



TRaid. A charity
helping the nation
give up its unwanted
clothes for good



Behind the Seams

ISSUE 8

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Donate Clothes at TRAIID Charity Shops



TRAIID's charity shops are packed full of amazing second-hand clothes, vintage, shoes, accessories and more. Every piece in our shop is a donation made by our wonderful customers, the local community and people across the UK, plus fabulous donations of stock by retailers and other businesses.

We ALWAYS need these donations. Next time you are shopping at TRAIID, or passing by, please also drop your donations off to one of our friendly staff. We accept a wide range of items, just keep in mind that donations should be in good enough condition to be put out on the shop floor and resold.

You are now able to Gift Aid the donations you make in our shops. It's a simple form that you will only need to fill in once. It means that the value of your donations to TRAIID can increase by at least 25% under this scheme, at no cost to you. Our lovely staff will be happy to explain this short and easy process to you.

Your second-hand donations have the power to change the world by reducing waste, consumption and carbon emissions. At the same time, for every unwanted garment we sell, TRAIID raise funds for global projects preventing child labour, unsafe working conditions and polluting practices in the fashion industry.

Drop your donations off in any of TRAIID's charity shops. Visit traid.org.uk/shop for your nearest TRAIID shop.



Fashioning Empathy

Despite raised awareness of conditions in the industry through devastating events like the Rana Plaza factory collapse in Bangladesh in 2013, consumer desire for fast fashion - currently around £44 billion pounds worth in the UK annually - trumps ethics.

Why is this? The reasons are complex, but in our hyper-globalised world with extended supply chains, it is extremely difficult to relate to the workers and processes that bring clothes to our high streets and into our wardrobes. Those making our clothes are so remote as to be barely human, and certainly there is no sense of people with lives and aspirations that may intersect with our own, for example as fellow workers, as students, as parents.

At TRAIID, we facilitate change through clothes reuse, education and by funding global projects to improve and change conditions in the garment industry. In our work to engage people with the problems within the industry and over-consumption, we are increasingly drawing on the idea of empathy; both as a tool to connect people to the conditions clothes are made in, and as a way to re-frame people's relationship to their clothes.

Empathy can help us to 'see the maker' - itself a radical act when brands, factory owners, advertising and magazines are predicated on reflecting a version of fashion that hides the myriad of processes carried out by people including farmers, machinists and

packers. Empathetic connections also need to be encouraged in the professional realm, particularly with designers who have the power to build sustainability into pre-production processes, for example when it comes to waste and water consumption.

Connecting people to the reality of the products we consume is not easy, and there is no single way to do this. While empathy may be a tool, making it useful requires conscious, constant and active work to build support for practical change in our fashion supply chains. So workers don't stay invisible, we need to keep reminding consumers that they exist and to keep asking consumers what conditions they think their clothes should be made in.

TRAIID makes our contribution to building empathy by working to reframe people's relationship to their clothes so garments are valued and not seen as disposable through reuse, our charity shops, our education work and our funding to improve textile industry practices.

TRAIID is not alone, and this issue of Behind the Seams includes contributions by people actively challenging exploitation in a myriad of ways as social justice campaigners, as 'craftivists', as menders, as writers and educators, and as designers.

All, in their own way, are engaging with the politics, as well as the aesthetics of fashion, which is crucial to raising awareness of the negative impacts

of the production, consumption and disposal of clothes. We invite you to become part of this growing movement demanding change in our fashion supply and production chains.

Photo: Rubia stands at the site of the Rana Plaza factory collapse in Dhaka, Bangladesh, where her two sons died alongside 1,133 others in April 2013. ©Leigh McAlea

Late Night TR Aid

Throughout the year, selected TR Aid charity shops hold late night events, keeping the doors open until 9pm so customers old and new can browse the rails of hand-picked quality second-hand clothes, shoes, vintage, accessories and linen.

We also use these extended hours to programme events - like repair workshops, film screenings and sustainable styling sessions - and with the help of our incredible staff, we often offer free sustainable styling sessions, so you can make more of your charity shop finds.

Late night highlights this year include a successful fundraiser marking the anniversary of Rana Plaza

at Shepherd's Bush, a #Secondhandfirst styling competition at TR Aid Dalston with the winner receiving a fantastic prize of a refurbished bike donated by BikeWorks, and a dozen local young people taking over our Peckham store on a hot summers night with incredible dance routines, music and screen printing courtesy of Captured in the Rye to revamp second-hand tee shirts.

Keep your eye on our website at www.traid.org.uk for all TR Aid late nights and events.

Westbourne Grove Re-fit

We have completely refurbished one of our oldest charity shops, TR Aid Westbourne Grove, and it looks absolutely beautiful.

The shop has been completely transformed and enlarged, with a beautiful hand painted feature wall, and the stunning 1920's curved windows brought back to its former glory.

Beloved by locals, stylists and the press, the charity shop is stocked full of high quality second-hand clothes and shoes, including lots of designer and vintage treasures.

Come visit us at 61 Westbourne Grove, London, W2 4UA, Mon - Sat 10am - 6pm, Sunday 11am - 5pm.

#Secondhandfirst Week - November 23 - 29

#Secondhandfirst Week - a TR Aid initiative - takes place from November 23 - 29, and celebrates the incredible power of second-hand to change the world.

We have planned a cornucopia of events and actions to connect you to the huge environmental and social benefits of second-hand including sewing workshops with East London's Fabrications, The Big Mend with Bath based Scrapiana, late night openings in TR Aid charity shops, sustainable screen printing with Peckham's Captured in the Rye, the Leeds Community Clothes Swap, fix it sessions with the Restart Project, film screenings in Bangladesh, Cambodia and Turkey of the incredible documentary Uditia by Rainbow Collective about exploitation in the garment industry, #TRAIDTALKS with author and design

activist Kate Fletcher, a spoken word performance with rapper and poet Potent Whisper and Sabrina Mahfouz, and much more.

One of the fashion industry's most influential bloggers Susie Lau, author of Style Bubble, has lent her support by taking TR Aid's #Secondhandfirst Pledge to source 50% of her fabulous wardrobe second-hand. Taking the pledge - www.traid.org.uk/pledge - is one of the easiest, but most life changing actions you can do to support us. It's a commitment to source more of your wardrobe second-hand rather than new, and a practical way of immediately adopting a more sustainable way of living while shaking us out of our high street comfort zones.

Over-consumption is having a seriously negative environmental impact on the planet, while exploit-

ative labour and unsafe working conditions are commonplace in our fashion supply chains.

The benefits of dramatically increasing our use of second-hand goods also includes a social and cultural dimension that TR Aid believes has the power to transform us from individual consumers into collective citizens, that connects us with communities and people rather than material objects, and that loosens the vice like grip of advertising and corporations on shaping our style and identity.

Visit our website www.traid.org.uk to find out what is planned during #Secondhandfirst Week and how to take part.

#TRAIDTALKS

To engage people in the conversations we urgently need to have on sustainability, education and the fashion industry, we created #TRAIDTALKS, a discussion space giving inspiring speakers a forum to engage and galvanise individuals and communities to embrace a more sustainable life.

TR Aid host around four talks annually and, in 2015 we welcomed the iconic fashion designer Katharine Hamnett who advocated that change in the fash-

ion industry has to come through its politicisation; artist and designer Alex Noble who took a personal approach discussing how his own experiences in the industry, both positive and negative, have seen his work develop to fuse fashion, art and ethics; and in #Secondhandfirst Week, author and design activist Kate Fletcher will explore the ingenious and resourceful ways we use our clothes in her talk 'The Craft of Use' at TR Aid Shepherd's Bush on November 24.

Keep an eye on our website at www.traid.org.uk or email education@traid.org.uk to go on our monthly mailing list.

Photo: #TRAIDTALKS in action ©The Snapshot Café

Take the #Secondhandfirst Pledge and source more of your wardrobe second-hand rather than new

www.traid.org.uk/pledge

Photo: Fashion blogger Susie Bubble, author of www.stylebubble.co.uk, takes our #Secondhandfirst Pledge in support of #Secondhandfirst Week 2015. ©Leigh McAlea





By Rosalind Jana, TRAIID supporter

Photos: Blogger Rosalind Jana puts together second-hand outfits for #Secondhandfirst Week ©Rosalind Jana



Why I Love #Secondhandfirst



TRAIID supporter Rosalind Jana blogs regularly on sustainable fashion and is a second-hand aficionado. Rosalind opens up her wardrobe as we start to prepare for #Secondhandfirst Week in November and tells us why she loves second-hand.

My new room is currently bedecked with dresses – five of them strung across one wall, doing an excellent job of simultaneously providing decoration and hiding chipped paint marks. All but one are second hand, bought from an array of vintage stalls, charity shops and other clothes troves I’ve visited in the last few years.

My wardrobe is also packed tight with skirts, shirts and jumpers that possibly had previous owners (and other stories) before I plucked them up from some pile or rail. The colours are all darkly jewelled - jades, deep blues, reds, pinks – with lots of black and grey thrown into the mix. There are velvets, silks, leather jackets, thick wools, and lots of cotton layers.

This little assembly of items is typical of my wider wardrobe. A small selection of it was bought new (think People Tree, ASOS Africa and the occasional foray into an independent designer), but the rest have been passed through other hands, other houses and other heritages first. I’d say about 80% of it is second-hand, whether it’s been bought by me, sneaked away from my mum, passed down from previous generations or received as gifts.

With TRAIID preparing for its next #Secondhandfirst Week in November, I’ve been thinking about second-hand a lot. Charity shops are my natural hunting ground, so TRAIID’s appeal for people to source more

of their wardrobes second-hand is easy for me, but it’s good to be reminded of the real sustainable value of a second-hand wardrobe. It’s also a thrill and a pleasure to sift through fifties tea-dresses, the satisfaction of finding something you know you’ll wear time and time again.

To get ready for the week, TRAIID asked me to put together a bunch of images charting some of the many, many outfits I’ve worn comprised mainly of second hand. Hopefully this will inspire you to support TRAIID throughout #Secondhandfirst Week by wearing second-hand and taking their Pledge. (Take it here and upload a photo! www.traid.org.uk/pledge)

Buying second-hand is a slow-burn pleasure and it’s a privilege to keep on building a little emporium of second hand delights. Some pieces will come and go, while others – hopefully – will remain stashed away until I’m old.

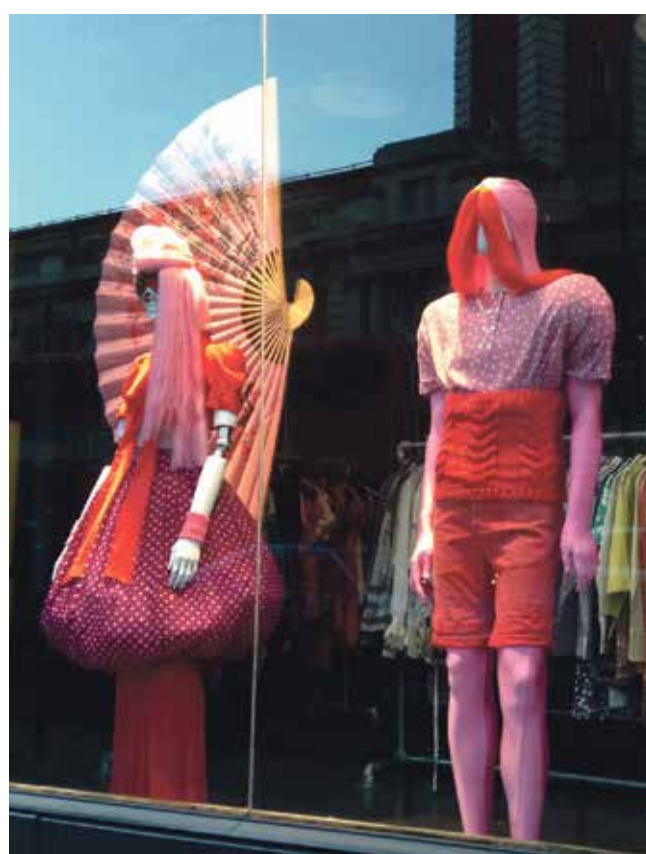
TRAIID are making this week all about the joy of second-hand. I’ll be joining them as I stomp around Oxford in all my various outfits cobbled together from items owned by others first - hopefully adding in my own tales to the ones created when they were worn before.

Check out Rosalind’s blog, clothescamerasandcoffee.blogspot.co.uk.

8 **#TRAIDWINDOWLOVE**

Photos: © Francesco Colucci

9 The creations of TRAIID's window designer Francesco Colucci have garnered huge love and praise from our customers, local people, journalists and stylists. With a clear eye for design and a bold aesthetic, Francesco celebrates the infinite variety of second-hand showcasing the beauty of clothes, textures and textiles in our windows, to reveal our second-hand soul.





Traidremade x Rights of Massive

Photo: Traidremade x Rights of Massive Collection 2015 ©Alex Noble

This year, Traidremade collaborated with artist and designer Alex Noble to create Rights of Massive, a 14 piece capsule collection plus a bespoke hand painted denim collection and a run of one-off patched and painted sports jumpers.

Alex has had a wide-ranging career which includes creating incredible (and brilliantly bonkers) stage designs for the likes of Lady Gaga and Florence Welch, and he also co-founded the ethical fashion initiative Everything Must Go which TRAIID partnered with in 2014.

He's always been interested in using off-cuts and existing resources in his art and designs, so his partnership with Traidremade made perfect sense.

The collection is inspired by streetwear and muses from the 1980s including Sade, Neneh Cherry and Willy Cartier. It includes bleached corduroy bomber jackets, panelled dungarees, boy-shorts, tartan trench suits, oversized shirts, box tees and hats.

'Traidremade and Alex Noble complement each other perfectly. We both believe in the environmental, social and aesthetic power of using the resources we already have to create fashion,' says Maria Chenoweth-Casey, Traidremade founder and TRAIID CEO.

'The collection is a departure from the avant-garde stage costumes people know me for but a return to my roots of streetwear, tomboys and culture clash,'

says Alex. 'I'm proud to be working with Traidremade. Their work is so inspiring.'

And of course, it's ready to wear with a purpose with all the profits raised being committed to a TRAIID funded project in Bangladesh providing day-care for the children of garment workers.

The collection launched at a pop up in Berwick Street, Soho, and is now available to buy at TRAIID Dalston, 106 – 108 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS or online at www.traidremade.com

Meet Your Maker

Designer and artist Alex Noble talks about working with Traidremade to create our 2015 collection, what it's like designing exclusively with second-hand and how he's using fashion to champion human rights.

The Traidremade collection is created from pre-consumer waste donated to TRAIID (materials discarded before consumer use like fabric rolls) and a selection of second hand clothes like denim and old leather. Rather than fighting this aesthetic of a random fabric resource, I wanted to promote it by celebrating the aesthetic fusion of putting together materials from an unpredictable source.

My aims for the project were to embrace the TRAIID customer and produce a really relevant collection in line with their shopping habits and interests. Eclectic and conscious thrift shoppers, who like a 'find', enjoy history and authenticity and that embrace multi-cultural references in their style. I'm talking about myself here too.

This collection also wove in TRAIID's amazing international development work by donating profits to a project in Bangladesh providing day care for the children of garment workers, and specifically to get the children birth certificates so they become official citizens of their own country. I wanted to communicate these facts through the collection, its branding and design. That's why I titled the collection 'Rights of Massive' – it's about human rights, rights for the masses and our hand in achieving that goal.

My design research started with looking at the

'straight up' photography of i-D magazine in the early 80's. Street style shots of punks, club kids and art students, total individuals creating their image from originality as opposed to mass trend forecasting.

The 'Buffalo Style' of the 80's has always influenced me; you saw sportswear, tailoring, strong silhouettes and tropes of various cultures juxtaposed together to create a really individual androgynous style.

The Internet and globalisation have now made us all global nomads. Today, we have access to all types of cultures and dress, and should embrace the inspiration that brings, the opportunities to collaborate and the positives of a world at our fingertips.

The pop up shop design also promoted the ideas of re-use, up cycling and individuality. We used random industrial materials like office shelving and light fittings to create a puzzle of a hanging system along the walls, old bits of screens from set design jobs to make fitting rooms and a photo booth donated by the brilliant Photo Emporium.

Once the collection was in-store, along with the 60 pairs of hand painted and bleached jeans, numerous polka dot mannequins and gorgeous staff, we had a vibrant D.I.Y temple of colour and cloth to promote a progressive culture to the fashion industry and consumers. It felt very special to sell clothes that promote sustainability, communicate the vital work of TRAIID and fund opportunities for extremely poor children and their families. It would be great to have more and bigger versions of the fashion industry like this.



Photo: Artist, designer and Traidremade collaborator Alex Noble

Book a Free Home Collection



TRAID's home collection service was set up to provide the public with the easiest possible way to donate unwanted clothes directly to charity. We schedule collections to take place when you are home so your precious donations don't have to be left outside, and with TRAIID coming to your door, you know your clothes are benefiting the charity.

In return for this wondrous reuse service, TRAIID asks for a minimum donation of one large bag and clothes which are good enough quality to be reused and resold in our charity shops.

TRAID has teamed up with councils like the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and, most recently, the London Borough of Brent, to spread the word to households. We've worked in both boroughs for many years to divert unwanted textiles from landfill, and we're very pleased to offer households additional ways to reuse clothes. In Brent, TRAIID's education team has also worked for many years with hundreds of students in local schools to promote clothes reuse and reduce waste.

TRAID's home collection service is completely free, and we collect in branded vans with our own drivers. Book a collection at www.traid.org.uk/collections or email recycling@traid.org.uk or call 020 8733 2580 (Option 1).

Photo: Activist, satirist and comedian Heydon Prowse books a home collection! ©Kit Oates

Student Eco-Denim Challenge

TRAID's work with schools to investigate the environmental impact of consumption and textile waste has seen us work directly with 121,526 children, young people, adults educators and teachers since 2005. Our work ranges from talks, to assemblies, to workshops to in-depth projects.

This year, a stand out project was with students of Glenthorne School in Sutton when we took them on a journey to discover the hidden stories behind our clothes. From the cotton fields in West Africa, to garment factories in Asia, the Year 9 classes explored how supply chains work, and considered more ethical and sustainable ways to consume clothes.

Knowledge takes root by doing, so we set the students a challenge to design and make a denim bag from unwanted damaged jeans. We chose denim because it's probably the most ubiquitous thing in all

our wardrobes, and denim production is a resource intensive process which uses up huge quantities of water and land.

We were really impressed with the student designs, and in our TRAIID Peckham charity shop, we created a special window display of their sustainable designs.

School textile teacher Mrs Degiorgio said, 'All the students have been really engaged with the project, and I feel, as a result, have learned a great deal about sustainability and the work TRAIID do. They are very proud of the work that they have achieved.'

If you are a teacher, pupil or parent, and are interested in bringing TRAIID's sustainability work to your school, please get in touch by emailing education@traid.org.uk or contact 020 8733 2591.



Photo (below): Glenthorne students up-cycle denim

A Volunteer Perspective

At TRAIID, we work regularly with volunteers in our shops and in our education team. Their precious time and support increases our capacity allowing us to expand our reach even further. Here, French-born Audrey Delaplagne talks about her impressions of TRAIID now her placement with us is over, and reflects on how TRAIID charity shops are 'sui generis' – one of a kind.

I was waiting at the bus stop when I noticed the singular windows of a newly opened shop on Rye Lane, Peckham called TRAIID. A glimpse at the brick walls and the plywood shelves made me think of trendy high-street shops like Urban Outfitters. I decided to go in, and missed my bus.

The atmosphere was similar to a high-street store with funky music and buzzing customers. I saw people were excited to find cool but cheap clothes, and I noticed that unlike high street shops, it didn't smell of moth balls and dust. But, when I looked at the price tag on a small blue leather backpack, it explained that TRAIID is a charity.

I learned that TRAIID works to reduce the negative impacts of clothes on people and the environment by reusing unwanted clothes, through education and by funding global projects in the garment industry. As a student of international politics, I was familiar with the challenges of international development and immediately resonated with TRAIID's aims.

Full of enthusiasm, I asked a member of staff how to get involved in some way, and after sending a letter through, I started volunteering with the education team.

Defining a TRAIID shop isn't necessarily easy. It isn't your usual high-street charity shop, and it also isn't a specialist vintage shop. It made me wonder if it should even be labelled.

For some people, second-hand is negative and regarded as old, used or out of fashion. The positive aspects of charity shops like giving, reusing and reducing waste are not always enough to encourage someone out of their high-street comfort zone to try second-hand. Plus, the eclectic mix of fashion, styles and trends in charity shops can be overwhelming for some customers, rather than a joy.

But, the design and feel of TRAIID shops make it stand out from other shops on the high street, whether they are retail or charity retail. This I think helps TRAIID cultivate loyal customers, as well as those who may be more wary of shopping second-hand, as its singularity makes it feel like it's worth shopping there.

In a nutshell, TRAIID shops are sui generis meaning they are shops of their own kind applying a mix of marketing techniques with a social purpose. Their contribution goes beyond reusing clothes, but takes a holistic approach that sees education programmes sensitising people to the social and environmental implications of the textile industry,

its fashion label TRAIIDremade promoting sustainability within the fashion industry itself, and its funding combatting the problems of the industry on workers and the environment.

Such variety of actions not only reveals a great ambition but also a holistic approach to the related issues of the textile and fashion industries, where the causes and the effects of fast-fashion are addressed. I volunteered across the organisation including at TRAIID's head office assisting on creating new educational resources, working alongside sorting staff in the warehouse, helping in TRAIID's charity shops and delivering work in schools with the education team.

I could observe behaviours and how customers looked at the clothes. I could hear their opinions about the charity and their shopping experience at TRAIID. And overall, I would say they seemed happy and satisfied to bring home a new item of clothing (new to them) and sometimes to feel they also contributed to a good cause. As well as buying something nice, clothes can trigger powerful feelings that go beyond the mere appearance of the object that make us think about who made them, and where.

This thought process is even easier to generate with second-hand clothes because they call to mind the previous owner and remind us we are part of a wider community. These clothes may make us wonder about the previous owner and why they discarded the garment.

I believe shopping at TRAIID creates much more than material satisfaction because it raises awareness and encourages critical thinking about our relationships to purchasing and discarding clothes. And, ultimately, it makes people more likely to change how they consume for the better.

If you are interested in volunteering for TRAIID, there are a number of opportunities in our shops and at Head Office. Email info@traid.org.uk with your CV and some information about what sort of volunteering you are interested in.

Photo: TRAIID volunteer Audrey takes our #Secondhandfirst Pledge



Killer Factories Trigger Regulation in Bangladesh

It took the devastation of Rana Plaza to bring about a hard fought consensus for new factory regulation in Bangladesh. Journalist, writer and social justice campaigner **Tansy Hoskins** argues that the history of factory reform lies with trade unions whether today or in our own recent histories.

Photo: The monument in memory of victims of the Rana Plaza factory collapse in April 2013 which stands in front of the now empty site in Dhaka, Bangladesh. ©Leigh McAlea



The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh now covers 1,600 factories, which are inspected against a strict set of structural, electrical and fire safety standards. But what does the history of regulating factories reveal about why it took a catastrophic disaster like Rana Plaza to get the start of factory regulation in Bangladesh?

The great myth of sweatshops is that they will make a country better off; that over time wealth will 'trickle-down' to the good of all. Advocates of sweatshops often point to the Industrial Revolution in Britain as an example of sweatshops being a fiery rite of passage that poor people simply need to go through.

Britain's wealth was built upon the slave trade, colonialism and horribly exploited domestic labour that included child workers. It was wealth that the richest people fought to keep to themselves. The 1833 Factory Act banned children under the age of nine from working in factories, children aged 9-13 were limited to working 8 hours a day, and for children aged 13-18 working days could only be 12 hours long. When it passed, the Act introduced the concept of having a factory inspectorate to ensure the Act was adhered to. The inspectorate was tiny – just four people to cover 4,000 factories – but it was a start.

These limited reforms were bitterly opposed by factory owners and free-marketeters but championed by a civil society movement of the Chartists, Trade Unionists and reformers. The 1833 Act shows how rather than being a linear march towards progress, history is made up of tension between those in charge of factories and those working in them.

The same is true today. The Ready Made Garments sweatshops in Bangladesh are the result of a country being poor in every way except its vast pool of human labour. Richer countries have invested their money and power in expensive technologies and above all in the most profitable processes of design, branding, and marketing.

Bangladesh also shows the myth of 'trickle down' economics. Instead of 'trickle down' we have what author Arundhati Roy has termed 'gush up'. The wealth created by Bangladesh's 4 million garment workers (85-90% of whom are women) gushes up to the top of society to the ruling class of factory owners. It also gushes out of the country altogether, flooding into the bank accounts of fashion's billionaires like Zara's Amancio Ortega, H&M's Stefan Persson or Walmart's Christie Walton.

After the Rana Plaza factory complex collapsed in 2013 there was another 'Factory Act moment'. Trade Unions and NGOs had been loudly warning that disaster in the unregulated industry was imminent, just six months before, the Tazreen Factory fire had been a sickening reminder that the industry should listen, yet no-one did.

In the days after Rana Plaza a coalition of global Trade Unions, Uni Global Union (20 million members of 900 unions across 150 countries) and IndustriALL (50 million members in 140 countries), worked with Bangladeshi unions and NGOs to serve retailers with an ultimatum. The 'Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh' was drafted and retailers were told: this time, you sign our deal.

Because history is not a linear march towards progress, three weeks passed by and the Accord received just two 'maybes'. Even after Rana Plaza corporations did not want to sign an agreement that might impact their profits. Campaigners then stepped in – people just like you – and enough pressure was put on H&M in Sweden via media, social media and street based campaigns, that the retailer caved in and signed.

Then it was up to trade unions in countries like Britain to put pressure on their employers. USDAW, the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW), a trade union representing retail workers, lobbied companies like Marks & Spencer and Next. This united, global campaign was so successful that today 190 companies are signed up and 1,600 factories have been inspected.

17 factories were immediately evacuated for being extremely dangerous and over 80,000 safety issues were identified which need resolving. The legally binding nature of the Accord and the fact that it is worker led and lasts for five years means it is a game changer.

Preventing disasters like Rana Plaza is not rocket science. It involves implementing basic health and safety measures and allowing the formation of trade unions which can provide workers with a collective voice which can speak out with impunity about safety standards. Supporting this work by unions in Bangladesh and around the world is a vital part of making sure history goes in the right direction.

Small & Beautiful

Photo: Parvin dropping off her son Rasul at the TRAIID funded day-care centre in Dhaka, Bangladesh. ©Leigh McAlea

For hundreds of thousands of garment workers around the world, very low wages means that they can't break the cycle of poverty for themselves or their families, no matter how hard they work.

Leigh McAlea visited a TRAIID funded project in Bangladesh, Dhaka, which is stopping inter-generational poverty with an innovative package of care, education and nutritious food for 140 children.

Parvin sits on the bed in a small dark room where she lives with her three year old son Rasul in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. She shares the room with another woman and her child. The bed takes up nearly all of the floor space, saris hang from nails on the walls, hair oil, a brush and medicine sit on the only shelf in the room, and there is a pink plastic bowl on the floor for washing.

A huge crack runs across the entire width of one of the walls. One toilet, a tap and a gas burner are shared with many others. The rent for this tiny dilapidated room is 2,500 taka per month (around £21) and Parvin, who earns 5,000 taka per month (£41) working in a nearby garment factory, splits this cost with her roommate.

I am here in Dhaka to meet garment workers, trade union workers and TRAIID's local partners, and will visit two projects working in different ways to improve conditions in the garment industry. I have been invited into Parvin's home because her son Rasul attends a day care centre funded by TRAIID where he is looked after while she is working.

Parvin tells me more about what led her from a rural village into the heart of Dhaka, Bangladesh's overcrowded capital.

"I am 20 years old, and come from a village. I was adopted when I was three, and then sold to be married when I was 12 to an older man to satisfy a debt. My husband is 43 and was already married, but he had only daughters and wanted to have a son."

Parvin bore him two sons – Rasul aged three who is jumping around on the bed and an older son aged six who is back in the village – but her husband left her, and she is now a single mother.

She tells me that there were no opportunities to earn money in her village, and so, with her youngest child, she came to Dhaka over a year ago. She quickly found work in the garment industry and is a machinist at a factory making clothes.



Photo: Shopul fits his schooling from the day-centre around his full-time job at a market selling shirts, Dhaka, Bangladesh. ©Leigh McAlea



"The reality for many children, even extremely young children, is that they are left alone to fend for themselves."

Parvin works in Bangladesh's capital Dhaka, a hive of textile manufacturing with around 5,000 factories jostling for space and providing employment for at least three million people, mainly women, who cut, sew and pack clothes destined for our high streets.

A decade ago, Parvin would probably never have left her village to travel to Dhaka, no matter how dire her situation. Today, Bangladesh, one of the poorest countries in the world, is in the grip of an industrial revolution powered by garment manufacturing requiring an abundance of low skilled cheap labour. In the last ten years alone, textile exports have accelerated from \$5 billion dollars, to over \$20 billion dollars, an astonishing increase.

These economic and structural changes have triggered sweeping social changes, including high levels of migration into the city for work, doubly compounded by climate migrants who have seen their homes washed away by increased flooding due to rising sea levels, and an increasingly feminised workforce.

The rapid expansion of the garment industry in Bangladesh has provided new opportunities for women to earn a living. However, rapid urbanisation, migration and factory work has also had a seriously negative impact on their children.

There are many female workers like Parvin, living with their children in Dhaka as single or abandoned mothers and without any networks of support. These extremely poor women make a stark choice between earning income in garment factories to subsist and survive, or their children's safety.

Under Bangladesh law, every factory must provide a crèche for the children of workers, but this is almost universally disregarded. When I ask, Parvin says she had no idea about this law and tells me there are no crèche facilities where she works.

A few days later, when I visit the National Garment Workers Federation – one of the largest trade unions in Dhaka – I am told that even in the few cases where crèche facilities are available, they are of such poor quality with no food or drink provided, that mothers prefer to rely on any informal care they can cobble together.

The reality for many children, even extremely young children, is that they are left alone to fend for themselves.

In its work to support street and working children, TRAIID partner, the Bangladeshi NGO Nagorik Uddoyog (The Citizen's Initiative), noticed that many of the children they worked with had at least one parent working in garments. Young children were being left alone for extremely long hours and at high risk of accidents, trafficking and abuse, while older children working to supplement their family's meagre incomes were often involved in dangerous and illegal work, notably drug dealing.

Nagorik's answer to this was to set up four centres providing day care for around 140 children, and it is here that Parvin is now able to send her son Rasul while she works making clothes.

"I wouldn't let him outside, it is too dangerous, and while I was working I was so worried and scared all the time that something would happen to him, I couldn't concentrate properly."

It's 7:30am and I'm walking with Parvin as she makes her way to the day care centre to drop off Rasul before going to the factory. She wears her factory



Photo (left top): Younger children at the day-centre learn to read and write.
©Rainbow Collective

Photo (left bottom): In the classroom at the day-centre.
©Leigh McAlea



identity card around her neck, which I'm told is compulsory since the Rana Plaza factory collapse in 2013 which killed over 1,133 people.

As we walk, she tells me that she found out about the centre by word of mouth and that it has been so life changing that she wishes there were more places like this in Dhaka.

Before the centre, she would tie Rasul to the bed post so he could move around but not leave the room, leaving food and water for him. Parvin's neighbours would sometimes check on him, but she couldn't rely on this.

"I wouldn't let him outside, it is too dangerous, and while I was working I was so worried and scared all the time that something would happen to him, I couldn't concentrate properly."

After about 10 minutes, we get to the centre and Parvin signs Rasul in, gives him a big kiss goodbye and hurries off to the factory. Rasul is swept up by one of the staff and disappears into the organised chaos inside.

Back at the centre, I talk to the teachers, carers and children. The centres are located close to the factories where the women work, and they look after around 140 children.

The centre is big, clean and light. It is not much of an exaggeration to say this place feels like a different planet compared to where Parvin and Rasul live. It has a flushable toilet, clean drinking water, a kitchen where lunch of Mass E Bhat (fish and rice) is made in enormous stainless steel pots, books, toys, blackboards, colourful pictures and a sleeping area.

Day-care is provided for children aged three to five – like Rasul – which includes learning the alphabet and counting, singing and playing, a nap and three nutritious meals per day. Hours are very long and flexible to fit with the mothers working hours with the centres usually opening around 6am.

Each centre also provides a drop-in for working children aged six to sixteen. The children I met work at varied jobs including selling ready-made garments in markets, one worked in a small textile factory, another six-year old girl had a job peeling the skins from onions in a vegetable market, and another boy sold chickens. Others were working doing domestic chores including looking after their younger siblings while their mothers worked.

I spend a lot of time with the older children as they work in the classroom. They are sat cross legged on the floor and watch the teacher at the blackboard who is writing words in Bangla. They are all nicely dressed, with books, pens and black fabric school bags. They are without exception completely concentrated as they copy the words on the board into their books.

The hours they spend here learning have been hard fought from employers, and sometimes even

their parents, and so there is an intensity and focus in the room as they try to soak up as much information as possible as quickly as possible, before going to work.

"It isn't enough to provide the education, we have to make sure that they can attend in the first-place. We do a lot of community outreach work to get parents and employers to understand the long-term benefits of an education."

The following day, with Joyeeta Hossain from Nago-rik Uddyog, I visit a local indoor market where three of the older children work. The employers have given us permission to visit and talk to them, although when we arrive, one has changed his mind.

Two of the boys – Shopul and Nazir work on stalls selling shirts. The other, Akash, works in a badly lit section of the market where around 10 young men work drilling holes into metal. None are wearing hand or eye protection.

It is probably here in the market, watching the boys at work folding and packing shirts, and making price calculations for customers on bits of paper, that I understand most clearly that literacy and numeracy is the single most important element to breaking the cycle of poverty that without the centres, they would be locked in.

With a high though rapidly improving illiteracy rate in Bangladesh, numeracy and literacy will give these children who had no opportunity to be educated in school, a huge advantage, helping them to get better paid safer jobs.

I talk to the employers on the clothes stalls and they tell me that they are glad their employees are learning to read, write and do numeracy. But the reality is of course more complicated.

Joyeeta tells me that initially, the employers were very reluctant to give the children a few hours to attend the drop in (hours which the children make up). She tells me even some of the parents need persuading as they are worried about the children losing vital income.

She explains, "It isn't enough to provide the education, we have to make sure that they can attend in the first-place. We do a lot of community outreach work to get parents and employers to understand the long-term benefits of an education."

One of the ways that the centres build this trust are through committees made up of parents, staff and seven children as peer representatives from each centre. They meet every month and talk about the

problems faced by the parents and children using the centres including contentious issues like child marriage, dowries and domestic violence.

They are even tackling issues like making sure children have birth certificates, without which they are not recognised as citizens of their own country. Many of the children in the centres have no paper work as they were born outside of hospitals to often illiterate parents.

Without birth certificates, these children are further disadvantaged as they are not recognised citizens, they can't go to state schools, they can't get medical help in state hospitals, and without proof of age, it is much easier to exploit children's labour.

"These centres help to break that cycle that will be felt through future generations."

This wonderful package of support includes care, education, food and some medicine, and eases the burden in unimaginable ways on the mothers working for long hours and little pay in garment factories.

Without the centres, these 140 children would be left to fend for themselves while their mothers work in the garment factories. They would be at risk of trafficking, accidents and abuse. For the older children who work, there would be no respite, no alternative and no chance to improve life skills.

Parvin, and millions like her, earn such a pittance, that they are trapped in a cycle of poverty. They cannot afford to send their children to school and they find it difficult to give them nutritious food. So, children must work to supplement incomes rather than going to school, and families become locked in inter-generational poverty.

These centres help to break that cycle that would otherwise be replicated through future generations. The risks and behavioural problems young children face when left without care are reduced. Older children get educated and vitally, in doing so they end up in safer and better paid jobs enabling them to provide for their own children.

But, is helping 140 children enough? As one of the staff at ChildHope, our UK partner, memorably said, "This project is small but beautiful". It is beautiful because the impact extends far beyond 140 individuals, helping to break the cycle of poverty for future generations.

Find out more, visit www.traid.org.uk or www.childhope.org.uk

Udita: Women Garment Workers Arise

This year, film-makers and social justice campaigners Rainbow Collective released the documentary *Udita*. It's an epic tale of the social injustice and exploitation embedded in the very fabric of the garment industry, and how women workers in particular are uniting to 'arise' (the translation of the film's title) and claim their rights.

Film-makers Hannan Majid and Richard York take us on a journey examining the grassroots struggles of garment workers in Bangladesh, through the tragedies of the Tazreen factory fire and Rana Plaza factory collapse, to the women and trade union activists pressuring for change. *Udita*'s huge strength is that it places women, the garment workers and trade union activists – perspectives which

are usually side lined – at the centre of their film.

The documentary brings together over five-years of filming in Bangladesh and worked closely with TRAIID partner the National Garment Worker's Federation to capture the reality of garment work for ordinary people in Bangladesh, as well the evolution of their struggles to stop exploitative practices in factories.

Garment workers themselves reveal the problems they face, and how they are being treated after disasters like the Rana Plaza factory collapse. However, despite the huge obstacles, *Udita* is also a film of hope that shows how garment workers are fighting repression, and in particular how in this female dominated industry, women are increasingly taking leadership roles to challenge exploitation.

Udita was made by Rainbow Collective with Open Vizor and is free to watch and share.

Visit www.rainbowcollective.com

Photo (right): Alyia, women's leadership coordinator at the National Garment Workers Federation, leads workers out on a demonstration for garment workers rights in Dhaka, Bangladesh in 2014 ©Rainbow Collective

Empower & Breathe

Ethical fashion champion and yoga teacher Amisha Ghadali also helped a wider audience to directly connect to the people benefiting from TRAIID's funding by organising a charity fundraiser to mark Fashion Revolution Day.

As the second Fashion Revolution Day was approaching in April this year, I knew that I wanted to do something that brought together my two worlds of work Sustainable Fashion and Yoga.

I have been part of the ethical fashion movement since I first started work on my jewellery label ten years ago. I believe that there are simple ways to change the way we think our clothes, what we buy and what we do with the clothes that we have.

Fashion Revolution Day marked two years since 1,133 people died and a further 2,500 were injured in the Rana Plaza catastrophe in Dhaka, Bangladesh. They were killed whilst working for familiar fashion brands in one of the many 'accidents' that plague the garment industry.

About a week before Fashion Revolution Day, I put together a charity event called Empower & Breathe. The yoga was themed on our power to change the world around us and create more freedom in our lives. It was followed by an in-conversation with Sarah Mac of Manuka Yoga, and Wearable Art Designer Laurie Nouchka, talking about how we can support positive shifts in the industry, how we can find out who made our clothes and how to support positive change in the industry.

I wanted the event to also have a direct impact by raising money for something very specific that one of TRAIID's project partners needed. TRAIID suggested raising funds for READ, a Dalit NGO working to stop the practice of Sumangali Thittam - or marriage plans

- which is common in Tamil Nadu, South India.

This practice sees girls and young women offered work in cotton spinning mills typically over a three-year period. They are promised a lump sum payment on completion, something that is very attractive to impoverished parents anxious to save enough money for their daughter's dowries.

Recruiters target poverty stricken families promising good working conditions, accommodation and decent wages. The reality is very different with girls working in prison like conditions, vulnerable to violence and sexual abuse, and provided with very poor quality food resulting in high rates of malnutrition. READ is working with mill owners to make conditions better and also rescues the most vulnerable girls and supports them back into education or helps them find other work.

In just a week, we raised £350 which went directly to support one family in their search for justice for their daughters who worked under this scheme. The family's two daughters died. One was raped by a group of mill supervisors and died (sexual abuse is not uncommon in the mills). Her older sister committed suicide two days later. Her family think she did this because she felt so bad about not being able to protect her younger sister.

This is not an isolated incident. There have been other mysterious deaths in mills, but investigations are rare. The money from this event has gone to this family so that they can seek legal action for their daughters and make enough noise to launch an official investigation.

Something that was so simple and fun to organise may have a ripple effect out into the world that those of us that took part and supported will never quite

understand. If you are inspired to put on an event or engage in some fundraising for something that moves you, do it. The world needs more of us to make a stand and empower each other in whatever ways we can.

Photo (below): Amisha Ghadali



Become a TRAIID Mending Activist

TRAIID is on a mission to get people back in touch with lost skills like sewing, mending and repair. TRAIID's Education Officer **Sarah Klymkiw** explains how learning these skills can be a positive physical, political and social act, and how you can become a mending activist by joining TRAIID's newly launched Community Mending Network.

I once heard that when a child was asked at school where milk comes from, they responded by saying 'the supermarket'. The teacher was shocked when she enquired further to reveal that the child did in fact believe this to be true.

Recently, several authors started a campaign opposing a cull of words connected with the natural world from the Oxford Junior Dictionary. 'Acorn', 'buttercup' and 'conker' were amongst the words removed to make way for 'broadband', 'cut and paste' and 'analogue'. Words are vital as a means of connection and understanding, and the campaign argued that their removal reflected increasingly solitary childhoods and proved a symptom of a wider problem.

With only 10% of children regularly playing outdoors compared to 40% over a decade ago, are we educating a generation to become more disconnected with our environment? What does this ultimately mean for our relationship to material things and society as a whole?

In recent years, I've observed a dramatic decrease in hand sewing skills amongst young people, which is no surprise considering sewing is no longer a core subject. Research carried out by the Crafts Council said dentistry and surgical professions are concerned with the lack of haptic (tactile) skills of young people. These fine motor skills develop naturally through the participation of craft, including sewing, but which is increasingly marginal in formal education.

Craft can act as a therapeutic activity, a solace away from the pressures of everyday life, and by participating in craft we have an opportunity to physically shape and fashion the world around us. This helps us to form stronger connections with

the material world and it's interconnectivity with the environment. With access to sewing in formal education fading, we are losing these skills.

Naturally, not everyone has the time, or inclination to learn how to make their own clothes. I met a young mother recently who openly admitted to throwing away a garment when the button had fallen off. I asked her out of curiosity, with no judgement, why she had been so quick to discard it. She explained that she didn't possess the skills to sew a new button back on and had never been given the opportunity to learn. I taught her how to sew on a new button.

In the last decade, mending and crafting has surged in popularity. These social movements whether born of necessity or a lifestyle choice, offer creative freedoms, individuality and intrinsic values. Since 2008, and in the aftermath of the financial crisis, there's been a 500% rise in the sale of sewing machines. The statistics tell us that the desire to sew is as strong as ever. Despite living in a society that is more ready to replace than repair, this is a growing revolution of values challenging excess, upgrades and disposability. Could we be seeing an uprising of mending activists determined to preserve and share lost skills in a bid to tackle waste and unsustainable living?

There's certainly a negative connotation with the term 'repair' – that something in need of repair is no longer desirable, or that if you choose to fix something it's because you can't afford not to. But repair can be about resistance, a way of challenging the short lived highs of passive consumerism. Possessing the skills to carry out repair leaves us less at the mercy of disposable goods and subverts

Photos (right): Our Community Mending Activists help TRAIID get the most out of the clothes donated to us.



I enjoy being a 'Mending Activist' as I was looking for some flexible volunteering where I was able to use some of the skills I already have, as well as learn some more. This kind of volunteering works really well for me. I have a TRAIID store very close to my house in Wood Green, so it is convenient to collect and take back clothes and I can mend them in my own time. It's great to know that clothes, that otherwise would not be sold, will be. Its life will be extended which contributes towards tackling our throw-a-way culture as well as the fact that more money will go to support TRAIID's great work! Most of the time, it's just a few stitches and they are wearable.

– Vic Tweedie, TRAIID Wood Green Mending Activist



I make costumes for theatre and Opera- I started out as an alteration hand at the National Theatre specialising in mending. As I work on a freelance basis, I often have spare time in between jobs and liked the idea of volunteering using my specific skill set, and maybe being able to share some of it with other activists along the way. I was made aware of just how much textile goes into recycling and land-fill when I occasionally helped out in a local charity shop. So, I was thrilled when I discovered I could help TRAIID in this way.

– Laura Holland, TRAIID Dalston Mending Activist

in-built obsolescence. It can only be a great thing for tackling textile waste.

Open access to skill sharing spaces is flourishing online from Fixpert to Maker Library Networks. By sharing skills with others we build and strengthen new relationships within our community and by learning how to mend we build confidence. It is with the confidence to repair or remake that we can feel empowered to make positive social and ecological change, and a freedom to confidently use our clothes. Repair is a physical, political and social act.

TRAIID's own Community Mending Network was established this year as a way to repair damaged donations which we can then reuse and resell in our charity shops. This flourishing group of volunteer mending activists, mostly aware of TRAIID through our charity shops, share their skills with us to give longer life to clothes donated to us by you.

Our mending activists not only help us meet our charitable objectives, but their work also recognises that mending is about the preservation of skills and our earth's precious resources. Together, we are collectively waging a war against textile waste while getting the most value out of clothes donations.

Through mending activism - repairing, remaking and redesigning - the full potential and beauty of these garments is realised, and new relationships can flourish within communities and with our clothes.

Becoming a TRAIID mending activist is easy. Email sarah@traid.org.uk for details on how to join our Community Mending Network or ask for information in any TRAIID shop.



Changing Our World One Stitch At A Time

Photo: The Craftivist Collective fuses craft and activism. ©Sarah Corbett



Sarah Corbett set up the Craftivist Collective after feeling like a burnt-out activist who doubted the effects of some traditional forms of activism and didn't fit in. Earlier this year, we welcomed the Craftivists into our Traidremade pop up shop to run a workshop and invited Sarah to deliver a #TRAIDTALK on her experiences as a Craftivist.

If we want our world to be more beautiful, kind & just, then surely our activism should be beautiful, kind & just?

Activism often conjures up quick transactional signing of petitions, clicktivism, loud and aggressive ways to demand justice. But injustices are often complex, there is no quick fix. I have been an activist from the age of three, growing up in an activist family in Liverpool I was a shy child but observed how strategic campaigns could be won and how good intentions sometimes where not enough. I campaigned at university with different groups and became a professional campaigner for large charities. But I never really felt like I fitted into traditional activist groups who tend to be loud and extrovert. I'm an introvert and I didn't think that fighting or demonising people should be the way to eradicate poverty and injustice in the long term.

My response was to create projects to do 'slow activism' that uses craft as a meditative tool to stop, reflect and act on injustice issues in a transformative and gentle way. My projects try to be hopeful, creative and a thoughtful way of doing activism using needlework to encourage us all to be the change we wish to see in the world.

Soon people around the world wanted to join in who also didn't fit in or were nervous of aggressive activism. Craftivists around the world use our kits,

tools and resources alone or to talk in a group about how we are at times part of the problem, but also how we can be part of the solution, when it comes to poverty and injustice. We use craft to build relationships as well as create provocative images and products that are then shared online, in magazines and books you wouldn't expect to see activism covered.

If used well, craftivism allows us to slow down, be offline, think critically and create a comfortable space to challenge ourselves on how to be effective activists and global citizens. I've seen more and more people turn to craftivism in recent years as a way to take time out of their hectic lives and think about the issues that matter to them as well as engage other in campaigning for structural change.

One of my first successes was with my local MP. After going down the traditional activism route – sending emails and petitions to her – I got nowhere, and my MP's office told me I was wasting my time. I added craft as an element to my next activism action to my MP.

Giving my MP a handkerchief with a hand-stitched timeless message sewn at a meeting, we had made her more open to what I had to say. It showed her that I was really passionate about the subjects that I was contacting her about and not just clicking a petition or the 'send' button.

The handkerchief also wasn't another way for me to talk at her it was a way for me to talk to her and discuss the things that we both felt passionate about rather than having the traditional adversarial MP-activist relationship. In addition, this has led to us becoming close, critical friends with me helping my MP to be great at her job and her helping me to be a better and more effective activist. We now have 'Don't Blow It' hanky kits as well as other craftivism kits for craftivists around the world to do.

It's important to remember that craftivism, like any type of activism, can be done really well or really badly. In my opinion, craftivism is slow-burning activism, allowing people to take the time to think about issues rather than being given the hard sell from charities and campaigners. It's a tool to build respectful relationships (we call it 'gentle activism') and a tool to reach new audiences where they are at. It's important that we keep being critical and question the impact, motivations and methodologies of what we're doing and how we can keep it fresh and relevant to as many people as possible.

So put the kettle on, grab a craftivism kit and let's change our world one stitch at a time.

To find out more about the Craftivist Collective visit craftivist-collective.com or follow us on Twitter and Instagram

15 Years Of Fabrications Unfolded & Celebrated!

Photo: Barley Massey, sustainable pioneer at the Fabrications shop counter which has marked its fifteenth year. ©Bernie Keating



Sewing, up-cycling and sustainability has surged in popularity over the last decade, and at the vanguard of this movement, is Barley Massey, a pioneer of sustainable design practices. This year marks the fifteenth anniversary of Fabrications, where she delivers classes empowering people of all ages to mend, repair and up-cycle. Here, she tells us about how she formed Fabrications and the ethos that informs all her work. Happy anniversary Barley!

On reaching my 15 year milestone I look back at some of the challenges I faced in setting up and running my upcycling textile business and I am looking forward to what the next 15 years will bring!

In the late 90's, I was looking around for my first 'professional' studio space for my fledgling textile business when I discovered Broadway Market through 'The Hidden Art' open studios event. At that time a majority of the shops along the street were boarded up and dilapidated. During the open studios the council had allowed local designer makers to use the empty shops as temporary exhibition spaces. I soon learnt that the council were accepting applications for more permanent business to take on these shops to re-energise them, which is what I did and continue to do.

I became an accidental shop keeper and faced renovating an old shop! This hadn't been my intention but I saw the benefits of utilising a shop space in lots of creative ways. As well as setting up my own studio I thought the space had great potential to involve other local creative's and talent, host events and happenings and create a community hub around sustainable textile & design practises, making, collaborating and co creating. At the time, I was squatting in Hackney after graduating from Goldsmith's in 1995, and had become aware of the area's rich

textile heritage, strong sense of community, diversity, creativity and green movement. Hackney seemed like the ideal place to be.

So the hard work and perseverance to make the shop safe and functional began. I did it up slowly but surely using a small regeneration grant, skill swapping, recycled materials and elbow grease.

The next challenge soon presented itself. I thought that linking ideas in the design world to sustainability, recycling, DIY & activism seemed like an obvious approach. After all one of roles of a designer as I see it is to problem solve and create solutions for a better world. But presenting this approach in early 2000 to the mainstream was very challenging and I experienced negative attitudes and resistance or was considered a bit of a curiosity.

Around this time I discovered the book 'Cradle to Cradle' by William McDonough and Michael Braungurt which I found very inspiring and in which the term 'Upcycling' was coined which I loved. I had discovered a language that elevated my practise. I was walking the walk, now perhaps I could talk the talk.

The recession was a big shake up not just in the country's economy but also in the nation's mind set. I could feel attitudes changing as ordinary people re-evaluated how to use time productively, to slow down, to become more resourceful and mindful

of the provenance of the things we consume. My classes in knitting, hand-sewing, making & mending noticeably increased in popularity and opportunities knocked! Today, DIY culture is at an all-time high!

These fifteen years have been a (Re)evolution of learning, improving and crafting to "make good" and "create change". Running Fabrications has given me the opportunity to collaborate with amazing and inspiring people, and organisations such as Traid on my 'Upcycling Academy' educational initiative.

Other highlights over the last fifteen years include getting my 'Rethink Rubbish' craft kits into Liberty! Being one of Kevin McCloud's 'Green Heroes', the healing my 'Remember Me' commissioning service brings its users, building my 'Imaginerium' eco classroom at Fabrications and the moments shared with other people on our paths.

Find out more about the classes, activities and services Fabrications offer at www.fabrications1.co.uk or visit Fabrications, 7 Broadway Market, Hackney, E8 4PH, (t) 020 7275 8043

Keep Your Stuff Alive By John Thackera

This month, we've been reading a preview copy of John Thackara's new book, *How to Thrive in the Next Economy* where he describes how communities the world over are creating real alternatives to global challenges like poverty and climate change. Here, John shares part of his book on the subject of fashion, and how we can derive new pleasures from our clothes unshackled from consumption.

Change leaders in the worlds of fibre and fashion have learned the hard way that exhortations to 'buy less, wash less' are ineffective, on their own, against a global 'Two Wash, Two Wear' industry; the financial DNA of the system as a whole compels it to grow at all costs. The new approach is to seek to influence the fashion system at its edges, using cultural interventions as a tool.

At the London College of Fashion in London, at an event called Craft of Use, two hundred professionals explored the question: what kind of system would improve the quality of our fashion experience without increasing the quantity we consume?

For thousands of years before the oil age, textiles were carefully looked after and the repair, alteration, and maintenance of clothes was a normal part of daily life; can we not combine the beauty of that culture with peer-to-peer production? The main input to our discussions was a remarkable archive of 500 stories, collected by designers and artists around the world, in which a sustained attention to wearing, tending and caring for clothes was a source of satisfaction and meaning.

In her project Grasslands, for example, Emma Lynas connects garments to the earth literally, by extracting colour from her agricultural grassland in Victoria, Australia. She collects eucalyptus leaves, wild thyme, cedar berries, and Aleppo pine needles – and simmers them with strips of hemp. The result is a range of summer hues: straw, gold and bronze.

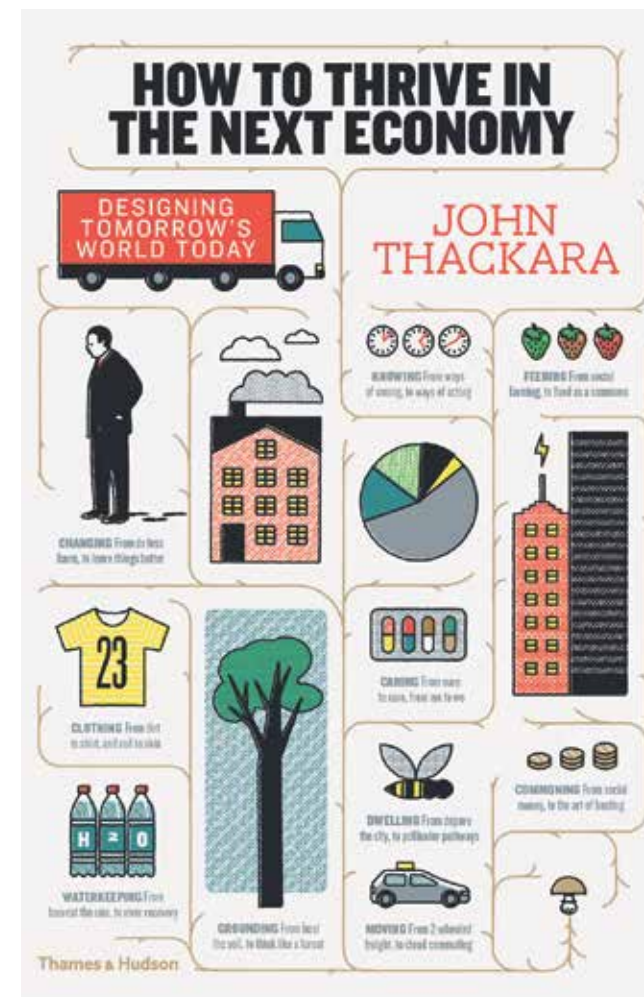
In another example, Sasha Duerr forages for materials in her neighbourhood. She uses plants directly, rather than extracts. She uses contextual knowledge about the lifecycles of plants, their seasonal availability, and their colour potential to plan commissions much as an organic chef plans menus around locally and seasonally available food. (For her wedding, Duerr hand-dyed all of her bridesmaids' dresses using fennel that she gathered from around her neighbourhood.)

Together with the University of California Botanical Garden in Berkeley, Duerr has now developed a Fiber and Dye Map that details the plant names, their uses and properties, and the colours and textures that their leaves, fruit, and bark are capable of producing.

The mapping project led, in turn, to the creation of a brand new plot dedicated to edible fibre and dye plants at the Berkeley botanical garden. 'Recovering knowledge can be a creative process,' says Duerr. 'I love rediscovering and experimenting with "lost" recipes. We have to raise awareness of how rich our world is, of how many possibilities there are. You go to the store and there are only three or four different kinds of apples to choose from. With fibre and dye plants it's the same way. There is so much more out there for us to explore!'

A Dutch designer, Christien Meindertsma, in her Flax Project, also explored the life of the products and raw materials that have become so invisible in an increasingly globalized world. Meindertsma made a series of products from flax produced locally – from the seed to the end product. Documenting the production process became an important part of the project; Meindertsma collaborated with a filmmaker and a photographer to make a quite beautiful record of the five stages of flax processing: sowing, blossoming, harvesting, retting, and pressing bales.

A key learning from these stories is that people who care for their clothes through time do not regard them as inert, static objects; rather, they do so, in Kate Fletcher's words, in 'a lifeworld that is itself a source of meaning'. For Fletcher, who conceived Craft of Use, people who connect with their clothes are more likely to connect with their makers, too, and with the ecosystems from which their materials come. An awareness of natural systems – of cycles, flows, webs, and interconnectedness – comes naturally to people who are close to the whole lifecycle of their clothes.

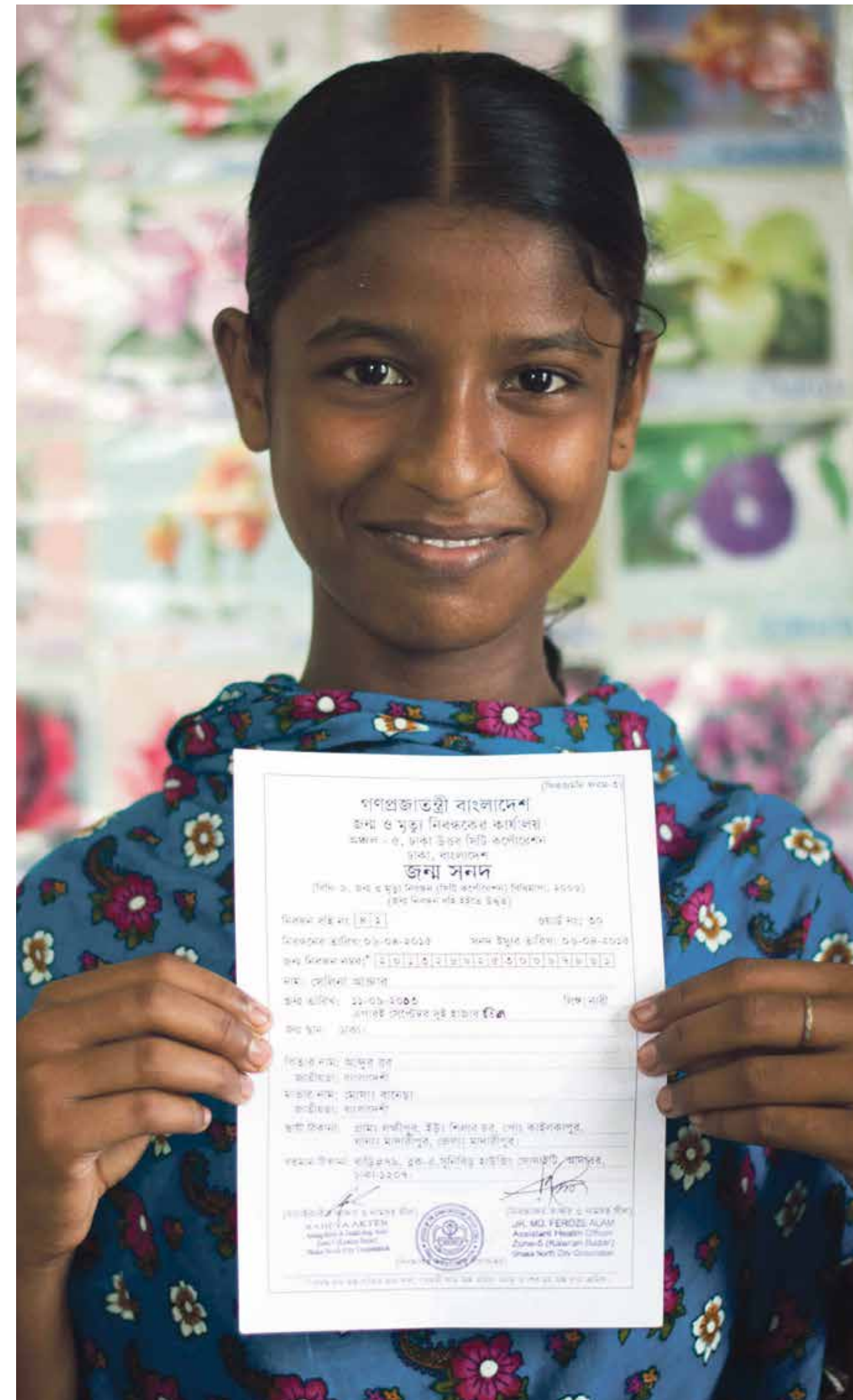


For Sabrina Mahfouz, our poet in residence for the day, the lesson was simple: reconnecting with the neglected qualities of material is a key to system transformation: we must 'Keep Our Stuff Alive'.

Taken from John Thackara's new book *HOW TO THRIVE IN THE NEXT ECONOMY*, published by Thames & Hudson, £18.95

Thank You!

Photo: Selina Akther holds up her birth certificate, secured with the support of TRAIID customers. ©Delwar Hossain



Thank you to the hundreds of TRAIID customers who generously donated over £1,795 to buy birth certificates for 120 children in Bangladesh as part of a project we fund providing a package of care and education. They are now able to access a host of welfare and health schemes, go to school and will be able to vote when they are old enough.

These birth certificates are more than a little piece of paper; they give these children their right to a name, identity and nationality.



Book a free charity clothes collection with TRAID.

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Call 020 8733 2580 (option 1)

Online at traid.org.uk/collections

Email recycling@traid.org.uk

Your lovely donations stock TRAIID's charity shops, so need to be in good enough condition to put on our shop rails to resell. To run this convenient free service, we ask for a minimum donation of one bin liner sized bag, and more is even better!