

Bring on the World

Day 4 Morning session: How sportswear is made

Activity 2: Mara's story

Time required: 30 mins

You will need

- A copy of Mara's story for each pupil (below)
- Lined A4 paper

Aims

- To help pupils understand how the global sportswear industry affects people worldwide.
- To begin to develop pupils' understanding of the global sportswear supply chain.
- To develop pupils' empathy with sportswear workers.
- To develop speaking and listening skills through group work and discussion.

What to do

Explain to pupils that they are going to read about Mara, who works in a factory in Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, making sportswear for a major brand. Mara related her experiences to a group of researchers studying the conditions in sportswear factories in different countries. The story is in her own words. Before pupils start reading, ask them to draw two columns on their notepaper, one headed 'Mara's problems' and the other, 'Possible solutions'.

As they read, ask them to note down their responses under the two headings. Invite them to share their findings with the whole class. Make a note on the board of the issues they raise. Pupils could also add to their own notes. Tell them that Mara's experiences are very similar to those of millions of other workers making sportswear, and that most factories are in poorer countries where alternative employment is hard to find and where wages are lower.

Ask pupils whose responsibility they think it is to improve conditions for workers like Mara.

You may have to conclude that there are different opinions on this but that the current situation certainly needs to be changed.

Mara's story

Mara is a 25-year-old factory worker in Cambodia, sewing products for a major brand. She moved away from her village in the country to look for work in the capital city, Phnom Penh, in order to support her widowed mother and six brothers and sisters, following the death of her father. She told researchers about her life at the factory:



‘Our boss asks us to work faster, to sew accurately, and to meet the targets set.

My target is 120 trousers per hour. For this, I earn between 70p and 80p. In a normal working day I have to sew 960 pairs. If I do not meet this target, my monthly bonus of £2.70 is cut. I even hold off from going to the toilet so that I can meet my target. When we want to go to the toilet during working hours, the boss must stamp our production cards.



‘Overtime starts at 4 pm and runs till 6 pm. Sometimes we don’t stop till 8 pm. If I work that late, I am frightened of the dark. Many motodup (motorbike taxis) ask to take me home. I do not want to go with them, so I run back to my room.

‘If I work all the overtime shifts, I get around £33–35 per month. If not, I get around £30. Of this, I spend £2.70 on rent for my room and send between £5.40 and £10.85 to my family. The rest goes on food and medicine. I cannot save anything from my salary.’