

# Why Should I Buy Ethical Clothing?



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Garment workers throughout the globe are traditionally paid the minimum wage and work long hours in poor conditions in order to produce the clothes that we take for granted.

In the developing world countries such as Indonesia and China mass produce enough clothes to reach to the moon and back every day, this routine production and exploitation in the name of fashion by major brands has increasingly come under fire as they continue to under pay staff, and offer no additional benefits while reaping huge profits from these suffering workers.

Ethical clothing guarantees that workers have not only been paid well but also have access to a range of benefits from maternity leave and pensions to healthcare and education.

In December 06 War on Want published a reporting stating that mainly women workers in Bangladesh are regularly working 80 hours a week for just 5p an hour, in potential death trap factories, to produce cheap clothes for British consumers for sale in retailers such as Primark, Tesco and Asda.

Primark, Tesco and Asda have all made public commitments to the payment of a living wage to suppliers - commonly calculated to be a minimum £22 a month in Bangladesh. I used to volunteer as a teacher in Nepal which is next to Bangladesh and the primary school teachers were paid around £40 per month. I know from experience that even £40 per month is a struggle for a family to survive on as there is no welfare system to help. Even though the cost of living is much cheaper than the UK and USA, the cost of living is rising faster than wages making them even poorer.

Yet starting wages in the factories researched for War on Wants report were as little as £8 a month, barely a third of the living wage. Even better paid sewing machine operators receive only £16 a month, which equates to 5p an hour for the 80 hours they regularly have to work each week. The minimum wage for garment workers in Bangladesh halved in real terms during the 1990s, and many complain their pay is too low to cover food, housing and health costs.

Primark, Tesco and Asda have also pledged that their suppliers must not be required to work more than 48 hours a week on a regular basis which is the same as the European Time Directive that applies to UK workers. We are not forced to work over 48 hours per week, why should they?

Workers interviewed for War on Wants report can toil up to 96 hours a week - double the supposed maximum - and often lose their day off and face the sack if they refuse. The choice appears simple, avoid dirt cheap clothes where possible and as the excellent ethical campaign by Marks and Spencers says ...look behind the label.

## **About the author:**

Davinos Greeno works for the [ethical](#) directory that lists 100s of Organic Food and Drink [Articles](#)  
See the Full War on Want article [here](#)

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