

A report on the sweatshop industry and child labour in nic's

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



This report is aimed at investigating if the two major TNC's Nike and Gap manufacture their products according to their code of vendor conduct. Both companies code of vendor conduct clearly states that no workers are employed under the legal minimum age and sweatshops don't exist in their factories. A sweatshop is a factory where employees are subject to extreme exploitation; they work in dreadful conditions with health and safety hazards, for little pay and long hours. Child labour is, as the word suggests, when children under the legal minimum age are employed to work

When we hear brand names such as Nike and Gap, most of us will immediately associate the brands with expensive and fashionable designer products, and no doubt most people have worn an item with these particular brand names on them; however under the soft clothing and recognisable brands lies a very different story. To investigate this further we have to travel to a country where Nike and Gap manufacture their products. I have decided to travel to Cambodia. This is a country situated in South East Asia, bordered by Vietnam, Thailand and Laos. Its capital Phnom Pehn is situated in the south east of the country.

Most of Cambodia's work force is mainly in the primary sector; however their secondary sector is growing, which results in Cambodia being recognised as being an NIC (newly industrialised country). When we arrived in Cambodia we immediately started our search for a factory that manufactured products for Nike and Gap. This was very difficult, as the factories are in secret locations, because Nike and Gap say the factories contain commercially

sensitive information about the products. This 'excuse' hinders outsiders knowing exactly what is happening inside the factory.

People didn't want to tell us about the factories whereabouts either, as they were scared of getting physically assaulted by the security men surrounding the factory. At last we found a factory called June Textiles, which manufactured products for both Nike and Gap, but no one would tell us more than that. Checking treatment of workers here was going to be a huge task. The factory was well guarded and looked like any ordinary factory from the outside, but at that time we didn't know what harsh realities workers were facing inside the factory.

We needed to talk to the workers on home turf, away from the security men surrounding the factory. Late at night we got a call from a couple of workers who said they were prepared to speak to us, if we met them after their shift, at their home. For them to talk openly about the conditions in the factory was a big step. This was the one of our first big surprises, 8 women were living together in a tiny little room which on a regularly basis had power cuts and was without running water.

As we interviewed them they told us that Nike and Gap treat them as dirt, they work 16 hours a day, which is 112 hours a week. This contradicts with Nike and Gap's code of vendor conduct, which says i?? i?? On a regularly scheduled basis requires no more than 60 hours of work per weeki?? i??. They don't even get any sick pay and are forced to work overtime which also oppose their code of vendor conduct. Worse still workers are shouted at

when they work too slowly, and are humiliated by having their intelligence insulted or being compared to animals such as dogs or monkeys.

This is what Nike's code of vendor conduct states about treatment of workers i?? i?? Management practices recognize the dignity of the individual, the rights of free association and collective bargaining, and the right to a workplace free of harassment, abuse or corporal punishment. Factory managers abuse and harass the workers because they think it will increase the workers productivity. They don't understand that people work better when they are treated in a way that respects their needs. Maybe if they understood, then they would stop treating the workers like machines.

All this physical and psychological pressure under which they work, makes the workers suffer from stress and exhaustion. We were also told that they have to work 7 seven days a week. Both companies code of vendor conduct clearly states that workers as a maximum work for 6 days a week, giving them 1 day off. They also told us that they only earn 8 pounds a week, which gives them a monthly income of 32 pounds. This is roughly what a shirt from Nike or Gap costs. A horrible fact: a worker is cheaper than the price of a single shirt.

Beggars here in Cambodia are probably making a lot more than that. We then asked them if there were any workers under the legal minimum age working in the factory. They informed us about some young girls who were only 12-13 years old. We then agreed that they would arrange a meeting with the young girls. When we met these young girls they told us, that they

had lied about their age to get the job, because they were from very poor backgrounds and left their homes and families to earn money to send home to their families.

They said they have no choice but to work in such bad conditions, as their families cannot afford to send them to school to have a decent education. We then decided to send a hidden camera inside the factory to gather some more evidence. A worker was given a hidden camera, which was put into his bag. When he came out from the factory an hour or so later, we saw the horrible things that were happening inside the factory. Workers were verbally insulted, physically and psychologically abused. Now it was time for us to confront Nike and Gap with all the evidence that we had gathered.

When we confronted Nike's spokesman with this evidence he replied "unfortunately we've found on occasion in different places isolated instances of child labour and sweatshops which I would say is isolated". But I am sure this is not an isolated incidence. I think if we went to any other factories, which manufacture products for Nike and Gap we would find the same evidence. Gap's spokeswoman told us that they had no idea that the children they had employed were under age. She denied the existence of sweatshops in their factories.

These excuses and denials are not good enough. Nike and Gap should travel to the girls' home villages and check their ages in the "family books", which in the absence of birth certificates, is the best way of authenticating a child's age. As regards to sweatshops I think Nike and Gap should start to think

about the welfare of their workers instead of just thinking about how they can make the biggest profit. In opinion, Nike and Gap should start to invest money in the country to improve their conditions. But they don't.

All the profit they make goes back to the headquarters in USA, and the money is then used to sponsor celebrities. This is known as Capital flight. Now exposed by us, Nike promised that they would pay for all it's under age workers schooling, whilst Gap sacked all it's under age workers without any form of compensation, but sacking the under age workers is not going to help, because they will end up working in similar places or starve and their families will be worse off, which does not solve the problem of sweatshops and child labour.

There are many negative things about child labour. For one thing, it is not right to have children to be working 16 hours a day and making only around 8 pound a week. Since the kids are working in the factories, they would not have the opportunity to attend school, which will lower the literacy rate, and many kids with a lot potential will be deprived the opportunity to learn and one day be successful. Child labour is also linked with poverty. Poverty is the most common reason why children work.

Poor families will have children take whatever work is available to them in order to pay for the basic human needs of food, clothing and shelter. This principle is a harsh and unrelenting reality in developing countries and, unfortunately, the problems are deeply rooted and will not disappear, at least not with simple quick solutions. There are also many negative things

about sweatshops. Firstly not right for big companies to take advantage of workers by giving them such a low salary. They know that without working in the factories, they will starve and they use that to their advantage.

Humans are not use to such hard work and will cause a lot of stress, which would result in workers getting sick and perhaps dying. That would then increase the country's death rate However a positive point that TNCi?? s such as Nike and Gap do help the Cambodian government by improving the infrastructure by building roads etc. But the negative points clearly outweigh the positive points. In my opinion, I believe that child labour and sweatshops are totally wrong. Having a worker suffer for 16 hours a day just to feed their families is just wrong.

I don't think that the workers deserve only around 8 pound a week for making a pair of shoes worth about 60 pounds. Nike and Gap have got loads of money lying in their bank, just sitting there doing nothing when they should be using that money to pay the people that are making all the stuff that millions of people buy each year. But instead Nike and Gap spent an enormous amount of their revenues on sponsoring celebrities such as the Brazilian football team. It breaks my heart to see them suffer like that and nobody is doing anything about it.

I am very disappointed with the companies like Nike and Gap, who do not feel one bit guilty for what they are doing. Workers are dying because of exhaustion and stress. If their shoes were not so comfortable, I wouldn't even buy Nike. But, I guess that's how people see it - the only thing that

matters is that they are good looking and that they are comfortable. The clothes we buy from the Gap and Nike are made in factories in South Asia and the demand here affects lives there. Consumers are starting to realise this. More and more want that workers making their clothes are being treated humanely.

Both the Gap and Nike have anti-sweatshop rules or codes of vendor conduct, they proudly post those reassurances on their web sites and staff repeats to worried customers " No sweatshops, no child labour, no tolerance". But as we have seen in this report Nike and Gap break their codes of vendor conduct on several points. These codes of vendor conduct and anti-sweatshop rules are just an attempt not to damage their reputation. After all Nike and Gap rely on their reputation from the public and a report like this could damage their reputation. I hope that this report has helped to raise awareness about these issues.