

VIETNAM, MYANMAR, LAOS, CAMBODIA

Enhancing Women's Voice to Stop Sexual Harassment (STOP) Project



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Background

Sexual harassment is a global issue. It is a form of gender-based violence - one of the most tolerated violations of workers' human rights'. It is a deeply sensitive issue rooted in unequal power and gender relations and disproportionately affects women and girls.

The project, Enhancing Women's Voice to Stop Sexual Harassment, is working in four countries in the Mekong to address sexual harassment in the garment industry. Through this project CARE is leading development of contextualised models to support industry, government, and civil society in preventing and responding to sexual harassment. The project will develop, test and adapt workplace models for the prevention of and response to sexual harassment in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam. The project is funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Gender Action Platform and Australian NGO Cooperation Program.

The focus on sexual harassment

As at the end of 2014/15 there were approximately 60-75 million people employed in the garment and textiles industry worldwide, 75% of whom were women.

The Mekong countries, where CARE focuses our work, represent just under 10% of that workforce. The value of the garment industry across the Mekong has been rising year on year and was almost \$35 billion in 2015. We expect that will continue rising.

Governments and the garment industry have an incentive to prevent and manage sexual harassment. International evidence has demonstrated that abusive behaviour in the workplace affects profits and productivity. Sexual harassment decreases staff productivity and well-being.

In Cambodia, the garment industry was valued at an estimated USD\$6 billion per annum in 2015. CARE's [research](#) in Cambodia, "**I know I cannot quit!**: The prevalence and productivity cost of sexual harassment to the Cambodian garment industry" assessed the impact and costs of harassment.

The research found that:

1. Sexual harassment is a regular occurrence for women. **Nearly 1 in 3 female garment factory workers** report experiencing sexually harassing behaviours in the workplace over the last 12-months.
2. **One in four men** surveyed (50 of the 198 men) reported being asked questions of a sexual nature in the workplace.
3. The productivity cost of sexual harassment in the garment industry is estimated at **USD 89 million or 0.52 per cent of Cambodia's 2015 GDP**.

Similar research is yet to be conducted in Vietnam, Myanmar and Laos. However, costs for the region may be at least USD\$200 million per annum (assuming similar impacts and only half the prevalence rate of Cambodia).

Government and business across the Mekong have an economic and human rights imperative to take bold action in ensuring prevention and response to sexual harassment is a priority.



Timeframe:

July 2017 - June 2021

Region/Country:

Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam

Overall Beneficiaries:

200,000 including campaigns

Expected reach:

40 Factories -

Vietnam (6), Laos (10), Cambodia (18), Myanmar (6)

What the project will do

The project draws on CARE's success in Cambodia in developing a workplace package for garment factories. CARE's package includes a workplace sexual harassment policy; implementation guide for factories and a comprehensive multi-media training for factories to deliver to staff to prevent and report sexual harassment. The package, developed in consultation with government, industry and garment workers, will continue to be tested in partnership with factories in Cambodia.

In Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, CARE is adapting this work, working with unions, industry, NGOs and government to identify, test and roll out appropriate models. Models and packages will be designed to respond to the legal and gender issues in each context and will be tested with stakeholders including garment workers.

Development of packages will draw on global evidence of what works from: CARE's expertise developing a package in Cambodia; insights into the prevalence and nature of sexual harassment; country legal, political and situational analysis; CARE's global review of evidence of what works in organisational change and development in relation to sexual harassment; and the field of social psychology.

The project will strengthen the evidence-base on the effectiveness of workplace interventions to tackle sexual harassment in factory settings. Evidence and research from the project will inform national advocacy efforts in relation to reform and regulation addressing workplace sexual harassment.

Through its regional approach, the project will also support CARE's global campaigns including the proposed International Labour Organisation Convention to eliminate Workplace Gender-Based Violence. The project will leverage CARE's global advocacy and will work in collaboration with our International Dignified Work team to increase the impact of this project.

This regional approach also enables CARE to develop evidence and share learning internally and externally on what works in preventing responding to sexual harassment. Through this project, CARE is leading development of contextualised models to support industry, government, and civil society actors in preventing and responding to sexual harassment.

Long-term project goal: women workers in garment factories experience safer workplaces, due to a reduction in sexual harassment.

End of project outcome: garment factories implement effective and appropriate models to address sexual harassment in the workplace.

The project will operate through three approaches:

1. Supporting garment factories to develop effective workplace mechanisms to respond to sexual harassment.
2. Supporting female garment factory workers to feel safe to report sexual harassment, and through engaging with factories, to do so free from negative consequences.
3. Strengthening the national regulatory environment of factories to promote laws, policies and mechanisms to address sexual harassment in the workplace.

Further information can be obtained from

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