

[> BACK](#) [> PRINT](#)

## The Gap Falls Into Child Labor Controversy

NEW DELHI, Oct. 29, 2007

**(CBS/AP)** The Gap brand is well known for its campaigns for social justice, but now a British newspaper reports that vendors who make clothes for the gap in India are using child laborers.

The reported discovery of children as young as 10 sewing clothes for clothing retailer Gap Inc. in a New Delhi factory has renewed concerns about child labor in India, but government officials offered no comment Monday.

Activists say the Indian children reportedly found making clothes for Gap Inc. should be reunited with their families and compensated by the government.

"The biggest responsibility here lies with the Indian government - they don't develop a way of monitoring" factories, said Bhuwan Ribhu, a lawyer who works with Bachpan Bachao Andolan, or the Save Childhood Movement.

"International companies hire subcontractors and then forget about it. There is no monitoring at all," Ribhu added. "Where the Gap is concerned, at least they've taken a good pro-active stand against the subcontractors."

Britain's Observer newspaper on Sunday reported that it had found children making clothes with Gap labels in a squalid factory in New Delhi. It quoted the children as saying they were from poor parts of India and had been sold to the sweatshop by their impoverished families. Some said they were not paid for their work.

Gap responded quickly, saying the factory was being run by a subcontractor who was hired in violation of Gap's policies, and none of the products made there will be sold in its stores.

"We appreciate that the media identified this subcontractor, and we acted swiftly in this situation," Gap spokesman Bill Chandler told The Associated Press on Sunday. "Under no circumstances is it acceptable for children to produce or work on garments."

Charles Kernaghan of the National Labor Committee first publicized Gap's use of sweatshop labor in El Salvador more than a decade ago, reports **CBS News correspondent John Blackstone**. Since then he says the company has come a long way. Still, he wishes it would protect its workers as vigorously as it protects its trademark.

"The garment is protected but not the human being who made it," said Kernaghan. "There are no laws to protect these human beings in the global economy."

Child labor remains a widespread problem in India, despite the country's economic boom and its growing wealth.

The government has repeatedly tried to ban the use of child workers - in 1986 outlawing them from working in dangerous industries, such as glassmaking, and last year banning them being employed as domestic servants or in restaurants.

But the prohibitions have had only a minimal impact and children's rights activists estimate that 13 million children are still working in India, with many being used in labor-intensive businesses like carpet-weaving and in dangerous industries, such as making fire crackers.

"It's very common in New Delhi, in particular, for children to be trafficked from those regions to the city to work," the Observer's Dan McDougal told **CBS' The Early Show**. "In the case of one of the boy who identified himself as 10 years old, he had been trafficked from the Bahad area and he basically told us that a man came into the village basically advertising for recruits, and his parents, with a large family, had effectively sold him into bonded labor."

"It's a very common scenario, tragically, in India," says McDougal.

Chandler said Gap requires its suppliers to guarantee that they will not use child labor to produce garments. Gap stopped working with 23 factories last year over violations uncovered by its inspectors.

The San Francisco-based company has 90 full-time inspectors who make unannounced visits around the world to ensure vendors are abiding by Gap's guidelines, he said.

© MMVII, CBS Interactive Inc. All Rights Reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed. The Associated Press contributed to this report.

[> Feedback](#) [> Terms of Service](#) [> Privacy Statement](#)