



**BetterFactories**  
Cambodia

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY  
**Gender Strategy**

2017-2018



International  
Labour  
Organization



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Finance  
Corporation  
WORLD BANK GROUP

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The Cambodian garment sector provides employment to approximately 600,000 workers, over 80% of which are female. Although female garment workers have benefited from employment in the sector, they still mainly occupy the lower paid and lower skilled jobs, and career advancement opportunities are limited. Non-compliance in relation to gender specific issues is also prevalent in the sector. Independent studies on the Better Work programme have demonstrated that improved working conditions benefit female and male workers equally.

Better Factories Cambodia, as part of its strategy for sustainable improvement in factories, promotes gender equality, empowerment of women, and inclusiveness in Cambodia's garment sector, and is well placed within the industry to increasingly focus on the promotion of gender equality in its factory level work.



## 1 Why a Gender Strategy?

**Better Work aims to create sustainable change in factories and improve working conditions together with improved business benefits. Research from the Better Work global program has demonstrated that improved working conditions benefit female and male workers equally. An independent impact assessment of Better Work by Tufts University demonstrated how the programme has contributed to specific improvements for women. Better Work factories have bridged gender pay gaps, reduced incidents of sexual harassment, improved women's voice and increased access to pregnancy related healthcare , .**

Improved working conditions have an impact beyond factory walls. Workers take lessons home; they report about improved communication within their families, especially with their partners and are also more satisfied with their family lives. The longer women work in the garment industry, the more likely they are to make shared decisions at home. Compared to other Better Work countries, the children of Cambodian garment workers are more likely to attend school. Cambodian workers also state that the division of care and household work is rather equal between partners (as opposed to many other countries), a situation that is different from the previous generation .

Understanding these gender dynamics and impact of increased gender equality in the garment sector,

Better Factories Cambodia will give the promotion of gender equality an extra boost. This gender strategy was developed as a result of the gender analysis that was conducted between February and June 2016. The gender analysis included a more thorough analysis of the national and sectorial context, as well as a gender mainstreaming exercise of BFC's core services and other areas of work. The gender strategy document takes into account findings from the gender analysis, and sets out the rationale for the promotion of gender equality in the Cambodian garment industry, and includes a theory of change for the Better Factories Cambodia program for the period January 2017-December 2018.



## 2 Gender Dynamics in Cambodia

**Women and men around the world face different constraints in obtaining productive employment, decent work and government services. This can be a result of (direct and indirect) discrimination and discriminatory practices that pervade all spheres of life, at all ages. Discrimination is usually the result of bias and prejudice distinguishing between those that meet the norm and those who are “different”.**

### THE CAMBODIAN LEGAL FRAMEWORK

ILO's core conventions on non-discrimination are the Discrimination Convention, 1958 (No.111) promoting equality of opportunity and treatment in the world of work, and the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), promoting equal pay for work of equal value between women and men

The ILO gives equal weight to economic and rights-based arguments for gender equality. According to the 2009 Resolution of the International Labor Conference on “Gender equality at the heart of decent work”, gender equality is both “right and smart”.

The general principle of equality and non-discrimination was first adopted in 1948 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

A good practice of the Cambodian (Labour) Law is that it specifically covers direct and indirect discrimination, sexual harassment and “exceptions” to discrimination (i.e. when preference or exclusion is inherent to a job requirement).

*Source: Asian Development Bank and International Labour Organization, (2013), Gender Equality in the Labour Market in Cambodia.*

**Cambodian women are more disadvantaged in comparison to men. Women in Cambodia have restricted access to assets and employment even though the 1993 Constitution recognises the principles of gender equality..**

### Labour Participation

The increasing labour participation of women in the economy changes social norms, beliefs and perceptions of gender roles, albeit slowly. Female participation in the labour market is 79.2% compared to 86.7% for men, but a large share of women are employed in vulnerable employment.<sup>iv</sup> Vulnerable employment is the sum of own-account work and unpaid contributing family work and typically means long working hours, low productivity and lack of access to social protection. Women's labour participation is

also constrained because of their reproductive role, whereas having children is usually a push factor for men towards employment, it has the reverse effect on women.<sup>v</sup> On average, Cambodian women earn 71% of what men earn, in other words the gender annual earning gap is 29%.<sup>vi</sup>

### Education

Women's labour participation is constrained by lower levels of literacy and total years of schooling compared to men, because girls aged 6-17 were and still are more





likely than boys to be kept out of school to help in the household. Education for boys is perceived to be more important. However, more girls attend secondary and tertiary education now than previously.<sup>vii</sup>

### Segregation

Across the world, women, regardless of age, are often overrepresented in sectors and positions where pay tends to be moderate. This is also the case in Cambodia. Two types of segregation are evident:

- ◆ **Horizontal segregation**, which relates to the high concentration of women in sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture.

- ◆ **Vertical segregation**, which refers to the high concentration of women in lower ranking positions (the large majority of female garment workers are sewers and most female farmers have more limited access to land and assets).

### Demographics

The Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey indicated that poverty in Cambodia fell dramatically between

2007 and 2012, from about 50% to below 20%. However, 90% of the poor still live in rural areas, . Based on the latest demographic data, two new trends are visible: Cambodians are on the move (rural-to-urban migration) and are getting older. The latter trend, in combination with a declining fertility rate but growing population will lead to a large group of elderly people by 2030, which requires health and social security policy implications. Elderly women will be a particularly vulnerable group in terms of needs and poverty risk as well as women in the workforce who usually account for the largest share of care work in addition to their other responsibilities. The out-migration of primarily younger adults in search for jobs and income is resulting in a slowly “greying” rural population. Many parents choose to leave their children with grandparents . This changes the dynamics of (maternal) healthcare providers and childhood development outreach, who used to target parents and their children in one geographical area, and now have to reach three different generations in different areas to reach the same objective .

Development and Population Indicator	Cambodia
Per capita gross national income, 2014	USD1,020
Human development index ranking, 2014	0.555
Gender Development Index, 2014	0.890
Gender Inequality Index value, 2014	0.477
Gender Inequality Index ranking, 2014	104
Gender annual earning gap, 2012	29%
Population, 2015	15.33 million
Annual population growth, 2014	1.6%
Fertility rate (births per woman), 2013	2.7
Poverty (national threshold), 2012	17.7%
Poverty (USD1.25 threshold), 2012	6.2%
Poverty (USD2.00 threshold), 2012	37%
Income inequality (Gini coefficient), 2009	0.308





## 3 Gender Dynamics in the Cambodian Garment Sector

**The Cambodian garment industry provides job opportunities to both women and men. The income workers earn and their experiences at work have a trickle down effect on all women, men, girls and boys in the Cambodian society. Having an income creates agency, which leads to empowerment. Women earning a formal income that is higher than average for low skilled jobs have a bigger say in household decisions than women without an income, and there is also research that demonstrates women's increased political participation , .<sup>xii, xiii</sup>**

### Workforce and Worker's Profile

The garment and footwear industry in particular are characterized by a number of specific gender dimensions. The workforce in both industries is comprised of over 80% women. The worker's profile that we know to date reflects generally young, migrant workers coming from rural communities with six years of completed primary education. The move to a new environment with which they are unfamiliar, makes many women vulnerable for discrimination and exploitation. Workers' living conditions are typically poor; they tend to live with three other people (extended family members, spouse and children or friends/colleagues) in rented rooms and compounds that are often unhygienic and far away from affordable public services (e.g. health care centers, childcare and education institutions) , .<sup>xiv, xv</sup> The commute to work in Cambodia is done by minivan, bus, foot or 'moto' (motor cycle or moped) depending on the province of work and residence. The journey from home to work is also dubbed "killer commute" because the minivans and open buses are tightly packed with as many workers as possible, with high risks for road crashes. In 2015, more than 7,000 workers were injured and 130 people died during their commute to work.

### Recruitment

Women are generally recruited for and mainly occupy the lower paid and lower skilled jobs (sewing machine operator) as opposed to men who dominate the higher paid jobs that require more skills and/or are physically heavier (maintenance, repair of machine, washing processes, cutting and printing, loading and unloading containers). Proof of direct discrimination is low, and only in 6% of the factories was gender

a factor in hiring decisions in 2015. The ILO survey from 2012 shows however that 72% of the workers reported that discriminatory practices exist in the recruitment process, with men expressing this feeling more strongly than women. Explanations for indirect discrimination – employers' prejudice – have been documented by many: young women are perceived to be more productive than old workers, women are cheaper and more obedient as well as the stereotyping that certain jobs, such as mechanic or manager, are inappropriate for women or because they "cannot do the job" .<sup>xvi</sup> Career advancement opportunities in the industry are rare, especially for women due to various reasons, including the widespread perception amongst both women and men that women don't make as good supervisors/managers because of gender stereotypical characteristics as well as their responsibilities at home. The senior management in most factories is most likely male and foreign.<sup>xvii</sup>

### Working Conditions

The working conditions in factories put high pressure on women's reproductive role. A Cambodian garment worker usually works 6 days a week from 7am to 11am, has a one hour lunch break, and continues from 12pm to 4pm and around 80% of workers work regular over time of two hours a day, commute time not included. Such a working schedule is difficult to balance with personal life. Even though more than 75% of employers paid workers correctly for maternity leave between 2006 – 2015, the duration of the maternity leave is only 90 days which creates a constraint for women to come back to work and breastfeed the child. In 2015, one quarter of the





### URBAN AND RURAL WORKERS

The average factory garment worker in urban areas (Phnom Penh) migrates to the city at a young age while still single. She is around 27 years old, has three to five years work experience in the garment sector and has finished primary education. About half of the urban garment workers are married, while the other half is single. Of the married workers, around three quarters have 1 or 2 children, most of the children live with their grandparents in the parent's home village. Nearly all workers live around the factory they work in with three other people in the same accommodation. Only half of the married people live with their partner, the majority of workers live with extended family members or friends/colleagues.

The average factory garment worker in rural areas (e.g. Kampong Speu) lives in her home village with her husband and/or close to parents who take care of their children whilst at work. She commutes a fair distance to the factory every day. She is around 27 years old, married and typically has 2 children. She has studied until the end of primary school.



employers did not provide the breaks or remuneration for breastfeeding correctly. Even if workers are able to take paid time off to breastfeed, the majority won't take time off because there is no facility (or refrigerator to lactate at work or go home earlier, because there is no transportation available outside regular working hours. Understandably, pregnancy and motherhood are challenges for many women which could lead to a relative low fertility rate as women delay marriage, giving birth and the number of children couples have. It is known that many new mothers do not return to the factory after their maternity leave ends, because they are not fit enough yet or cannot combine work and care. However, a large share of these women do return to the sector a little later (usually to a different factory), missing out on the benefits they had gained with their seniority.

Interestingly, women garment workers in Cambodia earn more money on average compared to male garment workers (men tend to have more favorable working conditions and less working hours,<sup>xviii</sup> but accumulate less wealth. This could be attributed to women spending more money to support their family a phenomenon that has also been found by economists worldwide.

### SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Harassment and sexual harassment is prevalent, but underreported because of a lack of mechanisms to address the issues within factories and because of internalized norms that make it 'normal' for people to be treated this way. This means that most people experiencing forms of (sexual) harassment, would not identify it as such and therefore not speak out against it.

The BFC assessment data show that cases of sexual harassment are difficult to identify. There are inevitable limitations to factory assessments - e.g. limited time available to build trust, mixed worker interviews, stigmatisation of the victim and lack of formal reporting mechanisms - that are likely to cause underreporting. However workers' concerns and experiences of sexual harassment in the factories are

confirmed by the independent impact assessment research conducted by Tufts University, 9% of the 1,500 workers surveyed as part of the Tufts impact study stated that they often feel uncomfortable at the workplace because of inappropriate behavior.

### Trade Unions

Leadership positions in union confederations, federations and factory level unions are dominated by men. In 2011, all but one leader and intermediate leader of the union confederations were men. More women are increasingly becoming representatives at the factory level,<sup>xix</sup> but they are far from being equally represented. Female representation is important, because women tend to advocate harder for women's specific issues and there is scope for improvements that will have a positive effect on working conditions and the quality of life for both women and men



# 4 Our Approach

**Understanding and acknowledging the gender dimensions in Cambodia and the garment and footwear industry in particular allows BFC to identify key areas of impact for its Gender Strategy. By setting out our understanding of key concepts and summarizing where we are (based on the gender analysis) we have identified where we want to be and how to get there.**

## Workforce and Worker's Profile

The following key concepts form the basis for BFC's Gender Strategy.

Research and the day-to-day lives, as captured in this report, show that worldwide norms, structures, and behaviours are gendered. This affects whether and how women, men, boys and girls participate in private and public life, hold power in different fields and levels, and enjoy the benefits of social and economic development. The term gender refers to men and women, their place in society and their mutual 'power' relations.

**Gender equality** refers to the concept that all human beings, men and women and boys and girls, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles, or prejudices. It does not mean that women and men and girls and boys are or have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female (defined by their biological sex, the physical attributes women and men are born with).

Gender equity is often used in relation to gender equality. It means fairness of treatment for women, men, girls and boys according to their respective needs. This may include the same treatment or treatment that is different but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and creating equal opportunities.

As women are often in subordinate positions compared to men, many initiatives are focused on women's empowerment. Empowerment is the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those

choices into desired actions and outcomes. It implies women and men and girls and boys setting their own agendas, gaining skills, and increasing self-reliance. It is a process and an outcome. Women's empowerment implies an expansion in women's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them.

To sustainably change gender inequalities in societies, engagement of men and boys is crucial. Men have specific obstacles to overcome, especially the fact that for many a move towards gender equality is against their short-term interests. In most policies that seek to address gender imbalances, men are implicitly present as "the problem". When men are present only as a background category in a policy discussion about women, it is difficult to raise issues about men's and boys' interests or problems. If large numbers of men are to support and implement gender equality initiatives, it will be necessary to speak in concrete, positive ways to their concerns, interests, hopes and problems.

## Where are we now?

Better Factories Cambodia believes that to set out a pro-active strategy for the future, it needs to know where the starting point is, that is why a gender analysis was undertaken between February and June 2016. The analysis included a context analysis of the Cambodian society and garment sector. It also included an analysis of its own work, it looked in detail how gender responsive the core services (Assessment, Training and Advisory Services) and other services and activities such as programming and research are. Based on that 'baseline' a number of recommendations were made to improve its efforts to promote gender equality.

## Where do we want to be?

A closer look at and discussion on the recommendations in the Gender Analysis Report clearly identified a number of areas where BFC can strengthen its efforts to promote gender equality. This is visually represented by the Theory of Change that is part of the following rationale.

## VISION

**BFC's gender strategy contributes to BFC's vision to improve working conditions and impact lives of Cambodian garment workers. BFC aims for a society where workers and citizens have opportunities for secure, sustainable and high quality livelihoods, and where women and men and the members of their communities (boys, girls, youth, and elderly people) are able to access their rights, fulfill their potential and decide on their futures.**

## GOAL

**The goal of BFC's gender strategy is to increase gender equality and empowerment of women and girls through systematic mainstreaming of gender throughout BFC's core services and other initiatives, together with the entire team, the management team and with support from Better Work.**

**By 2018, at the end of BFC's current strategic phase, BFC aims to more effectively promote gender equality and inclusiveness in Cambodian garment and footwear factories.**

In particular, BFC aims to have:

- Gender responsive assessments;
- Gender responsive trainings;
- Gender responsive advisory services; and
- Gender responsive monitoring and evaluation and gender specific research/communication materials.

## BENEFITS

More specific benefits of the Gender Strategy are:

- Alignment with BFC's current strategy providing further depth to the output and measurements reported in its logical framework;
- Attention for the need to strengthen internal policies and procedures;
- Formalized commitment to build in-house capacity on promoting gender equality, with the support of and in line with the priorities of Better Work; and
- Increased understanding of gender dynamics amongst the program staff and external stakeholders.





**Our approach to change**

Our approach to change is based on a 'Theory of Change'; a foreseen change process for a longer period of time. The problem analysis (very bottom of the graph) is where we stood in 2016, the impact (very top of the graph) is linked to BFC's vision and is likely to become visible only after 2019 - if all intermediate steps of inputs, outputs and outcomes are realized and the assumptions hold true.

The long term outcomes (expected around 2019-2020) will result in BFC's core and other services to be gender transformative. That is to say that the services transform the existing distribution of resources and responsibilities in order to create a more equal relationship between women and men. For instance, gender transformative advisory services will lead to more active participation of women and consequently the decision making around topics that are directly relevant to them and their position within factories and communities leading to more women in higher status positions.

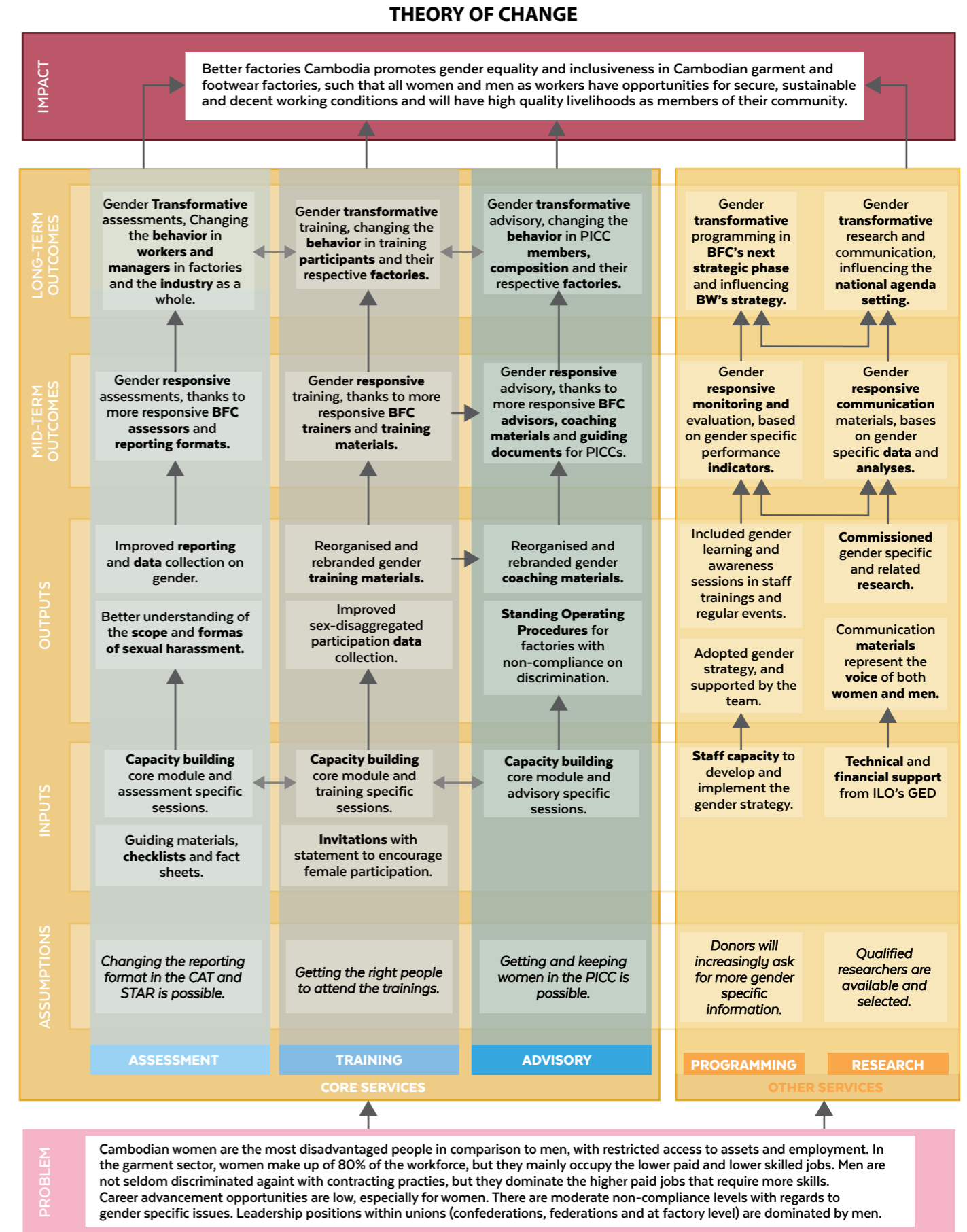
In order to obtain gender transformative long term outcomes, the mid-term outcomes (expected around 2018-19) will first need to be achieved. The mid-term outcomes will result in core and other services to be gender responsive. That is to say that the services have proactive, formal and consistent integration of gender perspectives. For example, gender responsive training services will change the participant's beliefs about gender norms, roles and their access to resources.

For the mid-term outcomes to be realized, the outputs need to have been delivered. The outputs for all core and other services focus on increasing gender sensitivity. That is to say that our services acknowledge and highlight existing gender differences, issues and inequalities and incorporate these into strategies and actions. A large part of being gender sensitive

is about measuring existing situations. After all, you cannot change what you do not measure. For example, gender sensitive assessment services will lead to more specific sex-disaggregated data collection and detailed reporting on gender specific issues.

The inputs are a prerequisite for the entire change process to be started. Building capacity of our own BFC staff, to fully understand the meaning of gendered beliefs, values and norms in daily life - which transcends garment factory walls - must be done if BFC aims to have a responsive and ultimately transformative impact.

In summary, the Theory of Change builds upon the 'gender perspective continuum' (see Glossary of Terms). From a state of being gender neutral (that is to say that existing gender relations are not disturbed and are not considered relevant to reach programme goals), BFC wants to first become more gender sensitive, then responsive and then transformative.





**How do we get there?**

To realize BFC’s goal and theory of change an action plan has been developed for the period January 2017-December 2018. Most of the objectives are directly linked to the outputs of the theory of change and the strategic activities are linked to the inputs from the theory of change and the recommendations from the gender analysis.

In short, three main streams of work can be identified during the time period of this gender strategy: improved information collection and reporting, staff capacity building and the revision of training and advisory materials.

1. Strong focus on improving gender sensitivity by collecting sex disaggregated data in a more systematic way for all core services. This will lead to more gender sensitive reporting in monitoring and evaluation (programming). Having a better information basis will also contribute to the ongoing research projects and possibilities to publish gender specific communication materials during 2017.
2. Continuous capacity building of staff has started and will continue on a regular basis. The focus will be on better understanding gender and diversity related concepts and what this looks like in our own lives.
3. Training and advisory materials will be subject to revision, in the first place to ensure workers and employers will start to become more interested in the themes and also to strengthen consistent messaging towards factories in relation to discrimination.

During 2017-2018, the action plan objectives and expected results of the gender strategy will be the following

AREA OF WORK	OBJECTIVE	EXPECTED RESULTS
1 Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Improved reporting and data collection on gender.</li> <li>◆ Better understanding of the scope and forms of sexual harassment</li> </ul>	1.1 Sex-disaggregated data for shop stewards, union leaders and workers interviewed collected and used for analysis. 1.2 The 34th Synthesis Report (May 2017) will include focus on gender and compliance. 1.3 Improved reporting and shorter investigation time in cases of non-compliance on discrimination and harassment. 1.4 Sexual harassment is measured 1.5 Awareness of sexual harassment prevention is strengthened among all staff members
2 Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Reorganised and rebranded gender training materials.</li> <li>◆ Improved sex-disaggregated participation data collection</li> </ul>	2.1 A gender specific training module (including different diversity aspects) based on positive framing. The training will be part of a broader cluster and have a higher attendance rate. 2.2 All training modules being gender sensitive and/or responsive. 2.3 Training modules being easier to understand, fun way of learning. 2.4 Higher participation rate of women and people with disabilities. 2.5 Sex-disaggregated data for worker, union member/leader and employer participants collected and used for analysis and adaptation of training materials.
3 Advisory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Reorganised and rebranded gender coaching materials.</li> <li>◆ Guidelines for factories with non-compliance on discrimination.</li> </ul>	3.1 Sex-disaggregated data for PICC members (and their positions) collected and used for analysis and adaptation of advisory materials. 3.2 Gender responsive PICC guidelines developed. 3.3 Gender sensitive and possibly responsive advisory services. 3.4 Communication materials to ensure consistent messaging to factories (workers and employers), buyers and brands.





## GLOSSARY

**Sex** refers to biological and universal physical attributes of men and women. For example, only women can give birth; only men have a prostate gland.

**Gender** refers to the socially constructed roles and opportunities associated with women, men, girls and boys. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are ‘Socially constructed’ (as opposed to being biologically determined) and learned through social norms, as well as being context and time-specific and changeable. Gender is relational and refers not simply to women or men but to the relationship between them.

**Gender analysis**, is defined as bringing into question naturalized assumptions about women, men and power. An analysis should illuminate the diversity of positions available to women and men in different contexts, and permit a closer assessment of the relational dynamics of power among as well as between them. Gender analysis is also a systematic way of looking at the different impacts of development, policies, programs and legislation on women and men that entails, first and foremost, collecting sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive information about the population concerned.

**Gender-based violence and harassment**, in this strategy, is used as an umbrella term for unacceptable behaviors and practices – perpetrated against a person’s will – that stem from unequal power relationships and negative gender roles. It includes acts that are likely to result in physical, psychological, or sexual harm or suffering; threats of such acts; and coercion and other deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

**Gender equality** is defined as ‘the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of men and women and implies that the interests, priorities and needs of both are taken into consideration equally.’ Equality does not mean being the same, nor equal numbers of men and women in all activities, nor does it mean treating them in the same way. Everyone should have equal opportunities and live in a society in which men and women are able to live equally fulfilling lives.

**Gender equity** means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.

**Gender mainstreaming** is defined as ‘the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action. It seeks to guarantee that the concerns and experiences of individuals of both sexes are taken into consideration in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs with the aim of achieving gender equality.’

**Gender-Neutral, Gender-Sensitive, and Gender-Transformative:** The primary objective behind gender mainstreaming is to design and implement development projects, programs and policies that:

1. do not reinforce existing gender inequalities (Gender-neutral)
2. attempt to redress existing gender inequalities (Gender-sensitive)
3. attempt to re-define women and men’s gender roles and relations (Gender -responsive/transformative)

The degree of integration of a gender perspective in any given initiative can be conceptualized as a continuum.



Gender absent initiatives fail to identify or acknowledge the difference of gender where it is significant. It is often a result of the usage of gender-neutral language. Such initiatives are biased in favor of existing gender relations and therefore are likely to exclude women or exacerbate existing inequalities between women and men.

Gender-neutral initiatives use the knowledge of gender differences in a given context to target and meet the practical needs of both women and men. Gender-neutral initiatives do not disturb existing gender relations.

Gender sensitivity is the ability to acknowledge and highlight existing gender differences, issues and inequalities and incorporate these into strategies and actions. Gender-sensitive initiatives address gender norms, roles and access to resources in so far as needed to reach project goals.

Gender responsiveness is the ability to be proactive, and to consistently integrate gender perspectives. In addition it aims to include gender equality, women’s empowerment and men and a masculine lens. Gender responsiveness changes gender norms, roles and access to resources as a key component of initiatives.

Gender-transformative initiatives transform the existing distribution of resources and responsibilities in order to create a more equal relationship between women and men. Women and men may be targeted or one group alone may be targeted by the intervention.



**NOTE**

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