

Chapter 6

Application of Human Rights Due Diligence and the LeanIn Concept for Addressing Pregnancy-Related Discrimination in Cambodia's Garment Sector



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Sheryl Sandberg is the chief operating officer (COO) of Facebook now, and used to be the vice president of global sales and operations of Google. She mentioned an incident from her first pregnancy in her book *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (2013). One morning, Sandberg found a far away parking spot. As a pregnant woman, she struggled to get into the office and suddenly felt nauseous. The next day she met with Google's founders and proposed an idea: pregnancy parking, which would be designed to give expecting mothers priority to park in front of each building. She felt embarrassed that she never thought of these pregnancy-related human rights issues until her own pregnancy (Sandberg 2013). Human rights are universal and inalienable; indivisible; interdependent and interrelated. They are "universal because everyone is born with and possesses the same rights, regardless of where they live, their gender or race, or their religious, cultural or ethnic background" (UNFPA 2005). As such, it is worth paying attention to pregnancy-related human rights issues in the workplace.

Compared to 30 years before, the American gender pay gap has dropped by 30% (Hegewisch et al. 2012) and a higher number of women, such as Sheryl Sandberg, have become top managers in companies and earn higher salaries than before (Sandberg 2013). As a result, pregnancy-related human rights issues have been attracting significant attention in developed countries. However, the gender income disparities were growing in most Asian developing countries over the past years (OECD 2017) and pregnancy-related human rights issues appear to have received little attention. With the global garment industry, from upstream to downstream, dispersed around the world, apparel factories play a critical role in many developing countries' economies, such as Cambodia, Bangladesh, and Vietnam (Berik and Rodgers 2010). Human rights and labor abuse issues are not new topics in apparel

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factories, however, ingrained prejudices mean the status of female labor in these developing countries is lower than in western countries (Robertson et al. 2016).

The global policy agenda has included the issue of human rights for decades (Ruggie 2011). However, workers in some Asian countries still suffer from human rights and labor abuses, and they lack the awareness, seniority, and confidence to solve these problems (Heintz 2007). To remain competitive, both export-oriented factories and subcontractor factories squeeze workers with long working hours, low salaries, and working on weekends (Kashyap and Tiv 2015). Kashyap and Tiv (2015) explain that labor rights abuses, as one type of human rights issue, includes “forced overtime and retaliation against those who sought exemption from overtime, lack of rest breaks, denial of sick leave, use of underage child labor, and the use of union-busting strategies to thwart independent unions” (p. 7). It is difficult for pregnant women to survive sleepless nights and long hours of backbreaking work, because of their special physical condition. Therefore, they are especially vulnerable to pregnancy-related human rights abuses, like lack of rest breaks. Recently, in Cambodia, episodes of workers fainting on the job has drawn considerable public attention (Kashyap and Tiv 2015).

The understanding related to pregnancy-related human rights and labor abuse for female laborers is more novel and exceptional in developing countries as mentioned before. Correctly, in Cambodia, some rural girls see garment factories as saving themselves from the control of their families and village, even if, as asserted by Homlong (2016), the cheating and discrimination of garment factories appears limitless. Most female workers in Cambodian garment factories lack awareness to resist abuses and struggle against human rights issues. To solve these issues, it is critical to gain support from different stakeholders, such as brands, governments, factories, and consumers (Rullo 2017). Garment brands gain most of the profits in the supply chain, and they are most often located in developed countries. Therefore, brands are stronger than other stakeholders in the garment industry and should take a leading role in addressing pregnancy-related human rights and labor abuse for female laborers in Cambodia’s garment industry.

This paper considers how companies can implement the due diligence recommendations for responsible supply chains in the garment and footwear sector. We draw on guidance from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to propose ways to address pregnancy-related human rights and labor abuse issues for female workers in Cambodia’s garment industry.

1 Cambodia’s Apparel Industry: Double-Edged Sword

As one of the main sources of non-agrarian employment, the apparel industry plays a critical role in Cambodia’s economy. Specifically, 75% of value-added in manufacturing and 17% of all economic activity in Cambodia comes from the garment industry (Heintz 2007). In 2016, 45% of Cambodia’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was driven by merchandise exports including footwear and garment exports (World

Bank 2017). Designs are provided by international buyers, such as GAP, Levi Strauss, and Nike, and then they are manufactured (cut-make-trim) by the garment factories in Cambodia with imported textiles (ILO 2012).

The growth of the garment industry in Cambodia started in 1994 (Oka 2016), with the average annual growth rate during the following decade at 45% (Heintz 2007). Nowadays, garment exports, as the prominent industrial sector, have further pushed Cambodia's economic growth in a short period. World Bank (2017) indicates that Cambodia's rapidly improved international status is due to its competitive productivity.

At the same time, the garment industry in Cambodia has created job opportunities for poor workers from rural areas, and the industry hires a majority of low-skilled female laborers. One study shows that women make up 90–92% of the industry's 700,000 workers (Kashyap and Tiv 2015). In 2013, 412 export garment factories hired almost 400,000 workers. Counting the workers in subcontracting factories would most likely bring the number of female laborers even higher (Kashyap and Tiv 2015).

Because apparel and textile supply chains are spread across many different countries, it is challenging for apparel brands to control their supply chains and meet their social responsibilities. The Cambodian garment industry is mainly dependent on international markets, foreign investors, and foreign aid. Brands in the United States, the European Union, and Canada are core consumers for the garments made by Cambodian factories. Also, about 95% of exporting garment factories are owned by foreign investors from China, Malaysia, and Singapore (Oka 2016). Although the garment industry has a positive contribution to the employment rate, the impact on human rights is complex and may be far-reaching. Most of the laborers who worked in Cambodian garment factories are in low skill jobs. Workers in Cambodian garment factories often suffer from human rights and labor abuse issues.

2 Effects of Human Rights Issues and Discrimination on Efficient Supply Chains

Efficiency of production is vital to brands and retailers in the extremely competitive global garment industry (Robertson et al. 2016). This competition leads international manufacturers to cut all possible costs by outsourcing production to lower-wage economies (Hurley 2005). Heintz (2007) asserts that big brands also prefer to choose smaller subcontracted units than larger factories, because garments can be produced faster and cheaper. This competition also leads to increasing pressure on several fronts, especially time and price. In absence of a technological reformation, most garment factories put pressures on their workers, increasing their working time, adding to their workload, and reducing their salary (Kashyap and Tiv 2015). Labor abuse becomes a detriment to an effective Cambodian garment industry.

Some workers in Cambodian garment factories have complained that “management pressure to meet production targets undermined their ability to take breaks to use washrooms, rest, or drink water” (Kashyap and Tiv 2015). Most of the factories in Cambodia rarely care about the human rights and labor abuse issues, and follow the labor standard (Berik and Rodgers 2010). To make itself more competitive, Cambodia’s export garment industry has lost its ethics.

3 Pregnancy Discrimination: A Human Rights and Labor Abuse Issue

Different from other industries, the garment industry in Cambodia is dominated by female laborers, because women can frequently be paid less and are perceived to be easier to control (Kashyap and Tiv 2015). Compared to the higher salary they offer to male laborers, some factories only pay about half of the lowest salary to female laborers (Berik and Rodgers 2010). Hurley (2005) identifies seven key issues faced by laborers in the apparel industry: “the employment of vulnerable workers; insecurity of work; underpayment of wages and social welfare; overwork and underwork; health and safety issues; harassment; and the challenges facing trade union organization” (p. 96).

Kashyap and Tiv (2015) pointed out that pregnancy-related discrimination and sexual harassment are two key human rights and labor abuse issues that female laborers faced in their workplace. Pregnancy-related discrimination existed in different stages of the employment lifecycle, including “during hiring, promotion, and dismissal, and included failure to make reasonable workplace accommodations to address the needs of pregnant workers” (Kashyap and Tiv 2015, p. 8). Pregnancy and motherhood are hard to cope with during daily work and are at odds with efficiency of production. Pregnancy-related human rights issues have occurred widely in at least 30 factories in Cambodia (Kashyap and Tiv 2015). Although Cambodia’s Constitution and labor laws forbid dismissals based on pregnancy, Human Right Watch (Kashyap and Tiv 2015) found that legal protection was weakly enforced.

Workers from Cambodian garment factories have revealed that it is a general situation that factories’ managers reject hiring pregnant workers (ILO 2012). When females who already work in the factories become pregnant, it is difficult for them to renew their contracts. This discrimination is thought to occur because maternity benefits would raise production costs of factories. Interviews with workers show that factories prefer to hire unmarried female workers rather than married female workers. Furthermore, they prefer not to recruit pregnant women or women with babies because the babies are often sick and mothers have to take leave from work to care for them (ILO 2012).

Those pregnant workers who are employed explained that it is difficult for pregnancy to be accommodated in factories because pregnancy needs adequate time to rest or use washrooms. Kashyap and Tiv (2015) have found that the real situation in

Table 1 Three pillars of the “Protect, Respect, and Remedy” Framework (Ruggie 2011, p. 4)

The State Duty	To protect against human rights abuses by third parties, including business enterprises, through appropriate policies, regulation, and adjudication
The Corporate Responsibility	To respect human rights, which means that business enterprises should act with due diligence to avoid infringing on the rights of others and to address adverse impacts with which they are involved
The Need for Greater Access by Victims	To effective remedy, both judicial and non-judicial

Cambodia is many factories do not offer these necessary frequent bathroom breaks or lighter workload without reducing pay. Also, factories do not offer enough time for prenatal health checks (ILO 2012). One factory in Cambodia required workers to make up time lost because of health visits affiliated with pregnancy (Kashyap and Tiv 2015).

Under Cambodian law, the payment system should include the basic salary and benefits, such as the payment for seniority, attendance, or other bonuses. Also, the pregnant women should receive half of their payment during their 90 days’ maternity leave. However, most workers interviewed by the ILO, as part of a study on gender equality and the working and living conditions in Cambodia, reported that they only received half of the minimum basic salary without any benefits including the maternity benefit (ILO 2012). The report shows that women who worked at the garment factory in Cambodia for more than a year never got their maternity pay. Furthermore, because of the lack of childcare and difficulties in continuing breastfeeding while working, it is difficult for pregnant women to return to the workplace within the limit of 90 days (ILO 2012).

4 Using Human Rights Due Diligence to Address Pregnancy-Related Human Rights Issues and Discrimination

As part of globalization of the fashion industry, awareness of businesses and governments’ impact on human rights has started to increase (Ruggie 2011). In 2005, the United Nations established a mandate for a Special Representative, which focuses on human rights issues for business enterprises (Ruggie 2011). One phase of the Special Representative’s work was a recommendation for the “Protect, Respect, and Remedy” Framework. The Special Representative hoped this framework would provide a coherent system detailing the expectations and actions of relevant stakeholders for addressing human rights issues (Ruggie 2011). The three pillars outlined within the framework are shown in Table 1.

An important element of the corporate responsibility to respect human rights outlines that companies should carry out human rights due diligence, to “identify, prevent, mitigate and account for how they address their adverse human rights impacts” (Ruggie 2011, p. 10). This framework has been endorsed by many institutions, such as OECD. In 2017, the OECD published *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains in the Garment and Footwear Sector* (2017), which provides guidance on how to carry out due diligence and account for a company’s actual and potential adverse impacts (OECD 2017). More specifically, this guidance aims to ensure that the enterprises’ operations are aligned with government policies, therefore strengthening mutual confidence between enterprises and public societies in which they “operate, and lessening the negative impacts of business activities” (OECD 2017).

Due diligence can fit into solving the pregnancy-related human rights and labor abuse issues. This process can improve enterprises’ reputation of participating enterprises and other stakeholders, and increase the ability to manage global operations consistently (OECD 2017). The OECD guidance has a module providing information on how enterprises may apply due diligence recommendations to sector sexual harassment and sexual and gender-based violence in the workplace (OECD 2017). However, this module lacks information related to pregnancy-related human rights and labor abuse.

The following sections suggest ways that companies can implement the due diligence recommendations to address pregnancy-related human rights and labor abuse. The guideline has six core elements as follows. We explore application of the first four elements.

- (1) embed responsible business conduct in enterprise policy and management systems; (2) identify actual and potential harms in the enterprise’s own operations and in its supply chain; (3) prevent or mitigate harm in the enterprise’s own operations and in its supply chain; (4) track; (5) communicate; (6) and provide for or co-operate in remediation when appropriate. (OECD 2017, p. 20)

4.1 Policy and Management of Responsible Business Conduct

The first recommendation in the OECD guideline is that companies should make policy commitments related to human rights and embed those throughout the company. These policies need to be approved at the senior level, and draw on internal or external expertise and publicly available information (OECD 2017). As mentioned before, the Cambodian economy is mainly dependent on foreign aid and international markets. International brands and retailers who have products manufactured in garment factories in Cambodia should move toward a zero-tolerance policy on pregnancy-related human rights and labor abuses issues in their operations. Based on the material in the OECD guideline, we derived the following policies related to pregnancy-related

human rights and labor abuse issues. Specifically, the foreign brands and retailers should be encouraged to add the following policies (OECD 2017):

No.	Policies
1	A workplace free of pregnancy-related human rights and labor abuse issues
2	Worker understanding of pregnancy-related human rights and labor abuse issues and related international labor standard
3	A process to hear grievances, which maintains confidentiality of workers who make complaints
4	A commitment to uphold international standards rather than less stringent national legislation

4.2 Risk Assessment

The actual and potential harms in the company's supply chain includes adverse impacts from both internal and external activities, either directly or indirectly related to their operations (OECD 2017). Pregnant women are exposed to risks of human rights and labor abuse issues in the workplace. After endorsing the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) at Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, Cambodia has made gender equality a top priority in its development agenda, with significant political commitment, and has taken firm measures to achieve the goals set out in the BPFA (Nakagawa 2015). The Ministry of Women's Affairs created many laws and mechanisms, but the resources to enforce and advocate those is lacking, thus these policies have not been fully implemented. One report shows about 70% of employed female laborers, compared to 59% of male laborers, remain in vulnerable employment (Nakagawa 2015).

Brands and retailers should encourage Cambodian factories to understand the extent of pregnancy-related human rights and labor abuse issues in the garment industry. However, the lack of related material and data makes it difficult to identify the pregnancy-related human rights and labor abuse issues (OECD 2017). As such, the company might help factories to consult stakeholders and workers directly instead of relying on secondary data. By having conversations with the big brands more directly, stakeholders who cooperate with Cambodian garment factories can share useful information related to pregnancy-related human rights and labor abuse issues, making companies pay more attention to these issues than before (OECD 2017). Also, based on these conversations, feedback can be given to workers who are interviewed so they can learn about these risks. Some examples of possible risk factors for pregnant women who work in Cambodian garment factories are shown in Table 2. Brands and factories might be inspired by this table of ideas derived from the OECD (2017) Guidelines.

Table 2 Possible pregnancy-related human rights and labor abuse issues in Cambodian garment factories

	Risk factor
1	Inadequate labor laws and labor law enforcement to protect pregnant workers
2	Lack of access to education and low quality of education leading to poor school attendance of females in Cambodia
3	Wages that do not cover basic needs of pregnant women and their families. Wage non-compliance is also a risk in Cambodia’s garment factories
4	Presence of production quotas and order fluctuation that leads to excessive overtime in Cambodia’s garment factories

4.3 Prevent Harm

The necessary next step after identifying actual and potential harms is to stop or prevent the impact. Once factories have found harms in their operations and supply chain, they should not simply push the responsibility to other stakeholders, such as garment factory (OECD 2017). Grievance mechanisms are key to preventing and mitigating harm in the company’s operation (OECD 2017).

Higher rates of unionization may help with solving pregnancy-related discrimination issues (OECD 2017). Becoming part of a trade union allows female laborers to be educated of what true rights they deserve in order to better protect themselves. Although a report shows that 97% of the 371 factories in Cambodia had one union (Kashyap and Tiv 2015), there is no information about whether these unions address pregnancy-related discrimination issues. Generating awareness about the problem is the most important thing to do first; let female laborers in Cambodia’s garment industry who suffer from pregnancy-related human rights and labor abuse issues realize their mistreatment tis out of step with international standards.

4.4 Track

After companies consider and attempt to solve issues, they still need to determine whether their work results in actual changes. “Track” means enterprises should examine all the impacts, ensuring their changes have been effective. It is important for enterprises to track their due diligence progress (OECD 2017). Specifically, enterprises can collect information from factories, laborers, and unions. For example, workers in factories can report data through telephones; data can be updated directly to the audits (Roman et al. 2014). Then the stakeholders, such as brands, factories, and consumers can easily gain the growing database about the factories.

One example would be a story “dream” mentioned by Roman et al. (2014) a young Indian woman, coming from a rural area in southeastern India, worked in a large factory in Bangalore, India. She accessed Labor Voices-Connect on her mobile,

and filed a complaint about her rights being exploited during work. Even though she speaks everything in her native language, the app was able to recognize it, and send everything back to the database. A few hours later, a report was generated, and sent back to brand that works with this Indian factory. Just like the end of this story, in Sweden, an employee in one of the global retailer's offices of corporate social responsibility received the report and started dealing with the issue (Roman et al. 2014). This type of mobile technology is a great tool for gathering all the complaints and hidden issues from the workers. Without being punished, or scared of being found out in front of their bosses, workers can file all the complains through the app, making their voices heard (Roman et al. 2014).

5 LeanIn.Org Approach and Human Rights Due Diligence

In addition to carrying out aspects of human rights due diligence, companies could adopt concepts from LeanIn to address pregnancy-related human rights issues. LeanIn.org is an initiative of Sheryl Sandberg and Dave Goldberg Family Foundation and aims at helping an increasing number of women take the lead and talk openly about gender issues (Leanin.Org 2017). Partners can “participate in LeanIn.org public awareness campaigns, share education materials with employees, and run successful Circles programs” (Leanin.Org 2017, p. 1). Specifically, LeanIn.org has a study, Women in the Workplace that is promoting gender diversity in the workplace (LeanIn.Org 2017). This study is related to women who work in American companies and is conducted annually by LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company. We suggest that garment factories in Cambodia also can work with LeanIn.Org, become the partner of Work in the Workplace, and try to solve the pregnancy-related human rights issues together to accomplish desired changes. Also, as a nonprofit organization and online community dedicated to helping all women achieve their ambitions, LeanIn.org already has three ways to solve gender equality issues (leanIn.Org 2017):

- Annual campaigns: focused on raising awareness about topics that are critical to female workers. A campaign could be carried out in Cambodia, inviting popular celebrity lecturers who could give speeches relative to pregnancy-related discrimination issues. Yang Sophorn would be an ideal candidate since she is the president of the Cambodian Alliance of Trade Union (CATU), an independent union federation that promotes garment worker's right.
- Education: LeanIn.org offers an online library, which provides recommendations for human rights issues. The pregnancy-related issues should be a special column for this online resources. In this case, there may have a language barrier for Cambodian women who want to use this information. One possible solution would be make some provocative brochures and videos in the Khmer language that relate to pregnancy-related human rights and labor abuse. These informational materials could be aimed at raising workers' awareness about these issues.

- Lean in Circles, are peer groups, that women can meet together per week or per month. Research shows that in the group discussion, people would be likely to feel self-confident. Specially, in Cambodian garment factories, workers can discuss the brochures and videos, which mentioned before, discuss some pregnancy-related human rights and labor abuse issues, and share good practices on how to combat these.
- Lean in Circles, are small groups that meet regularly to learn and grow together. Research shows that people feel more confident and are able to accomplish more in the groups.

Companies can hold events like lectures, lean in circles, and educational forums, helping female workers become aware of the pregnancy-related human rights and labor abuse issues they are facing now. The process is similar as identifying current and potential harms in the enterprise's operations and its supply chain in OECD Due Diligence Guidance. Also, the human rights related education materials showed on LeanIn.org website, will increase other stakeholders' (factories, brands, consumers) awareness.

By applying common strategies of LeanIn.org, companies can increase the awareness of female labors related to pregnancy-related discrimination issues. The United Nations has created a sense of urgency for companies to respect human rights of workers in global supply chains and how to tackle due diligence has been outlined by the *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains in the Garment and Footwear Sector* (OECD 2017). Companies can be the true leaders in this change. Brands may ask their suppliers to cooperate with LeanIn to build up an organization (LeanInFactory) focused on pregnancy-related issues. Well-known brands should lead this charge, by taking the first step in the OECD Due Diligence Guidance and embedding responsible business conduct in enterprise policy and management systems. If it works well, making mutual benefits for both upstream manufacturers, and downstream brands, other companies may follow this approach.

Moreover, the LeanInFactory could collect feedback from women workers and then discuss that with factories and government to improve policies. The LeanInFactory should share change plans immediately with workers. For this change action, workers should be the leaders of the trade union (LeanInFactory). Brands, factories, and governments can be the promoters and also be the organizers of the events or build up the library. Over the short-term, it would be important for workers to increase awareness of the idea that pregnancy-related discrimination issues exist and it needs to be addressed as fast as possible. Events like lectures and LeanIn Circle should regularly be held for factories in Cambodia. Then as part of building the complete system, the organization's next step should focus on remediation. Victims of pregnancy-related human rights and labor abuse issue should be consulted and helped so that the victims can get back to work being treated equally.

6 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined how companies can use the OECD's due diligence recommendations for responsible supply chains in the garment and footwear sector to address pregnancy-related human rights and labor abuse for female workers in Cambodia's garment industry. Also, we have offered some suggestions related to LeanIn.org that could help raise worker awareness of the issues. For Cambodia, staying at the forefront of the promise of improved human rights in the garment industry, it is vital for them to solve the pregnancy-related human rights and labor abuse issues. This kind of change related to human rights should not be limited to developed countries or large tech companies like Facebook or Google where Sheryl Sandberg has been fortunate to build her career. In a time of such radical and rapid change, no one should suffer human rights and labor abuse in silence. In closing, we are inspired by this statement from the book *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (2013, p. 11): "We can reignite the revolution by internalizing the revolution. The shift to a more equal world will happen person by person. We move to the larger goal of true equality with each woman who leans in."

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