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Future In Our Hands, Center for Alliance of Labor &  
Human Rights, and Action Labor Rights  
Report May — 2019

# Overworked & exposed



Short term contracts and gender issues  
in the Myanmar and Cambodian garment industries.

# 04 OVERWORKED & EXPOSED, SHORT TERM CONTRACTS AND GENDER ISSUES IN THE MYANMAR AND CAMBODIAN GARMENT INDUSTRIES

JUN

📁 Reports

This report is a collaboration between Future in Our Hands (Framtiden i varehender), Norway, The Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL), Cambodia, and Action Labor Rights (ALR), Myanmar. All three organizations campaign for labor rights within the garment industry. The research is based on the individual responses of garment workers in four factories two in Cambodia and two in Myanmar. The Scandinavian retailers H&M, KappAhl and Lindex all sourced garments from at least one of these four factories at the time of the research. In addition, the researchers undertook group discussions with a total of 38 workers, delving deeper into issues highlighted in the face-to-face interviews.

Through a gender lens, this report analyses workers rights issues within the garment industry. The vast majority of garment workers worldwide are female and gender is

therefore key to any analysis of the main challenges issues workers face.

Commonplace problems for the workers interviewed include sexual harassment, excessive overtime, toilet use restrictions, personal safety on leaving the factory at night and insufficient insight into their rights to enjoy maternity leave, as well as the implementation of such rights. These challenges disproportionately affect female workers and urgently need addressing within the garment industry.

Given that sexual harassment is a sensitive subject that maybe difficult to discuss openly, addressing cases of such harassment can be challenging. Although the findings are mixed, our research at factories in Myanmar indicates that sexual harassment is a concern among the female workers interviewed. They report of sexualized language, unwanted touching and demands or requests for sexual acts by male workers, superiors and translators: Touching parts of their body, lifting female workers' skirt or opening their bra, inviting to a male worker's home "...so that he could treat them" or making comment about female workers' bodies, saying they...looked like virgins or like"...they had a lot of children".

While saying so, some workers might not perceive that certain actions by colleagues or superiors are acts of sexual harassment, although found unpleasant and unwanted. Many workers say that sexual harassment happens to other female workers but that they themselves do not experience this. At the same time many of the same workers felt specific sexual harassment complaints committees within factories would allow sexual harassment by male managers or colleagues to be more readily addressed. Other workers stated that their preference would be for sexual harassment cases to be dealt with by a trade union or a workplace coordinating committee, ideally with female staff dedicated to the role.

The report also aims to take stock of the impact that short-term and fixed duration contracts have on garment workers. The widespread use of fixed duration contracts in Cambodia is by workers considered a tactic used by suppliers to ensure a more compliant workforce.

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**CENTRAL** empowers  
Cambodian working people to  
demand transparent and  
accountable governance for

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Global clothing and shoe  
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labor and human rights through legal aid and other appropriate means.


**Vision:** Cambodian people are the masters of the country, living with human dignity and in peace.

**Mission:** CENTRAL organizes and supports the Cambodian working people through legal aid and other appropriate means to demand transparent and accountable governance for labor and human rights.


**Goal:** To contribute to a transparent and accountable governance for fulfillment of workers' & human rights in Cambodia.

written again to PM Hun Sen, sayin...  
<https://t.co/2OdqdyOp8>  
yesterday

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 CENTRAL have conducted an analysis of the Law on Trade Unions and recent amendments. We find that, despite some min...  
<https://t.co/3X5BddgO2>  
2 days ago

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 Download our Analysis of the Trade Union Law and Amendments to the Trade Union Law through the link below:  
...  
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