster child for capitalist
inequality**
page 6

**Campaign Update:
Cancer among Samsung
workers in Korea**
page 6

**Campaign Update:
Sandblasting, blue jeans
& silicosis**
page 7

**Campaign Update:
Apple's global supply
chain**
page 8

**Play Fair at the
London Olympics**
page 9

Quotes of the month
page 9

Chinese activist wins APHA OHS Section award

The Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Section of the American Public Health Association (APHA) has awarded its annual "International Health & Safety Activist" award to Yuying Chen of China. Chen will travel to San Francisco, site of the 2012 APHA conference, to receive the award in October 2012.

Our Network is covering Chen's travel expenses to the conference, and those of Sally Choi of the Asia Monitor Resource Centre (AMRC) in Hong Kong, who will be translating for Chen. Another group of Asian OHS activists in the electronics industry, organized by Ted Smith of the International Campaign for Responsible Technology, will also be present and participating in the APHA conference.

Chen was nominated for the prestigious APHA OHS Section award by Network Coordinator Garrett Brown, Miriam Lara-Meloy of the Hesperian Foundation in Berkeley, and Laura Stock and Robin Dewey of the Labor Occupational Health Program at the University of California, Berkeley. Their nomination letter is reprinted below:



Yuying Chen

Chen Yuying was born in 1976 is from

(See **Chinese activist**, page 4)

Clothing Manufacturer Signs On to Factory Safety Agreement

On March 21st of this year, PVH Corp. (PVH), owner of Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein and other well-known brands, signed a groundbreaking agreement negotiated between Bangladeshi and international unions and labor rights organizations to establish a two-year fire safety program in the Bangladesh apparel industry to identify and address the preventable safety hazards.

The agreement will not actually go into effect until three other major clothing companies also sign on and there is a "critical mass" to have an impact on the ground in Bangladesh and to overcome any "competitive disadvantage" for the companies that are participating in comparison to competitors who are not. Negotiations with other possible brand retailer participants are ongoing.

The following is an article reprinted from the April 2012 *Maquila Solidarity Update* newsletter, published by Canada's Maquila Solidarity Network, which explains the details:

One of the tragic lessons from the disastrous accident at the Eurotex factory, in Dhaka, Bangladesh in December 2011, was that some international brands that had been producing clothing in the factory already knew there were serious safety hazards. Rather than fix the problems, however, they quietly left the factory, leaving workers to face those hazards alone.

The results were predictable, and preventable. On December 3rd, 20-year-old Jesmin Akter and 22-year-old Taslima Akter were

(See **Clothing Manufacturer**, page 5)

Letter from the Coordinator

Our Network coordinator is still working at Cal/OSHA Headquarters – not fired by the Governor yet – and still has major responsibilities that have cut into the time available to coordinate Network activities. Work continues, however, on individual projects and in joint efforts with the Developing World Outreach Initiative of the Northern California Section of the American Industrial Hygiene Association, and with the Asian Network for the Rights of Occupational and Environmental Victims.

As noted in the last newsletter, Network members looking for new projects are encouraged to contact Occupational Knowledge International and Workplace Health Without Borders. You can look them up on the web!

■ ■ ■

Since the series of New York Times exposés about working conditions in Apple's global supply chain in January 2012, the electronics giant has been in full-out damage control mode.

The company abruptly joined the Fair Labor Association – considered the most corporate-friendly of the global “multi-stakeholder initiatives” – and had the FLA oversee for-profit consulting companies which conducted audits of three factories in China operated by Foxconn, Apple's primary supplier. The audits were released with great fanfare in March with the overall conclusion of FLA officials and Apple's PR flacks: “work to be done, but not that bad.”

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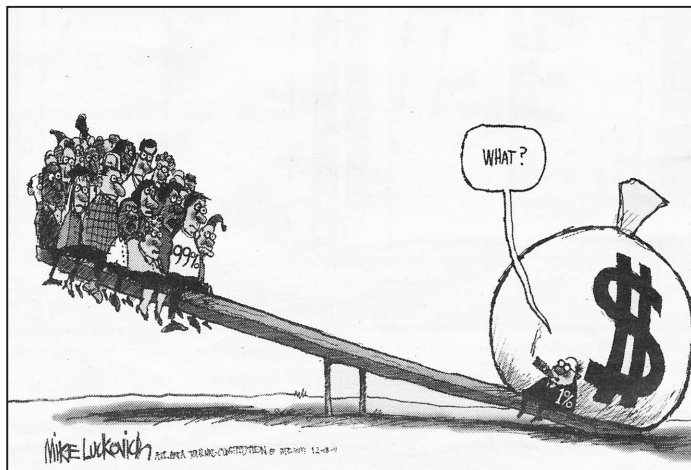
Actually, if one reads the actual audit reports from the factories – contained in Appendix 1, Parts 1, 2 and 3, of the FLA report – the inescapable conclusion is that Foxconn has occupational health and safety programs in name only. What's on paper is entirely inadequate, and clearly nothing actually happens to protect tens of thousands of young, vulnerable workers on the factory floor. Don't take my word for it, read the appendices from each of the factories for yourself at www.fairlabor.org/report/foxconn-investigation-report.

To give you just some of the highlights of the report written by corporate-friendly consultants supervised by a FLA anxious to keep its newest member, which is now paying consider sums for FLA services and membership, the OHS sections of the report note:

- little or no management commitment to occupational health and safety;
- zero participation and involvement of workers in the paper OHS programs;
- the formal OHS program does not include all workers in the plant;
- no tracking of injuries and illnesses that occur in the plants;
- management-only “health and safety committees” which rarely meet;
- no worker training on any OHS issues, including essential topics like fire safety and evacuation, chemical hazards, and lock out/tag out procedures for energized machinery;
- no ergonomics program – evaluation, controls, training – whatsoever for highly repetitive assembly work performed 11 to 16 hours a day;
- the existence of all kinds of obvious safety hazards that would be picked and

fixed by simple walk-around inspections – if the plants conducted such inspections, which they do not;

- failure to meet even the most elementary sanitation and human dignity issues, such as having an adequate number of toilets for factories of 60,000 to 200,000 workers.



The Apple-Foxconn OHS program can really only be described as a “catastrophic failure” – literally in the case of one plant where two entirely-preventable explosions of aluminum dust occurred within months of one another, one just hours after a “safety audit” of the plant. These explosions, which Foxconn did little or nothing before or after to prevent, took the lives of four workers and has ruined the futures of more than 60 injured workers, a score of them badly burned.

Remember these are plants that had been repeatedly “audited” by for-profit “independent, third-party monitors” who had given the facilities a clean bill of health year after year. Some of these Apple-Foxconn plants are “OHSMS 18001 certified” despite having no functional OHS program at the factory floor level. These “18001 certifications” are just another example of how inaccurate and corrupt these factory certification schemes are – truly a disgrace to the OHS profession.

(See Letter, page 3)

(Letter, from page 2)

Remember that both Foxconn – the world's leading supplier of electronics for all the major brands – and Apple are giant transnational corporations with enormous financial and human resources at their disposal, if they actually cared about protecting the health and safety of the workers who produce the world's electronic devices.

Apple's profits in the first quarter of 2012 were \$11.6 billion on sales of \$40 billion, and it had \$97.6 billion in cash on hand in January 2012 from 2011's record sales and profits. Apple's Chinese workers receive only \$1.60 of every \$100 of sales price, and \$54 goes to parts and materials, while Apple takes \$30 in profits off the top.

Remember that Apple is fully aware of all these health and safety hazards because the last exposé in 2006 detailed all of them – and Apple said they would be fixed then. Six years later, Apple's supply chain is as poisonous, explosive and

injurious as it was the last time Apple promised to conduct a “root cause analysis” and “put systems in place to prevent” injuries, illnesses and fatalities.

Apple's knowledge and responsibility for unsafe and unhealthy working conditions is clear from their business model. Apple is famous, or notorious, for demanding information down to the penny of the costs of each part that goes into their products, and then Apple sets the razor-thin profit margin it is willing to pay suppliers and assemblers, large and small alike.

This relentless, intransigent downward pressure on suppliers means there is no money available for anything other than cosmetic OHS programs at the plant level. Pro-forma, “window-dressing” safety programs with no real content or impact are the direct result of Apple's business model, and this is not a secret to anyone familiar with its global supply chains. Apple's current CEO is Tim Cook, who ran Apple's global supply

chains for years under Steve Jobs and now in his own term, knows exactly what the deal is.

An ocean of ink has been spilled in commentaries about Apple's supply chains, but I recommend the following columns. Scott Nova is Executive Director of the Workers Rights Consortium: www.cnn.com/2012/02/17/opinion/nova-apple-foxconn/index.html and <http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2012/04/24/470158/apple-workers-rights-credibility/>. Ted Smith was founder of the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition and now leads the International Campaign for Responsible Technology: <http://www.icrt.co/node/40>. Hazards magazine is published in the UK and edited by Rory O'Neill: <http://www.hazards.org/deadlybusiness/isick.htm>.

■ ■ ■

The word “sweatshops” was first applied to garment factories in the 19th century, and the concept still characterizes almost all the garment industry in the 21st century. Recently those working to improve working conditions in the garment industry in Bangladesh and Mexico have been subject to brutal and systematic violence. International campaigns are now underway to protest this violence and protect those working to assist some of the most exploited and vulnerable workers on the planet.

Bangladesh: Aminul Islam, a trade union organizer for the Bangladesh Garment and Industrial Workers Federation (BGIWF) and a member of the Bangladesh Center for Workers' Solidarity (BCWS) was found dead on April 5, 2012. Police pictures of his body suggest that he was tortured before being killed.

Aminul Islam became active in the Bangladeshi labor movement when he was elected Convenor of the Workers Representative and Welfare Committee at Shasha Denim Ltd., a factory located in the Dhaka export processing zone.

When Aminul was fired due to his union activity, he became a fulltime

NETWORKING NOTES

- In April 2012, the China Labor Support Network conducted a two sessions with representatives of five grassroots labor rights organizations in the Pearl River Delta of southern China. The goal of the OHS workshop was to provide information on the adverse health effects of noise exposures and train participants to conduct noise surveys in factories and help develop effective control plans. The training was funded by a joint grant from our Network and the Developing World Outreach Initiative of the Northern California Section of AIHA.
- The Asia Monitor Resource Centre (AMRC) in Hong Kong released a report on workplace injuries and illnesses in Asia on April 28th to mark the international Workers' Memorial Day. The report, entitled “Invisible Victims of Development – Workers Health and Safety in Asia,” can be accessed at: www.amrc.org.hk/node/1241.
- The Asian Network for the Rights of Occupational and Environmental Victims (ANROEV) released the latest issue of its newsletter, *Occupational Safety and Health Rights*, in April. The current issue includes major coverage of the ANROEV conference held in November 2011 in India, as well as articles on a wide variety of OHS issues in Asia. The newsletter can be accessed at: www.anroev.org/2012/04/16/osh-rights-april-2012-no-24/.
- In early 2012, *New Solutions: A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy*, published a speech by Network Coordinator Garrett Brown given at a March 2011 conference in Emeryville, California, organized by WorkSafe, a workplace safety advocacy organization. The speech, entitled, “Now is the time for us to become the leaders we have been waiting for,” can be found in Volume 21, Number 4 of the peer-reviewed journal.

(See Letter, page 4)

(Letter, from page 3)

organizer with BCWS and BGIWF. Due to his organizing activities, Aminul was repeatedly threatened by gangsters working for garment factory owners.

Aminul was previously detained and beaten by police in June 2010, along with two other leaders of the BCWS. The organization, which provides support to workers in Bangladesh's apparel industry, has been stripped of its legal status and its leaders subjected to numerous trumped-up charges for supposedly causing workers unrest during the 2010 campaign by garment workers for a decent minimum wage.

During his previous arrest, police threatened to kill both Aminul and his wife. To join an international campaign to protest this murder and continuing threats to garment workers, please click here: <http://en.maquilasolidarity.org/node/1047>.

Mexico: On May 15, 2012, four masked men in a van kidnapped José Enrique Morales Montaña, a member of the Worker Support Centre (CAT) in Puebla, Mexico. Morales was abducted as he was on his way to a hearing of the government's Local Conciliation and Arbitration Board where CAT was assisting a group of garment workers in their claim before the labor board over unpaid wages and hazardous working conditions. Morales was tortured and his belongings

stolen before he was dumped alive on the side of a road. At approximately 7:30 am the following morning, CAT director Blanca Velázquez received a message from Morales' stolen cell phone, stating: "You will die, bitch."

The Worker Support Centre is a Mexican non-governmental organization that defends the rights of workers in the state of Puebla, and has been subjected to harassment, assaults and death threats since 2008. In 2010, unknown person robbed the CAT's office in Puebla, leaving threats written prominently on the walls of the office and stealing their computers. Since then, CAT members have been physically assaulted and have received death threats by e-mail.

In response to the violence, the Project of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

(ProDESC) and the CAT filed four complaints with various government authorities, but there has been no substantive advance to date in any of the investigations. ProDESC and the CAT, with extensive national and international support, last year requested the National Commission

of Human Rights and the Puebla State Commission of Human Rights grant immediate precautionary measures to protect CAT members. While these measures were implemented in 2011, the Puebla State Commission suspended protection in April 2012 without any progress in the threat investigations and without conducting a risk analysis. The attack on Morales took place one month later.

On June 20th, as result of this campaign of violence, CAT has been forced to close its office in Puebla.

To join an international campaign to protest the kidnapping and continuing threats against CAT leaders, please click here: http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/1618/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=10552 ■



(Chinese activist, from page 1)

Zhongxian County in Chongqing City. In 1990, she went to Shenzhen to work in the Zhili Toy factory. In 1993, a terrible factory fire there changed her life: 75 per cent of her body had third degree burns in a fire that killed 80 other women workers.

However, within one year, with the support of her relatives and friends, Chen regained her wish to live. Gradually, she was able to use her artificial limb to walk, and could begin to take care of herself. Despite the emotional trauma she had to face, she took up the fight for the welfare

of migrant workers from rural areas working in contract factories producing goods for international retail brands. She also wished to do something for those who had cared for her.

In 1994, Chen set up the Self-Empowerment Service Center for Disabled Persons in Zhong County of Chongqing Municipality (Chongqing ZhiQiang Fu Wu Zhan) for her fellow workers and friends with disabilities. Since 2002, Chen has been leading the service center's work on a wide range of issues, including disability rights, rights for migrant workers, and occupational

health and safety.

Among the service center's popular programs is informing workers, who are preparing to leave Zhong County to work in the contract factories on the coast, about their rights through such things as a "Q & A handbook" for migrant workers. Another program is work with local silicosis patients, and other activities include ongoing programs in three nearby rural towns.

Since 2004, Chen has been participating in the ANROEV (Asian Network for the Rights of Occupational and

(See Chinese activist, page 5)

(Chinese activist, from page 4)

Environmental Victims, a network for 20 grassroots organizations in 14 Asian countries) to exchange experiences and skills with occupational victims and advocates from other countries to advance the voices of all injured workers. In 2009, Chen was elected as the convener of a local network of ANROEV to facilitate the mutual learning, advocacy and public education campaign activities among 10 OSH non-governmental organizations in China.

Chen is very caring towards other people with disabilities. She has taken every opportunity to use her social con-

nections to locate and assist people and groups in need. Her contributions have been recognized by the public and even the Chinese authorities.

In 2005, Chen was one of 1,000 women nominated world-wide for the Nobel Peace Prize; in 2009, Chen was selected as one of the national outstanding model workers in China ("March 8 (International Women's Day) Red-Banner Pacesetters"); in 2011 Chen received the award from ANROEV for her work on occupational safety and health in China.

In addition to her work at the service center, Chen is currently a chairperson of

Association of Physical Disabled Person(s) in Zhong county, and a member of the 13th Political Consultative Conference of the Zhong county in China.

Profiles of Yuying Chen and her work at the Self-Empowerment Service Center for Disabled Persons in Zhong County of Chongqing Municipality can be found on the following websites:

- ONE story in China - Empowerment, after the Fire: http://www.oxfam.org.hk/tc/one_285.aspx
- Peace Women across the globe: <http://1000peacewomen-china.org/html/?type=detail&id=60> ■

(Clothing Manufacturer, from page 1)

trampled to death when a panic broke out following a boiler explosion on the second floor of the factory. Another 62 workers were injured. The disaster added two more unnecessary deaths to the list of more than 330 workers killed in Bangladeshi garment factory accidents since 2000.

The "cut-and-run" approach exhibited by the brands who fled the Eurotex factory is about to change, however, as a result of a ground-breaking new agreement Bangladeshi and international unions and labour rights organizations and PVH Corp. (PVH), owner of Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein and other well-known brands.

Announced on March 21, 2012, the agreement will establish a two-year fire safety program in the Bangladesh apparel industry to identify and address the preventable safety hazards that so regularly take the lives of the country's garment workers. The signatories to the agreement include the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF), the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC), the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC), the International Labor Rights

Forum (ILRF), the Maquila Solidarity Network (MSN) and seven Bangladeshi unions and NGOs.

Although PVH has signed the agreement, it will not go into effect until three more major buyers sign on. Discussions with other large international brands whose garments are made in Bangladesh are ongoing as we go to press.

"The program is significant because it is supported by all the key labour stakeholders in Bangladesh, it is transparent, and it involves workers and unions in implementation and safety training," says the CCC's Tessel Pauli.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) provides for a comprehensive program to improve safety in the Bangladeshi garment industry, including:

- Hiring a Chief Inspector to design and implement a safety inspection program covering all of the major factories sup-

plying the participating brands;

- Publicly disclosing lists of the factories being inspected, as well as a list of any factories that fail to fix problems;
- Establishing a complaints mechanism for workers to identify high-risk factories;
- Implementing a fire safety training program for all workers, managers, and other staff, and allowing union representatives access to workers for continuing training;
- Creating functioning health and safety committees in all participating factories; and
- Conducting a rigorous review of building standards and regulations to advise the Bangladeshi government on standards.

The MOU also requires participating brands to maintain or increase orders in factories that are improving conditions over the course of the program, in order to provide incentives for factories to upgrade their facilities.

"Brands have been stalling for years while disaster after disaster struck," said Pauli. "Now there's a solution on the table. There's no excuse for further inaction." ■



"Communist" China: Poster child for capitalist inequality

In June 2012, several new studies on income distribution around the world were released indicating that "Communist" China has one of the world's highest number of millionaires and billionaires, and hundreds of million of desperately poor people.

According to Cape Gemini and RBC Wealth Management, there are currently 562,400 millionaires in China and 115 billionaires in a country where the government is run by the Chinese Communist Party governed by "Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong Thought."

China has a nominal national parliament, the National People's Congress, and Toronto's *Globe and Mail* newspaper reports that the wealthiest 60 NPC delegates had an average wealth of at least \$1.44 billion. By comparison, the wealthiest American Congressman, California Republican Darrell Issa, with a net worth of \$700 million, would be only the 40th richest member of China's NPC.

A 2010 report indicated that 91% of the people whose income was greater

than \$8 million were members of the Chinese Communist Party, or their children. At the same time, it is estimated that of China's 1.4 billion people there are approximately 468 million people (31% of the population) living on less than \$2 per day. An estimated 134 million live on less than \$1.25 a day; and 57 million people in the countryside live on less than 35 cents a day in "extreme poverty."

China, of course, has become the production platform for transnational corporations whose contract manufacturers produce the majority of consumer goods sold in the US and Europe. This trade has enriched a small number of politically-connected businessmen while the relentless drive for ever-lower production costs condemns tens of millions of workers to a subsistence existence.

In an on-line posting in March, former state worker Lijia Zhang and now free-lance journalist commented: "When I became a worker at a rocket factory back in 1980, aged 16, workers

enjoyed cradle-to-grave social welfare and a much higher status. We were hailed as 'the masters of the nation.' During the free-market era, the state-owned factories laid off excess workers. Those who kept their jobs complained about low salaries, rising labor intensity and the lack of job security."

"But they are generally better off that workers in the private sector, which now employs 70% of the workforce. The employees at [electronics contract manufacturer] Foxconn work up to 16 hours a day, in silence (talking is forbidden), with only a few minutes for toilet breaks. Socialism's 'masters of the nation' have been reduced to cheap commodities in this cold-hearted capitalism."

Just in case you are worried that the USA has lost its status, the United States is still number one in this arena with 5.1 million households of millionaires and 363 billionaires.

Overall, just 1% of the world's households controls 40% of the world's private wealth. ■

Campaign Update: Cancer among Samsung workers in Korea

Samsung started off the year with a kick, selling 93.5 million handsets and raking in \$5.2 billion in profit – in just the first quarter. This flurry of productivity has put it head to head in competition with Apple in terms of its share of the high-end electronics market in China, the world's largest mobile market. The Korean electronics giant also recently launched a third generation of Galaxy S, its version of a smart phone aimed to rival the capabilities of the iPhone.

But like Apple, Samsung's economic success continues to be at the expense of its workers lives. Workers on the assembly line continue to be exposed to harsh and unknown (to the workers) chemicals that are contained in lead, solvents and cleaners. Little or no protective equipment is provided as they cut screen panels, clean LCD screens,

and piece together electronic components. Samsung's workers suffer from such chronic diseases as malignant lymphoma, acute leukemia, aplastic anemia and brain cancer.

Four Samsung factory workers have died so far this year, most of them young women who started working for the company in their early 20s.

In January, 37-year-old Lee Eun-ju passed away after battling ovarian cancer for more than a decade. In early May, 32-year-old Lee Youn-jeong died from brain cancer, leaving a husband and two young children. Lee had worked at a Samsung semiconductor assembly and test factory for six years. Although Lee had applied for workers compensation, the Korean government denied her any aid, saying she couldn't prove her disease was caused from exposure to toxic chem-

icals at work. This despite the fact that just a month before, in April 2012, the country's Ministry of Employment and Labor had certified another Samsung worker for compensation.

Jisook Kim had also worked at a semiconductor factory and now suffers from aplastic anemia – a blood disease. In her case, the ministry recognized her medical condition as an occupational disease. About 20 workers comp requests have been denied because workers couldn't prove their disease was caused by exposure to toxic chemicals, according to GoodElectronics, an international network that supports human rights and sustainability in the electronics industry.

Then in June 2012, 31-year-old Yun Seul-ki became the 56th Samsung factory worker to die. She began working for the

(See *Samsung*, page 7)

(Samsung, from page 6)

company when she was only 18, making screen display devices. Yun was ultimately diagnosed with a severe aplastic anemia. Her family was in the process of making a claim for workers comp to cover her medical expenses when Yun died.

Also this year Samsung denied accusations that it had dumped waste from its manufacturing facilities in China. Photographs revealed that defective gadgets and parts had been dumped in China's Guiyu landfill. The labels on the packets showed that the packages had come from Samsung, HP, Panasonic

and AMD.

According to Samsung, the products must have been dumped by a supplier. The items were dated as far back as 2004. "Based on our internal investigation," stated Samsung, "we confirmed that the boxes were not discarded by Samsung Electronics or by one of Samsung's recycling partners."

How committed Samsung is to the health and safety of its workers, however, is unclear as it continues to clamor for profits and expand its operations. In July 2012, the company plans to merge its Samsung Display liquid crystal display

(LCD) unit with its Samsung Mobile Display production unit to create the world's largest flat-screen producer. The electronics giant also plans to build a semiconductor factory in Xian, China – the second manufacturing plant of its kind outside of Korea. Throughout it all, the company reportedly continues to use benzene, a cancer-causing solvent.

The latest developments in the international campaign to curb cancer deaths at Samsung can be found at: <http://stopsamsung.wordpress.com/> and <http://goodelectronics.org/>. ■

– Reported by Nancy López

Campaign Update: Sandblasting, blue jeans & silicosis

Twenty-eight year-old Idris Oral is the latest sandblasting worker to die from silicosis in Turkey. Silicosis is a respiratory disease caused by overexposure to silica dust and it has become a rampant occupational disease that has affected many garment workers in the jeans industry. Despite efforts by the Clean Clothes Campaign, and even legislation banning sandblasting, the practice continues unabated as the preferred and cheap method to give jeans that faded and washed-out look.

A new report by the Amsterdam-based Clean Clothes Campaign, Deadly Denim, found that many brands that had committed to completely stop the use of sandblasting continue doing so – such as H&M, Levi's, Lee and Diesel. Just a year ago, these same companies had promised to eliminate the use of sandblasting, acknowledging the documented evidence of its ill effects. Meanwhile, other brands have ignored all together the organization's calls to ban the practice.

In fact, the garment industry is far from ensuring oversight and accountability as evidenced in Deadly Denim. Researchers interviewed more than 70 workers across seven factories and found a disturbing trend of outright negligence and unwillingness to change workplace conditions. Many factory supervisors,

under pressure from retail brands to speed up production have skirted the regulations that do exist. Managers have sometimes made workers sandblast over night to avoid being caught by auditors, who typically visit factories only during the day shift. This makes it clear that brands have not held up their end of the bargain.

Turkey has been the center of concerted action against the use of sandblasting – and the campaign had achieved a degree of success. Legislation was passed there in 2009 banning the practice all together. The "Killer Jeans Campaign" of 2010 brought the issue of sandblasting to the international forefront creating pressure for big name brands to eliminate the harmful practice. A recent report from the UK's Labour Behind the Label and the Swedish Fair Trade Center, *Killer Jeans: a report on sandblasted denim*, details that campaign and the current status.

But brands have responded by outsourcing their manufacturing outposts to less regulated waters. Now, for example, it is estimated that there are more than 2,000 sandblasters in Bangladesh, where nearly half of the 200 million exported pairs of jeans each year are sandblasted. The study found that in Bangladesh, one worker can produce 35 to 60 jeans with manual sandblasting. It is not known how



many workers there may have early stages of silicosis. However, with these levels of production and constant exposure to silica dust the disease is a continuing and fatal hazard for all sandblasters.

Currently, no brand has committed to actually checking for silicosis among workers at its factories, much less offering treatment for those with the disease. The report calls on a national ban of sandblasting by country but also on enforcing import bans on garments that were sandblasted.

The Clean Clothes report can be accessed at: <http://www.cleanclothes.org/resources/ccf/working-conditions/deadly-denim-sandblasting-in-the-bangladesh-garment-industry>.

The Labour Behind the Labor report can be accessed at: http://www.fairtradecenter.se/sites/default/files/JEANSRAPPORT_ENG_low_1.pdf. ■

– Reported by Nancy López

Campaign Update: Apple's global supply chain

Earlier this year, the Fair Labor Association went into three Foxconn facilities to conduct the first-ever thorough investigation and assessment of the working conditions at Apple's supply chain. The month-long investigation in which more than 35,000 workers were interviewed uncovered a host of non-compliance issues with FLA's own "Workplace Code of Conduct" and Chinese labor law.

Excessive overtime, unpaid work, and health and safety risks were among the main workplace abuses reported. In response to the investigation's findings, Apple and Foxconn agreed to take remedial steps as proposed by FLA to better working conditions at these factories – such as achieve full compliance regarding work hours by 2013; document all accidents in Foxconn facilities that lead to workplace injuries; increase worker participation in committees and unions; and pay workers fairly and on time for all overtime and work-related meetings that occur outside of their regular shift. By April 2012, Apple had reported that its suppliers had achieved 95 percent compliance with the 60-hour workweek.

But are the reported changes real and lasting? Independent investigations into Foxconn show that there is reason to doubt Apple's commitment to improve working conditions, which may only exist on paper.

A report released in May 2012 by Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehavior (SACOM) found that life inside China's Foxconn factories remains abusive and exploitative for hundreds of workers. At one facility, employees were working nearly 80 hours of overtime a month to produce the new iPad. The report also found that line managers often work up to five hours of unpaid overtime on a

daily basis.

SACOM's investigation took place from March through May 2012 with



170 workers and supervisors interviewed. Workers said they continue to face abusive treatment at the hands of management. They are frequently punished when they don't meet production targets. In one factory, they are forced to clean toilets or write "confession" letters.

GoodElectronics and makeITfair have been critical not only of Apple's progress, but also of FLA's initial assessment of its supply chains. Foxconn had already agreed to reduce overtime hours to be in compliance with Chinese law by the end of 2011. But as FLA's report found, excessive overtime is still an issue. No remedial action was set forth for the abusive management methods that led to the suicides that took place in 2010 and 2011 at Foxconn. In its analysis of FLA's investigative report, the Maquiladora Solidary Network in Canada also found many of the same shortcomings.

GoodElectronics, makeITfair and SACOM have called on the Fair Labor Association to involve local labor organizations as well as international stakeholders in evaluating Foxconn and Apple's efforts at achieving compliance. And ultimately, the question remains: what actual steps will Apple and FLA

take to ensure that Apple's purchasing practices do not override efforts at creating a healthy and sustainable workplace for all employees?

Apple joined FLA in January 2012 after years of independent investigations, and a firestorm of media reports in January, documented the abusive working conditions in its supply chain. In joining the FLA, Apple has committed to upholding the FLA Workplace Code of Conduct, but has two years to be in full compliance. Time will tell what the end result will be.

Joint statement

(March 22): http://goodelectronics.org/news-en/give-apple-workers-a-voice-in-their-future/?utm_source=SOMO+Alert&utm_campaign=5c25b19f1d-Give_Apple_workers_a_voice_SOMO&utm_medium=email

Open letter to Tim Cook (March 26): http://sacom.hk/archives/945?utm_source=SOMO+Alert&utm_campaign=5c25b19f1d-Give_Apple_workers_a_voice_SOMO&utm_medium=email

The Guardian (UK) newspaper (May 30): <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2012/may/30/foxconn-abuses-despite-apple-reforms>

Sweatshops are good for Apple and Foxconn, but not for workers (May 31): <http://sacom.hk/archives/947> ■

– Reported by Nancy López

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www.igc.org/mhssn

Play Fair at the London Olympics

For all its glitz and glory, the 2012 London Olympics are not performing as ethically as the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) pledged the organizers, sponsors, licensees and suppliers would.

The Play Fair 2012 Campaign has been working closely with the London Games organizing committee to ensure that goods made for the upcoming Games are made under safe conditions for workers. A mechanism for workers to voice their grievances was created. A code of conduct based on international human rights and labor standards was also implemented, requiring employers to pay living wages and provide regular employment. Even a landmark agreement was reached in February 2012 in which LOCOG promised to train workers and management in China as well as create a worker hotline and develop transparency measures.

But with the summer games only days away, and the majority of production probably already complete, it is now evident that the organizing committee did not follow through on most of its promises.

Play Fair 2012 has followed up on an investigation done earlier this year, *Toying with Workers' Rights, A report on producing merchandise for the London 2012 Olympic Games*, which identified poor working conditions in two factories supplying the Olympic mascot and pin badges. In its new investigation, *Fair Games? Human rights of workers in Olympic 2012 supplier factories*, Play Fair has revealed that garment workers in Asian factories are still scrambling like mad under unsafe and exploitative working conditions to meet ambitious production targets set by brands such as adidas, New Balance, North Face, Nike and Speedo.

Researchers interviewed 175 workers across 10 factories in Asia as well as factory supervisors, labor and trade union representatives. They uncovered a long laundry list of grievances: work-

ers employed on short-term contracts, poverty wages, mandatory and excessive overtime followed by overnight shifts at different factories, child labor, intimidation, a lack of freedom of association, a lack of protective equipment.

Workers in the Philippines and Sri Lanka, for example, have to rely on payday loans to supplement their low income and cover basic needs. In China, workers who use the sewing machine have to sit on stools with no back support and reported experiencing constant back, neck, and waist pain. Workers across the board said they were notified of audits in advance and ordered to respond favorably to questions regarding workplace safety and treatment by supervisors.

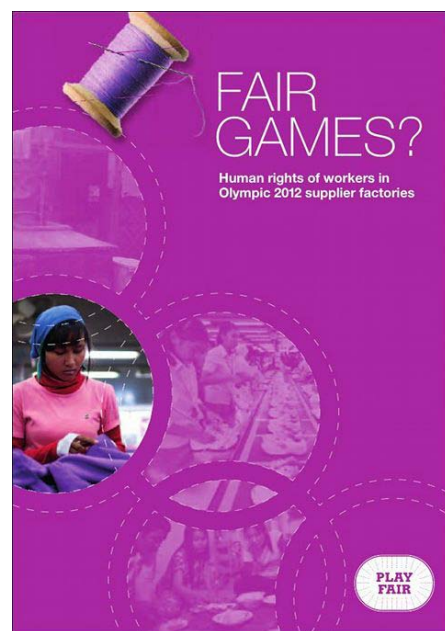
For future Olympic games, Play Fair calls on the International Olympics Committee (IOC) to institute tougher measures guaranteeing workers rights, such as making factories actually create a complaints mechanism that will resolve workers' grievances, and making brands actually comply with international labor standards if they want to secure sponsorship agreements with the

Olympic Games. Currently, Play Fair is pressuring the president of IOC, Jacques Rogge, to adopt an ethical licensing policy for the next Olympic games.

Information about the Play Fair campaign and copies of its reports can be accessed at:

<http://www.playfair2012.org/>. ■

– Reported by Nancy López



Quotes of the Month

"On average, one worker dies in the yards a week and every day a worker is injured. It seems like nobody really cares. Workers are more easily replaceable to the yard owners: if one is lost they know another 10 are waiting to replace him. The government collects the taxes and turns a blind eye... There is hardly any testing system for the use of cranes, lifting machinery or a motorized pulley. The yards re-use ropes and chains recovered from the broken ships without testing their strength. Fires, gas explosions, falling steel plates, exposure to poisons from bunker oil, lubricants, paints and cargo slop have left thousands with respiratory diseases."

– Worker advocate Muhammed Shahin, in "Bangladeshi workers risk lives in shipbreaking yards," The Guardian (UK), May 5, 2012.

"First it kills the men. Then the disease kills the women who are forced to take over the work to survive, and finally it takes our children. If you're in this job now, you cannot ever get married any more – the girls know you will be dead in your 30s. No one will carry on your name."

– Ramesh Makwana, Indian gemstone polisher who has silicosis, in "Workplace poisoning killing millions of Asians each year, says new report," The Guardian (UK), April 26, 2012.