



Shoe companies are far from being child labour free

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In Europe and elsewhere one can still buy shoes made by children. That is the conclusion of the campaign ‘Stop Child labour – School is the best place to work’ on the basis of research in India. Stop Child Labour specifically suspects four companies – Bata, Bugatti, Clarks and Marks & Spencer of making use of child labour in their Indian supply chain.

The fact that child labour is being used in the supply chain of shoe companies was already reported (June 2012) after research by SOMO (Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations) at the request of the Stop Child Labour campaign. The campaign informed 28 companies about the results of the research. In eight cases companies were confronted with specific findings on child labour with regard to their company, of which four came up with a satisfactory answer. Clarks and Bata responded after the deadline of September 1st and have started their own investigation. After the publication of the findings in The Netherlands on October 16th Bugatti for the first time responded to Stop Child Labour and has stated that they will investigate the matter as well.

In addition *all* 28 footwear companies were asked about their policy on tackling child labour in their supply chain worldwide. The research of SOMO showed that child labour is a problem in quite a number of countries like China, Vietnam, Indonesia and Bangladesh. The companies Van Bommel, Cruijff Sports and UGGs did, after various requests, did not react at all to the requests for information.

However: companies like Timberland, Dr. Martens, Macintosh and Deichmann are relatively transparent about the way their shoes are produced. Campaign co-ordinator Sofie Ovaa of Hivos: ‘‘Timberland, ECCO and Dr. Martens’ are among the frontrunners producing ‘socially responsible’ leather shoes. These companies also admit that child labour is still a risk in their global supply chain.’’

Ovaa emphasizes that the supply chains are often ‘tainted’ with labour rights abuses and that a company cannot be absolutely sure that their shoes are ‘child labour free’ when there is no good monitoring and remediation system in place.

Action

The Stop Child Labour campaign again calls on companies to be transparent and to take effective action to eradicate child labour from their full supply chain. ‘‘Companies do often have a code of conduct and monitor their factories, whether in India or elsewhere. But that’s not enough because child labour has moved from often large first tier supplier factories to smaller sub-contractors further down the supply chain’’ says Ovaa.

Stop Child Labour also asks consumers to support this call. Via the online ‘Mr. Scribble action’ they can see which companies are not transparent and do not take sufficient action against child labour. Consumers can then send a message ‘I want child-friendly shoes’ to companies but also give a ‘thumbs up’ when companies are active on the issue. You can find Mr. Scribble here:

<http://www.stopchildlabour.org/Stop-Childlabour/Make-your-own-Mr.-Scribble>

See ‘Child labour in the leather shoe sector – An analysis of CSR policy and practice of footwear companies’ and other related documents: <http://www.indianet.nl/ka-shoes.html>

Stop Child Labour

'Stop Child Labour – School is the best place to work' aims to eliminate all forms of child labour and to ensure formal full-time and quality education for all children, at least until the age of 15. The campaign calls on consumers, companies, governments and international organisations to be part of the solution.

'Stop Child Labour – School is the best place to work' is international campaign of the Alliance2015, coordinated by Hivos (Netherlands) and executed with the India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN), Cesvi (Italy), Ibis (Denmark) and People in Need (Czech Republic) and local partner organisations in Asia, Africa and Latin America. www.stopchildlabour.org