



Better Work Beyond the Workplace

A Comparative Study of Gender Dynamics
in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kenya,
Lesotho, and Vietnam

35

DISCUSSION
PAPER

FEBRUARY 2020

Kelly Pike

Beth English



International
Labour
Organization



International
Finance
Corporation
WORLD BANK GROUP

BetterWork.

ILO CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION DATA

Kelly Pike, York University, Toronto, Canada

Beth English, Princeton University, Princeton, USA

Better Work Beyond the Workplace: A Comparative Study of Gender Dynamics in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kenya, Lesotho, and Vietnam

International Labour Organization

FEBRUARY 2020

Copyright © International Labour Organization (ILO) and International Finance Corporation (IFC)

First published FEBRUARY 2020

Publications of the ILO enjoy copyright under Protocol 2 of the Universal Copyright Convention. Nevertheless, short excerpts from them may be reproduced without authorization, on condition that the source is indicated. For rights of reproduction or translation, application should be made to the ILO, acting on behalf of both organizations: ILO Publications (Rights and Permissions), International Labour Office, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland, or by email: pubdroit@ilo.org. The IFC and ILO welcome such applications.

Libraries, institutions and other users registered with reproduction rights organizations may make copies in accordance with the licences issued to them for this purpose. Visit www.ifrro.org to find the reproduction rights organization in your country.

The designations employed in this, which are in conformity with United Nations practice, and the presentation of material therein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the IFC or ILO concerning the legal status of any country, area or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers.

The responsibility for opinions expressed in signed articles, studies and other contributions rests solely with their authors, and publication does not constitute an endorsement by the IFC or ILO of the opinions expressed in them.

Reference to names of firms and commercial products and processes does not imply their endorsement by the IFC or ILO, and any failure to mention a particular firm, commercial product or process is not a sign of disapproval.

ILO publications can be obtained through major booksellers or ILO local offices in many countries, or direct from ILO Publications, International Labour Office, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland. Catalogues or lists of new publications are available free of charge from the above address, or by email: pubvente@ilo.org

Visit our website: www.ilo.org/publns

Cover photo: ©ILO/IFC

Printed by ILO

BETTER WORK BEYOND THE WORKPLACE
A Comparative Study of Gender Dynamics
in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kenya, Lesotho, and Vietnam

Kelly Pike, York University, Toronto, Canada¹
kpike@yorku.ca

Beth English, Princeton University, Princeton, USA
baenglis@princeton.edu

Abstract

Women's increasing entry into paid work has not been accompanied by a corresponding change in the gender division of unpaid labour in the household and community. Though women increasingly participate in the labour market, the expectation is that they will also take responsibility for the household. To what degree does women's waged work in the garment industry transform gender norms and dynamics in their home lives? To what extent do the choices they make at the household level translate to their empowerment? This paper examines these questions by looking at data collected on gender dynamics at work and at home in the clothing industries of Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kenya, Lesotho and Vietnam. While the extent to which women's empowerment through employment in the garment sector remains fundamentally circumscribed by low wages, financial insecurity, and gendered expectations, the paper finds that Better Work has expanded the space in which women are able exert agency over their earnings within the context of household resource allocation, and has decreased the negative effects of ongoing and systemic financial precarity.

Introduction

In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a boom in foreign direct investment (FDI) in the clothing industries of Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kenya, Lesotho and Vietnam, in large part due to the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA). The MFA imposed quotas on imports from major garment-producing countries (i.e. large Asian producing countries), with the result of promoting the spread of garment production in developing countries. The purpose was to develop these industries and export business, as well as create employment for thousands of workers in developing economies. For most women in these countries, many of whom traditionally maintained the home while their husbands went to work, a job in a clothing factory represented first-time waged employment. With this came the promise of independence, stability, skill development, mobility, and a certain quality of life that waged employment offers. This paper examines how a quality job in the garment industry translates into changes in gender norms and dynamics at the household level.

¹ The authors thank Zareef Ahmad for his contributions in pulling together relevant literature for this paper. Zareef has an undergraduate degree in Sociology (2018) and Masters in Management from the Schulich School of Business (2019) at York University. Research assistance provided by Zareef was funded through the Dean's Award for Research Excellence (DARE) in York University's Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies. A short clip of Zareef sharing information about this project at the DARE poster session can be found [here](#).

The normative standards of labor in the garment industry have remained remarkably static across time and place. Long hours, low wages, and poor working conditions common across the global industry have historically, disproportionately and negatively impacted female wage earners. These conditions persist because of structural power dynamics that function to replicate economic and gendered inequalities that perpetuate a gendered division of labor within the home, ascribe to women a status of secondary wage earner, and maintain conventions around assumed feminine skill and character traits (English 2013). These ‘structures of constraint’ (Folbre 1994) circumscribe individual and group agency and replicate gender disadvantage within the labor market and broader society. An established and growing body of literature reflects the assertion that market forces alone cannot undo such historically and culturally established ‘durable inequalities’, and in the absence of ‘offsetting forces’ function instead to reproduce structural inequalities (World Bank 2006)². This literature also offers a deepening understanding of women’s empowerment in an economic development context.

There are a variety of indicators have been generated to gauge levels of women’s empowerment that are useful to consider. In 2001, the United Nations defined women’s empowerment broadly through five factors: their sense of self-worth, right to have and determine choices, right to have access to opportunities and resources, right to have the power to control their own lives within and outside the home, and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just national and international social and economic order. Research conducted for the World Bank in 2005 defined empowerment as ‘enhancing an individual’s or group’s capacities to make choices and transform those choices into desired outcomes’ (Alsop and Heinsohn 2005). Additional sets of indicators seek to more specifically identify gender gaps in women’s economic and social standing in key areas. In 2008, for example, the United Nations Development Programme narrowed the broad indicators identified by the UN in 2001 to outline specific components of empowerment within the economic space, focusing on initiatives expanding women’s economic opportunity, strengthening women’s legal status and rights, and ensuring ‘their voice, inclusion and participation in economic decision-making’ (Kabeer 2012). The World Economic Forum focuses on measures of economic participation, economic opportunity, political empowerment, educational attainment, and health and well-being (Kapista 2008).

A consistent theme that emerges from all sets of women’s empowerment indicators, especially in the context of women’s labor force participation, is the importance of two foundational variables: agency and resources. Meaning, women’s empowerment is dependent upon the ability to define desired outcomes and the power to make decisions to act on and achieve them, and access to and control over ‘tangible’—financial and material—and ‘intangible’—e.g. skills, knowledge—assets (Kapista 2008; Golla et al. 2011). Yet the relationship between economic growth, gender equality, female employment in basic industries like garment assembly, and women’s empowerment is not always clear. While women’s access to employment and regular waged work reduces the likelihood of poverty, and women’s control of household resources have been shown to have a range of positive outcomes for children and other household members, in the absence of decent job creation, advancement opportunities, and supports for women’s home and caretaking labour the potential for empowerment remains shaped by competing constraints and choices (Kabeer 2012).

2. Such literature includes (as reviewed by Kabeer 2012): Sen and Grown 1988, Moser 1989, Batliwala 1993, Kabeer 1994, Alesina and Rodrik 1994, Persson and Tabbellini 1994, Rowlands 1997, Birdsall and Londono 1997 and 1998, Li et al. 1998, Deininger et al. 1998, Deininger and Olinto 2000.

There is then an ongoing debate about whether waged employment in the garment manufacturing sector offers opportunity or leads to exploitation of women workers. There is a group of scholars who argue that, indeed, women are not exploited or subjugated but rather earn self-respect through their waged work, and that this work can in fact enhance agency and be a route to freedom. Working makes one less dependent on her husband, and this financial independence not only increases her economic power (Trappe and Sørensen, 2006) but also her household bargaining power, self-respect, and agency, (Friedemann-Sanchez, 2006). In addition to paid work, legal changes in married women's property rights have also contributed to women's household bargaining power and agency, though these changes have arguably been developing over a longer period of time in advanced industrialized countries (Combs, 2006; Rutterford and Maltby, 2006) than in developing countries (Datta, 2006). Even in countries where women conform to their 'normalization as housewives ... the preferred social ideal', some view their work as 'help to their husbands' and, in particular, if their husbands are in positions of authority, these women are in a position to be respected and admired (Soni-Sinha, 2006).

This line of argumentation is, however, more complicated. As Elson (1995) argues, women should not be seen as a 'resource for the achievement of development' but rather as 'people whose control over resources should be strengthened'. Whether these resources include money from paid work, or other assets resulting from changes in, for example, property rights or divorce laws, the argument is that control over these resources empowers women. Yet the nature of the work that enables accumulation of these resources is notoriously exploitative. Furthermore, control over these resources may not equate to financial independence but rather basic survival strategy. Many women report being abused in their workplaces, and barely able to make ends meet with the salaries they take home, thus finding themselves dependent on a second, generally male, earner.

Moreover, from a feminist political economy perspective, the underlying assumption of the 'dual earner female carer model' that has emerged with neo-liberalism is that women are primarily responsible for social reproduction—that is, all provisioning processes that sustain life on a daily and generational basis—and therefore not in need of support for this unpaid work in the family, household, and/or community (Bezanson, 2006). Yet women's work in social reproduction plays an important role in contributing to the economy, in large part because their unpaid work ('non-tradables') subsidizes paid work ('tradables') in the economy (Elson, 1995).

Women's increasing entry into paid work has not been accompanied by a corresponding change in the gender division of unpaid labour in the household and community. Though women participate in the labour market just as men do, the expectation is that they will also take responsibility for the household. This puts women in a position of constantly negotiating their work lives with their home lives, and some with a greater degree of struggle than others in part due to differences in cultural norms, promotion of women's rights, the presence of social assistance. Research by the Institute for Development Studies has found a strong, inverse link between the amount of time women and girls spend on unpaid care work and their economic empowerment due to 'time poverty': the costs and impacts on the health and wellbeing of women—and their wider ability to participate in the economic, social and political spheres—caused by their dual workplace-household responsibilities and treatment (IDS 2015). Engaging men in the processes of questioning gender norms and power dynamics is therefore an important factor facilitating women's economic empowerment. This includes shifting attitudes related to the domestic and care work of the household as well as to attitudes and behaviors related to gender-based violence (Slegh et al. 2013).

Thus, critical questions must be asked about to what degree women's waged work in the garment industry, changes in gender norms and dynamics in their home lives, and the choices they are able at a household level translates to their empowerment. This paper examines these questions by looking at data collected on gender dynamics at work and at home in the clothing industries of Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kenya, Lesotho and Vietnam. These particular countries were chosen as garment-producing countries participating in the ILO-IFC's Better Work programme, with the exception of Kenya, which acts as a comparison case. In-depth qualitative data was already collected in Lesotho and Kenya, and the opportunity arose to replicate the study in Bangladesh, Cambodia and Vietnam, with some modification to account for local contexts as well as time constraints. In the next section, a brief description of Better Work is provided, followed by a literature review of the body of work on shifts in gender norms alongside women's economic participation, including context on country-specific studies on issues such as gender norms. Following this are sections on methods and data, findings, and a summary discussion.

Better Work

Better Work (BW) is a partnership of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and International Finance Corporation (IFC). Better Work is a multi-stakeholder initiative that includes unions, buyers, manufacturers and governments directly in the process of developing a plan for improving labour standards compliance without negatively impacting competitiveness. Its pilot project, Better Factories Cambodia, launched in 2001 and eventually led to improvements in compliance and increased trade quotas. Building on its success, BW was established and rolled out in an additional eight countries: Jordan (2008), Haiti (2009), Vietnam (2009), Lesotho (2010)³, Indonesia (2011), Nicaragua (2011), Bangladesh (2014) and Ethiopia (2019).

Better Work Global is housed at the ILO in Geneva and has local offices in each program country to administer its services. It is advised by a global advisory committee, along with project advisory committees in each country—consisting of representatives from labour, business and government. These services consist of monitoring and evaluation activities that are more comprehensive than traditional forms of private regulation, and are coupled with training and remediation activities geared towards developing capacity rather than simply shutting down factories that have non-compliance issues. They also establish workplace committees in their participating factories, known as Performance Improvement Consultative Committees (PICCs), which are comprised of an equal number of management and worker representatives, both union and non-union. The PICC is tasked with the development, implementation and monitoring of factory improvement plans to address areas of non-compliance identified in factory assessments. Training courses are then developed by BW to address the root causes of compliance problems. For the handling of grievances, there are usually other mechanisms in place in a factory, but workers are also able to raise issues in the PICC meetings. This assists in improving communication and building more cooperative relationships between workers and managers.

Over the past ten years there has been a growing body of research on the impact of Better Work in its program countries, particularly in Cambodia. The research has been largely quantitative, using data primarily from audits to examine, for example, the impact of BW on wages (Robertson 2011), factory survival (Brown et al. 2011), human resource innovation (Robertson et al. 2011), verbal abuse (Rourke 2014), sexual harassment (Lin et al. 2014), profit maximization (Brown et al. 2015), factory

3. Better Work closed down its programme in Lesotho in June 2016.

performance (Asuyama et al. 2017; Brown et al. 2013), the public labour inspectorate system (Dupper et al. 2016), whether compliance pays off in terms of attracting reputation-conscious buyers (Oka 2012), and the relationship between wildcat strikes and workplace bipartite committees (Anner 2017).⁴ Conversely, research on BW Lesotho has been largely qualitative. It has examined workers' perceptions of compliance in Lesotho's clothing industry between 2011-2015, management perceptions of the impact of BW Lesotho, and the reasons why South African firms were not joining BW (Pike and Godfrey 2012, 2014, 2015).

There is general consensus in the Better Work literature that improvements in compliance do not negatively impact competitiveness, though in some cases they may not improve competitiveness either. This study departs from the existing literature through its examination of how a quality job in the garment industry translates into changes in gender norms and dynamics at the household level, comparing across four BW countries and one non-BW country.

This study is different from existing studies, namely the World Bank's 2015 *Interwoven* report, in a few important ways. First, it is a purely qualitative study. Second, it includes data from Bangladesh. Third, rather than a broad focus on job and life quality, the study focuses on whether women's work in the garment sector is leading to changes in gender norms and dynamics at the household level. Fourth, in focusing more on changing gender norms, this study takes stock of the literature on gender norms in all five countries, at both the national and sectoral level.

Literature Review

To better understand the degree to which women's employment contributes to women's empowerment, and whether there have been shifts in gender norms alongside women's economic participation, it will be useful to first explore how gender norms in the global garment sector have traditionally been understood and experienced, with a particular focus on the countries included in this study. This allows us to then examine the reasons motivating women's economic participation to better understand whether and how norms adjust in order to facilitate a process of women moving into paid work. This opens up a closer investigation of evolving gender dynamics at work and at home.

In some cases, women continue to be exploited and disempowered as they are paid low wages, held back from management positions, have restricted or no control over income from employment, very little voice and agency, no involvement in decision making, and are faced with unequal distribution of care work. In other cases, women are moving into supervisory roles, exercising control over their income, and experiencing greater involvement in decision making, resulting in improved autonomy and bargaining power both at work and at home. Oftentimes, opportunity and exploitation co-exist as two sides of the same coin.

By examining the factors explaining why there are shifts in some contexts but not in others, this section aims to broadly review existing literature to develop a base-line understanding of gender norms and dynamics within the countries under consideration in this study, from which we can generate a better understanding of how women's economic participation can lead to positive shifts in gender norms. The

4. Beyond the research on Better Work Lesotho, a number of studies have been done of Lesotho's garment sector over the past several decades, in particular with reference to trade and implications for the treatment of workers (Baylies and Wright 1993; Gibbon 2003; Morris and Sedowski 2006; Phillips and Xaba 2002; Pickles and Woods 1989; Seidman 2009; Tafirenyika, 2011), labour standards compliance (Pike 2016; Pike and Godfrey 2012, 2014, 2015), labour migration (Chaka 2011), and the structure and implications of related Global Value Chains (Morris et al. 2011).

section then informs the subsequent analysis of how we expect shifts in gender norms to play out in the countries involved in this study, as revealed by qualitative data collected from factory workers in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kenya, Lesotho and Vietnam.

Kenya

Utilized in this study as a non-Better Work comparative country, the garment industry in Kenya operates within Export Processing Zones centered in areas mainly around the cities of Nairobi and Mombasa. First funded by the World Bank in 1990, Kenya's EPZ-based industrial start up was slow, with basic infrastructure not completed until 1995, and low occupancy rates until the early 2000s when both the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA) stimulated a boom in foreign direct investment in the sub-Saharan Africa apparel industry. The EPZ attracted a largely female labour force, and created an opportunity for women to engage in full-time employment in the formal sector, many for the first time. By 2013, EPZs in Kenya's garment sector employed nearly 24,000 workers, approximately three-quarters of whom were women. The average age of these female garment workers was 29 years old, and roughly 60 percent were single, widowed or divorced, with the remaining 40 percent married or living with an intimate partner (Pike 2018). By 2014 Kenya's apparel industry was valued at USD 330 million a year and employed 30,000 workers (Ouida and Pluess 2017).

As is the case for many women in developing economies, work in the garment industry has been an important entry point into the formal economy for Kenyan women, providing a potential path out of poverty. Labour standards in Kenya too reflect those normative throughout much of the global garment industry. Wages that do not cover basic household necessities, excessive and often uncompensated overtime, temporary work arrangements, and lack of organizing and collective bargaining rights mitigate the ability of workers to significantly improve their standard of living or achieve financial stability (Omolo 2006). In the workplace, gendered perceptions about women's abilities and dispositions—along with additional factors including access to education, healthcare, and childcare—constrains women's ability to acquire skills and rise out of low-skilled, low-paid production jobs. Taken together, women's productive and reproductive responsibilities in the home and gendered and limitations on women's advancement potential in the workplace impact the empowerment potential of garment sector development and employment.

The Kenyan economy is characterized by a fragmented labour market in which the formal and informal sectors co-exist (Wanjala and Were 2009), and remains predominately agricultural, with some 75 percent of Kenyans employed in the agricultural sector and 25 percent in industry or services combined. Kenyan society then remains largely rural and grounded in traditional patriarchal gender norms. These norms in Kenya dictate that husbands and male heads of households worked while women maintained the home. During their years of primary school education, girls, especially in rural areas, are conditioned into undertaking household duties from a young age as preparation for a lifetime devoted largely to household labour and child care (Milligan 2014), and women—in part because of limited education and training opportunities—commonly seek work in the more flexible but also more precarious informal sector to better balance competing demands of contributing to the family economy and undertaking household and care labour (De Giusti and Kambhampati 2015, Wanjala and Were 2009). Women's employment in the formal garment sector, therefore, signaled a shift in traditional economic and gender arrangements within households, but as women's employment in the formal sector has grown, so has the normalization of women's 'double day' of paid and unpaid labour in the

factory and in the home. The long hours worked at the factory by female garment workers compounds the burdens of this by leaving even less time to devote to the second shift of work at home. The *Interwoven* report found that husbands of female garment workers were frustrated at female garment workers' long hours and their not 'fully performing their household duties,' but concurrently male workers rejected the idea of men helping with household tasks because they were 'a woman's job' and 'if he helps one day, she will expect it every day' (World Bank 2015).

Violence against women in Kenyan society is pervasive (Kimuna and Djamba 2008). Among female garment workers, violence is often experienced in relation to their responsibilities for household care work, and in the context of control of economic resources, as women are expected, and sometimes compelled by violence, to turn over their earnings to husbands, boyfriends, and fathers. Prevailing gender norms in Kenya are rooted in norms of strong male domination and female subordination, wherein by customary practice decision making is de facto the purview of men and a husband or male partner maintains the right to control their wife or female partner as he deems appropriate. In this context, violence is "gendered and culturally patterned," and a sanctioned means of control (Kimuna and Djamba 2008). Regardless of social positioning or economic contribution to the household (in the form of paid and unpaid labour), the notion that women should allow men to be the unquestioned head of household is deeply engrained in Kenya's gender norms and are widely accepted by both men and women (Gillum et al 2018).

How women are disciplined and treated in Kenyan factories mirror how men treat them within the household. Workers recount rampant sexual harassment, with sexual favors often required for access to work, raises or promotion opportunities. Harsh treatment by supervisors is common, including corporal punishment including slapping, frequent use abusive and degrading language, and frequent excessive overtime (Opondo 2009, World Bank 2011). Further, wages in the Kenyan garment sector remain too low to raise its workers out of poverty, a factor strongly correlated to intimate partner violence (Kimuna and Djamba 2008). The social reproduction of degrading treatment, physical violence, and gendered control patterns is happening within workplaces as well as homes, and working in factories has not decreased the cultural gender norms of how Kenyan women are 'disciplined' through violence by men (Opondo 2009, Omolo 2006).

Access to work and women's employment prospects remains strongly circumscribed by sociocultural institutions that embrace gendered norms defining women as wives and mothers, and restricting women's work outside of the home. Research by De Giusti and Kambhampati (2015) has shown that religion and ethnicity correlate significantly with women's employment prospects. This traditional male breadwinner-female caretaker model is followed most strictly among Muslim and Roman Catholic communities, and among ethnic groups other than Embu, Kisii, and Kikuyu (De Giusti and Kambhampati 2015, Kimuna and Djamba 2008). Married women were more likely to be self-employed or stay at home rather than employed by an external employer or family member, sometimes acting out of fear that external work or self-employment will make a husband leave or discontinue providing financial support (Gillum et al 2018). Single female workers therefore constitute the largest proportion of Kenya's female garment workers, bolstered by employer perceptions of young women as particularly quick, nimble, and least costly from a wage perspective since, presumably, they are not using wages to support a family (Opondo 2009). Research that shows that employment can increase women's reproductive health status and outcomes (Asweto et al. 2014) but Kenyan garment workers indicate that most factories do not employ expectant mothers, and likewise do not provide maternity leave to the majority of workers who are employed as temporary workers, among whom abortions are

high in part because of fears of being fired (Opondo 2009, Raworth 2004). Thus, through hiring practices and maternity policies, it can be seen how gender norms that define women primarily as wives, mothers, and household labourers are not changing in spite of expanded opportunities for industrial employment.

Key challenges remain to women's economic empowerment in the Kenyan garment industry: low pay that fails to keep up with steep inflation, limited job security and few employment options, low education attainment levels and limited opportunities for workplace advancement, sexual harassment and violence both in the home and at work, difficulty balancing work and home care duties (Ouida and Pluess 2017). As research for this study shows, however, women's employment in the Kenyan garment sector is at the very least having the effect placing traditional gender norms under strain. In 2003, over 15,000 EPZ workers, mostly women, went on strike to protest issues ranging from low pay and unpaid overtime to sexual harassment and lack of paid sick leave (World Bank 2011), challenging commonly held notions of women's docility and subservience. While workers—men and women—note that factory work provides a degree of financial stability for their households in the context of few employment options and skyrocketing costs of living, they also re-percussions growing out of the reconfiguration of power dynamics within the household this wage earning has underpinned: increased conflict over day-to-day tasks and child care responsibilities, more divorces as women exert agency over their time and household decision making, and more men having intimate relationships outside of marriage as a response. Yet without external interventions like those made by Better Work, it remains an open question whether or how Kenya's garment sector will ultimately serve as a vehicle for women's economic or social empowerment.

Bangladesh

The Bangladesh garment industry has undergone tremendous changes since its establishment in the late 1970s. Bangladesh has gone from having 134 factories in 1984 to over 50,000 registered factories currently. Bangladesh is the second largest garment exporter in the world, trading over USD 17 billion worth of clothing yearly. In addition, the ready-made garment (RMG) industry in Bangladesh employs 4 million people, of whom some 90% are lower working-class women from rural areas who have undergone several changes to their life development since the rise of the industry, primarily through earning wages (Adnan et al. 2015).

In Bangladesh there are highly specialized gender roles dictated by the tradition of Purdah, a system of social control whereby women are segregated from men and heavily secluded from the outside world (Kibria 1995), including strong discouragement of engaging in paid work outside the home. Men are responsible for being the breadwinners, making household decisions, and maintaining authority in the house. Whereas men are responsible for activities outside of the house, women are responsible for activities inside the house, undertaking unpaid social productive and reproductive labour such as taking care of the children and the home. Women's authority with the household increases over time up to around 30-34 years of age, whereby the youngest and oldest women must show deference to men (husbands, fathers, sons), as well as to their in-laws (Balk 1997).

Dowry is a key concern in relation to poverty and gender relations in Bangladesh (Hossain 2011⁵) which no doubt contributes to a traditional preference for sons and, as such, a higher rate of female mortality (Kabeer et al. 2013). Conservative attitudes towards women, especially in rural areas, are

5. Citing the World Bank report, *Voices of the Poor*, 1999.

further perpetuated by gender inequalities in the law regarding, for example, divorce and maternity rights (Bridges et al. 2011). Wider Bangladeshi society has traditionally not respected garment work, as it has led to a feminization of public space, and in the context of prevailing gender norms women in public spaces are thought to be more sexually available. On the basis of lacking male protection, society therefore questions their virtue and subjects them to criticism and suspicion of their morals (Hossain 2011).

Bangladesh gained independence from East Pakistan in 1971. To edge out South Asian competitors for US trade, Bangladesh tried to capitalize on its image as a Muslim but moderate country, the second largest Muslim democracy, and a trailblazer in the emancipation of Muslim women's rights (Siddiqui 2009). According to Siddiqui, the emerging rhetoric invoked the image of oppressed Muslim women coming out of seclusion and into the liberated world of wage labour, showing how the state used the on-going war on terror to improve trade rights and falsely liberalize women. In 1983 there were just 47 garment factories, but by 1992 there were more than 1,000 (as cited by the Bangladesh Garment and Manufacturers and Exporters Association), making it at the time the eight largest exporter to the United States. Initially, female workers came from urban working-class backgrounds, but in male-dominant households whereby a male family member exercised substantial or complete control over the women's income (Kibria 1995).

Out of economic necessity (Hossain et al. 2013) and to enable family survival (Hossain 2011), more women in Bangladesh have been entering paid work in the garment sector. Between 1984-2000, women's economic participation grew faster than men's, though it started to slow after 2000 for girls under the age of 15 (Rahman 2014). This slowdown could in part be explained by the fact that girls were seeking higher education rather than a low skill garment job, which was likely a motivating factor for their parents' engagement in garment work. A shortage of older male siblings and a lack of resources also pushed more women into economic participation. Young, unmarried women further enter the workforce to avoid dowry and the burden they fear they will place on their families (Hossain 2011). According to one study about 92.5% of Bangladeshi female garment workers are younger than age 30, citing a cheaper and more committed workforce than male workers or married female workers (Sikdar et al. 2014). On one hand, the rise of the industry helped to defeat the institution of Purdah in the 1990s (Kibria 1995). However, few women stay in garment work for more than 5 years, overlapping with their pre- and early marriage lives (Hossain 2011), and married women are under greater pressure to adhere to cultural norms around home-based activity (Heintz et al. 2017), which makes it difficult for them to break free from traditional gender norms (Sikdar et al. 2014).

In Bangladesh, gender norms at work are similar to traditional norms at home in that there is gender segregation whereby women are not employed in management positions (Macchiavello et al. 2015), men are in authoritative and higher paid positions (Al-Amin and Hoque 2015), and men assert their dominance across workspaces in a variety of ways (Siddiqui 2009). There is a lack of equal treatment and access to rights—such as earnings and paid leave (Rahman 2014)—and women are forced to be docile (Hossain et al. 2013). This is in part to circumvent the possibility of labour organization, though unions in Bangladesh are also typically male dominated and in the public sector, as well as closely linked to political parties (Hossain 2011). Some employers use physical violence and emotional abuse against women, particularly younger women, to 'get work out of them' (Naved et al. 2018).

Gendered hiring and production practices (Hossain et al. 2013) therefore leave women without the opportunity to enter into management positions where higher pay could increase mobility (Islam 2016),

and without the authority they would possess and be able to exert in these supervisory roles. Based on the assumption that men are household breadwinners, gender norms also dictate that women are paid less when hired and are the first to be fired (Dey and Basak 2017), making women a cheap disposable labour force (Anwary 2017). Although employers enforce the gender norm women as secondary earners in their hiring, firing and promotional practices, this is often not the case and results in men attempting to assert their dominance and authority within the household in other ways, often using physical violence (Heath 2014).

It is difficult for Bangladeshi women to balance care work with garment sector employment, primarily because of long working days, unpredictable overtime, few facilities for child care, and the likelihood that they will not be able to return to work after maternity (Hossain 2011). Some women express high levels of stress, guilt, anxiety and poor appetite due to being separated from their children who remain back in their villages (Akhter et al. 2017). Others report dealing with these and other mental health issues on their own, fearful that a depression diagnosis will lead to dismissal, as well as enduring physical ailments and increased risk of intimate partner violence (Farhana et al. 2015).

Increases in production targets in order to cover the costs of compliance with the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety enacted in the wake of the 2011 Rana Plaza disaster, have impacted most especially the overwhelmingly female production workforce (Sinkovics et al. 2016). The intensification of production and expanded workloads have led to even longer work hours with no sick leave, increased incidents of domestic violence (Anwary 2017), as well as depression and other mental health issues (Hossain 2011). Women workers thereby have no work life balance, continue to engage in household work as a 'second shift', and are therefore unable to enjoy their work because of this (Chowdhury et al. 2015).

Upon entering the workforce then, women overwhelmingly encounter gendered hiring and production practices that expect them to be docile, expose them to unequal treatment, tie them to low wages, and prevent them from taking on supervisory roles, all of which hamper autonomy, decision-making, voice and agency. Because they are not empowered in the workplace, they remain vulnerable to physical and emotional abuse there, and because they work long hours and unpredictable overtime, they are also vulnerable to physical and emotional abuse at home. Still commonly treated as secondary earners, when in fact they are the breadwinners, attempts by women to expand their autonomy and decision making at home are broadly met with resistance from men in the home. While some working women have been given a greater role in decision-making (Sikdar et al. 2014), and it has been shown that wage income has a larger effect than unearned income (e.g. from husbands' farms) on women's autonomy in household decisions (Anderson and Eswaran 2009), and it is argued that gendered assumptions of male power overshadows and offsets women's empowerment from earned wages (Hossain 2011). Although having better access to jobs and wages generally improves women's bargaining power at work and home (Bridges et al. 2011), many Bangladeshi women still have no control over their earnings at home, being required to hand over their wages their husbands or in-laws (Naved et al. 2018).

It must be noted however that gender norms in Bangladesh shifted somewhat simply in order for women to enter paid work in the garment sector. Whereas the idea of women working outside the home has traditionally been strongly discouraged, economic necessity has opened up a space for women to play a role in contributing financially to their households. This seems to be softening a historically rigid preference for sons, who have been viewed as less burdensome than daughters tied to the home and a looming dowry price. Recent studies have found other examples of where gender norms have been

shifting. On a practical level, because there are more women who are working in the garment sector, men are engaging and helping more with household work and childcare responsibilities (Bridges et al. 2011). Public perceptions of traditionally defined gender roles for women have also shifted, facilitated in part by public documents from the government that have begun to recognize women as more than future mothers and rather as workers and central actors in the RMG sector in Bangladesh. According to Hossain (2011⁶), this type of state recognition has helped to improve women's autonomy and bargaining power within households. Moving more women into supervisory roles in garment factories—who in fact often perform better than their male counterparts—has also begun to change men's opinions about women's right or ability to manage (Macchiavello et al. 2015).

Cambodia

Quite different from Bangladesh, Cambodian women have always been economically active and have been considered to have more autonomy than female workers in other Asian regions (Ledgerwood 1994). There has always been a strong parental expectation that daughters should provide for the family, which in the modern economy means more young Cambodian women are moving into paid employment in the garment sector (Nishigaya 2002), along with the 700,000 workers it employs (ILO 2015). This migration can be challenging for young women, many of whom have lost opportunities to complete their education, as their commitment to their family's economic needs took them into the workforce prematurely (Webber et al. 2010). Similar to female workers in other garment-producing countries therefore, Cambodian garment workers are typically young and unmarried with low levels of education. Entering the workforce early prevents them from completing the minimum 5.5 years of education they would need for a better paying job (Mejía-Mantilla and Woldemichael 2017), which contributes to a vicious cycle of poverty and exploitation.

On the other hand, the entire household is often involved in this process of migration, which in some ways helps to shift social norms, as families adapt to new roles in the household and community (Lawreniuk and Parsons 2017). However, greater acceptance of women participating in paid work does not necessarily mean better treatment. Many of these women work overtime—not necessarily on a voluntary basis—and struggle to make ends meet as they send a large portion of their income home to their families (Webber et al. 2010). Despite their high participation rate in the Cambodian garment industry, they are not on equal terms with their male colleagues (Nuan et al. 2011).

Traditional gender norms in Cambodia dictate that women are expected to be moral, invisible, and hardworking, and to carry a societal obligation to support their families and protect familial reputation through their sexual chastity. These norms carry over into work in the garment industry, where women experience harmful, sexist gender norms (Merk 2012). Sexual harassment is a regular occurrence for these workers (UNFPA), which is traumatic in itself and may be made even more stressful by the historical gender ideal that a whole family's reputation is dependent upon the maintenance of virginity in the daughter (Webber et al. 2010). By some reports, Cambodian women are much less sexually active than men (Webber et al. 2010), with sexual debut around 20 years of age and after marriage (UNFPA). Yet in one study, nearly one in three female garment workers in Cambodia reported experiencing sexually harassing behaviours over the last 12 months (Lawreniuk and Parsons 2017). Within the context of a sexually conservative culture (Nishigaya 2010) and rigid gender norms, this can be extremely damaging for a woman's reputation (Lawreniuk and Parsons 2017). Having men

6. Citing Government of Bangladesh 2009a, 2005.

occupy the most authoritative positions within factories only further solidifies these norms and enhances risk of harassment.

A report by Better Factories Cambodia demonstrated that harmful gender norms and structures mean that women are excluded from certain types of work, are recognized less for their contributions, and are more likely to be harassed in their workplace. Low wages have forced female garment workers into the sex industry which significantly increases their chances of getting HIV/AIDS, being forced to take drugs and alcohol, and being physically and sexually abused (Nishigaya 2002). Their chances of contracting HIV/AIDS are also heightened by the fact that insisting on condom use is insulting to men (including their husbands), and treated as a sign of mistrust or disrespect (Nishigaya 2002). Furthermore, they often work long hours without being allowed medical check-ups (Webber 2010). According to Eisenbruch (2017), the phenomenon of mass fainting in Cambodian garment factories, triggered by fear, seems to be an outcry of protest by disempowered workers whose misery is made more acute by their factory work.

Understanding Cambodian women's participation in unions is illustrative of how gender dynamics impact female garment workers' empowerment opportunities and realities at work and in the home. An ILO report in 2011 found that union leadership positions at the factory level were overwhelmingly held by women— though at the federation level only half were held by women. Moreover, the study found that a substantial number of men said women union leaders are knowledgeable, honest, and have enough capacity and leadership skills to lead the union. Men said that women should be chosen to take up leadership positions because they are also good at dealing with problems, are gentle and serious at work, and their patience and good analytical skills resulted in less tension and more fruitful bargaining. Despite these opportunities provided by the union, many of the women said that the timing of these union activities (e.g. women's development opportunities, bargaining, etc.) conflicted with their household care responsibilities. Other challenges included union multiplicity, employer discrimination of union members, lack of adequate support from men, and sexual harassment.

Even though there is a high proportion of women in factory level unions, there is a lack of representation at the federation level. This limits women's collective voice at a structural level, and doesn't allow them to move into positions of authority. Though men at the factory level believe women can solve problems and be more 'gentle' in the workplace, their ability to progress in society is undermined when they are restricted from serving in leadership roles with greater authority. Factory level unions dominated by women are powerless if the federation level unions are dominated by men, and thus prevent upward mobility for women both socially and economically, hampering a shift in gender norms at work and in the home.

Lesotho

Formerly a labour reserve for the South African mining industry, the clothing sector in Lesotho is the largest private employer in the country, accounting for nearly 90 percent of total manufacturing employment in the country (Alam et al 2019⁷). The industry initially emerged in Lesotho in the 1980s as a result of preferential trade agreements, attracting foreign investors who ran their businesses by focusing production on low-skill, low-cost labour and an entirely export market (Pickles and Woods 1989). Similar to Kenya, the expansion of Lesotho's garment industry was largely stimulated by the African Growth and Opportunity Act of 2000, which provided preferential access to US markets. Thus,

7. Citing World Trade Organization. (2015). *International Trade Statistics 2015*.

the smallest country in sub-Saharan Africa with a population of roughly 2 million people grew to become one of the largest producers of apparel on the continent. By 2015, Lesotho's garment industry contributed 20 percent to the country's GDP and employed some 40,000 mostly female workers, with AGOA US imports from Lesotho amounted to over USD 295 million in 2016 (Keletso 2015, UNECA 2018). Better Work officially launched in Lesotho in December 2010 and operated for six years before being shut down in June 2016. BWL was funded exclusively by the US Department of Labor, which ultimately pulled funding due to state reluctance to mandate industry-wide participation (Pike forthcoming).

Gender relations in Lesotho have historically been bound closely to norms of work, reflecting the home-work gender divide present in other countries in this study. Prior to the 1980s the majority of Lesotho men working in the industrial sector did so in the South African mining industry. The industry employed half of Lesotho's adult men at any given time until the early 1990s, most of whom migrated from rural areas to engage in this work. Women stayed behind in rural areas providing a "subsistence" sphere, engaging in the social productive and reproductive labour of the home and utilizing subsistence agriculture as an economic safety net. With gender and socio-economic norms eventually adjusted to accommodate male labour migration, employment norms for women reflected this accommodation, as well. With migration to South Africa by women prohibited from the 1960s to the 1990s, jobs in the emerging clothing industry of the 1980s went mainly to women, not only because of the lower wages they could be paid and assumptions of feminized work traits they naturally embodied, but because practically speaking, men did not constitute an available surplus labour supply (Ansell et al. 2015). Lesotho's garment sector remained female dominated through the industry's largest period of growth in the 2000s, even as retrenchments occurred in mining and men's employment in that sector declined.

Complexities layered into Lesotho's gender norms by this history of male labour migration are myriad. Men returning temporarily or permanently from South African mines brought with them high rates of HIV infection, which when transmitted to intimate partners has contributed to Lesotho having one of the world's highest HIV/AIDS infection rates in the world. Gender inequalities continue to help fuel this HIV/AIDS crisis. Prevailing gender norms functioned to limit many women's abilities to negotiate safer sex with their partners—and to limit male partners' sexual infidelity and having multiple concurrent sexual partnerships—which studies show are further compounded by poverty and limited economic choices (Tanga and Tangwe 2014). Thanbe (2017) found that among both male and female migrants working in the apparel industry there is a prevalence of transactional sex. An estimated 23 percent of all adults in Lesotho are living with HIV, but a study conducted by the Apparel Lesotho Alliance to Fight AIDS (ALAFa) to assess the prevalence of HIV and AIDS among workers in the apparel sector found a 43 percent prevalence rate, with women's rates standing at 44 percent against men's 35.6 percent (Tanga et al, 2017). Lesotho government health facilities provide both HIV testing and antiretroviral treatment, but garment workers infrequently access these services because of trouble negotiating time off or because they cannot afford the costs of transportation. Focus group discussion participants reported that HIV-positive workers were not given time during the work day to take their medications. Low pay and long working hours translate practically to women having little or no access to healthcare, particularly in the area of sexual and reproductive health, and thus contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS (UNECA 2018, Botea 2018).

Patriarchal gender relations remain rigidly enforced by custom but the frequent, extended absences of men in a labour migration context increased the influence and status of women within the spheres of

home and local communities (Ansell et al. 2015). While chronic unemployment among Lesotho men as the availability of mining jobs shrank—and the relatively high wage rates they paid disappeared—women’s employment in the garment sector and their labour migration to factory towns has become both more important for household financial stability. In 2018, 43 percent of Lesotho households reported at least one member living away, with a sharp increase in the previous decade in female migration to garment producing areas of Maseru and Maputose (Botea et al, 2018). Yet this employment is also more problematic as their gender-determined responsibilities for the care of the home, children and the sick remained largely static. In fact, the rigid gender split between home and work created by male labour migration underpinned a widely held belief—though increasingly chafed at by working women—that men were incapable of performing household tasks or contributing in any way to the care work of the home (Ansell et al 2015). In this way Lesotho’s female garment workers often are in the position of being fully both breadwinner and caretaker.

Access to waged employment is shaping gender dynamics in ways both within and beyond traditional marital and household relationships. Some young women in Lesotho, who comprise the largest number of the country’s female garment workers, are renegotiating the importance of marriage and household creation based on a marital partnership. In the absence of the relative household and financial stability once secured by men’s remittances from mine work, marriage is not a strict necessity for young women in the way that it had been a generation before, while families—especially where one or both parents are in ill health from HIV/AIDS—increasingly rely on remittances from daughters employed in the garment sector for household financial support (Boem 2006).

Within more traditional household arrangements, as is reflected in other country contexts in this study, a wife or female partner assuming the economic role of breadwinner and decision maker creates stress and conflict with men work to maintain their socio-cultural (albeit not earning) authority in the household. In spite of being in the position of economic dependent, unemployed men often refuse to give their permission for their wives to seek work in the garment industry, creating a climate of conflict that is an outgrowth of either ongoing financial instability or a wife defying her husband’s decision making authority. The ‘freedom’ women obtain through their access to work and an income is met commonly by resistance to that freedom in the home in ways ranging from a lack of emotional support and understanding about workplace stressors (e.g. overtime, sexual harassment, production quotas), to arguments over domestic tasks, to intimate partner violence (Dyer 2001). As the discussion of field research below indicates, Better Work training did over time and in part contribute to better communication, cooperation, and sharing of household responsibilities.

It remains unclear whether these shifts will continue and whether communications skills learned through BW will have a spillover effect into other areas, such as intimate partner communication around HIV/AIDS status.

Vietnam

In the aftermath of *Doi Moi*—economic reforms in Vietnam in 1986 with the goal of creating a “socialist-oriented market economy”—cloth and clothing trade became the main source of income for most companies (Horat 2018). Women started playing a more involved role in trade and in the marketplace, and were able to make serious financial contributions to their families. Though perceived by local state officials as neglecting their ‘care duties’ for their families, at the local level this began to be viewed as women ‘caring’ in the form of providing financial support for their families, children’s

education, food and security. In this way concept of care shifted, most visibly where women have become the breadwinners while men stay at home. Their rising status through earning income and providing their families with a good lifestyle is respected by elders in Vietnamese society. Both inside their homes and in their communities, things like being able to manage a business, have more work autonomy, and play a role in budgeting has given women more authority and better status.

While this lends support to giving women more authority and management positions inside factories—which could also result in a more respected position within the household, as they would be better able to support and ‘care’ for their families, have more money, and autonomy in decision making—in Vietnam’s traditional patriarchal society, the family forms the main economic unit and women perform the bulk of the work but under male supervision (Dang Vung et al. 2008). Gender norms dictate that women are first and foremost seen as wives, mothers, daughters and daughters-in-law (Horat 2018). They are subordinate to fathers, husbands and sons, and are expected to ‘obey their father when they are young, obey their husbands when they get married, and obey their children when their husbands passed away’ (Tran et al. 2016). They are likewise expected to adapt readily to changing social norms and dynamic kin relationships, and their perceived failure to do so may evoke blame or punishment (Yount et al. 2016).

Some argue that traditional norms of domesticity have come to replace former socialist ethics of collective participation, in part due to state reforms that have implicitly encouraged rural women to retreat from the public sector roles they held during wartime (Resurreccion and Khanh 2007). In the ongoing race to the bottom, garment producing countries in Asia are competing with each other for the cheapest labour. To get this, women’s rights and gender norms are often exploited. Women working inside Vietnamese factories are expected to comply with low wages, exploitive working conditions, and physical and verbal abuse. Labour surplus allows employers to prevent paying higher wages, promoting women to management positions or providing any kind of upward mobility. They deprive women of provisions through basic labour laws, sick leave, maternity leave, and easily fire workers without just cause, reflective of their image in society as secondary earners. Further research indicates that women working in factories are not eating well, living in terrible conditions, and that 70 to 90 percent of their income is going towards basic necessities (Kerkvliet 2010). ‘Small advances’ of wages reinforce the paternal relationship and perpetuates the cycle of indebtedness as they are forced to be dependent on managers for basic necessities such as medical expenses, or trips home for family matters (Tran and Jeppesen 2016).

Working conditions further exploit such gender norms as women are categorized as easy to control, schemes are used to implement paternal relationships, there is no upward mobility, and wages are not being improved to raise their living standard. Norms around submissiveness and subordination to men are further exploited in the factories as all supervisor positions are held by men. Women are subjected to violence and inhumane treatment by supervisors, which is the second biggest reason workers go on strike (Tran 2012). Factory policies and practices make women more vulnerable, and yet they have few options due to low levels of education and limited mobility. One study has shown how all management in one particular factory held post-secondary degrees, which structurally makes it impossible for women to move into these positions if they are held back from educational opportunities.

Women have largely been discouraged from migrating for work, based on an assumption that they would be sexually abused, forced into prostitution, or victimized by their employers—a risk to girls’ chastity and integrity (Hoang 2011). Factory work has therefore been looked down upon by

Vietnamese communities. Women are often judged by the quality of their reproductive work and childcare. Migrating for work means leaving these duties to their husbands, which some female workers believe will brand them as ‘greedy’ for putting economic benefits above the interests of their children and families (Hoang 2011). Often, men would migrate with the women, finding it unacceptable to take over the wives’ duties at home, based on beliefs that he would be subject to ridicule and humiliation for failing to live up to social expectations as the head of the household (Resurreccion and Khanh 2007). Vietnamese female garment workers—similar to their counterparts in Bangladesh—are also forced to work long hours, making it difficult for them to take on the expected ‘double burden’. Factory work is therefore undermining the ability of women to maintain their traditional responsibilities at home, at the same time as gender norms there reinforce the expectations that women should engage in and continue to be those within the household undertaking care responsibilities.

Violence against women has become accepted more and more in Vietnamese culture, and even women themselves have started justifying intimate partner violence (Krause et al. 2016). Men increasingly take it as a threat to their masculinity if women are working or out-earning them, thus they assert their dominance through ‘hot anger’, believed by some to be a natural trait embodied in men (Yount et al. 2016). Such gender norms support the notion that men are entitled to deliver a sizeable punishment, or exert violence, if women ‘disobey’. This intersection of masculinity norms and economic precarity therefore make it more likely that women working in Vietnam’s garment sector experience IPV. It is interesting to note, however, that manufacturing sectors broadly have a lower loss of productivity from IPV than agricultural sectors, which may indicate that factory jobs are lowering the rates of IPV among women in the garment sector despite it still being high and socially accepted.

Some gender norms however, are starting to change. Women are now just as likely as men to migrate for work, comprising some 40 percent of migrants—a growing number—and women working in Vietnam’s garment sector have better probabilities than men of receiving written contracts providing somewhat stable incomes. Though one study noted that men and women are reassuring themselves that this new work-family-household arrangement is temporary, and that one day in the future they will return home and resume their former gendered responsibilities and obligations (Nguyen et al. 2015), women have started to challenge gender norms at work. Women are resisting gendered norms of submissiveness, pushing back in various ways against low pay and working conditions through which they are “treated like a slave”, including through strikes (Cox 2015), but more commonly through activities such as “slowing down” or reaching out to local newspaper outlets to expose workplace exploitation (Kerkvliet 2010). Changing laws and raising the minimum wage through strikes has shown the power women are gaining through collective action, and how resistance at the workplace is working to reshape their gendered assumptions and norms writ large within the context of the state and society.

Methods and Data⁸

This study employed qualitative methods and data was collected through focus group discussions (FGDs) with workers. The broad objective was to compare gender dynamics across the different countries, based on data already collected in Lesotho and Kenya, combined with additional data collected in Bangladesh, Cambodia and Vietnam using the same methodology.

8. Information for Lesotho and Kenya is based on the author’s personal data collection efforts, which have been included in Appendix C (Methodology) of the World Bank *Interwoven* Report (pp.114-116). Information for Cambodia and Vietnam is taken from the *Interwoven* Report Appendix C (pp.113-117).

In 2011, the co-author (Pike) developed a set of focus group guidelines that were used to facilitate FGDs in Lesotho as part of a baseline assessment of working conditions and gender dynamics. These same guidelines were modified slightly and used again by the author for impact assessment research in Lesotho in September 2013, and for a baseline assessment in Kenya in July 2013 (see Table 1). The World Bank then commissioned the Nuppun Institute for Economic Research in Cambodia, and the Life Center for Promotion of Quality of Life in Vietnam, to use the Lesotho FGD template to each conduct four FGDs with garment workers in their respective countries. In Bangladesh, Better Work Global partnered with BRAC, the NGO who was provided with these guidelines to carry out the same research in Bangladesh. All transcripts were sent to the author for comparative analysis. The main focus of this analysis is on the gender relations component.

Table 1: Focus Group Discussion Guidelines

Module 1: Working Conditions and Labour Standards Compliance	What is good and what is bad about work? Similar issues for women and men? Do employers comply and who monitors them? What needs to change in order to have job quality? Do improvements in job quality lead to improvements in welfare?
Module 2: Available Remedies/Tools for Addressing Issues	If you have an issue, what do you do about it? What, if any, grievance procedures are in place? Are available remedies effective at improving job quality?
Module 3: Employment Relations	Relations between workers and supervisors Same for women and men? Structures in place for promotions, employee involvement, etc. Barriers to equal opportunity for advancement/agency
Model 4: Gender Relations	Norms surrounding female and male roles at work and at home Equal access to economic opportunities for women and men Breadwinners and decision makers; impact of work on home life Women's participation in unions and collective action

Participant Recruitment

In Lesotho, 20 FGDs were conducted with 141 workers (approximately 7 workers per FGD): 10 in Maseru and 10 in Maputsoe. All groups except one (due to a communication error) met separately according to gender, including 14 female groups, 5 male groups, and 1 mixed group. Within those groups, some were working at factories that had subscribed to Better Work and others at factories that had not. 77% of all participants were working in Better Work factories. Participants were recruited in two ways: union members were recruited by their union organizers, and non-union members were recruited by Better Work Enterprise Advisors, who had non-union contacts through the Performance Improvement Consultative Committees (PICCs) in different factories. Most participants spoke Sesotho only, so focus groups were facilitated in the presence of a local Masotho female interpreter. Table 2 briefly summarizes the number of focus groups facilitated in each of the five participating countries.

Table 2: Summary of Focus Groups Across Participating Countries

Country	Date of FGDs	# FGDs	# Workers	%Female	Ave Age	%BW ⁹	BW est.
Bangladesh	Aug-Sept 2015	4	39	49%	25	100%	2014
Cambodia	March 2015	4	26	69%	27	100%	2001
Kenya	July 2013	13	114			0%	non-BW
Lesotho	Sept 2013	20	141	77%		77%	2010
Vietnam	March 2015	4	32	63%	37	100%	2009

In Maseru, it was easiest to meet with one focus group per day, after work from 5:30 to 7:30 pm. Maseru is the capital of Lesotho and also the busiest city, with many villages surrounding the city center. Two industrial centers, Ha Thetsane and Maseru West (also known as Station), are located relatively close to town, where the Better Work Lesotho office is, and where all of the focus groups took place. In Maputsoe all of the focus groups took place on Sundays from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m., 12:00 to 2:00 p.m., and 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. Maputsoe is 80km north of Maseru and is also a relatively large city, though not as big as Maseru, and more spread out. It is also known to be more dangerous than Maseru. Workers in Maputsoe are reluctant to stay later than 6:30 or 7:00 p.m., as they want to be able to walk home before dark. It also took them longer to get to the meetings, which could then begin only by around 6:00 p.m. This situation is what motivated the decision to hold multiple focus groups on Sundays, when no one had to work and all meetings could be held before nightfall. All meetings took place in the Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC) building.

In Kenya, 13 FGDs were held with 114 workers (roughly 8-9 workers per FGD) representing 17 factories in the Athi River Export Processing Zone (EPZ). Ten of the focus groups were held with females, two with males, and one with a mixed gender group. Participants were recruited by a union organizer from the Tailors and Textile Workers Union (TTWU), along with the assistance of two shop stewards from the union. As Kenya does not participate in Better Work, none of the participants represent factories participating in the program. The focus groups lasted approximately 1 to 1.5 hours. Most participants spoke in English and, for those who needed assistance, a junior consultant was present to provide interpretation.

9. Supposedly, 100 percent of the participants in Cambodia and Bangladesh were from BW factories. However, only two of the groups in Cambodia seemed to be aware of BW. And there was not much talk about BW in the Bangladesh focus groups, most likely because the programme was too new for workers to have observed an impact. In Vietnam, it is unclear whether these are actually 100% percent BWV because 8 participants are listed as non-BWV in the *Interwoven* report (where most details on methodology are available). However, the author notes that all focus groups took place at one factory, which participated in BWV. It may be that these workers simply did not receive BWV training. However, this level of detailed breakdown is not available in the other countries so for the sake of comparison, the figure is kept at 100 percent.

A pilot focus group was held with TTWU shop stewards at a hotel outside the Athi River EPZ. Afterwards, Pike was informed that another union organizer within the TTWU reported this to the General Secretary (i.e. President) of the union, who was not happy that workers were participating in research—more specifically, that his permission had not first been sought. Though it is a much more complex story, for brevity it is worth noting that there were tribal ties between this particular union organizer and General Secretary, and that other workers and union organizers believed there may be some form of collaboration between the TTWU and employers in the Athi River EPZ. After repeated failed attempts to secure a meeting with the TTWU General Secretary, Pike proceeded with the research but moved it farther outside into Kithengela, a neighbouring township. In the patio area behind a quiet restaurant, she and workers—who would travel there from Athi River EPZ after their day-long shift—were able to meet privately and facilitate the focus group discussions.

In Cambodia, the research team selected factories from a list provided by Better Factories Cambodia. The participants are therefore all considered as participating in a BW factory (i.e. 100 percent participation). The sample included six female workers from large factories that had received advisory and training services in addition to monitoring; six male workers from two small factories that had received monitoring services only; eight female workers from two small factories that had received monitoring services only; and four female and two male supervisors (two from a medium-size factory that had received monitoring services only, four from a medium-size factory that had received advisory and training services in addition to monitoring). The FGDs were held at various locations including a restaurant, office building, and a coffee shop.

Researchers asked FGD all participants set series of questions. The questions covered likes and dislikes about the job, as good and bad about employment at other factories they may have worked at previously, what improvements participants would like to see happen in the factory, and how working conditions have changed as a result of participating in Better Factories Cambodia including in areas such as participation in PICCs and management-employee relations, and questions related to gendered labor practices in the factories and in their homes. Field notes suggest a somewhat rigid Q&A format followed for the interviews, with little back and forth conversation between participants or follow-up from the interviewer.

In Vietnam, all four FGDs were held on one day at a factory in Ho Chi Minh City. Each FGD included eight workers, two of the groups made up entirely of women, one group entirely of men, and the fourth group evenly split between women and men. The discussions were all held in a garment factory subscribing to Better Work services, though the ‘composition of participants in focus groups discussion’ on page 117 of the *Interwoven* report suggests that one of the focus groups was comprised of ‘non-Better Work’ female factory workers. One might hypothesize from the information on page 117 that all workers within a Better Work factory have been categorized as either BW or non-BW based on whether they received BW assessment and/or advisory services. This is a level of detail that is not readily available in the other countries, so for ease of comparison these FGD participants in Vietnam can all be considered as participating in a BW factory (i.e. 100 percent participation).

Responses between BW and non-BW participants vary, but are most consistent across questions related to working conditions. This is to be expected as working conditions across a single factory implemented by management are unlikely to diverge widely depending on worker access to and participation in BW training. Communicating issues with supervisors is an in-factory area that does see

some noticeable variation in responses, though further analysis within the country with a larger number of FGD, as well as across countries for comparative purposes, is necessary before any strong arguments can be made.

In Bangladesh, 10 factories were selected from a list made available to the research team by Better Work Bangladesh so as to include factories in different locations with different workforce composition and sizes. Workers were selected from each of these 10 factories randomly from the list of workers. The research team in Bangladesh selected approximately 30 workers from each factory, with male workers from two factories and female workers from the remaining. From these 30 workers in each factory 10 workers were randomly selected for the worker FGDs.

In Bangladesh, workers were apparently more comfortable with their managers arranging the meetings for them in their factories. The factories assisted the research team to organize the workers and to provide a venue for the FGDs, usually the training room where the workers apparently felt most comfortable. The FGDs were conducted at the factory premises without presence of any management staff, though the notes indicate that managers found ways here and there to check in on the group or offer lunch to the research team, etc.

Limitations

Sample Size: Variation

A limitation of the data is the variation in sample size from one country to the next. Though four focus group discussions were conducted in Bangladesh (n=39), Cambodia (n=26) and Vietnam (n=32), there were 13 focus groups in Kenya (n=114) and 20 focus groups in Lesotho (n=141). This is largely a reflection of the fact that this broader comparative study was developed to build on the findings of more in-depth findings from Kenya and Lesotho, and significantly less time was spent conducting fieldwork in the three additional countries.

Participants: Better Work and Supervisor Status

The aim of the study was to address the question of whether work in a garment factory is leading to changes in gender norms and dynamics in workers' home lives. A significant component of this was to understand the impact of Better Work in this regard. In Bangladesh there was very little mention of Better Work (though it had been in place for approximately one year). In Cambodia, two of the four focus groups were unaware of Better Work. In Vietnam, one of the four focus groups was reported as 'non-BWV' (which may simply have meant these eight workers did not receive BWV training, even though they work in a BWV factory). On one hand, it is good to have a control group. However, with such a small sample, this might have been better balanced through strong BW representation in at least three of the focus groups, and one non-BW focus group. This has implications for the recommendations that can be put forth in this paper, as we will have only partial view of the role that BW plays in leading to changes in gender norms and dynamics at the household level. We will, however, have a better understanding of whether work in the garment industry (more generally) is leading to these types of changes.

A second note on participants is that regular (non-supervisor) workers were recruited for focus group discussions in Lesotho, Kenya and Bangladesh. However, in Cambodia and Vietnam, only three out of

the four focus groups conducted in each country were with regular workers—the others were with supervisors. This is interesting for perspective on within-country variation (something that is not unpacked in this study), though it doesn't add to any comparable base for examination across countries.

Focus Group Discussions: Consistency in Facilitation

Another limitation of this study is the somewhat limited feedback from workers due to lack of probing during the FGDs. In general, the feedback from Bangladesh, Kenya and Lesotho is quite detailed, whereas the feedback from Vietnam is only somewhat detailed, and Cambodia is the least detailed. Across the five countries, four different people/groups were responsible for collecting data through FGDs. Either due to time constraints, or lack of experience in facilitating focus group discussions, some facilitators were unable to pose the questions related to gender relations and/or skipped some and/or did not probe workers further to keep the discussion going. While quite detailed in some places, the feedback is extremely sparse in others, which makes it difficult to draw conclusive findings. Due to time and resource constraints in conducting additional primary data collection, this gap in the data is filled in part by the literature review which provides additional context on country-specific gender norms and women's work in the garment industry.

Findings

The findings point to a number of factors that influence how a job in the garment sector translates into changes—positive or negative—at the household and worker level, thereby promoting or impeding women's empowerment in the context of agency and resources. Generally, these factors can be grouped into four thematic areas: cultural norms; education and training; financial insecurity; and quality of working conditions.

Summary Points

Cultural norms are a key factor in establishing and perpetuating gendered divisions of labor and gendered assumptions about authority and decision-making prerogatives. 'Cultural norms' is a very broad classification and is intertwined with a number of factors, including a country's historical experience and workers' degree of education and training. A society's notion of what it means to 'be a man' or to 'be a woman' further influences the ease or resistance in adapting to a changing (feminized) world of work. Gendered cultural norms certainly do not shift overnight, and are arguably the most difficult to alter. But findings from this study indicate it may be easier for workers in some countries to break the mould than it is for workers in others. For example, even though all countries included in the sample can be considered patriarchal societies, findings indicate that men in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lesotho and Vietnam have adapted more readily to their changing worlds of work, whereas men in Kenya have not¹⁰.

Education and training has been a productive starting point in altering traditional gendered norms in a way that supports women's empowerment by decreasing 'time poverty' among women caused by their dual home-work caretaking and economic responsibilities. This is true especially in the area of getting

10. In addition to having strong patriarchal roots, there are also strong ties to different tribes in Kenya, some of which dictate rigid expectations for men and what man's role is in society and the family. The issue of tribes or tribalism is not explored in this paper, though it would be interesting to explore further in the context of whether something similar exists in the other countries under comparison.

men to contribute to the unwaged work of the home. There is evidence from Lesotho to support this—in particular the benefits of education and training from the external intervention of Better Work on communication, conflict resolution and sharing responsibilities. The data from Vietnam also supports this, and in some cases alludes to BW training, though one group mentioned that men were helping at home even before BW. There is also counter-evidence from Kenya to support this—in other words, a lack of education and training or external intervention, and a continued rigid gendered division of labour in households. The data from Bangladesh and Cambodia indicate that men are sharing responsibilities at home but do not directly speak to training from BW¹¹.

Financial insecurity in all of these garment-producing countries is common for workers. Throughout the garment manufacturing sector, wages are not high, labour supply often vastly outweighs demand—making it difficult for workers to demand more—and there is increased pressure on households to have two incomes and make sure those small wages stretch. Though workers in some countries have managed to set a workable rhythm within these bounds, others appear to be desperately struggling. That ‘rhythm’ seems to be in part facilitated by Better Work training on budgeting but begs the question of whether waged work and BW budgeting trainings contribute solely to household and familial economic survival or more broadly to women’s empowerment through increased management and control of household resources, and the impact of wage earning on decision making power within the household.

Working conditions have a direct impact on conditions at home by virtue of their impact on an individual’s sense of self-respect and agency. Precariousness and poor treatment at work has a spillover effect on home lives and interpersonal relationships. By alleviating some of the key issues workers experience at work—for example verbal abuse from supervisors, or stress-inducing and lengthy periods of overtime—relationships at home stand to benefit. A general observation from the data in this study is that workers who are more content at work also appear to be more content at home. The reasons for this range, for example, from improvements due to Better Work interventions in Lesotho and Vietnam, to feeling among workers in BW factories of being looked after, to, as in the case of Bangladesh, simply being unaware of anything that is wrong.

Cultural Norms

This section considers how cultural norms and historical experience may help to explain differences in women’s empowerment outcomes across countries, and creates a foundation from which the impacts of Better Work interventions can be assessed. ‘Cultural norms’ generally refer to the standards individuals and societies live by—the shared expectations and rules that guide the behaviour of people within societies and across cultures. Some cultures may cling more tightly to their norms and expect a strong degree of conformity to those norms across the board¹². Exploring this further through an analysis of the cultural looseness or tightness in each of the five countries under comparison is useful, and looking

11. It would be useful to compare education levels across the different samples. Does Kenya have low education levels in addition to not participating in BW? Do workers across all countries have similar levels of education? I talk here about education/training through the external intervention of BW—but what about formal education?

12. Winston Sieck has a brief but interesting post on “Cultural norms: do they matter?” on GlobalCognition.org in which he briefly summarizes the description by Gelfand et al (2006) of tight and loose cultures, and how this is influenced by ecological/historical threats; socio-political institutions; everyday social situations; and psychological adaptations. This isn’t explored deeply in this study but it’s worth considering that each country’s historical trajectory (or others of these elements to do with tight/loose cultures) is linked with current gender dynamics. The post is available at: <http://www.globalcognition.org/cultural-norms/>.

particularly at the openness or resistance to men helping more at home is an important indicator of change.

In some of the countries in this study, shifts in cultural gender norms have been at least in part due to broader socio-economic changes. While Cambodia was the first country in which what would evolve into the wider Better Work programme was put into place, it has been argued that the country's history of conflict facilitated changes in gendered cultural norms there long before. Consider the following is an excerpt from Minori (2004) on changing gender roles as a result of conflict and civil war there:

Cambodia was a predominantly agrarian patriarchal society before the conflict period of the Khmer Rouge Civil War. Women were supposed to subordinate themselves to their husband and family. However, it is said that Cambodian social networks and family structures have broken down, or at least been seriously impaired, by decades of conflict. Resulting from the deaths of more men than women in combat, and more killings of men than women during the Khmer Rouge period, the population of female aged over 15 is more than that of male. Forced marriages as well as polygamies were widely exercised during the conflict period. Female heads of household increased. After the conflict, men were often faced with disability as well as lack of job opportunities due to loss of agricultural livelihood. Instead, women by using their skills of domestic labour played the role of breadwinner.¹³

Due to Cambodia's brutal experience with civil war, many heads of household by the mid-1970s were women. On one hand, due to the trauma and stress that men were experiencing, women became victims of increased domestic violence and sexual exploitation. On the other hand, this also signalled that gender roles in the home could not be so rigidly defined. Earlier than the other countries, where women really started entering the workforce with the emergence and rapid growth of the clothing industries in the 1980s and 1990s, men in Cambodia understood that they depended heavily on women working. Now when workers are asked, they talk about men sharing responsibilities at home as if it is common sense. Across all of the focus groups, they say things like, 'There is no division. The one who comes home first will cook foods and rice' (Cambodia FGD 1, p. 4); 'We all work to earn money so we help each other at home' (Cambodia FGD 2, p. 4); 'If we both work at the factory, at home we will help each other to do housework' (Cambodia FGD 3, p. 4); 'There is no division of tasks at home. Since we are busy, we help each other if we are free' (Cambodia FGD 4, p. 6).

Reflecting broader shifts in the concept of 'care work' in Vietnamese society, as discussed in the literature review, as a result of women contributing to family economies through their waged work, male focus group workers in Vietnam said things such as, 'When I get home and see my wife doing something, I immediately roll up my sleeves and help her', and 'If I finished my house tasks earlier than hers, it does not mean I can just sit idly by'. Others asserted, 'I am not a patriarchal man. We share our responsibilities,' and, 'We have better awareness [about gender equality] so we share responsibilities for our family unlike our parent's generation' (Vietnam FGD 2, p. 9). One worker went so far as to observe, 'especially in big cities, roles of men and women appear to be equal' (Vietnam FGD 3, p. 9). How long it took Vietnam and Cambodia to realize these shifts in cultural norms related especially to household labour is not clear, and could be a line for further analysis.

13. Quoted directly from Minori, T. (2004). "Changing Roles as a Result of the Khmer Rouge Civil War in Cambodia." Available at: http://www.irenees.net/bdf_fiche-experience-643_en.html.

In Bangladesh, a more complicated picture emerges indicating that cultural norms are in the process of shifting due to rural-urban migration and an increase in the number of dual-earner households. Men in urban, dual-earner households reflect this. Interviewed workers reflect a common situation of husbands and wives both working the city who are both tired when they come home, and wives ‘are not able to attend to their husbands needs as they can in the village’ (Bangladesh FGD F1, pp. 4-5). As a practical result, these couples are more likely to share in household responsibilities together, some even noting that this gives them a way to spend more time together. Yet this sort of household dynamic exists within a deeply patriarchal structure in which men are still considered superior. One group of female workers reported that there is no room for improvements in their work lives because their job is perfect in most ways and, if they want anything, they ask the ‘sirs’. One woman said of her familial situation that, though her in-laws are happy to have an earning daughter-in-law, they would rather see their son earn more than his wife.

The data from Bangladesh on what it means to be a ‘good husband’ or a ‘good wife’ and how this compares with their mothers’ generation is useful in exploring how cultural norms there are shifting. Some women described husbands from a previous generation as worse, moving to better now—not mistreating or abusing as much, not withholding basic supplies or food, not beating her for not giving birth to only daughters. Women with ‘good husbands’ said they should not have equal rights, but women with ‘bad husbands’ conversely argued for equal rights. Workers described a ‘good wife’ as someone who is ‘taking care of one’s husband and seeing to his needs’ (Bangladesh FGD F1, pp. 4-5), but also someone who ‘should earn and contribute to the household’ because ‘it is good to earn an income’ (Bangladesh FGD 1, p. 5). Comparatively, in the non-Better Work country of Keyna, workers felt that a ‘good wife’ takes care of her children, her husband and the home, though there was a reluctance to equate paid work and helping the family become more financially stable with one of the elements of being a ‘good wife’.

In Lesotho, shifts in cultural norms are closely linked to changes in labour practices and more women moving into the paid workforce. As noted in the literature review, at the same time that Lesotho’s clothing industry was growing, there were massive retrenchments in the South African mining industry and many, if not most of the men formerly employed in the mining sector, were returning home. While thousands of women began flocking to the city centres for work, it was more difficult for men to secure employment in mining and in the feminized garment sector. In a culture that traditionally assigned household duties to women, and bestowed an obligation on men to provide financially for the family, this created tensions over time.

In 2011, interviewed female workers in Lesotho observed that women were required to fulfill both work and household obligations. They said they were often required to work late for overtime, meaning they would arrive home after dark only to find their children crying and unfed, washing to be done, and the husband sitting on the couch. Some women said their husbands would help out but only rarely, and that mostly they did so just wanted money from her paycheque to go to the bar. Many women reported that this led to a lot of fighting, not only about a more equal division of household labour, but in particular about budgeting for their basic needs at home. By 2013, the narrative had shifted. Though many women and men alike still said that cultural norms dictate women take care of the home—that this is not a man’s job—more and more workers reported that the men were assisting with domestic tasks and childcare responsibilities at home. In some cases shifting gender norms extended to broader care work, which for one male worker included ‘look[ing] after people with HIV/AIDS in my community’ (Lesotho FGD 17, p. 5).

Changes in cultural gender norms that have or are starting to take place in Cambodia, Vietnam, Bangladesh and Lesotho do not appear to have done so in Kenya. Though the industry has been around since before the 1980s, the Athi River EPZ (where all the workers involved in the research were working) had only emerged around 2000. Not only did workers have less exposure to the industry but they also had never heard of or been exposed to Better Work. Men in the EPZ seemed slow to break from rigid traditional expectations, and many continued to ‘no longer’ take ‘their responsibilities’ (Kenya FDG 11a, p. 8), let alone help at home, despite extremely difficult economic conditions. Just one generation ago in Kenya, women did not used to go to work, instead undertaking the unpaid work at home—tending to the children, doing the cleaning—and were there for their husbands in whatever way they needed them to be. They did not argue or disagree with their husbands but rather obeyed them. Men went to work and were responsible for providing financially for their families—a roof over their heads, and money for food, school fees and clothes. They were there for their families and were, or tried harder to be, faithful to their wives.

Rather than reflecting the positive, albeit small changes noted in Lesotho as a result of Better Work interventions, in Kenya women’s waged employment has resulted in increased interpersonal conflict between husbands and wives. For instance, *Mpango wa kando*—Swahili for having ‘a side dish’—is cited in Kenyan news as a growing problem among couples in the country. Some believe this is linked to the fact that women who work are becoming more empowered, and therefore less submissive to their husbands. One male factory worker remarked, ‘In cases where the husband is working, the marriages are usually very good. But the minute she acquires a job with the EPZ ... she has her own money ... from there it will be difficult for the husband and the wife to live in harmony because the minute the husband asks the wife to assist him in doing something, she will excuse herself that she is tired and leave for the bed’ (Kenya FGD 1a, 14).

And, while women’s employment has put some households on firmer financial footing, it has caused friction elsewhere in the context of traditional cultural norms and assumptions about a woman’s place in a marriage, household and society more broadly. When a group of male workers was asked whether or not women are working in the EPZ has changed the dynamics between men and women at home, one man responded by saying, ‘For some, it has changed for better because most are not financially well off. Now when the woman is working, they are just about making ends meet. But there are those also, after their wife has gone to work, she is arrogant. When she comes (home) after job, whatever she does in the kitchen and whatever—she wants the husband to do the same. Now because we’re both working together and making the same salary ... there’s nothing I can say to her because whatever I’m getting she’s also getting. So most families, if they don’t have that patience, they end up breaking because of that. Those simple-minded people will think that when she’s working she can be able to control the men. And mostly in the African culture, men don’t want to be controlled by women much. So it ends up creating problems in the family’ (Kenya, FGD 12, audio file).

Education and Training

Focus group data indicates that either directly or tangentially Better Work trainings on gender relations and communication have been instrumental in, at the very least, opening lines of communication around a more equitable division of household labour and decision making related to household

finances. The most direct evidence of the impacts of Better Work trainings comes from Lesotho¹⁴. Lesotho workers particularly felt that training on communication had not only improved their communications skills, but had a positive impact on relationships between husbands and wives. One female focus group participant noted, 'BW helped me to groom a sense of responsibility with my husband. Now we are able to share all the responsibilities' (Lesotho FGD 1, p. 6), while another observed the importance of BW training in communicating better with her husband 'to discuss family issues' (Lesotho FGD 11, p. 2).

Better Work trainings provided women with strategies to open lines of communication around household finances and decision making as well, diffusing the potential for conflict around the fraught issue of access to and control over household resources. One focus group participant noted, 'I have learned a lot from BW and there's a significant change between me and my husband. Now, from the training I got from BW, I've taught him that we're supposed to sit down with his salary and my salary ... we're supposed to sit down and discuss, draw up a budget, learn how to share both of our salaries in order to meet our daily expenses' (Lesotho FGD 12, p. 3). Such lines of communication also created more transparency and hence less distrust about how that money was being spent. One worker said, 'BW has taught us to be open with each other, man and wife. Now, they are able to put down their salary and discuss a way forward to build their family. Whereas in the olden days, a man would just give his wife R50 and the wife would not even care to ask where's the rest of the money' (Lesotho FGD 15, p. 5).

Women workers in Bangladesh, Cambodia and Vietnam said that men do help at home, and attributed this in general to a recognition that factory work is demanding and that wives and husbands need each other to be well—both physically and financially—to survive or have any type of livelihood. In some cases this may be due to Better Work intervention. For example, workers in Vietnam spoke quite a bit about BW training on life skills, communication and conflict resolution. Though one group mentioned that men were helping at home even before BW, there was also a sense that BW played a role in improving awareness and a general recognition that factory work is in itself demanding, made more so for women by their added home care responsibilities. They said there were many improvements since BW, 'especially when BW showed the film about their workers' and since being trained on different topics by the LIFE project. According to one worker, 'Before joining BW and LIFE project, workers' awareness was low/very poor' (Vietnam FGD 1, p. 4).

Workers in Kenya said that men do not help at all at home. This was rooted in strong patriarchal expectations for men and women at work and at home, a feeling among men that working women were becoming more arrogant, and a feeling among women that Kenyan men are 'no longer taking their responsibilities' (Kenya FDG 11a, p. 8). Given the evidence of improvement in both Lesotho and Vietnam, it seems possible that some kind of intervention in Kenya could be useful—in particular because the intervention can be introduced as something that is immediately beneficial for workers. Even without directly addressing issues of gender equality, by engaging in these trainings together and then taking those lessons home, men and women are (even inadvertently) working closer together. Simply by improving that relationship through increased awareness and decreased conflict, a space opens up for men to feel more at ease contributing in the household. The Kenyan men in the sample

14. It should be noted again that FGD interviews in Lesotho and Kenya were facilitated in a way that asked and probed questions related to marriage and household gender relations more specifically, yielding more detailed feedback from participants. It is therefore not possible to ascertain with any degree of certainty one way or the other about the positive or neutral impacts of Better Work interventions and trainings in the other countries considered in this study.

spoke like the Lesotho men spoke back in the baseline study in 2011. If the tide could shift there over the course of a couple years, it may be possible in other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa as well.

The data from Cambodia does not provide much detail on the extent of Better Work training impacts. The focus group guidelines did include questions about training, but the sample in Cambodia did not include many workers who were even aware of BW. In other cases workers were not probed much on questions that would help ascertain the impacts of BW trainings on workers' home lives and household gender dynamics. As a result, the feedback from Cambodia is quite sparse. One male worker from Cambodia commented, 'Gender means giving equal value to each other. There is a better understanding among workers. BFC also used to provide training on gender.' However, that was the extent of the comments on the issue, and the notes taken by the researcher indicate 'FGD participants could not differentiate the effect of BFC on gender implications' (Cambodia FGD 4, pp. 6-7).

Financial Insecurity

While workers indicate that Better Work trainings have had a positive impact on the ability of wives and husbands to more effectively communicate about household responsibilities and financial decisions, focus group data on the impacts of BW trainings around budgets reveal positive impacts but also the extent to which women's empowerment through employment in the garment sector remains fundamentally circumscribed by low wages, financial insecurity, and gendered expectations. In Lesotho for example, wages are so low that many workers report not being able to make ends meet—this was especially the case near the outset of BW. However, since BW, couples have received training on how to better budget their money. Evidence from workers suggests they are able to stretch their earnings farther than they were before BW. According to one focus group participant, 'BW has helped me especially in budgeting my salary with my husband. Before, we'd budget way higher than our salary. Now we're able to fit everything to our salary' (Lesotho FGD 16, 3). One worker said, 'I've learned how to draw my budget. We've learned to save money. We no longer go to backstreet funeral schemes. We go to real insurance companies now. We were taught to make some investments' (Lesotho, FGD 9, p. 4). Another observed, 'From the training I went to about saving money, I passed that training to my husband. I taught him how to save all the little, like 10 cents, 5 cents lying around the house ... put them in a can and later we can take them to a bank or shoprite' (Lesotho FGD 12, p. 3).

Data from field group discussions in Vietnam suggest that workers' financial management was improved through Better Work. They spoke on several occasions about learning to 'cut their coat according to their cloth'. As one worker said, 'Thanks to the expenditure management training, I can save few hundred thousand VND each month' (Vietnam FGD 2, p. 7). When asked what they would do with their money if they earned more of it, several commented that they would send it home to family members, though this did not come across as a great burden or obligation. Many others, for example, said they would use the money to send their kids to school, to build a home, get married, or open a small business. In Cambodia similarly, workers said that if their salaries increased they would use the extra money to start a business (most said this), save the money to get married, buy a home or car, or would send remittances to family members. 'I would increase remittance home for my mom' said one worker (Cambodia FGD 1, p. 5).

Many workers across the countries in this study are responsible for supporting extended family members beyond their households, often through sending remittances to their home communities in rural areas. This can be difficult when finances are already tight in one's own household. In the early

days of Better Work in Lesotho, some workers spoke about remittances creating tension between married couples. One partner (usually the wife) would be spending money on things for the household and sending to their family members, while the other (usually the husband) would spend on personal items like alcohol. Training on communication and budgeting helped to alleviate this somewhat.

In Bangladesh, workers spoke about sending money to extended family members, and emphasized at least two important symbolic functions of this. First, being able to earn an income and send money back home meant that they were on more equal footing with men, whereas in rural areas women do not share equal rights with their husbands. Secondly, sending money back home is a sign of being a ‘good daughter-in-law’. As one worker remarked, ‘If we do not send money to in-laws then people will say: husband-wife both work but don’t send money to father-mother! This daughter-in-law is not a good person’ (Bangladesh FGD F1, pp. 4-5). In one focus group, workers described a ‘good daughter-in-law’ as ‘someone who maintains good relationship with everyone and behaves well with the in-laws and with others in the household.’ Illustrating how gendered norms and expectations may affect one’s financial security, a ‘good daughter-in-law’ sending remittances to her in-laws may have a positive impact on her home life given that this should lead to improved relationships with her in-laws, but may have an equally negative impact if, for example, she and her husband are not able to properly budget with or communicate about the remaining money.

In Kenya, the situation of financial insecurity appears to be particularly difficult. Wages in the industry were and remain very low. As inflation has increased exponentially in Kenya, workers’ wages have nudged up only slightly. One woman remarked, ‘The basic salary is [low] according to the standard of life today ... it can’t manage for your house keepings. You have a child who is in school, you have to pay the school fees, you have to provide for her clothes, food, so the money you are getting are very less ...’ (Kenya FGD 12, audio file). Even though some families now have two incomes to support their households, the vast majority are unable to meet their expenses even with the combined income they earn. There is sentiment among men that women’s work in the EPZ is a double-edged sword. On one hand, they need the women to be earning an income just so they can make ends meet—something they did not traditionally rely on when the cost of living was lower, and which some feel threatens their role in the family. On the other hand, they feel that women who work are becoming too confident, too arrogant, and/or have unrealistic expectations about the degree to which a man should help at home. As one male worker said, ‘In those days men never used to let women get jobs at the factories. But nowadays we don’t live like they did because life itself has become too hard for us ...’ (Kenya FGD 1a, p. 14).

Workers from Kenya also said that issues related to financial insecurity are contributing to a higher divorce rate—in part because the threat of poverty is pushing people into marriage too early, or driving them apart because of the strain. One factory worker observed, ‘I’m a single mother—a mother of two. In the EPZ, men there say the money is little. When the children are there we need school fees, food, we need house rent. When they see the responsibility is too high, they’ll definitely run away and go to the girls who have no children. So I’ll be left with the whole burden of the children. I have to work hard, so even if I’m abused in the factory, I’ll always stay for my children. The men there are not responsible. Even some young men they go to old ladies—sugar mummies who have money. They go there, they are taken care of. There, they are not asked for anything. They just eat and drink and dress’ (FGD 6a, p. 27).

In Bangladesh, there is a somewhat similar situation where workers are drawing a connection between financial insecurity and marital instability. While workers in Kenya spoke about men having ‘side dishes’, workers in Bangladesh spoke about it being common for men to have a ‘sangshar’. They said it is common for men to ‘have two wives at a time and two households to run, but they end up not being able to look after either household properly, cannot feed his children or send them to school’ (Bangladesh FGD 1, p. 6). Only with two people earning can they divide up and meet the costs of running the house, which is part of ‘why they think it is essential for both husband and wife to work. Their assessment of men’s reluctance to work and the rampant marital instabilities and insecurities are therefore intricately involved with survival issues’ (Bangladesh FGD 1, p.12).

Working Conditions

A significant ripple effect of improved working conditions as a result of Better Work interventions across the countries in this study is an overall improvement in workers’ home lives and interpersonal relationships. Data shows that as stress at work decreased, stress at home decreased as well. Workers in Lesotho for example reported feeling less stressed at home because health and safety at work has improved, along with relationships with their supervisors, and the fact that they are told in advance if they will need to work overtime. Workers talked about significant improvements since BW in health and safety—including the opportunity for workers who are HIV positive to ‘come out and they are given a tea break so that they can take their medication’ (FGD 7, p. 1)—as well as in communicating with their supervisors and having methods for addressing complaints. Workers generally reported feeling more calm, while mothers noted being more patient with their children. Husbands and wives were spending more time communicating with one another, about how to draw up a budget or other issues pertaining to the family. Daughters could give their parents advance notice about working overtime and returning home late, decreasing mistrust between them. As one worker remarked, ‘If my employer has shouted at me at work, I was always taking my frustrations out on my children. I would shout at them and wouldn’t want to hear anything from them. Now, since BW, I am open. We always joke around with my kids and I’m able to help with their assignments ... because I went for BW trainings and there were some things I was taught in that training’ (Lesotho FGD 11, p. 2).

Workers in Vietnam also spoke about improvements at work since Better Work, similarly citing improvements in working conditions, communication, and other life skills. One worker noted that because of changes that BW facilitated in his factory, ‘I have better health thanks to the good changes. Also thanks to the communication skill I learnt, I can now easily share my worries with my wife, easily chat with my children, and restrain myself. My family life is more joyful now’ (Vietnam FGD 2, p. 9). Part of this has been achieved through the Performance Improvement Consultative Committees (PICCs). When asked about the benefits of the PICC specifically, one worker said, ‘I think the benefits are workers’ income, working environment, working time. The PICC was very concerned about workers’ working hours so [last year we had] less overtime’ (Vietnam FGD 1, p. 6). And when asked about how workers deal with issues at work, one worker said, ‘If workers had a problem that needs to be solved, they can talk to the factory trade union or PICC, and then trade union or PICC will talk to the management’, and another worker echoed this in saying, ‘If the issues [are] related to working conditions, workers come and talk to PICC.’ (Vietnam FGD 2, p. 5). Workers likewise felt that the PICCs opened up channels of communication between workers and supervisors, improving that relationship at work. In the words of one female factory worker, ‘Thanks to PICC, the management listen to workers and workers listen to the management, so they understand each other better.’ Another worker saw PICCs as ‘a bridge between factory workers and the management, so the managers were

easy to listen to workers' voice and vice versa' (Vietnam FGD 1, p. 4), with the result of 'workers' voice was stronger, and it was more listened to and understood' (Vietnam FGD 1, p. 6). They also felt the PICC worked effectively to resolve their workplace issues.

While most field group discussants in Cambodia were not PICC members, some group participants identified a similar dynamic between the PICCs and improvements in working conditions, in particular in the areas of overtime, work safety (including first aid), hygiene, and in related to compliance by keeping 'check and balance on what have been done' (Cambodia FGD 4, p. 4). They also felt channels of communication had been opened up through the opportunity to voice their concerns through the PICCs, and saw them as an effective mechanism for resolving issues, and communicating better with their supervisors. These opened channels of communication appear to be making different aspects of daily life easier. Though one worker praised the fact that the 'PICC is an internal process' and thus can address issues quickly, another female worker said, 'In my factory, it works somehow but the change occurs very slowly (Cambodia FGD 4, p. 4).

In Kenya, on the other hand, where there have not been any Better Work interventions or improvements, workers discussed feeling abused and exploited at their workplaces, being entirely exhausted and stressed out at the end of the workday, and carrying that tension and acting it out with their families. In addition to dealing with the stressors of low pay and financial strain, Kenyan workers are typically required to work excessive overtime hours with lends itself to a shift in household dynamics with often negative consequences. Husbands reprimand their wives who return home late due to long overtime hours, which many women report is one factor contributing to an increasingly higher rate of divorce. Though women are taking on greater responsibilities away from the home, they are still expected to maintain their traditional responsibilities in the home. This was a common theme that workers raised throughout the focus group discussions. In response to a question about whether the fact that women are working is changing the relationships at home, one woman said, 'For the advantages, you're cost-sharing ... at least you can build up yourselves together. But most [relationships] are breaking, especially because of the working conditions. Sometimes you're supposed to work late and, if your husband is not working there, he will not understand that you're from job. So you find that there are a good percentage of break-ups in marriages ... because of the working conditions. Sometimes you're told to work up to 9pm. You have a child who has come from school. The husband is there waiting. He'll wait for two, three days ... he'll feel this is too much. So either you leave the job or become a housewife. You breakup or you go for the job' (Kenya FGD 3, p. 15).

Somewhat surprisingly, focus group participants in Bangladesh had few complaints about wages or working conditions. Though they seemed generally satisfied on the surface with their working conditions, a number of red flags pop up in the research notes. Workers in Bangladesh reported feeling looked after at work, but also do not seem to have any understanding of what compliance is or what they are entitled to in terms of labour laws, unions, and other protections. Workers 'felt more comfortable' for example having the management arrange the focus group discussions on site at the factory. They had no complaints about work because if they need anything they just 'ask their sirs'. No worker seemed to feel comfortable saying if he or she was a member of a trade union. No workers appeared to have any knowledge about local labour laws. But they did talk about a 'pre-screening process' before being hired to see if they were 'physically fit'. They all appeared to make enough money to save something at the end of each month. So while in Bangladesh there is quite a bit of migration between factories—suggesting that demand for labour outweighs supply and workers are able to pick and choose somewhat between factories—it would be prudent to follow-up with additional

research with workers outside of the factories. It is premature to argue that workers have few complaints because they are able to choose the factories with the best conditions. It may be that they did not have a proper opportunity to express their concerns in a private and confidential space.

Discussion

Despite the limitations imposed by the data collection undertaken in this study—namely in the disproportionate number of focus groups convened in the countries under consideration, and in the quality of discussion facilitation—it is still possible to glean insights from the findings regarding the factors that influence how a job in the garment industry may contribute to women’s empowerment.¹⁵ Participant feedback regarding the conditions of labor and dynamics at work and at home, and where applicable whether this changed since Better Work, was particularly useful making this assessment. Utilising the indicators of agency (the ability to define desired outcomes, and the power to make decisions to act on and achieve them), and resources (access to and control over tangible and intangible assets), findings in this study indicate an overall positive net effect of Better Work interventions in, at the very least, equipping female garment workers with tools necessary to move toward increased empowerment at the workplace and household levels. This is particularly evident in analysis of the data culled from the ‘positive’ cases of Lesotho and Vietnam (where BW has been established for some time *and* the sample included a good portion of BW participants), and in the ‘negative’ case of Kenya (where BW does not operate).

In any assessment of mechanisms facilitating women’s empowerment, it is necessary to acknowledge the parameters of ‘what’s possible’ in any given scenario, and how women are—or are not as the case may be—becoming better equipped to negotiate and navigate the competing constraints of and choices in their lives. While a fully equal division of household labor between a husband and wife, for example, would be the most optimal and desired outcome of woman’s increased agency over her time and labor, moving the needle even slightly to a recognition by a male partner of the dual and often competing demands and constraints of work and home *and/or some* household labor sharing indicates a positive change. This therefore is the standard by which the data collected in this study and impacts of Better Work interventions in shifting gendered norms towards women’s empowerment are gauged.

Within this narrow framework and assessed according to the indicators of agency and resources, findings show that Better Work programmes have facilitated an increase in the empowerment of female garment workers. This can be seen especially in two crucial ways: (1) through an increase in effective communication, and (2) through a decrease in household level impacts of financial instability and precarity.

The communication skills female workers learn through Better Work education and trainings are an ‘intangible’ resource to and over which women have access and control. The knowledge of how to more effectively engage male partners in discussion and resolve conflict is a resource that women in this study who participated in BW trainings have utilized in a variety of areas to increase their agency at both the workplace and at the household level. Engaging male workers in BW trainings has had the further impact of challenging these men’s gendered assumptions, especially in the area of household labour, and in some cases shifting attitudes and behaviours. In the factory, women noted that they are

15. If a second wave of data collection for this project were to be conducted, training for the facilitators is strongly recommended—including how to facilitate the discussion itself, and also sharing/reviewing the results of this round of data collection and report writing.

better able to voice concerns and dissatisfaction with issues ranging from abusive supervisors to excessive overtime and, often through the PICCs, seek redress and change. At home, study participants noted a positive change and a more equitable distribution of domestic labour and a better understanding among male partners of the value of the unpaid social and reproductive labour of the home. In each of the country case studies where norms started to shift—in particular regarding gendered divisions of labour and expectations specifically for men and women—it appears to be in large part because couples had begun communicating more openly with one another. A potential longer-term spillover effect of this then, as reflected in data from countries like Cambodia and Vietnam which points to a greater degree of sharing between men and women in household tasks, is a broader cultural shift around attitudes about gendered labour expectations and a more readily accepted recognition of its wider social and economic impacts. The findings in this study therefore indicate that Better Work programmes are part and parcel to women's empowerment by providing the skill- and knowledge-building resources necessary for women to better define choices, to negotiate in their own interests, and to demand desired changes at work and at home within existing normative gender frameworks.

Better Work programmes have empowered female garment workers to better navigate and manage the precarity in their home and work lives that is caused in large part by the intersections of cultural norms, sector-wide low wages, and long hours of labour. Considering poverty in the context of material resources and in terms of time, women's access to employment and regular waged work together with BW interventions have provided women with an increased degree of financial stability and decision-making power over personal and household resources. Earning wages coupled with Better Work trainings on budgeting and conflict resolution have mitigated some aspects of household financial precarity while diffusing points of conflict within marriages over expenditures and spending wages to the benefit of the entire household. So too have budgeting and financial planning strategies enhanced women's self-respect and sense of agency over their economic destinies, noting in some cases that their households are now not only able to stretch wages to cover household expenses, but even save as well. Female study participants moreover reflect an increased ability to leverage the material resources they contribute to the household to engage male partners more effectively in home and caretaking labour. This has had the further benefit of decreasing the 'time poverty'—and related negative effects on their physical and emotional wellbeing—they experienced as a result of their dual wage earner/care taker responsibilities within the household economy. While the extent to which women's empowerment through employment in the garment sector remains fundamentally circumscribed by low wages, financial insecurity, and gendered expectations, Better Work interventions have expanded the space in which women are able exert agency over their earnings within the context household resource allocation, and have decreased the negative effects of ongoing and systemic financial precarity.

This study looks narrowly at factors contributing to women's economic empowerment in the context of their waged work in the garment industry, prevailing gender norms, and related changes in household dynamics. It finds that Better Work initiated workplace programmes that address factory conditions, help open lines of communication between men and women, and provide workers with tools to better navigate precarities created by normative labour standards in the industry do in fact positively impact women's empowerment vis-à-vis increased voice, agency, decision making, and access to and control over both tangible and intangible resources at the factory and household levels. Yet, the findings from this study also point to the limits of this progress. The reality remains that women's empowerment through their employment in garment manufacturing will remain circumscribed without broader changes that address and work to alter entrenched structural inequalities and gendered power dynamics that perpetuate the gendered wage gap, limit women's advancement options, and undergird the

industry's labour standard status quo of low wages, long hours, and few protections for worker organizing. This is the challenge at hand, but it is a challenge worth confronting in the quest to secure "better work" for the women and men employed in the global garment industry.

Note of Acknowledgement

This discussion paper builds on and complements a related report, *Interwoven: How the Better Work Program Improves Job and Life Quality in the Apparel Sector*, published by the World Bank in 2015. A product of World Bank staff and external contributions, including those of co-author Kelly Pike, *Interwoven* is a quantitative-qualitative study of job and life quality in Lesotho, Kenya, Cambodia and Vietnam. Specifically, Pike developed the methodology to be used for data collection in all countries, including the survey instrument and focus group guidelines. Pike also conducted all fieldwork and data collection in Lesotho and Kenya and was responsible for writing up the methods sections and most of the analyses on these countries in *Interwoven*. The report acknowledges several others for important contributions to specific sections and analyses. Notably, Raymond Robertson (Texas A&M) who was responsible for synthesizing quantitative and qualitative information from all four countries, and for producing a detailed write-up of the findings that speaks to the research question of how Better Work broadly improves job and life quality in the garment manufacturing sector.

Works Cited

Adnan, A., Rakib, A., and Rahman, M. (2015). Export Trend of Bangladesh: The Dominance of Ready-Made Garments Industry. *Research Journal of Economics, Business and ICT*, 10(1).

Akhter, S., Rutherford, S., Kumkum, F., Bromwich, D., Anwar, I., Rahman, A., and Chu, C. (2017). Work, Gender Health: Neglected Mental Health Issues Among Female Workers in the Ready-Made Garment Industry in Bangladesh. *International Women's Journal of Mental Health*, 9(August).

Al-Amin, M., and Hoque, M. M. (2015). Violence against Women Workers in the Ready-Made Garments Industry in Bangladesh. *World Vision*, 9(1).

Alam, M.S., Selvanathan, E.A., Selvanathan S., and Hossain M. (2019) The Apparel Industry in the Post-Multifiber Arrangement Environment: A Review. *Review of Development Economics*, 23(1).

Alesina, A. and Rodrik, D. (1994). Distributive Politics and Economic Growth. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*. 109(2).

Alsop, R. and Heinsohn, N. (2005). Measuring Empowerment in Practice: Structuring Analysis and Framing Indicators. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 3510.

Anderson, S., and Eswaran, M. (2009). What Determines Female Autonomy? Evidence from Bangladesh. *Journal of Development Economics*, 9(2).

Anner, M. (2017). Wildcat Strikes and Better Work Bipartite Committees in Vietnam: Toward an Elect, Represent, Protect and Empower Framework. Better Work Discussion Paper No. 24.

Anwary, A. (2017). Feminised Workforce in Transnational Production: Bangladesh Ready-Made Garment Industry. *History and Sociology of South Asia*, 11(2).

- Ansell, N. Tsoeu, S., and Hajdu, F. (2015). Women's Changing Domestic Responsibilities in Neoliberal Africa: A Relational Time-Space Analysis of Lesotho's Garment Industry. *Gender, Place and Culture*, 22(3).
- Asuyama, Y., Fukunishi, T., and Robertson, R. (2017). Labor Compliance and Factory Performance: Evidence from the Cambodia Garment Industry. Better Work Discussion Paper No. 23.
- Asweto, C. O., Ouma, J. O., Aluoch, J. R., and Obonyo, C. O. (2014). Women Empowerment and Skilled Attendance/Facility Delivery in a Rural Community of Western Kenya. *Journal of Nursing and Health Science*, 3(2).
- Balk, D. (1997). Defying Gender Norms in Rural Bangladesh: A Social Demographic Analysis. *Population Studies*, 51(2).
- Batliwala, S. (1993). *Empowerment of Women in South Asia: Concepts and Practices*. FAO-FFHC/AD.
- Baylies, C. and Wright, C. (1993). Female Labor in the Textile and Clothing Industry of Lesotho. *African Affairs* 92(369).
- Bezanson, K. (2006). *Gender, the State, and Social Reproduction: Household Insecurity in Neo-Liberal Times*. University of Toronto Press.
- Birdsall, N. and Londono, J. L. (1997). Asset Inequality Matters. An Assessment of the World Bank's Approach to Poverty Reduction. *American Economic Review*, 87(2).
- Birdsall, N. and Londono, J. L. (1998). No Tradeoff: Efficient Growth via More Equal Human Capital Accumulation. *Beyond Tradeoffs: Market Reform and Equitable Growth in Latin America*. eds., N. Birdsall, N., Graham, C., and Sabot, R.H. Brookings Institute Press.
- Boem, C. (2006). Industrial Labour, Marital Strategy and Changing Livelihood Trajectories among Young Women in Lesotho. *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood: Social Becoming in an African Context*. eds. Christiansen, C., Utas, M., and Vigh, H. E. Nordic Africa Institute.
- Botea, I., Chakravarty, S., and Compennolle, N. (2018). Female Migration in Lesotho: Determinants and Opportunities. World Bank Group, Africa Region Office of the Chief Economist and Gender Global Theme, Policy Research Working Paper 8307.
- Bridges, S., Lawson, D., and Begum, S. (2011). Labour Market Outcomes in Bangladesh: The Role of Poverty and Gender Norms. *The European Journal of Development Research*, 23(3).
- Brown, D., Rajeev, D., and Robertson, R. (2011). Working Conditions and Factory Survival: Evidence from Better Factories Cambodia. Better Work Discussion Paper No. 4.
- Brown, D., Rajeev D., and Robertson, R. (2013). Is There an Efficiency Case for International Labor Standards? Better Work Discussion Paper No. 12.

- Brown, D., Rajeev D., Robertson, R., Domat, G., and Veeraragoo, S. (2015). Are Sweatshops Profit Maximizing? Answer: No. Evidence from Better Work Vietnam. Better Work Discussion Paper No. 17.
- Chaka, N. (2011). Female Migration, Gender Relations and Remittances in Lesotho: On Whose Terms? 4th European Conference on African Studies.
- Chowdhury, M. M., Mohammed, N. H., and Kabir, J. (2015). Work- Life Balance of Female Garment Workers in Bangladesh: An Empirical Investigation. *Global Journal of Management and Business*, 15(7a).
- Combs, M. B. (2006). Cui Bono? The 1870 British Married Women's Property Act, Bargaining Power, and the Distribution of Resources Within Marriage. *Feminist Economics*, 12(1-2).
- Crush, J., Dodson, B., Gay, J., Green, T., and Leduka, C. (2010). *Migration, Remittances and 'Development' in Lesotho*. South African Migration Programme Migration Policy Series, No. 52
- Dang Vung, N., Ostergren, P. O., and Krantz, G. (2008). Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in Rural Vietnam—Different Socio-Demographic Factors Are Associated with Different Forms of Violence: Need for New Intervention Guidelines? *BMC Public Health*, 8(55).
- Datta, N. (2006). Joint Titling—A Win-Win Policy? Gender and Property Rights in Urban Informal Settlements in Chandigarh, India. *Feminist Economics*, 12(1-2).
- De Giusti, G. and Kambhampati, U. S. Women's Work Choices in Kenya: The Role of Social Institutions and Household Gender Attitudes. *Feminist Economics*, 22(2).
- Deininger, K. W. and Olinto, P. (2000). Asset Distribution, Inequality and Growth. World Bank Policy Research Paper 2375.
- Deininger, K. W. and Squire L. (1998). New Ways of Looking at Old Issues: Inequality and Growth. *Journal of Development Economics*, 57(2).
- Dey, S., and Basak, P. (2017). Out of the Shadows: Women and Wage Struggle in the RMG Industry of Bangladesh. *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, 23(2).
- Dupper, O., Fenwick, C., and Hardy, T. (2016). The Interaction of Labor Inspection and Private Compliance Initiatives: A Case Study of Better Work Indonesia. Better Work Discussion Paper No. 21.
- Dyer, Kate. (2001). *A Case Study of the Gender Implications of Lesotho's Current Economic Development Strategy for the Clothing Industry*. Institute of South African Studies, Gender and Development Research Programme.
- Eisenbruch, M. (2017). Mass Fainting in Garment Factories in Cambodia. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 54(2).
- Elson, D. (1995). Gender Awareness in Modeling Structural Adjustment. *World Development*, 23(11).

- English, B. (2013). Global Women's Work: Historical Perspectives on the Textile and Garment Industries. *Journal of International Affairs*, 67(1).
- Farhana, K., Syduzzaman, M., and Munir, M. S. (2017). Prevalence and Risk Factors of Depression among Garment Workers in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 63(3).
- Folbre, N. (1994). *Who Takes Care of the Kids? Gender and the Structures of Constraint*. Routledge.
- Friedemann-Sanchez, G. (2006). Assets in Intrahousehold Bargaining Among Women Workers in Colombia's Cut-Flower Industry. *Feminist Economics*, 12 (1-2).
- Gibbon, P. (2003). AGOA, Lesotho's 'Clothing Miracle' and the Politics of Sweatshops. *Review of African Political Economy* 30(96).
- Gillum, T., Doucette, M., Mwanza, M. and Munala, L. (2018). Exploring Kenya Women's Perceptions of Intimate Partner Violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 33(13).
- Golla, A., Malhotra, A. Nanda P., and Mehra, R. (2011). *Understanding and Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment: Definition, Framework, Indicators*. International Centre for Research on Women
- Heath, R. (2014). Women's Access to Labor Market Opportunities, Control of Household Resources, and Domestic Violence: Evidence from Bangladesh. *World Development*, 57(May).
- Heintz, J., Kabeer, N., and Mahmud, S. (2017). Cultural Norms, Economic Incentives and Women's Labour Market Behaviour: Empirical Insights from Bangladesh. *Oxford Developmental Studies*, 46(2).
- Hoang, L. A. (2011). Gender Identity and Agency in Migration Decision-Making: Evidence from Vietnam. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 37(9).
- Horat, E. (2018). Rearranging Care, Reconfiguring Gender: Family and Household Business in Post-Doi Moi Vietnam. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 19(1).
- Hossain, M. I., Mathbor, G. M., and Semenza, R. (2013). Feminization and Labor Vulnerability in Global Manufacturing Industries: Does Gendered Discourse Matter? *Asian Social Work and Policy Review*, 7(3).
- Hossain, N. (2011). Exports, Equity, and Empowerment: The Effects of Readymade Garments Manufacturing Employment on Gender Equality in Bangladesh. *World Development Report, 2012: Gender Equality and Development*.
- Institute for Development Studies. (2015). Balancing Paid Work and Unpaid Care Work to Achieve Women's Economic Empowerment. Policy Briefing, Issue 83.
- International Labour Organization. (2017). *Better Work Vietnam Annual Report 2017: An Industry and Compliance Review*.

- Islam, M. A., Deegan, C., and Gray, R. (2015). Social Audits and Multinational Company Supply Chain: A Study of Rituals of Social Audits in the Bangladesh Garment Industry. Paper presented at the AFAANZ Conference, Hobart, Australia.
- Kabeer, N. (1994). *Reversed Realities. Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought*. Verso.
- Kabeer, N. (2012). Women's Economic Empowerment and Inclusive Growth: Labour Markets and Enterprise Development. SOAS Centre for Development Policy and Research, Discussion Paper 29/12.
- Kabeer, N., Huq, L., and Mahmud, S. (2014). Diverging Stories of 'Missing Women' in South Asia: Is Son Preference Weakening in Bangladesh? *Feminist Economics*, 20(4).
- Kapista, L. (2008). Women's Economic Empowerment. United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women Expert Consultation on the 2009 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development.
- Keletso, P. Is Lesotho's Garment Industry an 'Ethical Alternative'? *Equal Times*, 25 February 2015.
- Kerkvliet, B. J. (2010). Workers' Protests in Contemporary Vietnam (with Some Comparisons to Those in the Pre-1975 South). *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 5(1).
- Kibria, N. (1995). Culture, Social Class, and Income Control in the Lives of Women Garment Workers in Bangladesh. *Gender and Society*, 9(3).
- Kimuna, S. R., and Djamba, Y. K. (2008). Gender Based Violence: Correlates of Physical and Sexual Wife Abuse in Kenya. *Journal of Family Violence*, 23(5).
- Krause, K. H., Gordon-Roberts, R., VanderEnde, K., Schuler, S. R., and Yount, K. M. (2016). Why Do Women Justify Violence Against Wives More Often than Do Men in Vietnam? *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 31(20).
- Lawreniuk, S., and Parsons, L. (2017). *"I know I cannot quit": The Prevalence and Productivity Cost of Sexual Harassment to the Cambodian Garment Industry*. CARE Australia.
- Ledgerwood, J. Gender Symbolism and Culture Change: Viewing the Virtuous Woman in the Khmer Story 'Mea Yeong'. *Cambodian Culture since 1975: Homeland and Exile*. eds. Ebihara, M., Mortland, C. A., and Ledgerwood, J. Cornell University Press.
- Li, H., Squire, L., and Zou, H. (1998). Explaining International and Inter-Temporal Variations in Income Inequality. *Economic Journal*, 108(446).
- Lin, X., Babbitt, L. and Brown, D. (2014). Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: How Does It Affect Firm Performance and Profits? Better Work Discussion Paper No. 16.
- Macchiavello, R., Menzel, A., Rabbani, A., and Woodruff, C. (2015). Challenges of Change: An Experiment Training Women to Manage in the Bangladeshi Garment Sector. Economic Research Papers, University of Warwick, Department of Economics.

- Mejía-Mantilla, C., and Woldemichael, M. T. (2017). To Sew or Not to Sew? Assessing the Welfare Effects of the Garment Industry in Cambodia. World Bank Group, Poverty and Equity Global Practice Working Paper Series No. 106.
- Merk, J. (2012). *10 Years of the Better Factories Cambodia Project: A Critical Evaluation*. Clean Clothes, Campaign and Community Legal Education Centre.
- Milligan, L. (2014). 'They are not serious like the boys': Gender Norms and Contradictions for Girls in Rural Kenya. *Gender and Education*, 26(5).
- Morris, M. and Sedowski, L. (2006). Report on Government Responses to New Post-MFA Realities in Lesotho." Report for the Institute for Global Dialogue.
- Morris, M., Staritz, C. and Barnes, J. (2011). Value Chain Dynamics, Local Embeddedness, and Upgrading in the Clothing Sectors of Lesotho and Swaziland. *International Journal of Technological Learning, Innovation and Development* 4(1/2/3).
- Moser, C. (1989). Gender Planning in the Third World: Meeting Practical and Strategic Gender Needs. *World Development*, 17(1).
- Naved, R., Rahman, T., Willan, S., Jewkes, R., and Gibbs, A. (2018). Female Garment Workers' Experiences of Violence in Their Homes and Workplaces in Bangladesh: A Qualitative Study. *Social Science and Medicine*, 196(January).
- Nguyen, L. D., Raabe, K., and Grote, U. (2015). Rural–Urban Migration, Household Vulnerability, and Welfare in Vietnam. *World Development*, 71(July).
- Nishigaya, K. (2002). Female Garment Factory Workers in Cambodia: Migration, Sex Work and HIV/AIDS. *Women and Health*, 35(4).
- Nuon, V., Serrano, M., and Xhafa, E. (2011). Women and Gender Issues in Trade Unions in the Cambodian Garment Industry. *Better Factories Cambodia: Working Towards Gender Equality*.
- Oka, C. (2010). Labor Standard Compliance and the Role of Buyers: The Case of the Cambodian Garment Sector. PhD thesis, The London School of Economics and Political Science.
- Omolo, J. O. (2006). The Textiles and Clothing Industry in Kenya. *The Future of the Textile and Clothing Industry in Sub-Saharan Africa*. eds. Jauch, H and Traub-Merz, R. Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung.
- Opondo, M. (2009). The Impact of Chinese firms on CSR in Kenya's Garment Sector. The International Research Network on Business, Development and Society (BDS), BDS Working Paper series No. 7.
- Ouida, C. and Pluess, J. D. (2017). Women's Economic Empowerment in Sub-Saharan Africa: Recommendations for the Apparel Sector. BSR Industry Brief.

Persson, T. and Tabellini, G. (1994). Growth, Distribution and Politics. *Monetary and Fiscal Policy* (vol. 2). Persson, T. and Tabellini, G. MIT Press.

Phillips, G. and Xaba, J. (2002). *The Workers' Story: Labour Rights Violations at Hudson's Bay Supply Factories in Lesotho*. Ethical Trading Action Group.

Pickles, J., and Woods, J. (1989). Taiwanese Investment in South Africa. *African Affairs* 88(353).

Pike, K. (2016). Better Work Five Years Later: Worker Perspectives on Labour Standards Compliance in the Final Year of Better Work Lesotho. International Labor Organization.

_____. (forthcoming). Voice in Supply Chains: Does the 'Better Work' Program Lead to Improvements in Labour Standards Compliance? *Industrial Labor Relations Review*.

_____. (2018). Women's Work in Kenya's Athi River Export Processing Zone: Opportunity or Exploitation? *Global Women's Work: Perspectives on Gender and Work in the Global Economy*, eds. English, B., Frederickson, M. E., Sanmiguel-Valderrama, O. Routledge.

Pike, K. and Godfrey, S. (2014). Assessing Opportunities and Challenges for Better Work in Lesotho's Apparel Sector. *Towards Better Work: Understanding Labour in Apparel Global Value Chains*. eds. A. Rossi, A. L. and Pickles, J. Plagrave.

_____. (2012). Corporate Social Responsibility and the Worker Stakeholder. Better Work Discussion Paper No.7.

_____. (2015). Two Sides to Better Work: A Comparative Analysis of Worker and Management Perception of the Impact of Better Work Lesotho. Better Work Discussion Paper No. 20.

Rahman, M. M. (2014). Trade Liberalization and Gender Gap: Bangladesh Experience. *Journal of Applied Business and Economics*, 16(2).

Raworth, K. (2004). *Trading Away Our Rights: Working Women in Global Supply Chains*. Oxfam International Report.

Resurreccion, B. P., and Khanh, H. T. V. (2007). Able to Come and Go: Reproducing Gender in Female Rural–Urban Migration in the Red River Delta. *Population Space and Place*, 13(3).

Robertson, R. (2011). Apparel Wages Before and after Better Factories Cambodia. Better Work Discussion Paper No. 3.

Robertson, R. Brown, D., and Rajeev D. (2011). Working Conditions and Factory Survival: Evidence from Better Factories Cambodia. Better Work Discussion Paper No. 4.

Rowlands, J. (1997). *Questioning Empowerment*. Oxfam Publications.

Rourke, E. L. (2014). Is There a Business Case against Verbal Abuse? Incentive Structure, Verbal Abuse, Productivity and Profits in Garment Factories. Better Work Discussion Paper No. 15.

Rutterford, J. and Maltby, M. (2006). 'The Widow, The Clergyman and The Reckless': Women Investors in England, 1830-1914. *Feminist Economics*, 12 (1-2).

Seidman, G. (2009). Laboring Under an Illusion? Lesotho's 'Sweat-Free' Label. *Third World Quarterly* 30(3).

Sen, G. and Grown, C. (1988). *Development, Crises and Alternative Visions*. Earthscan.

Siddiqui, D. M. (2009). Do Bangladeshi Factory Workers Need Saving? Sisterhood in the Post-Sweatshop Era. *Feminist Review*, 91.

Sikdar, M. M. H., Sarkar, M. S. K., and Sadeka, S. (2014). Socio-Economic Conditions of the Female Garment Workers in the Capital City of Bangladesh. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 4(3).

Sinkovics, N., Hoque, S. F., and Sinkovics, R. R. (2016). Rana Plaza Collapse Aftermath: Are CSR Compliance and Auditing Pressures Effective? *Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal*, 29(4).

Slegh, H., Barker, G., Kimonyo, A., Ndolimana, P., and Bannerman, M. (2013). 'I can do women's work': Reflections on Engaging Men as Allies in Women's Economic Empowerment in Rwanda. *Gender and Development*, 21(1).

Soni-Sinha, U. (2006). Where Are the Women? Gender, Labor, and Discourse in the Noida Export Processing Zone and Delhi. *Feminist Economics*, 12(1-2).

Tafirenyika, M. (2011). Lesotho's Economy Catches Flu—From Big Brother's Sneeze. *Africa Renewal*, No. 4.

Thanbe, S. (2017). Prevention of HIV in Lesotho's Apparel Industry: A Social Work Perspective. *International Social Work*, 60(6).

Tran, A. N. (2012). Vietnamese Textile and Garment Industry Chain: State Strategy and Worker Responses. *Institutions and Economies*, 4(3).

Tran, A. N., and Jeppesen, S. (2016). SMEs in Their Own Right: The Views of Managers and Workers in Vietnamese Textiles, Garment, and Footwear Companies. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 137(3).

Tanga, P. T. and Tangwe, M. (2014). Interplay Between Economic Empowerment and Sexual Behaviour and Practices of Migrant Workers within the Context of HIV and AIDS in the Lesotho Textile Industry. *Journal of Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS*, 11(1).

- Tanga, P., Bello, H., Makatjane, T., and Tsikoane, T. (2017). Economic Globalization, HIV and AIDS and Gender Dimensions in the Lesotho Textiles and Garment Industry. *HIV/AIDS: Contemporary Challenges*. ed. Dumais, N. IntechOpen.
- Trappe, H. and Sørensen, A. (2006). Economic Relations Between Women and Their Partners: An East and West German Comparison After Reunification. *Feminist Economics*, 12 (1-2).
- United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). (2018). *Lesotho—Country Profile 2017*.
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). (2014). *Literature Review on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Migrant Garment Factory Workers in Cambodia*.
- Wanjala, B. M. and Were, M. (2009) Gender Disparities and Economic Growth in Kenya: A Social Accounting Matrix Approach. *Feminist Economics*, 15(3).
- Webber, G., Edwards, N., Graham, I. D., Amartunga, C., Keane, V., and Socheat, R. (2010). Life in the Big City: The Multiple Vulnerabilities of Migrant Cambodian Garment Factory Workers to HIV. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 33(3).
- World Bank. (2006). Equity and Development. *World Development Report 2006*.
- World Bank (2011). *Fostering Women's Economic Empowerment through Special Economic Zones: Comparative Analysis of Eight Countries and Implications for Governments, Zone Authorities and Businesses*.
- World Bank. (2015). *Interwoven: How the Better Work Program Improves Job and Life Quality in the Apparel Sector*.
- Yount, K. M., Krause, K. H., and VanderEnde, K. E. (2016). Economic Coercion and Partner Violence Against Wives in Vietnam: A Unified Framework? *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 31(20).

Appendix 1: Typology Development

	Bangladesh	Cambodia	Kenya	Lesotho	Vietnam
Better Work?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
BW Year Est.	2014	2001		2010	2009
Men help at home?	Yes (in urban areas)	Yes	No	Some	Yes
Different from mother's generation?	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Equal pay for equal work?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Quality of work conditions	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate
Degree of financial insecurity	Moderate/Stable	Moderate/Stable	High	High	Moderate/Stable
Financial management skills			Low/ Under developed	Moderate/ Some training	Moderate/ Some training
Awareness of rights	Low		Low	High	

The Better Work Discussion Paper Series is an original, peer-reviewed series that presents rigorous, work-in-progress research material for comment and feedback. It is addressed to researchers, policymakers and development practitioners to generate comments and encourage discussion.

THE BETTER WORK GLOBAL PROGRAMME IS SUPPORTED BY PARTICIPATING BRANDS AND FACTORIES, AND THE FOLLOWING KEY DONOR PARTNERS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER):

Australia (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, DFAT)

Denmark (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Danida)

European Commission

Germany (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, BMZ)

Netherlands (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MFA)

Switzerland (State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, SECO)

United States (US Department of Labor, USDOL)



International
Labour
Organization

