

### Improving access to childcare services for vulnerable women and children

### CAMBODIA COMMUNITY-BASED CHILDCARE FOR GARMENT FACTORY WORKERS PROJECT

2020–2024 | US\$2.7 million grant

In 2019, Cambodia was home to nearly 1,160 garment factories, providing jobs to more than 800,000 people, 90 percent of whom were women. A 1997 labor law mandates that enterprises that employ a minimum of 100 women or girls shall set up, within their establishments or nearby, a nursing room and a childcare center. If a company is not able to set up a childcare center on its premises for children over 18 months of age, female workers can place their children in any childcare center and the charges shall be paid by the employer. However, even today, few employers comply with this requirement in a way that satisfies the needs of working mothers, through providing only a small allowance, which is not able to pay for daycare services. As primary providers of unpaid care in the household, this situation leaves women financially vulnerable and at risk of losing their jobs and seniority if they fail to secure affordable care.



Research shows that children who have access to early childhood education, adequate care, and nutritious diets are more likely to perform well in school, as well as be healthier and more productive as adults.

Providing quality childcare for women results in a win-win situation for employees, children, employers, and local economies. Therefore, the Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF) provided a US\$2.70 million grant to Planète Enfants & Développement to establish quality, sustainable, community-based childcare services for garment factory workers through the Cambodia Community-Based Childcare for Garment Factory Workers project, managed by the World Bank. The goals of the intervention were to improve employment and labor outcomes, reduce unpaid household childcare, and enhance child development.

The project established 13 community-based childcare centers for children under the age of 3 years old, providing care for 174 children, six days a week, from 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. The project also provided childcare training to 61 community-based childcare center staff members and 352 parenting group sessions, in addition to 4,400 door-to-door visits with a light-touch approach in project communities, on topics such as childhood development, health, education and safety, as well as financial literacy. A total of 1,160 people, including household members of trained individuals, benefitted from these activities.

An evaluation of the centers revealed 100 percent parent satisfaction with the services provided. Beyond covering a child's basic care needs, the community-based childcare centers gave parents a much-welcome peace of mind.

"Daycare is well prepared and has a lot of materials to play and learn for my kid. She is safe when staying here," said Ms. Ratha, a mother who lives in Kong Tanoeng commune, Kampong Cham Province.

"They know they have a safe space for their children and that the children are well taken care of. They are also feeling more relaxed in the workplace. They don't have so much anxiety about their children while working, so they can concentrate more on their work tasks and be more productive," said Mr. Jens Aas, worker and Community Development Program Manager of VF Corporation.

To ensure the centers' operational autonomy, financial viability, and institutional sustainability, the project piloted an innovative model of cost distribution. Local authorities provided land and paid for utilities, the JSDF covered the cost of construction of the centers and training of staff, and parents pay 50 percent of monthly fee to cover staff salaries, and foods. Contributions from factories and brands for subsidizing part of the operating costs have been provided. Multi-year financing participation from the factories and brands is under discussion.

In addition, the World Bank is supporting the government of Cambodia in preparing a childcare subdecree which is being led by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. The subdecree will bring positive outcomes to benefit Cambodian children and parents and improve compliance.