

Do you wear the world on your back?

The Real Cost of your cotton t-shirt Cheap clothes come with a serious human rights price-tag somewhere down the line.

Six degrees of separation

- **You at your favourite store purchasing a t-shirt**
- **Cut, Make, Trim – Turning the cotton fabric into a garment**

Focus Bangladesh: The garment industry is booming in Bangladesh, and makes up more than 80% of the country's exports, with the nation rising to become the second biggest garment exporter in the world. Bangladesh attracts garment producers because the costs of production are so cheap, the human costs however are not. Many of the almost 4 million workers employed in the industry suffer through appalling conditions. Harassment, unsafe factories and injuries are rife. Additionally Bangladesh has the lowest manufacturing wage in the world, and reports of child labour remain prevalent.
- **Wet Processing**

Fabric is dyed, washed, scoured, bleached and rinsed. All these finishing processes require the use of chemicals, heat and water, and produce contaminated wastewater.
- **Spinning and weaving: Turning the cotton seeds into thread and fabric.**

Focus India: India is a global hub for textiles manufacturing. There are major incidences of child and forced labour in this industry.

In Tamil Nadu in southern India, young women are kept in what can amount to labour bondage through a practice dubbed the "Sumangali Scheme." The girls, some younger than 14, are paid less than the minimum wage for one to three years. After this work term is finished, the employer pays the withheld wages to the family as a lump sum to be used as a dowry. In some instances the practice can mean forced labour: in these cases the employer binds the women to work by refusing to pay the withheld money unless they complete years of employment. Some of these women are also victims of other abuses such as forced overtime, sexual abuse and gender discrimination.

- **Cotton Harvesting – Gathering the cotton seeds from the plant**

Focus Uzbekistan: Uzbekistan is currently the world's fourth largest exporter of cotton globally, where state-sponsored forced and child labour continue on a massive scale. Each year the Karimov government forces over a million people across the country—from adults to children as young as 10—to pick the crop each year. It requires teachers to close schools for the harvest, and forces children to work up to 70 hours a week for little or no wages under threat of expulsion and abuse. Farmers are required to meet production quotas and then forced to sell the crop to the administration at an artificially low price, keeping them in poverty. Citizens who speak out against these abuses are punished with detention, torture and exile. Meanwhile the Karimov government profits from ongoing cotton sales on the international market, and the material continues to find its way into globally-sold apparel.

- **Cotton Seed – The planting of the cotton.**

Focus India: Thousands of children work in India's cotton seed industry, many of them trafficked or trapped in debt bondage. They work long hours, are exposed to toxic chemicals and pesticides which result in severe health problems and death.