

'His father wondered why FWF was willing to help'



A 13-year old boy from Bangladesh is taking a vocational training following an FWF complaints procedure. The boy appeared in the Dutch documentary [Slag om de Klerewereld](#) on 9 January 2015. In the documentary, labels for FWF member Continental Clothing were found in a small label printing workshop in Dhaka where employees appeared to be younger than the legal working age. When FWF visited the workshop, also labels from Fristads Kansas Group were discovered.

FWF, Continental Clothing and Fristads Kansas Group used the [complaints procedure](#) to investigate the matter. A plan was made to remediate the issues. After investigation of FWF local staff in Dhaka, the boy was located. FWF's Koen Oosterom went to Bangladesh in April 2015 and met with the boy and his father.

Where did FWF find the boy?

'Our local staff identified the workshop in a street in Dhaka where several other small printing workshops are located. During the visit, labels of FWF affiliate Fristads Kansas Group were found, so we informed them about the complaint as well. In the meantime, the boy shown in the documentary was working for another label printing shop in the same street.'

What happened next?

'My colleague in Bangladesh met with the family of the boy. Ahad turned out to be 13 years old. Together with the family, we explored alternatives to working in a printer shop. The father wondered why Fair Wear Foundation was willing to help them. We showed him the documentary, and explained about FWF and its [policy](#) when child labour is found within the supply chain of an FWF member.'

How did a 13 year old end up in a label printing shop?

'Ahad's father used to be a farmer in a small village outside Dhaka. However, he did not own the land and work became increasingly scarce. He therefore decided to move his family to the capital and try to look for work there. He now works as a day labourer; working whenever he can, in construction, road building or carpentry.

The boy had to support the family. At the age of 12 he found a job at the printer shop. He was the youngest, but other workshops around employed even younger children. The boy had to work with chemicals to clean the machines. He never used any gloves or mask and the smell was terrible. Working in the printing workshop, the boy earned a meagre BDT 4,000 per month (about € 45).

How is it possible that the FWF brands concerned didn't know about this?

Most factories in Bangladesh do not own the machinery to print labels and therefore use subcontractors. Their designated label printing company however, sometimes outsources (part of) the order to yet another workshop. Often this happens without informing the factory concerned, let alone the garment brand.

This case illustrates the wider problems in Bangladesh with high level of (severe) poverty and the absence of a social security safety net. It also shows that unauthorized subcontracting remains a

Interview - Bangladeshi boy takes vocational training following FWF complaint

common issue in Bangladesh, which requires continuous vigilance from brands sourcing in Bangladesh.'

The boy's family finally agreed on training?

'Yes. The two FWF brands involved cover the costs of Ahad's one year vocational training on freezer and air conditioning servicing/repairing. In line with FWF's policy for child labour, the family is compensated –by the brands- for the loss of income of the child during the time he is enrolled in the course.

The implementation of this arrangement is monitored carefully by FWF's local complaints handler, who will take care of monthly payments to the family of the child and verifies that the child is still attending the training course.

The family is very happy with the support received, which hopefully will lead to better employment opportunities for the boy in the future, and a brighter future for the family as a whole.'

