



## PRESS RELEASE

### **Global apparel and footwear brands join the Life and Building Safety (LABS) Initiative in Cambodia**

*Phnom Penh, Royal Kingdom of Cambodia, May 18, 2022*

Today, IDH, The Sustainable Trade Initiative launched its Life and Building Safety (LABS) Initiative (the “**Initiative**”) in Cambodia. The Initiative promotes safer working conditions for factory workers in the apparel, footwear, and accessories industry by assessing factories and providing a framework for their monitoring, mitigating, and remediating.

LABS has been operational in India and Vietnam since 2019, where over 572,000 workers have benefitted from the program. Expanding into Cambodia aligns with the program’s ambition to mitigate preventable fire, electrical, and structural building safety risks in key production countries in the sector.

The Initiative will operate in all major hubs of Cambodia including Phnom Penh, Kandal, Kampong Cham, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Speu, and Takeo and is expected to benefit approximately 206,000 workers in 2022.

With a pressing need to protect workers from structural, fire, and electrical safety risks, several leading apparel brands approached IDH to create a coherent and consistent worker-safety program; thus leading to the development of the Initiative. Major brands including Gap Inc., Target, VF Corporation, and Walmart joined the program that cover small, medium, and large enterprises in these countries.

LABS participants, facilitated by the LABS Secretariat, engage with local stakeholders, such as industry associations, civil society organizations (CSOs), governments, and institutes to create better safety policies and provisions. The LABS Standards and Methodology are based on international best practices and codes, including, but not limited to the International Building Code and National Building Code of Cambodia. In addition to applicable country laws, factories commit to adhering to a harmonized, country-level standard regarding structural, fire, and electrical safety under LABS. IDH supports the overall facilitation of LABS as well as the development of the operational setup.

Pramit Chanda, Global Director for Textiles & Manufacturing, IDH and LABS Spokesperson said, “Aimed at improving worker safety in the apparel and footwear industries, LABS

effectively identifies and mitigates the potential risks related to fire, electrical, and structural building safety and evacuation. Our expansion into Cambodia is aligned with our goals to scale the programs in key apparel and footwear hubs. LABS continues to build on the learnings and engagements from the work in India and Vietnam.”

LABS aims to set a safety standard against which apparel and footwear factories are assessed. The LABS assessment is not a code-compliance check; it defines a required level of safety based on international best practices considering the local context. All technical standards consist of an interrelated set of measures which, when taken together, are assumed to provide an acceptable level of safety in a building.

**About LABS**

The Life and Building Safety (LABS) Initiative is an industry-driven program in which multiple brands and retailers join forces with public and civil society organizations to mitigate preventable fire, electrical, and structural building safety risks in key apparel and footwear-producing countries.

<https://labsinitiative.com/>

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