

Beginning of the Journey

PLATFORM FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN APPAREL AND FOOTWEAR IN CAMBODIA

EQUALITY BENEFITS EVERYONE

November 2, 2022

EVENT REPORT



INTRODUCTION

This briefing paper outlines the overall goal and provides the outcomes from the “Platform for Gender Equality in Apparel and Footwear in Cambodia” (“The Platform”). Relevant data, opportunities, and challenges within these sectors will be provided based on the tracking of direct risks (impacting business operations) and indirect risks (impacting the value-chain flow and the wider ecosystem and communities).



It aims to serve as a valuable resource for governments, the private sector, and other stakeholders interested in strengthening the enabling environment for gender parity.



BEGINNING OF THE JOURNEY

Platform for Gender Equality in Apparel and Footwear in Cambodia, co-hosted by The Textile, Apparel, Footwear and Travel Goods Association in Cambodia (TAFTAC, formerly GMAC) and IDH, presented opportunities for partners to discuss and address key issues related to gender in the apparel, footwear, and garment sectors as well as provided a trusted, neutral space to discuss and exchange ideas, highlight significant opportunities, scale interventions, and help accelerate gender-positive actions. Topics included pay gaps, leadership opportunities for women, and working conditions.

Over 85 percent of workers in the apparel and footwear sectors in Cambodia are women. The Royal Government of Cambodia has entrusted each ministry to prioritize instituting gender-intentional programs.



Currently, 1 out of 3 Managers/ Supervisors is a woman and at the current rate of progress, it will take 140 years to achieve parity.

Source: https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2022-en_0.pdf



THE CASE FOR BUSINESS ACTION **ON GENDER**

“ We have been implementing the P.A.C.E. program in Cambodia since 2009 and our studies show that there is a 250 percent return on investment when implementing our program, with a marked increase in women’s workplace influence, work efficacy, retention, and overall productivity as a result.

Our Personal Achievement and Career Enhancement (P.A.C.E.) program is designed to boost women and girls to reach their full potential and find their voices. P.A.C.E. is an innovative factory-based program that positively impacts female garment workers by providing them with life and technical skills to help them advance in the workplace and their lives.”

**Mrs. KHOUN Soklay
Senior Manager, Gap Inc.**



At the current rate of progress, it may take 286 additional years to remove discriminatory laws and close prevailing gaps in legal protection for women and girls.

Source: https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2022-en_0.pdf



“ The cost of sexual harassment is around 89 million USD per year or 0.52 percent of Cambodia’s GDP. This is a result of absenteeism, staff turnover, decreased presenteeism, and reduced productivity.

Studies show that factories saw some 112,000 days where workers were absent due to sexual harassment. We also see around a 40 percent loss in productivity from victims of sexual harassment. Not only should sexual harassment be eradicated for the benefit of society, but the private sector should actively implement policies and practices to create a safe work environment which protects their employees whilst improving its productivity.”

**Mrs. NEOU Sovattha
Country Director, CARE Cambodia**



By the end of 2021, 44 million WOMEN AND GIRLS were forced to flee their homes due to climate change, war, conflict, and human rights violations.

Source: https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2022-en_0.pdf



PRIVATE SECTOR **INITIATIVES**

Walmart's Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE)

As we build the Next Generation Walmart, we must win the global war for talent. We believe companies that excel at advancing women will have a competitive edge, and those that don't will shrink their talent pool. At Walmart, 23.5 percent of the boardroom directors are women, compared to the average of 15 percent in Fortune 500 companies; and 27.5 percent of our corporate officers are women, compared to the average of 18 percent in Fortune 500 companies.

Source: <https://cdn.corporate.walmart.com/ea/cc/20f1ac8c4bb88f9640f58cdc45dc/global-womens-economic-empowerment-initiative-fact-sheet-2013.pdf>

Gap Inc's Personal Advancement and Career Enhancement (P.A.C.E.)

For the past 15 years, Gap Inc.'s P.A.C.E. program provided women and girls in the global apparel industry the opportunity to thrive with foundational life skills, technical training, and support to advance at work, in their lives, and in their communities. We're proud to announce over one million women and girls directly participated in the program across 19 countries, giving women a voice and an opportunity to positively change the trajectory of their lives.

<https://www.gapinc.com/en-us/values/sustainability/empowering-women/p-a-c-e-and-empower@work>

CARE International

Gender equality is CARE International's central organizing principle. We cannot achieve women's economic justice, climate justice, health equity, the right to food, water, and nutrition, or equal access to humanitarian assistance without addressing gender inequality. By 2030, CARE International seeks to support 50 million people to experience greater gender equality in their lives.

<https://www.care-international.org/what-we-do/gender-equality>

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UPSCALING THROUGH **TRAINING**

“Challenges we face are still **workers’ literacy levels, trainer turnover, the training schedule, attendance levels, and getting the private sector, such as factories, to buy in on the program.**”

Mrs. NEOU Sovattha
Country Director, CARE Cambodia

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) implemented a 2023 goal to incorporate the P.A.C.E. curriculum into all primary and secondary schools.

Source: [http://www.kapekh.org/en/home/10/?news=personal-advancement-career-enhancement-\(P.A.C.E.\)-for-adolescent-girls-manuals-permitted-to-publish](http://www.kapekh.org/en/home/10/?news=personal-advancement-career-enhancement-(P.A.C.E.)-for-adolescent-girls-manuals-permitted-to-publish)

The Textile, Apparel, Footwear and Travel Goods Association in Cambodia (TAFTAC) is an institution that provides free training to factory workers because the factory owner pays for training.

Source: <http://www.taftac-cambodia.org/>



PRODUCTIVITY LOSS

The already thin profit margins of factories recognized the negative effects of sexual harassment among peers as well as from supervisors to subordinates.

Due to the low education levels of garment workers, the majority of workers do not understand what sexual harassment entails.



Results of sexual harassment in the apparel and footwear sectors in Cambodia:

- On average, absenteeism stands at 164 days per factory
- Presenteeism witnessed a 40 percent decline



Mrs. NEOU Sovattha
Country Director, CARE Cambodia

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Keynote Speaker & Guest Speakers

Keynote Speaker



Her Excellency KOUNG Sorita

Under Secretary of State
Ministry of Women's Affairs

Guest Speaker 1



Mrs. KHOUN Soklay

Senior Manager
Supplier Sustainability
Gap Inc.

Guest Speaker 2



Mrs. NEOU Sovattha

Country Director
CARE Cambodia

Key Takeaways



“We need actors from the public and private sectors to come together to solve the problem. Women are the backbone of the economy, and supporting women directly contributes to **economic growth in Cambodia and provides job opportunities for Cambodian people**. This in particular is true in the garment sector, where **women represent around 90 percent of the workforce**. However, high-level positions are dominated by men, which is not conducive to fair representation. Women’s potential can be harnessed when they are protected and supported, and **Cambodia will benefit from efforts towards female empowerment in and out of the workplace.**”

Her Excellency KOUNG Sorita

Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Women’s Affairs

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Compare productivity and give an **equal opportunity for advancement and equal pay.**”

Mrs. KHOUN Soklay

Senior Manager
Supplier Sustainability
Gap Inc.



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Not only should sexual harassment be eradicated for the benefit of society, but the private sector should actively implement policies and practices to **create a safe work environment which protects their employees whilst improving its productivity. Put women and girls in the center of everything.**”

Mrs. NEOU Sovattha

Country Director, CARE Cambodia

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Panel Discussions

Panel 1



Mrs. CHEA Davy

Assistant Admin Manager
Yi Da Manufacturer Co., Ltd.
(Crystal International Group)



Mr. Arron Goldman

Technical Advisor & Deputy
Program Manager,
ILO's Better Factories Cambodia



Ms. SAO Kanharoat

Business Development Executive,
Cambodian Garment Training
Institute (CGTI)

Key Takeaways

“**Allow women to succeed by changing the mindset of not being dependent on men.**”

Mrs. CHEA Davy

Assistant Admin Manager,
Yi Da Manufacturer Co., Ltd.
(Crystal International Group)



“There are cultural and social barriers within the factory to promote women. BFC asks workers what they need. Launching a new strategy, **where women are asked to learn by asking and men are asked to learn by listening.**”

Mr. Arron Goldman, Technical Advisor & Deputy Program Manager,
ILO's Better Factories Cambodia



“The garment sector is disproportionately represented by men when women make up the vast majority of workers, this means women’s income is also much smaller and their voice is not heard. **One gender does not always know the answer, and men also need to be involved in this discussion.** Men also have to contribute and acknowledge wider issues, such as unpaid work that can burden women, which is taking place outside of the workplace but often still expected from them.”

Ms. SAO Kanharoat, Business Development Executive,
Cambodian Garment Training Institute (CGTI)

Panel Discussions

Panel 2



Mrs. SEM Sreytouch

Business Engagement Manager,
PACT Cambodia



Mr. Hasso Anwer

Project Manager
GIZ Fabric Cambodia



Mrs. MEAS Molika

Co-founder and Group CEO
iCare Benefits Group

Key Takeaways

“**Work within the factory has similar productivity, but inequal pay.**”

Mrs. MEAS Molika

Co-founder and Group CEO
iCare Benefits Group



“**Create a systematic approach from the bottom up.**”

Mr. Hasso Anwer

Project Manager
GIZ Fabric Cambodia



“**Unpaid care needs to be acknowledged and evenly distributed between men and women within the household.**”

Mrs. SEM Sreytouch

Business Engagement
Manager, PACT Cambodia



Moderator

Panel 1 & 2



“There needs to be a quota for **women in leadership roles.**”

Mrs. TAN Kim Tol

Vice President, American Chamber of Commerce

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Participating Organizations

- Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA)
- Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT)
- TAFTAC (Textile, Apparel, Footwear and Travel Goods Association in Cambodia)
- ILO's Better Factories Cambodia (BFC)
- American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham)
- European Chamber of Commerce (EuroCham)
- CARE Cambodia
- Gap Inc.
- Target Corp.
- VF Corp.
- H&M (Hennes & Mauritz)
- C&A (Canda)
- Marks & Spencer (M&S)
- GIZ Cambodia
- Oxfam
- UNDP (United Nations Development Programme)
- Pact Cambodia
- Crystal International Group (Yi Da Manufacturer Co., Ltd.)
- Shift360
- ISF Cambodia
- Saddha
- Cambodia Investment Review
and many others



Key Takeaways Participants



“The current childcare centers are limited due to the lack of space at the factories and creates a negative effect on child development. Workers rent small rooms and have limited space and are unable to provide adequate childcare.”

Mr. RIM Ratanakvitou

Sustainability Development Specialist, H&M

“Although there [is] a breastfeeding room, there are a lot of issues when the child is in the factory area, such as exposure to chemicals, machinery, etc.”

Mrs. KONG Dararath

Vice Chief of Bureau, MoLVT



“Women often sit back and listen, while men talk.”

Mrs. NHEAN Monyvann

Project Manager, Feminists
in Action, CARE Cambodia



Recommendations: Call of Action

- Fund NGOs and INGOs to work with government sectors to institute more reforms and create legal requirement with follow-up mechanisms
- Create an effective grievance system
- Provide incentives to factories administering gender-based training
- Break the glass ceiling by changing social norms
- Equalize skills and leadership-training opportunities
- Survey workers on their needs before creating programs and initiatives

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Life and Building Safety Initiative

The LABS Initiative (“**The Initiative**”) launched in Cambodia in May 2022 and is designed to promote safer working conditions for factory workers in the apparel and footwear industry by assessing factories and providing a framework to monitor, mitigate, and remediate.

The Initiative operates 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; the newly launched Platform should bring more private and public-sector actors into discussions.

The Initiative partners with large multinational organizations such as Gap Inc., Target Corp., VF Corp., and Walmart Inc. The Initiative launched in India and Vietnam during the third quarter of 2019 and will launch in Indonesia in 2023.

As of November 2022, almost 400 factories were onboarded and over 350 were assessed and provided multiple levels of safety training.



factories onboarded

Source: <https://labsinitiative.com/transparency/>

Event in Pictures





