

CHINA CALLING: MAKE IT FAIR

Chances are that your mobile phone was **MADE IN CHINA**. Half of the world's mobile phones are made there – as well as huge numbers of computers, MP3 players and game consoles.

MILLIONS OF MIGRANT WORKERS have moved from China's impoverished countryside to find work in the country's expanding electronics industry. Yet many of these low-skilled workers – mainly young women aged from 16 to 30 – are **PAID AS LITTLE AS 35 CENTS PER HOUR** in a province where shower cream costs 1,80 Euro. Factory workers often work for ten to twelve hours a day – six to seven days a week – to make parts that are supplied to big name electronics companies like Nokia and Samsung.

The normal full-time pay is barely enough to live on – even though most migrant workers share cramped dormitories at low costs. In order to save money for studies or to help their parents back home, workers have to put in up to **150 HOURS OF OVERTIME EVERY MONTH**.

They may get sacked or punished with salary reductions if they make any mistakes or speak out against unfair treatment. It is difficult for them to protest since **INDEPENDENT LABOUR UNIONS ARE FORBIDDEN IN CHINA**.

Although Chinese labour laws have been put in place to protect workers against these unacceptable conditions, the **LAWS ARE OFTEN IGNORED**. Most brand name electronics companies have set up rules for their suppliers but they are not always enforced.

"I want to ask people not to focus on the beautiful appearance of the products, but on the workers behind the products."

SIU, 20, ELECTRONICS WORKER IN CHINA

Now the makeITfair campaign is calling on young people across Europe to **HELP MAKE WAGES AND CONDITIONS FAIR** for electronics workers in China and across the developing world.

**FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN HELP AT
WWW.MAKEITFAIR.ORG**



MAKING IT FAIR FOR WORKERS IN CHINA

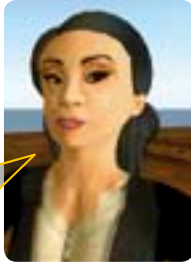
Everybody loves having the latest mobile phones, laptops and MP3 players. But did you ever think about the workers who make many of these electronic gadgets in China?

Long hours, low wages

Every day, 20-year-old **SIU WORKS 10 TO 11 HOUR SHIFTS** in a factory near Shenzhen city in Southern China that makes mobile phone chargers for big brand electronics companies like Nokia, Motorola, Sony, LG and Samsung.

“When the shift is over, I feel extremely tired both physically and mentally due to the huge workload.”

SIU, 20, ELECTRONICS
WORKER IN CHINA



SIU HAS ASKED US NOT TO USE HER REAL NAME OR PHOTO IN ORDER TO PROTECT HER IDENTITY.

In spite of her heavy work load, Siu barely earns enough money to live on. During low season, **SHE EARNS JUST 75 EUROS PER MONTH.** To make some more money she feels forced to work a lot of overtime. Even though she shares a small dormitory room with seven other migrant workers, she can hardly make ends meet.

Earlier this year Siu fell ill and she had to pay out **NEARLY 80 PER CENT OF HER MONTHLY SALARY IN MEDICAL FEES.** She seldom has any money left at the end of each month to send back for her brother.

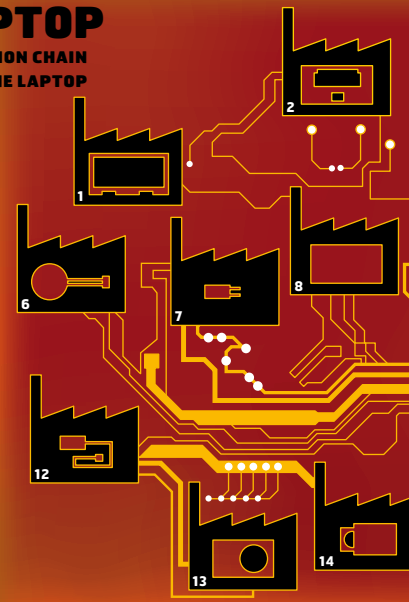
Her job is to put 855 stickers onto mobile phone chargers every hour. If Siu fails to meet the target, **SHE HAS TO CARRY ON WORKING WITHOUT ANY PAY UNTIL SHE HAS REACHED HER QUOTA.** It is back-breaking work. And for three months of last year, Siu had to work for seven days a week without any time off.

Siu left her rural village when she was 18 years old to begin work at this electronics factory. She planned to send back money to her family, to help support her younger brother through school. Since then she got ill. **HER EYES ACHES AND SHE FREQUENTLY FEELS DIZZY.** Often she has to work night shifts, and she doesn't sleep well as a result.

Siu urges young people across Europe to **JOIN THE MAKEITFAIR CAMPAIGN** to improve the lives of electronics workers and to make sure they receive fair wages.

58 FACTORIES MANUFACTURING 1 LAPTOP

EXAMPLE OF A PRODUCTION CHAIN
FOR THE PRODUCTION OF ONE LAPTOP



Standing up for workers in China

Since she was a student, Jenny has been involved in improving working conditions for workers like Siu. After she left university, **JENNY JOINED SACOM, A HONG KONG-BASED ORGANISATION THAT TURNED ITS ATTENTION TO THE ELECTRONICS INDUSTRY** after workers at a factory were poisoned when manufacturing mobile phone lenses.



JENNY

How can workers like Siu improve their working conditions?

Individual workers risk losing their jobs if they speak out – but **IF THEY TAKE COLLECTIVE ACTION, THEY CAN MAKE POSITIVE CHANGES**. For example, a worker could draft a letter, get co-workers to sign it, and then petition factory management. If the workers in a group don't receive positive answers, they can approach journalists or labour rights organisations for help. As a group they can make much more impact than as an individual.

What can big brand companies like Sony Ericsson and Apple do to help improve workers' conditions?

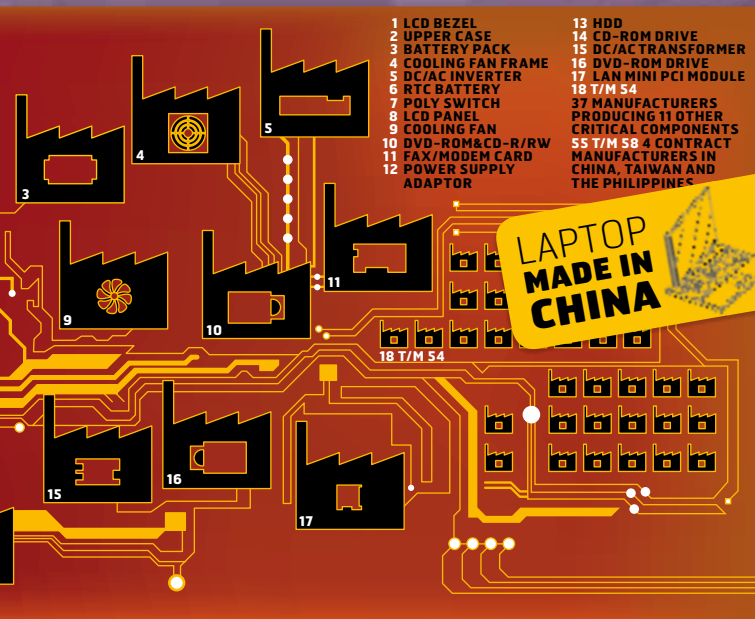
It is the big brand companies' responsibility to monitor workers' conditions in their supplier factories in China and elsewhere. They should also move a step further by making suppliers aware of workers' rights. Even more importantly, **WORKERS SHOULD HAVE THEIR RIGHT TO EFFECTIVE REPRESENTATION** so they can protect their own rights.

How do workers in China make their voices heard?

WORKER PROTESTS ARE GETTING MORE SERIOUS. For example, over 18,000 workers from Shenzhen-based FRIVO took to the street in August 2007 to demand higher wages and improvements in working conditions.

What can young people in Europe do to help?

You can demand that the big brand companies adopt responsible social and environmental policies in their supply chain. Also, you can **SUPPORT WORKERS BY BUYING 'DECENT GOODS'** – asking for more information about where and under what conditions your mobile phone or MP3 player is made.



SURVIVING ON 70 EUROS A MONTH

LOW WAGES ARE THE MAIN CONCERN FOR ELECTRONICS WORKERS IN CHINA. The government has set a minimum wage, but this doesn't cover workers' basic needs in the industrial heartland of Southern China, where many of the electronics companies are based. The minimum wage in early 2008 was just over **70 EUROS PER MONTH**. That means that workers have to work for about seven days just to buy a ticket back home.

Our research has shown that the low wages force workers to put in **MANY HOURS OF OVERTIME EVERY MONTH** to make ends meet and to be able to save money for education or send money to their family back home – which are some of the factors that have driven them to move to the manufacturing areas of China. Many workers aren't even paid the higher overtime wages they should receive. makeITfair interviews with workers revealed that some workers slaved away for more than 320 hours in one month – that's about **12 HOURS A DAY FOR SEVEN DAYS A WEEK** – and only received two-thirds of the salary they were entitled to.

makeITfair

Behind each mobile phone and each computer lies a complex web of suppliers. Each supplier makes different parts of the electronic gadgets we buy in our shops. Often, the big brand companies like Acer, Dell and Fujitsu Siemens Computers don't actually manufacture products themselves but engage contract manufacturers to deliver the components or complete product.

makeITfair is a campaign run by a group of European organisations to challenge unfair and unsustainable practices in the supply chain of consumer electronics. We are calling on young people across Europe to help us put pressure on big brand companies to make sure workers like Siu are paid a living wage for the work they do.

Most big brand companies have made some efforts to make sure that workers' rights are respected, but on the factory floor, improvements are hardly noticeable. Much of the supply chain is left uncontrolled, with workers' rights being violated as a consequence even though the workers provide parts that are crucial to our favourite gadgets.

To be able to compete in the global economy, factory owners try to produce goods at the lowest possible prices. The brands at the top of the supply chain are negotiating hard on the prices, which squeezes suppliers at the bottom of the chain even more. Consumers around the world are attracted by low prices. But the demand for cheap electronics goods across the world also has consequences for factory workers in China.

Join the makeITfair campaign!

Send a postcard to mobile phone bosses asking them to pay workers a decent wage.



www.makeITfair.org



CONTACT DETAILS:

SOMO

Co-ordinator makeITfair

Sarphatistraat 30

1018 GL Amsterdam

Tel: +31 (0)20 639 12 91

info@makeitfair.org

www.makeitfair.org

**"Join the
makeITfair
campaign!"**



This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Commission. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of SOMO and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Commission.

PRINTED ON PEFC PAPER

August 2008