

G7 Geography – Improving Sweatshops Help Sheet

| Improvement | Why important? |
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| Improving fire safety, fire alarms, smoke detectors, escapes etc | Many people have died as the factories are not up to modern standards and don't have health & safety features that can save lives. |
| Introduce 2 days paid holidays | This is a small step but would show the people working in the sweatshop that they are valued and that it is good to have a break every now and again (In France, we have 5 weeks paid holidays) |
| Build a school | You should have calculated from the introduction how many children are relying on the women in the factory. Education is not free and so it would help out a lot if there was a good standard education available for the workers children. |
| Offer a training scheme for workers | Training helps to give workers additional skills so that they can progress within the company and move on to better paid jobs. This would avoid workers staying in low skilled jobs for their whole career. |
| Offer a free basic lunch | Many sweatshop workers do not stop for lunch as it is sometimes frowned on. They might miss their targets for the day. A hungry worker is not a productive worker and so this might improve productivity and health/energy levels of the workers. |
| Provide a 20-minute break during their shift | See reason above. This might improve the overall health and wellbeing of the workers. |
| Improve pay by 5% per day | Any increase in salary would have positive consequences for the workers. They would be able to afford better quality food, pay more towards education of their children. |
| Structural Survey once every three months | The importance of this goes without saying. Remember the warning signs in Rana Plaza? A survey like this could have saved many lives but would the results have been accepted and acted upon? |
| Offer free transport to and from work | Workers can spend a number of hours travelling to and from work on top of their work shift being 12-14 hours per day. Less tired workers could be more productive in the long run. |
| Offer subsidised childcare | Subsidised means that the company (Primark) pays for a certain % of the total cost. If children are able to go to school or be looked after, this means that the parents can go to work. |
| Build a health care centre | This is revolutionary stuff and something that would really go some way to helping out all those workers who are too poor to afford health care and how are afflicted by a number of illnesses without hope of getting better. |

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| Offer their uniform free | Staff have money taken out of their wages to pay for their uniform. Do the Math! €5000 for 500 people. How much is that per worker? Don't forget that a worker can earn as little as \$5 per day for a 14 hour shift. |
| Pay 5% more for night shifts | Night shifts mean that you work all night and you have to sleep in the day. This can be very antisocial if you have a family and children. Remember that these factories never close down. They are going 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. |
| Invest in a wastewater management system | Many of these sweatshops do not have proper toilets and waste flows around the inside and outside of the buildings. This makes people sick and they are unable to come to work. This causes problems for the workers and the factories who have deadlines to meet. |
| Reduce working days by half an hour | The majority of observers say that 12 – 14 hour days are simply far too long to be working in such hot and confined conditions. Reducing the working day by 30 minutes without paying the staff less would be a positive goodwill gesture. |
| Offer reduced housing rent | The main expense for many sweatshop workers is their rental payments on their small house / shack. Once this is paid, they have very little money left for food and healthcare items. |
| Offer shares in the company | Many companies offer workers shares in their company. If the company performs well and makes money, the shares are worth more and can be sold for a profit. This often makes the workers work even harder as they can gain from it financially. |
| Provide clean drinking water during work | Workers drinking dirty in the factory makes them sick and they are unable to carry on working. This causes problems for the workers and the factories who have deadlines to meet. |
| Invest in new machinery | Much of the machinery is very old and dangerous. New machines would be safer for the workers and could even help them to be more productive. |
| Employ a fully trained health and safety officer | The importance of this goes without saying. Remember the warning signs in Rana Plaza? An Officer like this could have saved many lives. But would the factory owner have listened to them? |
| Offer a pension scheme for all workers | As we have seen before, after the rent has been paid on their accommodation, the food has been bought, doctors bills and school bills paid, there is no money left. Retirement just doesn't happen, and you literally have to work until you die. Having a pension when you turn 65 years old would make a massive difference to the quality of life of the sweatshop workers. |