



# Unit 20 Don't mess with our world! It's the only one we have!

## Task 09

Announcer: Listen to this report about an Indian seamstress.

Narrator: Every day Mina jumps on a local bus to head to the factory where she works, producing clothes for all kinds of international brands.

She works very long hours to make ends meet, just because she wants to live a decent life, to be able to send a bit of money to her family but most importantly to give her children a better life.

She, like the other workers, is paid a legal minimum wage. This amount is far from enough to keep her family out of poverty. She has to work up to 80 hours a week. Often she is exhausted and she hardly sees her children. So why don't governments and employers help these workers out?

There are a few reasons that prevent it. People, who try to join a union, so that they can negotiate a better wage, are often fired, intimidated and sometimes even put in jail.

Governments could set a living wage, but they don't do this because they are afraid that international companies will go to another country where wages are lower. International brands are very powerful. They are the ones who profit the most from this situation. They buy their clothes very cheaply from factories in Asia and sell them for a lot of money in Europe and the US.

Now I'll show you, step by step, how to calculate a living wage.

Let's take the average female Asian worker as our example case. The first step is ... to think about what she should actually be able to buy with a living wage. We begin with the most important thing: food. What all food items have in common, is that they can be measured in terms of calories. Every manual worker needs 3000 calories per day. She should be able to buy healthy food from a local store or market and prepare it at home.

Secondly, besides eating healthily, she also needs other things. She lives in a house, she needs clothes, she needs money for transport and she wants to be able to see a doctor when she's ill. A living wage should also cover these costs. She spends about the same amount on these other basic needs as on food.

Thirdly, a living wage should also support your family. A minimum wage often does not. A wage should cover 2 adults and 2 children.

Fourthly and finally, the Asian living wage must be earned during a legal maximum working week, though not above 48 hours.