

# Playfair 2012

## Campaigning for a sweat-free Olympics



This text is taken from the leaflet: Campaigning for a sweat-free Olympics 2012. Copies of the leaflet can be ordered at [www.playfair2012.org](http://www.playfair2012.org)

### TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

**How much do you know about the people behind the Olympics?**

1 How many years would it take for a worker in a Chinese factory producing for Nike to earn the same amount as its CEO Mark Parker did in 2007?

- a 650 years            b 12,000 years            c 9,000 years

2 The International Olympic Committee requires that suppliers of Olympic-branded goods do not use child labour or forced labour.

- a True            b False

3 In 2008, how much did workers making Olympic-branded bags for the Beijing Games earn per month, approximately, for an average 13-hour day at Yue Wing Cheong Light Products Co Ltd, China?

- a £215            b £48            c £76

4 What percentage of workers in the sportswear industry are women?

- a 80%            b 96%            c 68%

5 The International Play Fair campaign is organised by a coalition of charities.

- a True            b False

6 In 2007, workers involved in making Olympic-branded goods at Mainland Headwear Holdings Ltd, China were forced to work around:

- a 120 hours overtime per month  
b 160 hours overtime per month  
c 36 hours overtime per month

7 Which of the following companies is not an official sponsor of the Olympic Games 2012:

- a EDF    b BT    c British Airways    d Lloyds    e TSB    f HSBC    g UPS

*Answers: 1-c; 2-False; 3-c (a=legal minimum wage they should have earned); 4-a; 5-False (coalition of trade unions and labour rights organisations); 6-b (c=legal maximum overtime per month); 7-f.*

### What is Playfair 2012 and why do we need it?

Imagine... your working day starts at 6.45am and finishes about 10.30pm or maybe even as late as 2am. You have to work about four hours overtime Monday to Saturday, and sometimes all day Sunday too. At the end of the month your pay is around £97 – below the legal minimum you should have been paid, and nowhere near a living wage. You don't have an employment contract so if there's a dispute at work, you can't even prove you're

employed there. Legal maternity rights are not upheld. There is no trade union to protect your workplace rights...

It's not a pleasant prospect. But that is the reality that Playfair 2008 researchers found at Lekit Stationery Company, China, which was making Olympic branded goods for Beijing 2008.

And unfortunately for the hundreds of thousands of workers employed in the global supply chains that produce kits for Olympic teams, or the sportswear and Olympic souvenirs available on our high streets, it's an all too common scenario. Yet it is these workers, not just the athletes, who help to make the Olympics and all other major sporting events possible.

Playfair 2012 is part of an international campaign that began in the run up to the Athens 2004 Olympics and continued with Beijing 2008. The UK Playfair 2012 campaign is coordinated by the Trades Union Congress and Labour Behind the Label and is supported by trade unions and campaigning organisations.

Playfair 2012 is calling on the organisers of the London Games, the sportswear industry, and the International Olympic Committee to raise the bar on workers' rights. We want them to ensure that the rights of workers making sportswear and Olympic-branded goods are respected and in line with standards enshrined in International Labour Organisation Conventions and the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

## What are the issues?

### Poverty wages and child labour

*"I worked from early in the morning until 2am the next day. I was so exhausted, but I was still required to go to work as usual the next day."*

13-year-old girl working at Lekit Stationery Co., China

The Olympics is a multi-million dollar industry. Sponsorship revenue for Vancouver 2010 was just under one billion dollars – despite the global economic crisis. Adidas, a key sponsor of London 2012, had pre-tax profits of £220 million in 2009. Yet the vast majority of workers employed in sportswear and Olympic supply chains continue to be paid poverty wages.

In Bangladesh the minimum wage is 1,622 Taka – just a sixth of what a worker needs to be able to feed herself and provide for her family. In China, the minimum wage is about half the living wage. Minimum wages are set in the midst of fierce competition for multinational investment. As a result they are set below a government's own poverty levels, and way below what is needed for a living wage. This means that workers have to choose between buying food, educating their children or paying for medicine.

As the big brands seek to increase sales in the economic crisis, they cut prices, putting suppliers under greater pressure to cut production costs. This might mean outsourcing production to households where cheap labour and child labour are evident.

### Fact box

#### Living wage

A living wage is defined by campaign group Labour Behind the Label as follows:

- It is enough to provide for the basic needs of workers and their families (including food, water, shelter, clothing, healthcare, education and transport) plus a discretionary income.
- It enables workers to participate fully in society and to live with dignity.
- It takes into account the cost of living, social security benefits, and the standard of living of others nearby.
- It is based on a standard working week, before overtime, and applies after any deductions.

## Union busting

*"I am always alone. Not a single worker or any of the unions' members dares to talk to me either in the workplace or in the canteen."*

Waraporn Rakthai, union president in a sportswear factory, Thailand

The freedom to join a trade union and bargain collectively is a human right, as defined by the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but it is widely opposed throughout the garment industry. Although this right is enshrined in many codes of conduct, employers often harass and discriminate against workers who choose to form or join a trade union, and workers refrain from participating because they are afraid that having trade union membership will threaten their jobs.

## Flex and squeeze

*"None of us have time to go to the toilet or drink water. Even so, we are working without rest and are always afraid of not working fast enough to supply soles to the next production line."*

Worker making New Balance shoes, China

Global sportswear companies put demands on supplier factories to cut their prices, speed up manufacturing, and meet their demands for 'flexible' production and delivery. So, when large orders come in with short turnaround times, 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 on paper.

According to Anti-Slavery International, being forced to work overtime above the legal limit or beyond a negotiated agreement, with the threat of dismissal, is forced labour.

## Disposable workers

*"My wage is conditional. If I don't complete my daily target within the regular working hours, I have to work overtime without pay to finish my target."*

Garment worker on a temporary contract employed by a factory supplying Nike, Adidas, Fila, Puma and Lotto, Indonesia

With large orders and tight turnaround times, workers are taken on during peak periods but then laid off when the work is completed.

Temporary contracts renewed time and again are also used by some employers to avoid legal responsibilities, such as paid maternity leave or health insurance contributions. And when an employer fails to respect labour laws on minimum wages, working hours or maternity leave, workers who are not given a contract cannot even prove they are employed there. Many workers do not feel able to ask for such contracts, and not having one is becoming the norm in the garment and sportswear industry.

Playfair found that some suppliers coach workers to lie to inspectors about having a signed contract that is approved by the Labour Bureau, overtime rates, rest days and their basic wages.

## Fact box

### Global supply chain

A system of production in which clothing, food, toys, souvenirs and many other items pass through a long line of factories, suppliers, buyers and warehouses before ending up on our high streets or supermarket aisles. These 'supply chains' employ millions of workers and stretch all over the globe - from China to Kenya, Bangladesh to Manchester.

### Decent Work

Decent Work is an International Labour Organisation (ILO) strategy aimed at building fair and inclusive societies. Decent Work is about:

- equal access to employment without discrimination;
- a living wage 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 which most of us face in life;
- 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.

## **Playfair 2012: what we want**

The Organisers of the London Games, the sportswear industry and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) all have a role to play in making London 2012 work for everyone. In the UK, Playfair 2012 is focusing on three sportswear suppliers. Our main demands are:

From Adidas, Nike and Pentland (makers of Speedo):

- Commit to ensuring that workers making their products are paid a living wage.
- Support the creation of a positive climate where workers are free to organise and join trade unions.
- Eliminate short-term contracts and provide job security.
- Build long-term relationships with their supply factories.

From the Organisers of London 2012:

- Make sure their contracts with suppliers and sponsors of London 2012 include legal obligations to meet internationally recognised labour standards.
- Make public the locations where Olympic-branded goods are made and the results of any investigations into labour standards that they have carried out.
- Have a complaints procedure in place so workers can report violations of workers' rights. This process must be transparent and should involve trade unions and local labour rights organisations.

From the International Olympic Committee:

- Publicly acknowledge the need to end the exploitation and abuse of workers involved in the sportswear and athletic footwear industries.
- Ensure that contracts with companies providing goods and services require internationally recognised labour standards to be met.
- Include the principle of respect for workers' rights in The Olympic Charter and IOC Code of Ethics.

## **Together we can make a difference**

In the run-up to London 2012, our high streets and supermarkets will be full of Olympic souvenirs and sportswear. As consumers, we are linked to the millions of workers employed in the global supply chains that produce them. Acting together, we have the power to bring about change. The major brands are already increasingly wary of the reputational risk associated with violations of workers' rights, and the London Games provide a great opportunity to do things differently.

Together we can demand that London 2012 is the first ethical Olympics – providing Decent Work and dignity for all. London can learn from the successes and failures of previous Games. This means taking a firm approach with companies and sponsors supplying the 2012 Games, and being transparent about the supply chains that produce sportswear and Olympic goods. The Games organisers have engaged with Playfair 2012 and committed to taking some steps, but we need them to go much further.

## **Playfair Project, Sri Lanka**

The TUC is supporting a project aimed at organising workers making sportswear for export, and improving their pay and conditions. The project is being run by the Free Trade Zones and General Services Employees in Sri Lanka, with assistance from the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation (ITGLWF).

Cooperative relationships between ITGLWF, one or more UK based brands and Sri Lankan suppliers will be established with a view to improving pay and conditions through strengthened systems for collective bargaining. The project will benefit 27,350 workers – 79 per cent of whom are women. For project updates, visit [www.playfair2012.org](http://www.playfair2012.org)

*“We need the Playfair 2012 campaign to exert pressure to improve the rights of the real players who are behind the Olympic Games.”*

Anton Marcus, Joint General Secretary, Free Trade Zones & General Services Employees Union, Sri Lanka

### **Playfair 2012 supporters**

In the UK, Playfair 2012 is supported by:

Unions and union confederations including: ATL, ASLEF, BECTU, Community, CWU, EIS, GMB, NASUWT, NUJ, NUS, NUT, PCS, Prospect, PFA, STUC, UCATT, UNISON and Unite.

Non-governmental organisations including: Anti-Slavery International, War on Want and People and Planet.

### **International Play Fair campaign**

The international Play Fair campaign involves global trade union federations and nongovernmental organisations, such as the International Textile Garment and Leather Workers Federation, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Building and Wood Workers International, and the Clean Clothes Campaign.

For all major sporting events, whether it is the Olympics, World Cup or Commonwealth Games, Play Fair is campaigning to ensure that the rights of workers are respected.

### **Get involved in Playfair 2012!**

Visit [www.playfair2012.org](http://www.playfair2012.org) to find out more or to order and download material.

- Sign up for e-alerts to get the latest news, actions and events.
- Take the latest campaign action and promote it to others.
- Post information about Playfair 2012 on social networking sites and join up to Playfair groups on UnionBook and Facebook.
- Promote Playfair 2012 in your union or campaigning organisations' publications, or write an article about workers' rights in Olympic supply chains and Playfair 2012 for your union magazine or local paper.
- Find out if and how your union or campaigning group is involved in the campaign and what you can do. If they aren't involved tell them about Playfair 2012, or invite a speaker from the TUC or Labour Behind the Label to tell you more.
- Show the short Playfair 2012 film (available on the website) at your branch meeting and encourage members to take action.
- Find out if your union is organising a Playfair 2012 event or workshop, or organise one yourself. Unions and campaigning organisations supporting Playfair 2012 are running workshops and fringe meetings to promote the campaign from now until June 2012.
- Download teaching resources, quizzes and games (available from summer 2010) from the Playfair 2012 website. Use them in your union education work.
- Get your union to pass a motion to support Playfair 2012.
- Share skills and best practice – twin your trade union branch with a sister union organising textile and garment workers.