

Press Release

For Immediate Release
Monday, 29 September 2014

New Study Finds High Levels of Anemia, Food Insecurity, Among Cambodian Garment Workers

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia— The International Labour Organization's (ILO) *Better Factories Cambodia* project, together with the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and Angkor Research and Consulting Ltd., today release a few summary results of the baseline survey for the "Study on the Impact of Food Provision on Garment Workers' Health and Productivity."

The baseline results of the study indicate that 43.2% of garment workers surveyed suffer from anemia and 15.7% of workers are underweight according to the Asian Body Mass Index (BMI). The study also found that garment workers spend approximately \$9 per week on food or \$1.30 per day.

Anxiety and uncertainty about food supply was also found to be surprisingly high in garment workers with only a third of workers in the study meeting the definition of 'food secure' according to standardized assessment tools. In addition, approximately 8% of workers met the definition for severely food insecure. The study will investigate this finding further to examine possible links between anxiety and uncertainty about food supply, and workers' other expenditures such as remittances to family.

"Anemia and food insecurity can contribute to wide ranging health problems for workers. Anemia often leads to chronic fatigue, difficulty concentrating and low productivity. Addressing these anemia levels will be complex, but is key to improving productivity and business outcomes in the garment sector" says Jill Tucker, Better Factories Cambodia Programme Manager.

She continued: "The next phase of the research will help to explain what interventions are the most effective in improving worker health and productivity, but factories can take measures now to reduce anemia."

These early results come following the completion of surveys with 3,890 garment workers. The baseline survey collected data on various health indicators, including Body Mass Index (BMI), anemia and middle upper arm circumference (MUAC).

The study, which involves 10 garment factories that employ over 13,300 garment workers, is assessing the impact of food provision on workers' health and productivity. Factories participating in the study were divided into two groups: treatment and control. Treatment factories are those where workers are being provided with free food during the work day. Control factories refers to those where free food is not provided.

The baseline survey results will be followed by a midline survey later this year. The final survey will take place one year after the baseline study, in mid-2015.

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