

Sweatfree Toolkit: How Your Community Can Help End Sweatshops

Taking Action



A coalition of faith-based, labor, community and student groups joined forces to make San Francisco sweatfree. Global Exchange organizers rally citizens outside of City Hall on a day of action. Photo by Maryam Roberts, Global Exchange.

Running a Successful Campaign: 10 Steps to a Sweatfree Community

Because political climates and organizing opportunities vary in states, cities and schools across the country, every sweatfree campaign will be different. The steps below are common to many successful campaigns so far. They are not necessarily in linear succession. For example, the goals evolve over time, and the campaigners constantly build the coalition and educate the public, both before the policy is passed and afterwards to ensure enforcement.

1. Define Your Campaign Goal

Decide which parts of your community can become sweatfree. Look to your areas of strength. If high school students and teachers are prominent in your group, you may want to focus on a school district campaign. If you have been part of a living wage campaign and have good rapport with the city council, you may want to focus on a city purchasing policy. You can also work to pass a statewide policy.

2. Build a Coalition

To ensure your message is strong and convincing, pull together a large and diverse sweat-free coalition. Think broadly. Reach out to groups that have overlapping goals with your campaign or have self-interest in the campaign, such as expanding their outreach to the local community. This will not only deepen their commitment to your campaign but also allow you to reciprocate support for their work. For example:

- Local labor unions and anti-sweatshop groups
- Immigrant worker groups
- Faith-based groups and clergy
- Asian, African, Latin American solidarity groups
- Parents, teachers, and children
- High school youth groups and university student groups
- Community groups, peace and social justice committees, and human rights organizations
- Public health groups, environmental groups
- Small progressive businesses

3. Organize the Group

Find a couple of people (in addition to yourself) who can take a leadership role. Find people who will take the core responsibilities, and others who will help when needed. Set regular meeting location and times. The clearer the expectations of everyone and the clearer the group process, the more comfortable group members will be.

4. Research: Where Does Your Money Go?

Research the major purchases of the institution you are targeting. For example, where are your city's police uniforms made? If you can identify specific companies or factories, find any studies or independent human rights reports on them. Learn as much as you can about the regions where the uniforms are made. Also try to find alternative sweatfree sources where the uniforms could be made.

Organizing Tip:

In many places, elected officials and many members of the community has no trouble agreeing that taxpayers' money should not support sweatshop abuses. In such cases, it might be wise to select an elected body as the place to start.

In other regions, activists have found that building support among local retailers to carry only sweatfree apparel goods has been a way of creating community support for the idea to subsequently be applied at the city or state level

Planning Tip:

Research the timeline for passing policies in the targeted institution. That will define when and what kind of actions your coalition will do. Also plan for the coalition's short-term and long-term role. This includes outreach, education, lobbying, helping to monitor contracts, researching possible code violations, and helping to resolve issues of implementation and monitoring.

5. Evaluate the Political Climate in Your Community

Who are the members of the elected bodies that control purchasing policies for your city, town, county, or school district? Who will be supportive of your efforts, and who is the best member to sponsor the policy. In bodies whose members represent a variety of political stripes, you might try to get one cosponsor from different political parties. Also identify political leaders who oppose your efforts. Why are they opposed and how will you counter their arguments?

6. Educate

Build community support for the sweatfree purchasing policy. Offer to give a presentation on the campaign at other group's events and meetings or in relevant classes. You can organize your own speaking events. Invite experts to speak and show educational films on sweatshops. See "Fundraising Guide" for how to host a house party, and available speakers and trainers. See "Resources" for a list of current films. Hold letter writing events and petition drives. Collecting petition signatures is a great way for lots of volun-

teers to get involved and talk to people face to face (see "Sample Petition").

7. Mobilize and Work with the Media

When appropriate, organize creative actions with your coalition and use the media to let your local officials know that you are serious about ensuring our tax dollars are not supporting sweatshops. See "How to Work with the Media." Hold a press conference with your coalition and the official policy sponsors to officially launch the campaign. Members of your coalition can get on talk radio shows, write their own letters to the editor or opinion-editorials and pitch it to local papers. The media is a great outlet to educate the public about sweatshops, and win their support for the policy.

8. Make Your Case to the Elected Body

When meeting with decision makers, remember to:

- Present the best-possible policy. It is much easier to negotiate down than to start with a not-so-good policy and try to improve it through negotiation. (See "Sample policy.")
- Bring evidence of widespread community support, for example, a list of coalition partners or endorsing organizations, petition signatures, or letters of support allies and important political constituents.
- Anticipate challenging questions and be prepared to answer them. If possible present the decision makers with an attractive and well-organized packet of information that makes your case for the policy.
- At a public hearing, it is key to have testimonies from workers and coalition partners.

9. Implementation and Monitoring

The policy will be symbolic at best if it is not implemented and enforced. Once a policy has passed, work with the administrators and elected officials to develop the implementation plan. In order to enforce the policy, they should commit part of the budget to pay for independent monitors and possibly additional local enforcement staff (see Policy Toolbox for details). Make sure your group stays involved monitoring contracts, researching possible code violations, and helping to resolve issues of implementation and enforcement. Consider building on your momentum to get the policy adopted by other institutions.

10. Celebrate your victories!

Celebrate when you reach your objectives, both large and small. Recognize the work of volunteers. Make it fun!

Goals

1. List the long-term objectives of your work.
2. State the incremental goals for your work. What constitutes victory?
3. What short-term or partial victories can you win as steps toward your long-term goal?

Group Resources

1. List the resources that your group has. Include: money, people, facilities, reputation.
2. List the specific ways in which you want your group to be strengthened by this work:
 - Increase experience of existing members.
 - Build membership base.
 - Expand into new areas.
 - Raise money to sustain the work.

Constituents, Allies, and Opponents

1. Who cares about this issue enough to join in or help your group?
 - Whose problem is it?
 - What do they gain if they win?
 - What risks are they taking?
 - What power do they have over the target?
 - Into what groups are they organized?
2. Who are your opponents?
 - What will your victory cost them?
 - What will they do/spend to oppose you?
 - How strong are they?

Targets

1. Primary Targets

A target is always a person. It is never an institution or elected body.

 - Who has the power to give you what you want?
 - What power do you have over them?
2. Secondary Targets
 - Who has power over the people with the power to give you what you want?
 - What power do you have over them?

Tactics

1. For each target, list the tactics that each constituent group can best use to make its power felt.

Tactics must:

 - Be flexible and creative
 - Be directed at a specific target
 - Make sense to the membership
 - Be backed up by a specific form of power, such as voting.

Tactics include:

 - Meetings, letters, phone calls
 - Townhall meetings
 - Protests/demonstrations
 - Media events
 - Awareness-raising events

Goals

1. Long-Term Goal
 - To abolish sweatshops.
2. Intermediate Goals
 - Pass a Sweatfree Government Procurement Legislation in your city or state mandating the body to buy only goods made in factories with good working conditions.
3. Short-Term Goals
 - Your city or state representative makes a public statement in support of the sweatfree legislation.
 - Your City or State Representative cosponsors the Sweatfree Legislation.
 - Your City or State Representative writes a letter encouraging other cities and states to pass sweatfree legislation.

Group Resources

1. Resources to Put In
 - 15 active volunteers
 - Mary is a graphic designer.
 - Bob owns a print shop.
 - Karen is a website wiz.
 - Membership dues.
 - Free meeting space at the community center.
 - Good relations with local press: Joe Smith at the Herald and Carol Jones at the Sun.
2. What We Want to Get Out of It
 - Develop two active volunteers as effective spokespersons.
 - Establish committee as reliable source for information.
 - Attract 15 new volunteers.
 - Build a contact list in the 5th congressional district.
 - Develop ties with other local groups working for worker justice.

Constituents, Allies, and Opponents

1. Constituents and Allies
 - Iowa City Coalition for Worker Justice United Students Against Sweatshops
 - United Students Against Sweatshops at local colleges
 - Iowa City Progressive Jewish Alliance, local church groups
 - Iowa City Asian Women Advocates
2. Who are your opponents?
 - Major sweatshop brands and retailers
 - Politicians who bid for or funded by those sweatshop companies

Targets

1. Primary Targets
 - Rep. John Doe.
 - Sen. Jane Smith (sits on the Budget Committee)
 - Sen. Bill Jones.
2. Secondary Targets
 - Rep. John Doe's Chief of Staff.
 - Campaign contributors to Rep. Doe and Sens. Smith and Jones.
 - Rev. Stevens—Chair of the Iowa City Interfaith Committee (gathering of largest congregations in district)

Tactics

- Send action alert to contact list to call offices of Rep. Doe and Sens. Smith and Jones.
- Each committee volunteer hosts letter-writing and awareness-raising party at home.
- Arrange for several meetings of three to five people with congressional offices.
- Use media contacts to place op-ed in name of Iowa City Committee.
- Children from participating religious congregations write letters or draw pictures about the need to support worker justice globally.
- Notify local press that delegation of children will deliver letters and pictures to congressional offices on Monday, July 14 at 11 a.m.
- Invite Rep. Doe and Sens. Smith and Jones to a townhall meeting on *Abolishing Sweatshops*.

Sweatfree State and Local Governments

Governments are the largest purchaser of goods and services in the world. All levels of government have the purchasing power to influence corporate behavior. In terms of apparel, municipal governments buy police, fire department, and public works uniforms while state governments buy uniforms and other apparel for the state prison system, and the departments of public safety, transportation, conservation, and fisheries and wildlife among others.

Our tax dollars may be supporting sweatshops and child labor through these purchases. Instead, our local governments could be part of the solution.

Towns and cities, state by state - we can create a more just, global economy.

Here are some organizing steps.

Research: Where Does Your Money Go and Who Decides?

- Find out which agencies and departments have uniform or work clothing requirements.
- Find out what products the government buys, and how the procurement process works. Is purchasing centralized or does it take place at the departmental/ agency level? Who makes purchasing decisions? Does the government have a history of giving preference to certain products? Are the unions for uniformed city or town workers involved in the procurement decisions?
- Find out if the government has rental contracts for uniforms or work clothing.
- Request copies of current government contracts for all relevant products.
- Learn as much as you can about the companies, factories, and regions where the products are made.

Evaluate the Political Climate

Find a contact person for selected members of the legislature and city council who can talk with them informally and learn about concerns they may have. When meeting with the lawmakers:

- Reassure them that sweatfree purchasing is not radical. It reflects community values and affirms community consensus.
- Appeal to civic pride. Your community can set a moral example for others to follow.
- Listen: this is your opportunity to hear their concerns so that you can build a stronger campaign.

When you know who is supportive and who is not, find sponsors of your legislation, ideally from all major political parties.

Educate, Organize, and Mobilize

In most cases the merits of your ideas is not enough to win. And since you probably do not have money and high-level political connections on your side, you need people's power: lots of committed volunteers, a large and broad coalition of groups, powerful stories and personal testimonies, a large number of bodies at public hearings and events, and a continuous public presence. Here are a few things you can do:

- Organize a petition drive.
- Write letters to the editor and get on radio talk shows.
- Hold a press conference.
- Organize a "sweatshop fashion show," a benefit concert, or other educational events.
- Do presentations and workshops with classes, church groups, civic organizations, and others.

Create a Relationship with Legislators and Government Staff, and Make Your Case

Gather at least two to four people to meet with the city or town manager, the purchasing director, department heads, your legislative sponsor, or equivalent people on the state level. Present a draft of your sweatfree purchasing policy and talk about how you would like to see it implemented. Listen to their questions and concerns. Establish a process to develop a mutually acceptable policy if possible.



Former California State Senator Tom Hayden joins clergy, labor and other supporters of No More Sweatshops at the landmark City of LA "sweat-free" legislative victory, Nov. 9, 2004.

The stronger your community support the easier it will be to work with staff and legislators. You are probably asking a money-strapped and strained department to change the way they do business and develop a new administrative protocol. They will be more motivated and accommodating if: 1) you have done your homework well; 2) you show that you are interested in and understand their world and the constraints they are under; and 3) above all, if they know the public is behind you and that this issue simply will not go away.

Mobilize for the Public Hearing

Spread the word in as many ways as you can. Tell your friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers. If you know supportive teachers or ministers, ask them to make announcements. Activate a phone tree if you have it, or do a mailing if you can.

Consider contacting a local newspaper or radio-station to see if they will do a story before the hearing and cover the hearing itself. Write a letter to the editor.

The hearing is a public performance. Prepare for it! A few brief and concise testimonies are usually better than longer and repetitive testimonies from lots of people. But by all means, try to fill the hearing room to the brink. Everyone may not be able to speak, but everyone can show their support by standing up or holding signs at a given point.

If possible, prepare an information package for councilors or legislators. You can include:

- Summary of the proposed policy.
- Supporting testimony from key groups and individuals and evidence of widespread community support in the form of petition signatures or newspaper articles.

- Opposition viewpoints (if any) and your responses.
- Background information on sweatshops, e.g. testimony of a sweatshop worker, testimony of local (possibly displaced) workers, and basic facts about sweatshops.

Celebrate!

Make sure that you celebrate all your victories, both large and small. Recognize that you are doing groundbreaking exciting work. Make sure everyone in your group feels appreciated and takes credit for the successes.

Build on Your Successes

A new law is a movement tool. While administrators are responsible for implementing the law, your group should stay active to make sure you use this tool to win justice for workers. Monitor contracts, research possible code violations, and make sure that your institution pressures violators to correct problems and improve conditions for workers.

Finally, consider building on your momentum to get the policy adopted by other institutions. Once you have convinced one legislative body to adopt a policy, other neighboring bodies are likely to follow suit with just a little persuasion.

If you are planning to start a campaign or if your campaign is well under way, please be in touch with us at SweatFree Communities or Global Exchange. We can offer organizing assistance. We want to hear your questions, challenges, and successes. And of course, we want to hear about your victories! For a list of local governments with sweatfree policies, see www.sweatfree.org.



At a public hearing on the Connecticut sweatfree purchasing policy, Chie Abad speaks to legislators about her experience working at a sweatshop in Saipan. Photo by Kris Notaro.

Sweatfree Public Schools

Schools buy t-shirts, letter jackets, sports team uniforms, and sports equipment – just to name a few products. Many of these items are made in sweatshops. Our tax dollars are likely supporting sweatshops and child labor through these purchases. Instead our schools could be part of the solution.

The Sweatfree Schools campaign is an exciting way to educate students and to help bring justice to the lives of workers. Here are the key steps to winning a campaign:

Define Your Campaign Goal: School or School Board?

In some places organizers have won sweatfree policies one high school at a time. In other places organizers have won school district policies. A sweatfree school district policy will influence more purchasing and will educate administrators and students at more schools. You can use the momentum from your school campaign to get a policy for the district.

Research: Where Does Your Money Go and Who Makes Decisions?

- Research the major apparel and sports equipment purchases of your school district. Does it buy athletics uniforms, school t-shirts, cheerleader outfits? What sports equipment does it buy? What else?
- Look at the labels. Learn as much as you can about the companies, factories, and regions where the products are made. Also try to find alternative sweatfree sources where the products could be made.
- How much does the district spend on its apparel and sports purchases?
- Find out who makes purchasing decisions. A particular staff person? A committee? Is there a bookstore? How sympathetic are the purchasers to your cause?

Build a Core Group

Find a couple of people (in addition to yourself) who can take a leadership role. Start with a small group. Gather students who are supportive. Find people who can take on core responsibilities, and others who will help when needed. Set regular meeting location and times. The clearer the expectations of everyone and the clearer the group process, the more comfortable group members will be.

Divide up group roles:

- Who will do research?

- Who will connect with other groups and lead the coalition building effort?
- Who will communicate with administrators and set up meetings?
- Who will organize educational events?

Build a Coalition

To make sure your message is strong and convincing, pull together a large and diverse sweatfree coalition. Think who is directly affiliated with the school:

- Students and student organizations – Get many school clubs to endorse the campaign!
- Teachers, parents, and parent-teacher associations
- School staff and administrators
- Janitors who clean the school – Are they unionized? Connect with their unions!

While building a base of support in the school district and at several schools, reach out to groups in the community who will want to endorse the campaign:

- Local labor unions and anti-sweatshop groups
- Immigrant worker groups
- Faith-based groups and clergy
- Asian, African, Latin American solidarity groups
- University student groups
- Community groups, peace and social justice committees, and human rights organizations
- Small progressive businesses

Educate

Organize educational events within the schools to build student awareness and support for the campaign. Here are some ideas:

- **Class talks.** Approach social studies teachers. Ask to present in their classes about sweatshops. Tell students how help with the campaign. Provide social studies teachers with school curricula about sweatshops that they can use in their classes. (See www.sweatfree.org for sample curricula.)
- **Student group raps.** Ask student organizations for a few minutes at their meetings to present on your campaign and ask for their endorsements. Think broadly about which

organizations to approach. Try to get support from these groups: Amnesty International, community service club, social justice club, diversity-related clubs, Asian clubs, Latino clubs, sports teams – the students who wear the products targeted by the policy, etc.

- **Host a speaker.** Host a speaker at your school to educate about sweatshops – during an activity day, after school, or as an optional event during class time. Talk to teachers about event possibilities.
- **Show a film.** Show a film about sweatshops. Facilitate a discussion afterwards. Provide information about how to get involved with the campaign. (See “Resources” for a list of films.)
- **Organize a house party.** Have a potluck. Show a brief film to educate about sweatshops. Using sample letters and talking points, write letters to the school board. Write articles for school newspapers and letters to community newspapers to generate publicity. Know when your next meeting is and publicize it at the party. Get people to identify how they want to help with the campaign.
- **Tabling and petition drives.** Collecting petition signatures is a great way for lots of people to get involved and chance to talk to many people face to face. Consider tabling during lunch time. Have hand-outs with sweatshop facts – use our outreach flyer or make your own. Always know your next event or organizing meeting. Publicize it so people know how to get involved.
- **Activist training.** Organize an afternoon or day-long sweat-free organizer training for students on the weekend. (See our “Trainer's Guide” for ideas.)

Make Your Case to the School Board

At the school level, the principal or an administrative committee will probably be the ones to decide on the policy. At the district level, the school board decides.

Who will be supportive of your efforts, and who is the best school board trustee to sponsor your legislation? Who will it be difficult to win support from? Why are they opposed and how will you counter their arguments?

Build allies on the school board by asking people who know them who is most likely to support the policy. Meet with these trustees early on and strategize together with them. Ask your allies to talk with the other trustees. Once you have strong support in the community and once you can expect that the majority of trustees will support the policy, ask your allies to arrange a date for a presentation to the school board.

Bring to the school board presentation representatives from your coalition who are prepared to talk about the importance of the policy. At the meeting:

- Present the best-possible legislation. It is much easier to negotiate down than to start with a not-so-good policy and try to improve it through negotiation.
- Bring evidence of widespread community support, for example, a list of coalition partners or endorsing organizations, petition signatures, or letters of support allies and important political constituents.
- Anticipate challenging questions and be prepared to answer them. If possible present the decision makers with an attractive and well organized packet of information that makes your case for the policy.

School board trustees may decide to first forward a motion to develop a sweatfree policy. The policy will be developed after that motion is passed. Provide sample language for the policy. Request that the committee includes students, teachers, parents, and supportive community members, as well as trustees and school board staff.

Plan Ahead

Once a resolution has passed, work with trustees to develop the policy that describes how the resolution is to be implemented. Once the policy is in place, make sure your group stays involved monitoring contracts, researching possible code violations, and helping to resolve issues of implementation and enforcement. Consider building on your momentum to get the policy adopted by other institutions.

Celebrate your victories!

Celebrate when you reach your objectives, both large and small. Recognize the work of volunteers. Make it fun!

If you are planning to start a campaign or if your campaign is well under way, please be in touch with us at SweatFree Communities or Global Exchange. We can offer organizing assistance. We want to hear your questions, challenges, and successes. And of course, we want to hear about your victories! For a list of schools with sweat-free policies, see www.sweatfree.org.

Organizing thoughts:

- Some school campaigns are initiated by high school students. Others are started by adults in the community. Either way, it is important to get students involved early on. The sweatfree schools campaign is a great way for students to learn organizing skills and get educated about the global economy, as well as to improve conditions in factories supplying to the school.
- See if your friends at other schools want to start sweat-free groups. Share your campaign experiences with them.

Sweatfree Catholic Schools

People of faith are called forth by God to assist the oppressed and work for justice. One way to translate the mandate of faith into our everyday lives is by making sure that workers who produce student uniforms do not toil in sweatshops. The Sweatfree Catholic Schools campaign is an exciting way to educate students and to help bring justice to the lives of workers. Here are the key steps to winning a campaign:

Research: Where Does Your Money Go and Who Decides?

- Check the labels on student uniforms. Learn as much as you can about the companies, factories, and regions where the products are made.
- Find out who is responsible for uniform purchases for local Catholic schools.
- Is the Bishop or superintendent more likely to be supportive? Which principals are most supportive?

Build a Coalition

Form a committee of concerned people – including students, parents, teachers, unions, and Catholic community members – who are committed to the goal of making all Catholic schools in the Diocese sweatfree.

Educate

Education is key to all progress and helps foster ownership from the ground up. It is an ongoing process and part of each campaign step. Meet with principals, social studies teachers, parents, and students. Offer workshops, video showings, and presentations (see the Trainer's Guide for suggestions).

You may be asked questions about the production conditions of uniform items (twill pants, generic cotton shirts, etc.) sold by Wal-Mart and other major retailers and brands. These companies are notorious for sweatshop abuses. We can no longer assume that they are innocent of abuses until proven guilty. Instead, we need positive proof from suppliers that student uniforms are not made in sweatshop conditions.

Make Your Case to the Bishop

Roman Catholic Dioceses are oftentimes hierarchical. Try to secure a formal endorsement from the local Bishop, and ask the Bishop to share the endorsement through Diocesan channels.

First, request a meeting with the Bishop. If it is difficult to get a meeting, identify people who the Bishop listens to and who

you know. Get their support for your campaign, and ask them to help arrange the meeting.

Once you have a meeting, come prepared to it with several people from your campaign. Present information about sweatshops and your goal of creating sweatfree Catholic schools. Provide draft sweatfree purchasing policy language to the Bishop (see the Sample Code of Conduct and SweatFree Purchasing Policy). Continue building support in the community, and meeting with the Bishop until he declares his support and adopts the policy. Ask the Bishop to distribute the policy to all Parish and Catholic schools in the Diocese, and urge them to comply by requiring their uniform suppliers to be sweatfree.

Make Your Case to the Superintendent

You will also want support of the Diocesan superintendent. Set up a meeting with the superintendent to gain her/his support for the campaign. This may take a series of meetings. If the superintendent is more supportive in your Diocese, approach her/him before the Bishop. If the Bishop is more supportive, approach him first. It may be sufficient to get either the Bishop or the Superintendent to adopt a sweatfree purchasing policy and not need to involve the other. Some Dioceses may not be as hierarchical and there might be a committee within the Diocese who will need to approve the policy. In other places the Bishop or the Superintendent may grant the policy on their own.

Make Your Case to Principals

After you have obtained official support from the Diocese, it is up to principals at the individual schools to implement it. Principals sign contracts with suppliers. Your campaign should build relationships with the principals so that they will respond to information you provide about the suppliers and working conditions at their factories.

If the Diocese does not take enough initiative in getting principals to implement the policy, your campaign will need to meet with principals one-by-one. Using the the sweatfree policy statement and any supporting letters from the Bishop and Superintendent to lend authority to your goal, you can get them to implement the policy. Principals can share their enthusiasm about sweatfree purchasing with other principals, and thus help spread the campaign.

Implementation and Monitoring

The policy approved by the Bishop or Superintendent should

specify how it will be implemented. Make sure that the policy assigns responsibility to a staff person for getting individual schools to comply. Otherwise it will be your responsibility to follow up with the principal at each school and to communicate with suppliers.

A great deal has already been accomplished. No group or individual has to reinvent the sweatfree wheel! For more information about the Buffalo experience or for guidance with your own campaign, contact the New York Labor-Religion Coalition at 716-875-2641. Also please be in touch with us at SweatFree Communities or Global Exchange. We can offer organizing assistance. We want to hear your questions, challenges, and successes. And of course, we want to hear about your victories!

An inside view of the Buffalo Diocese campaign:

- After gaining support from the Bishop of Buffalo in July 1999, the campaign succeeded in having schools switch from sweatshop producers to a unionized factory in Pennsylvania and a women's sewing co-op in Thailand. School principals issued supportive public statements, noting that the sweatfree options were not substantially more expensive than sweatshop-made garments. Having facilitated contracts for two schools with positive results, the campaign moved on to meet with more principals and got sweatfree contracts for more schools.
- After the campaign developed a relationship with a Bendinger Uniform representative, the company moved its production from a Mexican sweatshop factory to a unionized factory in Pennsylvania. This is the first time a uniform vendor decided to move to a sweatfree workplace in response to anti-sweatshop education.
- Subsequently, Flynn & O'Hara Uniform Company approached the campaign, and made necessary changes in their Dominican offshore plant to bring them into compliance with the Diocese Code of Conduct.
- A good relationship with the Diocesan Superintendent has been critical to the campaign. When Campus Outfitters sought to do business with the Diocese, the Superintendent first sent a letter to all schools asking them not to do business with the company until the sweatfree campaign had completed their investigation. After much correspondence, the company addressed problems in their El Salvadoran offshore plant.



Youth leading the way for farmworker rights. At the New York State Labor-Religion Coalition "Inspired Voices in Troubled Times" conference, April 25, 2004. Photo by Marie Triller.

Sweatfree Religious Institutions (including your congregation!)

First, decide where to begin. If you are part of a congregation, this is an ideal place to start. A “sweatfree congregation” can greatly influence larger religious bodies through its example. Or, start with an institution that you have some connection with, either directly or through a family member or friend. Here are types of faith-based institutions that make purchases:

- camps and conference centers
- health-related institutions (for example, nursing homes or even a hospital)
- retirement communities and senior homes
- educational institutions (preschools, afterschool, colleges, seminaries, etc.)
- social service organizations (community ministries, soup kitchens, etc.)
- denominations, middle governing bodies and conference purchasing
- congregations (and special programs such as bible schools and mission trips)

Form a core group and seek out allies. Find people around you who see the importance of living out one’s faith in this way. A few people will likely become the core group or task force. Try to include people with diverse backgrounds, such as clergy, businesspeople and someone with a respected voice in the institution.

Discuss the connections between the institution’s faith teachings and justice for workers. Pull in clergy or theologians, if needed. Make this theological/moral framework the foundation of your efforts.

Define the scope. Will you apply ethical purchasing to certain items and expand from there? Some campaigns have focused on the industries with the most widespread abuses, such as apparel, toys and footwear. Or does your faith compel you to create a comprehensive policy that covers all purchases? Certain cities and school districts have succeeded in implementing such laws.

Research. Identify what is purchased. Check the labels, brands and countries of origin. Contact SweatFree Communities

and/or someone in your denomination who is working on these issues to find out whether these companies/brands have had documented labor violations in factories where they are produced. Become acquainted with sweatfree alternatives. Also, find out who makes decisions about purchases and who does the actual purchasing. Learn the decision-making process. Try to identify those you think will be supportive.

Plan out and make your case. Meet in person with the key leaders and decision-making groups. Come well prepared with answers to anticipated questions, and with reassurance that there are alternatives. This may be just the beginning of a long process. If needed, request permission to do outreach and education in the institution.

Educate. Find resources in your denomination, in this organizing guide and/or from the organizations and their websites listed in Campaign Toolbox section. Weave responsible purchasing and sweatshop themes into sermons, organize video showings and workshops, invite knowledgeable people in to speak about the issues and their experiences. Nothing compels like real-life stories.

Create the sweatfree purchasing policy. Use the sample sweatfree policy in the Policy Toolbox as a framework and modify it to make it fit the institution. Run it by SweatFree Community staff for comments and advice. Celebrate its adoption!

Implement and monitor. Your task force will need to ensure implementation. The institution’s leaders may need support. Communication with vendors is key to implementation. Make use of SweatFree Communities and other organizations working on compliance and monitoring. As a smaller institution, you may have to rely on the compliance and monitoring of other organizations. Check out the Sources for Sweatfree Apparel in this organizing guide.

If you are planning to start a campaign or if your campaign is well under way, please be in touch with us at SweatFree Communities or Global Exchange. We can offer organizing assistance. We want to hear your questions, challenges, and successes. And of course, we want to hear about your victories!



Yadira Vallejos, member of the Nueva Vida Sewing Cooperative, Nicaragua
[photo credit: Melanie Hardison]

One denomination's story:

In 2001, the Presbyterian Church (USA) introduced Sweat-Free Ts to provide Presbyterian congregations, camps, conference centers and colleges with sources of non-sweatshop t-shirts. Several years prior, the Presbyterian Hunger Program had provided a grant to an economic development group in Nicaragua that helped create the COMAMNUVI women's sewing cooperative. Today the cooperative is the primary supplier of Sweat-Free Ts for the PC (USA), which created space in its distribution center to warehouse blank, ready-to-print t-shirts for easy ordering by any Presbyterian group. Between 2003 and 2004, the PC (USA) imported and sold over 40,000 Sweat-Free Ts, becoming the cooperative's second largest customer. The denomination also sponsors cooperative leaders on speaking tours to the United States and global events such as the WTO Summit in Cancun, Mexico, where co-op members presented their model at the Fair Trade Expo/Symposium. The PC (USA) celebrates its role as an active partner in promotion, education and long-term support for the first worker-owned Fair Trade Zone in the world.



Sweatfree Baseball Campaign

Pittsburgh is the first city in the United States with a campaign focused on a Major League Baseball team, the Pittsburgh Pirates Baseball Club. "After three years of talking to baseball fans about sweatshops at PNC Park," says Kenneth Miller, organizer with the Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance, "we know that Pittsburghers are concerned about labor union rights and expect our baseball team to do much more to protect the workers who sew the Pirate logo." Organizers have made "baseball cards" that educate about sweatshop conditions. Using these as a way to start up a conversation, they have connected with fans. Their creative education and action has gained the campaign significant media attention.

For more information about the campaign, contact Kenneth Miller at nosweatshopsbucco@yahoo.com.



Organizers with the Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance, Kenneth Miller and Celeste Taylor, demand that the Pittsburgh Pirates stop sourcing from sweatshops. Photo by K. Neely, New Pittsburgh Courier.

Working With Local Clothing Retailers and Vendors

Making contact with small, local clothing retailers and vendors can be a feasible and significant first step in starting a local anti-sweatshop campaign in some regions. Small clothing retailers can be powerful allies in the anti-sweatshop movement. They do not want their sales to contribute to anyone's suffering any more than consumers want their purchases to support sweatshops. They also share with you a common enemy: the chain stores that may threaten their very existence.

If you can win a commitment from local retailers and vendors to add sweatfree apparel to their inventory, thus ensuring local suppliers for local institutions that adopt sweatfree purchasing policies, these policies can also further local economic development. This additional benefit will make your sweatfree campaign even more attractive to the community and decision makers.

What You Can Ask Your Local Retailers and Vendors to Do

- Ask them to develop business relations with sweatfree suppliers (see Sources for Sweatfree Apparel in this Organizing Guide).
- Send letters of concern to other suppliers.
- Educate staff and customers about sweatshops.

What You Can Do For Your Retailers and Vendors

- Present evidence of a local customer-base, individuals as well as organizations, which would purchase sweatshop-free items.
- Promote them to media and your own members.
- Conduct staff workshops on sweatfree purchasing.

Organizing Tip:

Focus on “how” rather than “why.” The businesses that will work with you already know why they should do it, but they do not have time to do the necessary research. Give them a list of union factories and worker-owned cooperatives with information about pricing, delivery times, products, and contact person. If possible, show them sample products. Make it easy to go clean.

If you are planning to start a campaign or if your campaign is well under way, please be in touch with us at SweatFree Communities or Global Exchange. We can offer organizing assistance. We want to hear your questions, challenges, and successes. And of course, we want to hear about your victories!



Workers at Just Garments, a unionized sewing shop in El Salvador.

Local Clean Clothes Buying Consortium

Can a whole community create a common market for apparel made in fair labor conditions?

Bangor's (Maine) Clean Clothes Consortium consists of local cities, hospitals, social service agencies, schools, and other public and private apparel bulk purchasers who have joined together to develop and recommend common regional methods of sweatshop-free purchasing, educate the community to create stronger demand for sweatfree clothes, and coordinate activities with similar efforts nationwide.

For more information, contact PICA's Bangor Clean Clothes Campaign at 207-947-4203 or info@pica.ws.