



CPME/AD/Brd/130609/103 final/EN

At the CPME Board Meeting in Brussels on 13 June 2009, CPME adopted the following document “Fair and Ethical Trade in Medical Goods” (CPME 2009/103 final EN/Fr)” (referring to CPME 2009/103 EN/Fr)

Fair and Ethical Trade in Medical Goods

At the SC Ethics meeting in London 24 October 2008 Ms Roberts and Dr Bhutta gave a presentation of the work of the Medical Fair and Ethical Trade Group in ethical trade of surgical instruments as an example of the Group’s work in developing ethical trade in the medical supplies for health systems in Europe. The British Medical Association has supported the Medical Fair Trade Group since 2006, which is an independent group with membership from fair trade groups, industry associations and government bodies. The MFET Group is coordinated by the BMA International Department and the promotion of fair trade in healthcare goods is a key objective for the BMA’s work on improving global health.

In May 2008 the MFET Group researched the ethical implications of producing surgical instruments in some low cost countries including a trip to visit manufacturers in Pakistan. The paper focuses on three key issues: Child labour, Health and Safety, Worker’s rights and what can be done by UK health service, by the ministry of health and by the medical association.¹ The MFET Group is also working with suppliers of other healthcare products such as cotton uniforms, bedding, rubber gloves and condoms.

Since then, the Group has worked closely with the NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency, the group responsible for national purchasing decisions, to develop guidance for ethical purchasing. ‘Ethical Procurement for Health’ is the first national guidance in the world, applicable for all health and social care organizations in England². This is also a key part of the UK Government’s new Global Health Strategy³. Ethical Procurement for Health contains tools to enable organizations to change their

¹ BMA Medical Fair and Ethical Trade Group

http://www.bma.org.uk/health_promotion_ethics/health_developing_world/fairandethicaltrade.jsp

² NHS PASA Ethical Procurement for Health

<http://www.pasa.nhs.uk/PASAWeb/NHSprocurement/Sustainabledevelopment/Ethicalprocurement/>

³ UK Government Strategy: Health is Global

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/International/DH_072715



purchasing practices, monitor progress, report and work with suppliers to bring change to labour practices in supply chains throughout the world.

Next steps for the MFET Group are working with doctors and health professionals to engage with their employers to implement policies that ensure that their health care products they use every day are not made using child labour, workers are paid a fair wage and work in healthy and safe work places.

At the SC Ethics meeting in Prague March 2009 it was decided that the document CPME 2009/018 should be expanded with examples on how ethical rules can be designed with an example of a Code of Conduct produced by three county councils in Sweden.

The three largest authorities for health care in Sweden (Stockholm County Council, the Region of Västra Götaland and the Region of Skåne) have jointly produced a Code of Conduct for fundamental social responsibility in business deals with suppliers.

The background is that Fair Trade Center⁴ reported that the County Councils in Sweden made poor or no demands on their suppliers. Another NGO, SwedWatch⁵ reported that clothes and surgical instruments used in Swedish healthcare were manufactured in Pakistan under unacceptable conditions, such as for instance exposure to toxic and corrosive chemicals, too many working hours and inadequate remuneration below statutory minimum wage.

The Code of Conduct is now mandatory in the buyings of these 3 County Council/Regions. Recently signed contracts will be monitored annually, and suppliers asked how they comply with the contract. If deficiencies are discovered, further steps may include the supplier contacting the producing factory or the Regions themselves checking on factories.

Both NHS PASA Ethical Procurement for Health and the Swedish Code of Conduct⁶ contain the following points as key principles of developing fair and ethical trade:

Suppliers shall respect fundamental social responsibility in business deals.

All products shall be produced according to ILO and UN fundamental conventions and shall be related to health and safety legislation in the manufacturing country.

Discrimination, forced labour or child labour must not occur.

Wages shall be paid as agreed directly to workers.

Remuneration must not be below national statutory minimum wage.

Weekly working hours must not exceed legal limit and overtime is to be paid for.

A deliberate environment effort shall exist.

Working environment shall correspond to international guidelines.

⁴ Fair Trade Center is a Swedish non-governmental organisation promoting fair trade with developing countries since 1996. Its intention is to increase consumer and company awareness of social and environmental responsibility.

⁵ SwedWatch is a non-governmental organisation that writes reports on Swedish business relations with developing countries. Different sectors and focus on environmental and social concerns are dealt with. SwedWatch consists of five member organisations: The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, Church of Sweden Aid, Education for Aid Activities, Friends of the Earth Sweden and Fair Trade Center. SwedWatch is financed by the Swedish Development Aid Agency, Sida

⁶ http://www.skane.se/upload/Webbplatser/MASkane/Dokument/Socialt_ansvar_Uppforandekod_en.pdf



CPME calls all the European medical associations to work for fair and ethical trade in their home countries. We would recommend the following actions for all medical associations:

Contact the British Medical Association with your interest and for advice (email fairtrade@bma.org.uk)

Contact your members about this issue (with this paper or the BMA paper for information) to get their support

Contact the national health service purchasing agency or regional body to ask them to look into this issue

Contact the industry association and ask about which countries they work with

Report back to the next CPME meeting