

# LABELS TO WEAR OUT

A SOCIAL STUDY ON WOMEN WORKERS IN THE GARMENT  
INDUSTRY IN CAMBODIA



Womyn's Agenda for Change – Cambodia 2002

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research started in March 2001, when the first draft of the goals and objectives was written. Since then, lot of passionate and enlightening events happen, that have progressively driven the study out of the simple rails of research, and plunged it into real life. So recognition and thanks should go to the people that have made that possible, the garment workers who participate in the research.

Women and girls that have patiently answered our questions, explained to us, the ignorant, what working in a garment factory means and what kind of hard life is. Women that cried, when remembering the hardship and the discrimination they suffer, women angry when talking about exploitation and abuses, women concentrated when discussing on how to gain strength and power, women brave when facing an audience of thousands with a speech against social rules when all people expect them to cry and ask for pity, women with sparkling eyes chatting about their future out of the factory, women upset when explaining to men what gender discrimination is, women laughing together after a day of discussion. What can be found in these pages is only a pallid image of this experience.

Womyn's Agenda for Change team has endured this new experience with the confidence coming from their capacity to share instead of teach, to listen instead of educate, to recognize themselves in the workers' problems instead of looking for the differences. They have been attentive, committed and curious, showing the best qualities for researchers. The amount of work done and its quality has been impressive, as well as their capacity to learn, manage new technique and face different kind of difficulties. Without such a team this research would not be possible, and the voices of the workers would never have been so truly collected. A part from the researchers, volunteers, Cambodian and foreigners, as well as students or visitors on stage have also contributed to this research. WAC ambience, this special feeling of commitment, freedom and creativity that is pervasive in WAC office and that every visitor perceive since the first minute, that is the result of the coordinator's vision of work environment and working relationships, help to bring to light the most brilliant ideas, to transform wishes in realities, and to involve everybody in that process.

Before starting the research work we have met many persons that have given us information, visions, ideas. Among them Dr. Huy Han Song, Director of the Department of Occupational Health at the Ministry of Social Affairs; Leang Sung Heang, Secretary of the Cambodian Labour Union Federation; Ros Sok, President of the Cambodia Federation of Independent Trade Unions; Lejo Sibbel, Chief technical adviser of the International Labour Organisation Garment Sector Working Conditions Project; Dymphna Kenny, Reproductive Health Manager Care Cambodia; Mak Pich Rith of the GSP Department at the Ministry of Commerce; Dr. Sat Samoth, Director of Industrial Technical Department at the Ministry of Industries Mines and Energy; Chan Dara, labour Consultant for the Garment Manufacturers Association in Cambodia; Mom Sandap, Director of the Planning Department and Pheng Heng, Deputy Chief of Cabinet, at the Phnom Penh Municipality.

Many people came in our office during these months. With many of them we discuss issues related to this research, and we get from many of them important ideas, inputs and comments. We are also in debt with all the important literature criticizing the neo-liberalist agenda, their analysis was fundamental for building the frame of this research.

The whole document has been read and reviewed by .....and their contribution....

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## INTRODUCTION

Statistics on Cambodia's economy and social development during the last decade, published by the Cambodian Development Research Institute<sup>1</sup> do not show a bright picture. Despite the lack of specific data on poverty – the country counted 36 % of the population living below the poverty line in 1999<sup>2</sup> – other indicators testimony for a process of pauperisation and social suffering. The daily per capita protein supply between 1990 and 1998, did not increase, even compared to a poor country as Laos or a overpopulated country as Vietnam, whose protein per capita increased significantly during the same period.

During the nineties, from 1990 to 1997, Cambodia has been the only country where gross enrolment in secondary school decreased, compared to Laos and Vietnam. The average income of the Cambodian households, all professions included, decreased in 2000 compared to 1996. The segregated data on income show that the incomes of rice farmers, who represent the majority of the Cambodian population, after increasing slightly in 1996, decreased in 2000 to a level below the one of 1993.

Landless families have augmented to reach 15% of rural households, while migration rate, from rural to urban areas, is increasing and nearly doubling the rate of 1996. In 1998 40% of the children under 5 year were still malnourished, the same percentage as in 1996. The demographic and health survey of the year 2000 shows that private health care dominate the medical sector, at a cost that people cannot effort if not by utilising their saving or borrow money.

Debts are epidemic among Cambodia's population. The need for cash to face everyday life, where everything now is paying and where even basic social services are no more free, goes beyond families capacities, triggering recurrence to borrowing. Money lending is a very profitable enterprise in the country, providing a level of profit that very few other legal businesses can guarantee. Microcredit has been implemented in many circumstances without accompanying the offer of loans with opportunities to secure and increase people revenues, triggering a process contrary to development: the borrowing of money to face everyday life, and the following lost of assets to pay back this money, as the cause of poverty and need were not removed.

In this context the garment industry represents the "great success" of Cambodia's recent economy. The first garment factories appeared in Cambodia in 1994, as an expression of the opening of Cambodian economy to the global market. As in other developing countries, the Garment manufacturers in Cambodia exploit the unlimited offer of cheap labor, and particularly women's labour. The production is simple, the machinery obsolete, investments are low, design and orders come from overseas through a system of subcontracts granted by Trans National Corporations, TNC, to regional/local owners. The main resource needed is a mass of poor and jobless people, forced by neediness to accept low salaries and exploitative working conditions.

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<sup>1</sup> "Cambodia's Annual Economic Review 2001" by Sok Hach, Chea Huot and Sik Boreak, CDRI, Phnom Penh, August 2001

<sup>2</sup> Data on poverty in Cambodia are controversial. The Cambodian Socioeconomic Survey in 1999 was carried out in two rounds of interviews. The first round resulted in a headcount of poverty rate of 64%, the second 35.9%, with an average of 51% if both results are merged.

Nearly a whole generation of young women is migrating to the capital Phnom Penh, where garment factories may offer them a subsistence salary of 45 USD, 0.22 cents hour often not entirely paid. Workers are women in majority, just arrived in town, mostly aged between 18 and 25. The sector employs nearly 200,000 people, 90% women, but is already squeezing, as a result of the economic recession in the global economy.

Cambodia garment factories are far from being a workers haven: forced overtime work, arbitrary reduction of wages, intimidations and firing of unions representatives, and other small and big violations of workers rights have been recorded. Nevertheless, workers' protests and demands have not been till now censured or heavily repressed, and the newborn workers' movement, despite its difficulties, has been able to negotiate a increase in the minimum salary in the year 2000.

The Cambodia Labour Code, and the additional decrees that integrate it, provides the legal basis for the recognition of workers' rights and freedom of organization. Unfortunately, if the legal apparatus is in place, the means to enforce it are not appropriate and violations of the law occur without soliciting the expected reaction, as periodically denounced by the Unions and by the workers directly.

The Labour Code of Cambodia is also put at stake by the ongoing process of developing Export Industrial Zones. Experiences from other countries have already shown that the intrinsic philosophy of the Export Zones is to create safe haven for investors and threaten workers unionisation. In the document available at the time where this report has been written, the Ministry of Commerce Draft Document on Integration and Competitiveness, the article n. 46 of the draft law regulating the Export Industrial Zones said: *people may be arrested without a warrant*. As a statement, it does not look as an indication of commitment toward labour rights implementation, unless the idea is to arrest without warrant the investors who violate workers right, but that will look quite extravagant...

Cambodia, as other developing countries, relies deeply on the garment sector for its foreign exchanges. Garment sector represents actually nearly 90% of total export and is playing a strategic role in Cambodian short-term economic outputs. The main trigger for the development of garment manufactures has been the granting of trade agreements or preferential status by the US and the EU. Garment and textiles are still highly protected goods, submitted to tariffs and bans impending their import in the industrialized countries. Bilateral agreements are the only way to overcome this protection and have access to the western markets, until the sector will be regulated differently. Cambodia export is guarantee by a bilateral agreement signed with the US, with EU and with other countries. The agreement with US includes a clause regarding labor rights which links the amount of quotas allowed to enter the US to the labor conditions by which these products have been manufactured. The implication of such approach are discussed in Part 1 of this report, where the characteristic of this industry are discussed

The Garment Industry in Cambodia is triggering social changes that have not yet been fully explored. *Do the garments workers represent a new class of labourers, who are going to achieve a better life standard? or are they, instead, a new group of poor, even more disadvantaged while cut out from their rural environment and natural social*



*network? and what kind of social group is the one migrating? are the garment workers among the poorest? what are other characteristics of this social group?*

It is impossible to answer such questions without considering the peculiarity of this industry: women represent 90% of the workers in the garment sector.

The gender segregation in the garment industry in Cambodia is not a surprise, thus it is well inscribed within the Asian economic development frame, which is characterized by high growth rates achieved through export oriented industries, relying on female labour forces<sup>3</sup>. The degree of benefits - or the capacity to retain them - associated with the mass entrance of women in the industrial sector is a complex issue and has given birth to an intense debate<sup>4</sup>. Experiences from other countries, which underwent the same patterns of female labour development, have provided ground and data to build a range of hypothesis on the impact of wage labour not only on women wealth, but also more holistically on women discrimination or social recognition.

All these analysis have underlined the need for a specific approach to this sector, a focus shift, from the central issue of work and working conditions - toward a more wide view, which includes the changes in relationships triggered by this new women's role. A feminist social analysis of the new industrial female workers should include changes – both progressive and regressive - in the private, domestic, social, cultural life. So the previous questions about the workers as a new social group can be reformulated in a different one: *what kind of changes is this mass employment of women in garment factories promoting in women life and women social status, and what are the advantages/disadvantages for the women?*

It is well know that the female population, traditionally charged with domestic tasks, unpaid and non recognized, as child's care, elder's care, house keeping, and other reproductive activities, suffer directly the lack of adequate social protection services. It is also known that the provision of services related to social protection and care has a strong impact on women and is a powerful instrument for enhancing gender and social equality within a society. The development of public services aimed to support and facilitate changes in gender relations has till now represented a powerful tool to enhance the volatile progress – if not the increased discrimination - that women can achieve through the simple access to paid work.

Unfortunately structural adjustment policies, and their new version the PRSP, and other forms of restriction to public expenditures introduced in – or often imposed on- developing countries by International Loans Organizations, go exactly in the opposite direction, by reducing the state involvement in education, health, or other public services. Openness to free market and trade, according to the liberalist dogma, which supports such view, is a mechanism capable to promote not only economical growth but also development and well being for everybody, even if strict public budget reductions and privatizations of national assets and public services occurs.

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<sup>3</sup> Not uniquely Asian countries, all over the world, from Mexico to Turkey, whenever industrial growth is linked to export more than internal consumption, relying on cheap and flexible labor, and having to meet the demand of uncertain and fast changing markets, female workers, traditionally discriminated in wages, less demanding and assertive, become the first choice.

<sup>4</sup> For example the historical articles of Ruth Pearson and Diane Elson, or the analyses of women in industries in the South by Jayati Gosh, see the bibliography for more input in this issue

Years of experiences have already shown that this is not possible and not true. Public expenditures are crucial for poverty reduction, and are the main mechanism to redistribute wealth among citizens within the state. The developing world is now experiencing the effects of industrialization, without receiving the benefits that characterized the western world industrial development during the years of welfare states and social policies. Moreover, the world development statistics show clearly that the process of pauperisation that is going on as a result of such policies is particularly affecting women. Women are the majority of the poor, being a woman is a risk factor to fall in poverty, poverty is not gender neutral.

Therefore, some more points may be added to the questions already mentioned: *what services are available to women workers in Cambodia? and/or what kind of services are crucial to women workers to improve their living conditions and in the same time gain gender equity?*

That said, the aim of this study is to start a reflection on the phenomenon of migration of young women to town, and their employment in the garment sector, by keeping in mind the questions already mentioned. The study would be a first attempt to provide a feminist and social analysis of garment workers experience in Cambodia and to bring to the light the workers judgment and experience on that. Moreover, it will try to appraise women's experience as manufactures workers beyond the strict boundary of the factory, in order to provide a view of what is life as "garment worker", what are the main constraints, and how a public welfare system can answer such needs.

## PART 1

### Methodology

#### **Learning**

The project's aim has been, since the beginning, to combine a research approach with a process of learning. The research team has approached something completely new, where all the steps needed to be checked and validated. The process resulted has been extremely intense and satisfying for all the people involved, but very time and energy consuming. Some aspects of the research have suffered because of the privilege given to relationships, instead of data, and to discussions, instead of simply questions and answers.

#### **Acquiring secondary data**

Initially, the research has been concentrated on the acquisition of the main information concerning the garment sector in Cambodia in order to gain a full understanding of the situation as:

- the number of factories established in Cambodia, their size, investment, years of activity, ownership nationality, location and geographical development during time, their kind of production and activity records
- statistics on the number of workers, their path of migration, sex, age, employment duration, dismissal and turn-over, working position, average salary, working hours
- the institutional, legal, and decision making frame of the Garment industry in Cambodia, including taxation regime, investment rules etc.
- the workers as social counterparts: unions, other organisations involved in labour rights defence and support

The International Labour Organisation Garment Sector Working Conditions Improvement Project, which was in a phase of setting up its activity and research in Cambodia at that time, provides us with important information concerning key persons and institutions involved in the sector that have facilitated our further data enquiry .

The Cambodian Ministry of Industry and Ministry of Commerce provided us with their public available statistics and gave us further information concerning the process of setting-up factories in Cambodia.

The Cambodian Ministry of Social Affairs and particularly the Labour Inspection Unit, has been less incline to disclosed information or statistic to us, especially the ones concerning the number of workers, their employment duration, workers turnover etc. Nonetheless, the Occupational Health Department of the same Ministry has provided us with the most significant information concerning its own activity, the inflow of workers in Phnom Penh, and many other inputs.

The Garment Manufacturers Association gave us some indications of their main problems, concerns and perspectives concerning the Garment sector in Cambodia.

We have contacted some of the Unions active in Cambodia and they presented us their activities and views, main problems and perspectives.

Among the NGO community, CARE International in Cambodia, among the very few working and studying this sector, provided us with the studies and the information made available from their program based on reproductive health promotion among garment workers.

Relevant literature, concerning garment industries worldwide, women in industries, free trade and export zones development, gender analysis of women employment, initiatives against Garment industry exploitation of cheap labour, etc. has been collected before and during the research (all listed in the bibliography at the end of the report).

### **Collecting primary data**

The research wanted to look into the phenomenon of mass employment of young women in the factories through a gender feminist social perspective.

The data and the experiences from other countries having undergone the same kind of industrial development - export oriented industrial zones employing mainly women migrating from the countryside to produce garment, toys or simple electronics goods – as India, Korea, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh etc. - help us to formulate work hypothesis for the primary data collection:

1. the highly exploitative nature of the work is rather established from the few studies available concerning Cambodia, whereas the idea of quality of life of the workers - living conditions, social status, etc,- is less known and needs to be understood and evaluated
2. the selective and massive employment of women as cheap labour force is facilitated by gender discrimination and devaluation of women within the society, the community and the family. That needs to be assessed according to the context, and evaluated all along the study
3. discrimination against women may also acts as a mechanism to undermine women's achievements linked to their entry in the wage labour sector, as self confidence, independence, empowerment. New stigmatisation and new forms of discrimination need to be understood and evaluated
4. to evaluate the interrelations between gender and social opportunities it is therefore necessary investigate all the mechanisms that lead decisions concerning women's lives: choice of work, access to education, access to other resources, spending and saving money, management of time, marriage, divorce, maternity, migration, etc.
5. quantitative data may provide only partial answers to such questions, which demand an interaction between researchers and women based on mutual trust

and sharing of aim: understand what is going on and the reasons why that happen and assume responsibilities for changing aspects of this reality.

### **The questionnaires**

A questionnaire has been developed that included the main areas of interest selected after the acquisition of the secondary data and after some preliminary discussion with the workers. Despite the effort to cut as much questions as possible the questionnaire resulted very long and time consuming for the workers and the team. Time has been since the beginning the main problem of the research: interview could only be conducted after 6 o'clock in the evening, or on Sunday, but often workers were tired, hungry, or just want to relax and not think to work.

Since the beginning we have taken full responsibility to assure the privacy and confidentiality of the people responding us. This has lead to the decision of keeping the respondents anonymous, so that it would have been impossible to identify workers through any of our questionnaires. This decision has had an impact on the data collection as it was impossible to trace back the respondents, therefore go back to the respondents to check some data, leading to a certain number of missing data.

The number of questions, and the collective situation in which the team worked within the workers houses, push us to restructure the questionnaire and conduct collective interviews of four people together whenever they agree.

### **The interviews**

We have decided to interview 150 garment workers living in Phnom Penh. In order to avoid any form of interference or bias we decided to by-pass the factory owners –and the unions - and interview the people directly where they live, in their houses. The research team approached the workers directly and rather randomly, by walking into the neighbourhoods where the workers lived and asking them if they agree to answer our questions. The locations chosen for the field work corresponded to the highest densities of factories and workers living compounds: Chak Angrae Kraom commune in Mancheay district, Cham Chao commune in Dangkor District, and Tuol Sangkae in Russey Keo district.

Very soon the problems linked to such approach appear clearly: a team of researchers, including a foreigner, was not a familiar view in such places, and raised enormous interest and curiosity. The houses of the workers do not guarantee people's privacy even in normal situations, and when our team was there public and listeners gathered to watch from the windows and looking into the room from the open door, or just standing all around us. In such a situation questions concerning sensitive issues were not answered or rise embarrassed sights around to the public. Of course the ability of the team to enter in more personal details and the willingness of the workers to disclose feelings, hopes, problems, or other emotions where significantly impaired. As interviews were possible only on Sunday or after 6 pm in the evening, the maximum public participation was guaranteed.

In all the houses we went people said that nobody has come to discuss or get information from the workers before so the team was soon welcomed and solicited to

enter the houses, sit down and listen to the problems, the news, or answer questions and give explanations on our activity. Male workers were quite surprised by our focus on women, and more than one time male workers complained for being excluded from the process. A certain number of male workers have been interviewed too.

Figure 2. Interviews in Dangkor



### **The workshops**

To create an environment facilitating the workers externalisation of problems and feelings, the team has organized a series of workshops in our own facility in Phnom Penh. Workshops main agenda was to bring the workers to talk about their feelings, expectations, perspectives, relationship with families, communities, other workers, men, etc. Meetings with the facilitators help to clarify the objectives of the process, and the simple methodology to achieve it, mainly by working to reduce social and cultural distance between the workers and all our team.

The initial experience of gathering workers in our facility has to overcome the diffidence of the women and girls that were not confident in leaving their houses and going around in Phnom Penh. Some even mention the fear of being trafficked when they saw the car coming to pick them up. The workshops should be held forcibly on Sunday, and transport of workers had to be facilitated by arranging car to pick workers up in the farthest areas.

The first group of 30-40 workers who accepted to come from the three districts, gave us an intense and dramatic view of their lives, their problems, and their

anger toward discrimination, stigmatisation and exclusion. No particular techniques of animation or facilitation were needed: people talked, and expressed their feelings and problems, with lot of emotions and many tears. The team has mainly the role to collect these issues, and to record all what the workers said and expressed.

The further workshops were easier to organize because workers started to know us, and people having participated in the first workshops spread positive messages about the initiative. So we had to face the contrary, all the workers wanted to participate, and we had to adapt the structure to more people. One workshop has been conducted with workers of both sexes, to understand better gender relationships and specific gender views.

Two other workshops has been organized not just to get information from the workers but to provide information to them on our results, and let them discuss and take decision concerning their participation in a public forum, the 8 of December and the 8 of March.

The experience of the workshops, and the discussions held during such meetings has been very important to understand workers life, experience and problems, and provide us with visions and understandings that our questionnaires and quantitative data would never have given to us.

### **The village survey**

A part from this report, the garment workers research carried our by WAC is linked to WAC projects and researches on rural women and impact of the neo-liberalist agenda on rice production. In fact, the garment workers database has been utilised to trace back the villages of origin of the migrants women, and in these villages the research on rural women started. But this is another story and another report...

The information collected in the villages of origin of the workers has also push WAC to develop other studies, following the paths of and reasons for migration of Cambodian women. From the same villages women move at the desperate search of an income and factories are just one of the destinations. But this too is another story...

### **Data analysis**

A first database was constituted by processing the lists provided by Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Industry, and includes all the information in the garment industry sector. The analysis of these data is provided in Part 1, the Cambodian Garment industry.

The primary data from the interviews has been recorded in another database including 154 records and more than 200 variables. Missing data occurs here and there, but we have chosen to keep any available record even when many variables data were missing, because we have considered that even the smallest information given us by the workers, as their village of origin, deserved to be included. As specified before, the identity of the workers has never been recorded and there is no way to trace back workers from the database.

The data were analysed by computing frequencies and percents, cross tabulate some variables, and calculate main statistic for numeric values. Results of the data analysis are reported in Part 2.

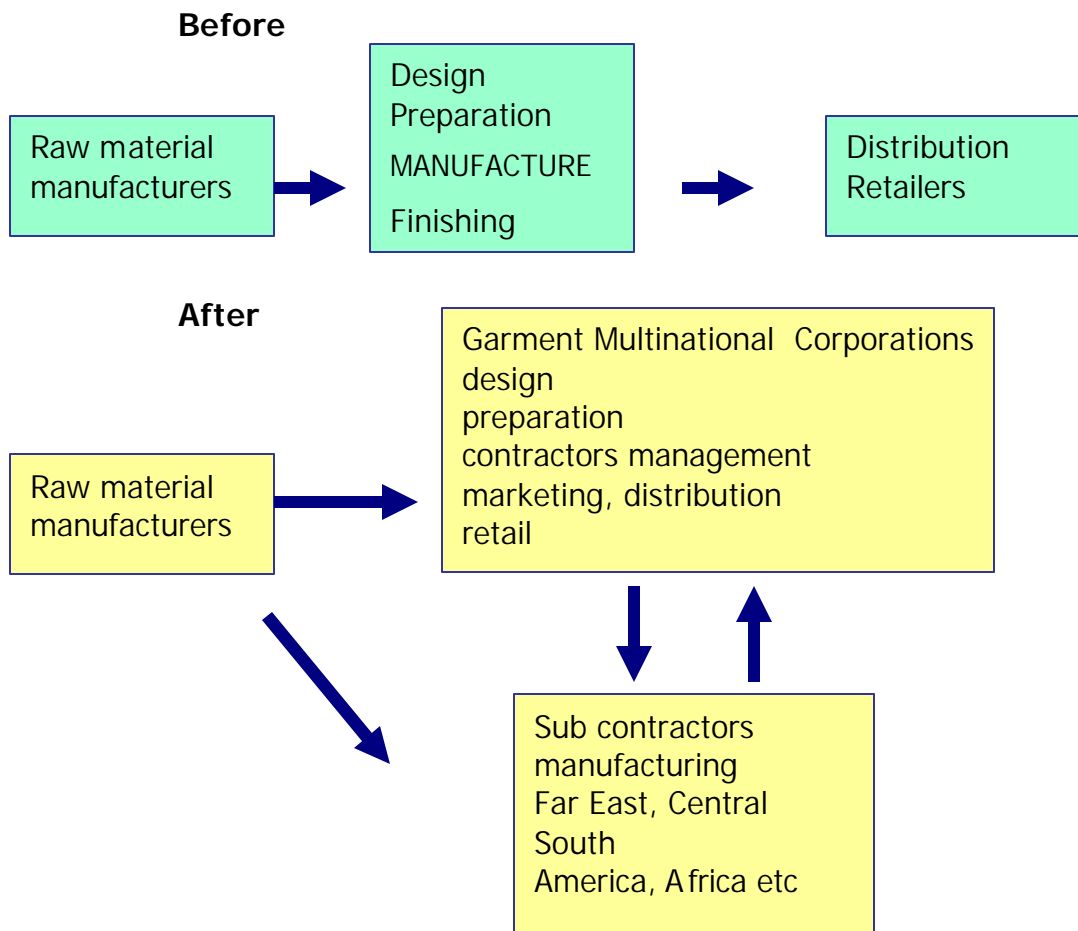


The Garment industry in the era of globalisation

**The global Garment business**

The garment industry worldwide has undergone substantial changes as result of the globalisation of the economy. The industry is becoming one of the better performing and most adapted to the free-trade liberalized global economy. Once the garment manufacturers, mainly based in the Northern countries, produced clothes and textile products and sold it to the retailers, who took care of marketing the goods. During the last 2-3 decades, the production of clothes has been turned upside down in order to maximize profits and reduce costs. The industry has slashed out the manufacturing phase of the process, which is now subcontracted in other countries, through a network of middlemen and brokers, dealing with the subcontracting manufacturers. The trade of clothes became the domain of big industrial groups, heavily investing on their own specific trademarks and logos.

Figure 3. Changes in Garment Industry (modified from Julie Delahanty, North South Institute, 1999)



The restructured industry concentrates its activity on research and technologies for clothes design, manufacture standardisation, sales, marketing, financial services, and

aggressive advertising campaigns to promote their brand. The labour intensive production steps, manufacturing clothes, has been shifted from high wage geographical areas in the North, to low cost salary areas in the developing countries or to low wage home-workers in the North, mainly coming from immigrant communities. By that shift, not only the wages' cost has been reduced but also the organisational power of the labour force, as home-workers in the North and workers in the developing countries tend to be less unionised, less demanding in labour rights, less organized and socially recognized.

Of course the process of restructuring has given birth to a concentration of brand and trade marks, which has also caused the disappearance of medium and small size industries, as well as the obsolete ones. As a result few giant multinational corporations dominate the garment sector all over the world. They send out their production orders to their network of manufacturers subcontractors all over the world, through a network of brokers and middlemen. The garment manufacturers in the developing countries compete between each other in order to offer the cheapest cost of labour, the most flexible, unregulated and exploitative.

The chain of middlemen, contractors and subcontractors, through which the Multinational firms manage the manufacturing of their goods, is very flexible and can change quickly to answer the Multinational needs. Moreover, the expansion of manufactures all over the world, everywhere there are sources of cheap labour, constitutes a fluid system which is easy to handle, where countries compete with each other. The system is easy to manage telephone lines and fax machines can vehiculate orders and contracts.

Countries where the manufacturers are prone to economic shocks because production can very abruptly moved from one country to the others, leaving thousands of people without work, and the import export balance deeply in red. The scarce security offer by the garment subcontractors' manufacturers is considered as having enhanced the recruitment of women, who dominated this industry all over the world.

As garment are among the few industrial products that the rich countries allow the developing countries to produce –the list include electronics & communication components too- the competition among countries become a struggle for survival for the poorest economies. What a country may gain in terms of investments and trade preference may be the result of de-investment in a neighbouring country once elected as trade beneficiary. Moving away and rebuild factories elsewhere is the constant menace expressed by the subcontractors owning and managing the factories locally, as a response to increase of workers' demands, unionisation, struggles and achievements in terms of labor rights.

While countries are left struggling and competing in order to offer the best exploitation conditions for the industry, the Multinational Garment Corporations increase their profits so enormously that Wal-Mart's annual sales are larger than the GDP of 155 countries in the world and GAP CEO's earnings is one year is six times the minimum salary of 200,000 Cambodian workers<sup>5</sup>!

A last consideration should include technology. The new organisation of the garment industry once again has reiterate the division occurring between rich and poor countries. All the technological improvement, in designing clothes in particular, or in producing new textile, have been managed and capitalized by the richest countries. Manufacturers in the South conjugate cheap labour with obsolete technologies. As a result, once finally the garment sector will be free from protection measures imposed on trade, the Northern

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<sup>5</sup> National Labour Committee web page, The race to the bottom, in the global sweatshop economy, [www.nlcnet.org](http://www.nlcnet.org)

countries will benefit from innovating technologies, whereas in the South old fashion sewing and weaving machines constitute the bulk of the industrial means of production.

### **How the textile trade is regulated**

The international trade of textiles and clothing has been governed since 1974 by the Multi Fiber Arrangement, or MFA. This agreement gave to the Most Industrialized Countries the power to quantitatively restrict imports of particular products supposed to cause damages to their own industry. On this basis the Most Industrialized Countries restricted imports of textiles from the developing countries, establishing yearly the quantities, or **quotas**, that they will accept.

The MFA significantly violated the basic principle of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs, better known as GATT. According to the GATT the imposition of quantitative restrictions should be forbidden as well as any discrimination amongst countries. The fact that both practices were allowed, through the imposition of quotas and the granting of trade preferences, shows that inequalities in application of the agreements went hand in hand the imbalances in the terms negotiated.

When the GATT went through its long round of talks better known as the Uruguay Round, lasting nearly 10 years from 1986-1995, it came out of this experience completely transformed, empowered, broader in scope, provided with powerful tools to make countries adhere to its rules: formally the World Trade Organisation, or WTO was born.

Amongst the main rules adopted by the WTO, two should be considered as the core philosophy of the organisation; the first, the *National Treatment*, states that a foreign products or company should be treated as a domestic one and not discriminated; the second, the *Most Favoured Nation* treatment, states that all countries should be considered as favoured nations, and trade concessions given by one member to another must be extended to all members.

With the establishment of WTO the old MFA has been phased out and a new agreement on textile, on line with the WTO new rules, has been established, the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing, or ATC. The ATC provides a 10 years phase out for the sector, in order to comply with the WTO rules, so that integration could be fully achieved in 2005.

If ATC should represent the elimination of all restrictions to free trade of textiles and clothes, in reality several articles strongly supported by the US and the EU, limit the free circulation of goods and maintain the protection measures in use during the MFA. Other articles link the implementation, by the Most Industrialized Countries, of free trade rules in textile, to a greater access into the developing countries markets. As happened in other sectors of trade negotiations, the Most Industrialized Countries raise the stakes instead of negotiating, so that any concession that the Developing Countries obtained was invalidated by further prices they have to pay back.

As a result, the Most Industrialized Countries continue to issue duty-free or preferential trade entry conditions, such as the **Most Favoured Nation, MFN**, and the **General System of Preference, GSP**, to single countries, upon bilateral negotiations, and concerning a restricted list of products. For example the Trade Agreement between Cambodia and the United States describes 12 categories of garments and the amount allowed to be exported to the US yearly. In fact the EU has open its market to only 14 out of a list of 219 products under restraint, and the US have removed restrictions to 13 products out of 750 items. It is

very improbable that this large amount of products will be liberalised all in once at the end of the year 2004<sup>6</sup>!

Last but not least, MFN and GSP grants are powerful political instruments: the US deny it to Nicaragua during the Sandinistas government to weaken their economy and use it to remove trade benefit from Chile and Paraguay *at the end* of the dictatorships...

### **Labour clauses as a new kind of restriction?**

The status of **MFN** or **GSP** is not granted for ever, but is submitted to revisions that are linked to the protection's needs of the country granting it, in contrast with the free-trade rules claimed by the WTO. The quotas may also be revised, decreased or increased. The US has linked an increase of 14% of their quotas of garment to the improvement of working conditions in the sector. The counterpart for this agreement, paradoxically, is not the Garment Industry, its network of Multinational Firms (mostly based in the US) and their local subcontractors, but the Government of Cambodia.

The attempt to link availability of quotas to the respect of labour standards, by making the Cambodian Government directly responsible, as main implementer of the law in the country, is very controversial. Third World countries have always strongly criticized the inclusion of labour standards within trade regulations, and have defined them as "non-tariff barriers". In fact history has shown that in many situations labour rights and labour standards were just instrumental to markets protection. "From the late 1920's, when Japanese textiles invaded Indian markets ousting Lancashire textiles there was an outcry from the Britain that Japanese labour was super-exploited. All these crocodile tears shed on behalf of Japanese labour had only one objective, to exclude Japanese competition and continues the British monopoly of the Indian market"<sup>7</sup>.

A part from the necessity to protect their market<sup>8</sup>, the increasing impact of campaigns against TNC exploitative practices, especially in the poor countries, may be the trigger for such an interest in labour rights. TNCs as GAP, who is facing a growing boycott from consumers in the US, and who is the target of demonstrations, call in courts, protests, including customers refuse to buy this label, are in strong need of getting a better image, "green washing", and re-assure the customers about their respect of labour rights. In this situation it may becoming interesting for a TNC to achieve a certified status of "labour rights respectful", through such an agreement, so to counteract the campaigns that is facing in the North.

In the case of Cambodia, the labour right clause is resulting in an enormous power given to the major trade partner in the garment sector, to taking decision on a common issue. The only real arbiter of the workers conditions, the TNC who is ordering its clothes from

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<sup>6</sup> Chakravarthi Raghavan, Take concrete steps for meaningful liberalization, Third World Economics, n 239, pag 2-5, 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Utsa Patnaik, The cost of free trade; the WTO regime and the Indian Economy, Memorial lecture February 2000.

<sup>8</sup> Despite all the declarations and statement on free-trade and economic opening the recent policy concerning steel, introducing new tariff to reduce import from outside and protect their national sector, shows clearly that the US see globalisation and economic liberalization as something applying to countries others than their own, who instead will continue to protect its economy.

the manufactures located in other countries and looking for the cheapest cost, is not part of the agreement and has no obligations even if it is the major responsible.

Other doubts concerning the efficacy of such clauses refer to the danger of creating a parallel set of factories, the ones complying to labour codes offering an official façade of good labour standards, while a great subset of irregular and non regulated factories continue with illegal practices.

Moreover, labour conditions verification, with the aim of checking compliance with labour clauses, may overlap with the initiatives taken by the Multinational Garment Corporations to clean their image of exploiters of cheap labour. Many Companies have developed Codes of Conduct and have launched monitoring missions all over the world where their clothes are produced. The aim of such strategy has been well expressed by the Canadian vice-president of manufacturers and exporters alliance: "self regulation now or legislation tomorrow. Public opinion will demand no less..."<sup>9</sup>. If critiques to these initiatives came from certain Unions, NGOs or other workers' organisations, it is also sure that other NGOs and even Unions have accepted TNC money or are involved in corporate driven monitoring. Only in Cambodia, three NGOs and one Union Federation were considering a very rich offer from GAP at the moment of publishing this report. So trade clauses on labour become synergic with the necessity of Multinational Garment Groups and more than the workers conditions, it would be the well being of one of the more powerful industry in the North that will be protected and improved. Their way of organizing the business by reducing manufacturing costs and relocate in poor countries the assembly of clothes, which is the real cause of exploitation, it is not put forth as a consideration.

### **Why women are the main resource of the industry?**

The labour market data show an increasing participation of women in the export oriented manufacturing industries, and particularly in the garment sector, all over the world. From Thailand to South Korea, from Salvador to Cambodia, garment factories employ similar percentages of women, between 80 to 90 %.

Among the cause of such a uniform sex segregation of the labour force<sup>10</sup> the new kind of employment that the export oriented productions call for. Unless other industrial settlements, these kind of manufacturers demand "labour flexibility" so to better answer the demand of a market that is moving very fast. Flexibility in this case means freedom to recruit or fire workers according to the amount of orders coming from abroad, shift to part time work when necessary, piece rate contracting of workers when necessary to increase competitiveness and all the other practices that allow factory owners to exploit a labour force without having to pay for its real, including social, costs.

All that contributes to select a female labour force, as women are traditionally cheaper, paid less, more flexible, women's work is not considered equal even in terms of job security, than men.

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<sup>9</sup> in Lynda Yanz et al. Policy options to improve standards for women garment workers in Canada and Internationally, Status of Women Canada Policy's Research Fund, 1999

<sup>10</sup>See the excellent study of Jayati Gosh study Trend in economic participation and poverty among women in the Asia Pacific Region- The study can be downloaded from Macroscan web site : [www.macroscan.org](http://www.macroscan.org)

Feminisation of labour force in export industries is also a consequence of the "widespread conviction among employers in Southeast Asia that female employees are more tractable and subservient to managerial authority, less prone to organise into unions, more willing to accept lower wages because of their own lower reservation and aspiration wages, and easy to dismiss using life-cycle criteria such as marriage and child-birth"<sup>11</sup>. Whenever women workers are able to negotiate and gain better working conditions and higher salaries, their attractiveness decrease. It is not unusual to see the gender segregation trend reversed as soon as the industrialisation process move toward more secure and better remunerated works.

But to see the trend in feminisation of labour force exclusively as the result of the choices and preferences of the factory owners may be misleading. Very powerful forces are pressuring the labour market, and the whole societies in the South, and feminisation of labour goes hand in hand with a general trend of feminisation of the poverty itself. Those forces, or macroeconomic factors, merge with the local traditional patterns of discrimination against women, and contribute to create a new world underclass, mainly female, unpaid or low paid, employed in highly exploitative enterprises or in the humbles agricultural works, more and more taking care of typical males' tasks without gaining by this fact any benefit in social recognition, giving birth to a progeny of excluded.

Among these forces, liberalisation of trade and emphasis on export production, in the era of free-trade fundamentalism, have brought to deepen regional and world divisions among rich and poor countries. Countries in the South have only labour to offer, as liberalisation brings to them only low technology investments based on cheap labour. And women will fill the requirement for cheap and flexible workers. Liberalisation goes together with privatisation of national assets and services, reducing the role of the states to a mere one of police control of internal opposition and social distress. At the mercy of market forces, disempowered by privatisation policies, states lost their capacity to regulated and distribute wealth. And women are the first victims of the lack of public services, or their deliberated dismantling to create new private business. Only public policies specifically oriented toward to enhance gender equity can fill and counteract the gender gap, but such policies, as all other social interventions of the states, are not at the top of the liberalist agenda. Left in power of free-market forces' whims, gender gap and discrimination is not going to be reduced, as well as social discrimination and poverty.

If all that wasn't enough, new policies on agriculture, on natural resources, on health and access to efficacy drugs, contribute to affected directly and indirectly women.

Not least, women are also called to face the stress and the problems that this subversion of values and social habits is triggering in the society, as they are the one who cope between the social and personal life, productive and reproductive activities, society and family. It has been pointed out that if women would adopt in the private circle the values dominating the ultra-liberal society, children would be eliminated if not healthy enough, elder parents will follow the same destiny, as well as sick husbands, and cares and attention will become a good having a cost. Privatisation of states services is based on that, and can happen because at the family levels, women are taking care of what the liberalized state refuse to support. Not only this increases the burden for women, but often they are called to mediate the conflicts that this social changes are inducing. The increasing violence against women, which is alarming high in the countries undergoing

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<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

these transformations, can be seen as the result of their role of social safety valve, on which men in particular can discharge their tensions<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Particularly focused on these issues the works of Antonella Picchio, in *Genere e Democrazia*, 1997, Rosemberg and Sellier.

The Garment Industry in Cambodia**Garment: Cambodia's unique export**

The garment industry is the "great success" of Cambodia's recent economy. Since 1994, when the first factories have been established in Cambodia the industry has grown quickly and represents actually the main industrial activity of Cambodia, as well as the main source of export revenues, as shown by the official data concerning export.

Commodity	Year 1999 (USD)	Year 1999 percent	Year 2000 (USD)	Year 2000 percent
Garments + shoes	674,204,861	99.76	1,002,691,637	98.96
Others	1,598,177	0.14	10,522,457	1.04
Total	675,803,038	100.00	1,013,214,094	100.00

(statistics from the Ministry of Commerce, Kingdom of Cambodia)

The development of the sector during the recent years needs to be put in relation with some external factors, such as:

- the granting, by US and EU, of trade preferences to Cambodia allowing the import of quotas of textiles made in Cambodia
- the constant need of cheap labour markets, by the Multinational Garment Firms

The main internal factors can be identified as:

- ❖ the progress of peace in Cambodia, that provided a relatively safer environment for regional investors, supported by a favourable legislation concerning investments' taxation (10 years tax holiday)
- ❖ the decrease of revenues of rice producers during the last years, which make even a highly exploitative and low paid work in Phnom Penh very attractive as a source of cash
- ❖ gender discrimination which continues to deny education to the girls and pressure them to take economic responsibilities within the family at all costs
- ❖ the chronic lack of job opportunities for people in the countryside

The granting of trade preferences to Cambodia by the US and the EU governments, better known as Generalized System of Preference, GSP, and status of Most Favourite Nation, MFN, allows a certain "quota" of textile commodities manufactured in Cambodia to enter industrialized countries with tariffs exemptions.

The pattern of export destination shows clearly the linkage between export destination and quotas:



Country	Year 1999 (USD)	Year 1999 percent	Year 2000 (USD)	Year 2000 percent
US	520,673,060	77	750,787,912	74.2
EU	148,689,990	22	239,143,372	23.3
Others	6,439,988	1	23,282,810	2.5
Total	675,803,038	100	1,013,214,094	100.0

(data from the Ministry of Commerce, Kingdom of Cambodia)

Despite the first factories dated since 1994 the typical evolution seen in other countries, from garments to simple electronics, and from the simplest toward more added valued productions, is not occurring in Cambodia, and at the moment is difficult to argue about the reasons for that. Surely the economic global environment is not so favourable as it was a decade ago, when most of the countries gained shares of market in electronics and telecommunication equipments. It is therefore quite questionable if the garments factories are the vanguard of an export industry that is going to develop, or if this is a kind of dead end, already decreasing after its initial boom in 1999-2000.

### Available data on the Garment Sector

Unfortunately, the sources of data concerning the Garment and Shoes production sector are not easy to compare. The public structures involved, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Industry and Ministry of Labour, work with different databases, due to their different role (release of certificates for export, check of production origin, industrial plants supervision, labour inspection etc.). Therefore, there are differences in the total number of factories, of workers employed, of activity records, of percent of females, or geographic distribution.

There are 163,000 workers according to the Ministry of Commerce, which database do not include the shoes factories; 184,000 according to a list of the Ministry of Industry, which includes all the garment and shoes factories. Both lists, when compared to the field data, seem to underestimate the number of workers. The Ministry of Labour, the structure that should supervise labour, employment and dismissal procedures, disclosed to the research team only an approximate list of factories, grouped by province, which data are not matching the other two sources and are not up-dated. Moreover, the Ministry of Industries at the time we started our data search, has two different lists, one updated in March 2001, and one updated to June 2001, showing differences in the number of workers and registered factories, as well as in their location and activity.

The following table will provide a picture of the sources of data available to the research:

sources variables	Ministry of Labour	Ministry of Industry A	Ministry of Industry B	Ministry of Commerce
n. of Garment factories	234	259	207	225
n. of shoes industries	18	16	no	no
n. of total workers	145,185	no	180,507	164,952
n. of foreign workers	no	no	no	2671

n. of female workers	126,631	no	163,140	no
n. of closed factories	no	41	3	25
n. of suspended factories	no	no	19	10
Factories location	yes*	no	yes	yes
Ownership nationality	no	no	yes	yes
Date of opening	no	no	no	yes
Export destination	no	no	no	yes
Raw material import	no	no	no	yes
Capital investment	no	no	no	yes

\* grouped by province without further details

It should be noted that the Ministry of Commerce database is the most detailed and comprehensive ones, including the most complete list of variables concerning ownership, investments, import and export etc.

### Our database

After a comparative analysis of all the sources, we have decided to work by merging the lists of the Ministries of Industry and Commerce. The data we have obtained are still not complete, but may provide an overview of the sector, and its evolution since the beginning of the activity. The database resulted after merging the lists includes 246 factories, but many variables have missing observations because of data missing in the original lists. Despite this we have considered that the relevance of these information was not impacted by the incompleteness of the database and deserves to be analysed in detail. The following table provides a summary of the number of observations available for each variable and the data missing.

Observations Variables	Valid	Missing	% of valid observations
n. of factories	246	0	100
location by province	244	2	99.2
location by district	243	3	98.8
location by commune	223	23	90.7
activity	246	0	100
kind of production	246	0	100
ownership	223	23	90.7
year of establishment	222	24	90.7
export destination	176	70	72
import raw material	180	66	73
n. of workers	210	36	85
sex ratio	194	52	79

### Location of factories

Location	frequency	percent
Phnom Penh	203	82.9
Kandal	28	11.4
Sihanoukville	6	2.4
Kompong Cham	4	1.6
Kompong Speu	1	0.4
Svay Rieng	1	0.4
Total	244	100

Most of the factories are located within the Phnom Penh Municipality area (83%), while the remnants are distributed among Kandal, Sihanoukville, Kompong Cham, Kompong Speu and Svay Rieng (17%). The factory in Svay Rieng was closed very early and has been

included in this table only, and excluded from further calculations.

### Kind of production

Production	frequency	percent
Garments	234	95.1
Shoes	12	4.9
Total	246	100

The main finished products of the sector are garments, representing nearly 95%. Shoes are not included in the US agreement, and are mainly exported to the EU and other regional

countries.

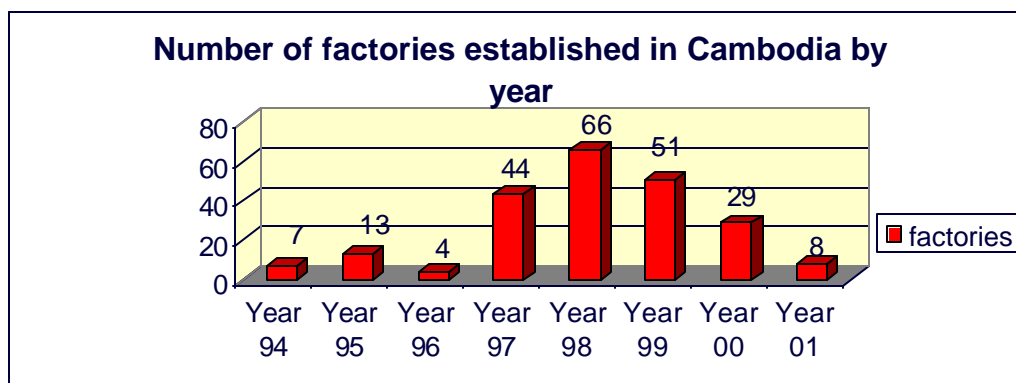
### Date of opening

Year of opening	frequency	percent
94	7	3.2
95	13	5.9
96	4	1.8
97	44	19.8
98	66	29.7
99	51	23
00	29	13.1
01*	8	3.6
total	222	100

The sector started the activity in 1994, when the first factories have been established in Cambodia. Since then, there has been a first phase of accelerate growth, lasting till the year 98, followed by the actual phase of slow down.

\*for the year 2001 data refer to the first 4 months only

Figure 4 Number of factories by year



## Activity records

activity record	frequency	percent
open	203	82.5
suspended	18	7.3
closed	25	10.2
Total	246	100.0

The statistic on the number of factories in activity is updated to June 2001, date of publishing of the lists. However, during the field research, factories that according to the lists should have been closed or suspended, were working at

full time, while factories listed in activity where closed. It is probably not just a matter of keeping trustable records, as the sector is very flexible, and changes happen quite quickly.

## Ownership

Hong Kong is the most frequent origin of investment. Whether Hong Kong represents a real local ownership or is a figurehead for a different origin is difficult to establish. Cambodia nationals own 23 factories, plus 6 in joint ventures with other foreign investors. Taiwan is the second investor and China joints Cambodia as third investor. Korea is less represented, with only 5.8%, as well as Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore. Around 10% of the total or 24 factories, are owned as a single property or in joint venture by western countries: EU, US, Canada Australia.

Nationality	frequency	percent	Nationality	frequency	percent
Hong Kong	55	24.7	Cambodia-HK	3	1.3
Taiwan	49	22.0	Thailand	2	0.9
Cambodia	23	10.3	Cambodia-Thail	2	0.9
China	23	10.3	HK-USA	2	0.9
Korea	13	5.8	Cambodia-USA	1	0.4
Malaysia	10	4.5	HK-Malaysia	1	0.4
Singapore	8	3.6	Portugal	1	0.4
USA	6	2.7	Malaysia-Taiw	1	0.4
UK	5	2.2	Bangladesh	1	0.4
Macau	4	1.8	HK-Macau	1	0.4
Indonesia	3	1.3	HK-Australia	1	0.4
Australia	3	1.3	EU	1	0.4
Canada	3	1.3	US-Taiwan	1	0.4
			<b>Total</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>100</b>

### Export destination

Export destination	frequency	Percent
US-EU	95	54.0
US only	59	33.5
EU only	17	9.7
US-Canada	1	.6
US-HK	1	.6
US-Taiwan	1	.6
US-non EU	1	.6
not for export	1	.6
Total	176	100.0

Data on export destination concern only 176 factories, but are quite indicative of the main export flow toward US and EU. Exports toward US surpass the other destinations significantly. One factory is producing for the internal market.

### Raw Material

The raw material is imported mainly from Hong Kong, China and Taiwan. Hong Kong plays the role of crucial trade/mercantile centre in the region, where merchandises arrives from outside and are redirected and traded toward other destinations.

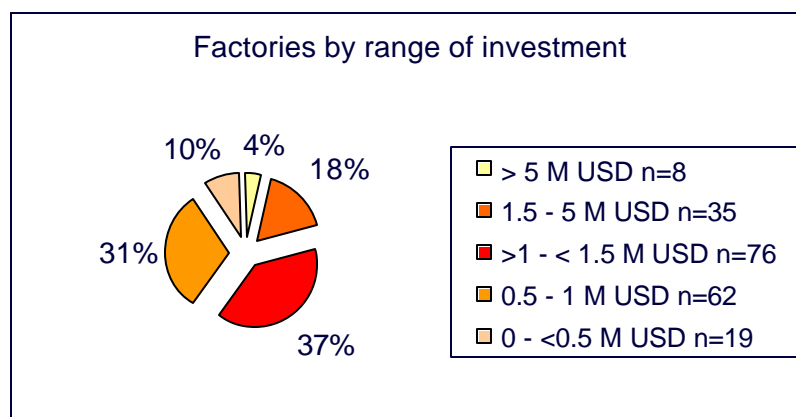
### The investments

The amount of capital invested in the Garment industries is highly variable: from a minimum of 50,000 USD, to a maximum of 11.500 million USD. However, only 8 factories required an investment of capital equal or higher than 5 millions USD. Out of 200 records, 69% of cases represent investment between 0.500 and 1.500 millions USD.

N. of cases	range (MUSD)	minimum (MUSD)	maximum (MUSD)	sum (MUSD)	mean (MUSD)	Standard dev (MUSD)
200	11.543	.050	11.593	262.893	1.314	1.345

The sum of all the investments in the sector, based on 200 observations only, is 262.8 Million USD. The mean investment is 1.314 million USD. Apparently what influence more the amount of capital needed to open a factory is the land availability: is land is buy the investment reach higher levels, whereas if land is only rented investments can be low, as low as 50,000-100,000 USD.

Figure 5. Investments range



## The Workers

The exact number of workers employed is perhaps the most controversial data and a very difficult estimation: unfortunately we were not able to get access to a General Register of Employees, and to verify the number of workers recruited and dismissed by the industry during time. It is not clear at the moment if such a register exists or not. According to the Cambodian Labour Code, each factory should have a Register of all its employees, properly updated, and the Labour Inspection Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs should monitor such files, but we could not access it or even receive an answer on its existence. Lacking this information, that should be the basis for any statistic survey of employment rates in the country, we have tried to draw a picture of the labour force based on the data we have gathered.

However, as mentioned before, direct field observations and discussions with workers, unions and other sources make us think that the available data may under-represent the real number of workers occupied. Frequently records in the official lists do not match with the workers employed, and more often the error is an underestimation. Our estimate is that a minimum number of 190,000 people have been employed by the industry at its peak development.

The turnover of the workers is at the moment very difficult to evaluate too, as a general register, as above mentioned, is not in place or was not disclosed to us. One of the most valuable resources during our search of data concerning the workers has been the Occupational Health Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. Workers need a good health certificate in order to start working once selected by the factories, so the officers in this unit are in touch with the mass of newly recruited workers coming to the Department for the medical check. The unit can easily appreciate the path of employment though the number of certificates released, as well as the rate of migration to Phnom Penh from other provinces, the workers' sex, age, marital status and health status. The officers in this unit were very helpful in providing us their estimates and their vision of the workers inflow. Unfortunately the Department, which is very committed and is taking care of the whole domain of workers safety and health, is also in chronic need of personnel and means, and do not have enough resources to establish a database where data on workers can be collected and processed.

The statistics concerning workers are based on 210 observations, less than the total number of factories. The maximum number of workers employed by one single factory is recorded within the official lists as 7032, but one of the biggest factory, if not the biggest one, has a working force of 10,000 people, according to their own press releases<sup>13</sup>. Whether this is a lack of updating of official files, or a mistake or a mean to gain some advantage is not clear.

N. of cases	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
210	6982	50	7032	184,740	879.71	931.72

<sup>13</sup> Far Easter Economic Review, *Material Gains: Tack Fat goes public even as the Asian garment industry comes under fire on labour issues*, May 2 2002.

### Workers sex ratio

The sex segregation within the garment factories working force cannot be calculated with exactitude from this set of data, as records on female and male workers come from two different databases, which number of observations do not match and do not allow a coherent comparison. However, a rough ratio of 10:90 men versus women appears, which is consistent with the literature available and other sources reports.

sex segregation	n. of records	number of workers	percent
female workers	194	159,780	90.15
male workers	192	17,457	9.85

The figures of the last Census done in Cambodia in 1998, show a total population of 11,437,656, people, out of them 5,926,248 are female and 5,511,408 are males. The population aged between 18 and 25 represents 12.5% of all women, 740,781 people, and 12.4% of all men, 683,415. According to our estimation of the total number of workers employed, of which 10% are males and 12 % are older than 25, a minimum of 150,000 young women aged between 18 and 25 have been employed by the sector. They represent within their age group, a percent of around 20%. This figure is an estimate, but shows a significant trend, concerning a generation of women employed in the factories.

During the villages' survey, when we have traced back the workers migration patterns, we have found villages where the number of women having migrated to Phnom Penh to work in the factories largely exceeds this percentage. In some of these villages young people could hardly be found around as only old people and children were still living there. Again, a register of the workers employed and dismissed will be the only way to validate this estimation and provide a better figure.

### The geographical development of the industry

A specific attention has been given to the geographical development of the industries. We have chosen to approach the garment workers reality as a whole, where labour and living conditions interrelate. If the main problems faced by the workers are linked to their very exploitative working conditions, it is also true that lack of services available to them contribute to enhance exploitation and social exclusion. Some of these problems can be faced through the development of a net of public services, subsidised by the state, for the workers. Such services need to be localized and strongly rooted in the local context, following the establishment of new workers settlements on the urban and peri-urban territory. Few attempts have been made to analyse the benefits and costs of the industrial development in the recent years, in terms of impact on the existent urban structures of the new mass of people settled around the factories. What, apart from employment, have the factories brought to the collectivity? have they contributed to some social costs share? have they shared urbanisation costs? what the local authorities have done and what are they planning to do in the future? In order to start a similar approach, we have considered that a geographical analysis of the sector development could offer some indication for further researches.

Apparently, the situation in Phnom Penh looks quite un-regulated. Around the factories the areas where the workers live seems to have mushroomed without an urban frame and clear rules.

### Location by districts

District	n. of factories	percent
Dangkor	44	21.6
Mean Chey	71	34.8
Russey Keo	49	24
Toul Kork	25	12.3
Chamcar Mon	7	3.4
Daun Penh	5	2.5
7 Makara	2	1
Total	203	100

Within the different provinces factories have been established only in some districts, following the main communications axes. In Phnom Penh factories grown mainly in 4 districts: Dangkor, Manchey, Russey Keo and Tuol Kork, following road n.4, n.5 and n.2.

Initially, when the first factories were settled in Phnom Penh, the local authorities did not yet have adopted policies concerning industrial activities development in urban areas. Afterward, the capital municipal has adopted of new rules aimed to space out industrial settlements from the human ones. Therefore, while the first factories were located within the urban fabric, practically among the houses, the more recent ones have been built in farther areas. Fortunately the garment industry is not particularly hazardous for workers and public health, however, at least on case of environmental pollution has been reported, with a factory in Tuol Kork discarding the chemicals for jeans washing directly outside and polluting the neighbouring houses.

District	Commune	n. of factories	percent
<b>Dangkor</b>	Chaom Chau	23	54.8
	Kakab	8	19
	Dangkor	6	14.2
	Trapeang Krasang	5	12
	<b>all communes</b>	<b>42*</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Mean Chey</b>	Chak Angraek Krom	41	58.6
	Stung Manchey	26	37.1
	Chbar Ampeuv	2	2.8
	Boeng Tumpung	1	1.5
	<b>all communes</b>	<b>70*</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Russey Keo</b>	Toul Samgkae	17	37
	Tuek Tla	15	32.6
	Klm 6	4	8.7
	Russey Keo	3	6.5
	Svay Pack	3	6.5
	Prek Leap	2	4.35
	Phnom Penh Tmey	2	4.35
	<b>all</b>	<b>46*</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Toul Kork</b>	Boeng Kak 1	7	
	Tuk Lak 3	5	



	Boeng Kak 2	4	
	Tuk Lak 2	3	
	Boeng Salang	2	
	Psa Daem Ko	1	
	Depo 2	1	
	Depo 1	1	
	<b>all</b>	<b>24*</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Chamcar Mon</b>	Tonle Bassac	2	
	Toul Svey Prey	1	
	Tumnub Teuk	1	
	Boeng Keng Kang 1	1	
	<b>all</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Daun Penh</b>	<b>Srah Cha</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>7 Makara</b>	<b>O'Russey 3</b>	<b>1</b>	

### Other provinces

Province	District	n. of factories
Kandal	Angk Snuol	17
	Ta Khmau	4
	Sa'ang	3
	Kandal Stung	2
	Kien Svay	2
	Ponie Leu	1
Sihanoukville	Mittapheap	6
Kompong Cham	Kompong Seam	4
Kompong Speu	Samrong	1

In the other provinces factories have been built along the main communication axes, or in special areas recently designated for industrial development.

### Geographical development during the years

The expansion of the industrial activities during the years shows the emergence of new industrial locations, as in Dangkor district. Here factories dominate the urban landscape, with their corollary of new workers slums of wooden shacks looking more as refugees' camps. There the whole life of the workers is confined between the house and the factory, as there is nothing around, and a drive to Phnom Penh by mototaxi is costly as the area is farther than the airport.

In Russey Keo the situation varies, from urban locations near the road number 5, integrated in a inhabited context of houses and basic services, to the very far locations in Toul Sankae, where the landscape resembles the one in Dangkor. The new industrial settlements have been build as cathedrals in the desert, and despite a big panel describing the place as an industrial park, in Cham Chao, Dangkor, the scenery around is one of desolation and unplanned development.

Manchey industrial settlements are all along the National Road n. 2, toward Takmao. There factories are aligned on both sides of the road, and workers live in houses nearby, as all the houses' owners settled there before are now renting rooms to them or building new facilities with the same purpose.

District	'94	'95	'96	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01*	total
Dangkor			1	5	13	13	4	2	38
Mean Chey	2	7		10	24	15	9	1	68
Russey Keo	1	3	1	10	10	7	9	2	43
Tuol Kork	1	1	2	4	9	5	1	1	24
Chamcar M.	1	1		2		3			7
Daun Penh		1		4					5
7 Makara	1				1				2
Total	7	13	4	35	56	40	23	6	187

### Distribution in provinces during years

The establishment of factories in the provinces is a more recent phenomenon, due to government incentives and plans to decentralise industrial activities from Phnom Penh towards the periphery.

Province	District	'94	'95	'96	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01	total
Province	Kandal	1			7	8	6	3	1	26
Districts	Ang Snoul				3	5	4	2		14
	Ta Khmau	1				2			1	4
	Sa'ang				2		1			3
	Kandal S.				2					2
	Kien Svay					1	1			2
	Ponhea Leu							1		1
Province	K. Cham						1	3		4
District	K. Seam						1	3		4
Province	Sihanoukv.				1	1		1		3
District	Mitthapeap				1	1		1		3
Province	K. Speu						1			1
District	Samrong T						1			1
Total all provinces		1			8	9	8	7	1	34

### Distribution by nationality of ownership

We have tried to verify if the factories' location follows some criteria other than time, as for example the nationality of the ownership. Mainly nationality is distributed uniformly among the communes and districts, with a major preference given to Phnom Penh locations. The only exception is represented by a group of 16 factories in Chak Angkrae Krom commune, Mean Chey District, Phnom Penh, all registered as Hong Kong proprieties.

Ownership Nationality	Phnom Penh n of factories (%)	Provinces n. of factories (%)	total
Hong Kong	52 (94.5)	3 (5.5)	55
Taiwan	38 (77.5)	11 (22.5)	49

Cambodia	18 (78)	5 (22)	23
China	19 (90.5)	2 (9.5)	21
Korea	8 (61.5)	5 (38.5)	13
Malaysia	9 (90)	1 (10)	10

### Geographical distribution of labor force

As for other calculations, these data are not complete and can only be read as indicators of a trend, as the total number of workers employed may be underestimated.

location	n of factories	average workers per factory $\pm$ Std dev.	sum of workers	female workers %	minimum n of workers	maximum n of workers
Phnom Penh	175	884 $\pm$ 968	154,763	90.34	51	7032
Kandal	25	994 $\pm$ 780	24,856	90.98	50	3231
Kompong Cham	3	391 $\pm$ 167	1,173	90.34	287	584
Sihanoukville	5	698 $\pm$ 630	3,492	90.98	255	1779
Total	208	885 $\pm$ 933	184,284	90.28	50	1032

### Workers in Phnom Penh compared to local population

Districts/ Communes	n of workers	total population	female population
Dangkor	33,209	92,461	47,670
▪ Chaom Chau	17,445	19,740	9,888
▪ Kakab	5,798	17,679	9,338
▪ Trapeang Krasang	4,032	3,013	1,583
Mean Chey	54,610	157,112	82,612
▪ Chak Angrae K	36,644	19,814	11,247
▪ Stung Mancheay	15,270	31,740	16,641
Russey Keo	47,181	180,076	94,691
▪ Tuol Sangkae	18,113	27,244	14,137
▪ Tuek Thla	15,763	33,139	18,796
▪ Prek Lieb	3,915	10,616	5,867

When the number of workers is compared with the local population resulting from the '98 census, the results that appear are significant. However these numbers need to be read by keeping in mind that some workers are not new settlers, as they lived in the areas before, and other may travel daily from peri-urban area to the districts where the factories are located. We were not able to collect viable information on the percentage of migrating workers out of the total number of workers employed, but sources from the

Occupational health department in Phnom Penh consider that nearly 90% of the people they visit to grant them health certificates are migrants coming from outside Phnom Penh.

However the total population in the districts and communes includes people under 18 (nearly 45% of the population in Cambodia is under 18 years of age) and elder people, whereas workers belong mainly to a specific age category, 18-25.

Somehow, these data confirm what is under the eyes of all people living in Phnom Penh: an unnumbered mass of young women moving around factories, travelling along the roads, eating at street restaurants, living in new compounds around factories. Surely the impact of these new settlers has been quite significant on the urban areas where they live. We were not able to obtain from the Municipality and the districts representatives relevant information on how they have been confronted with this situation and what measures they have developed to support such change, what problems are they facing - despite attempts to involve them in our reflection and research -

What we have seen, in all districts where we went to interview the workers, is a general lack of services, including basic hygiene, and a wild proliferation of a system of housing, left in the hands of privates who thrive by exploiting the workers needs. House' owners rent one or two rooms to workers, at 5 \$ months a person, squeezing even 20 girls in one room (personal observation in Russey Keo, where a family rented in its own house to 50 workers, one minuscule room for 10 males workers, the down stair room to 25 girls and one up stair room to other 25 girls). Other house owners have build shacks in the yards, or just rooms, and rent it for 20 \$ a month<sup>14</sup> normally without a sufficient number of toilets, garbage collection, safety. Among the services that are dramatically absents, cheap and quality public health, any kind of public education, cheap public transports, housing, waste management, road repair, etc.

### Evolution of employment

As with other tables concerning the number of workers, these data may be incomplete but are interesting to understand the evolution of employment during these years. Unfortunately we lack quantitative data on workers dismissal and re-employment. From the discussions with the workers we know that other forms of un-regulated work are current: workers are recruited by factories on a monthly, weekly, or even daily base. Of course these practice may further invalidate the official statistics, and increase the number of non-registered workers employed by the industry.

		workers employed		
year of opening	n of factories	sum	cumulative sum	mean $\pm$ std deviation

<sup>14</sup> Among them an NGOs senior officer, who is an expert in poverty assessment. His place was "better" because the rent was per room and not per person. It was so dark, even in daytime, that we could not write the answers of our questionnaire.

'94	7	10,080	10,080	1,440 ± 1,290
'95	8	13,593	23,673	1,699 ± 1,996
'96	4	10,265	33,938	2,566 ± 3,014
'97	34	35,529	69,467	1,044 ± 1,013
'98	60	51,714	121,181	861 ± 746
'99	42	29,837	151,018	710 ± 518
'00	28	17,948	168,966	641 ± 445
'01	7	1,344	170,310	192 ± 97
<b>Total</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>170,310</b>		<b>896 ± 960</b>

### What future for the garment industry in Cambodia?

From the above figures it appears that the garment industry in Cambodia has reach a peak, and that the actual trend is toward a reduction of the number of factories. Several factors influence this trend. The general economic recession which started in the first semester of the year 2001 has had an impact on the sector. In June 2001, according to an Associated Press release, GAP department stores in the US "were languish"<sup>15</sup>. and according to a GAP speak person: we expect a sales drop but margins fell well below plan" GAP is the major brand operating in Cambodia through contracted factories, and of course any slow down in its US sales have repercussions in Cambodia garment production Nevertheless, the September 11 attack has inversely boosted the garment production in Cambodia as many order from TNC to Pakistan have been re-rooted toward Cambodia for fear of war and insecurity in Central South Asia. The same happen with order for Indonesia, which arrived in Cambodia instead.

Today's economic outcomes in the US, despite the claims of an exceptional recovery, look still stagnant. The fact that GAP garment corporation has dismissed a significant number of employees in its headquarter<sup>16</sup>, do not let foresee a prompt resumption of the garment sector in Cambodia to the levels of before the crisis.

Other circumstances will soon affect the Garment industry worldwide, and Cambodia will inevitably be involved in these changes. The 2005 dismissal of the quota system that now regulates import in the Northern countries should put the manufacturing countries –mainly located in the South- on an equal basis of competition. But how this will happen is at the moment difficult to preview. Till now the Northern countries has always found way to avoid implementation of agreements that go against their trade interests. In the case of the textile quotas the majority of textiles, the ones with the highest added value, are still protected, and it is improbable that their production, domain of the North, will be totally liberalized in the next three years.

Cambodia is also among the countries that are knocking at the WTO door for getting admittance. In a recent declaration the government officers involved in the procedure for entrance declared that the acceptance could even be anticipated at the end of 2003 instead of 2005. Cambodia will be submitted to the WTO rules therefore loosing its trade bilateral agreements' advantages and struggle with other countries, which production capacities and costs may be highly competitive. China, in particular, will have

<sup>15</sup> CNBC & The Wall Street Journal, Stocks and Economy: *US retailers' sales largely disappointed in June*, Associated press release, July 13 2001.

<sup>16</sup> Global Exchange representative, personal communication.

the advantages of scale economy, enormous reserves of labour forces at low costs and efficient infrastructures.

As already mentioned a part from the garment industries no other typical export aimed productions, as basic electronic components or communications electric parts, or other manufactures, have appeared till now in Cambodia. The known trend in industrialisation, passing through well defined steps from the simplest productions, garment, toward increasing technology and skills, is not occurring, Cambodia industrial development looks more as a cul-de-sac, where garment constitute the beginning and the end of the path.

## PART 2 RESULTS OF INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND WORKSHOPS DISCUSSIONS

Foreword

The database resulted after the data input contains 154 individual records and more than 100 variables. Unfortunately there are missing data in some of the variables. We have chosen to quote in the tables only the total number of valid observations, to simplify the reading and avoid double percentages calculations. The missing data, that in some variables are quite significant, are due to some inaccuracies, especially during the first set of interviews, conducted when the interviewers were learning. In some cases the lack of time of the workers has influenced the outcomes, so that only the first part of the questionnaires are complete.

A total of 5 workshops were held in the WAC premises. The workshops were simply structured, with a brief introduction/discussion of the aim, then group discussions focused on a list of questions concerning relationships with others, changes in life, hopes, problems, and finally a group report to share with others their results. In italic in the text are reported the results of this process, which have been all included in the results without selection or ranking. Only one group of quotes, which refers to the last workshop organised with a large number of workers, have been kept separate from the others, as it show clearly the progress made by the workers in identifying their rights and denouncing in a strong articulate way abuses, frauds and illegal acts from the factories management. Unless specified the contents were expressed by women workers.

The workers understood that the workshop was a free space where they could talk freely and without repercussions (no factory spies listening, no house owner or managers turning around etc.) and they spoke out on what represented for them the most lacerating and outrageous issues: the social prejudice against them, and the injustice and humiliations linked to working conditions. This process goes on with a charge of emotions very difficult to handle for them. The workshops results are a living material, dotted with tears and sorrow.

**Sample selection**

The workers have been interviewed within their own houses or nearby, in three of the districts where the factories are located in the capital: Russey Keo, Mancheay and Dangkor. We have interviewed 95 workers in the commune of Tuol Sankae, located in Russey Keo district, 29 workers in the communes of Chak Angrae Leu and Chak Angrae Kraom located in Mancheay district, and 30 workers in the commune of Cham Chao located in Dangkor district. The workers were chosen randomly, following the road and going house by house, room by room, asking if they agree to be interviewed. In each district a little number of male workers have been interviewed too.

sex \ district		?	?	Total
Russey Keo	Count	85	10	95
	% within sex	63.0%	52.6%	61.7%
Mancheay	Count	25	4	29

	% within sex	18.5%	21.1%	18.8%
Dangkor	Count	25	5	30
	% within sex	18.5%	26.3%	19.5%
Total	Count	135	19	154
	% within sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

### Eligibility

The only criterion we have kept for the workers' enrolment in our sample has been their confirmed employment by a factory. Workers who were waiting for a job, looking for being recruited or selected but not having yet started the job were not admitted. Approaching the workers house by house along the road does not allow us to select other characteristics, as for example the factories where the workers were employed. The sample of 154 workers so selected resulted in 46 different factories.

The workshop participants have been selected by inviting the workers who have already answered to our questionnaire. The first workshop has been the most difficult to organise, as the women workers were suspicious and not confident. Some girls, the day of the workshop when the organisation's car came to pick them up were reluctant and clearly said that they will not leave their houses with unknown people as they fear being trafficked. After the first workshop they feel more comfortable and confident, and we had to face the opposite problem, too many volunteers that ask to attend the workshop, unfortunately beyond our office capacity. The medium attendance has been 50 workers, with the last two workshops more numerous. Most of the participants were workers we have interviewed, but during the last workshops participation was free. Male workers participated in one only workshop, that's why their quotes are less represented.

### Workers social identity

The workers' identity in this case should be understood as social identity and not as workers identification. The workers answering our questionnaire were not asked to identify themselves, nor their names or other specific identity data were recorded to protect the workers from any kind of enquiry or retaliation based on the information they disclose to us.

### Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percent
female	135	87.7
male	19	12.3
Total	154	100.0

The percentage of male workers in our sample is comparable to the number of male workers working in the industry, 12.3% compared to around 10% male in the total population.



During the discussions the workers elaborate on the gender segregation in the garment industry. It is interesting to note that they are not unaware of the main reasons for recruiting more women than men, but provides also an idea of the perception that both gender have about their characteristics and capacities.

*Factories do not look so much for men because men are stronger than women, if the boss force them to do something they can fight back and strike, but women don't do it, they are afraid of bosses and do not react.*

*Men do not have sewing skills as women have.*

*If men and women work together, some will fall in love and make the work late.*

*Families prefer to keep the sons in the village, to help farming, and send the girls to work because they can bring back more money.*

*Men protest against owners and if they don't get enough salary they organise a demonstration.*

*Men are recruited for particular tasks, as working at the weaving machine.*

*Men always protest if they are blamed, but women don't dare to do so.*

*Female workers work hard, trying all their best and are always afraid to lose their job if they protest against owners.*

*Is the factory policy to choose female workers.*

*Male workers have to pay lot of money to get the job, they paid the double price, 100 \$, female paid only one half.*

*For weaving they prefer to recruit men because they work harder than the girls and get more money than female workers.*

*Female workers work faster than men, but men have more energy and get more money.*

**Males workers:**

*Men cause a lot of problems, they demonstrate and go on strike.*

*Women can save much more money.*

*Men cannot sew while women can better do these tasks.*

*Women are more patient than men.*

*Women don't dare to protest with the managers when the salary arrives late, or for other problems.*

**Age**

Table 3. Age of the workers

Years	Frequency			Percent
	?	?	both	
16	3		3	1.9
17	3		3	1.9
18	14		14	9.1
19	10		10	6.5
20	31	9	40	26.0
21	13	2	15	9.7
22	18	1	19	12.3
23	12	2	14	9.1
24	5	1	6	3.9
25	9	2	11	7.1
27	4		4	2.6
28	2	1	3	1.9
29	2		2	1.3
30	5	1	6	3.9
32	1		1	.6
33	1		1	.6
40	1		1	.6
42	1		1	.6
Total	135	19	154	100.0

The data show a very young population: 83.7 % of the interviewed are 25 years old or younger and 19.4% are under the age of 20. The statistic mean is 22 years , but the mode, the most frequent value concentrating 26% of respondents, is 20 years, and the median value is 21.

Table 4 Age statistics

sex	?	?	both
values			
Valid	135	19	154
Missing	0	0	0
Mean	22.00	22.21	22.03
Median	21.00	21.00	21.00
Mode	20.00	20.00	20
Std. Deviation	4.13	2.99	4.00
Range	26	10	26
Minimum	16	20	16
Maximum	42	30	42

and the more frequent value is 20, and the median 21, but age of males is less scattered, and the range is only 10 years.

The age main statistic values show similar patterns among sexes, as the mean is 22

**Where they migrate from**

Table 5. Province of origin

Province	Frequency	Percent
Prey Veng	42	27.3
Kampong Cham	27	17.5
Svay Rieng	16	10.4
Kandal	14	9.1
Takeo	12	7.8
Kampong Thom	11	7.1
Kampong Speu	10	6.5
Battambang	7	4.5
PNP	6	3.9
Kampot	5	3.2
Koh Kong	1	.6
Kratie	1	.6
Poursat	1	.6
Siem Reap	1	.6
Total	154	100.0

Migration originates mainly from the provinces of the plain surrounding Phnom Penh. The predominance of Prey Veng province is quite significant, 27.3% of all respondents. This does not reflect Prey Veng population size, as the province is the third for population after Kompong Cham, Kandal and Phnom Penh. The second province of provenience in our sample is Kompong Cham, which is also the most populated province in Cambodia. Svay Rieng is the third province of provenience in our sample, but is the 12th province by population in Cambodia. Kandal is the fourth province in our sample, but the second most populated in the country.

Takeo, Kompong Thom and Kompong Speu show similar percentage of provenience among the workers in our group. Other provinces farther from the capital are less represented, as Kratie, Poursat or Siem Reap. Six workers came from within the Phnom Penh Municipality, from rural areas located in Russey Keo district.

### Migration differences among sexes

If analysed by sex, the data on workers prove nience show different patterns.

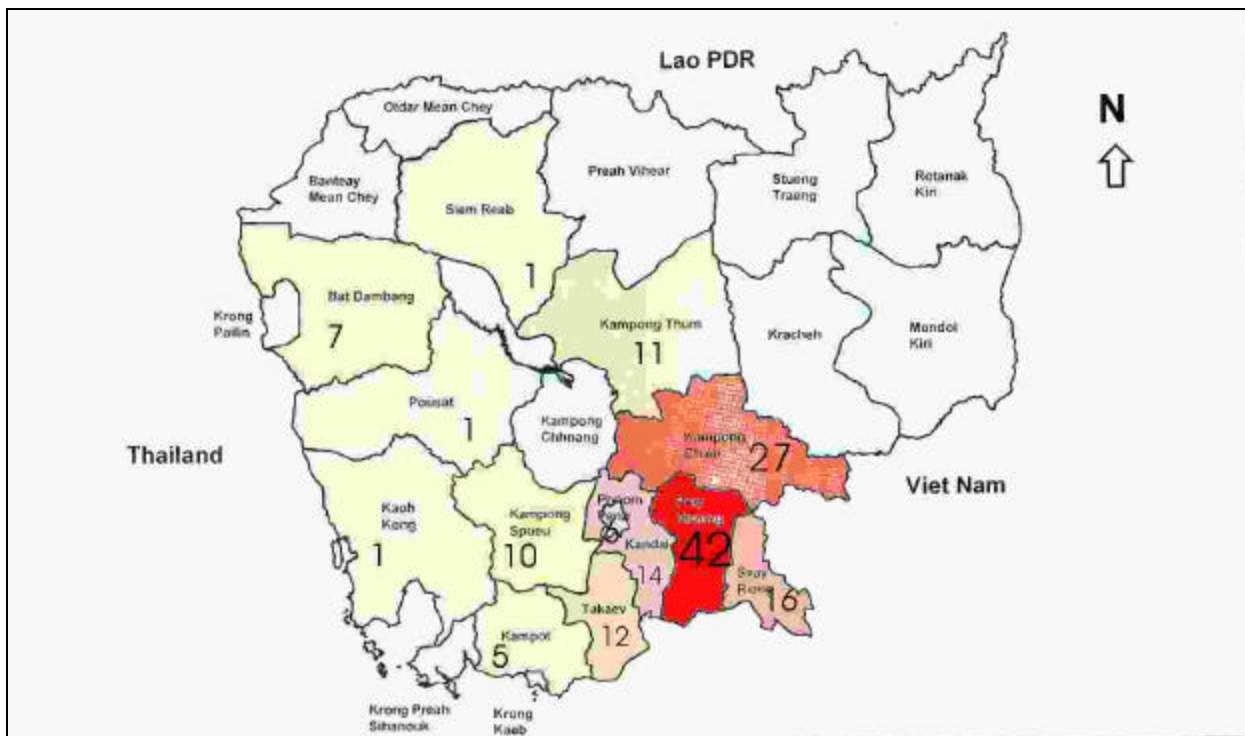
Table 6 Origin related to sex

sex \ province	?	?	Total
PNP	6		6
Prey Veng	41	1	42
Kampong Thom	11		11
Kampot	4	1	5
Battambang	6	1	7
Koh Kong	1		1
Svay Rieng	15	1	16
Kampong Cham	23	4	27
Kandal	12	2	14
Kampong Speu	5	5	10
Takeo	8	4	12
Kratie	1		1
Poursat	1		1
Siem Reap	1		1
Total	135	19	154

The provinces' ranking for men migration change substantially, most of them in our sample come from Kampong Speu, Kampong Cham and Takeo, and the predominance of Prey Veng is cancelled. What comes out as a suggestion from this data is that the patterns of migration differ among sexes.

So the strategies to secure incomes through migration implies different jobs, located in different areas. During the village survey in Prey Veng, we have learned that most of the girls where in Phnom Penh, while many boys from these villages were working in Thailand, or employed as construction workers in the capital.

Figure 1 Workers origin in Cambodia



**Districts of provenience**

Table 7. Districts of origin

Prey Veng	N	%	K. Cham	N	%	Svay Rieng	N	%	Kandal	N	%
K.Trabaek	7	16.7	Srei Santhor	13	48.1	Rumduol	7	43.8	Lvea Aem	4	28.6
Sithor Kandal	7	16.7	Kang Meas	7	25.9	K. Rou	5	31.3	Ponhea Lueu	3	21.4
Pea Reang	6	14.3	Kampong Siem	2	7.4	Svay Chrum	2	12.5	Kein Svay	2	14.3
Preah Sdach	4	9.5	Kr.Chhmar	2	7.4	Svay Teap	1	6.3	S' ang	2	14.3
Kanhchriech	4	9.5	Prey Chhor	2	7.4	Svay Rieng	1	6.3	Khsach Kandal	1	7.1
Peam Chor	3	7.1	Ou Reang Ov	1	3.7	Total	16	100.0	Kandal Stueng	1	7.1
Me Sang	3	7.1	Total	27	100.0				Kaoh Thom	1	7.1
Ba Phnom	3	7.1							Total	14	100.0
Kamchay Mear	2	4.8									
Mesang	2	4.8									
Sning	1	2.4									
Total	42	100.0									

The districts of origin located within the four main provinces for numerosity show different patterns of migration. In Kandal province the districts of origin are scattered all over the province, but in the other three provinces there are clusters districts, as Kompong Trabek in Prey Veng, Srei Santhor in Kompong Cham, Romdul in Svay Rieng, where many people migrate from.

A field visit to Prey Veng, and specifically in Pea Reang and Kompong Trabek, in January 2002, has revealed a very differentiated and complex situation. In Pea Reang migration to the garment factories involved more than 20% of the girls aged from 18 to 25 years. The remittances from the migrants were utilised to support agricultural income and secure families' earnings put at stake by reduced yields. However, houses were refurbished and lot of new roofs and houses could be seen along the road. Some family had two or even three daughters in the factories, and that was reflected by their housing conditions. But in Kampong Trabek we found a situation of despair, environmental degradation, debt, neediness and hunger. Their migration to find work in the factory was considered a choice for the better off families, who can effort to pay for the trip and the job. The poorest moved to look for work in the rubber plantations in Kompong Cham, in the salt fields in Kampot, or come to beg in Phnom Penh. Families sell everything, move towards other places and never come back.

It is crucial to take in consideration all the indications coming from these data, in order to understand social changes and situate them within the general context of Cambodia and even beyond.

### Education

The group of workers we have interviewed provides a quite alarming picture of the educational level achieved, or not achieved, by the generation aged between 17-18 and 25-27 years in Cambodia.

Level reached	Frequency	Percent
primary not completed	66	42.9
secondary	37	24.0
primary	29	18.8
none	15	9.7
higher	7	4.5
Total	154	100.0

52.6% of the workers interviewed has no education or did not completed the primary school. Only 24 % have had access to the secondary school.

Level	Frequency	Percent
can read and write	88	57.1
can but with difficulties	54	35.1
cannot	12	7.8
Total	154	100.0

When questioned about their literacy level, the workers who answer positively were only 57.1%. Out of them few declared to be illiterates and a more consistent group acknowledged not to read and write easily.

edu \ sex	none	primary not completed	primary	secondary	high	total
female	14	63	26	29	3	135
% within sex	10.4%	46.7%	19.3%	21.5%	2.2%	100.0%
male	1	3	3	8	4	19
% w sex	5.3%	15.8%	15.8%	42.1%	21.1%	100.0%
both	15	66	29	37	7	154
total	9.7%	42.9%	18.8%	24.0%	4.5%	100.0%

Data concerning education show a gender gap: only 21% of males do not have education or have not completed the primary school, while the percentage for the females is 57%. Among the boys 63% have a secondary or highest level, compared to 27% for the girls.

literacy \ sex	can read and write	can with difficulties	cannot	total
female	74	50	11	135
	54.8%	37.0%	8.1%	100.0%
male	14	4	1	19
	73.7%	21.1%	5.3%	100.0%
both	88	54	12	154
total	57.1%	35.1%	7.8%	100.0%

Consequently literacy too shows gender related differences: 45% of all the female workers can read and write with difficulties or cannot, while the percentage of males with this problem is only 26%.

literacy \ education	can read and write	can with difficulties	cannot	Total
none	5	1	9	15
primary not completed	26	37	3	66
primary	22	7		29
secondary	28	9		37
higher	7			7
total	88	54	12	154

The literacy level does not reflect directly the grade of education achieved by the workers, especially for the workers who declared to read and write with difficulties: 9 workers with secondary education have difficulties in reading and writing.

Such data are not new, as gender gap in education in Cambodia is well documented. What is more disturbing is this difference in access to and retention in the educational system referred to a relatively young population.

### Marital status and family

status \ sex	single	married	divorced	widow	remarried	Total
female	103	24	3	4	1	135
male	16	3	0	0	0	19
	119	27	3	4	1	154

The majority of the workers are single, few are married, divorced, widows or remarried.

marital status	frequency	percent
before entering factory	23	65.7
after entering factory	5	14.3
widow before entering factory	4	11.4
missing data	3	8.6
Total	35	100.0

Marriage occurs mainly before entering the factory, very few workers get married after being recruited. In fact by observing the number of working hours per day -during the survey people did not come home before 6-7 pm, or after - and put it in relation with the actual minimum salary of 45USD. You can support a family only if you integrate normal work with overtime, but in this case you cannot take care of a family.

## Children

children	Frequency	percent
none	130	84.4
1	10	6.5
2	10	6.5
3	3	1.9
5	1	.6
Total	154	100.0

Only 15.6% of the workers have children, and among the 24 workers with children only 2 have had children after entering the factory. The reasons are the same mentioned above: working in the factories push you to choose between time for child's care and extra salary. Only solid familial nucleus, with two or more adults, can effort it.

	Frequency	Percent
before	22	92
after	1	4
1before 2 after	1	4
Total	154	100.0

Only few workers with children where leaving with them at the time of the interview: most of them have children left at the village, living with their parents, particularly the mother.

## Family of origin

### Number of relatives

The family the workers were asked to describe was their original family, the one they have left to migrate to Phnom Penh. In cases of married workers, they were asked to describe their present family. However, in most of the cases the married couple was still living with the parents. The cohabitation with the original family after marriage allows the women married with children to come to Phnom Penh and work in the factory.

relatives	Frequency	Percent
15	1	.7
12	2	1.3
11	8	5.4
10	8	5.4
9	14	9.4
8	15	10.1
7	19	12.8
6	35	23.5
5	14	9.4
4	11	7.4
3	13	8.7
2	7	4.7
1	2	1.3
Total	149	100.0

The average number of relatives living together is 6.48, which is also the most frequent value. 68% of the workers interviewed have families of 6 or more members. The very high number of relative in one family corresponded to a situation where the families of both spouses have merged together. A quite significant number of small families, 3 or less members, were found, representing 14.7 of the sample.

### Head of family and his/her occupation

We have analysed the family composition, by defining the members' relationship with the interviewed, their age and their occupation.

The following tables cross-relate the members' parental link with the interviewed and their occupation. The first member of the family is the one perceived by the interviewed as the chief of family: normally the father, the mother in case the father is absent, in some cases the husband, the sister or other family members.

	F	M	ES	EB	YB	BL	U	H	ML	Total
farmer	86	20	3			1	1			111
motor taxi	1			1				2		4
housework	4	4								8
sick at home								1		1
seller	2	3								5
gov officer	4									4
fisherman	2									2
driver	1									1
construction worker	1							1		2
too old to work	5								1	6
labourer			1							1
taxi driver	1									1
bicycle guard	1									1
house builder	1									1
monk					1					1
Total	109	27	4	1	1	1	1	4	1	149

Abbreviations: F=father, M=mother, ES=elder sister, EB=elder Brother, YS=younger sister, YB= younger brother, H=husband, W=wife, S=son, D=daughter, GF=grand father, GM= grand mother, GS=grand son, GD=grand daughter, U=uncle, A=aunt, FL=father in law, ML=mother in law, N=nephew, Ne=niece, SL=sister in law, BL=brother in law, SF=step father, SM= step mother, DL=daughter in law, SL=son in law



	M	SM	ES	EB	YS	YB	BL	DL	GM	GF	A	Ne	N	Total
farmer	82	1	11	1	3		1		1	1	2	1	1	105
motor taxi						1								1
housework	8		3				1							12
seller	8													8
gov officer	1													1
garment worker	1		1		2									4
taylor			1											1
fisherman	1													1
student					3	2		1						6
too young to work						2								2
construction worker				2										2
too old to work	2								1					3
learning hair decoration			1											1
Total	103	1	17	3	8	5	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	147

In the majority of the cases, 73.1%, member 1 is the father. Mothers head of family represent 18.12% of the sample. Other members, including husbands, are less represented. Farming is the main occupation among members 1. Surprisingly the number of fathers doing house-work corresponds to the number of mothers having the same occupation, showing an unusual pattern of domestic task repartition. Among the male members listed as "too old to work" one is 44 years old, one 57, while the other three are over 60. Members 1 age is on average  $51.1 \pm 10.5$  years.

Mothers represent the majority of members 2, followed by older sisters. Farming is the main occupation. One brother in law, 30 years old, is at home, while the three persons too old to work, two mothers and one grand mother, are in this case over 65 years . 4 people are employed in garment factories. The average age of member 2 is  $42.8 \pm 13.8$  years.

The other family members data have been summarized and commented but the whole data analysis is reported in Appendix to avoid redundancy.

As age decrease, the number of people having as main occupation farming decrease too. 21 persons are working in the garment factories among the members 3 and three among them are brothers. One elder brother is doing house-work, two brothers are monks. Elder sisters show a range of occupations quite varied. Among the occupations that replace farming for young or middle age men, mototaxi, construction worker, labourer. Garment factories represent the main output for young females after farming, but some women are employed as construction worker too. The average age of members 3 is  $27.8 \pm 15.8$

Studying is the main occupation of members 4, among other occupations 12 are garment workers and 40 are farmers. The range of employments includes rubber plantations, migration to Thailand, etc. One elder brother stays at home, a definition that is not applied to female relatives. The average age for members 4 is  $22.9 \pm 10.8$  years. Still 8 persons among members 5 are employed in the garment factories, but the majority is too young to work, Farming is the second occupation after studying. The average age is  $19.3 \pm 8.4$  years.

The majority of the people recorded as members 6 are studying, but 6 people are employed in the garment factories. Their age mean is  $17.5 \pm 11.5$  years

The average age of member 7 is  $15.9 \pm 11.3$  years. The main occupation after studying is farming, and after that working in a garment factory.

Members 8 age average is 16 years  $\pm 15.1$ . A part from studying, farming is the main occupation, but 2 people are recorded as unemployed. One member is working in the garment factories.

The average age of members 9 is  $17 \pm 18$  years, most of them are studying or are too young to work, or too old, but there are still two people employed in the factories.

Members 10 and 11 have similar patterns: they are young, 11 years average, they are studying or are too young to have any occupation, but there are still, among them two garment workers. Members 12,13, 14, and 15 are in total 5 people, two of them are farmers, one is a construction worker, one is a student and one case is a step-mother who stays at home.

### Relatives in the garment factories

Out 149 workers analysed for their relatives occupation (5 missing cases out of 154 total observations) 46 have at least one relative employed in a garment factory, and the total number of relatives employed is 63. The highest number of relatives employed in garment factories is 5, a family where 4 sisters and a sister in law are working in Phnom Penh. In one case there are 3 sisters employed, in 11 cases at least two persons are employed, and in the rest of the cases only one relative.

A part from the main farming occupation, among the parents of garment workers there are government officers, gold smiths, car drivers, indicating that migration to factories is not a choice of the poorest families. In one case the mother is employed too, while the father is at home, not working. In another case the husband is employed in the factory too. Most of the relatives employed are elder or younger sisters.

### Family assets

#### Land

	Frequency	Percent
own land in rural area	144	96.6
do not own land	5	3.4
Total	149	100.0

Only few workers' families do not own land, 5 out of 149. In one case the land was sold to repay debts.

	Frequency	Percent
less than half hectare	7	4.9
less than one hectare	30	20.8
one hectare	22	15.3
between 1 and 2 hectares	13	9.0
2 hectares	20	13.9
between 2 and 4 hectares	13	9.0
more than 4 hectares	8	5.6
have but don't know	31	21.5
Total	144	100.0

Land size data, despite the fact that many workers do not remember clearly the extent of their land, shows that 25.7 % of the families own less than one hectare of agricultural land, 15% of the families owns at least one hectare of land and 37.5% own more than 1 hectare.

Reasons	Frequency
sickness	2
debts	1
need money	6
reform of land by government	1
cow died and we need cow for farming so sell land	1
Total	11

Asked if their families have recently sold part or all their land, 141 workers, representing 92.8 % of the sample, answered no, while 10, representing the 6.6 %, answered yes. In one case the land was mortgaged. Only in one case the family became landless because of that.

## House

In order to understand the reasons for migrating and the social origin of the garment workers interviewed, many details concerning properties, assets and tools have been collected.

	Frequency	Percent
wood	139	93.9
thatch	4	2.7
cement	3	2.0
bamboo	2	1.4
Total	148	100.0

Wood is the main house construction material among the workers in this sample. The very low percentage of families living in a house made by thatch lets think that these families are poor, need extra income, but they are not the poorest rural population, who normally live in thatch houses.

	Frequency	Percent
tiles	57	38.5
thatch	50	33.8
zinc	40	27.0
aluminium	1	.7
Total	148	100.0

The roofs are made by cheap material, thatch, in 33 % of the cases, but a significant percent of families have a roof done by tiles, zinc and one case aluminium, more costly materials.

## Animals

Cattle	Frequency	Percent
don't have	51	34.5
have 1	14	9.5
have 2	30	20.3
have more than 2	53	35.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100.0</b>
pigs		
don't have	62	41.9
have 1	37	25.0
have 2	32	21.6
have more than 2	17	11.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100.0</b>
chicken		
don't have	41	27.7
have less than 5	36	24.3
have more than 5	71	48.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Animal ownership, particularly cattle, may indicate production capacity in agriculture or also wealth, people with cattle are sometime defined as "the richest of the poor". In this sample 56 % of the families have 2 or more cattle, 34.5 % of them do not have ploughing animals. 53 respondents, 35.8% of families have more than 2 cattle. Apparently families have to resort to migration no matter what are their possessions.

Pigs and chicken have a different weight in the farm's economy, as provider of petty cash. However their raising is linked to many different factors, which includes availability of animal food, marketing, etc. Even in this case, the sample represents different situations, without a clear predominance of a group over the others.

## Other proprieties

	Frequency	Percent
none	29	19.6
have bike	56	37.8
have motorbike	10	6.8
have ox cart	7	4.7
have bike and motorbike	17	11.5
have bike, motorbike, oxcart	7	4.7
have bike and oxcart	21	14.2
have motorbike, oxcart, boat	1	.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Among the important assets in a family vehicles or transportation tools are relevant indicators. 23 % of the families have a motorbike, 68% of the families have at least a bike, while 19 % lack any mean of transport.

	Frequency	Percent
none	40	27.0
radio	39	26.4
tv	17	11.5
motopump	1	.7
radio and TV	27	18.2
radio, TV, motorpump	12	8.1
radio & tape recorder	2	1.4
radio, TV, & tape recorder	3	2.0
radio and motorpump	1	.7
radio, motorpump, planer	1	.7
radio, tv, rice mill	1	.7
radio, TV, motorpump, generator, tractor	1	.7
rice mill, motorpump	1	.7
TV, tape recorder, generator	2	1.4
Total	148	100.0

Only 27 % of the families lack all kind of asset. Around 58% of the families possess at least a radio, 41 % possess a TV, and 10% possess a motorpump, only two families have a rice mill machine and only one a generator.

<b>water</b>	Frequency	Percent
open well	48	32.4
river	31	21
handpump well	54	36.5
tube water	15	10.1
Total	148	100.0
<b>source of electricity</b>	Frequency	Percent
no	15	10.1
battery	56	37.8
kerosene	64	43.2
from a generator	3	2.0
electricity network	10	6.8
Total	148	100.0
<b>cooking</b>	Frequency	Percent
wood	140	94.6
gas	1	.7
coal	5	3.4
husk rice	2	1.4
Total	148	100.0
<b>toilets</b>	Frequency	Percent
yes	23	15.5
no	125	84.5
Total	148	100.0

53.4 % of the families get water from rivers or open wells. By comparing these data with the data from the 1998 Census, the number of people recurring to water from rivers or lakes represents 21% of our sample and 30.4% in the 1998 census rural population. 46% of the families in our sample have access to relatively clean water.

The people branched to a general electricity network are 6.8% of the sample, kerosene is the main mean to get light, utilised by 43% of the families in our sample, followed by batteries, 37.8%. Only 3 families have electricity from a generator while 10% of the people do not have a source of electricity. Compared to the 1998 census, people utilising kerosene have decreased and batteries' use has increased.

The percentage of families using wood for cooking, 94%, reflects precisely the data concerning rural people in the census. Toilet are still

a luxury, but the percentage of 15% in our sample is significantly bigger than the one of the census, 8.6% of the rural families.

As well as for the data on land and assets, this sample shows a varied social group that does not represent clearly and uniformly the poorest rural population, or the better off one. It rather reflects a view of the smallholder rural families, with some extreme at both sides of the curves.

We have explored the possibility of getting better indicators of the economic status of the respondents' families. We have selected 4 possible indicators of distress: single mother, sister or a female as head of family, land size less than one hectare, lack of transport means. A group of variables concerning education, land, house, and family ownership were grouped according to such subcategories.

Table 35				
	family headed by woman n=33	Land size n=37	No transport n=29	All records 148
<b>Education</b>	%	%	%	%
none or primary not completed	56.3	70	62	52.6
can read and write	59.4	60	62	57.1
<b>Assets</b>				
Land equal or less than 1 hectare	57.1	-	50	41
House in wood	96	90	96	93.9
House in thatch	3.4	3	3.4	2.7
House in cement	0	6	0	2
Roof in thatch	51	30	48	33.8
Roof in tiles	17.2	43	20	38.5
Roof in zinc	28.1	26	31	27
Don't have cattle	41.4	43	48	34.5
Don't have pigs	44.8	46.7	69	41.9
Don't have chicken	32	33	44	27.7
Don't have transports means	31	33	-	19.6
Don't have house assets	44.8	23	48	27

The result are not univocal and left us with the doubt that there should be other factors affecting the social/economic situation of these families, which common feature was having sent their daughters, the majority, or sons to work in Phnom Penh. What can be said is that we did not found any "macroscopic" characteristic, which alone could explain the reason for migrating, which some more the results of the availability of the job, the availability of young females having in this context a scarce value, and an unspecified situation of neediness among the rural families that make them look for extra incomes.

Changing, finding work**Previous work**

	female	male	total
farmer	76	7	83
	57.6%	38.9%	53.3%
housework	13	1	14
	11.3%	5.6%	10.6%
seller	15	1	16
	9.8%	5.6%	9.3%
student	24	7	31
	18.2%	38.9%	20.7%
handicraft (mats)	1		1
	.8%		.7%
rubber plantation worker	1		1
	.8%		.7%
carpenter		1	1
		5.6%	.7%
monk		1	1
		5.6%	.7%
sewer/weaver	2		2
	1.5%		1.3%
Total	132	18	150
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The data segregated by sex show some difference between women and men. The majority of the women were previously working as farmer, 57.6%, their second occupation was studying, 18.2%, 11.3 % of them were seller and 10% were doing housework, few others were employed in other sectors, including one woman working in rubber plantations.

Men were studying as well as farming, but by including the man who was a monk before, the percentage of men who were studying before entering the factory is 44.4%, 8 out of 18. A part for farming, other wage occupations include one carpenter and one seller.

**Paid or unpaid?**

	female	male	Total
unpaid	111	16	127
	84.1%	88.9%	84.7%
paid	21	2	23
	15.9%	11.1%	15.3%
Total	132	18	150
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Farming, apparently, is not a paid work, as expected in a smallholders agriculture system. The paid work in the table reflects more or less the occupations listen before as non-farming, 21 people among the women and 2 people among the men. However, gender differences are important to note, as nearly half

of the men were not working but studying but women studying were only 18%.

**Reason for migrating**

Table 3 Why do you come to work in the factory

Reasons	Frequency			Percent
	?	?	both	
Food was not enough	39	10	49	32.7
We need money	41	5	46	30.7
I want to work	20	1	21	14.0
My business broke down	11	1	12	8.0
I want to help the family	7		7	4.7
I felt exam	4		4	2.7
I lost the work	3		3	2.0
To gain skill	2		2	1.3
Flood destroyed the rice	2		2	1.3
To get better salary		1	1	.7
Need money for younger sibling to study	1		1	.7
I was cheated and left with no money	1		1	.7
Officers always catch our fishes in market	1		1	.7
Total	132	18	150	100.0

The main reason for moving to work in a factory in Phnom Penh is the lack of food. This kind of answer does not stop to surprise us during the survey, because of the flagrant contradiction with the previous questions concerning family assets and properties. The workers were not able to clarify why, having land, animals, a house with a roof made in tiles, a bike, and a radio, there was not enough food.

This query was among the reasons that have driven our research team to start a research in rural areas where the workers from this survey come from. A part from some severe event, like flood and drought, or a sickness within the family, what the local people seem to express to our team during the first preliminary field trip, is the fact that family survival is not guaranteed anymore. The rice produced is no more enough, as something has changed, compared to some years before.

These results induce us to compare the main outputs from the social analysis in all records with a subgroup including only the workers that migrate because of lack of food.

Table 4 Comparison between the total sample and the subgroup migrating because of "no food"

	No food n= 49	All records n=148
<b>Education</b>	%	%
none and primary not completed	57.1%	52.6
can read and write	51%	57.1
<b>Assets</b>		
Land equal or less than 1 hectare	36.9	41
House in wood	91.8	93.9
House in thatch	6.1	2.7
House in cement	0	2
Roof in thatch	49	33.8
Roof in tiles	30.6	38.5
Roof in zinc	18.4	27
Don't have cattle	32.7	34.5
Don't have pigs	40.8	41.9
Don't have chicken	28.6	27.7
Don't have transports means	22.4	19.6
Don't have house assets	34.7	27



The results did not elucidate the doubts: the data concerning land size in particular show that 60% of the people in this last group have more than one hectare of land, above the whole sample percent, and other indicators are well within the average of the whole sample.

Our analysis of this phenomenon, which has been later confirmed during our trip to the villages where these workers come from<sup>17</sup>, considers that a main transformation is turning rural life upside down. A significant percentage of Cambodian farmers, from a rather secure, even if not wealthy, life, are moving toward a widespread insecurity concerning the survival of their farm and the year by year reproducibility of their farming activity. Therefore investments, debts, expenditures, refurbishments and rehabilitations that before were done with the assumption that the next harvest would pay them back, become now a net loss. A plethora of factors contribute to make agricultural outputs uncertain: flood, draught, fluctuations in rice prices, increase demand of inputs and their costs, technical improvements that conduct to environment degradation, lack of access to water and rivers, destruction of forest, increased costs of health, spreading of money lending and usury managed by rural middle class to the disadvantage of the less wealthy, bad development practices as credits schemes impoverishing people...The list is very long, alone or together all these factors may contribute to make the life harder, to subvert the way people were used to plan their expenditures and revenues, and force them to find alternative solutions like migration.

### Decision to migrate

	female	male	Total
myself	78	14	92
	59.1%	77.8%	61.3%
together with family	41	2	43
	31.1%	11.1%	28.7%
husband and wife	5	1	6
	3.8%	5.6%	4.0%
my parents	5	1	6
	3.8%	5.6%	4.0%
mother	3		3
	2.3%		2.0%
	132	18	150
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Most of the workers said that they have taken the decision by themselves, and there was a kind of pride in this answer. Only 9 people declared that they have followed the decision of one or both parents, and 28.7% declared to have taken the decision together with their parents.

Only one man declared to have followed the decision of his parents, 77 % of the men decided by themselves, more than the women, who represent in this category only 59%.

Despite these results, during the workshops some of the workers express a different vision of her/his migration, less free and more dictated by family's. The married workers seem to have even more problems.

<sup>17</sup> See Womyn's Agenda for Change Research on impact of trade policies on rural women in Cambodia, unpublished at the time of writing.

*My husband is going to work in Malaysia, so I decided to come here to find some income. He sent money home only for the first year, than he got another wife and I had to take care of the children and myself. My relatives and neighbours said that I would like to come here to find another man and have freedom.*

*I would continue studying, but the school is far away from the village and I had to help the family.*

*I would like to continue my studying instead of working.*

*I'm angry with my family because I would like to continue studying.*

*The reason why we come to Phnom Penh is because we have low education and our family living standards are not so good.*

*In some cases the parents look reluctant to let the girls go*

*My mother got angry when I told her that I will go to work in the garment factory, but now she is not angry because I sent her some money.*

*Our parents really don't want the daughters to come and work in the factory but because of our poor living condition they have to let us go. When we went to visit our family in the village they cried because they missed us.*

Many women complain about the lack of education opportunities left to them.

## **Training**

	Frequency	Percent
yes	44	29.3
no	106	70.7
Total	150	100.0

A significant percentage of workers experienced a kind of training before applying for the job. Out of 44 workers having had training, 41 were female and 3 male. The majority, 42 out of 44 workers, got training on sewing. Training was

provided by privates in 77% of the cases, by friends, 8%, NGOs %, or factories, 4%.

Training provided by the factories and by the NGOs was free of charge, as 3 out of 4 cases of training provided by friends. The privates charged a minimum of 2000 riels per hour, or 20-30 \$ per month. 23 people have followed the training for less than one week, 4 between one and two weeks, all the others for more than one week. The average total cost of the training, when a cost was charged, was around 10-20 \$. Training was mainly conducted in Phnom Penh, 33 cases out of 44.

## **Requirements to get the job**

In order to be employed once selected, workers are requested a certain number of documents: one or more pictures, a good health certificate, the identity card, the family book, a clarification letter released by the local authorities of their village of origin. Not all these document where requested in all cases: a photo was mentioned by 139 workers, the identity card by 98, the health certificate by 97 workers, a clarification letter by 94 workers, and the family book by 96.

Table 7 How much did you pay for the documents ?

	Frequency	Percent
1.00	13	9.0
1.50	4	2.8
2.00	30	20.7
3.00	29	20.0
4.00	9	6.2
4.50	1	.7
4.75	1	.7
5.00	17	11.7
6.00	2	1.4
7.00	2	1.4
10.00	20	13.8
13.00	4	2.8
15.00	5	3.4
18.00	1	.7
20.00	2	1.4
30.00	1	.7
Total	141	100.0

What the workers have paid in order to get all the requested documents is listed in table 7. It appears very variable, and we have tried to evaluate the average cost and to identify sources of variation.

According to the Occupational Health Department, who is in charge of visiting the workers, carrying out medical tests and releasing certificates of good health, the cost of the certificate is 10,000 riels. This cost should be ascribed to the employers, by law. However workers come to get the certificate before been recruited, or during the process of selection, and in many cases they have to pay for it. The Identity card should be released free of charge, but according to some workers, they were asked to pay for that. People who cannot read and write and need somebody within the office to fill the request form are more often asked to pay for this service. The family book, if the family did not have already one, may require up to 15,000 riels. The most variable cost is the clarification letter, released by

the local authorities, and specifically by the village chief. What is charged for this document may vary very much, according to the good or bad practices in use locally. A photo cost less than 1000 riels in Phnom Penh.

It is relevant to note that if the cost of a single issue may be low, all together they reach a significant amount. Very few things are really free of charge in the whole process.

### Help to get the work

Table 8 who helped you to get the work

	Frequency	Percent
I found it by myself	70	47.9
relatives/friends working here	61	41.8
people from the factory	11	7.5
NGO	1	.7
house owner	3	2.1
Total	146	100.0

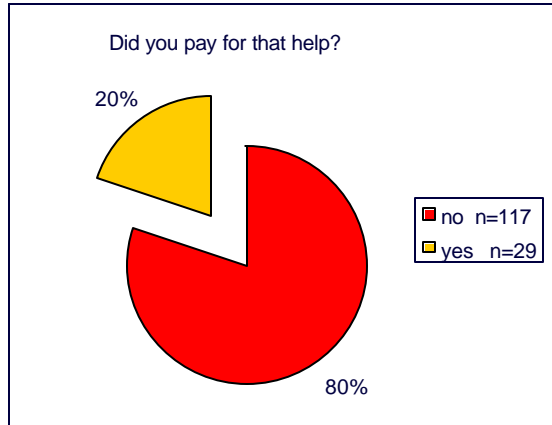


Figure 1.. Payment to get the job

This question was among the ones rising uneasiness in the people we interviewed. Among other reasons, also this kind of embarrassment have pushed us to organise discussions in our office, far away from neighbours, house owners, or other people listening. In fact workers are often asked to pay money to the "facilitator", the person who help them to get the job. This person is normally somebody working in the factory, workers mentioned administrators, guards, but in few cases also the house owner, who has relationship with somebody in the factory. Workers are also asked not to disclose both these procedures and the people who perceived the money. Judging from the worries of the workers to openly discuss such a thing, these people should have enough power to discourage them to talk.

One other indication of such practice was the fact that many workers just arrived in Phnom Penh, since one or two months, do not send money home. When asked why, it come out that they have to pay back a debt before being able to save money and send it home, but they refuse to explain what debt was it and the amount.

**Cost of getting the job**

Amount \$	female	male	both	Amount \$	female	male	both
3	1		1	50	2	1	3
5	1		1	55	1		1
10	1		1	70		2	3
15	1		1	95	2		2
20	1		1	100		3	3
30	5		5	110		1	1
35	2		2	130		2	2
40	1	1	2	Total	19	10	29

The amount paid varies, but data confirm what the workers said more informally during the discussions: for men getting the job costs more than for women, from a minimum

of 40 USD to a maximum of 130. Women paid a maximum of 95 USD and minimum of 3. All men paid at least 40 USD or more than that. More men answered this question, 10 out 18, than women, 19 out of 136.

**Time before getting the job**

Table 10 How long did you wait to get the job?				
Waiting time	Frequency			Percent
	?	?	both	
more than 2 months	23	1	24	16.4
2 months	14	2	16	11.0
between 1 and 2 months	7		7	4.8
1 month	24	4	28	19.2
2 weeks	16	2	18	12.3
1 week	14	1	15	10.3
few days	16	6	22	15.1
immediately	14	2	16	11.0
Total	128	18	146	100.0

Half of the respondents have waited at least one month before getting the job. This of course implied a lot of other expenditures, to support her/himself while waiting: rent, food, transports to go around, do the documents, etc.

Table 11 Who support you during this time?				
Support from	Frequency			Percent
	?	?	both	
my family	95	11	106	72.6
myself	13	4	17	11.6
I stay with relatives	10	2	12	8.2
husband/wife	7	1	8	5.5
I borrow money	3		3	2.1
Total	128	18	146	100.0

As expected support comes from the families, as only three workers claimed to have borrowed money to support themselves.

The data on the expenditures while waiting for the job are incomplete, as only 77 interviewed answered (counts are in parentheses). However, the data show that the expenditures for some of them were quite significant.

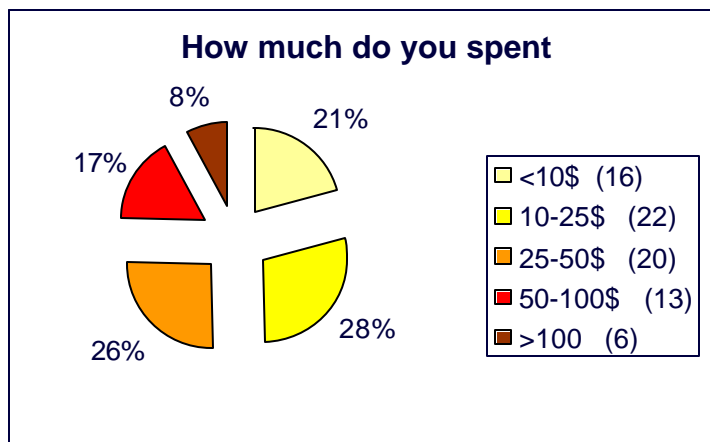


Figure 3 Expenditures before getting the job

Table 12. How did your family pay ?

	Frequency	Percent
have saving	100	68.5
sell animals	22	15.1
borrow money	17	11.6
borrow money without interest	2	1.4
sell land	1	.7
sell rice	1	.7
Total	143	100.0

When asked how their families paid all these expenditures most of the respondents answered that they had savings and they utilised their savings to support daughter and sons during the period. Other strategies were selling animals, borrow money, and only in one case land has to be sold for this purpose.

By putting together all the information concerning the cost of getting a job in a factory, it appears that a significant amount of money needs to be planned to go through all the steps: training, certificates, job facilitating, and livelihood while waiting. Again, this brought us back to consider why a family who has land, assets, properties, and a rather significant amount of money saved should send its daughter to Phnom Penh to work because lack everyday food.

### Feelings about the changes in life

A set of questions about feelings were included in the questionnaire, but there were no answers, as were considered too personal. Therefore we have consecrated a particular session during the workshops to discuss about those feelings. The stigmatisation and social/moral condemnation of garment workers based on their "bad behaviour" dominated the discussion. Workers spoke about these facts with anger and suffering, showing that this problem has a dominant place in their lives. The lack of recognition of their efforts and the reduction of their sacrifice to a simple duty as well as the moral stigma of their work, impacted so badly on their self images that they could not bear it . All the achievements in terms of empowerment, self-confidence, strength and increased experience that migration to town and wage labor could bring are invalidated by the reaction of the social environment. It should be said that the equivalence garment workers = bad girls or girls having sex with men without being married, is so deeply rooted in the society that even NGOs programs targeting the garment workers have focused their actions on reproductive and sexual health, somehow reiterating the prejudice.

*The other people do not give value to the factory work and look down on us.*

*My neighbours criticize me. They say that women working in the factories are not good, Srei at loor, bad women.*

*Before coming to work in the factory relationships my were normal, people never said something bad to me, but after they said this and that. They said that because I'm divorced from my husband, and I cannot stay in the village, I have to go to work in the factory*

*One girl in the factory is a former sex worker. An NGO rescued her from the brothel and found the job in the factory. But now that she is working in the factory her character did not change, and she makes everybody confused concerning garment workers, thinking that all are like her.*

*Some villagers hate us because they say we come to Phnom Penh to have boyfriends and they don't want us to talk with their sons because they consider us as Srei koich, bad women. But their daughters who stay in the village have husbands without getting married too...*

*Some of my friends in the village look down on me, make jokes with me that I dislike, and do not respect me.*

*Some of our neighbours said that the garment workers are not good because they see our dresses, nice clothes, and they think we have boyfriends and always go out, while we are working at the factory very hard and we have no time to rest.*

*Before leaving for Phnom Penh the villagers say something behind our backs, and they think we are going to be free and happy, but some of them encourage us to work, to help and support the family.*

*Some of my neighbours are different than before, they criticise me and say that workers in the factories are not good and accused workers to have boyfriends. As for me I never get angry with them because I never did what they accuse me of.*

*People say we are all bad girls, that garment workers are like sex workers. Why they say that?*

*Some neighbours look down at us, the reason is because some girls came back with boyfriends and some were also pregnant. But some neighbours and friends admire the girls because they left the comfort of family to go and earn support for their relatives.*

*The parents were told: don't let your daughters go to work in the garment factory because it is very bad. They considered the garment workers as the sex workers, going out with boyfriends during night time and spent time with boyfriends.*

*People in the village think that garment workers are 100% not good because in Phnom Penh they go outside, have boys and don't work.*

*I left the village in 1998 to come to Phnom Penh and my neighbours speak badly about me because they think I move to have more freedom so they didn't allow their daughters to speak to me. After two years they knew that I didn't do that and they told me to help them find the work for their daughters.*

*When I dress nicely to visit my home village they talk bad about me, when I dress normally they talk bad too.*

*We have left the family, left the school to find the money but we got the bad words from our neighbours, for example that when we went to Phnom Penh we forgot the village.*

*People say bad words to female worker such as they have many boyfriends. Everything we heard make us emotionally upset so much.*

*Some neighbours blamed us to spend our time with boyfriend when they see us wore more jewellery. They say we spent the money with boyfriends when we had no money to bring home.*

*They said that women working in the garment factory are very bad because they have boyfriends.*

*Neighbours, relatives, or people in their village claim that garment workers are bad girls.*

*Garment workers are considered bad because they live in town and may go out with men.*

*The people in the village look at the girls' dresses and judge them bad girls.*

*Some of my neighbours in the village said bad words to me when I visited home, that girls in garment factories are not good, go outside and have boyfriends. I felt angry with them but I didn't answer back because I think they are not educated and they are jealous because their daughters don't have job.*

*A few girls in the factory are not good, have boyfriends and go outside, so other people think that all the girls are bad girls.*

*When we visited our family our neighbours stared at us and sometime they didn't want to talk to us.*

*Some neighbours came to visit their daughters in Phnom Penh. When they went back they said bad things against us.*

*If I go back with new clothes, people blame I am a bad girl, if I go back with the old one, people blame because I spend all the money with boy and do not buy the new clothes.*

*The people in the countryside are afraid of sending their daughters to work in the factory because of four girls who were cheated and sold to work as sex workers in Thailand but luckily the girls run away to meet their family.*

*In Takeo province the old people discriminated against garment worker because they blamed us to have boyfriends come and go out during night time.*

*The negative things that people said about us make us upset. However we know that we are good girls so we can disregard these comments.*



Being married does not protect women workers from gossips:

*My neighbours said to my husband: you should not agree to let your wife go to work in Phnom Penh alone because she will go with other men.*

*My husband did not changed attitude with me, but the neighbours said to him that I commit adultery in Phnom Penh.*

Discrimination includes marriage:

*A real case happened concerning a garment factory girl. Her engagement was broken down because the family of the bride found out that she was a garment worker.*

*Male workers in the village told to other villagers: don't marry a garment worker because those girls are not virgins.*

*Village boys said not to marry factory girls because they are not virgin.*

*Garment workers are not considered good women even for marriage - in some cases engagement was broken because the girl was a Garment worker.*

In some case workers talked of jealousy:

*My neighbours are different now. They are jealous because I'm better off than before. They come to borrow money from me, but I did not lend them so they are angry and jealous.*

*Some people in the village said we are not friendly, because when we come back we meet only people in the family, but we are very tired, and some have car sickness, and the time is so short. If we come with our friends people said we forgot the old friends in the village. So they said we are trokoeun plek boeung, the morning glory who forget the lake.*

There were also cases where workers did not feel discriminated, but a minority compared to the number of workers feeling offended:

*The villagers are very friendly with us when we come home to visit the families*

*In my village there is no problem even if now I'm working in the factory, they are good to me the same as before.*

*I had the support from the neighbours when I a got job in the factory.*

*When I go back to the village people come to visit me and talk to me about this and that.*

*In my village there is no discrimination.*

*There is no problem in my village, is like before entering in the factory.*

Some worker elaborate more on these issues:

*The boys working in the factories said that people in village tell them to be careful with the girls in the factory, because they are all bad girls.*

*Workers feel that people in villages do not understand how difficult is their life, how tired they are.*

*Village people may change attitude according to the money: if the workers come back with little money they criticize, if come back with money they criticize less. But women are much more criticized than men.*

It was interesting to complete the vision of this social attitude of blame with the comments of the male workers. In some case they are blamed too, but in a lesser extent and not for the same reasons. However, during the discussion it does not come out as a main problem for them as it was for the women.

*Villagers said to men leaving the village: you will become a gangster, losing respect for the old people, impolite - even if some of the people who speak have exactly this character. When they say that, they normally blame the females also.*

*Some garment workers come to Phnom Penh without the permission of the family. So when they go back people said "they are not good boys, because they didn't obey and didn't listen to their parents."*

*Before going to Phnom Penh people said we would go and work no longer than two months, and come back.*

*Villagers said that male workers who come back to the village with little money spent all money with the girls or for themselves.*

*When workers visit the village with a lot of money the villagers praised them and said that male workers are good at work. But if male workers visited the village with little money, then the villagers say that male workers spend all money with girlfriends.*

*When we go back to the village without money people say, "they are useless persons."*

*There is no problem for me, each time I visit home, villagers welcome me more than before. Even if I'm busy and I could not go and visit them, they come to visit me.*

Their comments on the prejudice concerning their female colleagues were various, some agree with the general stigmatisation, while others strongly opposed:  
*People are jealous, so they said that 80% of the garment girls are very bad and lose virginity.*

*When female workers visit their villages, they are dressed nicely, their attitude and behaviour are changed, they are unfriendly with old friends. That's why people and men in the village criticise them, because they seems to have forgotten their past nature, trokouen plek boeung, morning glory forgot the lake.*

*Villagers said that female garment workers are cheap, bad women, have boyfriends and have sexual relationships with their boyfriends, especially the boys working in the factories, who enjoy a lot this situation.*

*If the girls stop working in the factory or the factory close down, they could not live in the village anymore, because they are used to be happy when they live in the city.*

*Women are blamed if they visit home with little money and even if they come back with a lot of money.*

*Some villagers told men: don't marry with a girl from the garment factories because most of them are bad girls.*

*People in the village said that female garment workers bring HIV/Aids back to the village.*

*Villagers who are relatives of garment workers said that they are good girls because they can support the family.*

*Women are not all the same, but trei moui kontrok soi moui keu soi teang hoh! one rotten fish will spoil all the basket. So if few garment workers do something wrong, which affect their family's honor, than villagers think that all the girls are bad because they come from the same place.*

*Some girls who use to have good time with boyfriends or friends now have changed after an organisation disseminate and educate on HIV/AIDS. They know how to protect themselves form this disease, but some still acts badly.*

*I'm angry when I heard people speaking bad about girls in the factory, because they affect many good women. Is not true that all women are bad, of course there are few. But when they say that just one can affect all the others, I think that sometime this bad word can help to remind other women who did not behave wrongly to be more careful about themselves.*

*When the villagers said bad word against female workers and we did not answer back and just keep quiet, it will affect us too, and they will think that we did it.*

*It is unfair that people talk like that, it affect other people economy. Families who send their daughters to work in the factories listening to bad words may stop them to work there and so lose the support and face more difficulties because they lose their income.*

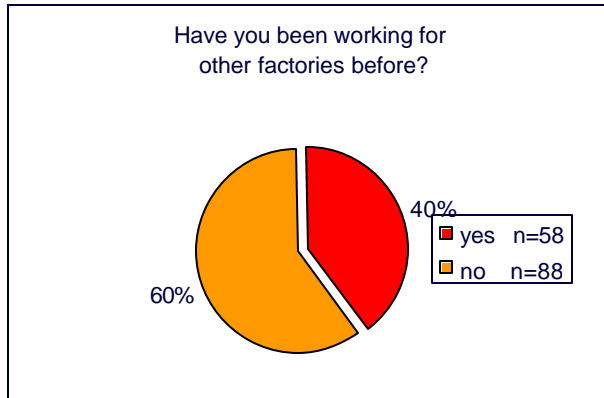
*Those who speak bad against the female workers always thought that other do what they have done.*

The insight provided by these comments shows a situation of social distress and contradiction between a traditional view of behaviour and the necessity to recur to new behaviours to survive. What is more frightening in this context, that by many aspects is not new and is linked to social changes such as industrialisation, is the extreme fragility of the social subject that is capturing all the blame: the young woman migrating to work in the factory. Her young age, her weak social position within the family and the society due to gender widespread discrimination, make her highly vulnerable. Only a strong social outcome as worker can remove this stigmatisation and act as a trigger for social affirmation and gender liberation from oppressive rules of behaviour. The next chapter concerning work will better answer this question, and give more information on the strength of women as workers, their job security and recognition.

Factory work

**Previous employment in other factories**

Figure 1 Working experience



A relevant number of workers in our sample have worked for more than one factory. At the time of the interview, 40% claimed having worked for other factories, some workers even for more than one.

Among the workers having worked in more than one factory, only 3 are men, 16% of the male workers sample, while women having worked for other factories are 55, 44% of the female group.

Table 1 How long have you been working in the previous factory

months	Frequency	Percent
3 or less	14	24.1
4-6	12	20.6
7-12	18	31.0
13-24	10	17.3
25-36	3	5.2
> 36	1	1.8
Total	58	100.0

The duration of the employment is variable, but some worker changed factory after a very brief experience, less than 3 months, not enough to go over the probation period and be entitled for the full salary.

The working positions in the previous factory reflect the factories' productions and processes. Sewing and weaving are the most frequent tasks. As the male workers are only three data were not split by sex.

Table 2. What was your position in the factory?

Position	Frequency	Percent	Position	Frequency	Percent
sewing	19	32.8	carrying the clothes	1	1.7
weaving	10	17.2	write the size	1	1.7
checking	8	13.8	warehouse	1	1.7
cutting	7	12.1	fraying	1	1.7
engine operator	2	3.4	hammer	1	1.7
sticking	2	3.4	sew the shoes	1	1.7
linking	1	1.7	counting leader	1	1.7
warping	1	1.7	ironing	1	1.7
			<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Salary in the previous factory

The data concerning salaries have been analysed in relationship with the duration of employment. In fact in July 2000, the Labour Advisory Commission, including representatives of the Royal Government, the Federations of Trade Unions, and the Association of Employers, agrees to update the salary levels as follow: 40 USD month during the probation period, lasting 3 months; 45 USD month when the probation is finished; for piece workers in both categories, if the output allow them to receive more, workers shall receive it, but if the amount allow them to receive less, the employer should add enough to reach the legal minimum. A 5 USD bonus should be given to workers coming to work regularly during the month. Seniority, calculated from August 2000, allows workers to receive 2 USD/month after a year, 3 USD after 2 years, 4 USD after 3 years, and over three years 5 USD bonus. The cases corresponding to the by law salary are filled in gray . The three male workers are written in italic.

USD months	8.00	10.00	14.00	18.00	20.00	27.00	28.00	30.00	35.00	38.00	40.00	45.00	50.00	Total
1		1			1			1						3
2							1	1		1	1			5
3	1			1				1			2			5
4								1						1
5								1	1			1		3
6									2		3	3		8
7									1		1	1		3
8											2	2		4
9													1	1
11									1					1
12						1					2	6		9
14												1		1
18								2			1	1		4
21									1					1
24			1								1	1		3
25												1		1
32											1			1
36											1			1
48											1			1
Total	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	6	1	16	17	1	55

According to the law, a correct salary was paid to 15 workers out of 55, 27% of this sub group. Among the other 40, 9 were in probation but did not received the by law salary of 40\$, 8 continue to receive a salary inferior to what established by the law for the probation period even after 3 months, 7 continue to receive the probation salary after 3 months, 9 received a lower salary after more than one year, 4 did not receive the seniority bonus. Only one worker received a salary of 50 \$ after 9 months, which can be the result of the application of the law that considers a bonus of 5 \$ month if the worker is not absent.

## Reasons for change

	Frequency	Percent
the factory closed	18	32.7
I was dismissed	10	18.2
no rest and poor health	9	16.4
low salary	5	9.1
because of night shifts	3	5.5
don't have overtime	2	3.6
get blames from Chinese	2	3.6
was difficult to get salary	1	1.8
my husband want me to stop and rest	1	1.8
sick/poor health	1	1.8
conflict with other group leader	1	1.8
forced to do overtime	1	1.8
forced to change sector	1	1.8
Total	55	100.0

The reasons given by the workers for changing factories show that 28 people, 50.9%, had to endure others' decisions: the factory close down or they were dismissed. The other half has taken its own decision because of different reasons, as forced overtime, concerns over health, low salary, night shifts, or conflicts. Salary in this group, as shown in the previous table, was lower than the minimum in many cases, probably forcing many workers to integrate it with overtime.

## The actual work

	Frequency			Percent
	?	?	both	
t-shirt	30	9	39	28.3
clothes	30	4	34	24.6
trousers/ jeans	30	1	31	22.5
shoes	18	1	19	13.8
sweater	8	1	9	6.5
skirt	2		2	1.4
hat	2		2	1.4
not specified	1	1	2	1.4
Total	121	17	138	100.0

The majority of the workers interviewed works in garment production, only 13.8% in shoes production. Only one male worker is employed by a shoes' producing factory.

## Position in the factory

Position	Frequency			Percent	Position	Frequency			Percent
	?	?	both			?	?	both	
sewing	49	1	50	36.0	knitting	1	1	2	1.4
weaving	14	5	19	13.7	warehouse keeper	1	1	2	1.4
checking	12	1	13	9.4	sizing	2		2	1.4
cutting	10		10	7.2	hammering shoes	2		2	1.4
ironing	7	2	9	6.5	steaming	1		1	.7
sticking the shoes	6		6	4.3	cleaner	1		1	.7
packing	5		5	3.6	glue deliver	1		1	.7
fraying	3	1	4	2.9	laundry	1		1	.7
machine operator		4	4	2.9	measuring		1	1	.7
warping	2	1	3	2.2	sew shoes	1		1	.7

linking	2	2	1.4	Total	121	18	139	100.0
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Men tend to be employed in positions connected with machines. Workers said that working at the knitting machine is demanding lot of energy, as workers should stand all the time. Ironing needs to be done standing too and is considered among the more hard works, often carried out by men.

### Duration of employment

Unfortunately, the number of missing data in this variable is higher than the average<sup>18</sup>. We have kept all the information and we have elaborated the data despite the reduction in number.

months	Frequency			Percent
	?	?	both	
1	13	4	17	13.5
2	11	2	13	10.3
3	7	2	9	7.1
4	8	2	10	7.9
5	8		8	6.3
6	4		4	3.2
7	4		4	3.2
8	2		2	1.6
9	1		1	.8
10	4	1	5	4.0
11	1		1	.8
12	11	1	12	9.5
14	3		3	2.4
15	5		5	4.0
16	1		1	.8
18	2	1	3	2.4
19		1	1	.8
24	11		11	8.7
25	1		1	.8
28	1		1	.8
30	1		1	.8
36	5		5	4.0
38	1		1	.8
40	1		1	.8
45	1		1	.8
48	3	1	4	3.2
60	1		1	.8
Total	111	15	126	100.0

Nearly 30% of the workers interviewed were employed since three months or less. 58.7% of the workers were working since less than 12 months in the factory, 19.9% for more than 12 but less than 24 months, 11.1 % between 24 and 36, and 10.4 % for more than 36 months. The table below provides some statistic of the data concerning duration.

	?	?	both
Valid data	111	15	126
Missing data	24	4	28
Mean	12.7	8.6	12.26
Median	8.00	3.00	7.00
Mode	1.00	1.00	1
Std. Deviation	12.9	12.5	12.90
Range	59	47	59
Minimum	1	1	1
Maximum	60	48	60

The statistic for men differ slightly as the mean is 8 months, the median is 3 months and the mode is 1 month, while range varies from 1 to 48 months the standard deviation is similar, 12 months.

<sup>18</sup> One interviews' team with new coming volunteers did not ask and record the question properly. The missing data were around 20, we do not have the possibility to go back and interview again the same persons as we some time occurs before we realise it.



It is difficult to draw conclusion on the duration of employment, also because 40 % of the workers in our sample were employed by other factories before. By summing up the previous factory employment duration with the present one, the average employment duration changes from 12.2 months to 16.4 months, the median value become 12 months, and the mode is 24 months, showing a much longer experience than what appears from the current employment only.

**Salary**

USD	Frequency			Percent
	?	?	both	
15.00			1	.7
20.00	31		3	2.1
25.00	1		1	.7
30.00	14	2	16	11.4
35.00	9	3	12	8.6

More than 50 % of the workers receive less than 45 USD a month. This can be in relationship with their seniority. However, 23.5% receive less than the minimum of 40 USD for the probation period. 43.6 % of the workers receive 45 USD and only 4,2 % receive more than 45 USD.

	?	?	both	Percent
41.00	1		1	.7
Valid	57	4	124	83.6
Missing	1		13	1.7
Mean USD	3		40.6	39.12
Median USD	2		45	40.14
Mode USD	22	18	145	40.45
Std. Deviation			7.1	4.6
Range USD			45	15
Minimum USD			15	30
Maximum USD			60	45

Statistics concerning salary show some difference between sexes: men, being less numerous in this sample, have also less variation: the range is smaller, only 15 USD.

We have analysed the data concerning salaries in relationship with the duration of employment, despite the fact that data concerning duration have more missing information than the average (124 instead of 140 or more normally). Men are recorded in italic.

\$	15.00	20.00	25.00	30.00	35.00	40.00	45.00	47.00	50.00	60.00	Total
months											
1				7+1	2+3	2					15
2	1			1	2	7+1	1				13
3				1	1	2+1	2+1		1		9
4			1		1	1+2	5				10
5				3	1	2	2				8
6						3	1		1		5
7					1	1	2				4
8					1		1				2
9						1					1
10						1+1	3				5
11							1				1
12						2+1	9				12
14							3				3
15						2	2			1	5
16						1					1
18						1	2				3

19							1				1
24		1				2	7		1		11
25										1	1
28							1				1
30							1				1
36						1	4				5
40							1				1
45							1				1
48		2				1	1				4
60								1			1
	1	3	1	13	12	36	52	1	3	2	124

Among the workers in probation, out of 37 persons who are working since less than three months, 13 or 35.1 % receive the salary by law, 4 or 13.5% receive more than that, and 19 or 51.4 % receive less than the legal amount. Among the 87 workers confirmed, 28 or 32.2% received the by law salary, 34 or 39% received less than 45 \$, 25 or 28.7 % got less than what their seniority will allow them to receive.

The total figures show that in this sample 45 workers did receive the salary they are entitled by law, out of 124, representing 36% of the respondents. In some cases the salary is significantly lower than the legal minimum.

It should be pointed out that the legal minimum salary is far below a living wage: no family can survive with such amount every month in Phnom Penh. With 0.21 USD/hour (45/26 working days a month/8 hours), Cambodian salary is among the lowest in the world in the garment industry.<sup>19</sup>

**Total salary**

The minimum salary represents the monthly remuneration for 6 days a week of 8 hours according to the law. Overtime is a common practice in garment factories in Cambodia. Through overtime workers can integrate their minimum salary, often less than the legal one, with the money they need to survive, to pay for their expenditures, to send money home and to face unplanned expenditures as health care, trips home etc.

<sup>19</sup> In December 2001 hourly remuneration in Bangladesh was between 13 and 20 USD cents, in Indonesia 20 cents, in China 28 cents, in Nicaragua 23 cents, in Guatemala 37 cents, in El Salvador 60 cents, in Mexico 50 cents, in US based sweatshops 3-4 \$. National Labour Committee web site: [www.nlcnet.org](http://www.nlcnet.org),

USD	Frequency			Percent
	?	?	both	
20.00	1		1	.7
30.00	1	1	2	1.4
35.00	1	3	4	2.9
36.00	1		1	.7
38.00	1		1	.7
39.00	1		1	.7
40.00	8	2	10	7.2
45.00	9		9	6.5
50.00	13	3	16	11.5
52.00	1		1	.7
54.00	2		2	1.4
55.00	6	2	8	5.8
58.00	2		2	1.4
59.00	1		1	.7
60.00	17	2	19	13.7
61.00	1	1	2	1.4
62.00	2		2	1.4
64.00	1		1	.7
65.00	4	1	5	3.6
66.00	1		1	.7
67.00	1		1	.7
68.00	1		1	.7
70.00	9	1	10	7.2
71.00	1		1	.7
75.00	8	2	10	7.2
80.00	12		13	9.4
85.00	1		1	.7
86.00	1		1	.7
88.00	1		1	.7
90.00	5		5	3.6
95.00	1		1	.7
110.00	1		1	.7
140.00	1		1	.7
150.00	3		3	2.2
Total	121	18	139	100.0

The data on total salary perceived by the workers show a very high variability.

	?	?	both
Valid	121	18	139
Missing	14	1	15
Mean USD	64.5	52.2	62.9
Median USD	60	52.5	60
Mode USD	50 + 35	60	60
Std. Deviation	22.0	14.1	21.1
Range USD	130.00	45.00	130.00
Minimum USD	20.00	30	20.00
Maximum USD	150.00	75	150.00

From this sample it appears that women received a higher salary, but the unbalanced number of observations may be also taken into account. In fact means, median and mode did not vary so much. Among the workers 20.8 % perceive 45 USD or less; 34.9% perceive monthly between 45 and 60USD; 29.3% receive between 60 and 75 USD; 19.4% receive more than 75 USD a month. The 4 cases that declare a total salary of over 100 USD monthly relate to workers working since more than three years in garment factories.

The difference between the minimum salary and the total salary is basically due to the overtime work performed by the workers. Overtime work, according to the law, should be remunerated 1.5 times more than the normal working hours, 0.31 USD. Here below are listed the differences between the total salary and the minimum salary.

Table 14 Total salary minus base salary

USD	Frequency			Percent
	?	?	both	
.00	9	6	15	10.9
5.00	6		6	4.3
6.00	1		1	.7
8.00	1		1	.7
9.00	1		1	.7
10.00	16	3	19	13.8
12.00	1		1	.7
14.00	2		2	1.4
15.00	18	3	21	15.2
16.00		1	1	.7
17.00	1		1	.7
18.00	2		2	1.4
19.00	1		1	.7
20.00	10	1	11	8.0
21.00	1		1	.7
22.00	1		1	.7
23.00	1		1	.7
24.00	1		1	.7
25.00	8	1	9	6.5
27.00	1		1	.7
30.00	7	1	8	5.8
31.00	1		1	.7
35.00	15	2	17	12.3
40.00	1		1	.7
41.00	1		1	.7
43.00	2		2	1.4
45.00	5		5	3.6
50.00	1		1	.7
65.00	1		1	.7
80.00	1		1	.7
130.00	3		3	2.2
Total	120	18	138	100.0

83 workers, 60.1%, perceived an increase of 20 USD or less, 41 workers, the 29.7%, perceive between 20 and 40 USD, and 14, representing the 10.2%, receive over 40 USD. Among these latter 3 workers declared to perceive 150 USD as total salary with overtime. These three worker - whose answer was checked and is not a mistake occurring during the interview- worked for more than two years, actually two of them over 4 years, in the same factory. They said to us that their work was valued more than the work of the others, even if they were not forced to do much overtime.

The mean salary increase is 22 USD, the median is 17 and the mode 15.

Table 15 Statistics on salary difference

	?	?	both
N Valid	120	18	138
N Missing	15	1	16
Mean USD	23.8	13.1	22.4
Median USD	20.00	12.00	17.50
Mode USD	15	0.00	15.00
Std. Deviation USD	22.1	12.1	21.4
Range USD	130.00	35.00	130.00
Minimum USD	0.00	0.00	.00
Maximum USD	130.00	35.00	130.00

If we consider the mean increase of salary in this sample, 22 USD, and we divide it for the legal remuneration of overtime work, 0.31 USD, the result in terms of hours is 70.9 per month, which makes an average of 2.7 hours daily in a month. This calculation is very approximated, as we lack sure indications that the legal overtime remuneration is applied.

When asked what the overtime payment per hour was, most of the workers were not able to answer.

During the workshops complains about salary were frequent. The kinds of problems they brought to light were varied and show a complex range of abuses and frauds that workers are submitted to. The order by which the workers quotes are reported reflect the timing of the workshops, so the final quotes in this chapter refer to the last workshop. It is interesting to note the better articulation and the deeper analysis that workers were able to display after having had the chance to discuss together and focus on their problems.

*Sometimes the salary that we get is not equivalent to the product that we have made and when we ask the owner about this the owner won't answer us.*

*I had problems before, when I was working by piece. Now that I'm a salary based worker I get my salary even if there are no orders to do. When I was working by piece, I got*

*1600-1700 riels for 100 finished T-shirts. In one day I cannot finish 400, and sometimes there where no shirts to sew and we got no money. Nevertheless now if we are late from 1 to 10 minutes per month our salary is cut \$5.*

*When I just started work I got salary only 40 USD per month and after three months the factory owner said I did not work so good so the owner did not agree to increase my salary and if did I not agree I will be dismissed and the owner will choose the new workers.*

*I did not know well about the salary, when I started working I got 30 USD per month. I just knew recently about the labour code, and learn that the new workers should have a salary of at least 40 USD per month during the first of three months.*

*The salary we get is not correct, if we protest we will loose our money.*

*In my factory workers are dismissed after their apprenticeship, so they are paid only 30 dollars a month.*

*Factories have a lot of probationary workers whose salary is only 30 USD and less permanent workers whose salary is 45 USD.*

*The minimum salary of \$45 is not applied, workers receive less.*

Overtime payment, according to the workers, in many cases is not correct

*I have been working since 1994. At that time I worked very hard during day and night but I received less than \$1 a day, and if I work overtime, in total, I got only 1\$. When my child was sick I had to leave her for work because if you didn't do the overtime work they would dismiss you, no matter day or night.*

*They ask us to do overwork during Sunday, so when I got the salary I asked for extra money but they answer me: who told you to come to work on Sunday? So they didn't give me any extra money.*

*The overtime is not paid properly, in some cases people work normally 10 hours instead of 8.*

*Factories exploit workers, for example we work overtime but are not paid extra money.*

*The day we receive salary they always force us to do overtime waiting for the payment.*

*Workers work for the whole month but get little money and are forced to do work overtime often until 10pm and for this they get 60 USD a month. If we refuse to work overtime factory owners force us to put thumbprint on a letter that is written in Chinese so the workers cannot understand it. If they have their thumbprint taken three times it will*

*lead to their dismissal. If they take a day off 7 USD per day will be cut from our salary but for one day without overtime we earn only 1.5 USD.*

*Permanent workers are worried now as owners always want to dismiss them because they have to pay too much money to these workers as opposed to probationary workers, and additionally probationary workers are easier to sack than permanent staff.*

*Some workers do overtime usually until 8 o'clock but their pay rate is calculated until only 6 o'clock so they do 2 hours unpaid work, and they work on public holiday too.*

*Before the bosses used to ask workers to work from Monday-Saturday and start at 7am and finish at 4p.m. Now they ask workers to only work from Monday to Friday and finish at 6pm, which means that workers are working two hours overtime (each day) without payment. When workers ask to work on Saturday their bosses say there is no work so even if workers ask to work on Saturday now they don't allow them too.*

*Some workers do overtime usually until 8 o'clock but their pay rate is calculated until only 6 o'clock so they do 2 hours unpaid work, and they work on public holiday too.*

*For permanent workers whose salary is 45 USD they have to work until they reach an equivalent amount in products that is worth 45 USD. If they are unable to do this they are thumb printed and if they are thumb printed three times they are sacked.*

*For workers from the ironing group, at the end of the year they tried to claim their bonuses but the factory owner said that they could only have their bonuses if they could sew something without breaking a needle (sewing is not their skill).*

**Working hours**

Table 16 Normal working hours

Hours	Frequency			Percent
	?	?	both	
13h	3		3	2.1
11h	5		5	3.5
10h	28	6	34	23.9
9h	5	1	6	4.2
8.30 h	12	3	15	10.6
8h	70	8	78	54.9
7.30h	1		1	.7
Total	124	18	142	100.0

More than 50 % of the respondents declared to work 8 hours per day. The second most frequent answer was 10 hours and 44.4% of the sample declares to work more than 8 hours a day. The male workers are all situated near the average values between 8 hours and 10 hours. In fact, during our survey in Russey Keo, Dangkor and Mancheay it was impossible to find workers to interview before 6 in the afternoon.

Apparently many workers consider the ten hours day as their normal working schedule, indicating that this is a normal practice. When compared with the working conditions in the West world, based on a 40 hours week, and in some country now reduced to 35h, the working week of the Cambodian workers brings back to the industrial revolution and the beginning of the textile industry!

	Frequency	Percent
1 hour	133	93.7
30 minutes	4	2.8
1.30 hours	5	3.5
Total	142	100.0

The daily break for lunch is 1 hour for 93% of the workers in our sample, very few have less than half an hour, or more.

### **Rest during work**

We did not include in our survey any question concerning resting time during work, or time to go to the toilet, but these issues come out quite significantly during the workshops' discussions.

*During working time, no rest, even to go to the toilet.*

*When we went to the toilet for a long time the security guard knocked the door and called us. Usually the guard always recorded the time when we were in the toilet. The workers used to fall unconscious in the toilet when they were too exhausted.*

*We can go to the toilet only two times a day and only for 3 minutes each time.*

*We have no freedom to go to the toilet.*

*During work workers cannot talk, move freely, and toilet time is checked by guards.*

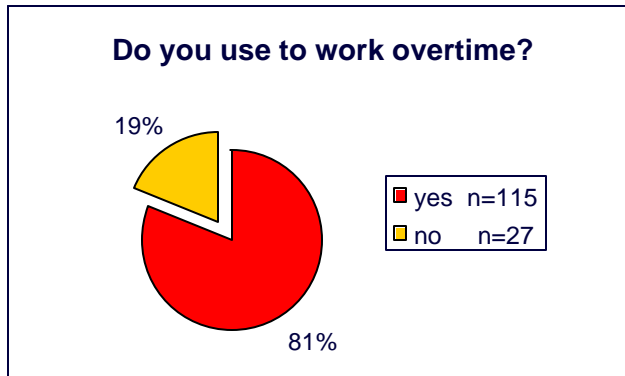
*The factories are like a prison, which detain all workers.*

*In the factory there are only 4 or 5 toilets for approximately 500 to 600 workers. When they want to go to the toilet they are only permitted 10 minutes in which to do so. If any worker goes to the toilet over 3 times a day she is thumb printed and 5USD are cut from her salary and her meal allowance is also deducted.*

### **Overtime**

Overtime work is a normal practice, as it appears from the data concerning salary and working hours. In the following figure are reported the exact number of workers who use to work overtime. Out of 115 respondents working over time 16 are men and 99 women, and 2 out of 27 respondents not working overtime are men.

Figure 2 Overtime work



**Table 18 Why you do not work overtime?**

Reasons	Frequency			Percent
	?	?	both	
I'm too tired	10		10	37.0
I want to rest	8		8	29.6
I want time for leisure	2		2	7.4
Overtime payment is not equal to my labor	3	2	5	18.5
They force me	1		1	3.7
My house is too far from the factory	1		1	3.7
Total	25	2	27	100.0

**Table 19 Why do you work overtime?**

Reasons	Frequency			Percent
	?	?	both	
I need extra money	96	16	112	97.4
I want to rest but I cannot	2		2	1.7
not specified	1		1	.9
Total	99	16	115	100.0

27 workers, representing 19 % of the total, do not do overtime work. Their reasons are mainly linked to fatigue, as 18 workers said they are too tired and want to rest. One worker is complaining about overtime

payment being not fair. The reason concerning distance from the factory is pointing out the problem of insecurity, especially at night, for women coming back home after overtime. Workers who use to do overtime are mainly pushed by the need of money, as expected.

**Table 20 Daily overtime hours**

	Frequency	Percent
6h	9	6.5
5h	17	10.1
4h	8	2.9
3h	19	9.4
2 h	62	32.6
1h	2	.7
every Saturday	4	2.9
don't have	17	12.3
Total	138	100.0

The difference between the overtime hours workers and the results of the previous question concerning overtime, may reflect the lack of choice left to the workers: even if they do not like it or want it, they are in many cases forced to work overtime. Data confirm the practice of working 2 hours overtime daily as very frequent. In fact overtime work is not needed regularly, but fluctuates according to the factory production. So it happen that when workers

need money there is not extra work to do, and when they need rest there is too much work to do.

As seen in the chapter concerning salary, workers complain often about overtime work, as they claim not receiving the due amount of money. Other complains however concern the lack of choice given them, or the practice of keep record of the workers who refuse to do overtime.

*Workers are forced to do overtime and cannot refuse to work late in the night or during Sunday.*

*If you refuse to work overtime they take your fingerprint. If you refuse three times you are sacked.*



*We are forced to work without time to rest.*

*We are forced to work very hard, sometimes we must sew the clothes for 24 hours.*

*If there are many orders to work out we have to work day and night.*

*Workers are forced to complete scheduled work and if they do not do this in time they are forced to work overtime until they finish it. It does not matter if her group works together or if a worker stays by herself, only that the work is completed (it doesn't matter how the work is completed only that it is). The hours taken to finish scheduled work are not calculated in dollar value as the factory owners feel that it is a workers duty to complete their assigned tasks. If workers do not complete their assigned work three times they are dismissed.*

*When a worker is sick and has no medicine she is forced to work overtime by the owner when there is an urgent order that needs to be filled. Workers have to work until 10 or 12pm at night and if they make any wrong stitches they must correct them and correction time is not included in their salaries.*

*We don't know why we don't have work to do, and don't know when we will have work to do again. Before we worked a lot but now it is not like before.*

*Before the bosses used to ask workers to work from Monday-Saturday and start at 7am and finish at 4p.m. Now they ask workers to only work from Monday to Friday and finish at 6pm, which means that workers are working two hours overtime (each day) without payment. When workers ask to work on Saturday their bosses say there is no work so even if workers ask to work on Saturday now they don't allow them too.*

*Only every three weeks we have one Sunday off.*

*Since we worked in the factory in one month we can rest one Sunday only.*

*We worked overtime until 10. 00 p. m and sometimes we worked until the next morning.*

*Usually we work overtime till 10 pm, sometime even 24 hours to meet the production requirement. We also work during Sunday.*

*Many workers have to work even on Sunday and some have a free Sunday only once a month.*

## **Salary payment**

	Frequency	Percent
yes always	101	73.7
sometimes yes, some no	26	19.0
no, often late	6	4.4
I don't know (just start work)	4	2.9
Total	137	100.0

A significant percentage of workers do not receive the salary in time. Such a bad practice can cause lot of damages to workers that perceive just enough to survive, who have dependents waiting for money, and have to pay for their house rent and food.

	Frequency	Percent
yes	108	78.8
no	25	18.2
I don't know because I just started working	4	2.9
Total	137	100.0

The majority of the workers receive a written paper with the salary.

These data need to be read and compared with the data concerning literacy, as a percentage of workers cannot read or read with difficulties. Moreover we have realised after a while that the paper they received with the salary wasn't always written in Khmer. We asked during the last 32 interviews more details about the language and the results were the following: 16 workers receive it in Khmer and 14 in Chinese or English.

	Frequency	Percent
supervisor	45	32.8
leader of worker	35	25.5
administrator	17	12.4
manager	12	8.8
interpreter	9	6.6
I accept how much they give me because I can't read	8	5.8
director	5	3.6
I don't know	3	2.2
myself	2	1.5
union representative	1	.7
Total	137	100.0

Workers discuss problems linked to the salary with the groups leaders, or other cadres within the management. Salary does not seem to be a problem that should be discussed with the unionists. Workers who cannot read are obviously very vulnerable, and generally the lack of knowledge of the labour code impairs workers' capacity to complain for errors or frauds.

## Shifts

Table 24 How many shifts in your factory

	Frequency	Percent
one	106	74.6
two	34	23.9
three	2	1.4
Total	142	100.0

Only 25.3 % of the workers we have interviewed have working shifts, 28 women and 6 men. The two workers having triple shifts are both male workers.

Table 25 What's the timing of night shifts

	Frequency	Percent
7pm to 6am	16	50.0
7pm-4am	7	21.9
6pm-6am	3	9.4
2-10pm, 10pm-6am	2	6.3
3:30pm-12pm	1	3.1
5pm-7am	1	3.1
4-12pm	1	3.1
6pm-7am	1	3.1
Total	32	100.0

Timing of night's shifts is reported besides. The working day of 10 hours or more resurfaces also in the night shift timing, which exceed 8 h in many cases.

Table 26 How often do you change shift

	Frequency	Percent
one month	22	68.7
1 week	4	12.5
rarely	3	9.4
3-4 months	3	9.4
Total	32	100.0

Shifts vary each month for the majority of the workers in the sample, but few workers change every week, a very tiring pace. Decisions about shift are taken by the factory's management, workers do not have much opportunities to influence it. Among the workers having shift, 28 prefer to work during the day.

### Appreciation of position

Figure 3 Position

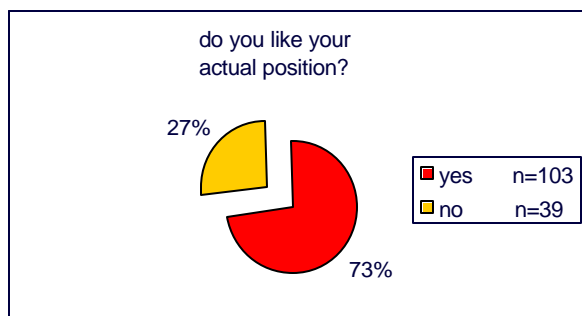


Table 27 Reasons why ?

I like my position	Frequency	Percent	I don't like my position	Frequency	Percent
Does not matter, I need to earn money	44	42.7	The work is too hard	14	35.9
It is my skill	20	19.4	I don't have other work to do	5	12.8
Work is easy	18	17.4	I get blamed	4	10.3
No alternatives	14	13.6	It is not my skill	4	10.3
I get money so is OK	3	2.9	Whole day standing/sitting	3	7.7
group leader not force, workers do what they can	2	1.9	I'm oppressed by the Chinese manager	3	7.7

workers have solidarity with each other	1	1.0	Low salary	2	5.1
overtime work is not too much	1	1.0	I want to be the group leader	1	2.6
Total	103	100.0	They force to do the overtime work	1	2.6
			Smell of chemical	1	2.6
			Owner forces to work too much	1	2.6
			Total	39	100.0

What appear from these answers is the consciousness that there are not other alternatives available, so it doesn't make very much make sense to be torn apart by that.

### Leaves and permissions

Table 28 Do you know how many days of annual leave you have?

	Frequency	Valid Percent
yes	44	31.0
no	97	68.3
not sure	1	.7
Total	142	100.0

According to the law, Cambodian workers have right to 18 days of annual leaves. We have asked this question to understand the degree of awareness of workers concerning their own rights. In fact the answers were not reassuring, as 69% of the respondent do not know the number of days they are entitled to rest in a year or are not sure.

Table 29 How many days of annual leave according to you?

	Frequency	Percent
2	1	2.3
3	1	2.3
7	3	6.8
8	2	4.5
14	1	2.3
15	3	6.8
18	33	75.0
Total	44	100.0

Only part of the 33 workers answering positively could mention the right number, the others have wrong information or beliefs on their annual leaves. In such a situation it become an impossible task for the workers to check if they have had what for the law they are entitled to receive.

Table 30 Do you know about the maternity leave you are entitled?

	Frequency	Percent
yes	79	55.6
no	62	43.7
not sure	1	.7
Total	142	100.0

The law entitled women to 90 days of maternity leave, at half salary, plus any benefit they were receiving, but women should have been employed at least for one year before getting such right. 44.4% of the workers are not aware of that. Among the respondents that claim to know the rules for maternity leave only 4 were aware of the specifications of the law.

<b>marriage leave</b>	Frequency	Percent
1 week	62	54.4
one week but cut salary	38	33.3
3 days but cut salary	7	6.1
less than one week	6	5.3
Total	113	100.0
<b>serious family problems</b>	Frequency	Percent
2 days only and cut salary	45	42.9
3 day but cut salary	22	21.0
2-3 days but don't know weather they cut salary or not	20	19.0
they don't allow	7	6.7
1 day	6	5.7
5-6 days	5	4.8
Total	105	100.0

The labour law mentions a special leave of maximum 7 days for events directly affecting the worker's family. This period of 7 days is included among the paid leave that workers are entitled during a year. But workers, when asked to specify policies concerning marriage leaves, or leaves in case of serious family problems, were very confused.

However, all these answers are also mirroring a situation de facto, and are based on the workers experience, more than their knowledge of the law. Factories, as reported during the workshops, widely violate the labour code, by imposing salary cuts for due permissions and leaves, by arbitrarily refusing leaves or permissions. This happen also in relationship with national holydays recognized by the labour code or listed in the annual holydays list prepared by the concerned ministries. Moreover it has happen during the communes election in February 2002.

*Owners will cut our bonuses when we ask for annual leave and they will cut our bonus if there is no work to do.*

*When we ask permission to go to a wedding, the owner will cut our salary, when we work we usually get \$1.5 but they cut us \$2.*

*We are warned if we ask for permission to have a little rest for 3 days.*

*When I have problems at home and ask permission to leave, they did not allow me to take leave.*

*I have difficulties in getting permission for rest. I asked to take a rest but they cut my salary. How much they cut depends on the factory policy, sometimes they cut \$2, sometimes \$3 or even \$5.*

*After we faint we continue to work, if we ask for permission to go home and recover they cut a day's wage from our salary.*

*On public holidays like IWD, Independence Day and the Water Festival garment workers are not permitted to take the day off and when they have to vote for the commune elections their bonuses were cut (for example in some factories, their cut between 7 to 10 USD).*

*The factory owners said that they would give the workers three days to go and vote in the commune elections including the Sunday but they still cut workers bonuses. If workers were not able to make it back to Phnom Penh on Monday they were dismissed. Owners also checked workers forefingers to confirm that they had indeed gone to vote as if their forefingers were not black then owners cut their salary (10 to 15 USD) or the worker was thumb printed. Any worker who lost their commune election card was not allowed to go to the province and still worked on voting day, which went against the order of the prime minister. Their rate of pay was the normal flat rate, not double time as stated in the labor laws of Cambodia.*

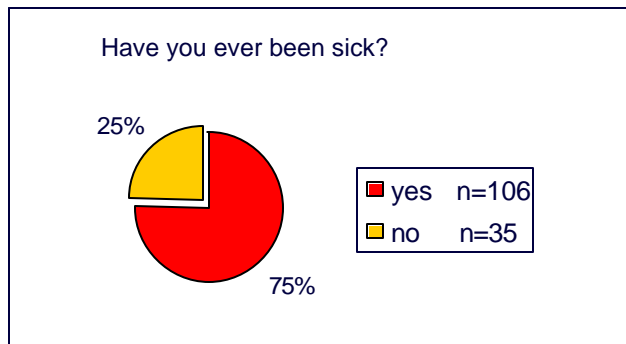
*For workers who went to vote during the election, when they complained that their bosses cut their bonuses their bosses said that if they were not happy with what they had done they could just stop working at the factory. The owners added that if workers file a complaint with the government they would be charged more than 32 USD.*

*One worker had family problems as her mother died and she asked for four days off to attend her mothers' funeral. The owner agreed and even signed a paper stating such. But when she came back the owner claimed that they had only given permission for tree days and they cut her bonus.*

*If a worker takes one day off without permission 10 USD will be cut but from their salary but if they have permission 7 USD is generally deducted from their salary.*

**Sicknesses**

Figure 3 Sickness



Many workers have been sick, but a part from sickness, there is a general loss of fitness and forces that results from months of over 10 hours per day, working on Sunday, eating rashly the less expensive food available out of the factory.

	Frequency	Percent
headache	41	38.7
typhoid fever	19	17.9
high fever	16	15.1
cold	12	11.3
stomachache	7	6.6
lose consciousness	4	3.8
tired	2	1.9
toothache + high fever	1	.9
hemorrhoids	1	.9
appendicitis	1	.9
feet swollen because whole day standing	1	.9
hemorrhage	1	.9
Total	106	100.0

The list of diseases mentioned by the workers who have been sick shows a varied list of diseases, which severity is also quite different. It should perhaps be stressed that even the mildest disease, as an headache, if you have to work 8-10 hours, can be invalidating. Lost of consciousness is often linked to period of overtime work without rest, which normally occur when workers are forced to fulfill orders.

It would be probably interesting to compare the number of typhoid fever that the workers complain about, with national epidemiological data, to check if the workers are more prone to infection. The hygiene conditions of most of the compounds where they live, without an adequate number of toilets and lacking waste disposal, make us think that they are more exposed to this kind of infective diseases.

	Frequency	Percent
I don't know	38	26.8
2-3 days but they need doctor letter	28	19.7
1 day but they cut the salary	16	11.3
less than one week and cut salary	16	11.3
1 week	13	9.2
2-3 day but don't know if they cut the salary or not	13	9.2
2-3 days but cut the bonus	6	4.2
depend on how long but 1 day they cut 1.5 \$	4	2.8
less than one week	3	2.1
more than one week but cut the salary depend on the days	2	1.4
they need letter from doctor	2	1.4
up to one month but cut the salary	1	.7
Total	142	100.0

The lack of awareness on the right to get leave in case of sickness merges with the experience that the workers went through while they were sick during work. So salary cuts seems to be a normal thing, despite the law said something different.

Table 34 Where did you look for care?

	Frequency	Percent
private clinic	33	31.7
just buy medicines	28	26.9
factory doctor	24	23.1
factory doctor and just buy medicine	9	8.7
factory and private clinic	6	5.8
public hospital	3	2.9
Kru Khmer	1	1.0
Total	104	100.0

Access to medical care and consequently health care seeking habits in Cambodia, is a social catastrophes. So it is not surprising that 31.7 of the workers went to a private clinic and 26.9 just buy medicine from the pharmacy. 24 workers went to seek care within the factory, 6 workers did both, go to see the factory doctor and the private clinic.

Table 35 Why you did not go to see the factory doctor

	Frequency	Percent
medicines of factory doctor don't cure me	44	53.0
don't have factory doctor	15	18.0
doctor comes only morning	10	12.1
the Chinese used rude words	5	6.1
if go to factory doctor too often they will blame me	3	3.6
factory doctor cures only simple sickness	2	2.4
after the treatment they cut salary	2	2.4
doctor uses the rude words with workers	2	2.4
Total	83	100.0

The reasons why workers did not seek medical care within the factory are explained in table 75, and do not need much comments too. The Occupational Health Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour is very active in elaborating rules, decrees and all the legal instruments to guarantee that the main right to health and safety of the workers are protected. The factory clinic and the timing of medical care availability are determined by the number of workers so small factories may lack it or have only a nurse available. Nevertheless workers seem to suffer different kind of discriminations.

In order to understand better how the health care provision works and what is its cost, we have crossed the data of the treatment cost with the kind of disease the workers have suffered . Data confirm the unsustainable cost of health care for the people.

Table 36 How much did you pay in USD and for what kind of disease

disease \ USD	head ache	tired	typhoid fever	stoma chache	high fever	toothache + high fever	cold	lose con sciousness	hemor rhoid	appen dicitis	feet swolle n	hemor rhage	total
1-5	15	2	1	3	11	1	9	2					49
6-10	6				1		1						8
11-15			5	1									6
16-25	2		1					1			1		5
26-40	3		6	1									10
41-60			3	1	1							1	6
61-100			2										2
101-500									1	1			2
	31	2	18	6	13	1	10	3	1	1	1	1	88



According to the results of the discussions' workshops, sickness is the source of another range of abuses, which include lack of appropriate care, bad treatment or discrimination in care provision, or forced work despite sickness. Sick workers are under such a pressure for fear of being dismissed that many go back to work before recovering.

*In the factory we do not have welfare.*

*When workers are sick and ask for medical help they tell us to withstand.*

*When we get sick we are in trouble because managers and bosses are very strict and do not allow us to stop working. If we ask to sign for leave they answer: we have to export our products very quickly.*

*I fell unconscious because I worked overtime too much.*

*If the workers get sick, the factory gives them few days off and then cut their salary.*

*Medical doctor who worked in the clinic in the factories discriminated against us. When we asked for medicine they said that they take care of only those that fell unconscious.*

*In many cases sick workers do not get leave and access to care.*

*If we have an accident during work in factory, they don't pay us money and they cut our salary and bonuses and stop our friends from visiting us.*

*When we got sick we asked for permission to take a rest but the Chinese didn't allow us to go home. They told us to go and get medicine from the doctor and wait until break time. But when we go to get the medicine from the doctor they told us that they cure only the people who lost consciousness.*

*Workers fell unconscious because of fatigue, too much working hours, not enough food.*

*The supervisor gave me bad medicines. After I took that medicine my health became worse and I had adverse reaction. I worked overtime for more than 3 months, till 10 pm, sometimes even 24 hours.*

*When I got sick I told the Khmer interpreter that I want to go home, but he don't agree with me. So even Khmer do not understand and help each other.*

*I fell unconscious twice a month because I worked overtime for three months.*

*When the workers have stomach-ache the boss use bad words: "Why you don't die as quickly as possible?"*

*One worker had typhoid and they cut her the salary.*

*One time when I had an accident while working, my eyes were bleeding because of the needle, the owner brought me to the hospital. They just pay \$15 for the reception but not for the medical treatment. I paid \$50 and they cut \$5 of my salary when I was hospitalised.*

**Dismissal**

Table 37 Reasons for dismissal ranked by frequency	
do not work properly	59
be absent	44
be sick too much	27
have conflict with other worker	17
become an union activist	10
do not follow the rules	9
work too slowly	4
factory has no work for worker to do	3
refuse overtime	3
steal the trousers of factory	2
be a worker on probation as factory exploit low cost then dismiss you	1
answer back to the Chinese	1
I don't know	1

Be absent and be sick are overlapping reasons that have been mentioned together in many cases. To be an unions' activist is among the reasons for dismissal. Refusing to do overtime wasn't mentioned by the majority of the workers, but it became evident during the discussions that it is a main reason for dismissal, or at least is feared by the workers as a main reason for, as they are often asked their fingerprints when they refuse.

The workers most at risk for dismissal are the more recently recruited still in probation period. That because factories tend to reduce the number of workers with certain seniority in order to keep the salary low. The workers are aware if that, as shown by the discussions we got with them. Unions' representatives are often a target for dismissals by the management.

*Workers are very afraid of dismissal so they do not complain of bad treatment.*

*Unions representatives get often fired by the direction.*

*One of the workers was fired because she worked as a representative of the worker. Since she attended the training with trade union she was harassed We should keep it confidential when we contact unions because if the owner knew that the worker joint the trade union than he will dismiss her. This worker used to protest against the Chinese owner and claim that the owner did not pay the worker after they worked for two months.*

*Dismissals happen almost on a daily basis. Factory owners use all kinds of strategies and often make false claims of worker misconduct for example eating, chatting or not doing work ordered, through which they can dismiss workers. If workers take three consecutive days off without prior permission they will be sacked.*

*There are now many factories that have reduced work activity and workers are recruited day by day.*

*According to Cambodian labor laws after finishing a three-month probationary period workers are to become permanent staff members but at my factory this is not the case. When Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour staff came to monitor they found that the factory owner had sacked probationary workers and did not give some money to workers for the time worked at the factory before.*

	Frequency	Percent
management	50	36.2
union representative	30	21.7
workers' representative	16	11.6
just cry/I don't know	16	11.6
group leader	8	5.8
administrator	6	4.3
other workers	5	3.6
I never have problem	3	2.2
powerful people	2	1.4
local authorities	1	.7
police	1	.7
Total	138	100.0

Most of the workers rely on management in case of problems. Workers representatives are not asked to solve problems by many workers. More workers, 21 %, seek support from unionists. A significant group of workers suffer and cry but don't know what to do or who could help them, revealing a situation of extreme vulnerability. Asked if they expect to pay for this help, 134 workers, 97.1 % answered no and 4, representing 2.9%, said yes.

**Factory life**

	Frequency	Percent
occasionally	88	63.8
yes	28	20.3
no, never	18	13.0
I don't know	4	2.9
Total	138	100.0

In some factories workers have difficulties, or are prohibited, to communicate with the exterior while working.

Figure 4 Facilities within the factories

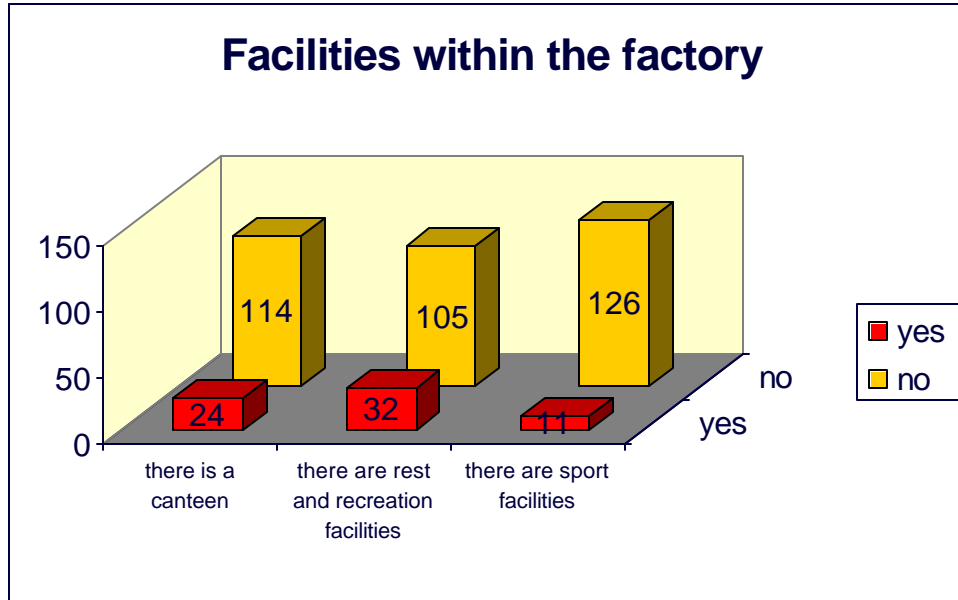


Table 40 Does your factory organise social activities free of charge?

	Frequency	Percent
no	96	70.1
yes	41	29.9
Total	137	100.0

Few factories have internal facilities for eating, resting, recreation or other kind of activities. Among the social activities organised by the factories, the workers mentioned participation in a TV public show on Sunday afternoon, or internal parties. Among the dates for these parties, May Day...

During the interview there were only few questions concerning life in the factory. We have thought that the lack of privacy and the need for a conducive environment would have made answers quite unspecific and vague. These kinds of issues were instead spoken out during the workshops. In this list there are different kinds of abuses, some incredibly harsh, some less, revealing situations of illegality, violence and arrogance or incredible pettiness.

**Relationships with bosses:**

*There are often bad and racist words from the bosses "Cambodian are stupid, lazy, cannot work properly" etc.*

*In the factory where I'm working now there was before a Chinese manager, but now they assign the management task to the workers representative, because the Chinese got headache when the problems happen. Now that the workers' representative is also the manager, we are afraid to complain about problems. If the workers complain too much they are dismissed, and also sometimes the representative is bribed. So, as for me now, I prefer the Chinese manager, better than the Cambodian.*

*The interpreter took bribes from the workers to get the job in the factory. It cost 20, 25 USD or even more than that.*

*When we do something wrong, like making a mistake or not sewing quickly enough the supervisor said that Cambodians have no eyes for sewing, are lazy workers.*

*We got angry with Chinese because they forced us to work under their requirement and when we were not able to fulfil their requirement they blamed us.*

*I'm disappointed with the leader who blames me and I decide to stop working in that factory and change to a new one. I commit some mistake when I distribute material for sewing to the other workers, sometimes something gets lost, and the leader blames me. There is no problem with the other workers.*

*I have problem in my factory. The group leader gets angry and oppresses me when there is demand for more clothes. I tried my best to work but still we cannot fit the demand and the leader said we couldn't work properly. I go to the toilet only two times in a day, I work very hard. The leader gets angry because I speak against her, and nobody dare to do that because she is superior than us. I speak against her only when I'm right, when I'm wrong I never speak. I worked in this factory for 3 years, I have never been threatened with dismissal, but this time the group leader is very angry.*

*There is no problem in the factory because it depends on the capacity of individuals: who can do more can earn more.*

*When I make a mistake the leader cheat me, and look down at me, but I do not have the ability to question him and I'm afraid of being dismissed.*

*Chinese discriminates against workers like if we just touch her hand, she sacks us.*

*I'm upset with the group leaders because they are young but very impolite, they are rude with other workers who are older than them.*

*When we get blamed we only keep it in our heart and walk away.*

*Many workers have to pay to get the job.*

*Chinese scold and threw the clothes on our table when we could not reach their demand of production on time.*

*When we break a needle, they say that we are lazy even if we work like slaves, such as 10 hour a day or more*

*We were upset with our group leader because they blamed us without reasons and we were afraid to answer back because we were afraid that we would be dismissed even because we used to attend the training with Trade Union.*

### **Sexual harassment and verbal abuses toward female workers**

*There are cases of sexual harassment from the bosses.*

*The Chinese owner committed sexual harassment against the workers when they saw beautiful workers. They touched the girls and then they leered with their mouth and make filthy faces to us. One of the workers stopped working at the factory because she was afraid of the sexual harassment against her.*

*Some workers were sexually harassed by the Chinese owners. They were looked down by Chinese owners and some beaten.*

*The boss of the factory said that if there were no factories in Cambodia all the women workers would be Srei Koich [derogative terms for sex workers].*

*The boss scolded the garment workers that attend the demonstration. He said that the workers look thin not because of hard working but because they have boyfriends and get abortion.*

*Factory owner and block/group leaders ask workers to work hard to be able to buy nice new clothes so that they are presentable in their workplace - this may also include wearing make-up. Bosses felt that wearing dirty clothes indicate that workers do not work hard and do not care about themselves and their appearance. If you come to work dressed shabbily you have to work hard in order to buy nice dresses because if you are hardworking you should be able to buy and wear nice clothes, otherwise you are a lazy worker. However, if workers dress nicely bosses often say that this worker has a boyfriend. Any worker who doesn't dress properly is often not given sick leave and when she asks for this owners usually don't allow it, instead telling her to work hard so that she can earn money with which to buy new clothes.*

### **Illegalsities**

*Many workers do not have contracts.*

*I was order by the factory to buy the uniform, and it was expensive.*

*Factory owners don't let us go outside for lunch.*

*Workers are scolded, they torn the permission paper, or push them if they cannot follow the instructions properly.*

*During work hour workers are not allowed to meet with any relative who may come and visit them, not even for 10 minutes.*

*When workers finish work at 4pm the guard won't allow them to leave the factory unless they have a letter signed by their group leader, block leader and the factory owner. If workers do not have this letter they must work until 6pm.*

*We cannot talk during working, if the Chinese (boss) found out that we are talking during work hours they will ask us to talk and talk until its time to go home.*

*When there is blackouts workers are forced to work 2 hours overtime.*

*During lunch break we went home and when we came back late the guard blamed us and didn't let us to get in.*

*Factories that provide lunch for workers do not allow workers to go outside after lunch.*

*The factory forces workers to resign when want to dismiss them.*

*When there is electricity sparking the workers want to run out the factory, but the leader did no want us to run and get angry with us.*

*A worker lost her bicycle in the factory but factory security didn't respond to this and blamed the workers*

*Salary is not paid in time, there is no receipt or the receipt is not clear, or written in foreign languages.*

### **Positive experiences**

*In the factory where I work I do not have problems. The Korean boss is in Korea and gave the responsibility to Cambodian to look over the factory. Cambodian leaders are good. If I have problem at home or I want permission they allow me to do that. I can earn, with overtime, up to 150 USD per month, and if there is no work to do they give us 26\$ per month*

### **Crime stories**

This story concerning a serious crime came out during one of the discussion. Challenged, the reporter said she just heard it from somebody else, who hear it from somebody else too. Other people then said that they had heard it, but nobody was able to provide details or sure indications to identify the source. It may just show that a core of "legends" is developing, based on this new experience of the factory work, but utilising former oral tales or horror stories.

*I did not see with my eyes, but I hear from other people. A worker died in the toilet during working time, and the Chinese owner put the body in the rubbish and burned it. During night time a truck took the remains away. The Chinese gave \$100 to the workers who knew the fact and then dismiss them from the factory.*

As already mentioned, when asked to comment their situation and position, or mention the problems encountered, workers did not speak out easily especially when interviewed. We have tried to get their vision of the factory work by asking them, during the workshops, how they see their future, including married and children, and if they would like to send their children to work in the factory. These are their answers:

*I don't want to get married while still working in the factory, because it makes our health go down and will affect our children's health too.*

*If I could afford my living condition I will stop working in the factory and engage in other business. When I get married I'm not sure if I will work in the factory or not.*

*I want to save money because after getting married I will have children and I have to support them.*

*I don't want to marry a garment worker, because this is not a permanent job. If the factory bankrupts we both will lose the job. I want to marry a businessman. But if I could not avoid it, and he has a good character, is honest and gentle, maybe I will decide to marry a factory worker.*

*I don't want to get married with a man who works in the factory, because they are not honest with us and when we have quarrel he will curse the wife who is a garment worker: you are the garment worker, you are easy to go with another boy or man.*

*I do not want to get married yet because I want to save money before.*

*I have a husband now, but if I will have children I will stop this work.*

*I will not let my children work in the factory because it is really very hard work: I want them to be government officers.*

*If I have children I will never let them work in the factory at all, because it is very difficult, and when you get sick you have no money to cure your sickness.*

*I will not let my children work in the factory, and if they still want to I will explain to them all the difficulties of working in the factory.*

*My children will not work in the factory, I will discourage them if they want to come here, and explain to them the problems and the difficulties. If they are stubborn and still want to come, they I can do nothing and I will let them go.*

*I don't want my daughter and my young sister to come to work in the factory, but if our conditions are poor maybe they will come too.*

*I will support my daughter so that she could get higher education, because I did not get a good education.*



*If I have children in the future I won't let them work in the factory because the working condition are too hard, make you very tired, have to work extra hours and have not enough time to rest. Moreover, we have no freedom and have pressure from the boss.*

*If the living conditions became difficult, I may send my children working here too.*

*If I will have better living conditions, I will not allow my children come and work in the factory.*

*The rich people do not want their children come and work in the factories because they do not want their children to face difficulties. Life as factory worker is suffering very much.*

Male workers comments:

*I'm worried because when I will be married I don't know how I will earn money to support the family.*

*After getting married I will stop working because otherwise my health will become weaker.*

*I will not let my daughter work in the factory because I'm afraid of rumours but I will let my son work.*

*I will not let my children work in the factory because I know already how bitter is working here. I do not wish to see my lovely children suffer and be in trouble by working at the same place where their parents used to work.*

*I will not let my children go, because in Phnom Penh there are many problems, cheating, exploiting, kidnapping, sexual harassment, killing and especially big brothers and gangsters.*

*It depends on my children to make the decision, to choose whether they want to work in the garment factory or not, I will just give advice to them before they come to work in the garment factory regarding communication with friends or the situation of working condition.*

*I want my children to do farming.*

From our results and outcomes, it appears very difficult to define the work in the garment factories as an empowerment experience for the women involved. The working conditions are quite bad, the lack of recognition of workers rights quite widespread. The most important negative aspect is the high turnover of workers, based on the practice of firing workers that reached a certain seniority. That means cutting continuously the possibility for the workers to gain experience and power through the work. In such environment, empowerment is very hard to achieve, especially considering the young age

of the workers and their social stigmatisation. Next chapter will provide the results of the analysis concerning involvement in labour rights struggle and women's collective actions, considered as experiences able to emancipate women and proved them with a stronger social role and recognition.

Labour rights knowledge and participation in unions' activity**Labour Code knowledge**

The lack of knowledge about their very elementary rights among the workers is a very surprising finding. Even if they have been exposed to unionism, or if in their factory there are active unionists, it seems that this very first and important sensitization and awareness raising activity is not particularly enhanced.

	Frequency			Percent
	?	?	both	
Yes, I know	13	5	18	12.8
Yes I know a little	11	-	11	7.8
I know it exist but I don't know specifically	1		1	.7
No, I don't know	98	13	111	76.7
Total	123	18	141	100.0

Among male workers knowledge is more spread, as 5 out of 18 of them, 27.7%, declare to know the labour code, but only 10.6 % of the female workers said the same.

Lacking fundamental information, workers underestimate in many cases the number and severity of abuses, mistreatments or frauds they are subjected to.

**Unionism**

	Frequency			Percent
	?	?	both	
yes	15	1	16	11.3
no	108	17	125	88.7
Total	123	18	141	100.0

Only 16 workers were or have been member of a union, corresponding to 11.3 % of the sample. Women are more unionised than men, 12.2% of the sample, while only one man, 5.6% of its group, is unionised.

	Frequency		Percent
	?	?	
they can solve my problem	13	1	87.5
they can help me	2		12.5
Total	16		100.0

had

The reasons for being member of a union are more contingent than holistic. Workers seek unions to solve problems, to find help, but during the discussions we have

on this subject, only one worker show a vision of unionism as a way to ameliorate the general working conditions and increase workers' rights respect. The only male worker

member of a union gave as reason: they can solve my problems.

Among the reasons why workers do not participate in unions, the lack of knowledge is the main issue. This occurs also in factories where there is a union representative.

	Frequency			Percent
	?	?	both	
don't know	66	13	79	63.2
no leader	30	4	34	27.2
I am not interested in that	5		5	4.0
Because I have never had any problem	3		3	2.4
They cannot help me	2		2	1.6
My family don't want me to be involve with unions	1		1	.8
It is useless to spend time on that	1		1	.8
Total	108	17	125	100.0

Having interviewed the workers in their own houses, we have always asked if other organisations or unions have visited there before, and the answer has always been no! Men answers mirror the ones of the women, with similar percentages.

months	Frequency	Percent
1	4	40.0
2	2	20.0
3	1	10.0
5	1	10.0
9	1	10.0
Total	9	100.0

	Frequency	Percent
yes	4	25.0
no	6	37.5
not clear	6	37.5
Total	16	100.0

### Participation in struggles

	Frequency	Percent
no	108	78.3
yes	30	21.7
Total	138	100.0

More than 20 % of the workers participate in a strike. Among them 3 are men, representing 16.7% and 27 are women, 22 %.

During the field-work there were strikes going on in the factories where some of our respondents worked. In one case the strike was declared to force the ownership to reintegrate some unionists fired. Workers joint the strike despite their lack of interest, and often confidence, in the unions, or in the unions leaders, showing that they are much more sensitive to calls for labour rights defence than what appears from their scarce participation in unionism.

During the workshops workers were more vocal about their participation in struggles, as strikes or other initiatives.

*Before I apply to work in the factory I read the labour code of Cambodia, and when I signed the contract paper I asked the factory owner to have a copy for me, but the owner said: All the workers never asked a thing like this, only one, you! The factory owner did not give me the paper because I was the only one asking for it.*

*I attended the strike because one of the workers was fired, we come to join the strike for solidarity and we were successful.*

*I joined the strike because when I ask two days of leave they give only one day, but I was sick and I could not go to work. When I receive the salary and I realise they cut the salary I decided with the others to take action and make the action successful.*

*I joined the workers union because when we have problems with the boss or other people in the factory they can help us.*

*We used to have quarrel with Khmer-Chinese interpreter because usually they never protect the interest of the workers. They just followed advice of the Chinese owner and treated badly against the workers.*

*The Chinese manager hit the worker's head with the pen. She was very angry and wanted to stab the Chinese with scissors. The Chinese complained to the owners and blamed the girl for attempting to stab the Chinese. But because all 40 workers declared that it was the mistake of the Chinese the owner then asked the girl to be quiet and then the Chinese was fired from the job.*

*When the male garment workers have worked long time in the factory they are able to protest with the owner when they see something wrong that is quite different from the female garment workers, they are silent when the owner curse or threaten them. In conclusion strikes usually occur in the factory that has many male workers that's why they don't like to hire the men. On the other hand most women are skilful in sewing.*

It is also interesting to note the workers' vision of monitoring coming out from these discussions

*When worker's union representatives or Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour people comes to monitor the working conditions, the factory owner threaten the workers not to talk truthfully. If the workers speak out about working conditions before the staff leave, they will be fired. It is difficult, if workers want to speak against their working conditions they often can't because the factory managers and owners walk along with the worker's union or Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour staff.*

*Workers who are under 18 years old are forced to go and hide in the toilet or leave the factory until the worker's union representative or Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour*

*staff leave because factory owners are afraid that they are committing an offence as they have hired workers who are not above the age of 18.*

*The factory owners force workers in probation period to leave the factory when Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour staff monitors come.*

Unions' membership appears as something contingent even from the answers to questions concerning objectives and goals: very few people know what the union's objectives and goals are. The only male worker member of a union didn't know the objectives and goals. The lack of a women perspective among unions is probably among the cause of the scarce participation, as women do not recognise these structures as places where they can talk, discuss, overcome prejudice and find new form of solidarities.

## Living conditions

One of the purposes of the study was to achieve an understanding of the main problems faced by the garment workers, inside as well as outside the factory. Therefore the living conditions were included as a main area of investigation and a section of the questionnaire was focused on issues like houses, services, transport, leisure etc. Some of the problems, however, did not come out until the workers felt free and comfortable to speak out, which happen only later on, during the workshops. Apart from the answers to the questionnaires and the discussions during the workshops, the living conditions are appraisable by whoever just wants to make the effort to go there and have a look at the houses and dare to ask few questions to the workers. The rooms' size, the people crowded in a same compound, as well as the lack of hygiene are very evident problems, and do not need further elucidations to be recognized.

Since the beginning, the research team has tried to involve the local authorities in the research. The Municipality of Phnom Penh was contacted and particularly the authorities of the three districts where the study was carried out, together with the Gender Advisor within the Municipality. However, once explained the aim of the study and our willingness to examine the garment factories by the angle of their social integration into the fabric of the city and the problems and costs of such process, the municipality officers do not seem interested in our action and the contact with them was lost.

## **Housing**

	Frequency	Percent
rented room	130	94.9
my own house	6	4.4
relative's house	1	.7
Total	137	100.0

Only 7 workers among the group we have interviewed were not living in a rented house but in their own house near the factories or in the house of relatives. All the other, 94.9% lived in rented rooms or houses.

	Frequency	Percent
only myself	2	1.6
2	15	12.1
3	18	14.5
4	48	38.7
5	20	16.1
6	7	5.6
7	6	4.8
8	1	.8
my parents and other relatives	7	5.6
Total	123	100.0

66% of the workers share their rooms with at least 4 persons. Most of the workers' houses look as refugees' camp and in the worse cases as detention camps. Rooms can be so small that beside the bed, where 4 people sleep, there is space just for one person standing. Many rooms are obtained by adding cement or woods cubicles to the family house or yard, without light or air. No one house we have visited had mosquito nets at the window or inside the rooms.

Table 3. Cost of rent

payment \$	individual	sharing	Total
5	23		23
10	4	3	7
12		3	3
15		27	27
16		5	5
18		9	9
19		11	11
20		34	34
25		1	1
28		1	1
30		3	3
Total	27	97	124

Workers can pay individually or share the unit cost of the room according to the owners' requests. Rooms' cost can be quite high, view the conditions. The medium price is between 15 and 20 \$, but for the same price conditions can vary significantly. In one case in Russey Keo 20 \$ month rooms have private toilets and the whole agglomerate was very new and clean, while few hundred meter farther for the same price there were very small rooms in a highly crowded agglomerate with few toilets for more than 80 rooms, and garbage everywhere. The 3 cases sharing a room at 30 \$ a month lived in a new building, in front of the factory, with toilets in each room, but even considering

that, the price is high. When workers pay individually the owners tend to squeeze them as much as possible within the space they have available, privacy become impossible, hygiene scarce. Individual payment is the choice when workers are renting rooms within a private house, or when rooms are very small.

Comments from the workers during the workshops testimony about the problems and confirm our appraisal during the visits:

*The house where we live has no hygiene, many people share the same rooms and toilets. When it is raining water comes in and all is flooded.*

*Each person spends \$5 a month, even if the room is small and there are other 3 or 4 people living there.*

*Water and electricity in my house cost more than the normal rate.*

*My place is very small and has not enough light and water. We have one toilet that we use in 30 workers living there.*

*We have troubles at the house that we rent because the owner doesn't care about us. Lighting is available for only a limited time as they turn the lights off at 10.00 pm and there are only a few toilets but a lot of people.*

*The house is very dusty, when it rains there is a lot of mud, bad smell, there are many mosquito and flies, no safety and there is no health centre around in our place. We pay for fire, electricity and water more than the limited cost set by the government.*



	Frequency	Percent
free	38	29.2
700 rls. 1 jar	4	3.0
1000 riel 1 jar	37	28.5
1500-2000 rls. 1 jar	32	24.6
4000 rls 1jar	8	6.2
1-2 \$ month	11	8.5
Total	130	100.0

Most of the houses are supplied in water with jars filled by the owner or the house manager. The characteristic of these houses, indeed, is this long row of jars near each door in the compound. Water is free only for 29% of the workers in this sample, the others have to paid it according to the tariffs imposed on them by their owners, often exceeding the normal cost. Workers complain about water and electricity cost during the workshops more than at the time of interviews.

Cost per kw	Frequency	Percent
is free	88	69.3
350	3	2.4
1000	1	0.8
1200	16	12.8
1400	5	4.0
don't have	1	0.8
don't know	13	10.4
Total	127	100.0

Electricity was free for nearly 70% of our sample, but in fact it was often cut after a certain hour, normally 9 or 10 pm. In other cases it was free until a certain consumption, as 1 kilowatt month, and charged beyond that limit. The workers that have the electricity cut in the evening when coming home after working overtime have to do everything in the dark. The electricity tariffs applied are often above the normal kilowatt cost.

	Frequency	Percent
one	30	25.2
two	16	13.4
three	15	12.6
four	10	8.4
five	7	5.9
six	4	3.4
in each room	5	4.2
114 rooms 12 toilets	4	3.4
don't have toilet	3	2.5
800 people 8 toilets	3	2.5
8	11	9.2
12	7	5.9
30	4	3.4
Total	119	100.0

We where not able to get the exact figure of the number of people living in each compound, so the number of toilets quoted by the workers cannot be properly compared. However we have chosen to keep the answers to the question because even if not complete it could provide a further outlook of the living conditions.

Toilets can be quite far away from the rooms, and in many houses, especially when a family rent few rooms, there is just one toilet available. In the worse cases, 50 workers were

Table 7 Houses' facilities		
There are facilities for laundry	Frequency	Percent
yes	27	20.0
no	108	80.0
Total	135	100.0
Do you have safes?	Frequency	Percent
yes	102	75.6
no	33	24.4
Total	135	100.0
There are cooking facilities?	Frequency	Percent
yes	44	32.6
no	91	67.4
Total	135	100.0
Is cleaning provided?	Frequency	Percent
yes	71	52.6
no	14	10.4
yes but not good	50	37.0
Total	135	100.0
Are you free to come and go ?	Frequency	Percent
yes	121	89.6
no	14	10.4
Total	135	100.0
Can you receive visitors?	Frequency	Percent
yes	126	93.3
no	3	2.2
once a month	6	4.4
Total	135	100.0

The impression of a transitory accommodation is accentuated by the confinement of so many people, crowded outside the rooms along the main corridors, between the jars, cocking, washing clothes, washing themselves or doing other kind of tasks. The lack of hygiene in certain cases was evident, with waste all around the houses.

The interviews were conducted in the houses, sitting on the yard, or on the corridor, with the owners or the house managers listening. So workers did not dare to underline too much some aspect, which was better elucidated during the workshops.

Table 8 Problems related to the house		
	Frequency	Percent
no problems	65	48.1
lack of hygiene	18	13.3
lack of hygiene, water and electricity cut often	13	9.6
expensive	11	8.1
afraid of robbers	9	6.7
hot and narrow	7	5.2
lack of water, hot and narrow room, toilet not enough	6	4.4
afraid of electrical fire	3	2.2
too crowded	2	1.5
expensive and lack of hygiene	1	.7
Total	135	100.0

Most of the workers did not mention specific problems during the interview, nevertheless the lack of hygiene was very much perceived by the workers.

During the workshops the workers were more vocal on their living conditions and the problems they face, particularly for what concern complains on the owners' behaviours or rules imposed by owners to them:

*I live in a rented room near the factory, but I do not feel safe, I want to live in a better place.*

*When our salary comes late or we have no job to do we don't have money but the owner of the house did not understand us. We must paid the money for the rental, therefore we have to borrow at high interest to pay for the house, if we don't pay we must leave from there.*

*The house owner behaves as a boss, workers cannot go out and have to follow his rules. The owner of the house scolds us and accuses us to have boyfriends.*

*During free time I cannot go out because the house owner did not allow me, but Sunday afternoon the owner plays TV and we can watch.*

*The house is very dusty, when it rains there is a lot of mud, bad smell, there are many mosquito and flies, no safety and there is no health centre around in our place. We pay for fire, electricity and water more than the limited cost set by the government.*

## Transports

	Frequency	Percent
walking	127	92.7
bicycle	1	.7
mototaxi	6	4.4
truck	3	2.2
Total	137	100.0

conditions.

Having approached the workers at their own house, near the factory, we did not found many people utilising transport means to go to work, as houses are normally at walking distance from the factories. The answers from the few people that had to utilise transport's means to go to work discovered another aspect of exploitative living

	Frequency	Percent
13 \$month/ 2000 rls day	1	14.3
10 \$ month/ 1500 rls day	1	14.3
7.5\$ month/ 1100rls day	2	28.6
3.5 \$month/ 500 rls day	3	42.9
Total	7	100.0

The cost of transportation, in this sample concerning only a small percentage of workers, is very relevant. Workers rely on private truck, mototaxi and motoremorqs to move to and from the factory daily. Thousand of workers coming from rural areas surrounding Phnom Penh travel daily with these means, that not only are costly but also particularly overcrowded and unsafe, particularly at night. Accidents are frequent and deadly.

	Frequency	Percent
less than 10'	53	38.7
10' to 20'	76	55.5
30'	7	5.1
30' to 1 hour	1	.7
Total	137	100.0

The length of the daily walk to reach the factory can be quite significant, up to 20 minutes for 55.5% of the workers. If the morning walk may not pose particular problems, the return, especially at night, without light, is a of cause problems or apprehension.

	Frequency	Percent
lack of safety at night after overtime	68	49.6
no problem	61	44.5
traffic jam	7	5.1
cost	1	.8
Total	137	100.0

The workers mainly complain about the lack of safety. In fact robberies and rapes occur in the areas around the factories, and workers are often obliged to walk home late in the night after overtime, along dark streets.

During the workshops the workers spoke quite freely about the problems linked to the house location and the way home from work, and again it appears the weakness and the extreme vulnerability of the women working in the factory.

*Gangs oppress us and make us afraid when we want to go anywhere and particularly when we leave from factory in the evening and go home.*

*The place around is not safe, when we come back from the factory at night we are afraid.*

*In Russey Keo gangsters rob workers the day we receive the salary.*

*Workers were kidnapped and extorted money or raped when they worked overtime and left the factory during night time.*

*When I finish work at night and I came back home I'm so worried about getting robbed or even that somebody rape me.*

*I'm worried and afraid the day I receive the salary, because the gangsters know that and assault us.*

*We are very afraid of sexual harassment and rape by gangsters because we often have to work late at night and walk home in the dark.*

*Some workers were kidnapped by traffickers when they came back from the factory during night time. A van or motorcycle stopped in front of the factories and kidnapped the workers, three workers were kidnapped like that. It always happened near Toul Sangkae pagoda and Bekchan area but nobody takes action because they just think that*

*the workers stopped working by themselves. In fact, one girl left the factory and went with her friend but she never came back.*

Moral rules of behaviour are so interiorised, or the moral condemn for their infringement is so feared, that women prefer to take personal risks instead of adopt behaviours that can be judged as immoral.

*Girls are afraid of robbers and even of rape, but very few ask to the factory boys to walk with them because they are also afraid of gossip, everybody will talk about them if they go around with boys.*

## Food

The pressure on workers to save money and send it back to the families force them to control their expenditures as much as possible, especially food. Workers eat mainly prepared food from street vendors near the factories, which price is relatively cheap. Saving on food expenses may also allow workers to spend money for personal care, or leisure. Very few factories have a canteen for the workers or have cheap prices for this service, as normally occurs in the factories' canteens in the western countries, where prices are administered.

Table 13 Where do you get breakfast and how much it costs?

\$ \ where	home	outside	both	total
300-500 rls	21	60	1	82
500-1000 rls	6	17	9	32
500 rls	1	7		8
total	28	84	10	122

Workers eat normally along the road, near the factories, where small food sellers mushroom from the early morning till late at night. Food is cheap, as is quality.

Table 14 Where do you get lunch and how much it costs?

\$ \ where	home	outside	factory	home or outside	
less than 500	8				8
500-1000 rls	31	54	6	4	95
1000-1500 rls	3				3
1500-2000 rls		4			4
free			3		3
2500 rls	1				1
factory cut 3 USD			12		12
3 USD a month	1				1
1000-1500 per lunch and dinner	1	2			3
5000 rls for the whole family lunch & dinner	1	3			4
	46	63	21	4	134

Out of 134 workers answering only 21 had lunch within the factory. For three of them the lunch is free, for 12 the price is lower than the normal price paid to the food sellers' shops, while 6 other workers paid in the factory the same amount. The majority of the workers buying their lunch at the shops spend between 500 and 1000 riels a day, around 3.8\$ month.

	home	outside	home and outside	factory	Total
less than 500 riels	8				8
500-1000 riel	81	8	1	1	91
1000-2000 riel	22	1	1		24
8-10 USD per month	3				3
8-10 USD per lunch and dinner	1	2			3
5000 riel for the whole family lunch & dinner	4				4
Total	119	11	2	1	133

Workers have mainly their dinner at home. The majority spends between 500 and 1000 riels for the dinner. From this sample it appears that the majority of the workers spend for food between 1300 riels and 2500 riels a day (three meals), which corresponds in dollar to a monthly cost of 10 to 20 \$.

The workers complain that they do not eat enough good food, especially fresh vegetables and fruits that are very expensive and can be bought only at the beginning of the month.

*We never eat good food because we have to save the money to send to our family at the homeland.*

*Workers fell unconscious because of fatigue, too much working hours, not enough food.*

It is not surprising also that workers complain about their tiredness and fatigue: the huge number of hours worked to put together a decent salary conjugate with cutbacks on expenditures for food, compromising health and fitness. Having been in contact with the workers for many months we have witnessed this physical impact in many of them: girls just arrived from the villages, nineteen years old, that after 5 months appear thin, and have changed their body shape and face expression.

### **Other facilities**

A part from the essential services as houses, we have tried to analyse the social context wherein the workers live, not just the mere survival but also leisure, education, recreation facilities that are available to them.

Table 16 There are education facilities?

	Frequency	Percent
yes	104	75.9
no	33	24.1
Total	137	100.0

Table 17 Did you attend it?

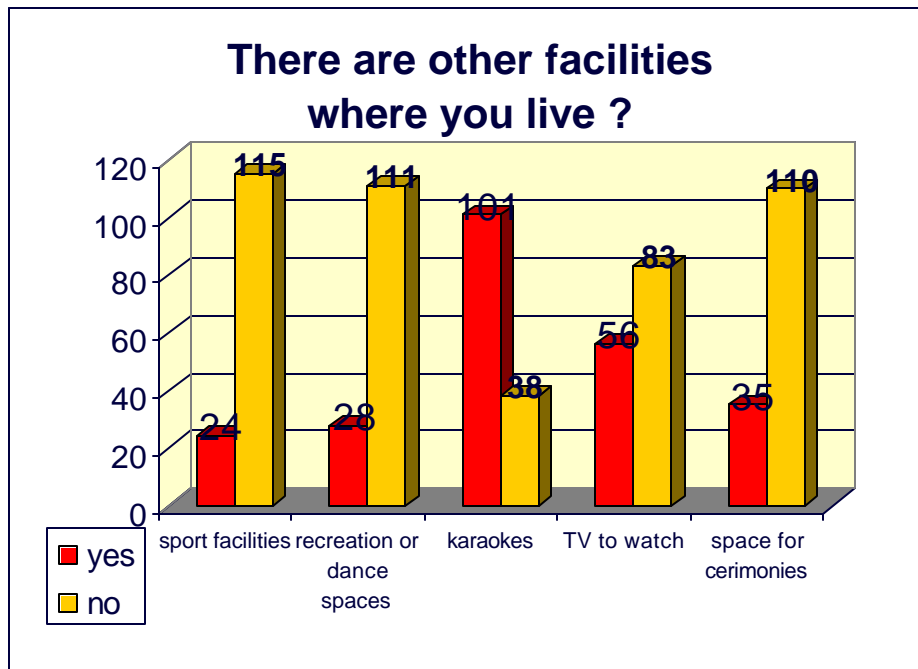
	Frequency	Percent
yes	8	7.7
no	96	92.3
Total	104	100.0

Among the educational activities that can be found near the workers houses, language courses and sewing courses predominate, but only 8 workers attend one of those, 2 men and 6 women.

Table 18 Why you did not attend it ?

	Frequency	Valid Percent
no money, no time	18	18.8
low education	1	1.0
I'm disable	1	1.0
I'm tired	5	5.2
I have no time	65	67.7
I don't know the location	2	2.1
I'm too old	1	1.0
Total	96	100.0

The reasons for not attending training or other educational courses are quite obvious: lack of money and lack of time.



Apparently English or computer schools and karaokes are the main opportunities offered to the workers near their houses. It is true that all over Cambodia, and even in the rural areas where the workers come from, there are very little leisure facilities too. It may be therefore argued that the places where the workers live do not differ substantially from their normal environment. But the situation of the workers differs substantially from normality, as they are separated from their family and cut from their community's life,

exchanges and contacts. The lack of spaces for socialisation is therefore felt more, while the young age of the workers enhances this feeling.

Constrained by the lack of time and the need to save as much money as possible, workers are often confined within these neighbourhoods, and spend their free time doing housework. Males workers have more activities, as they are not constrained by moral codes of behaviour, and do not have to fear aggressions and violence. Some workers are aware of this gap, as of the unfair repartition of domestic tasks, and ask for more equity.

*During free time we wash the clothes, prepare food, wash the dishes, watch TV, listen the radio, go to watch other people doing karaoke, sit together telling joking stories to each other, singing without music, go to the market and buy food. Sometime when we have the salary we collect a little amount from each one and we organize a little picnic.*

*On Sunday I stay at home and do housework. I never go out, especially at night.*

*If I have free time I help my grandmother to sell something. I never go out because I want to save the money.*

*During rest time I prepare food, I wash the clothes and I watch the TV.*

*My aunt comes every 3 or 4 months and brings me out in town.*

*We have to save money for our families and do not have money for leisure.*

*I'm scared of getting around in Phnom Penh.*

*We just go to the nearest market and buy some extra food or clothes, but only at the beginning of the month, when we receive the salary.*

*Some workers go to the riverside, in front of the Royal Palace, to Phnom Tamao, or visit the family.*

*We raise money in a group and we go out, to the farm, or we buy some sweets in the market.*

*Leisure time is not a lot. Workers are tired after normal work and overtime, and have to do homework, washing dishes, clothes, preparing food.*

*On Sunday workers, especially the women, spend the time for the housework such as: washing clothes, embroidering, looking after the children (if they have any), going to the market, cooking, preparing and cleaning the house etc. Beside the factory work and the housework workers rarely go for a walk far from the house because they are concerned about their safety. So the freedom the female workers are enjoying is limited and quite different from that of the men, who people can always see while they play sport and go out at night.*



*Workers who are married with children have very little time.*

*I have a husband and children so when I finish work or during rest time I cannot go anywhere, I have to come home and do cooking and take care of the children.*

*We want the men to help us in the housework so that the women can have time for leisure.*

*Men workers have more activities during leisure, go to karaoke, play football, and move more easily.*

The workers react to this situation by not investing emotionally in their actual position, which is considered transitory, and by putting their hopes and plans for the future in a return back to their village. The village is seen as the place of freedom, happiness and plenitude, and the only attractiveness of the town is the income available there. City life charm, as lights, restaurants, shops, etc., seems to exert very little influence on the workers, who realise quite well that their life in the slums near the factories has little glamour, and that without money the town is not so enjoyable.

*The village is better than the factory, but we do not have money there, working in the factory makes me tired and upset.*

*In the village we have freedom, but we didn't get money.*

*In Phnom Penh we have work to do and we can earn money to support our family, but we work long hours in a day, and our freedom is limited according to working conditions.*

*Before at the village I spend money without thinking, but now that we came in Phnom Penh if we want something we always think before, because we need to save money for our family to pay for food or medical treatment.*

*When I will stop working in the factory I will go back to the homeland, have freedom, help the parents to do farm work, live there and have time to rest more than here in Phnom Penh.*

*I work hard and try to save money so in the future I can change work and do some business in the village, where I have freedom and I'm happy.*

*I don't want to work in the factory forever, because I'm so tired and sometime I lose consciousness and have no time to rest.*

*I want to go back in the village and do farming, raise pigs, produce local wine and do small businesses.*

*I want to go back to the village and do farming.*

*I don't want to work in the factory forever because there are many problems, no rest and in the village I had more freedom.*

*If I stop working here, I will never come back again to work here.*

*I don't want to work for a long time here because of the working conditions and the leaders' rudeness and control over me make me very sad and I feel imprisoned.*

*I want to do bride make up or tailoring at the village.*

*When I will have enough money I will get married, stop working in the factory, go back to farming and be a traditional singer.*

Male workers

*I will work in the garment factory for three to five more years.*

*I would work only for one more year because my health and energy became poorer and weaker.*

*If the factory is still running I will continue to work.*

*It depends on my health if I continue to work in the factory, but I don't want to work for a long time.*

How the money is spent

We do not have the presumption of being able to trace exactly the workers expenditures and savings, which would require more in deep investigations. What we were interested in instead was having a view of the workers' livelihood standards, understanding if the workers were simple money transferor or if they saved money for themselves, and in what degree they have control over their wages.

Table 19 How much you spend for personal care?				
USD	Frequency			Percent
	?	?	both	
0-5	67	6	73	58.8
6-10	16	3	19	14.5
11-15	12	1	13	10.5
16-20	10	3	13	10.5
21-30	5	1	6	5.7
Total	110	14	124	100.0

Workers are careful with their expenditures in all their life domain, as shown by their food consumption. Personal care expenditures were defined as soap, shampoo, toothpaste, clothes etc. 73,3 % of the workers do not spend more than 10 USD a month for this kind of goods, only few of them claim to spend more money. Among women 60.9% spend less than 10 USD, compared to 42.8% of the men.

Table 20 How much do you spend for leisure?

USD	Frequency			Percent
	?	?	both	
0	20	4	24	28.2
1	1		1	1.2
2	2	1	3	3.5
3	13	6	19	22.4
4	1	1	2	2.4
5	23	1	24	28.2
10	6	1	7	8.2
15	4		4	4.7
20	1		1	1.2
Total	71	14	85	100.0

Many workers did not spend money for leisure at all, 85.9 % spend not more than 5 USD a month, and men tend to spend less as 92.8% of them spend 5 USD or less compared to 84.5% of the women. Not only the money for leisure is scarce, also going around in town is perceived as dangerous, and there are seldom other leisure activities where the workers live.

Despite that, workers organize collective trips near the town, or in town, sharing the cost of transport and meal.

The discussions on workers leisure and their spending related to leisure show that this is a main socialisation opportunity, as some of them organise activities together sharing the money:

*On Sunday we went to the riverside, to Phnom Tamao, TV 3 live concert, Royal Palace, Karaoke shop. Usually we went with other garment workers (both boys and girls) or sometimes with our brother or our uncle. Usually we share the expenses.*

*Some workers go to the riverside, in front of the Royal Palace, to Phnom Tamao, or visit the family.*

*We organise little trips together, and share the expenses. Only few workers have participated in trips or leisure activities organized and paid by the factory.*

*We go out with many friends, all the expenses are paid by men who are not garment workers. Sometime we went to the riverside, watching a concert at TV3. We go to the market to buy something, or we go for a walk, or to sing at karaoke.*

*Sundays we go to Wat Phnom, riverbank, karaoke shop, watched film, television number 3, Parkway square, Tamao Mountain. We go with the group of men or women. Sometimes we go with our sisters or cousin. Usually we paid money by ourselves. The factory paid for the ticket of the film two times per month.*

However, for other money is not enough and rarely they spend money on leisure:

*I would like to visit my family every month but I cannot because I have no money.*

*We have to save money for our families and do not have money for leisure.*

## Remittances

Table 21 How much do you send home?

	Frequency	Percent
0	6	5.7
2	1	1.0
5	2	1.9
10	9	8.6
13	1	1.0
15	8	7.6
20	14	13.3
25	9	8.6
30	27	25.7
35	3	2.9
40	10	9.5
45	3	2.9
50	6	5.7
55	1	1.0
70	1	1.0
90	2	1.9
100	1	1.0
not sure	1	1.0
Total	105	100.0

The amount sent home is very variable. The statistics are the follow:

Table 22 Statistics for money sent home

	all	female	male
Valid data	104	93	11
Missing data	50	42	8
Mean	27.84	28.57	21.64
Median	30.00	30.00	20.00
Mode	30	30	20
Std. Deviation	17.83	18.41	10.46
Range	100	100	40
Minimum	0	0	0
Maximum	100	100	40

The general mean is 27.8 USD, median and mode coincide at 30 USD, but range is as high as 100\$. The differences between sexes are significant: men mean is less, 21.64 USD, as are the median and mode at 20 USD, range is 40 USD and standard deviation shows a lesser dispersion.

These significant amounts of money explain the workers' caution in spending money in Phnom Penh. Sending such amounts of money home every month requires a strong sense of duty, or a huge pressure to accomplish this supposed duty. How else can be justified that some people send home to the family for food more than what she or he is spending monthly to live in Phnom Penh? During our survey we have found only one worker, a woman, who claims to have stopped sending money to her family, after 3 years of work in garment factories. Most of the people who were not sending money home were just recently employed. In this case money is needed to pay for the facilitator and other expenditures while waiting for the job. The pressure is particularly strong on daughters, who feel very concerned by their role of income providers to the families.

Apparently their capacity to send home remittances has changed the relationships within the family. Money acts as mediator for relationships among relatives, and workers acquire recognition in relation to their income providing capacity. The lower value given to the daughters, compared to the sons, is perceived by some of the women, who realize the discrimination as they suffer it directly, for example by being sent to work instead of continuing education.

*While I was at home they always cursed me and beat me up, but now that I have the job everything is changed and they are friendly and never ask me to do home work or cooking when I come home.*

*We have noted the low value of the daughters in our society. Our parents gave more chance to their sons than to the daughters because they think that although the daughter*

*have high education she do nothing beside housework. But they sent the daughter to find the job to support the family.*

*I sent money every month because my father is sick. I had heavy burden to support my family, I'm always concerned about my family and my brother who is studying at the high school.*

*My parents allowed me to come and work here and I send all the salary home. So when I go to visit them they are very kind and do not allow me to do anything.*

*Sometime family look down at me.*

*My family treat me better than before. I was scolded or beaten, but now no more because family misses me and receives the money I sent home.*

*My family at the beginning was not happy, but after they start to appreciate my work and money.*

*Some families think that daughters can save money better than boys, and prefer to send the girls in the factories.*

*The relationships with my family are good, even better then before.*

*I'm angry with my family because I would like to continue the school.*

Male workers:

*My family misses me, they cry when I visit home.*

*Before working in the garment factory my parents love me less, now they are closer than before and they pity me.*

*My parents want nothing from me beside wish me a better future, and they said: do not forget to take some few hours free to study if possible, because working in the factory does not represent a bright future and a valuable one.*

## **Saving**

	Frequency			Percent
	?	?	both	
yes	29	4	33	34.0
no	55	9	64	66.0
Total	84	13	97	100.0

Only one third of the workers interviewed use to save money for themselves. No difference in frequency between males and females were found.

\$	sex	females	male	Total
2		1		1
4		1		1
5		3		3
10		5	4	9
15		7		7
20		9		9
30		2		2
40		1		1
Total		29	4	33

The amount is variable: 3 out of them could save less than 5 USD month, nine up to 10 USD, 16 up to 20 USD and three up to 30 USD.

Despite the fact that only part of the workers save money on their own, when asked questions concerning their future, most of them base their plans on the money saved. Youth increases the quite unrealistic views and perspectives the workers express about future: going back to the village and do farming is a common wish, even if farming presently cannot support them and that's the reason why they had to migrate.

*If I had enough money I would like to set up a business and sell clothes in the market.*

*I want to save money because after getting married I will have children and I have to support them.*

*When I will have enough money I will get married, stop working in the factory, go back to farming and be a traditional singer.*

*I will get married when the money that I have saved will be enough to set up a new business.*

Male workers:

*I want to save a lot of money and go back to the village and be a farmer.*

*When we can save some money we will stop working from the factory and run a small business such as selling grocery, coffee, credit, buy and selling rice, repairing car, motor, radio or television.*

### **Decisions power over money utilisation**

	Frequency	Percent
mother	24	20.7
parents	1	.9
with others	11	9.5
myself	75	64.7
sister or brother	5	4.3
Total	116	100.0

The majority of the workers said to have decision power over the money they send home. The second decision maker is the mother, who is the more involved in decisions, the elder sisters and brothers, and in any case the father.

### Money utilisation

	Frequency			Percent
	?	?	both	
yes	88	5	93	83.0
no	10	9	19	17.0
Total	98	14	112	100.0

Most of the workers claim to be aware of the utilisation of the money by their families. Women seem to be much more conscious of the family expenditures, only 10 % of them are unaware compared to 64% of the men.

	Frequency			Percent
	?	?	both	
food and family expenses	53	4	57	60.6
utility expenses	1		1	1.1
repair the boat & food	1		1	1.1
food and sister/brother's study	15		15	16.0
parents save for me	13		13	13.8
treatment of sickness	4	1	5	5.3
pay for debt	2		2	2.1
Total	89	5	94	100.0

The money is more often used to provide food, and support livelihood expenditures. A small group of workers said that their family is saving money for them. Debts repayment, sickness, maintenance and utilities make up the rest of the expenditures. It is quite worrying to see that the money is not invested in tools for new activities, or in other kind of issue that may free the family from the neediness.

These last questions on the families' expenditure bring back the analysis of the workers' social group to the initial questions addressed to the workers: why do you migrate? Food appears here again, as a main utilisation of workers' remittances, as it was at the beginning among the reasons for migrating. In many cases workers send home more than what they spend for food, even if the number of relatives isn't too high, or the parents are young, there is land available and there are house assets including transport means.

The whole experience for the workers appears also as a turning wheel, that did not bring them far forward from their initial step. Few of them have gained social recognition

and economic security through this work, while the money they were able to gain did not fall under their control and is not available for them for their future plans. Their sacrifice has been paid back with a stigmatisation and a social prejudice that constitutes for them a heavy weight, that may continue to affect them even in the future, as for a bad girl is very difficult to wash her image because virginity is lost for ever. The actual participation in collective actions does not take into account this aspect of workers life, therefore alienating workers instead of gather them. Living conditions did not offer them other ways to acquire power and decision making capacities. The offer of alternative ways of life is scarce even in town, and there are not other forms of social participation that they may be involved too.

The results of this research are a mirror of the actual situation of the workers, if the global economy will allow Cambodia to develop its own industrial apparatus, of goods for the internal markets, while strengthening its primary sector, workers may emancipate from this initial negative experience and become a structured and recognised working class and not just a reservoir of cheap labour for Multinational Corporation. In this case, however, women will not be so demanded...



## CONCLUSIONS

The introduction illustrated various questions that triggered this study: investigate the achievements in terms of living conditions, social recognition and gender equity that the work in the factories is procuring to the women employed. After this long excursus amid garment workers', that has essayed to analyse their lives within the factories and outside, to reveal their feelings, hopes, and visions of the future, and has disclosed prospects of social exclusion, anger and despair, the picture that unfolds bears no resemblance to notions of women's emancipation and empowerment, that are commonly synonymous with economic betterment. At least not until now.

Surely employment in the factories represents an important source of revenue for thousands of **rural families** that regardless of their social status, are in increasing need of extra incomes. Sending a girl to work in a garment factory may solve everyday livelihood needs, and secure families lives. At what cost to the women and girls employed in the factories? Women workers are facing a life of sacrifice; long hours of work, bad and unsafe living conditions, not enough nutritional food, social discrimination, stigmatisation, and violence. Concurrently, in the village a new roof is build, a bike is bought, younger brothers and sisters may access the secondary school or higher education.

Do these families represent the poor, or the most in need? apparently not, since it became rather evident from this study, that not one factor could explain the socio-economic condition of the families in need of extra incomes, but rather a culmination of factors leading to daughters, and a minority of sons, to migrate to **Phnom Penh**.

It may look as a paradox, but having achieved peace and security, Cambodian farmers have now increasingly to deal with economic insecurity. A plethora of factors contribute to make agricultural outputs uncertain: flood, draught, fluctuations in rice prices, increase demand of inputs and their costs, technical improvements that lead to environment degradation, lack of access to water and rivers, destruction of forest, increased costs of health, spreading of money lending and usury managed by rural middle class to the disadvantage of the less wealthy, bad development practices as credits schemes impoverishes people and subverts the way people are accustomed to plan their expenditures and revenues. Expenses that were made on the assumption that the next harvest would pay off, are now resulting in net losses and force the people to find alternative solutions like **migration**. In some provinces as Prey Veng, where human born environment disasters merge with natural catastrophes, this strategy is taking the amplitude of a real exodus, leaving villages nearly empty and filling the country's urban slums with Prey Veng migrants.

In this situation of social distress women are both the actors and the victims of a huge social transformation. Young women move from their villages to find work in the factories in town, and this goes against the rules and codes of life that normally forbid the girls even to accede to education if the school is far away from the village. This contradiction between traditional codes of behaviour and the necessity to recur to new behaviours to survive is totally bared by the women. It is not something new, because important social changes as industrialisation are subverting behaviours and values and creating tensions within a society. What is relevant in the garment industry in Cambodia

is the extreme fragility of the social subject that is capturing all the blame for this subversion: the young woman migrating to work in the factory. Her young age, her weak social position within the family and the society make her highly vulnerable. As reiterated by this study, access to education is not guaranteed, and this represents just one of the expressions of discrimination. The others include the scarce value given to the daughters by families, that has transformed girls into family assets rather than real subjects, easy to be sent out to find work, to tie up in chains, and exercise constant pressure to force conformity to traditional roles and duties.

The women workers accomplishment of their role of dutiful daughters is paid back with an overwhelming wave of social blame and stigmatisation that the workers found unsupportable. Instead of recognition for their role as they are the real engine of Cambodia's economic growth and exports, not to mention remittances- women receive a moral condemnation that the whole society participates to create and reinforce. What the workers get is a label of "bad women" that will follow them in town as well as back to the villages, this permeates their whole social life, interferes with their lives, creates obstacles to prospects of marriage. To the extent that the aid and development focus on garment workers view them as group at risk for reproductive health disorders, by doing that they expose completely their social prejudice.

Only a strong social outcome as workers can remove this stigmatisation and act as a trigger for social affirmation and gender liberation from oppressive rules of behaviour. A strong social identity as workers can derive from the degree of recognition of workers rights, their enforcement, and the defence. The industrialisation process has been triggering only human and social devastation –unless somebody thinks that the children in the British textile factories were fortunate protagonists of a change -until a workers' movement wasn't able to counteract exploitation and to give dignity to the workers. For the women in industry the process is more difficult, as gender discrimination combined with exploitation contributes to reduce their chances to achieve better status and recognition.

But any potential for women workers to organise for liberation is eliminated by working conditions and practices that increase their insecurity and uncertainty regarding their work. The garment industry in Cambodia sums many different aspects of rights violations, that all together contribute to destroy the possibility for the workers to gain experience and power through the work. The recruitment of young, even very young workers, their dismissal after probation, the practice of firing workers that reach certain seniority act to keep the working force at a stage of unawareness and to counteract their capacity to organise themselves to fight back. At the actual stage unions appear unable to respond to women workers and are mostly seen as not credible. Lacking a vision of women's problems, they have a scarce appeal for them, while their vision is often limited to the mere factory, when is not directly influenced by a political agenda that doesn't have nothing to do with the workers demands.

The lack of social services reiterates the lack of recognition, and underlines the absence of a public social policy aimed to support and defend the most vulnerable citizens. In fact it is the whole concept of citizenship that is at stake, or is totally missing. Lacking recognized social rights, as the right to a dignitous house, to public free health services, to child care services, to infrastructures such as transports conceived and aimed

to respond to people needs, to accessible education, to retirement funds, to insurances, and other conditions and services. the workers are deprived of another fundamental base for their recognition. It is not a specific problem of the garment workers, as most of the citizens in Cambodia lack these services. What is relevant in the context of this study, is that work in factories does not contribute to build workers citizenship.

The whole experience for the workers appears more as a turning wheel, that did not bring them far forward from their initial step. Few of them have gained social recognition and economic security through this work, while the money they were able to gain did not fall under their control and is not available for them or for their future plans. Their efforts – if more than 10 hours a day, six or even seven days a week, can be simply defined as efforts- have been paid back with a stigmatisation and a social prejudice that constitutes for them a heavy weight, that may continue to affect them even in the future. The actual participation in collective actions does not take into account this aspect of workers lives, therefore alienating workers instead of gathering them. Living conditions did not offer them other ways to acquire power and decision making capacities. The offer of alternative ways of life is scarce even in town, and there are not other forms of social participation where they may be involved.

The results of this research mirrors the actual situation of the women working in the garment industry in Cambodia, but it is not a strict feature of Cambodian society and economy. The garment industry - or toys or electronic components industries - all over the world employs thousands of women, wherever poverty and need push them to migrate to find extra incomes. The working conditions do not vary, and so does the discrimination that women face: from Bangladesh to Guatemala, from Lesotho to Nicaragua, from China to Mexico, the same stories are collected and heard, of women captured within the mechanism of exploitation and discrimination, paying with their lives, freedom, health and a minimum wage which makes it impossible even to support a family. It is not an unexpected event, an unforeseen consequence, or a collateral effect. It is the result of a very conscious and deliberate worldwide process, aimed toward reducing the cost of work on a global scale, that put at stake the workers' rights, dismantle their capacity to organise and fight for better conditions, and demolish their recognition as social subjects. In this global frame, where workers represent just a cheap labour reservoir for Multinational Corporations, the opportunities for women emancipation opened by the export oriented industry in countries like Cambodia risk to be scarce.

The results of this study brought us to think that work only is no more a factor that can trigger emancipation, as the conditions of work are changed and are now very unfavourable for the workers and their achievements in terms of recognition. It is perhaps necessary to integrate the experience of the access to work into a broader picture, where the negotiation for their social recognition includes all their rights as citizens. In this context, stigmatisation for behaviours that are breaking traditional rules is as detrimental to the workers than loosing a collective bargain round, while for the workers organise themselves to protest water privatisation or transports costs can be as important as a salary increase. So if the global economy has changed the parameters of work and power relationships that rule the industries, the path of emancipation should look for different approaches too.

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Labels to wear out

*A social study on women workers in the garment industry*

APPENDIXES

Questionnaire

## 1 Family members data on occupation

	ES	EB	YS	YB	BL	SL	DL	GM	GF	D	Ne	N	H	Total
farmer	19	11	5	4	1			1	1			1	1	44
motor taxi		2												2
housework	4	1	2			1								8
seller	6	3												9
gov officer	2	1												3
private employee		2												2
garment worker	6	3	10				1				1			21
soldier		1												1
policemen	1	2		1										4
student	1	1	4	13								1		20
too young to work			2							1				3
construction worker	2	2	1	2	1						1			9
too old to work								1	5					6
monk		1		1										2
labourer	1	1	1											3
mechanician	1													1
carpenter				1										1
Total	42	31	25	22	2	1	1	2	6	1	2	2	1	139

	ES	EB	YS	YB	BL	SL	DL	GM	A	S	N	Ne	H	Total
farmer	13	9	6	4	2	1		1	2		1		1	40
housework	1		2											3
sick at home	1													1
seller	2	3	1											6
gov officer		2												2
garment worker	7		5											12
policemen		1												1
unemployed			2											2
weaver sewer	1	2												3
student			20	18							3	2		43
too young to work			1				1							2
construction worker					1					1				2
too old to work								2						2
labourer		2												2
stay at home		1	1											2
immigrant worker at Thai border		1												1
silver smith	1													1
rubber plantation worker		1												1
taxi driver					1									1
Total	26	22	38	22	4	1	1	3	2	1	4	2	1	127

	ES	EB	YS	YB	BL	SL	DL	U	S	N	Ne	H	Total
farmer	9	11	4	5	1			1					31
motor taxi						1						4	5
homework	1			1						1			3
seller			1										1
gov officer	2				1			1					4
garment worker	5		3										8
soldier		1											1
unemployed	1												1
weaver,sewer				1									1
student		2	18	23			1		1	4			49
too young to work			1	2							1		4
construction worker	2	1											3
labourer		1											1
imigrant worker at Thai border		1											1
gold smith		1											1
flat wood factory worker		1											1
Total	20	19	27	32	2	1	1	2	1	5	1	4	115

	ES	EB	YS	YB	BL	DL	GM	S	D	N	Ne	GS	W	H	Total
farmer	6	7	3	4	1								1		22
motor taxi		1									1				2
housework	1		1	5				1	1						9
seller	2		1		1										4
gov officer		2												1	3
garment worker	1	1	3	1											6
student	1		17	20		2			1	1	1				43
too young to work			1					1		2	1	1			6
construction worker		1													1
too old to work							1								1
housework	1														1
monk				1											1
Total	12	12	26	31	2	2	1	2	2	4	2	1	1	1	99

	ES	EB	YS	YB	BL	DL	GF	S	N	Ne	Total
farmer	6	2	2	2							12
motor taxi		1									1
housework			3			1					4
seller			1		1						2
garment worker	3	1	3								7
soldier				1							1
student			11	12				1	1	3	28
too young to work			4	1		1			1	2	9
too old to work							1				1
motor repairer					1						1

flat wood factory worker			1									1
Total	9	5	24	16	2	2	1	1	2	5	67	

Table 6 Occupation of member 8

	ES	EB	YS	YB	GM	S	D	Ne	W	H	Total
farmer	1	2	2	1	1				1	1	9
motor taxi		1									1
housework	1		2								3
garment worker	1										1
unemployed		1	1								2
student	1		12	7		1	1	1			23
too young to work				5			1	1			7
too old to work					1						1
Total	4	4	17	13	2	1	2	2	1	1	47

Table 7 Occupation of member 9

	ES	EB	YS	YB	SL	DL	GM	GF	S	N	Ne	GD	Total
farmer	1	2	1										4
housework	1			1									2
garment worker	1				1								2
unemployed				1									1
student			7	7					2				16
too young to work				1		1				1	1	1	5
too old to work							1	1					2
monk				1									1
Total	3	2	8	11	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	33