

Looking Behind the Logo

An assembly from Oxfam
Suitable for ages 13 to 17

Introduction

This assembly is intended to encourage pupils to see the contradiction between the slick images promoted by sportswear brands and the harsh, unfair working conditions of workers in many countries who make the sportswear worn by athletes and many millions of ordinary people.

Timing

This assembly should take 15 to 20 minutes (longer with pupil participation).

Preparation

- There are 4 PowerPoint slides. These can be copied onto OHP transparencies if preferred.
- The assembly can involve pupil participation or be presented solely by a teacher. Material for pupils to read out or dramatise is provided on page 5 for you to cut up, print out and distribute.

What to do

Sportswear with logos

Introduce the topic sportswear by asking the pupils whether they own a pair of trainers. Then ask:

What make are they?

Which brand do you like? Why?

Answers might include Nike, Reebok, Adidas or Puma. Reasons for liking these brands might include the image projected in advertisements, or the fact that they want to identify with certain sportsmen and women whom they perceive to be ‘winners’, ‘cool’ or skilful.


However, many of the most important people behind the world of sport do not have the chance to take part in sporting events. These are the sportswear workers. Who makes our sportswear? Do we ever think about what life is like for them?

Slide 1, Mara’s story

Show the slide with just the picture at first. Tell pupils you are going to tell them about a sportswear worker.

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Mara's Story



- I sew trousers all day.
- My target is 120 pairs of trousers an hour.
- I earn 75p an hour.
- In a normal day, I have to sew 960 pairs.

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Mara is just one of millions working in sportswear factories all over the world. She is 25 years old and works in a factory in Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia. Her factory produces sportswear for world-famous sports brands. She used to live in the countryside but there was no work there.

Big sportswear brands do not manufacture their goods in richer countries, like the UK, as they used to. Now that we have quicker travel, easier communications and computers, they can arrange for them to be made in countries where wages and other costs are lower.

They companies save money by having the sportswear made in countries like Bangladesh, Turkey, Cambodia, Thailand and Morocco. This could be good news for people in these countries, but too often, they are treated very unfairly.

Now show the text of slide one. Read it out or ask a pupil to read it.

Ask pupils:

Can you imagine sewing 120 pairs of tracksuit bottoms in one hour.

This is what Mara has to do. Mara earns about £30 a month, or £33 if she does overtime. The big brands make enormous profits. For example, in 2003 Nike made US\$1,123 million (£611 million) profit (before tax).

Mara could never afford to buy the trainers she makes.

Slide Two, Mara's day

Mara's Day



- I start work at 7.30am.
- Overtime starts at 4pm.
- Sometimes we don't stop until 8pm.
- I'm not allowed to take a break.

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Show the picture and text on slide two. Read the text, or ask a pupil to read it from the script version.

Ask pupils:

How do you think you would feel if you had to work this hard.

Mara's day is at least 8 hours but she often has to do overtime to meet her targets, giving her a 12-hour day.

Can you imagine how tired she is? Her pay is cut if she misses her target.

Is this fair on Mara. Why do you think she earns so little?

Slide 3, The global supply chain



Explain that workers like Mara are the last but essential link in the global sportswear supply chain – the people who get sportswear designed, made, transported, and into the shops. Like football or athletics, the global supply chain connects people across the world – but not in fair play.

Read out the texts below, or ask different pupils to read each one from the script page:

***Customers** like the latest trainers and tracksuits. Most of us have branded sportswear at home.*

***Shops** attract customers with the latest trainers and sports kit.*

***Big sportswear brands** spend millions of pounds advertising sportswear and sponsoring sports stars. They have their sportswear made in factories in poorer countries to save money. They choose the factory that can offer them the best deal.*

***Sportswear factories** pay low wages. They have to sell the sportswear to the big brand at a low price, otherwise the brand would choose another factory.*

***Workers like Mara** work very long hours for low pay producing our sportswear. Conditions are usually very harsh, and their health suffers.*

Slide 4, What should we do?

So what can be done? Ask for some suggestions. Tell them that some organisations (including Oxfam) believe that big brands must take responsibility for the suffering they are causing. They must pay realistic prices to the factories that produce their clothes, so that these factories can afford to pay their workers properly.

What should we do?



Conclusion

Tell pupils that, thanks to the efforts of ordinary people, some sportswear companies are changing the way they get their sportswear made. However, most of them need to do more.

Finish by telling pupils that if they feel this situation is unfair, they could write to big sportswear companies asking what their plans are for making the lives of sportswear factory workers better. Are they working with factories to improve conditions?

Extension

Finally, encourage pupils to question how all the products which are made abroad – such as food, computers, clothing – are made. Who produces them? Do these people get a fair wage? At the moment, we all depend on their hard work, but many of them have a hard life.

Looking Behind the Olympics

Pupils' scripts

You will need a female voice to read Mara's words and four other voices for the global supply chain. The words in this script for slides one and two are the same as on the slides.

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Slide 1, Mara's story

I sew trousers all day.
My target is 120 pairs of trousers an hour.
In a normal day, I have to sew 960 pairs.

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Slide 2, Mara's day

I start work at 7.30 am.
Overtime starts at 4pm.
Sometimes we don't stop until 8pm.
I'm not allowed to take a break.

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Slide 3, The global supply chain

Customers like the latest trainers and sportswear. Most of us have sportswear with logos at home.

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Shops attract customers with the latest designs.

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Big sportswear brands spend millions of pounds advertising sportswear and sponsoring sports stars. They have their sportswear made in factories in poorer countries to save money. They choose the factory that can offer them the best deal.

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Workers like Mara work very long hours for low pay producing our sportswear. Conditions in the factories are usually bad, and their health suffers.

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