

REPORT

Gender Intentionality Assessment in Cambodia's Apparel and Footwear Industry



LABS
Life And Building Safety

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study's overall purpose is to assess the apparel and footwear industry on gender-related issues and opportunities in Cambodia from the views and perspectives of the apparel and footwear factory workers, relevant stakeholders, and existing law and policies.

The first part of the report reviews the policy and legal context that existed in Cambodia related to gender equality in the apparel and footwear industry. The second part highlights the findings from small-scale qualitative field research conducted through interviews and focus group discussions. The research carried out among 4 focus group discussions, with 7-8 women/men in each group, and 4 key informant interviews. The focus group discussions were conducted with the factory workers on the outskirts of Phnom Penh and in Kampong Speu province.

The findings presented in this report combine the review of the policy, legal context, qualitative field research conducted with the factory workers in the communities, and other key informants.

Summary of Findings

No single finding can reflect the gender issues and challenges of the apparel and footwear factory workers in Cambodia. Some inequalities happened to female and male workers while others were specific to a vulnerable group of women/men. The finding suggests that harmful gender norms and practices at the workplace are decreasing among the 26 workers in the last 5 years. This results in equal respect, reduced harassment cases, equal wage benefits, and better and quick response mechanism at the workplace. The study showed that the bigger the registered factories, the better working conditions are in place for the workers, including the opportunity for both women and men to climb up the leadership positions at the workplace equally. Even though equal opportunities are open for both women and men, raising awareness about women's rights and gender equality can help women identify their potential to become leaders in their workplace. Last but not least, most apparel and footwear industries do not have specific gender intentionality/transformation in their factories. However, with Better Factories Cambodia, some are open to having training opportunities available to the workers. More work needs to be done by all relevant stakeholders to strengthen the gender mainstreaming program in the apparel and footwear industries. Please refer to the section at the end of the report for full details regarding the recommendation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. PROJECT OBJECTIVES	4
3. METHODOLOGY	4
3.1 Desk Review	5
3.2 Focus Group Discussions and In-depth Interviews	5
3.3 Ethical Considerations	7
3.4 Framework of Analysis	8
4. LIMITATIONS	8
5. MAIN POLICY, LEGAL CONTEXT, DOCUMENTS, AND PROGRAMS FOR ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE APPAREL AND FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY	8
6. KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	12
6.1 Gender Norms and Practices at the Workplace	12
6.2 Gender and Leadership Opportunities	14
6.3 Work Environment, Health, and Safety Issues	16
6.4 Gender Intentionality/Transformative at the Workplace	18
7. RECOMMENDATIONS	20
7.1 Supporting Women/Men and Diverse Women/Men’s Empowerment in the Workplace Through Gender Analysis, Awareness Raising/Knowledge	20
7.2 Ensure that Gender Knowledge Applies to All Levels of Workers, Including the Top Management Team	20
7.3 Support the Creation of Gender Equality and Equity Policy and Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment Policy at the Workplace	21
7.4 Monitor the Implementation of the Policy and Program	22
8. ANNEX	23

ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

BFC	Better Factories Cambodia
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSES	Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey
DWCP	Decent Work Country Programme
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GADC	Gender and Development for Cambodia
TAFTAC	Textile, Apparel, Footwear and Travel Goods Association of Cambodia
IDI	In-Depth-Interview
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labour Organization
KII	Key Informant Interview
LABS	Life and Building Safety
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
NAPVAW	National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women
NSSF	National Social Security Fund
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
RHAC	Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia
UDC	Undetermined Duration Contract
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

1. INTRODUCTION

After the tragic events in the Tazreen, Ali Enterprise, and Rana Plaza factories, multiple stakeholders have stressed the utmost importance of developing collaborative efforts to improve the safety of workers in the apparel and footwear industry. In several key producing countries, there is an urgent need to act in order to promote a safer working environment and to mitigate risks of workers' exposure to fire, electrical and structural hazardous conditions in factories, where an average of 65% of the workforce is composed of women. By developing a scalable program that identifies and evaluates life safety risks in this sector, the industry can seek to address and mitigate these risks in an effective, targeted way. The Life and Building Safety (LABS) Initiative is an industry-driven program, in which multiple brands and retailers are joining forces with public organizations to operate a scalable program to mitigate preventable fire, electrical and structural safety risks in key apparel, footwear, bags, and accessories producing countries in a targeted way. LABS participants include brands, agents, and retailers that join the program and the factories that are assessed throughout the program. Collectively, they seek to engage with local stakeholders like industry associations, CSOs, governments, and institutes to create better safety policies and provisions.

This research was an exciting opportunity to show how LABS program in Cambodia can provide a gender-intentional business model in key apparel, and footwear industries in a targeted way by partnering with Gender and Development for Cambodia to support LABS in the process.

Cambodia has high labour force participation rates for women (84%) and men (91%)ⁱ. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the country saw consistently high economic growth rates. In the whole manufacturing sector, due largely to the garment industry, 60% of waged workers were women in 2016ⁱⁱ. The social and economic importance of Cambodia's Garment, Textile, and Footwear (GTF) sector remains high. In 2018, for around one million workers, the GTF sector in Cambodia directly generated employment for nearly 80% of womenⁱⁱⁱ. This sector offers women opportunities to move into more senior and higher-paid positions. However, management positions comprise an almost small fraction of the total number of jobs in the sector, meaning that the sector provides few opportunities for career growth. Although the gender disparities in the labour force are less than in many other countries, some inequalities need to be addressed to achieve inclusive and sustainable growth. Meanwhile, gender inequality in the workplace would result in a massive profit loss in the industry. A CARE International survey conducted in Cambodian garment factories estimated that the loss of productivity cost of sexual harassment in the country's garment industry was US\$89 million per annum^{iv}.

2. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

This project aims to support the LABS program in Cambodia to learn about the relevant stakeholders' program regarding gender mainstreaming in their operations or projects and what steps can be taken to strengthen its gender intentionality/transformation.

The research will answer the questions:

1. What are the gender issues and challenges in Cambodia, particularly in the apparel and footwear sector?
2. Where does the existing apparel and footwear industry stand in the gender ladder?
3. What existing steps the footwear and apparel industries can take to strengthen its gender intentionality/transformation?
4. What are some existing/recommended key indicators the footwear and apparel industries should monitor to track progress on gender-related initiatives?

3. METHODOLOGY

This study applied and used the gender lens and feminist facilitation approach to achieve the objective described above. To start answering the questions, the study also applied a participatory and intersectional approach. The approaches were applied to constantly thinking through the researchers' own position with respect to research participants, taking care to respect their autonomy, security, and privacy throughout the research process, and making sense of the data in ways that would ultimately help empower the diverse women/men we spoke to. Distinct from the traditional focus on collective information, the assessment emphasized what we could learn at the individual level from the participants during the focus group discussion about overcoming the unsafe working environment and risks during their work. Using feminist facilitation skills, the study is not just to increase our data gathering, but also to help us to recognize and share the experiences of participants who spoke with us and contribute to our efforts to address and mitigate their risks effectively and efficiently. Overall, the research team made sure that the research builds feminist and decolonial knowledge of the circumstances of people based on gender, is accountable for how our research is conducted and ensures that the collaboration is ethical. As a result, the recommendations can transform the root causes of gender inequality.

3.1 Desk Review

The desk review gathered documents on the challenges of gender, specifically in Cambodia in the apparel and footwear industry, in understanding the current opportunities and challenges for sector-level engagement. The reviewed documents include related laws/policies, existing research, and Cambodia's gender indexes. The desk research mapped the existing organization/branches which are in the apparel and footwear sector in Cambodia and their work being done or existing around gender with a system impact in recent years made by their gender programs with some indicators of the comparison with the overall Cambodia's law and policy in the industry. Relevant laws and policies of the Royal Government of Cambodia include the Cambodian constitution, CEDAW, Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Equity and Efficiency Phase IV, the Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals, the National Strategic Development Plan, the National Social Security Fund, the National Action Plan of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women and several more. The national key gender statistic is also summarized in the session.

3.2 Focus Group Discussions and In-depth Interviews

For the second part, it was critical to ensure that women and men participants played an integral role in the study process. This process was responsive and supportive of local knowledge, cultures, languages, religion, and understanding of the context by research participants. The small-scale qualitative research included 4 focus group discussions with 7-8 women/men in each group and 4 in-depth interviews with the selected relevant key informants working in the apparel and footwear sector. The focus group discussion used the semi-structure questions guideline to map the existing key constraints, needs, priorities, opportunities, health, safety issues, and some good practices of existing gender inclusiveness in their workplace. The guideline of the questions includes their working sectors, way of working, some gender inclusiveness methods provided at their workplace, sexual harassment, health and safety issues, and existing gender policies if any. The FGD participants were selected through GADC's existing project's beneficiaries and LABS location cluster in Kampong Speu province, not limited to the factory that LABS has been working with.

The in-depth interviews were conducted with key informant interviewees to understand where the existing footwear and apparel industries stand in the gender ladder, the existing steps they are taking to strengthen their gender intentionality/transformability, and some existing/recommended key indicators the footwear and apparel industries should monitor to track progress on gender-related initiatives. Four of them wish to remain anonymous in this study. Two key informant interviewees are from the garment and footwear association, and two others are experts in international development organizations. The following tables -1 and -2 outline the FGDs and in-depth interviews with selected research participants and selected locations. A total of 30 participants were interviewed.

Table 1: FGDs with Women and Men Groups

Participating Group	Study Location	FGDs (#)	Total Participants	Inclusion Criteria
Women/diverse women	Samraong Tong District, Kampong Speu	1	8	The FGDs consisted of: - partnered/single/married - are currently working at the apparel/footwear factory - junior, mid-level and senior skilled workers at the workplace - diverse genders including LGBTQIA+, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, and physical abilities - willing and able to provide informed consent to participate.
Men/diverse men	Samraong Tong District, Kampong Speu	1	4	
Women/diverse women	Outskirt of Phnom Penh	1	7	
Men/diverse men	Outskirt of Phnom Penh	1	7	
Total		4	26	

Table 2: Interview with Key Informants

Key Informants	Organizations	Location	KIIs (#)
Garment industry	Anonymous 1	Phnom Penh	1
Footwear industry	Anonymous 2	Phnom Penh	1
International Program in Cambodia	Anonymous 3	Phnom Penh	1
Development partner	Anonymous 4	Phnom Penh	1
Total			4

3.3 Ethical Considerations

The research team followed strict ethical standards such as the no-harm approach, protection of anonymity and confidentiality of individual research participants, ensuring informed consent (including pictures that are only taken if appropriate and with written consent provided), sensitivity to social and cultural context and acting with integrity and honesty when interacting with all stakeholders. In addition, the data collection team adhered to the following principles.

1. Full and precise information about the research was provided to research participants before consent was sought, and with adequate time and opportunities for potential participants to consider the risks and benefits of their participation.
2. Consent was voluntary and without coercion.
3. Research participants were able to withdraw their consent at any stage without consequence.
4. In order to participate in the research, research participants had to provide verbal consent to take part in the research.

3.4 Framework of Analysis

In order to answer the research questions and inform the findings, the data analysis in this study consists of the process of analyzing the collected evidence from the data of the field work and the desk review. It is important for intersectional, feminist analysis of issues to be co-created between research stakeholders. We interpret and make sense of the data, whilst also reflecting on the influence of our organizational and personal values, and the power dynamics within the research team on and during this process. The researchers used the analysis table template to separate row categories that correspond to the different themes and questions in the respective interview tools, summarizing key findings and analysis.

4. LIMITATIONS

The Small scale of this study means some groups were left out. This study was implemented primarily in two locations in Cambodia. The study also conducted with the apparel and footwear factory workers in a form of FGDs. Although, the team felt confident that the work conducted was successful in shedding the light on most of the critical issues, and priorities the workers are currently facing, an in-depth interview, giving more time and resources would open the different needs and issues of the study participants and be more informed.

The difficulties in reaching directly to the factories. It was difficult to reach out directly to the factories. Due to confidential reasons, all the KII interviewees did not agree to link GADC to the brands/factories for further understanding of the gender mainstreaming in the factories' programs. This could add a limitation to the findings of identifying the current existing practices/ policies that brands have on gender intentionality/transformation in their workplace.

The difficulties in finding specific data during the desk review. Extracting the information available to map the programs on gender being run by existing brands sourcing from the country is limited. It is more limited to tracking the document system impact in recent years made by gender programs of the brands, apparels, and retailers. Most factories in Cambodia do not have a website to access them. The international brands also publish their gender equality program but mostly without giving specifics or details on which country or how they are partnering with the other organizations in terms of the implementation.

5. MAIN POLICY, LEGAL CONTEXT, DOCUMENTS, AND PROGRAMS FOR ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE APPAREL AND FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY

The Cambodian constitution adopted in 1993 (amended in 2022), gives equal status to both women and men as citizens regardless of race, color, sex, language, religious belief, political tendency, birth origin, social status, wealth, or other status. Article 45 declares that “all forms of

discrimination against women shall be abolished and the exploitation of women in employment shall be prohibited.”^v The RGC ratified CEDAW in 1992 followed by its Optional Protocol in 2010. By ratifying this convention, discrimination against women and gender equality concerns is recognized and integrated in other legal documents throughout national policy frameworks such as Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Equity and Efficiency Phase IV^{vi} and the Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals^{vii} which include objectives to end discrimination and violence against women, to value unpaid domestic work, and to achieve equal opportunities for leadership in all areas of public and economic life. The National Strategic Development Plan (2019- 2023)^{viii}, acknowledged that “women are the backbone of the economy and society”. Several development objectives for women, including employment, education, safety from violence is also included. It also states an objective to promote improved access to legal protection for disabled women, indigenous and ethnic minority women. The National Social Security Fund (NSSF) is a social security insurance, providing the protection to the Cambodian people wholly and partly for the workers who are employed in enterprises/establishments. It also has a responsibility for providing the basic social security to the workers in private sectors^{ix}. Cambodia Garment, Footwear and Travel Goods [GTF] Sector Development Strategy 2022-2027 set common development goals, establish independence, and develop the sustainability and inclusiveness of the sector. To achieve this, two among five of the strategic measures include strengthening human resource capabilities to increase productivity and create viable career paths for workers and continuing to improve working conditions and worker welfare^x. The Decent Work Country Program (DWCP) 2019- 2023 focuses on ensuring the rights, inclusion and engagement of women, men, youth, and vulnerable groups in line with international labour standards. It includes persons with disability, indigenous communities, LGBTQI persons and persons living with HIV. It aims to promote decent jobs and sustainable enterprises, linked to formalization and skills development; strengthening and expanding social protection and occupational safety and health; and improve industrial relations and rights at work, including addressing sexual harassment and maternity protection^{xi}.

The National Action Plan of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA), Neary Rattanak V is the five-year strategic plan for gender equality and empowerment of women in Cambodia^{xii}. It aims to empower women in the economy, education, public leadership, dismantle negative gender behavior norms and stereotypes and combat gender-based violence. The draft law on National Policy for Gender Equality is expected to be approved and published in the set indicator of gender mainstreaming framework core strategy of Neary Rattanak V. The National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women (2019- 2023)^{xiii}, reinforcing the commitment to eliminating violence against women. NAPVAW identified three priorities in response to the prevention of violence, which includes domestic violence/intimate partner violence, rape and sexual violence and violence against women in or vulnerable groups.

ILO C190 is the first international binding labour standard to recognize the human right to a world of work free from all forms of violence and harassment including gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) and affirms that all workers have the right to be treated with dignity and

respect on the job, irrespective of their contractual status in both the formal and informal sectors. ILO C190 also recognizes the changing nature of where work is conducted by not only covering the physical workplace, but also commuting to/from work, work-related communications, and where workers are paid, take a rest break or take a meal break. However, it is not yet ratified by the government of Cambodia^{xiv}. In Cambodia, the existing labour law prohibits sexual harassment at work, however, the law is not clear enough to effectively define these terms^{xv}. The scope to define sexual harassment as a definition in the criminal code is also quite limited. It does not cover single instances of abuse or abuse occurring between peers^{xvi}.

Better Factories Cambodia (BFC) was initiated by ILO and IFC to monitor labour conditions and provide services towards improving working conditions, management, and industrial relations in the sector, in cooperation with international buyers and the Cambodian Government, and the concerned employers' and workers' organizations. BFC published a Guide to the Cambodian Labour Law for the Garment Industry in 2019, aiming to provide helpful guide to business owners, unions, managers, and human resource personnel as a quick reference to identify their obligations under Cambodian labour law and a broad understanding of employees' rights and obligations under the law^{xvii}. Women employees shall be entitled to maternity leave, breast-feeding breaks, and pregnancy safety guide. For an employer who employs 100 women or more, a day care center, nursing room, privacy for women employees for the infirmary, a western-style toilet for every 50 women shall be in place. Gender mainstreaming and gender awareness are a vital part of BFC's engagement with factories and stakeholders (brands, retailers, factory owners, workers, and unions) to ensure that these stakeholders have the commitment and capacity to promote gender equality and engage in social dialogue on gender related issues. Their trainings include the basic understanding of gender awareness, how to promote gender equality at workplace, how to identify and stop gender stereotyping and discrimination against women, people with disabilities and other marginalized groups in the workplace. The participants then made an action plan related to gender inclusion and mainstreaming to apply in their workplaces. For example, one of their projects with H&M group is to promote the women's leadership skills through worker representative program^{xviii}.

Better Factories Cambodia and CARE have developed standardized guidance for all businesses in garment supply chains to address gender-based violence and harassment in textile, clothing, and footwear manufacturing industry. Eight guidance notes included in the document are workplace policy, grievance mechanisms, referral, monitoring and reporting, risk assessment, responding to disclosures, workplace training and zero-tolerance in relation to gender-based violence and harassment. BFC also ensures that their new staff receive the induction on gender inclusive assessment and advisory techniques. This includes regular analysis of gender-related compliance data, monitoring and evaluating the number of women reached by the programme's initiatives, and continuous and long-term training and awareness-raising on this topic among BFC staff. GMAC trainers were also trained on these same topics and gender analysis and facilitation skills.^{xix} BFC's independent impact assessment in 2020 showed that engagement with Better Work's initiatives

and improved compliance can drive positive changes across a broad range of areas, including gender equality. There was a 5 percent reduction over the three years in how workers reported being treated differently by their supervisor or manager because of their gender^{xx}. The global study by Better Work has shown that female supervisors trained by Better Work achieved 22% increase in productivity on their line and that a workplace free of harassment also leads to higher profitability^{xxi}.

The Workers' Information Centres (WIC), the Cambodian Women's Movement Organization (CWMO) provides women workers with places where they can get together, find support and information, link with unions, receive capacity building with the aim of increasing awareness of gender-based discrimination. Another group of NGOs provides reproductive health services to workers, by working directly with factory owners, including RHAC and Marie Stopes International. CARE Cambodia also provides training, life skills, literacy and gender education to workers. Training takes place outside the normal working hours, and is sometimes in cooperation with major buyers (e.g. Levi Strauss, Gap)^{xxii}.

Most of the top international brands are outsourcing from Cambodia. Those international clothing and footwear brands include Adidas, The Armani, Gap Inc., Loblaw Cos. Ltd. (which owns Joe Fresh), Marks and Spencer. These brands and more have their commitment to international labour standards by incorporating them in their codes of conduct. Through their own internal factory audits and engagement with external monitors like BFC, brands track labor compliance and are well-placed to exert pressure on suppliers to make changes. Some brands also undertake such monitoring for subcontractors. They may also set up grievance redress mechanisms to respond to complaints by workers employed by their suppliers and subcontractors^{xxiii}.

Key Gender Statistics in Cambodia (2021)^{xxiv}:

- **Population (census 2019):** Women account for 51.3% and men are 48.7.
- **Labour force participation (Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2019/2020):** 84.1% of women and 91% of men participated in the labour force. 2019/20 saw the highest growing rate of women's labour force participation, increasing at a higher rate than that of men.
- **Violence against Women (MoWa 2015):** 1 in 5 women aged 15-64, experience physical and/or sexual violence and 1 in 3 women experience emotional abuse by an intimate partner at least once in their lifetime.
- **Knowledge of transmitted disease (Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey 2014):** less women at 80%, compared to men at 90% are aware of the protection measure of HIV prevention.
- **Gender Inequality Index (UNDP Development Reports 2020):** Cambodia ranked the lowest among ASEAN countries in order to achieve gender equality.
- **Education (CSES 2019/20):** Literacy rate for women is at 10.1% lower than men.

6. KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The first three findings and discussion parts describe the results from the focus group discussions, whereas the last part on gender intentionality and transformative at the workplace results from the FGDs and the KIIs.

6.1 Gender Norms and Practices at the Workplace

The finding suggests that harmful gender norms and practices at the workplace are decreasing among the 26 workers in the last 5 years. This results in equal respect, reduced harassment cases, equal wage benefit, and a better and quick response mechanism at the workplace. For example, 14 women workers from a garment and footwear factory said they received respect from their colleagues and employers because an organization provided training on gender and sexual harassment to garment factory workers. In addition, there were rules and principles for the workers to sign before starting a job at the shoe factory.

“At the factory, we really respect and love each other. Male and female workers receive the same value... because there is a rule and regulation against verbal violence in our factory. We cannot use aggressive words toward each other... When an employee made a mistake, the line supervisor softly talked to her.” (FGD with a female shoe factory worker)

“They [the employer] do not divide the work as female or male’s work. It depends on the ability from top to the bottom of the position.” (FGD with a female garment factory worker)

They used to experience harassment from a foreign employer in the factory. A female shoe factory worker from the FGD2 stated:

“Ten years ago, the employer was so aggressive. A foreign employer used to throw shoes at the head of a factory worker when she made a small sewing mistake on the shoes.”

They also reported a decrease in sexual harassment cases at their workplace. In the FGD2, the female interviewees reported the most common harassment from their male colleagues. For example, a male worker used to look at a female worker wearing shorts to work at the factory. Some of them used to look at the breasts of the female worker and touch the female worker’s thighs. The supervisor hugged a female worker from behind and oncn her sexy outfit and said, “wearing this made his genitals go hard”. Besides this, the finding also indicates that 15 women

among all 26 interviewees claimed that the factory used to have a rule which forbade women from wearing sexy outfits, which led to harassment in the factory. Female interviewees from the FGD1 of the shoe factory believed that these situations had been improved due to an effective and quick response from the human resources office, and a worker's uniform was introduced.

However, an FGD with male shoe factory workers claimed that there is still some physical harassment going on in the factory. A male interviewee mentioned that the common harassment at the workplace mostly happens at the entry point of the factory during the finger scan before working hours.

“There is no wider space for the workers, especially for women to stay within the comfortable distance, which led those women workers to get harassed physically by the male workers.”

Both male and female interviewees said that they receive an equal pay wage, regardless of their gender. 2 out of 4 FGDs reported that employers paid them based on their ability and skills in their job position. However, 4 out of 26 interviewees who are male workers (3 of them are people with disabilities) said that they are not getting respect at their workplace as their work responsibilities do not align with the wage received. They also face discrimination regarding their disabilities (walking difficulties). While 22 out of 26 male and female workers said the benefits are given out equally to all workers, 4 male workers mentioned a big gap in the benefits between job positions within the factory. They said the workers have many responsibilities with lower wages, while the employers have fewer responsibilities but higher wages.

11 male interviewees said that in most cases, the employers discriminate against the workers regarding the abilities and position of the workers, specifically the workers with disabilities and the workers who are the labor union representatives.

“Workers with disabilities cannot wear boots, gloves, or even glasses like the rest of other people, but the employers try to pressure the workers to wear those types of equipment anyways”. (FGD with a male shoe factory worker)

A woman from a different garment factory that is not a registered factory and 4 men workers out of 26 interviewees mentioned that employees feel hopeless about addressing the cases of harassment to the admin because there are no solutions. If there are mechanisms for resolving the case of harassment, it is still ineffective.

6.2 Gender and Leadership Opportunities

The finding suggests that leadership opportunities in the apparel and footwear industry are increasing among the 26 interviewees. However, there is still room for improvement to make female workers participate fully and meaningfully in leadership roles. All the interviewees, except one female worker from a factory that is unregistered, are in Undetermined Duration Contract. Usually, workers work for 3 months under probation period until they can get to sign the UDC. The middle management levels within the factory are mostly females.

Opportunity for advancement: The factory employers provide opportunities for the workers to learn to improve their skills and capacity. A female shoe factory worker from an FGD mentioned:

“There’s a record on paper of what workers can or cannot do in every department. They have a training chart. So before they ask workers to move to another section, they will make the decision based on that record.”

7 women and 1 man out of 26 interviewees agreed that there is an opportunity for further advancement in their career. In addition, 15 women and 4 men among 26 interviewees said that their factory had provided training on various topics such as sexual and reproductive health (by RHAC), English language, sanitation, health, and gender awareness issues related to sexual harassment at workplace. Furthermore, there are training skills for other female factory workers who wish to change the factory department and have more capacity in the future.

“I am 70% different from who I was before. Before I was just a normal employee, now, I am a manager. They asked me to try this position, and when I could do it, they promoted me to work in an office on warehouse storage... My mom and bigger sister who are working in the same factory have also become managers. They both only studied until grade 4 at the public school.” (FGD with a female shoe factory worker)

Based on the interview, there were only 5 of the interviewees who received training in their factory on sexual reproductive health, and sexual harassment. Another 10 interviewees received training on sexual reproductive health, sexual harassment, financial saving, birth spacing, administration, and computer skills. The interviewees received the training twice a year in a group of 50 people, and afterwards, they also received knowledge testing. Most importantly, the factory employers provided knowledge on Quality Control to workers in charge of the position.

However, more things should be considered in terms of women’s leadership roles. All the interviewees from the FGDs said that there are both female and male union representatives at their

workplace. The head of the labor union is usually male representative, and the deputy is the female representative. One of the male shoe factory workers mentioned:

“...male employers tend to know better about their male colleagues than females.” On the other hand, another interviewee mentioned, *“female employers seem to be more serious than male and not willing to be talkative compared to male employers”*.

Both male and female interviewees do not have any clear future career plan or career path in the future. Despite the trainings provided at the factory, all the interviewees do not have any plans for the future besides continue working in their current factory. 5 of female garment factory worker interviewees said they want to find opportunities to own businesses by themselves, but they must consider their family income first. They need to continue working until they save enough money for themselves.

Another female shoe factory worker mentioned:

“If I still have energy, then I will continue working in this factory. If I switch to other factories, I am afraid that I will be terminated because of a small mistake. Other factories will curse the workers badly. Here, they [the employer] provide more opportunities to show our ability.” (FGD with a female shoe factory worker)

“Normally, as women, we have more family responsibility than men despite sharing responsibility at home” (FGD with a female shoe factory worker)

“I will stay longer in this current factory because I have no choice or other opportunities” (FGD with a male shoe factory worker)

When talking about the type of training the female interviewees would like to have, they said they do not know what other topic they need because the factory has provided them some trainings related to sexual reproductive health, English, sanitation, health, and gender awareness already. However, one of them from an unregistered factory has never received any training. On the other hand, the male interviewees prefer additional skills such as electricity and motorcycle repair skills. Nevertheless, the FGD2 of male garment workers mentioned that there is no training for all workers except the team leaders or labor union representatives who have personal connections with the employers.

Work-life balance:

Regarding personal work-life balance, only 3 male interviewees thought the employers understood it and considered it important. 4 male interviewees said the employers consider the worker's work-life balance as neither important nor unimportant. Sometimes, even when the employers approved their leave form, they still contacted the employees to come to work based on demand. 80% of the female interviewees agreed that the work-life balance is neither important nor unimportant because sometimes, the employees want an extra salary; hence they need to work whenever the employers need them.

6.3 Work Environment, Health, and Safety Issues

The finding suggests there are safety, sanitary, and a health care system to support female and male factory workers. However, a few things still need to be improved since 70% of the interviewees said their workplace is neither secured nor unsecured. As mentioned in both FGDs of the female factory workers, 15 female workers received safety and sanitary training from their employers because the factory employers thought of the benefits the workers could produce if they had a good working environment and health care system.

In a shoe factory, workers are required to wear masks all the time because there are a lot of chemicals in the workplace. The female factory workers can only take off the masks during mealtime. Furthermore, there is safety at work, including shoe protection, immediate action on risk and hazard, and first aid kits to which the female factory workers know how to report because there was an explicit instruction in the case of emergency and risk. The female interviewees from the FGD of a shoe factory worker studied safeguard policy 6 times a year. The factory has PICC to patrol and monitor the safety of workers in the shoe factory that we interviewed. This resulted in good safety practice in their workplace, even during the covid-19 outbreak.

“I feel secure because there is no messy equipment on the sidewalk. There are fire extinguishers and officials from the provincial level to provide safety training to the factory workers. When leaving the workplace, there is street security who guides us to cross the road.” (FGD with a female shoe factory worker)

The interviewees said that ISO 9001 is the main reason the factory provides a good system and benefits the workers. The factory also has a safety committee of 10-12 people, to do a daily safety check. When there is a fire or emergency, pregnant women and people with disabilities need to escape as a priority. However, the male workers at this same factory do not agree with some points. The workers who work in the warehouse usually face problems such as work incidents that cause the workers to have backaches and other injuries. Other units have been affected by the chemicals

used in processing the products. 3 of them, men with disabilities, pointed out the accessibility for people with disability and said that *“the nursery room is not easy to access since it requires a lot of steps”*.

After the covid-19 outbreak, breast-feeding room is no longer available for both factories we interviewed. The shoe factory has safety infrastructure to support all the workers, including clean and safe toilets, preventive mechanisms, and safety protocols during work. At the garment factory that we interviewed, there are still concerns over safety and sexual harassment issue. For example, a male garment factory worker stated that *“there are few toilets available inside the factory and are not convenient for users due to lack of water supply”*. Another female from the same factory said,

“During the rainy season, we are afraid of snakes. They would come with the flood. One time, earlier this year, the snake came into the toilet room of a female worker. Luckily, she came out quickly, and our male colleagues helped to catch the snake”.

“The restrooms between male and female workers are separated but are next to each other. There used to be a male worker taking photos of a female worker when she was going to the restroom from the top of the toilet room. Later, I’ve never seen him working there anymore. I don’t know if he resigned or was fired”. (FGD with a female factory worker)

Some of these issues have been addressed to the employers; however, the problems have not always been responded to by the employers as the workers desired.

“If I have any concerns or other problems, I have to pass the words to the labour union representative instead. Only managers, deputy managers, and assistants have the chance to attend the meeting. Employers never called for orienting or raising problems for workers, but blaming.” (FGD with a male garment factory worker)

16 of the interviewees know about and are satisfied with the national social security fund. They have never had health insurance before. But this program from the government that all workers need to comply with is helpful for the workers. Two of the interviewees used to use the service when being dizzy and tired at work. The employers at the factory also guide the interviewees on how to use the NSSF. A female interviewee said that a doctor at a private clinic with NSSF service asked her for pocket money when she was pregnant, even though she used an NSSF card.

6.4 Gender Intentionality/Transformative at the Workplace

The findings suggested that there is gender intentionality/transformative in 3 workplaces that this study conducted. However, two of them are the non-profit organizations working directly with Cambodia's apparel and footwear industry. The findings from the two FGDs found that besides following the government and international standards, rules, and regulations, factory owner's understanding is also an important element in creating a gender-intentional/transformative workplace.

“The factory owner is Japanese, so there are good policies and practices in the workplace. When the company understands and cares about the workers, the workers also understand and care about the company. Therefore, workers understand and work hard to produce the products for the employer. The work could not reach the target without good cooperation between employees and employers.” (FGD with a female shoe factory worker)

All the female shoe factory workers from the FGD agreed with each other that there are equal rights at their workplace. 5 of 8 interviewees that have been working there for more than ten years indicated that this factory is one of the good quality workplaces for female workers. One of them stated, *“I can guarantee you that this is the best factory in Kampong Speu”*. They said that all the factory workers have equal rights and equal salaries at the workplace. The factory employers support workers' learning and have follow-up assessments, appreciation certificates, examinations, and evaluations for factory workers' performance. Women and men are encouraged to learn other skills in the factory so that they could move to higher job levels. There is a meeting every month with all departments, where they could report to the top manager. They have a mediation room to solve the conflict. The workers can get into the queue by each unit, and workers can raise their concerns. The factory employers noted clear points on the papers and never left cases unsolved. The employers and employees join in solving the problem.

One thing that could be a concern is how the workplace is not yet inclusive for diverse men/women. During the FGD with male workers, one of the male interviewees from a shoe factory stated,

“The employees need to be treated better by the employers, including using non-discrimination words, especially against workers with disabilities and creating a convenient working space for us.”

The study found that 2 out of 4 key informants have specific gender programs in their organizations. The two organizations that have the gender program in place are supporting factory

workers with around 30 training topics that are not related to production and management skills but soft skills, for example, health and safety at the workplace. A program works on women empowerment, promoting women's rights in Cambodia. The program focuses on working with marginalized women with limited rights, predominantly female garment workers, and women who suffered from gender-based violence and sexual harassment.

An interviewer said their organization does not have a program focused on gender and said that 85% of factory workers in Cambodia are female workers by continued:

“... our sector, there is a gender issue, there is gender bias but not toward females, there is a bias against male, males are treated worse than females in our sector, in this country. Maybe, it's different in other country, but not in this country. Females are more likely to get hired, females are more likely to get promoted, females are treated better than males...”

This organization is working with an international NGO to provide training related to gender, and sexual harassment to female workers as it is a requirement by labour Law. On the other hand, when asking an interviewee from this international NGO whether the apparel and footwear industry generally has gender equality as a strategic goal in their organization, their short answer is “no”. The interviewee continued,

“...because most of the factory owners are men, they hold the power...from me, I rarely see it [gender equality as a strategic goal in the workplace], but we keep doing it, and I hope that in the future there are private sectors and companies who are willing to do that, to promote gender equality. But only a few claim they do more than expected because 85% of workers are females, and why don't we think they are promoting gender equality?”

The interviewee provided several reasons why they do not agree with this statement.

“They think it is good to create more jobs for women, but at the same time, women themselves receive a lot of burden from unpaid care work at home and then need to go to work to provide income to the family, so they are being exploited from every place. There is no space for women to breathe. That's why we want leadership level to be equal, not only in the labour work.”

All the KIIs said there is no strategic goal for gender equality in the factories. However, they are working to ensure that women are being taken care of during pregnancy and receive the training related to sexual harassment and meet with a union representative or worker representative to understand worker's challenges. 3 out of 4 KII reported that the industry would prioritize production before gender issues. Only one stated that the factory's members would be willing to learn about it but said it is a side topic like environment and leadership. Because the factory does not have gender equality as their strategic goal, the factory does not have a template to track or monitor gender. However, for some programs, there is a set of questions to follow up for the assessment. Therefore, they record the number of males and females. Some factories changed their behavior on gender equality because they are afraid that they will be recorded in the report by BFC. For the big factories, they have good policies. This also contributes to part of gender equality at the workplace.

Two of the KIIs stated that they engage the buyers, and brand in the interventions. One of the INGOs who have been working in a gender program stated that there is the brand visits from customers to see whether the factories have applied labor law, NSSF, and templates of reporting of sexual harassment.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Supporting Women/Men and Diverse Women/Men's Empowerment in the Workplace Through Gender Analysis, Awareness Raising/Knowledge

- This study found that there is no gender analysis to understand the differences in women's and men's lives. By doing more than collecting the sex-disaggregated data, understanding all workers' needs, priorities and strengths will give a clear direction to employers on how to rightfully support everyone at the workplace, including diverse men and women.
- Assess the barriers and constraints to women and men participating and benefiting equally from the program/project created, then develop strategies to address and support these barriers and constraints.
- Build knowledge and understanding of sexual harassment at workplace through commercial videos during meal break at the factory, especially inviting men for their engagement in the process to end violence against women at workplace.

7.2 Ensure that Gender Knowledge Applies to All Levels of Workers, Including the Top Management Team

- Human resources and administration in the factory shall have the focal person or gender committee appointed to provide training on gender issues for female and male factory workers on gender concepts and inclusion. These trainings can reduce discrimination in the

factory and build women's agency by increasing their ability to define and act on goals, make decisions that matter to them, and participate in the economy and public life.

- Engage male workers from all levels in discussing, sharing, and learning. This study found that even at top-level management, some men are not fully aware of what gender is. Gender does not refer to biological differences between males and females. One would need to go beyond the sex difference and numbers to discuss further the power and social relation in society to understand the root causes of gender inequality that is happening in their workplace.
- Engage personal topics about tasks such as housework in the sharing conversation and promote a transformative masculinities approach in the workplace. Start to discuss the equal sharing of responsibility as it is important for gender mainstreaming from the personal level to the workplace level.
- Factory employees can reach out and cooperate with local and international NGOs for external training support on gender and make sure that the middle and top management are required to attend once or twice per year.
- Include gender as a topic in soft skills and leadership training that the apparel and footwear industry can apply among their members.
- Provide the sharing of gender-related issues to top management in other languages like Chinese, English, and Korean.
- Consumers are heavily influenced by what a brand represents. Therefore, introduce and link the factories to the consumers and brands who commit to sustainability and gender equality can make the factories consider and commit to the gender intentionality/transformative program in their workplace.
- Resume all the trainings and reproductive need facilities after covid-19 for women.
- Create an opportunity for women to join the entrepreneur and financial literacy courses and prepare a small grant for women who have worked more than ten years at the factory with the ability to start their small-scale businesses.
- Expand and introduce existing guidelines for response to violence and harassment in the workplace, like CARE and BFC have been implementing to more factories in Cambodia.

7.3 Support the Creation of Gender Equality and Equity Policy and Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment Policy at the Workplace

- Encourage and support the factory employers to create codes of conduct on inclusion and non-discrimination gender policy (LGBTIQ+ and people with disability) at the workplace. The policy should state the organization's commitment to ensuring an equitable, diverse and inclusive workplace.
- Encourage and support the creation of a Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment policy in the factories (PSEAH).

7.4 Monitor the Implementation of the Policy and Program

- Monitor the progress of the dialogue and activities related to gender.
- Follow up and track the progress of the training provided to the employees.
- Assess the partners' capacity for gender-sensitive planning, implementation, and monitoring, and develop strategies to strengthen the capacity.
- Factory associations should play a crucial role in monitoring gender equality and women's empowerment in factories.
- Strengthening the audit from the trade associations to improve the inclusiveness and quality work environment for women/men and diverse women/ men.
- Conduct more studies on both qualitative and quantitative research on gender issues to create shreds of evidence (to prove that gender equality in the workplace leads to increased production in the garment and footwear industry).

8. ANNEX

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2. [Interview Guide KIIs](#)
3. References

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