



It's the time of year when one can renew one's wardrobe at a minimal cost as large retailers are getting rid of last season's fashion at extremely low prices. But more and more customers are beginning to ask themselves: if a pair of jeans originally cost only 10€, and now is for sale at 5€ - how and where was it actually made, and by whom?

Throughout the garment industry, unacceptable working conditions make an already difficult working day significantly worse. In many garment factories, harassment and violence are not uncommon.

Around [168 million children](#) are still working worldwide instead of attending school, and of those, 85 million in hazardous conditions. Many of these children work for the garment industry, one of the sectors that keeps resorting to employing children.

But there are good news as well. The 900 employees at Ando International, a women's wear manufacturer in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam, have [voted](#) to select a co-worker to represent them in a new system of regular meetings with the factory management.

Their new workers' representative, together with a trade union leader, sits with management every month to resolve problems related to labour standards and strengthen workplace relations.

This mechanism, the Performance Improvement Consultative Committee (PICC) was introduced by Better Work Viet Nam – a joint programme of the United Nations International Labour Organization ( [ILO](#) ) and the International Finance Corporation ( [IFC](#) ). It has produced concrete improvements in the factories where it operates - in working conditions, wages, welfare, occupational safety, workplace hygiene and working hours – and has gained the approval of both employers and workers.

But much remains to be done. The working conditions of textile workers once more raised the world's attention when the Rana Plaza clothing factory near Dhaka, Bangladesh, collapsed last April, killing at least 1,100 people.

Denim workers often pay a deadly price for the jeans that end up in our wardrobes. As a result of the [Clean Clothes Campaign](#) 's 2010 'Killer Jeans' campaign, many companies have banned the use of sandblasting in their clothing lines, but according to a CCC

[report](#)

, regardless of whether a brand has 'banned' sandblasting or not, sandblasting – both manual and mechanical – is still commonly used.

Yesterday, at least [three Cambodians have been killed](#) when police opened fire on garment workers on strike yesterday, as a nationwide wave of protests, backed by the main opposition party, presses on in demand for wages to be doubled.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay has [called for swift action](#) to empower trade unions and overhaul the garment industry.