



Annie's story – week one

Annie Thomas is 20 years old and has lost both her parents. She is not the only one. Annie belongs to a group of teenagers and young adults on the outskirts of Blantyre in Malawi, who have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS. Without a main breadwinner, it's hard to know where the next meal is coming from.

There are few jobs and living in an urban area means that little land is available for growing food. Occasional work, such as carrying sand for builders, is very low-paid. Annie has no opportunity to save and with no assets, can't even borrow money to improve her life. Fees for education and training that might give Annie opportunities for higher-paid work are completely unaffordable.

Annie explains: *"We want to make a life for ourselves, not be forced into prostitution just because there is no other thing to do. We really want to help ourselves."*



Irma's story – week three

Hundreds of women, like Irma Ramo, work in the factories of Honduras, making clothes, cigarettes or packing food for export. Irma started work at 14 and has worked in several different factories. Although it is illegal to employ under-18s, many girls use false papers and employers turn a blind eye, happy to take on young women who are unlikely to complain about working conditions and low wages.

No overtime is paid in the factories and unions are not allowed to operate. Pressure to meet targets is high and verbal abuse is common. Workers often do not take a break all day for fear of falling behind.

Irma has now given up factory work to care for her sick mother, and is a Group Co-ordinator for MRDF partner CODEMUH, which lobbies the Honduran government to properly enforce labour laws. Irma organises workshops on labour rights and self-esteem to help women stand up for themselves at work.

Further information

What is poverty? – week one

Income: A person is considered poor if their income falls below a minimum level necessary to meet basic needs. This minimum level is usually called the ‘poverty line’. What is necessary to satisfy basic needs varies across time and societies.

World Bank definition

Quality of life: The Human Development Index (HDI), published annually by the UN, ranks nations according to their citizens’ quality of life rather than strictly according to economic figures. The criteria include life expectancy, educational attainment, and adjusted real income. MRDF uses the HDI to determine which countries to work in.

http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/hdi_rank_map.cfm

Having a say: Poverty is social exclusion from the democratic and legal system, the labour market, the welfare state system and the family and community system. It also includes powerlessness, lack of voice and denial of rights.

Did you know? – week three

- Labour costs typically represent less than 4% of the retail price of a garment or sports shoe.
- Tourism is the biggest export earner for a third of developing countries. Yet workers in the tourist industry often cannot earn a living wage or join trade unions, have only temporary contracts or none at all, work long hours and are not paid for overtime.
- British supermarkets are engaging in ‘banana price wars’ matching each other’s price cuts so that it is now impossible for many plantation workers to earn a living wage. Tesco alone makes roughly £800,000 profit every week just from selling bananas.

Sources: www.supportcaribbeanbananas.org.uk www.tescopoly.org
www.tourismconcern.org.uk www.labourbehindthelabel.org