



Response to the Rock Bottom Report :

Modern Slavery and Child Labour in South Indian Granite Quarries

From Chris Harrop, Group Marketing Director, Marshalls

In May 2015 'Stop Child Labour & India Committee of the Netherlands' published a report titled 'Rock Bottom: Modern Slavery and Child Labour in South Indian Granite Quarries', in which Marshalls is referenced.

Marshalls is disappointed to be referenced in this Report as the company does not source granite paving from this region. Marshalls is also incorrectly reported as 'non responding', however a response was issued. Following the publication of the report Marshalls again confirmed this fact with the authors.

In particular the original report contained three web links to the Marshalls' website; two of these are attributed to Marshalls and one was attributed to a German supplier with whom Marshalls has no relationship.

The first web link (reference 22, page 49) connects to Marshalls' Commercial Granite Paving page; these products have been historically, almost exclusively, sourced from China (which does have its own supply chain challenges) and a few from Europe. In 2015 Marshalls added a small number of Indian Granite products, however these are sourced from Rajasthan in Northern India. The second (reference 22, page 49), connects to Marshalls Fairstone Domestic Paving pages; the majority of these products are sandstone products from Rajasthan, however Marshalls Granite product range Eclipse is sourced from China and Rajasthan.

Marshalls has long campaigned, in the UK and internationally, against the use of child and bonded labour in the natural stone paving industry and works tirelessly to ensure that it does everything possible to ensure that its supply chains are free from both child and bonded labour. Marshalls is extremely supportive of the endeavours of those attempting to raise awareness of these abhorrent issues, however feels very strongly that corrections should be made to this report.

Background Information

In 2005, Marshalls was the first company in the UK hard landscaping industry to join the Ethical Trade Initiative and adopt the ETI Base Code, which is based on the International Labour Organisations' conventions and is widely accepted as a model code of practice.

Marshalls is also a signatory of the UN Global Compact, created to harness the power of collective action in the promotion of responsible corporate citizenship. The Compact is a framework for businesses that are committed to aligning their operations and strategies with the ten universally accepted principles in the areas of human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption. Marshalls' Chris Harrop is the Chair of the UN Global Compact UK Network.

Over the last 10 years, Marshalls has worked closely with the ETI campaigning for greater awareness of the issues which exist in the Indian supply chain. The ETI Stone Group, a focussed work group of stone importers, NGO's and trade unions, was formed in 2009 and was chaired by Marshalls Head of Sustainability David Morrell for four years. This group led to the Rajasthan Working Group, looking at issues specific to this region. In 2011, Marshalls Group Marketing Director Chris Harrop joined the ETI's board, a post he still holds.

In India where the majority of Marshalls imported natural stone is sourced from, Marshalls employs a full time, field-based, Social Auditor based in Rajasthan who works with quarry owners, managers and workers on a daily basis to ensure the ongoing implementation of the ETI Base Code and to monitor and report on progress, undertaking regular supply chain inspections, reporting and compliance auditing and ensure that Fairstone commitments are upheld.

Marshalls' management and that of some of its customers also undertake direct checks and inspections of the supply chain.

The audits provide both verification and an agenda for improvement that Marshalls and its suppliers can work to.

Marshalls has worked with the same sole Indian sandstone supplier for many years, this is a trusted and open relationship, which enables a mature discussion and implementation of corrective action plans.

In the face of largely anecdotal information, Marshalls invested in field studies into the social issues in the Rajasthan stone industry. It was found that the root cause of child labour is often a lack of schooling, particularly for the migrant worker community, therefore from 2008 until 2013 Marshalls fully funded a local NGO to provide free education to the children of quarry works and the migrant community. This NGO also ran monthly health camps, dedicated maternal health camps and provide free medicine, undertake labour rights education, offer social security provision and to deliver women's empowerment projects.

In 2014 Marshalls entered into a 3 year strategic partnership with UNICEF UK to address the endemic causes of child labour and to work for Children's Rights not only in India but also in China and Vietnam.