

## Panorama: ‘Primark on the Rack’

### Introduction

In 2008, Primark was featured on the BBC TV Panorama programme: ‘Primark on the Rack’.

The programme claimed to show three young boys being used to manufacture clothes sold by Primark. Primark did not believe the footage was genuine, and complained to the BBC.

In 2011, after three years, a lengthy investigation by Primark and a full review by the BBC, the BBC confirmed the footage had been faked, and should not have been shown on TV.



This fact sheet explains what Primark had to do to clear its name.

### Our response

Like all clothing retailers, Primark knows that sourcing in the developing world is difficult and needs constant care. We do not own the factories that make our products, but we do have a responsibility to ensure that products are made in good working conditions, and the people making them are paid a fair wage and treated well.

We take this responsibility extremely seriously, and we have a highly experienced team that check every factory before we approve it to make our products; and we work with experts including local charities, trade unions, other retailers, and international bodies such as the ILO to help develop programmes to raise awareness of the importance of children’s rights and children’s education.



The Panorama programme, broadcast in 2008, claimed to show that Primark was using child labour to make its clothes, and that it had no control over its supply chain. It used fabricated (faked) footage of three boys, who were supposed to be making clothes for Primark in a backstreet workshop.

# Programme Case Study

Although Primark believed the footage was not real, and complained to the BBC, the BBC went ahead and broadcast the programme. This was damaging to Primark's reputation, and millions of people were deceived by it.

Primark complained again after the programme was broadcast, but its complaints were not taken seriously. It decided to conduct its own investigation. This revealed that the freelancer the BBC hired for Panorama had faked the footage.

He had bought some Primark T-shirts from a supplier, and had given them to the three boys in a backstreet workshop, and told them to pretend to be working on them, while he filmed.

Primark went back to the BBC with this evidence, and the BBC agreed to re-open the investigation. This time the case was reviewed by the BBC Trust, the governing body of the BBC. They ruled that the footage had been faked, and issued an apology to Primark.

## BBC apology

*"In 2008, we broadcast an hour-long Panorama special called Primark: On the Rack. The programme included footage obtained in a workshop in Bangalore, India, of three boys carrying out an activity described as "testing the stitching" on Primark garments.*

*Primark complained about the programme. The main issue it raised was the authenticity of this footage.*

*"The Editorial Standards Committee of the BBC Trust concluded that it was more likely than not that the footage of the three boys apparently*

*working on Primark garments was not authentic. This was a serious breach of editorial standards that caused unfairness to Primark. The footage should not have been broadcast.*

*"The committee considered that there was a strong public interest in Panorama conducting such investigations. However, there were serious failings in the making of this edition of the programme and they are not acceptable. The BBC Trust would like to apologise unreservedly to Primark and to our audiences."*





## Primark's statement in full

*"The confirmation that faked material was broadcast by Panorama is extraordinary.*

*"Millions of people have been deceived by Panorama. Viewers who watched the programme, shoppers who were then fed the lie, sourcing experts who believed the lie, teachers and pupils who viewed the programme in lessons, have all been badly let down.*

*"Primark welcomes the decision of the BBC Trust which confirms that Panorama: "Primark on the Rack", was based on fabrication and was littered with poor journalistic practices. Panorama simply did not find child labour involved in the Primark supply chain as the programme sought to suggest but relied on fabricated footage to air a programme otherwise based on prejudice.*

*"Primark was forced to carry out its own investigation into the allegations made by the programme and, based on this, and staggeringly based on evidence in the possession of the BBC even prior to broadcast, Primark demonstrated the lie underpinning the programme. Primark has had to persevere and pursue the matter for a period of 3 years. Only now after 4 official investigations by the BBC has Primark been vindicated.*

*"Primark welcomes the BBC Trust's confirmation that it was quite wrong that Primark was forced to prove its innocence even though the BBC editorial guidelines require authentication and verification of material before broadcast.*

*"A detailed account of Primark's complaint and the activity that followed is set out below. Primark has consistently believed that*

*Bangalore was false for a number of reasons and the BBC were told this before broadcast.*

*"Although today's verdict concerns only the footage of the 3 boys in Bangalore, Primark notes that Dan McDougall, the journalist at the centre of the programme, alone took similar footage of a boy and a girl in a refugee camp, film also broadcast on the programme.*

*"Evidence about this footage only came into Primark's possession at the end of this process and the company does not accept that footage as genuine, nor that it is evidence of child labour in Primark's supply chain, but the company does not intend to pursue this matter further at this stage. There is no other footage of children working on Primark garments.*

*"The company remains wholly committed to ensuring that its customers can continue to shop at Primark confident in its commitment to its ethics and its values. To this end the company continues to work hard to improve working practices among its suppliers and these steps have been recognised by NGOs expert in the field.*

*"Like all clothing retailers, Primark knows that sourcing in the developing world is difficult and needs constant care to ensure the best possible working conditions. But this film was a deliberate mischaracterisation of Primark's business, its supply chain, and its ethics. Sensationalising these issues by the use of fabricated journalism harms the very people whose lives retailers, trade unions and NGOs are all working to improve.*

*"Panorama can be a fine maker of documentaries and, at its best, it is to be applauded, but the programme carries responsibilities which were disregarded. This lapse was compounded by the BBC's complaints process. It is now for others to decide what steps should be taken at the BBC. But Primark hopes that no other individual or company is again subjected to such deception and ill-treatment."*