



Cambodia Garment and Footwear Industry

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PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE



Fatal garment factory fires and the catastrophic collapse in April 2013 of the Rana Plaza Building in Bangladesh highlighted the real risks facing garment and footwear workers, and led to a clamor for improved working conditions and better compliance with factory safety standards. With the help of key industry stakeholders, the Profiling Project intends to develop fire and building safety risk profiles for 7 Better Work country programmes by conducting industry level factory assessments.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES



This project aims to support Better Factories Cambodia (BFC) in its efforts to improve working conditions in global garment and footwear supply chains. To ensure that BFC is sufficiently addressing areas of greatest risk, the risk profile advises BFC on how to improve its approach, materials, tools, and protocols on fire and building safety, and recommends measures for key industry stakeholders.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES



The Fire and Life Safety Risk Profile was developed based on:

Fire and building accident data



Review of the country's legal and regulatory regime on fire and building safety



Review of BFC factory assessment reports



Discussions with industry stakeholders



On-site factory inspections for selected individual factories

KEY FINDINGS


Based on desk research and stakeholder discussions

Legal and Regulatory Regime



- The current Labor Law has no adequate sub-decrees addressing fire and building safety.
- The implementing regulations and guidelines of the Law on Fire Prevention and Firefighting are still pending from the Ministry of Interior.
- An Executive Order issued in January 2014 calls for an inter-ministerial committee to address fire and building safety. However, no clear timeline for implementation has been concluded.
- There is no Cambodian Building Code, but efforts from the government in coordination with foreign firms have been initiated to develop building standards.
- As of 1998, building permits are required prior to construction. However, there are no procedures from government agencies to inspect whether buildings are constructed according to approved plans and designs.
- Labour inspections are conducted irregularly due to lack of budget and personnel. The labour inspection checklist covers hygiene and working safety, but is not sufficient for a detailed fire and building safety assessment.
- No clear mechanism is in place to ensure that factories accurately report incidents of fire or structural failure in their facilities.

Drivers of Fire and Building Safety Progress



Economic/ Commercial Gains

Buyers are one of the key actors influencing factories to implement fire and structural safety measures. Factories are generally willing to implement measures that will satisfy their buyers and potentially result in additional orders.

Reputation

Expanding companies usually serve key buyers in the industry, who typically seek out only reputable suppliers.

BFC Assessments, Advisory Services and Training

Factories registered with BFC undergo assessments and have access to training opportunities, advisory services and support for improvements. The checklist used by BFC includes fire safety and emergency preparedness, but does not include the level of detail required under international fire codes. The return to transparent reporting in 2014 has contributed to improvements on fire safety and other issues.

Fire and Building Accidents

One factory fire and 534 residential fires were reported during 2013 in the Fire Accidents Statistics Report for 2011-2013. The most common cause was electrical fires.

2013 Reported Fire



1
Factory

534
Residential

Two recent building safety incidents were reported in garment factories:

May 2013, a portion of a shoe factory collapsed, resulting in two deaths and several injuries.

October 2014, the floor slab of a garment factory collapsed, injuring at least eight workers.

Based on on-site factory inspections

Industry Risks

FIRE SAFETY RISKS



1. Fire Hazard Materials and Equipment

Flammable materials or hazardous equipment that is not properly protected or segregated create possible sources of ignition or explosion (e.g., through poor housekeeping, partitions made of wood or fabric, or improper enclosure of boilers).



2. Fire Hazard Activities

Hazardous activities carried out in close proximity to each other or without standby firefighting equipment (e.g., smoking in areas with flammable materials) increase the chance of a fire incident.



3. Automatic Fire Suppression Systems

Absent or inadequate automatic sprinkler systems, standpipe systems, fire alarms, or smoke detectors can contribute to high casualties when fires cannot be contained at the source.



4. Means of Escape

Unmarked, obstructed, locked or inaccessible emergency exit doors, blocked or hazardous exit pathways, or lack of emergency lights and exit signs can impede quick evacuation.



5. Electrical Installations

Improperly maintained or incorrectly installed electrical equipment, including exposed electrical cables, poorly installed panel boards, or poor housekeeping for machines, may become a source of ignition, short circuit or electrocution.



6. Emergency Awareness and Training

Poor awareness and training of workers/personnel on emergency procedures can result in chaos and delayed firefighting response and evacuation during emergencies.



7. Firefighting Equipment

Obstructed fire cabinets, or improperly installed or substandard fire extinguishers impede containment of fires at the source.

BUILDING SAFETY RISKS



1. Building Construction and Design

Substandard building construction and design (e.g., poorly constructed roof structures, columns, staircases; unsafe mezzanines; low quality concrete; insufficiently reinforced columns; lack of rebar in the ground slab). Weak or overloaded structures may collapse when put under too much strain or in the event of natural calamities.



2. Building Maintenance

Poor building maintenance, including corroded steel structures, water leaks, and deformed ceiling panels, may lead to collapse in parts of the factory.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Garment & Footwear Factories

Factories should tailor their actions based on their risk level, with the goal being to reach and maintain the low risk level.

High Risk Factories

- identify objectives and set targets on fire and building safety conditions
- develop policies and procedures related to fire and building safety (e.g., emergency response plan)
- focus on internal awareness and training
- establish a joint worker-management OSH committee
- send health and safety personnel to relevant trainings
- perform regular assessments to determine if targets and objectives are being met

Medium Risk Factories

- focus on evaluating weaknesses
- streamline existing risk controls
- reinforce inadequate risk mitigation measures
- adopt any missing risk mitigation measures

Low Risk Factories

- focus on maintaining performance of best practices and processes
- document and institutionalize existing fire and building safety risk mitigation measures, such as emergency procedures, regular assessments and allocation of resources/equipment
- consider OHSAS 18001 Safety Management System certification



Government

- develop and implement standards on fire and building safety
- develop a building code that is suited to Cambodia
- establish a system to ensure that all new buildings are constructed according to standards
- initiate a program to certify the soundness and safety of existing factory buildings
- strengthen existing laws on fire and building safety by issuing supporting regulations
- expand the assessment checklist used in labour inspections to comprehensively incorporate fire and building safety issues
- establish a system that would require factories to report incidents of fires and structural failure
- provide training to factory assessors to increase their capacity in performing credible and accurate inspections



Buyers

- require suppliers to perform annual basic building safety assessments and regular fire safety inspections
- provide financial assistance to factories to cover costs of safety assessments
- pressure/encourage factories to address non-compliance issues identified in BFC assessments and other audits
- set up rewards (awards, recognitions) and penalties (reduced orders) for factories based on compliance with fire and building safety measures



GMAC

- promote awareness and information exchange by forming strategic partnerships within and outside the country
- arrange an annual industry seminar/conference on the importance of fire and building safety
- disseminate information on fire and building safety good practices in newsletters
- conduct trainings in collaboration with experts and service providers
- initiate industry-wide competitions on fire and building safety in collaboration with BFC
- organize trade fairs on fire and building safety equipment and service providers
- act as the repository for fire and building accidents



Trade Unions and Workers

- pressure other stakeholders to implement positive change
- lobby for a joint worker-management OSH committee and a fire brigade within factories
- actively participate in available trainings and in emergency drills
- be aware of internal fire and building safety measures in the factory
- report dangerous conditions to supervisors/managers and to the factory's OSH committee

This document contains the summary of the Fire and Life Safety Risk Profile on the Cambodian garment and footwear industry and cannot be expected to provide a complete understanding of the study conducted. The full report, which contains all details on the project overview, industry overview, key findings, and risk profile of the industry, will be made available for download from the BFC website (www.betterfactories.org) soon. You will be notified once the document is available for access.

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