

# Segment Spotlight: Factory Workers

## Who are they?

In 2006 the total number of employees in Cambodia's ever expanding garment industry was 293,600. There are over 200 garment factories in Cambodia. Most are in Phnom Penh with others in and around the port of Sihanoukville.

Nearly 90% of garment factory workers are young women aged 18-25 years old. Many come into Phnom Penh from the countryside to look for work and often send 30-50% of their salaries back to their families. The average monthly salary for a factory worker in the garment industry in 2006 was \$72.

Only 8% of women working in the garment industry have had a high school education.

## What are their lives like?

Official working hours are 8 hours per day, 6 days per week but many workers do overtime in order to supplement their salaries.

Typically, a worker in the garment industry will average 10 hours per day in the factory. Underpayment of wages has been a problem in some factories. And there are continuing problems with use of protective equipment, safety guards on machines, training, good ventilation and cleanliness.

Outside of work these young women face other problems such as inadequate accommodation and can fall victim to unscrupulous landlords. Those who are new to the city face an entirely different pace of life and often a new set of values. City life brings with it an increased threat of violence, rape and STDs.

## What do they believe?

Like most Cambodians, factory workers will be Folk Buddhists - a mixture of Theravada Buddhism, animism and ancestor worship. They will generally try to live a good life, believing that those who do good things will receive good things and those who do bad things will receive bad things. But they also live in fear of the spirits and will be sure to make the right offerings at the right times to the right spirits in order to secure protection and blessing.

However, as with many young Cambodians today, they are open to the Gospel. Finding a safe place to stay in one of the growing number of hostels run by churches and Christian organizations will often be the first step to serious consideration of the person and claims of Jesus Christ.

## What are their needs?

As well as fair and reasonable working conditions, these factory workers need safe and suitable accommodation where they can be free from the threat of violence or exploitation. But most of all these young women need Jesus Christ. Pray for those who run hostels and evangelistic programs aimed at witnessing to and discipling these young people. Also pray that many other churches in the city will respond to the challenge of reaching them.



Fast Facts	
Number of workers:	293,000
Number of factories:	200+
Average age of workers:	18-25
Average salary:	\$72
Percent of workers without high school education:	92%

