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# “I know I cannot quit.”

The Prevalence and Productivity Cost of Sexual Harassment to the Cambodian Garment Industry

RESEARCH SUMMARY | MARCH 2017



# INTRODUCTION

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**Sexual harassment** in the workplace and the community is a form of violence against women and a human rights violation. It remains a **serious and widespread problem** for workers in the Cambodian garment industry. This research finds that it also represents significant financial costs to employers – totalling almost **USD 89 million per annum**.<sup>i</sup>

Since the mid-1990s the total annual output of Cambodia’s garment sector has grown from an estimated USD 20 million to over USD 5 billion today, now representing almost a third of the country’s Gross Domestic Product<sup>1</sup> and 80 per cent of its exports.<sup>2</sup> **85 per cent<sup>3</sup> of this 600,000 strong workforce are women.**<sup>4</sup>

“Sometimes, of course I think about not going to work anymore because of this [sexual harassment]. But then I think about my family condition and I know I cannot quit.”

Female garment worker

This multibillion dollar industry has contributed significantly to Cambodia’s economy, providing new opportunities for millions of people. However, **women workers are limited socially and economically from claiming their rights, leaving them at risk of exploitation and abuse.** Low wages, fixed-term contracts<sup>5</sup>, substandard working conditions, long hours, and sexual harassment are some of the daily challenges facing women workers - limiting their voice, opportunities for leadership, and access to rights and protections across the industry.

In an industry in which success relies heavily on women’s labour, **sexual harassment is not only a human rights issue but also an economic issue.** Sexual harassment costs the industry money; investment is also required to create a safe, respectful and gender equitable environment for all employees. For this reason, CARE commissioned this research study to **examine the prevalence and productivity cost of sexual harassment of workers to the Cambodian garment industry.** The study was conducted by CARE in cooperation with the Garment Manufacturers Association of Cambodia (GMAC).

This report presents the findings of a large-scale, nationally representative survey of sexual harassment in the Cambodian garment industry. It combines quantitative survey data from 1,287 workers<sup>ii</sup> (1,085 women and 198 men) across 52 factories, with 25 qualitative interviews and 9 focus groups conducted in a variety of different living and working environments.

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## KEY FINDINGS

1. The productivity cost of sexual harassment in the garment industry is estimated at **USD 89 million per annum**.<sup>iii</sup>
  2. Sexual harassment is a regular occurrence. **Nearly one in three women garment factory workers report experiencing sexually harassing behaviours** in the workplace over the last 12 months.
  3. **One in four men** surveyed (50 of the 198 men) reported being asked **questions of a sexual nature** in the workplace.
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i. This is a rounded figure from USD 88,742,695.

ii. All gender analysis is based on the total of 1283 where gender was recorded for survey participants.

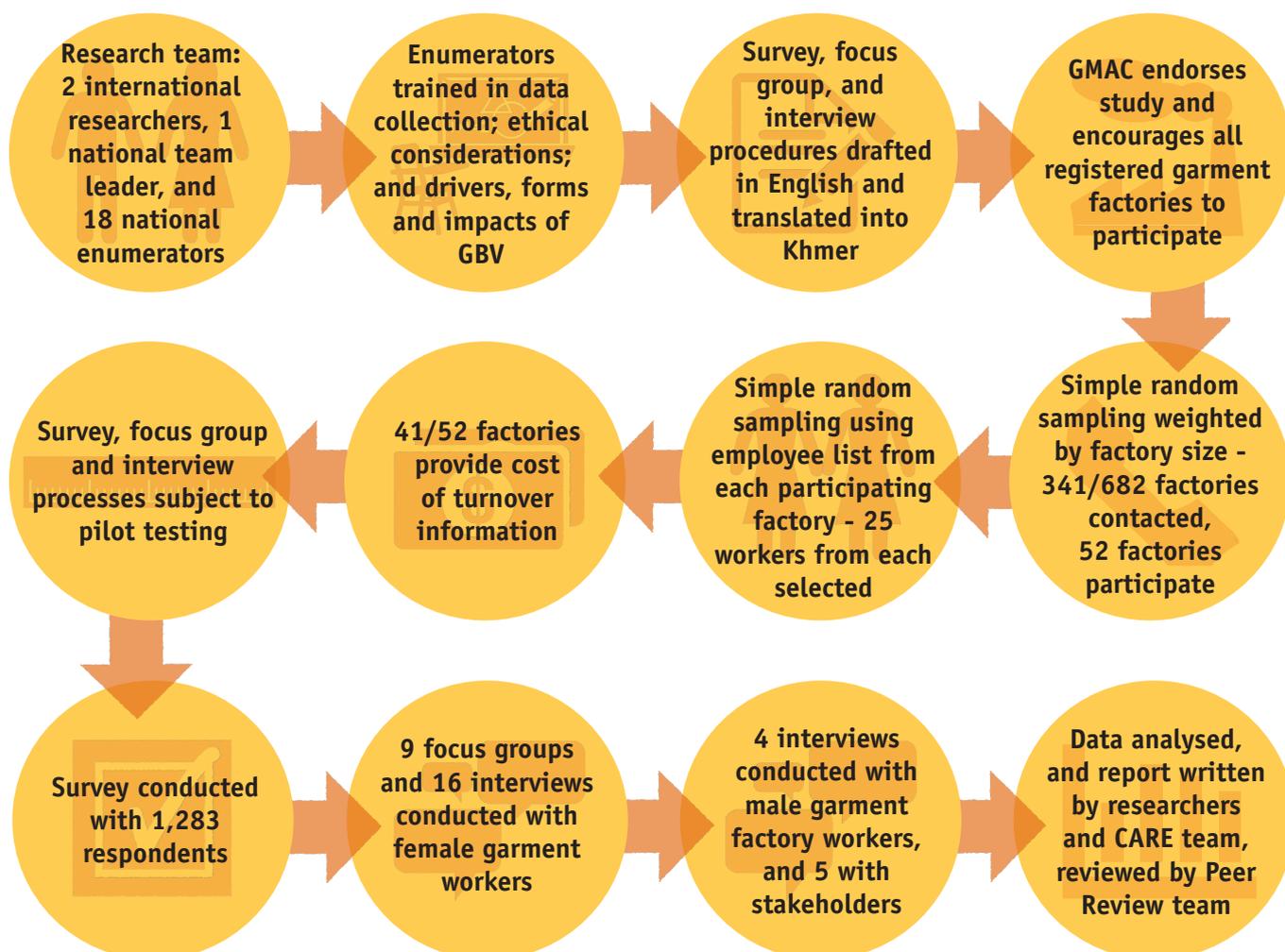
iii. Based on quantitative data collected between March 2016 to June 2016 where participants were asked to recall ways in which their work performance was affected by sexual harassment over the previous 12 months.

# METHODOLOGY

The safety of respondents and the research team was paramount and informed all decisions throughout the study.

The design and implementation of the study complied with World Health Organisation ethical guidelines for researching violence against women.<sup>6</sup> Verbal informed consent was sought from all participants. Respondents were given the opportunity to select a safe space and convenient time for the one-on-one interview; sometimes she/he chose to conduct the interview over the phone for safety and ease to their work schedules. There was no additional support requested and no respondent chose to opt out of or discontinue the interview. At the end of each interview, the respondent was provided with a small pocket-sized booklet and explanation of health and other services available. The research team ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents throughout the study. Data analysis in the study has not been presented at factory level, both to protect factory anonymity and also protect workers from fear of reprisal. The final dataset of survey responses is password protected and access is restricted to the four members of the core research team.

The research process took 15 months, from December 2015 to March 2017. Field work was conducted from February 2016 to June 2016.



# SEXUAL HARASSMENT

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According to the International Labor Organization (ILO) sexual harassment is defined as any “sex-based behaviour that is unwelcome and offensive to its recipient”.<sup>7</sup>

Sexual harassment is a barrier to equal participation in paid work; it undermines equal participation in the workplace; and it reduces the quality of working life. This leads to productivity costs for businesses.

Sexual harassment perpetuates and is perpetuated by gender inequality. Gender inequality is characterised by unequal value afforded to men and women and an unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunity. It is often rooted in laws or policies formally constraining the rights and opportunities of women, and is reinforced and maintained through informal mechanisms, like negative gender norms. When women are considered to have less value and fewer rights than men, and are barred from accessing resources and opportunities, they are more vulnerable to experiencing sexual harassment. Sexual harassment in turn also entrenches these barriers and attitudes, limiting women’s choices and opportunities.

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## SEXUAL HARASSMENT IS A FORM OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.

It may be:

- **physical**, including physical and sexual violence, touching, or unnecessary close proximity.
  - **verbal**, such as comments and questions about appearance, life-style, or sexual orientation, or offensive phone calls
  - **non-verbal**, including leering, whistling, sexually-suggestive gestures, or the display of pornographic materials.
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The majority of women in the garment industry are not on equal terms to their male colleagues. Harmful gender norms and structures both in and out of the factory mean that they are largely excluded from certain types of work (such as leadership roles), get paid less than men, receive less education and training than men, are recognised less for their contributions, and are more likely to be exploited and harassed in their workplace.

**This research estimates the cost of sexual harassment to productivity within garment factories and notes the scope of the problem and testimonies of the workers. It does not count the cost to individuals and society of the broader harms caused, which can include poor health and serious emotional and psychological distress. Other studies examining national rates of gender-based violence (GBV) estimate the cost of GBV to women, households and economies to be high.<sup>8</sup>**

This study measured indirect tangible costs as a result of loss of productivity due to sexual harassment in three different ways: turnover costs, absenteeism costs, and presenteeism costs.

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## MEASURING PRODUCTIVITY

**Turnover costs:** costs of workers leaving the factory due to sexual harassment, including time to fill a vacancy, training for new workers and other costs

**Absenteeism costs:** costs of days missed from work due to sexual harassment.

**Presenteeism costs:** costs due to lost productivity from working while not in a fully functional state of mind due to sexual harassment.

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# GARMENT FACTORY WORKERS

## Young migrant women are most at risk of being targeted by men who harass.

According to the survey conducted by this study, a typical garment factory worker in Cambodia is a 27-year-old internal migrant woman working outside of her home province. She left school after grade seven and earns USD 145 per month, or USD 209 per month including overtime and bonuses. Men typically have one more year of schooling than women, and earn on average USD 16 more than women per month, or USD 19 more including overtime and bonuses.

Women who are younger, unmarried, internal migrants, living (alone or with friends and family) and working outside their home provinces, are more likely to experience sexual harassment in their communities than those who are older, married, from Phnom Penh, and/or living with their spouse or parents. Migrants were twice as likely to experience sexual harassment than non-migrant peers on their way to and from work.

### “You cannot hide...”: Chanthavy’s story

Two years ago, Chanthavy\*, now aged 24, left her parents’ home in Prey Veng province to find work in Phnom Penh. She moved into a shared room, rented by older cousins who had left the province a few years before her. Her cousins secured her a job at the garment factory where they worked and Chanthavy has worked there ever since. When her cousins married, they moved out of the room and now she lives alone. She is single.

*“I have lived in this area for two years, but I don’t know many members of the community. There are many problems here in the community - last week somebody stole a neighbour’s motorbike. People always steal small things, like clothes when we leave them out to dry.*

*Women feel afraid. We only go out to work and then come back to the house. We fear staying outside. Women who work late tell stories about how they meet gangsters in the street on the way home from the late shift - other women hear their warnings and try not to go out after work ... The risk to women is increasing because there are so many bad boys now, young people who go crazy on drugs ...*

*You cannot hide. Almost every morning, we meet problems on the way to work, with men calling out to us and chasing us. Two months ago, it happened to me, at 6am on the way to the factory. I was walking and two men began to chase me. It was light at that time but quiet where we were. I ran to where there would be many people. This happens to many women, but we don’t report it to the factory. Before, we used to report it, but they didn’t do anything. The men in this community see it happening. They hear us calling for help, but they won’t help us. They are scared of the bad boys because sometimes they carry knives or guns. I have no male relatives here so I have no one to look out for me.*

*Some men also cause problems in the factory. They fight and spread rumours about the women workers, especially the young ones. If you have a problem with a man at the factory, you can report it to the bosses. If something violent happens, the factory might call for the police in the commune.*

*Many women change jobs because of [these problems], like one woman who was attacked by a gang outside work. They hurt her and stole her money. She was frightened, so she moved to [another factory] ... Of course, everybody knows some factories are better than others. Many [at the factory where I work] want to work at [another factory] - they have good rooms there: cheap, close to the factory, security to keep the bad boys out, no drugs allowed. But those factories are always full. We didn’t change factories ourselves, though, because we have adapted to the problems. We know not to walk alone, but to wait and walk together.”*

*\*Chanthavy is a participant in this study. Her name has been changed to protect her identity.*

# USD 89 MILLION PER ANNUM...

In total, sexual harassment cost the industry USD 88,742,695, or 0.52 per cent of Cambodia's 2015 GDP.<sup>10</sup>

Turnover costs	USD 85,184
Absenteeism costs	USD 545,000
Presenteeism costs	USD 88,112,511
<b>Total</b>	<b>USD 88,742,695 per annum<sup>iv</sup></b>

To estimate the costs of sexual harassment in lost productivity, this study examined turnover costs, absenteeism, and presenteeism among a representative sample of the 546,467<sup>v</sup> workers in the Cambodian garment industry. Between the months of March and May 2016, workers were asked to recall incidents of sexual harassment over the last 12 months:

- 1.17 per cent of workers surveyed reported having moved factories as a result of sexual harassment.
- 3.3 per cent of workers reported taking an average of 3.9 days per year off work as a direct result of sexual harassment.
- 13.5 per cent of workers stated their productivity was significantly affected by sexual harassment, estimating that on average, they were able to work half as effectively. Representing over 99 per cent of the cost to productivity, **presenteeism caused by sexual harassment is a significant problem.**

## CALCULATING THE COST OF LOSS TO PRODUCTIVITY

### TURNOVER COSTS

USD 13.31 (costs of training) x (1.17% of the sample or approx. 6,400 workers)



AN ESTIMATED COST OF  
**USD 85,184 PER ANNUM** ACROSS THE INDUSTRY

### ABSENTEEISM COSTS

3.3% of workers taking an average of 3.9 days per year off work as a direct result of sexual harassment: approx. 69,550 work days missed or 102 days/factory/year<sup>vi</sup>



AN ESTIMATED COST OF  
**USD 545,000 (APPROX)** ACROSS THE INDUSTRY

### PRESENTEEISM COSTS

USD 99.38<sup>iv</sup> in lost value per month for the 13.5% of workers reporting productivity losses due to sexual harassment



AN ESTIMATED COST OF  
**USD 88,112,511 PER ANNUM** ACROSS THE INDUSTRY

iv. See Chapter 6 in the technical report.

v. This figure has been extrapolated from the sample data to reflect the full 682 factories registered with GMAC at the time of the survey. 365 (28.4 per cent) of all workers in the sample experienced some form of sexual harassment in the workplace (see Table 5 in the technical report). We asked these workers to estimate the effect that sexual harassment had on their productivity. 174 workers (13.5 per cent) of all workers in the sample indicated that sexual harassment had some effect on productivity, with the mean effect reported at 49.67 per cent among these 174 workers.

vi. 365 (28.4 per cent) of all workers in the sample experienced some form of sexual harassment in the workplace (see Table 5 in the technical report). We asked these workers to estimate the effect that sexual harassment had on their productivity. 174 workers (13.5 per cent) of all workers in the sample indicated that sexual harassment had some effect on productivity, with the mean effect reported at 49.67 per cent among these 174 workers.

# NEARLY 1 IN 3 WOMEN...

**Nearly one in three female garment workers reported experiencing sexual harassment in their workplace over the last 12 months.<sup>vii</sup>**

Of these women, 68.2 per cent reported *“being made to feel uncomfortable or unsafe”*. 32.5 per cent reported *“receiving unwanted leers, sexual comments, noises or gestures”*. 19.5 per cent also reported being referred to in *“sexist or degrading terms”*.<sup>viii</sup>

Outside the workplace<sup>ix</sup>, women and men in the garment industry perceive a regular and daily risk of sexual harassment. 16.5 per cent of women and 7.6 per cent of men have experienced sexual harassment outside the factory over the last 12 months.<sup>x</sup>

“We all experience problems with men on the way to and from work. They shout things at us and try to embarrass us, but I try not to care. It doesn’t happen too often, just once or twice a week. Everybody experiences this [but] ... I know I cannot quit.”

Female Garment Worker

Despite the fact the journey to and from work is generally undertaken during daylight hours and usually in the company of many other workers, many women reported regular harassment and abuse.

Outside the factory, the most common experiences of sexual harassment included being stared or leered at, whistled at and subjected to inappropriate comments. Migrant women workers were more than twice as likely to experience sexual harassment than non-migrant women workers on their way to and from work.

In order to avoid unpleasant and threatening situations, many female workers avoided going out as much as possible, making sure when they did so that they arranged for somebody to accompany them. Women were generally expected – by each other as well as the wider community – to stay home at night and to avoid leisure activities, especially without someone to accompany them.

Ultimately, women workers learned quickly that their mobility was confined, which limited work and leisure options. Their voices have been silenced by sexual harassment, both in the workplace and in the community.

“First of all [a woman] has to stay inside till morning – even if you have a problem... If somebody comes to knock on your door, then you don’t open it. You have to be afraid and listen at the wall to see if it is who they say [because] sometimes they pretend to be someone else.”

Female Garment Worker



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vii. See Table 5 in the technical report.

viii. See Table 6 in the technical report.

ix. In the community and while commuting to and from work.

x. Based on data collected between March to June 2016 where participants were asked to recall ways in which their work performance was affected by sexual harassment over the previous 12 months.

**Many workers find the legal system for reporting sexual harassment to be ineffective, explaining that authorities are both disinterested and disempowered.**

At the national level, the *Labour Law 1997* and the *Criminal Code 2009* exist as regulatory frameworks related to sexual harassment and the *National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women 2014-2018* (NAPVAW) serves as the government's statement of intent to address violence against women, which includes sexual harassment.

The Criminal Code includes provisions for various sexual offences that are against the law, such as rape, sexual assault and indecent exposure; but its definition of sexual harassment is narrow and does not cover the broader range of behaviours understood to constitute sexual harassment. Similarly, while the Labour Law states that 'all form of sexual violation (harassment) is strictly forbidden', it does not include a clear definition of sexual harassment in the workplace.

"If it's not violent, they [the garment factory] give a warning. They say that if a worker has three warnings, then they should be fired. But I've never seen that happen at my factory..."

Female Garment Worker

The NAPVAW is a comprehensive plan of action involving a multi-sector coordinated approach from state institutions, civil society, private sector, development partners and citizens. Its aim is to provide a comprehensive plan for action to combat violence.



## Women bear the burden of responsibility to prevent sexual harassment.

There is an absence of a minimum level of protective or preventative measures in the garment industry, like a standard policy for sexual harassment across the industry, or recognition and action against sexual harassment from senior levels of management. As a result, women workers reported they have little means to protect themselves or to receive appropriate support from factory management and duty bearers in the community.

“If you have a big problem – like you are sick at work – then they will take you to the hospital. But if it’s a problem between two workers, then they will fire you both.”

Female Garment Worker

“[Sometimes the male workers] talk about taking a girl to have [sex with] . . . When this happens, she doesn’t change factory, but she changes the place she works, like if he works on one side [of the factory] then she would move to the other side.”

Female Garment Worker

As a result, women developed other coping strategies – such as moving to another part of the factory, walking to and from the factory in groups, and not leaving their rooms at night or avoiding restaurants and bars. These coping mechanisms restricted women’s freedom and mobility and put the onus on women to protect themselves and bear responsibility for what happens to them, encouraging a culture of victim-blaming.

Authority figures offer very little assistance to garment workers – either preventative or investigatory – in relation to sexual harassment. Instead, they reinforce unequal and restrictive gender norms that lay the blame for harassment on victims, and in particular female victims.

“Women have to be very moral, not pretend to be a sexy girl or a bad girl. If people see that you are an honourable girl, then people cannot harass you. Even if they do, then we can report it to the authorities and the man will be punished. From my own perspective [though], some of them go out and some of them call their boyfriend or girlfriend to come to their rented room, they go out at night and drink and so on. If they act like this, then they already have a relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend, so they cannot say they [suffer] harassment.”

Male Village Leader

This cultural narrative, in which women were strongly criticised for experiencing harassment, is a key theme to emerge from the focus groups and interviews. This indicates an environment in which the responsibility to prevent sexual harassment lies primarily in women’s restriction of their own freedom of movement. Female workers in the communities interviewed for this study tended to view after-hours leisure as irresponsible, as it was thought to increase the risk of sexual assault. Indeed, most female workers viewed sexual harassment as a problem partly of their own making and hence, their responsibility to overcome.

“If you stay in your room at night then you are 100 per cent safe, but if you want to go out, then you will end up getting involved with gangs and you’ll face problems.”

Female Garment Worker

# HARMFUL GENDER NORMS...

**One in four men surveyed (55 out of the 198 men) reported being exposed to uncomfortable or harassing behaviours and being asked questions of a sexual nature.**

Male workers consistently and more often reported harassment in the form of inappropriate jokes, sexual rumours or as recipients of unwanted sexualised communication. The forms of harassment appear different for men in that they may pressure them to participate in a workplace culture of sexual harassment. Over one in five had heard or experienced inappropriate jokes in the workplace and 9 per cent were shown offensive or pornographic images. Both the Employee Survey and the qualitative findings reveal women and men adapt to and accept sexual harassment as the norm in the garment factory environment, indicating that men may become passive or active participants of harassment.<sup>xi</sup> Men are both perpetrators and victims of sexual harassment; traditional masculine values in society in general are replicated in factory settings, and reward behaviours like sexual posturing, bravado and denigrating women, while a man reporting sexual harassment is seen to be feminine.

While men make up only 15 per cent of the employee population they generally hold higher positions (greater levels of responsibility and authority) and thereby will have greater control over workplace culture (e.g. normalisation of sexualised behaviour and harassment). Further research is needed to better understand gender enculturation - where people 'learn' the requirements of their surrounding culture and acquire attitudes, language values and behaviours appropriate or necessary in that culture - in factories.

“[Sexual harassment] is a problem inside the factory. [When these things happen], some people care and some people don't. Normally those who care, only care the first time and then it becomes normal.”

Male Garment Worker



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xi. See Chapter 5, Section 5.1 Harassment in Factories, in technical report.

# CONCLUSIONS

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**This study shows that sexual harassment remains a serious issue for women workers in the Cambodian garment industry, and it is associated with considerable costs to the factories themselves.**

**The social and economic costs of sexual harassment in the workplace are high**, as the acts of workplace violence affect not only the direct survivors and perpetrators, but also include indirect victims (including secondary survivors and future generations), the factory, and society at large (e.g. increasing the strain on medical and mental health care systems, and contributing to overall lower quality of life, isolation, unemployment and productivity which affects GDP). As evidenced in this study, sexual harassment can discourage women and men from working and reduce productivity.

**The research reveals a day-to-day tolerance and adaptation to sexual harassment** caused by unequal gender norms. Responsibility is placed on women to prevent and protect themselves from harassment, and they are blamed and shamed when they experience harassment. These norms and approaches should be challenged and replaced by a comprehensive, coordinated and systematic response that is based on the principle that all women have a right to be free from violence, including sexual harassment.

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Women should not be expected to limit their movement or ignore harassment. **Factories have a duty to provide safe and decent work conditions** to their employees; and **authorities have a responsibility** to ensure that community members are safe.

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**Action is required at all levels**, including: strengthening national legislation and oversight; improving factory conditions and codes of conduct; committing community authorities (such as local leaders, police and unions) to take sexual harassment seriously; and empowering workers to know and demand their rights.

**Another key finding of this research was men's experience of sexual harassment.** However, this research study did not explore in detail how men and women experience sexual harassment differently, how their coping mechanisms differ, and the impacts of their harassment on workplace culture and gender norms among male colleagues. We recommend further studies conduct additional in-depth research with men in the garment industry to explore in detail: men's experiences of harassment, whether as perpetrators, witnesses, or victims; and the drivers of sexual harassment in workplace culture.

**More broadly, efforts must be made to address the root cause of sexual harassment: gender inequality.** Derogatory attitudes towards women must be addressed both through workplace processes, and through targeted campaigns in the broader community. This is a task that involves everyone working together: **government, industry and civil society.**

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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**Preventing and reducing sexual harassment requires a coordinated response. The following recommendations are directed at the Royal Government of Cambodia, local authorities in communities surrounding garment factories, the garment industry, unions, civil society, and the ILO's Better Factories Cambodia Program.**

CARE endorses the overall objectives and activities put forward by the Royal Government of Cambodia in the National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women 2014-2018 (NAPVAW). The detailed recommendations below highlight particular activities under this plan which directly relate to the findings of this report.

CARE's overall recommendations are threefold:

1. Improve productivity, prevention and protections through industry and Government jointly promoting harassment-free work and community environments.
2. Work towards better legal protections against sexual harassment.
3. Invest in and support programs, law and policies that continue to build the reputation of Cambodia as a country committed to gender equality, appropriate labour standards and protection against sexual harassment.

## **1. Improve productivity, prevention and protections through industry and Government jointly promoting harassment-free work and community environments.**

1.1. Given the impact of sexual harassment on women's well-being and workforce productivity, CARE endorses and recommends prioritising the following activities identified in the "Community and Workplace" and "Capacity Building" sections of the NAPVAW by both Government and industry stakeholders:

- "Design, implement and evaluate interventions to prevent violence against women in both public and private spaces with increased mobilization of civil society participation and initiatives."<sup>12</sup>
- "Promote safe, harassment-free and respectful public and private workplace environments through raising awareness of labour rights, ensuring policies and mechanisms to prevent and respond to workplace harassment, and working with employers to create safe and harassment-free work environment."<sup>13</sup>
- Increase the capacity of all key actors to understand the physical, psychological and financial impact of violence against women.<sup>14</sup>

1.2. Given the identified gaps in workplace-level protections, CARE recommends garment factories, with the support of the industry body GMAC:

- Develop and/or adopt and implement workplace-level policies (in line with international best practice) which put processes in place to prevent, respond to and monitor sexual harassment.
- Train all management and staff on sexual harassment, gender equality, and bystander intervention to ensure that the workplace-level policy is properly understood and implemented.
- Provide necessary awareness to workers on the workplace policy, and their rights and responsibility to report incidents in the factory to the designated management staff.
- Task appropriate employees with responsibility and expertise in addressing sexual harassment and creating cultural change so that sexual harassment is no longer tolerated. This may involve establishing a sexual harassment committee or explicitly and publicly tasking an existing committee or individuals with this mandate.
- Create linkages, dialogue and reporting mechanisms (where appropriate) between other workplace and community stakeholders, such as unions, commune authorities, landlords, and police to address and prevent sexual harassment that occurs both inside and outside the workplace.

1.3. Given the identified gaps in workplace-level protections, CARE recommends the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training:

- Include identifying policies and protections from sexual harassment, and the implementation thereof, in the Inspection Checklist.
- Train Labour Inspectors on sexual harassment and gender and facilitate ongoing knowledge sharing between officials and factory management through the labour inspection process.

## 2. Work towards better legal protections against sexual harassment.

2.1 Given the gaps in the implementation of the law identified by the legal analysis and qualitative findings of this report, CARE endorses and recommends prioritising the following activities identified in the “Multi-sectoral Coordinated Response Mechanism”, “Effective Police Protection” and “Legal Aid and Access to Justice” sections of the NAPVAW by both Government and industry stakeholders:

- “Develop a coordinated response mechanism between ministries, institutions, service providers, civil society, private sector and other key actors to promote a coordinated prevention and response strategy at the national level and to build knowledge and skills.”<sup>15</sup>
- “Clarify operational standards and codes of conduct, review and share at all levels to promote improved police response to violence against women.”<sup>16</sup>
- “Legal and justice reform process considers and discusses violence against women issues.”<sup>17</sup>

2.2. Furthermore, CARE recommends that the Government of Cambodia:

- Begin a consultative law reform process to consider an appropriate new or existing legal mechanism or institutional body that has the power to give legal remedy for people who suffer detriment due to sexual harassment.
- Create new legislation or amend existing law to create easy-to-access, affordable legal remedy for all forms of workplace and/ or community sexual harassment, including vicarious responsibility (accountability) of employers, which cannot be remedied at a workplace level.



Garment workers sign commitments to listen to their peers, show support and report to the authorities when they hear of sexual harassment as part of CARE’s Sexual Harassment Stops Here campaign. ©2015 Jenny Conrad/CARE

### 3. Invest in and support programs, laws and policies that continue to build the reputation of Cambodia as a country committed to gender equality, appropriate labour standards and protections against sexual harassment.

3.1 Given the high prevalence and cost of sexual harassment to the garment industry and the potential for Cambodia to set itself apart as a destination for responsible investment, CARE recommends that the Government, industry stakeholders, and the ILO's Better Factories Initiative:

- Through a consultative process with stakeholders, agree to a Cambodian industry-wide common code of conduct to address sexual harassment in the workplace.
- Coordinate with suppliers and retailers to adopt international standards of responsible investment with regards to sexual harassment, and reflect this commitment to international standards through monitoring and auditing protocols.
- Endorse and support the global movement for a labour convention on ending violence in the workplace.

3.2. Given the intersections of women's workers right to be free from sexual harassment and the loss of productivity to industry caused by sexual harassment, CARE recommends that industry stakeholders, unions and civil society work together to:

- Ensure representation of women in factory committees and union structures so that women's voice and experience of sexual harassment is brought to the fore as a workplace issue and, in turn, fed back to factory management for action. A possible mechanism would be setting targets for women's membership of committees.
- Endorse and engage with public campaigns which aim to promote respectful relationships, change harmful gendered social norms and engage all community members to intervene in sexual harassment and gender based violence.



Garment workers review details of who to contact if they see or experience sexual harassment.  
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17. Ibid., Section 3.2.2.5 Legal Aid and Access to Justice, Outcome 13, Activity 2.

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**The technical report “I know I cannot quit.” The Prevalence and Productivity Cost of Sexual Harassment to the Cambodian Garment Industry is available at [www.care-cambodia.org](http://www.care-cambodia.org) and [www.care.org.au](http://www.care.org.au).**

A great many people came together to enable this study to be conducted; to all of those involved, a sincere thank you. In particular, thanks and gratitude to the 1,287 factory workers who participated in the study, generously providing their limited time to recall painful experiences of hardship, harassment and violence. Without their generosity, this research would not have been possible.

All photographs included in this research summary are illustrative only and do not feature any survey participants.



# “I know I cannot quit.”

## The Prevalence and Productivity Cost of Sexual Harassment to the Cambodian Garment Industry

**Sexual harassment in the workplace and the community is a form of violence against women and a human rights violation.**

Of the 600,000 workers employed by Cambodia’s garment sector, 85 per cent are women. However, despite their high rate of participation in the garment industry, women are not on equal terms with their male colleagues. They are largely excluded from certain types of work (such as leadership roles), get paid less than men, receive less education and training than men, and are more likely to be exploited and harassed in their workplace.

Since the mid-1990s the total annual output of the garment sector has grown from an estimated USD 20 million to over USD 5 billion today, almost a third of national Gross Domestic Product. In an industry whose success relies heavily on migrant women’s labour, sexual harassment is therefore not only a human rights issue but also an economic issue worth addressing, with appropriate investment required to create a safe, respectful and competitive work environment for all its employees.

For this reason, CARE has conducted this study in cooperation with the Garment Manufacturers Association of Cambodia (GMAC). It was funded through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP), from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Australian public.

*CARE has worked to improve conditions for marginalised women workers, including women in the garment sector; the entertainment, hospitality and tourism industry; and more recently, the construction industry. This includes nearly a decade of work tackling sexual harassment in the workplace and community.*

*In the garment sector, we work with government to strengthen garment factory management and law enforcement authorities’ ability to implement laws effectively. We engage with employers and the private sector to ensure effective policies and procedures are in place to protect workers and adequate services are available to employees. We train factory workers to have the knowledge, confidence and skills to make informed decisions about their lives and demand the sexual and reproductive health rights and services they need. We also address harmful social and legal gender norms around sexual harassment through broader community outreach and advocacy.*

*The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of CARE International, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, or any other participating organisations.*

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