



# Impacts on the Shop Floor:

## An Evaluation of the Better Work – Gap Inc. program on Workplace Cooperation

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Kelly Pike



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An Evaluation of the Better Work – Gap Inc. program on Workplace  
Cooperation

Kelly Pike  
Assistant Professor of Industrial Relations  
School of Human Resource Management  
York University  
Toronto, Canada  
[kpike@yorku.ca](mailto:kpike@yorku.ca)

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## **Abstract**

The Better Work-Gap Inc. program on Workplace Cooperation (WPC) is a partnership between Better Work and Gap Inc. aimed at strengthening workplace cooperation in both Better Work and non-Better Work factories in Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. The project aims to train workers and managers to more effectively address and resolve non-compliance issues and to broaden workplace cooperation beyond Better Work's formal worker-manager committee structure. Phase 1 evaluation in May 2017 focused on the training itself, including both the materials used as well as receiving and delivering the training. The purpose was to identify the key strengths and potential problem areas, with suggestions for future improvements. This second phase evaluation is focused on impacts on the factory floor – whether (and how) the training has translated into improvements in the workplace. This report presents the findings of this evaluation, drawing on data collected in a sample of six factories from six countries – Bangladesh, China, Guatemala, India, Philippines, and Vietnam. At each of the six factories, interviews were conducted with a BC management rep and a group of BC worker reps (n= 33 BC reps), along with a group of regular workers in four of the factories (n= 18 regular workers). The report also draws on relevant literature, Gap Inc. quarterly reports, and a baseline/endline survey facilitated by Gap Inc. staff with regular (non-bipartite committee) workers in the sample of six factories included in the study.

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## 1. Introduction

Workers in the global garment industry have long been experiencing poor working conditions as a result of weak labour standards enforcement. Different approaches to labour regulation have had varying degrees of success in reducing that enforcement gap. Better Work is one such initiative that has demonstrated positive impacts on employment outcomes.

### 1.1 The Better Work–Gap Inc. program on Workplace Cooperation

The program on Workplace Cooperation (WPC)<sup>1</sup> is a partnership between Better Work (BW) and Gap Inc. aimed at strengthening workplace cooperation in both BW and non-BW factories in Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Guatemala, India, Jordan, Philippines and Vietnam.<sup>2</sup> Launched in 2016, the project aims at training workers and managers to more effectively address and resolve non-compliance issues and to broaden workplace cooperation beyond BW’s formal worker-manager committee structure (PICC – Performance Improvement Consultative Committees).

The objectives of the WPC are two-fold: (1) Provide Training of Trainers (ToT) for Gap Inc. staff on the eight different Workplace Cooperation training modules: Communication; Problem Solving; Grievance Mechanism; Risk Assessment; Health and Safety; Bipartite Committee Roles and Responsibilities; Industrial Relations; and Negotiations. (2) Provide Skills Training for Gap Inc. staff to deliver the Workplace Cooperation related activities in the selected vendor sites, including deeper knowledge of content, facilitation skills, and industrial relations. These are two major inputs to the program, with the overarching goal to improve the social and business impact in supplier factories. Gap Inc. staff then deliver training on the eight core modules to bipartite committees in their vendor sites.

Bipartite Committees (BCs) are committees made up of equal parts management and worker representatives.<sup>3</sup> BCs are set up in WPC factories that are both BW and non-BW, and receive training from Gap Inc. on eight modules related to workplace cooperation. In the process of receiving this training, a new kind of relationship has started to develop between BC members and Gap Inc., whereby the Gap Inc. staff feel more like trainers than auditors (and are also perceived this way by the BC members). Through a participatory approach, BC members are equipped with the knowledge and tools they need to communicate more openly as workers

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<sup>1</sup> The program was piloted as “Workplace Cooperation Program” (WPC), but is now formally referred to more broadly as the Better Work Academy. However, the research participants involved in this study were familiar with, and still using, the term “WPC”, so this is the term that is used throughout the report.

<sup>2</sup> Information on WPC obtained from BW concept note for Gap WPC partnership phase 2, obtained from Minna Maaskola on 21 March 2017.

<sup>3</sup> BC is a generic term for any worker-management committee. It can be called by different names in different countries, required by law in some countries and not in others. Wherever there is a legal BC, Gap Inc. does not constitute a separate one for this program. Countries where there is a BC already established by law include: Bangladesh, El Salvador (a new WPC country for 2019), India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam.

and managers, which enables them to better address workplace concerns. The goal is for the effects of the training to reach regular workers throughout the factory and have positive impacts on the shop floor, which will in turn improve business performance. Gap Inc. also provides WPC training to non-BW factories who have completed the eight training modules, so that WPC factories can train the next batch of BC members when the BC constitutes again. Rather than a ‘training of trainers’ approach to BC members, Gap Inc. provides WPC ‘training of trainers’ to potential trainers from the factories (e.g. this may include HR and compliance managers, and/or a few worker or management reps from the BC).

In Phase 1 of the WPC, four training sessions were provided by BW Global trainers to Gap Inc. staff: one in Phnom Penh (November 2015), one in Seoul (February 2016), and two in Bangkok (November 2016 and 2017). At that time, Gap Inc. Staff were only beginning to deliver the training to bipartite committees in their supplier factories. Since then, there has been one additional training for Gap Inc. Staff (Sri Lanka March 2018). At the time this research was conducted, Gap Inc. had 118 factories in the WPC, of which 29 (“Batch 1”) had completed all eight training modules.<sup>4</sup> As of December 2019, there were 182 factories in the WPC, of which 116 have completed all eight training modules.<sup>5</sup>

## **1.2 Summary of Phase 1 Evaluation**

Training in Phase 1 of the program was provided by a training team from BW Global<sup>6</sup> to Gap Inc. staff on four occasions, including in Cambodia (November 2015), Korea (February 2016), and Thailand (November 2016 and 2017).<sup>7</sup> An evaluation of Phase 1 was conducted in 2017, which focused on the training itself, including both the materials used as well as receiving and delivering the training.<sup>8</sup> The purpose was to identify the key strengths and potential problem areas, with suggestions for future improvements. Data for the report was collected through semi-structured interviews with ten Gap Inc. staff from seven countries, as well as ten management representatives from the bi-partite committees in supplier factories in those countries. Participants from Gap Inc. included staff that attended at least three to four trainings from BW, which included ten Gap Inc. staff from Bangladesh, Cambodia (x2), China (x2), Guatemala, India (x2), Philippines, and Vietnam. Participants from the BC were recruited from among those who received training from the Gap Inc. staff who were interviewed as part of the Phase 1 evaluation. The results of that evaluation were positive and encouraging. Evidence from the 20 semi-structured interviews with Gap Inc. staff and BC management reps in seven countries pointed to the WPC being a valuable pilot and feasible model to expand with some adjustments.

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<sup>4</sup> Based on feedback obtained from an email exchange with Joo Jun on 30 July 2018

<sup>5</sup> Based on feedback obtained from Gap Inc. as of September 2019

<sup>6</sup> Better Work headquarters in Geneva

<sup>7</sup> A fifth training session was held in Sri Lanka in March 2018, after the Phase 1 evaluation was completed.

<sup>8</sup> Pike, Kelly. (2017). Meeting Targets: Evaluating Phase 1 of the Better Work-Gap Inc. Partnership on Workplace Cooperation. *International Labour Office. August 2017. Internal circulation at ILO and Gap Inc.*

One of the main strengths of the program during Phase 1 was in transitioning Gap Inc. staff into trainer roles as opposed to auditing roles. Through this process they acquired more information on technical content as well as how to facilitate trainings with their suppliers. This included receiving detailed training materials, joining with their Gap Inc. colleagues from different countries around the world, and learning first hand from BW trainers based on vast experience in the area of social dialogue – who they were then able to communicate with following the trainings. Most Gap Inc. staff found the training materials extremely useful, in particular the session plans on how to deliver the training in their supplier factories.

Another key strength of the program at that point was the modules on workplace cooperation and communication. This was a topic that all participants could easily relate to, understand, and get involved in. Role play, videos and other visuals facilitated this. This training also served to break down barriers between Gap Inc. staff and their suppliers, as well as between BC management and worker reps. With growing trust, confidence and open communication, a better platform was created for addressing workplace issues. An excerpt from the Phase 1 evaluation captures what Gap Inc. staff felt those barriers were, and how the WPC was helping them transition from an auditor to trainer role:

“Before I’m the auditor, like I go to factory and tell them you have this issue, you have to correct, you have that issue, you have to correct. But it’s like I’m the police or some negative person to the factory. But now when we help the factories to improve their capability, they can sense we really want to help them, not only tell them you have this problem, you have that problem, but we already sit down with them together to solve this problem. And we are not only ask them to improve their skills or communication in workplace but we jump into the factory and we teach them what’s the communication really means...and how can we improve communication in your factory, and how can you to conduct a risk assessment, and what’s the clear process of problem solving when you’re facing some problems. So it’s very hand-by-hand help to the factory and bring some positive benefit to the factory. So it’s a more positive way to work with our supplier partners. That I think is a very right way to go. And we can get their trust and their confidence from the factory as much as we can.”

One of the main challenges that remained was how best to adapt the training material to meet the diverse needs of varying cultures, languages, and educational backgrounds – not just across countries but also within countries and even within firms. Another key challenge for BW was to consider how to modify the training to respond to the addition of new Gap Inc. staff over time so that all participants remain engaged. Furthermore, training needed to adapt to line up better with the intense time constraints due to demands of production. Or, something would need to shift on the side of the suppliers or buyers to create a space for this training without

facing negative consequences. For example, more visibility on orders from buyers or through an agreement between the two parties to save a date for training.

Another key challenge was to reach a broader audience. A good sample of Gap Inc. staff had participated in the training and were noticing positive results. However, in some of the bigger countries with more diverse regions, it was a challenge for those Gap Inc. staff to reach suppliers in those regions. At its simplest, they may not speak the language and are therefore unable to provide training. In addition, there are sometimes cultural or other differences that might create new challenges – some countries have a large number of migrant workers who speak a variety of different languages; others have different norms around the degree to which a worker should interface with a manager, or whether skin tone should be different among characters in training materials, etc.

Some of the suggestions for adjustments (in anticipation of Phase 2) included: (1) Adapt the training materials to meet diverse educational, cultural and language differences – including more pictures and other visuals; getting locals on the ground to assist with terminology and advise on other cultural nuance; and including examples from non-BW countries; (2) Consider a tiered approach to training so that Gap Inc. staff don't sit through repeat trainings<sup>9</sup>; provide input on how to deliver condensed trainings; and include more technical training<sup>10</sup> – whether before, during or after the scheduled sessions; (3) Develop a system for reaching a broader group of trainees – this applies to BW Global in thinking about involving more Gap Inc. staff from different countries or regions within countries, but it also applies to Gap Inc. staff and BC members in thinking about how to ensure information from training gets passed on to workers; (4) Technical and open conversations should be encouraged on the topic of industrial relations and labour law/legal requirements pertaining to BC set-up in factories (or other relevant topics). The evaluation suggested that Gap Inc. staff remain informed about the climate for industrial relations in their supplier countries/factories. In part, understanding attitudes towards unions could better equip Gap Inc. staff to explain to members how the BC is different from a union. For example, some reported initial reluctance to the BC, thinking it was a union. If Gap Inc. staff were more informed about the climate for industrial relations, they could use this as an opportunity not to set aside unions as an entirely distinct enterprise, but rather facilitate discussion on what management and employee rights are, how worker empowerment might facilitate better workplace relations, etc. Table 1 provides a brief snapshot of the key takeaways of the Phase 1 evaluation, discussed in more detail in the full report:

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<sup>9</sup> For example, it's possible that the Gap Inc. staff who participated in the first training would be joined by new Gap Inc. staff in the second training, at which time there was attention devoted to some of the materials they covered in the first training (to bring the others up to speed). This was repetitive for some, who would have liked to jump into new material right away.

<sup>10</sup> Participants receive training on technical content and how to facilitate trainings. Some suggested that training sessions should include more content and technical information from BW. Technical content could include, for example, specific information on industrial relations and labour law/legal requirements, grievance procedures and how they work, regional differences in terms of law, whether a bipartite committee was already required by law, etc.

Table 1 Key Takeaways from BW-Gap Inc. Phase 1 Evaluation (2017)

	<b>Key Strengths</b>	<b>Broad Challenge Areas</b>
<b>Training Materials</b>	Highly useful, thorough, easy to understand, especially through pictures, and session plans on how to deliver training	Adapting from BW to non-BW context, or to within country cultural/language differences, or within firm educational differences
<b>BW-GAP Training</b>	Modules on workplace cooperation and communication are the 'big winners', with participants placing a high value on role play, video, opportunities for feedback	New trainees joining over time; adapting material to different cultural contexts; receiving enough technical content in advance, during, afterwards
<b>GAP-BC Training</b>	Training BC is opening up communication between managers and workers, building worker confidence. Role plays, videos and other visuals highly useful	Educational and language differences between BC management and worker reps; time constraints and interruptions due to production demands
<b>Training Impact on Doing Work Differently</b>	Moved from 'auditor' to 'trainer' role and enjoying job more, building trust with suppliers, witnessing capacity development; worker confidence growing	Creating more work in addition to other job tasks/requirements; BC set up getting overlooked in places where legally required; no system for BC to pass on information to workers

### 1.3 Gap Inc. response to 'Broad Challenge Areas' identified in Phase 1 Evaluation

On adapting the training to different contexts, Gap Inc. suggested they are improving over time with experience, noting that their trainers are more aware of within country cultural/language differences and, as they become more familiar with the training contents, their trainers are better able to accommodate and make modifications. This is done by observing the level of understanding of the participants and explaining through relevant examples in a way that participants can easily understand. This is one of the skills that their trainers acquired from delivering multiple trainings at the same factory, as well as the same content in different factories. To maintain the knowledge and experience gained through this process (as well as address the challenge of new trainees joining over time), Gap Inc. noted a specific example where the internal team (based in China) that had gone through the training with BW Global then provided the same Training of Trainers to Gap Inc. representatives in Cambodia in their first training, to keep them up to speed. They also pair more experienced trainers with

rookie WPC trainers, using it as 'on the job training for all modules' so they can be confident and on the same page when it comes to delivering quality training in WPC factories.

Gap Inc. admitted they face challenges to accommodate all of the different education levels and language differences of participants, but that their team is trying to be more mindful about using simple language with workers so that they capture the meaning of the trainings. They also try to schedule the trainings well in advance, in collaboration with factory management, in order to minimize disruption to production. Management engagement continues to be a challenge, given the costs of taking time from production, but Gap Inc. is committed to sharing with management how this investment can be beneficial to them in the long run. Gap Inc. cites this impact assessment as important for convincing WPC factories that capability building activities can bring positive outcomes for the business side as well.

One of the ways in which Gap Inc. is addressing the challenge of communication between workers is through a capability building program called the Workforce Engagement Program (WEP), whereby workers download an app on their smartphones as a platform to communicate with each other.

The program was actually started in 2017 as a separate project, but Gap Inc. realized it could complement the WPC, in particular through allowing workers to reach the broader workforce, and not only BC members. Since the Phase 1 evaluation, factories with both the WPC and WEP are using this app-based platform to share information about the BC including organizational structure, pictures, meeting minutes, getting feedback and recommendation on items to discuss during monthly BC meetings, conducting a survey, sharing WPC training contents for everyone in the workplace to access, etc.

#### **1.4 Focus of Phase 2 Evaluation**

This report examines Phase 2 of the program, and in particular whether the WPC is leading to improvements on the shop floor in a sample of participating factories. The suggestions from Phase 1 were in part incorporated into Phase 2 but did not go into full implementation, in large part because this period of time was used to roll out the program in the supplier factories, including Gap Inc. staff providing that training, and then allowing the bipartite committees to adapt to the learnings as well as share information with co-workers. There was only one additional global training provided by Better Work to Gap Inc. staff in between the two evaluations (Sri Lanka, March 2018). Interviews with Gap Inc. staff suggested that the findings from the Phase 1 evaluation were not incorporated into this training.

Findings for the Phase 2 evaluation are based on a review of relevant literature and interviews conducted remotely by the author with participants in six factories representing six countries - Bangladesh, China, Guatemala, India, Philippines, and Vietnam. At each of the factories, one interview was conducted with a BC management rep, as well as a focus group with a group of BC worker reps. In four of the factories, an additional focus group was held with a group of regular workers. The purpose was to gather information from BC reps on their experience with the eight training modules, which one(s) had the greatest impact, and specific examples of

how this was affecting their workplace – whether through changes in how work was done, improved relationships, increased knowledge which was transferred to other workers, etc. The purpose in conducting focus groups with regular workers was to understand the ‘reach’ of the training, by examining the perspectives of those in the factory that had not directly received training. The next section provides an overview of the methodology, followed by an examination of the impacts the WPC has had on the shop floor. In the final sections I provide a brief overview of Non-BC worker feedback to the baseline-endline survey facilitated by Gap Inc., and end by reflecting on the criteria proposed by Anner (2017) for well-functioning worker-management committees.

## 2. Methodology

Of the 29 factories in Batch 1 that had completed all eight training modules, six were selected for inclusion in this evaluation. The goal was to speak with each of the participants from the Phase 1 evaluation, who represented each of the countries involved in the WPC. However, interviews could only be secured with participants from six of the countries: Bangladesh, China, Guatemala, India, Philippines, and Vietnam. In total, in addition to 3 Gap Inc. staff, interviews were conducted in six factories across six countries, including six BC management reps, six groups of BC worker reps, and four groups of regular workers. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the participants involved in the data collection effort, in addition to the 3 Gap Inc. staff that were interviewed. Five international students at York University provided translation and transcription assistance for interviews conducted with participants in Bangladesh, China, Guatemala, Philippines and Vietnam. A personal contact outside of the university provided assistance with the interviews conducted in India.

Table 2 Participants involved in the data collection effort (2018)

Country	BC management reps	BC worker reps	Regular workers	Total
Bangladesh	1 male	5 females	5 females	11
China	1 male	5 females	4 females	10
Guatemala	1 female	3 females	2 females, 3 males	9
India	1 female	1 female, 3 males	4 females	9
Philippines	1 female	6 females	n/a	7
Vietnam	1 female	4 females	n/a	5
	6	27	18	51 participants*

\*in addition to 3 Gap Inc. staff representing the broad regions of South Asia, North Asia, and Latin America

### 2.1 Research Participants

The Gap Inc. staff represented the broader regions of Southeast Asia, North Asia, South Asia and Latin America. The purpose was to provide some overarching perspective on how the WPC was continuing to roll out, how the trainings were received by the bipartite committee, and what Gap Inc. perceptions are about whether the training is having an impact on the shop floor.

BC management reps were selected based on their prior participation in the Phase 1 evaluation, as well as having received training from one of the Gap Inc. staff included in the assessment. At that time, they had only received a couple of trainings and it was too soon to see changes in the workplace. Due to this and other logistical considerations, BC worker reps and regular workers were not included in the Phase 1 evaluation.

Conducting interviews with workers was an important new feature of the Phase 2 evaluation.<sup>11</sup> This completed the 'chain' in terms of detecting effects of the training on the factory floor. The bi-partite committees, having completed the training from Gap Inc., would have begun sharing that information with other workers. This element of the research strategy was added to further understand the impact of the program in terms of reach. Does the training provide useful information for BC members, and do they feel they are able to effectively pass that information on to other workers? Does the information flow to other parts of the factory, and through what forms of knowledge sharing?

BC worker reps were recruited from the same factory at which BC management reps were interviewed. Rather than one-on-one interviews, they participated in focus group discussions. This setting offered a couple of advantages. First of all, getting a small group together for a limited time reduces the number of workers being taken away from the line at any given time. Secondly, they may be more comfortable opening up in a group context where they have shared experiences. Third, it allows the opportunity to reach more workers, speaking with five to seven workers in a one-hour slot, rather than just one. Logistically, it required setting aside a room, making sure all workers got there on time, and ensuring a computer was set up with video/audio (generally already set up, as the focus group followed immediately after the BC management rep interview). Also, as the meetings were arranged with the help of the BC management rep, a focus group with all worker reps from the bipartite committee eliminated the chance that the BC management rep might be biased in his/her selection of a single worker rep. BC management reps help to set up the meetings, but then left the room for the actual focus group.

Due to scheduling conflicts resulting from time constraints on data collection, focus groups were conducted in only four of the six factories included in this assessment: Bangladesh, China, Guatemala and Vietnam. BC management reps were asked to randomly select workers from the shop floor for participation in a focus group. Recognizing the limitations of this approach,<sup>12</sup> a few precautions were taken: (1) BC management

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<sup>11</sup> Appendix 1 provides additional information on logistical considerations when conducting meetings with workers.

<sup>12</sup> Appendix 2 discusses this and other limitations in more detail.

reps were advised that the purpose was purely to understand whether and how far the WPC training was spreading to workers throughout the factory. They were advised that even a finding of low knowledge dissemination would be interesting to know because it will feed back to Gap Inc. on how to improve their approach and strengthen this aspect of the training; (2) Workers were asked if they knew why they were in the meeting, what it was about, and if they had come from different sections in the factory. The meetings were interesting and insightful, and proved quite valuable in both strengthening the findings about positive impacts, as well as identifying areas for further improvement. For future rounds of evaluation, however, the findings would be further strengthened by recruiting workers through the BC worker reps.

## **2.2 Interviews**

The overarching research question was to understand whether and how the WPC led to impacts on the factory floor. Broadly, this was approached through questions about which training modules they believed to be most effective – including specific examples of workplace impacts and, where possible, impacts on business performance – how they shared information with other workers, and what opportunities or barriers existed with regard to sustainability.

Though questions varied slightly to draw out this information, all participants were first asked which training was their favourite. The purpose was to place this front and centre, to understand what stood out in their minds. Feedback from participants indicated that some trainings were more ‘fun’ than others in terms of how the training was conducted, inclusion of role play, video, etc. To move beyond an understanding of what they enjoyed the most, participants were also asked a follow-up question about which training they felt had the greatest impact.

Some participants went on at great length about one or two modules, viewing these as key to improving functionality throughout the workplace. Where others had less robust feedback, they were prompted one by one with the list of training modules to probe what they thought of the training and any resulting impacts on the factory floor. Participants were probed to give as many examples as possible related to impacts of the WPC in their workplace. They were also asked how their own work felt different, and whether they were happier coming to work. For some it seemed that focusing on the individual level was easier to reflect on rather than general observations about the workplace as a whole.

All participants were asked whether the improvements they noticed were also leading to improvements in business performance, though some made this link automatically without being probed. They were also asked about how knowledge is disseminated, probed to give specific examples of how they take the information from the training sessions and spread it to other workers in the factory. Including management reps, worker reps, and regular workers gave a 360° perspective on whether strategy, intentions, and impacts were lining up. Participants were also asked whether they thought these improvements would be sustainable if in the future Gap Inc. was not involved and there were no more formal trainings. The purpose was to understand their perceived

permanency of the broader structural and relational changes that had been made through the WPC, as well as to understand what they perceived as challenges to this.

### **2.3 Data Analysis**

Transcripts were uploaded into NVivo 12. Feedback from participants was coded according to which module it spoke to. For example, a quote or excerpt about the WPC training improving communication between workers and managers would be coded at 'communication'. Sub-themes were created to capture additional nuance. For example, an excerpt about improved communication leading to a feeling of confidence might also be coded at 'communication' but in the sub-theme 'confidence'. Sub-themes could be altered to represent a broader range of feedback on the issues, for example 'confidence, agency and ownership'. The purpose was to organize the information in such a way that one could identify specific impacts that are resulting from the different training modules, but also importantly to understand how those impacts or improvements are happening in practice.

Figure 1 illustrates the themes and sub-themes that were created while coding transcripts. The main themes correspond with the eight training modules, and the sub-themes were created to capture a greater degree of nuance, which help to explain in more detail how the WPC is having an impact on the shop floor. The figure provides an example of an excerpt from this particular interview being coded at the theme 'communication'.

Figure 1: NVivo themes, sub-themes, and coded excerpt from sample transcript

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Knowledge dissemination</li> <li>▼ ● Shopfloor improvements             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▼ ● Communication                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Comm business case</li> <li>● Feeling cared for or listened to</li> <li>● Knowledge and awareness</li> <li>● Language or culture barriers</li> <li>● Ownership and confidence</li> <li>● Problem solving and communication</li> <li>● Relationships</li> <li>● Translating to regular workers</li> </ul> </li> <li>▼ ● Grievance mechanism                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Efficiency</li> <li>● Grievance business case</li> <li>● Problem solving and communication</li> <li>● Sharing solutions</li> </ul> </li> <li>▼ ● Industrial Relations                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Problem solving</li> <li>● Negotiations</li> </ul> </li> <li>▼ ● OSH                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Awareness</li> <li>● Due to communication</li> <li>● OSH business case</li> <li>● Want further training</li> </ul> </li> <li>▼ ● Problem solving                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Feeling cared for</li> <li>● Prob Solv business case</li> </ul> </li> <li>▼ ● Risk assessment                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Risk Assess business case</li> </ul> </li> <li>▼ ● Roles and responsibilities                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▼ ● BC elections                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cultural nuance</li> <li>● Knowledge</li> <li>● The union issue</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>▼ ● Sustainability                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Business case for sustainability</li> <li>● Communication</li> <li>● Supervisor or worker turnover</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>KP: Now that you've received all 8 modules, what would you say has been the most useful training of all of them?</p> <p>S: [Without skipping a beat] Workplace communication. The roles and responsibilities of the works committee members was really very effective. And, what else... Occupational Health and Safety was really good. The committee members came up with a lot of inputs. They have accepted the fact that earlier when they used to work, they used to ignore the things which are happening around them. Because they think their work is only to make garments, so it hardly matters what other things are going on. But now they have understood that as a committee member they have their increased roles and responsibilities which they have to take care of. And we also have ensured that whenever they are, for example earlier what used to happen was that for any problem they have to come to us, or either we go to the shop floor. But now thanks to the technology thing, whenever they feel that they have to communicate anything, either they can whatsapp us or they can give a missed call to us and then we can call back to them. So the connectivity has become more strong now.</p> <p>KP: You gave your phone number to all the workers?</p> <p>S: To the committee members. So it is easy for them also and for us also.</p> <p>KP: Do they actually communicate with you a lot?</p> <p>S: Yes.</p> <p>KP: Every day?</p> <p>S: That is the best part of the day WCP project which I have to say. Because initially I still remember when the first WCP meeting happened, the management was sitting at one side and the workers were sitting at the other side. So it's somewhere down the line, they used to feel like okay we are the management. Same goes with me, also, we also had this kind of a mindset. And okay they are the workers. So somewhere this thing used to happen. But initially when we communicated through these trainings, these meetings, so that bond has really developed strongly and they to have confessed with us, in one of the WCP meetings, wherein Reema (and Amit?) was also there, from Gap, they have shared that initially we used to think before going to someone's cabin, those people are approachable, there was open door policy also, but still there was a kind of a wall wherein they have to think twice before entering to the management's cabin or something like that. But now they are more free to, and more open, and they can just give us a call, to say this particular floor something is happening, can you please correct it. So now the dialogue is two-way. Though we have the HR helpdesk earlier also, wherein the welfare officer sits on the respective floors to ask them about their queries, but now if I have to personally say my own example, my connectivity with workers has really become very strong gradually and now for example because now we are in the corporate level, Archana and me, so we have to travel a lot to other units also. So it's not that we are taking care of the (sp?) facility only, we have to take care of the entire woollens and sweater facility also. So whenever we are not in office and we come after like 4 or 5 days, the workers are the ones who say, oh, madam, you were not here in the office, where were you. So that is the comfort level that we are sharing with them now.</p> <p>13:30</p>
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### 3. WPC Impacts on the Shop Floor

Workers and management reported that the training on communication had the biggest impact in the workplace. Not only did the communication itself improve, but this opened the gates for improvements in a host of other areas. Improvements in communication are intricately linked with improvements in worker-management relationships and worker confidence. It starts with the WPC training on communication. Barriers between workers and management started to break down, trust developed, confidence boosted, and channels of communication opened up.

This in turn is linked to more productive problem solving, functional grievance channels, and proactive risk assessment. Improved communication makes these tools accessible and functional in order for workers and managers to more effectively address workplace concerns. This could have positive implications for business performance. Though it is not reflected consistently in the analysis of the quarterly reports, workers reported feeling more motivated, and some management reps alluded to improvements in absenteeism and productivity, for example.

This process of improvements was often perceived by participants as fitting together naturally. In the same breath, participants often linked the improvement in communication to a more proactive approach to workplace issues, which could have positive implications for business. In order to examine this in more detail and better explain the ‘why and how’ behind these changes, the following analysis is broken down into three inter-related sections: (1) Communication and cooperative workplace relationships; (2) Enabling managers and workers to better address workplace concerns; and (3) The business case for WPC.

In each section, “360° Perspective” is offered in the form of a summary table, which draws on quotes from BC management, BC workers, and regular workers across each of the six factories/countries. Where appropriate, information from the Gap Inc. quarterly reports are included to support (or not) participant feedback about improvements in business performance.

### **3.1 Communication and Cooperative Workplace Relationships**

An important feature of the WPC bipartite committees is that they are not just established to identify issues. There is an important focus on sustainability, through improving the relationship between workers and managers, which in part includes challenging cultural norms. In some places more than others, such as North India and Bangladesh, it is much less common for women to engage in paid work, let alone serve in leadership roles. When first set up, the bipartite committee in North India was almost entirely male but, after the WPC training and by the time of this, was transitioning to an all-female committee.

A study by Miacchiavello et al. (2015) explores the dynamics between male and female operators in Bangladesh, including the negative perceptions of female operators and supervisors as less competent than their male counterparts, and that promotion of female supervisors appears to demotivate male workers. This is despite the findings that female trainees outperform male trainees on average, and that male operators exposed to female trainees improve their view of females as supervisors. Addressing these types of cultural norms will be an important ongoing consideration for the functionality of the WPC bipartite committees. In addition to occupying leadership roles, there needs to be an accompanying level of mutual respect. In part this will come through improved communication and the fostering of cooperative work relationships.

In many of the countries included in this study, traditional relations between workers and managers are based on rigid hierarchical relations. Workers are expected to remain silent and do as instructed, while management maintains clear authority. Speaking up could be perceived as a sign of disrespect, or insulting to management. This was a challenge initially when trainings were provided by Gap Inc. to the bipartite committees – workers were shy, nervous, and ‘bookish’. Over time, with repeated interaction, and a focus on building cooperative relationships, trust started to develop and both workers and managers became more comfortable. BC management reps across the six countries observed a change in workers’ confidence, stating that they “very easily come to the BC and raise their voice” (Bangladesh); “have more confidence in communication” (China); “are not afraid now, can express their feelings” (Philippines); and that “there is a happier relationship in the

workplace” (Vietnam), because “workers are communicating, and we feel closer with them after two years” (Guatemala). Managers also said that, whereas they might have previously been brief or expressed frustration with workers, they were now taking more time to try to understand what challenges they were facing.

Workers said that managers had become more open-minded through this process, that they were listening to workers, and engaging with them more politely. When workers raised issues with management, they often saw quick and effective resolution of those issues, which boosted their confidence in the process (and in themselves). BC worker reps in Bangladesh said that the training in communication was helping to “bridge the gap between employers and employees” and that they had become “very confident and easy in communicating with management with regards to any problems of workers. In India, BC workers reps said that they no longer feel “I’m too little a guy to actually have a voice about things” and that “overall relationships have just become better as a result of those increased channels of communication.” BC workers in the Philippines reiterated this feeling of feeling like “normal workers who don’t have a voice” before the WPC, but that “because of that communication, everyone has a more open mind.”

Regular workers also felt the impacts of this improvement in communication, for example in Bangladesh where they said that they now felt they “belong to a single family and work together happily” whereas before WPC they were afraid to talk to their supervisors. Regular workers in China also spoke about feeling happier, stating that, “When we have good communication, everything is improved, like our daily life and benefit. In the past, arguments might happen because of lack of communication. Everyone is happier now.”

Feedback from both workers and managers indicates that the improvement in communication and workplace relationships led to a greater sense of agency, ownership, confidence, voice, and empowerment among the workers. Empowerment in this case was expressed as feeling that workers could make a difference, that their voice mattered. Workers were starting to feel that they weren’t just ‘the little guy’ or the ‘normal worker’ who couldn’t have a voice, but that they had a responsibility to take accountability for issues on the shop floor, and to take accountability for one another. This is different from ‘empowerment’ as characterized by Anner (2017) who argues that the greatest degree of empowerment will emerge from strong, democratic and representative unions and encompassing collective bargaining.

The BC management rep in Bangladesh described how the workers are now working “very enthusiastically” and that “they own the factory.” He went on to explain that it is like “when you have a shop of your own, you tender your hard work there without thinking anything...they think that if anything is lost in this factory or if the rejection level is high, then they feel sorry for that because this is their property.” A BC management rep in India recounted what one worker said about feeling that he is “playing a leadership role wherein my decision plays a major impact, and it has a ripple effect on other workers also.” She said they are taking pride in that- that they are “not just the ones who are making garments, but we also play a major role in the decision making” and that they feel valued when the management accepts their decision, because they feel their decisions matter to the

organization. The BC management in the Philippines also spoke about how “the employees heard that their ideas are seriously considered, and they are much more motivated and happy.”

The table on the following page provides a ‘360° perspective’ on how the WPC training on communication broke down barriers between workers and managers, built trust, and led to more cooperative workplace relationships.

Table 3: 360° Perspective: Communication and Cooperative Workplace Relationships

	<b>BC Mgmt Rep</b>	<b>BC Worker Reps</b>	<b>Regular Workers</b>
<b>Bangladesh</b>	“After receiving this training, the workers very easily come to the BC and raise their voice, their issues or grievance, and the BC very easily comes to the management and sit with us and sort out the problems”	“These trainings help to bridge the gap between employers and employees... We are very confident and easy in communicating with management with regards to any problems of workers.”	"In the past...they became angry with us if we shared any problems with them... Now they reply to our questions with smile and ask us willingly whether we have any problems or issues. [They] became very polite and flexible after the trainings”
<b>China</b>	“After the training, the workers are more comfortable in the factory, more like a home... And I can see that some female workers have more confidence in communication”	“Once we have good communication and a good environment, we no longer have arguments and conflicts...we have a better mood and working efficiency. They are all connected and complementary.”	“When we have good communication, everything is improved, like our daily life and benefit. In the past, arguments might happen sometimes because of lack of communication. Everyone is happier now”
<b>Guatemala</b>	“The most talked theme is in relationship with production. Workers are communicating, we feel closer with them after two years.”	"People are able to identify each person that's part of the committee so they feel more confidence to approach us to ask for help with something"	“I feel good since I’m working peacefully...”
<b>India</b>	“They are taking pride...we are not just the ones who are making garments, we also play a major role in the decision making...”	“Workers don’t feel like I’m too little a guy to actually have a voice about things... Overall relationships have just become better as a result of	N/A

		these increased channels of communication."	
<b>Philippines</b>	"They are not really afraid now...they can express their feelings"	"[Before] we did nothing. We're normal workers...we don't have a voice... Because of that communication, everyone [has a] more open mind."	N/A
<b>Vietnam</b>	"I communicate better...cooperate better with the workers during the monthly meetings... There is happier relationship in the workplace."	"We were shy and afraid...but the relationship between managers and workers is getting better. We feel comfortable to bring up questions with the managers"	"Before, the supervisors are very tough with the workers, but since the Social Dialogue committee started, the managers and supervisor communicate with workers softer and more friendly..."

### 3.2 Enabling Managers and Workers to Better Address Workplace Concerns

Training in communication seemed to tap into hidden potential for better addressing workplace concerns. With the barriers down, workers and managers were better able to engage in informal problem solving, utilize formal grievance channels, and work collectively to assess risks in the workplace. Though the bipartite committees received training on the how-to of problem solving, grievance mechanisms, and risk assessment, without training in communication and improved workplace relationships, they lacked the 'why' and 'what for' of utilizing those tools. These tools were activated when workers and managers trusted each other to engage in those processes together.

Open communication allowed for prompt feedback to workers on the shop floor, whether it was a question about production, meeting quotas, or other problems for which they had to spend time engaging in root cause analysis together. As the BC management rep in Guatemala described, "There's no question in the meetings that has passed without a solution." As part of identifying and resolving issues, they are encouraging each other to take more responsibility and be more accountable (e.g. managers should be punctual to meetings; workers should not ignore any issues on the shop floor). The BC management rep in India described how workers "are more proactive now...they come up with problems and alternative solutions". She gave examples of how worker suggestions led to changes ranging from small fixes (e.g. more suggestion boxes in the bathrooms; more fans in the production area) to entirely new attendance systems (e.g. palm reading biometrics) to maximize efficiency.

BC worker reps in the same factory described how they are now taking “much more accountability” and that “because of these open channels of communication, things get resolved much more quickly.”

With a newfound sense of trust and confidence, workers started to take a greater role in identifying and seeking to resolve issues on the shop floor. Feedback from management suggests that they have found both productive and relational value in this improved relationship with workers. Not only do they sense workers’ growing sense of confidence and ownership, but they also work more cooperatively to address workplace concerns, which has positive implications overall for the business. The BC management rep in Vietnam said that workers are now better able to identify the source of a problem and find a solution, and that “everything is done together”. BC worker reps in the same factory felt they were more easily able to share issues with supervisors and search for solutions, and regular workers felt “more comfortable, happier, and encouraged to share issues”. They believed that “everyone will find a solution to improve the work to be more effective.” A BC management rep in Guatemala reiterated that “problem solving involves consensus” referring to the fact that they need to decide as a group where they need to intervene and where they need to consider changing their methods or strategies as a company. In many cases, she said the root issue was that certain problems “were not addressed well due to lack of communication.”

As problems are more easily raised and openly addressed, they often get resolved before escalating into bigger conflicts, allowing production to move smoothly. Management is taking the time to make sure workers understand what they are doing, and to provide them with further explanation should they need it, helping them to fix issues as they arise. According to regular workers in China, it used to take more than ten days to solve a problem but now, since WPC, “We talk to the reps, they talk to the BC, and they will give us a solution very quickly.” This is aided by the fact that the bipartite committee is “now doing preparation in the early stage to prevent [problems] from happening” and that BC worker reps in this factory now have a better understanding of how to address worker complaints, whereas in the past they “didn’t know where to complain so it was a bit chaotic.” One management rep in India said she shared her phone number with BC worker reps so they could inform her any time (through WhatsApp or a missed call) about issues in the workplace. She also noted that the improved confidence and relationships have led management to learn from workers as well, for example in being punctual for meetings.

With a proactive approach to risk assessment, workers taking greater responsibility, and management being open to their feedback, potential risks are identified and resolved early. Worker feedback contributes to root cause analysis, as they may know more about particular challenges or concerns that are not on management’s radar. As the BC management rep in Bangladesh described, they learned through workers that high absenteeism levels were explained by fear of being dismissed if they spoke up about their problems. In turn they developed an anti-retaliation policy and provided training on the issue to workers and managers. Now, according to BC

worker reps and regular workers in Bangladesh, “they do not feel fear and can easily discuss with their superiors about problems.”

The table on the following page provides a ‘360° perspective’ on how improvements in communication and workplace cooperation have enabled managers and workers to better address workplace concerns. The excerpts reflect a common theme of having more productive problem solving, better access to grievance channels, and taking a cooperative approach to assessing risks.

Table 4: 360° Perspective: Enabling Managers and Workers to Better Address Workplace Concerns

	<b>BC Mgmt Rep</b>	<b>BC Worker Reps</b>	<b>Regular Workers</b>
<b>Bangladesh</b>	"After getting the training...we go to root cause analysis with the workers about absenteeism and turnover...the problem is when they raise voice they get threats. So we develop anti-retaliation policy"	"Before workers felt their jobs might be in danger if they discussed any issues with the supervisor or the management. Now, they do not feel fear and can easily discuss with their superiors about problems."	"We were afraid of discussing our problems with our management in the past. Now we can easily tell the BC members about their problems."

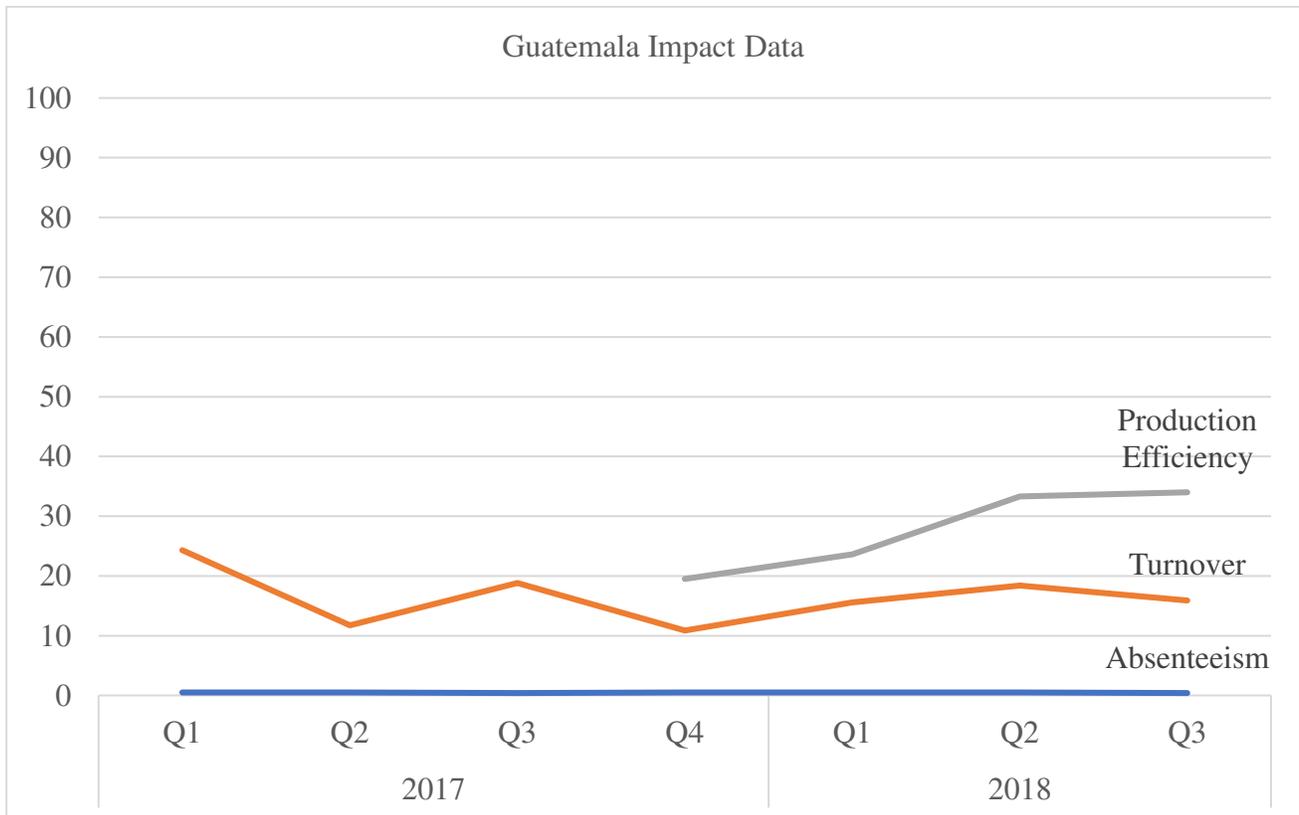
<b>China</b>	“In the past, we found some problems, we solved it. But now we are doing some preparation in the early stage, to prevent that happen...”	"In the past we didn't know where to complain so it was a bit chaotic. The BC will solve our problems, or when the problems are difficult or tricky, they will communicate with us..."	"We talk to the reps, and they talk to the BC. In the past, it usually took more than 10 days to solve a problem. Now...they will give us a solution very quickly."
<b>Guatemala</b>	"Problem solving involves consensus. Most times there was no need to intervene, rather to change our methods, including times when certain topics were not addressed well due to lack of communication"	"Before we didn't pay attention if there was a problem, we only focused on our work but now we have the knowledge to identify and give a solution to the problem, and how to communicate between us"	BC worker rep: "Workers can come to us and ask where we could redirect them to fix the problem... They would feel more satisfied because they cleared their doubts or problems."
<b>India</b>	“They are more proactive...now they come up with problems and alternative solutions.”	"Because of these open channels of communication, things get resolved much more quickly... I take much more accountability"	N/A
<b>Philippines</b>	“Before, if they talk with management, we feel they are afraid, but now...they can express their feelings... Their ideas are seriously considered, and they are much more motivated and happy...”	“When you're working and you see a problem, it's easier to talk to the management.”	N/A
<b>Vietnam</b>	"Workers now understand that when there is an issue, they have to learn about it... where and what is the source of the problem and find a	“Now we are able to share our issues with other workers and supervisors to find out a solution for the issue, and the result is it creates efficiency in production...”	“We feel more comfortable, happier, and encouraged to share issues with the supervisors... everyone will find a solution to

	solution... Everything is done together"		improve the work to be more effective."
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### 3.3 The Business Case for Workplace Cooperation

Workers and managers both attested to workers being more productive since the WPC. Workers feel more motivated on the job – relationships with managers and coworkers improved, the work environment is safer, they feel happier coming to work, listened to, and that they have a voice or say in decisions in the factory. In some cases that participation in decisions came down to something small, such as having a suggestion box put in a washroom. In other cases, their feedback led to broad changes in the factory, for example the new biometric attendance system. As a group of regular workers in Guatemala said, “The main improvements have been to motivate us, so we can continue working well, just as they have done their part, we also return the favour through our work.” This is also reflected in the Gap Inc. quarterly reports indicating a decrease in 2018 Q3 in both absenteeism (from 0.5 to 0.4) and turnover (from 18.39 to 15.91), as well as a steady increase in production efficiency between 2017 Q4 and 2018 Q3:

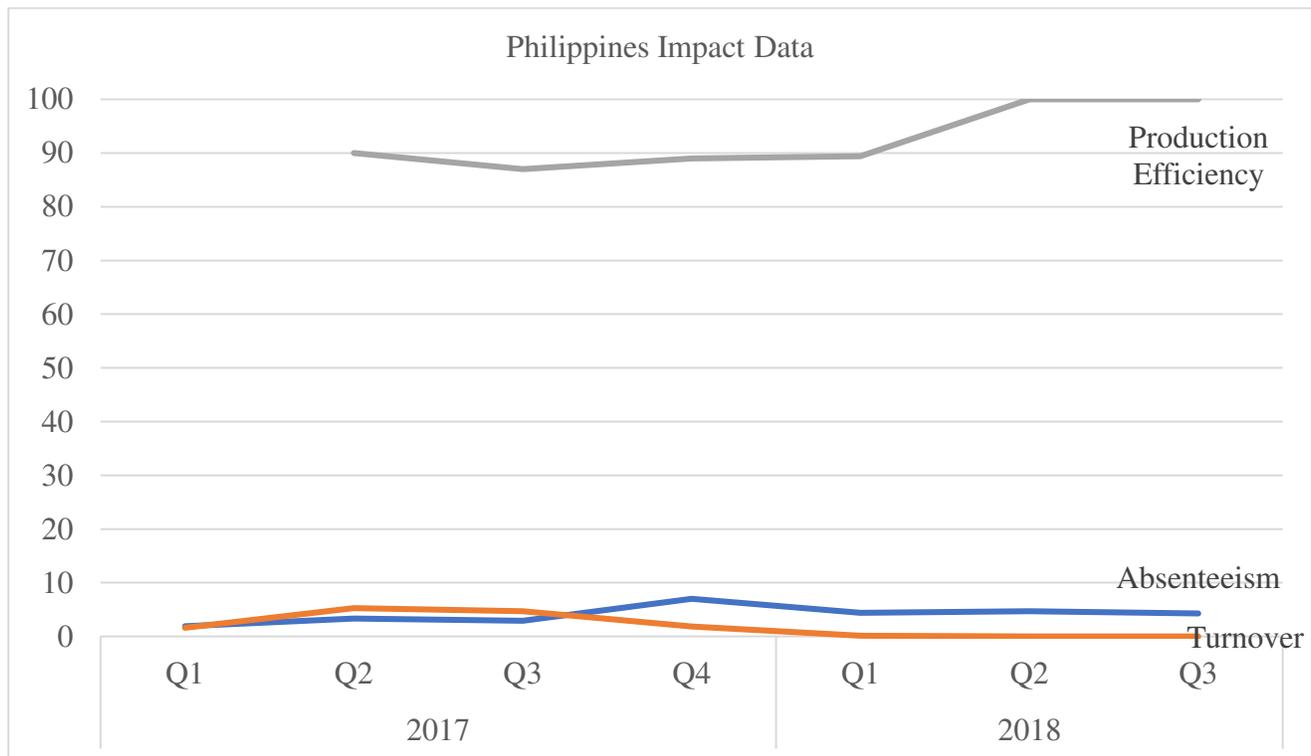
Figure 2: Guatemala Impact Data



As one management rep in the Philippines put it, workers and managers now “move in one direction” whereas before they only focused on their own jobs without consideration for others. Supervisors and workers used to be “hiding from each other” but now the relationship is based more on cooperation. As a result, they are overall a healthier, happier, more motivated and productive workforce, which started with open lines of

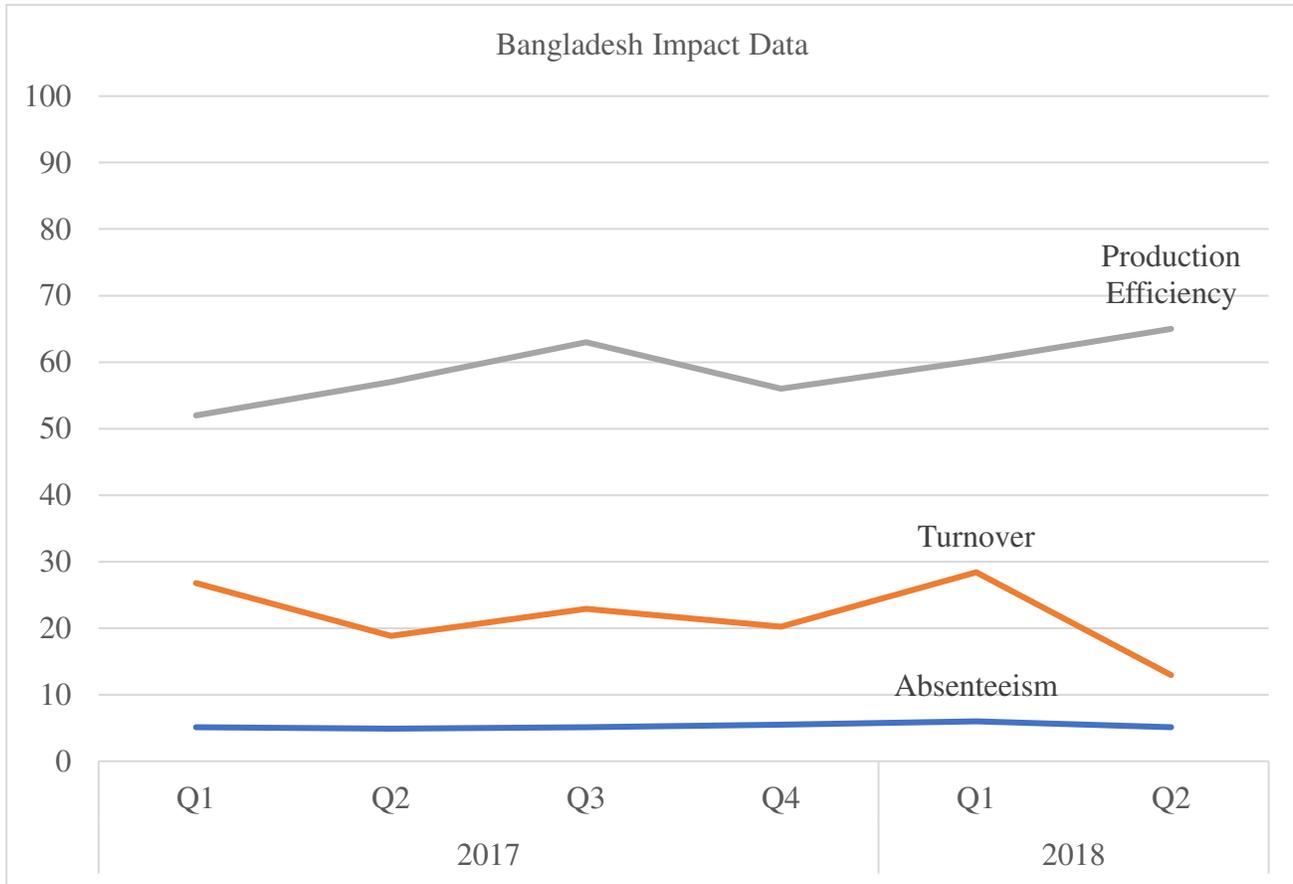
communication, and strengthened machinery/open channels for addressing workplace concerns. Lower absenteeism and turnover also contribute to greater production efficiency. The BC management rep in the Philippines said that, “Before, if they don’t like, they are easily absent.” BC workers in this factory explained the change, in response to a question about how work feels different now: “When you’re working...if there’s a problem in the production, it’s easy for us to talk to the line leaders, the supervisors. They became more open. We are happy. We work with a smile. More productive.” Data from the quarterly reports for this factory supports a subtle downward trend in absenteeism and turnover, as well as a slow but steady increase in production efficiency:

Figure 3: Philippines Impact Data



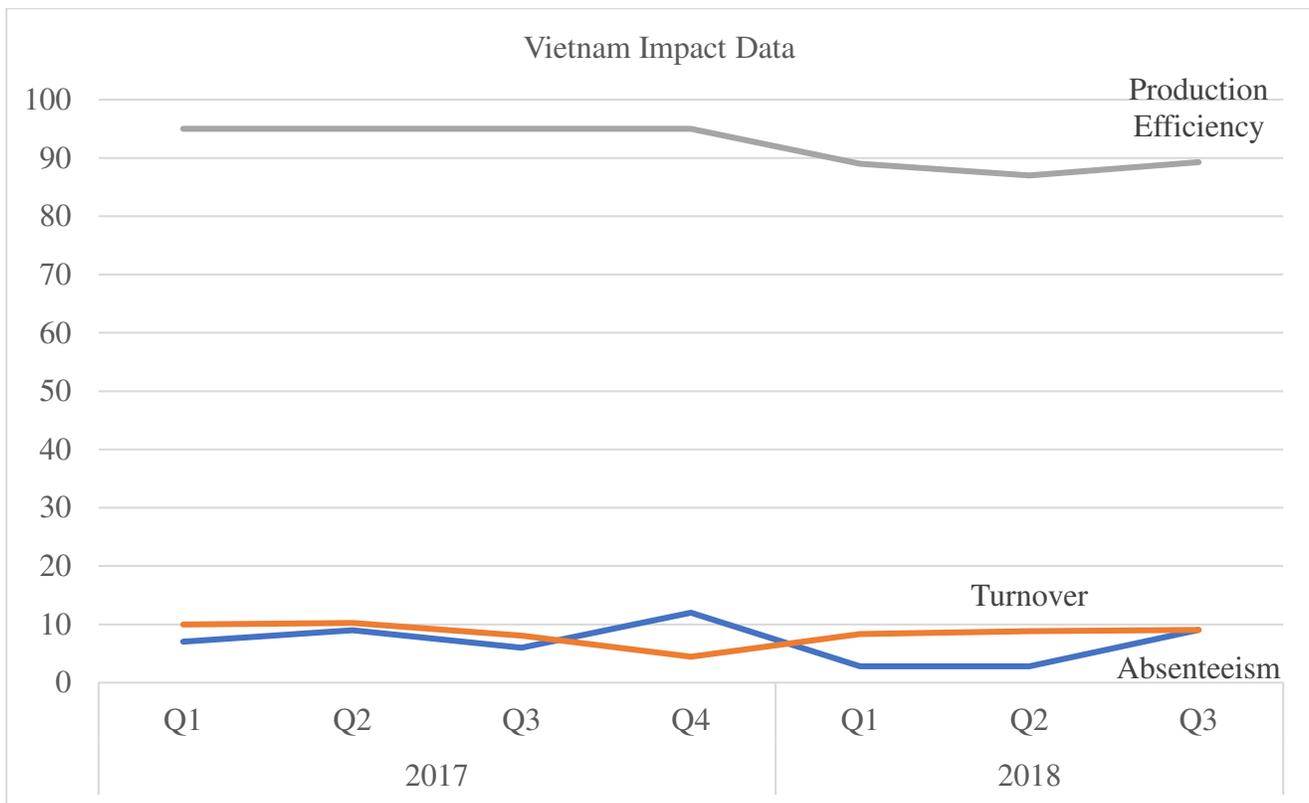
In Bangladesh, the BC management rep said they discovered through root cause analysis that the high rate of absenteeism and turnover was due to workers simply leaving the job out of fear they would be retaliated against if they spoke up about their problems. BC worker reps in the same factory said that the training on communication allowed them to better explain the consequences of absenteeism to workers, and that they were now “getting more responsible” (this, in addition to anti-retaliation policy put in place by management), so that now when, “if they feel they will be absent, they take leave from the authority.” Data from the Gap Inc. quarterly reports indicate that absenteeism in this factory fluctuated in 2017, but dropped from 6 to 5.1 in 2018 Q2. Turnover similarly dropped in the last quarter reported, from 28.41 down to 12.95. Aside from a small dip at the end of 2017, production efficiency also seems to be improving in this factory in Bangladesh:

Figure 4: Bangladesh Impact Data



Regular workers in Vietnam said they are happier now and feel comfortable raising issues with supervisors, knowing that, “everyone will find a solution to improve the work to be more effective” whether the issue is about a “broken machine, condition of work, or relationship between workers and supervisors...everybody solves the problem together.” Because of this, “There is less absenteeism. The workers want to stay to work in the factory, don’t have any intention to switch to different factory.” This is somewhat supported in the quarterly report data for this factory. Though absenteeism jumped from 2.8 to 9.05 in the last quarter reported, it had been decreased substantially from 12 to 2.8 in 2018 Q1 and stayed there in Q2. Turnover had been decreasing in the last two quarters of 2017, but has since been on the rise, up from 4.45 in 2017 Q4 to 9.07 in 2018 Q3. Production efficiency also remained the same throughout 2017, dropping from 95 to 89 and 87 in the first two quarters of 2018. It is back up to 89.3 in the last quarter measured.

Figure 5: Vietnam Impact Data

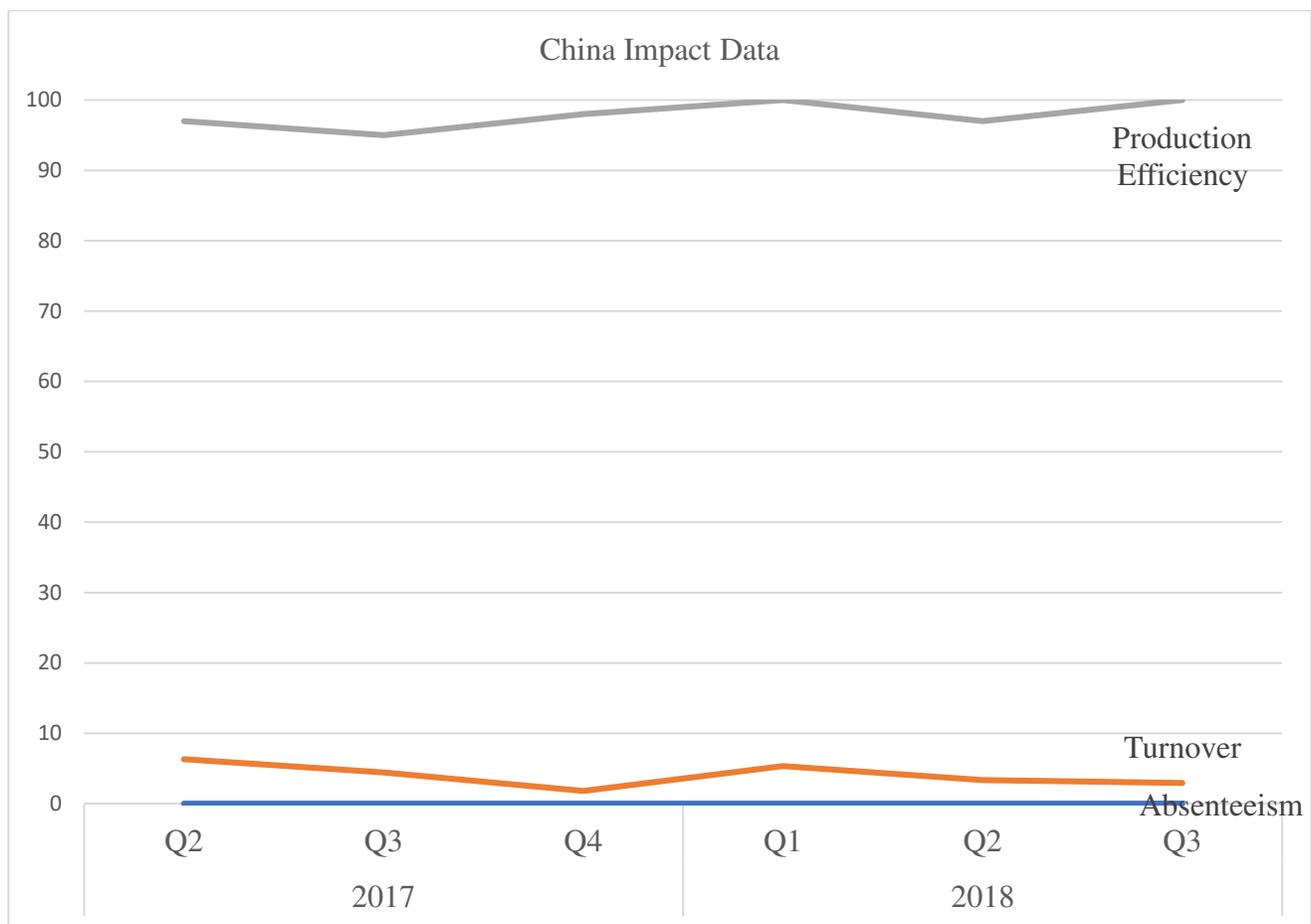


Production efficiency can be improved through open lines of communication, in terms of being able to solve problems quickly. When workers had questions in meetings about production, they got answers immediately, helping them to reach their goals more efficiently. On the line, managers met with workers more frequently, and more patiently, taking time to explain and make sure workers understood how to do the work. A BC management rep in China talked about how, “The inspector and the operator are in daily communication. They use their skills to communicate with other, and to help each other to solve the problems. And the knitting quality is very stable and good.” He went on later to add that, “After the training, I think the workers are more comfortable in the factory, more like a home. So, the workers’ output is increased, the factory’s capacity is also increased, and the defect rate is coming down.” BC worker reps in the same factory also credited the training in communication for teaching them how to better pass information to workers, and “As a result, we avoid the mistakes that would possibly occur.”

A more proactive approach to risk assessment is also contributing to early resolution of problems so that workers can be more productive. The BC management rep in China noted that, “The quality is improved, and also the production is more smooth. Because we have risk assessment in the early stage, we know where the key point is, so we can put the main attention there.” Interestingly, China reported a 0% absenteeism rate for the past two years. Though turnover jumped in the first quarter of 2018, it has generally had a downward trend

since the WPC. Similarly, production efficiency has been generally increasing, other than a dip in the second quarter of 2018.

Figure 6: China Impact Data

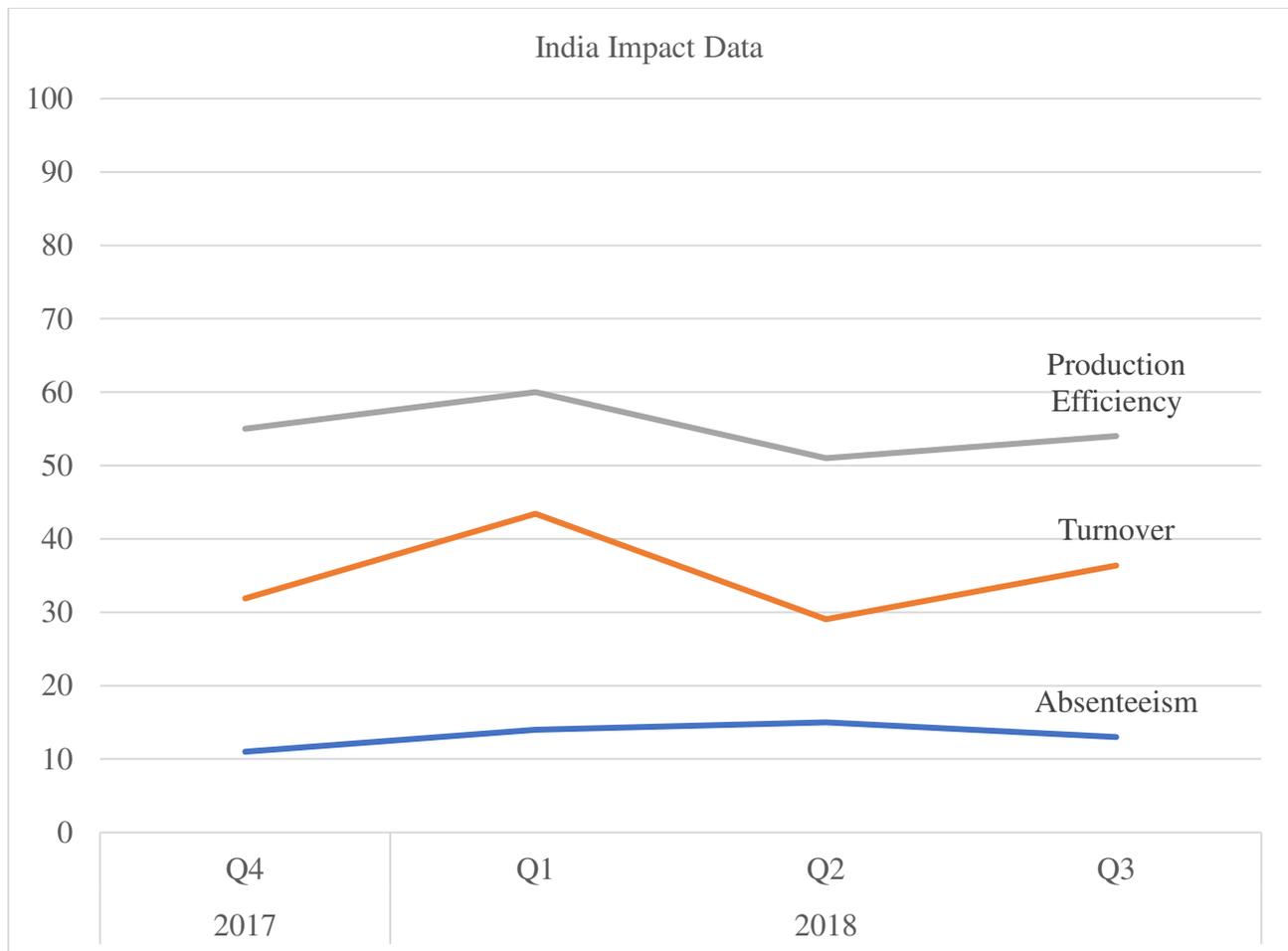


BC management reps in India said good communication and a proactive approach to risk assessment was also helping with their audits. They encouraged direct and frequent communication with BC workers reps and advised them not to consider any issue too small. As a result, they get a “minute level of detail” from workers who are now like their “hands on the floor” enabling them to resolve issues more quickly. This flagged some concern that management reps might be using worker reps in a way that could make regular workers feel they

had sided with management, or would be 'spied on' in some way. However, focus groups with workers reiterated that there has been a change in the relationship that is leading to a more sustainable approach to addressing workplace issues, and that they feel they are a part of it. The focus on process and how problems are addressed, rather than specifically on outcomes, is a common feature in worker and management feedback across the different countries. As a BC management rep in India remarked, they don't need to become "hyper and eager" if there is an audit "because we know our systems are set and sustained."

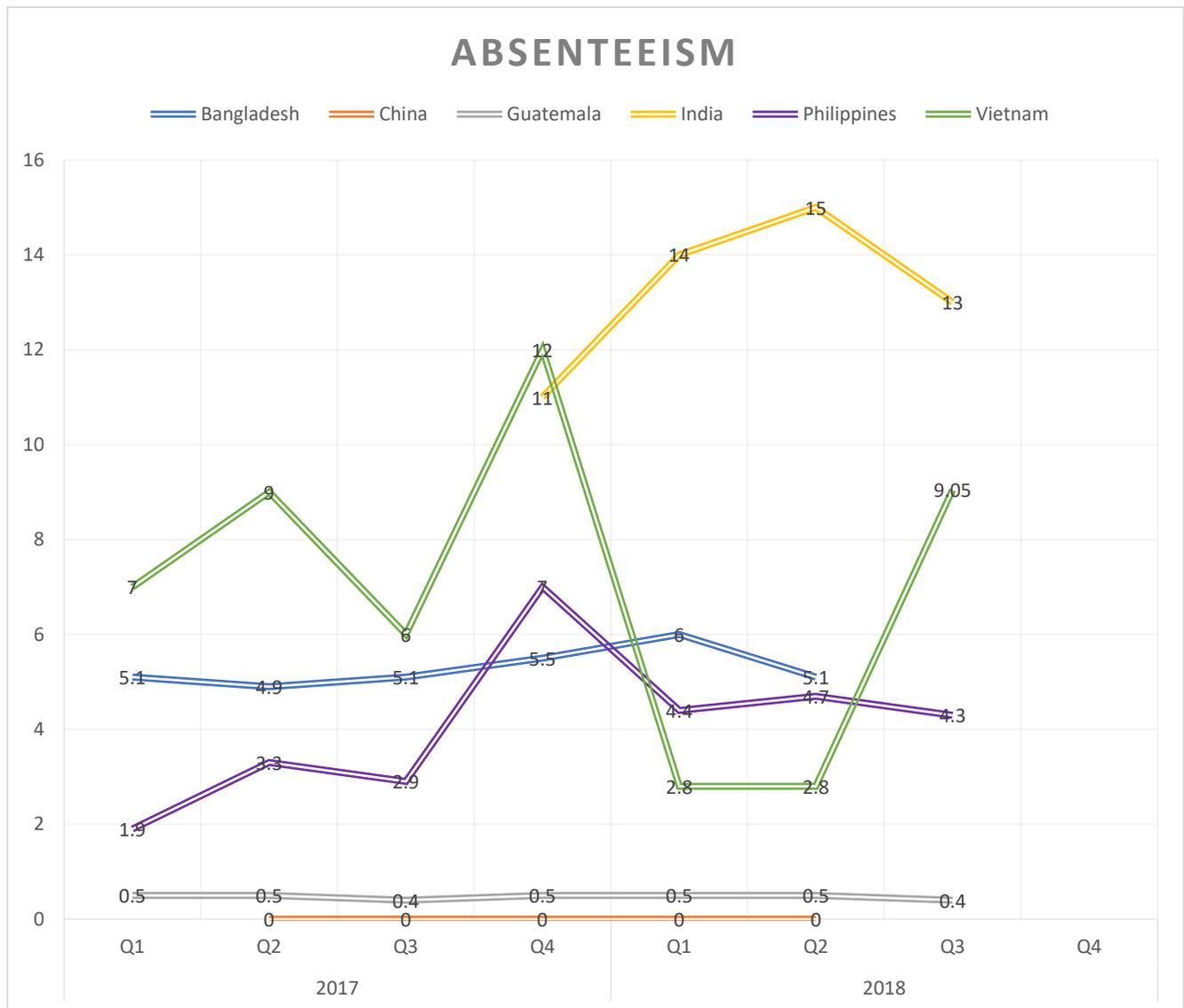
Looking at the quarterly report data for this factory in India, there is not a clear pattern of improvement. On one hand, absenteeism decreased in the last quarter reported, though it had been slowly increasing in the previous two quarters. Turnover jumped in the last quarter measured, though that was after a large decrease prior quarter. Production efficiency has been similarly fluctuating:

Figure 7: India Impact Data



Having considered each country individually, the following figures consider all countries for each of the three indicators (absenteeism, turnover and production efficiency).

Figure 8: Absenteeism across countries included in sample



With the exception of Vietnam, each country's absenteeism figures decrease in the last quarter measured. Vietnam did, however, experience a decrease between the end of 2017 and first two quarters of 2018. Overall, there is not a clear pattern that emerges throughout the time period measured, with absenteeism figures fluctuating quite a bit. Further data analysis will help to illustrate the long-term changes and trends.

Figure 9: Turnover across countries included in sample

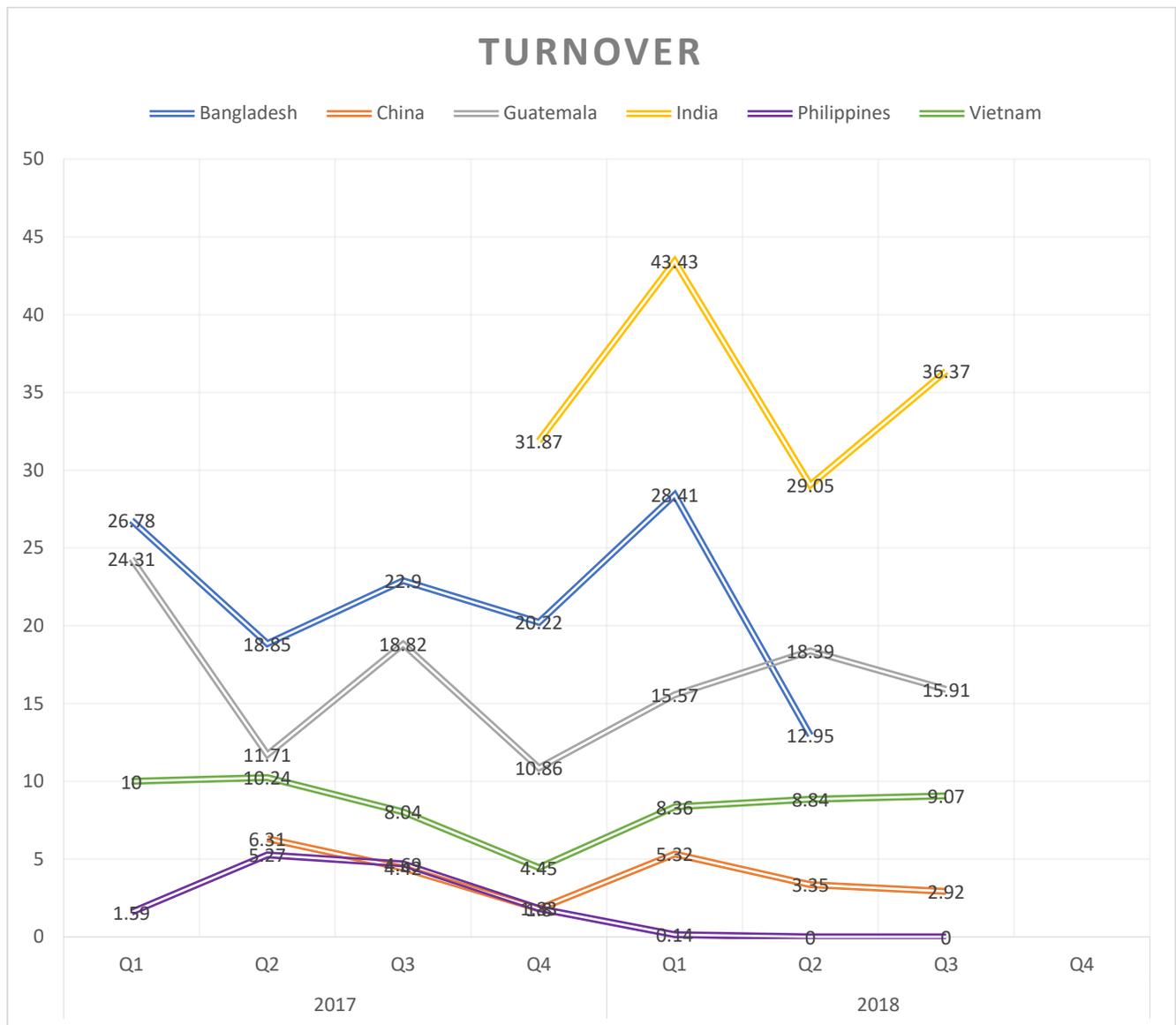
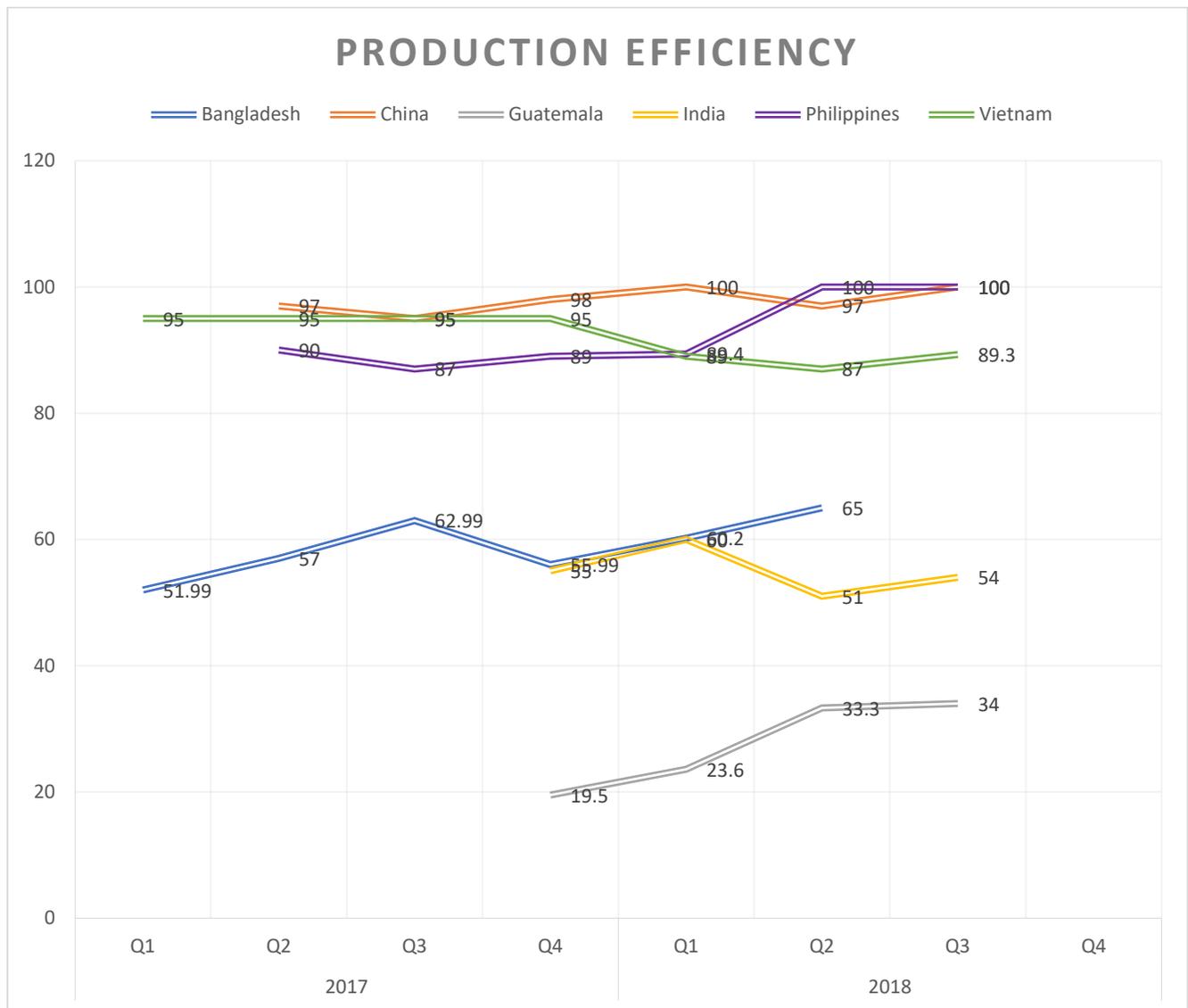


Figure 10: Production Efficiency across countries/factories included in sample



With regard to production efficiency, each country is better off in the last quarter measured than it was in the previous. China, Philippines, Bangladesh, and Guatemala are also all better off in the last quarter than in the first quarter measured, with production efficiency in Vietnam and India just slightly lower in the last quarter than the first.

In general, workers are taking more of a role to identify potential hazards, and feel comfortable voicing these issues because they trust the bipartite committee to resolve the issues. Both management and worker reps in Vietnam said that this is improving health and safety in the factory, as they know better how to identify risks, and are focusing more on their safety.” Worker reps said they felt that they, “are able to identify the risk...discuss with the supervisor and ask for a solution to reduce risk, actually feel safer at work...the number of issues actually reduced.” BC Workers in Philippines also said the training helped them to identify risks, and that they “became more aware of the signages...using personal protective equipment...” In addition to improving workers’ physical

safety, the WPC also had an impact on workers’ mental health in Bangladesh. A group of regular workers said they used to work “without any enthusiasm and out of fear” and because they were unable to express themselves, they “felt sick mentally in the past.” Since the WPC, they are no longer sick, they are “happy and more productive now” and are able to work “more efficiently”.

The table on the following page provides a ‘360° perspective’ on how improvements in communication and workplace cooperation have enabled managers and workers to better address workplace concerns, which is leading to positive impacts on the factory floor. The excerpts illustrate the potential for the WPC to improve business performance.

Table 5: 360° Perspective: Impact on the Shop Floor: The Business Case for WPC

	<b>BC Mgmt Rep</b>	<b>BC Worker Reps</b>	<b>Regular Workers</b>
<b>Bangladesh</b>	"Before when they have not received a solution, they left the job. Now absenteeism and turnover are low. All the channels are open and the ratio of grievances is lower.	"We can explain to the workers the consequences of late attendance, absences, poor quality. If they feel they will be absent, they now take leave from the authority."	"In the past we worked without any enthusiasm and out of fear. Now we are happy, productive and work more efficiently.
<b>China</b>	"The knitting quality is very stable and good, output increased, capacity increased,	"Now that we have more knowledge about communication, we will make sure...the workers understand	"Our mood is better, we work more efficiently too. The complaint is less because we communicate

	and the defect rate is coming down...production is smooth.”	what we say. As a result, we avoid mistakes.”	more... the workers’ quality also improved.”
<b>Guatemala</b>	"There’s no question in the meetings that has passed without a solution...e.g. when there’s a problem about production, because they have to reach a goal.”	“People feel happier now because the restrooms are cleaner...there’s less accidents...”	“The main improvements have been to motivate us, so we can continue working well...we return the favour through our work.”
<b>India</b>	“Our workforce is happy, confident, productive, it is helping the business also...we are getting a very minute kind of information from them, which is really helping us in our audits also.”	"The workers have become much more conscious of what is going on in the factory floor... of health and safety overall."	N/A
<b>Philippines</b>	“They are motivated and happy... Production has a good quality...(profits) also improved...We had so many absent before, but now it’s reduced”	“If there’s a problem in the production, it’s easy for us to talk to the line leaders. They became more open. We work with a smile, and are more productive.”	N/A
<b>Vietnam</b>	"Since WPC [a greater proportion of] grievances was resolved... Production efficiency increased to 95% (from 61%). There is happier relationships”	“Production efficiency increases because the workers feel comfortable, happy at the workplace... the managers are more open, understanding of workers”	“Less absenteeism. The workers want to stay to work in the factory, don’t have any intention to switch to different factory.”

### 3.4 A Model of WPC Impacts on the Shop Floor

The findings demonstrate that better communication led to more open mindedness, improved workers’ confidence, sense of agency, trust and ownership, and challenged cultural norms around traditional relations between workers and managers. This helped to strengthen the machinery for workers and managers to better

address workplace concerns. In a sense, training in communication activated the potential of the trainings in problem solving, grievance mechanism, and risk assessment. In conjunction with managers and workers taking a greater role in the factory, health and safety improved, and a number of business performance indicators were positively impacted as well. This is, however, not necessarily a linear model. Communication is partially endogeneous as it is impacted by motivated people, who are present at the factory and who stay longer at the job. Therefore the model is presented as a circular one.

Figure 11: A Model of WPC Impacts on the Shop Floor



Improvements in communication are at the core of WPC impacts on the shop floor. Though the different training modules proved valuable in different ways, without communication managers and workers would likely not have realized the full potential the other modules had to offer. Communication helped in Problem Solving to better identify and solve problems immediately, increasing productivity. It helped in Grievance Mechanisms by opening up channels for communication and resolving workplace issues, making the process more functional and effective, with overall implications for fewer conflicts. Improved communication helped with Risk Assessment as it enabled workers and managers to work more cooperatively in taking a proactive approach to reduce risk, which not only had positive implications for health and safety but increased efficiencies and better prepared the factory for audits. Better communication also helped to identify other Health and Safety needs, with workers playing an important role in flagging issues related to both their physical and mental well-being,

which overall left them feeling happier, healthier, and more motivated on the job. Negotiations and Industrial Relations were not often explicitly addressed by participants. Where they were, it was usually in relation to understanding different viewpoints, having less tension and better worker-manager relations, which in general contributed to productivity.

#### **4 Challenges for WPC Sustainability**

There are at least four interrelated challenges for WPC sustainability: Time, BC efficacy, the ongoing training of new hires, and incentive in the absence of Gap Inc.

##### **4.1 Time**

One of the key challenges for WPC sustainability is time – or the lack thereof. Not all of the BC Management reps had attended all of the training modules, and fewer were able to regularly attend the meetings of the bipartite committee. As they are usually involved in overseeing production, it's hard for them to get away from the line to attend all of the trainings and meetings. However, this is a critical component of continuing to foster cooperative working relations between workers and managers. BC worker reps also need more time to be able to gather worker input, prepare for and attend meetings, and then to share that information with workers. Regular workers also need that time to meet with the BC worker reps, to share their input, to receive and process information and have time to ask questions.

##### **4.2 BC Efficacy**

The issue of 'time' is intricately linked with the broader challenge of BC efficacy. Instead of knowledge dissemination per se, the objectives for the whole workforce is whether or not, after the training, the BC runs effectively and over time workers feel the benefits of an effective BC. This is linked to workers understanding of BC roles and responsibilities, including also the supports that are in place for BC members to follow through with those roles and responsibilities. In part this includes ensuring that BC members are properly elected to the committee so as to ensure they are trusted and supported by workers and will serve as their true representative. This also includes giving BC members adequate time to collect information from workers, present that in meetings, and share relevant feedback, in order to properly represent workers. In line with this, BC reps must feel protected in their roles, e.g. from retaliation for speaking up. This will help facilitate voice in the workplace, which the findings demonstrate are helping to foster empowerment (e.g. the worker reps in India who play an active role in identifying issues, and also contributed to an overhaul of the attendance taking system).

A common mode of spreading awareness from the trainings seems to be the 'open door policy' in which they share information with any worker who approaches them. This ranges from those who will engage in frequent informal conversations and information sharing, such as in India, to not having much to say to workers who do approach them, as in Guatemala where workers only knew that the bipartite committee received trainings.

The question may not be around formal vs. informal processes, as sharing conversations informally with workers can be an effective way to pass on information in a comfortable setting. The challenge will be to ensure

future workers and managers provide some leeway for allowing this type of dialogue on the shop floor. BC management in Bangladesh seems quite flexible about this, providing workers at least ten minutes every day to discuss matters, usually when they are “in their leisure period or less pressured in work”. BC workers in this factory said that they have BC members in each section and each floor, which makes it easier to reach workers. Regular workers confirmed that BC reps do approach them first before attending BC meetings, and then come after the trainings to discuss with them. In the past, they said they “rarely come to us, but now they frequently come to us and discuss with us as they also work in the same floor or production line. We can ask them any questions any time. They also ask us whether we have any problems or issues any time.”

The BC management rep in China felt that they “never do the formal meetings” for workers because he believes they would not be comfortable to speak up. Rather, “by daily chatting, they may want to share what they think.” Regular workers, however, said they have a monthly meeting in which the BC shares “the updates and solutions the management had. It is not clear whether this is a meeting specifically designed to share information from the meetings. More likely it is a regular department meeting, in which some information from the BC might also happen to be discussed in addition to other workplace issues or updates.

This informal process of spreading awareness is reiterated in this description given by BC worker reps in India: “Basically after every training, we would just go and talk to the people around us and say this is what we learned today. And then those people would talk to other people, so slowly through this fusion and osmosis everybody has learned about everything in the training...when new tailors join, we would go talk to them and say look if you have any issues you can come to us, if you have a small or big issue don’t worry, just come to us... We informally have chats with workers for 10 or 15 minutes on a daily basis but then if there’s something specific we use a tea break or we’ll have them come for a half hour session and do a training with them”.

### **4.3 Training New Hires**

This raises a third challenge for sustainability, which is the issue of ongoing training for new hires. Participants were asked what they thought would happen if there was suddenly new management in their factories. The BC management rep in China said there is very little turnover in his factory, stating that “a lot of workers are in the factory for more than 12-15 years, the supervisors 8-10 years, so they are stable”. In other places however, the door might revolve a little more quickly. BC worker reps in India, however, gave a response that reflected the changing relationships between workers and managers, and the importance of sustaining that. They said, “It is important to have the right kinds of relationship with the management and if the management changes we would need to re-establish those relationships because they’re crucial to the functioning of this whole thing. But, should that happen, we should see that as a challenge that we should take up because it’s important that we continue these mechanisms and these pathways. Not only is it important to us, it’s important to the factory because it’s more profitable. It’s just a better work environment, people are more productive, everything works better.” This reinforces the need for better systems to support knowledge transfer through the training and re-training of

current and new workers and managers, built up from a focus on communication and strengthening the relationship between workers and managers. This will also be supported by ensuring that ownership transfer is done properly between Gap Inc. lead training to the vendor/factory lead program.

#### **4.4 Incentive**

Both workers and managers were asked if they thought the improvements from the WPC would continue, even if Gap Inc. was not involved. Some were optimistic (India, Bangladesh), others believed it made sense in theory (China, Vietnam), and some seemed a bit unsure (Philippines, Guatemala). The same group of BC workers from India that talked about having the right kinds of relationship with the management said, “Firstly, we would love it if Gap just stayed, but those things that I have learned, like responsibility and personal accountability, that’s just going to be motivating for me for the rest of my life. I’ve internalized it.” They described how the relationships were strong, and that they didn’t think this would change. Even though they couldn’t say for sure, they felt that “based on the fact that we have these open channels and we’re working together so much hand in hand, I think it’s going to continue.”

Similarly, the BC management rep in India pointed to a change in the relationships that will lead to a more sustainable approach to addressing workplace issues – again, with the focus here being less on outcomes and more on how problems are addressed. She said that more workers are aware, on board, working together, have more channels and open lines of communication and taking a proactive approach, through which she believed the WPC can be sustainable.

The BC management rep in China expressed a similar sentiment, saying that, “Frankly speaking, in our factory, both the workers and the management realized this program really helps us, so we will continue to do it, no doubt. But for some factories, it depends on their mindset. If it doesn’t help or brings nothing, they don’t carry on. For us, we think this program is really really helpful, actually helps us, so we will continue to run this program.”

In the Philippines, however, the BC management rep described several areas in which she wanted to see continuous improvement, without specifically addressing the issue of whether she believes it will continue – only that indeed it should in order for these improvements to take place. BC workers also asked whether there would be more trainings from Gap, apparently expressing some concern with sustainability, in particular compared to workers in other countries who seemed equipped with tools from training and invigorated to continue applying them in practice.

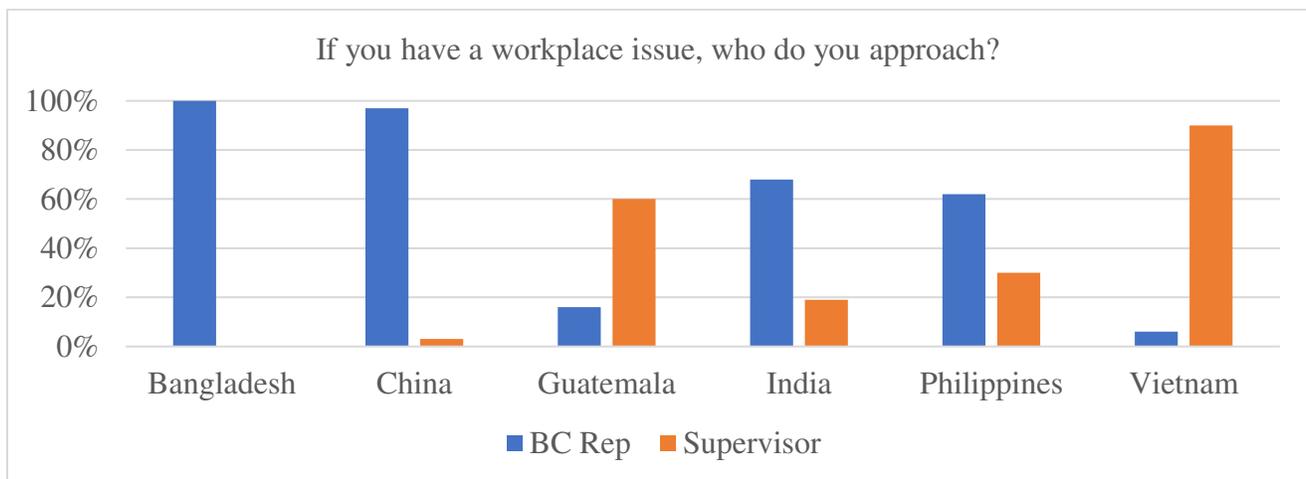
## **5 A ‘Test’ of Well-Functioning BCs: Feedback from the Baseline-Endline Survey**

A brief survey was facilitated by Gap Inc. with BC and Non-BC members at the beginning of the WPC (baseline) and after the training modules had been completed (endline). A quick overview of the results of those surveys will help to provide a better understanding of the functionality of the BCs. In this section, the focus is on

the survey with Non-BC members, to ‘test’ the reach, impact, and perceived usefulness of the BC. In both the baseline and endline surveys, Non-BC workers were asked a set of questions about the BC (see Appendix 3), including their understanding of its make-up, function, whether or not they felt comfortable approaching BC members, if they were satisfied with their decisions, etc. Table 4 summarizes workers’ responses to the survey. The results do not include all 29 factories from Batch 1. Rather, they only include the six factories included already in this evaluation. The number of workers who completed the surveys are included in the second row from the top, next to B (baseline) and E (endline), underneath the corresponding countries.

Over time, workers’ understanding of the BC function improved across the board. However, only 48% of workers in the Guatemala factory said they understood its function ‘very well’ by the time of the endline survey. Though an increase from the baseline, understanding of the BC function is not nearly as high in Guatemala as in other countries. Only 16% of these workers said they would approach the BC rep if they had an issue. 60% said they would instead take the issue to their supervisor. Incidentally, 90% of workers in the Vietnam factory also said they would take their issues to their supervisor, and only 6% would go to the BC rep.

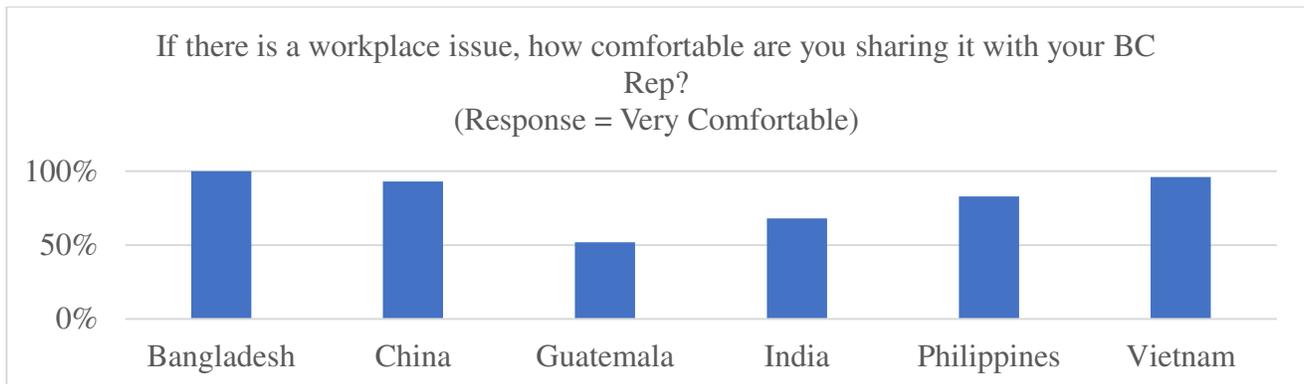
Figure 12: Non BC member responses to: "If you have a workplace issue, who do you approach?"



The majority of workers answered ‘yes’ to knowing who their BC reps were,<sup>13</sup> so it was not a lack of awareness that prevented them. Rather, evidence that they may not have felt comfortable. Indeed, only about 52% of workers in Guatemala said they would be comfortable approaching their BC rep with an issue – low compared to Non-BC worker counterparts in other countries.

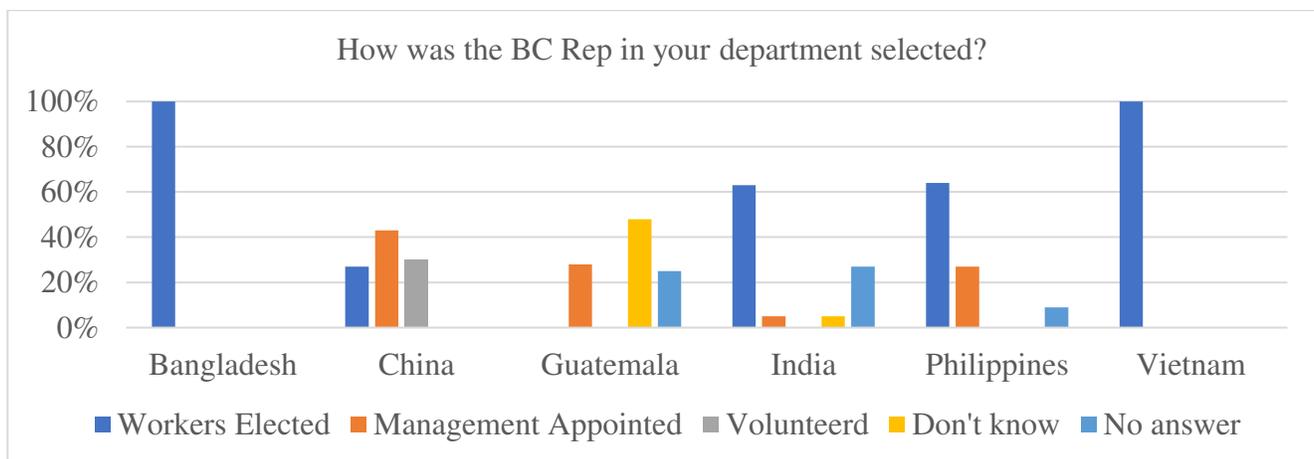
<sup>13</sup> 100% of respondents in Bangladesh, China and Vietnam knew who their BC reps were; 93% in Philippines; 84% in Guatemala; 73% in India.

Figure 13: Non BC member responses to "If there is a workplace issue, how comfortable are you sharing it with your BC Rep?"



This could in part be due to whether they feel their BC rep is truly their representative, in terms of having been identified and elected by workers to represent them. When asked how their BC reps were elected, no workers in Guatemala said their BC reps were elected by workers. 28% said they were selected by management and another 48% said they didn't know. On one hand, this supports the theory that they might not feel the worker is their actual representative and therefore not trust them. However, only 27% of workers in China said that their BC reps were elected by the workers – 43% were selected by management, and the remaining 30% apparently volunteered – and yet 93% said they would be very comfortable bringing an issue to their BC rep. The feedback was different in the other countries, with roughly 63% of workers in India and the Philippines, and 100% of workers in Bangladesh and Vietnam reporting that workers elected them.

Figure 14: Non BC member responses to "How was the BC Rep in your department selected?"

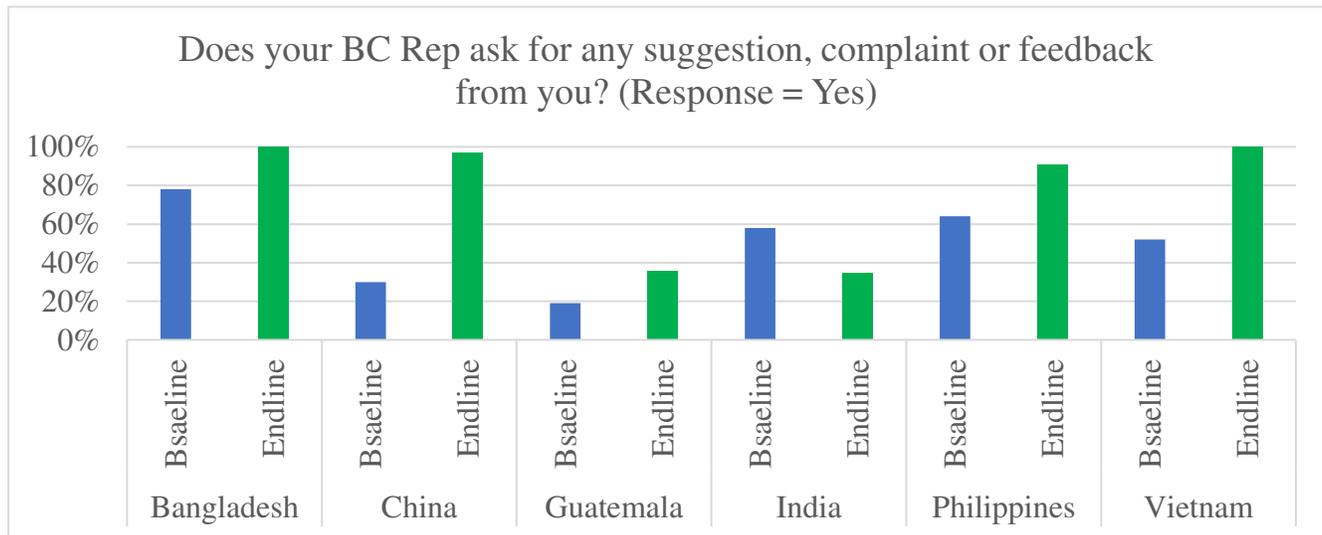


Workers' perceptions of the usefulness of the BC to the workforce as a whole increased over time, in most cases by 35-50% (the exception being Bangladesh, which already began with a higher perception of BC usefulness in the baseline survey). In all countries except Guatemala, the vast majority (i.e. 80-100%) were 'very

satisfied' with BC decisions. In Guatemala the feedback was split, with 48% saying they were 'very satisfied' but another 36% reporting they were 'somewhat dissatisfied'.

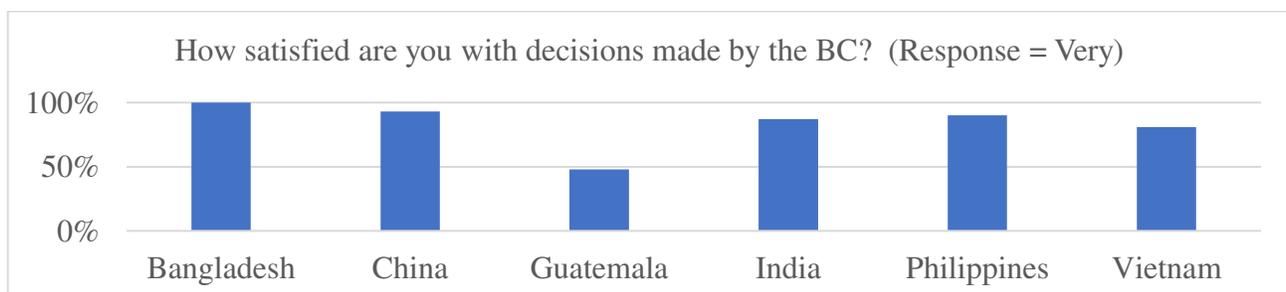
There are at least two factors that could be influencing workers' perceptions of the BC's usefulness. The first is whether or not they feel that the BC seeks their input on workplace issues.

Figure 15: Non BC member responses to "Does your BC Rep ask for any suggestion, complaint or feedback from you?"



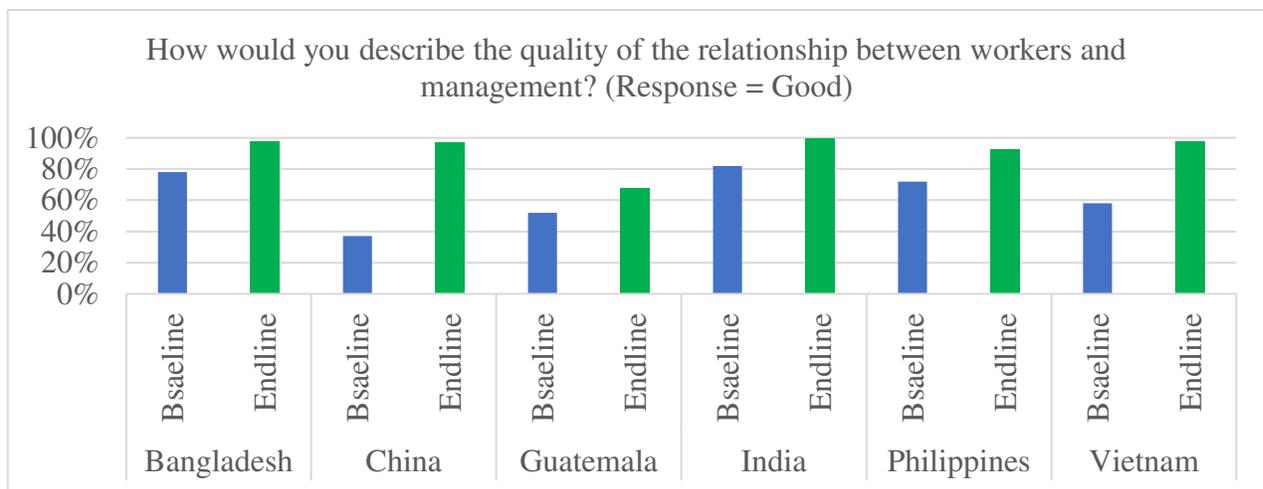
The low "yes" response from workers in Guatemala could help to explain why they have an overall lower perception of the usefulness of the BC. A similarly low response from workers in India, however, runs counter to this theory, in particular given that 94% of respondents in India felt that the BC was "very useful". Another factor that might help to explain why workers do not perceive the BC to be very useful is whether or not they are satisfied with the decisions that the BC makes on workplace issues. As the following chart indicates, 87% of respondents in India reported being "very satisfied" with how BC decisions are made. This might imply that, even though they may not always feel that their input is sought out, they are satisfied with the BC in how they make decisions on their behalf. Furthermore, it is worth recounting that 63% of respondents in India said their BC Rep was elected by workers, compared to 0% in Guatemala.

Figure 16: Non BC member responses to "How satisfied are you with decisions made by the BC?"



A closer look at workers’ perceptions of the quality of the relationship between workers and managers might explain this. The qualitative data suggested that better communication was leading to cooperative work relationship which opened up channels and better enabled workers and managers to address workplace concerns. That relationship was a key component in the process of generating positive impacts on the shop floor. In Guatemala, only 68% of the workers perceived a ‘good’ relationship between workers and managers – low, but a bit better than the 52% response they gave in the baseline, demonstrating an improvement over time. By comparison, 97% of workers in China said the relationship was good (compared to 37% in the baseline), and 98% of workers in Vietnam said the relationship was good (up from 58%).

Figure 17: Non BC member responses to “How would you describe the quality of the relationship between workers and management?”



## 6 The Need for Well-Functioning BCs: Reflections on “Elect, Represent, Protect, Empower”

BW stands above other forms of labour standards regulation in that it ‘brings labor in’ as an active stakeholder, moving beyond a view of labor as a ‘passive object’ and creating a forum for voice for both trade unions at the program implementation level, as well as workers at the factory level. Linked with improvements in communication between workers and managers, and improvements in workers’ perceptions of compliance, there is inherent potential for BW to make significant gains in reducing regulatory deficits in global supply chains. Ensuring workers have a channel for meaningful input and access to effective remedy is a powerful antidote to non-compliance. The challenge is to understand the conditions under which these channels can be established and sustained.

In his study of PICCs in Vietnam, Anner (2017) identifies four criteria for well-functioning PICCs – elect, represent, protect, empower – arguing that they are interrelated and essential to any system of employee participation (p.4). Where this broke down in Lesotho rested in large part on how workers were elected to the PICCs, reporting that management would select people who were too ignorant or shy to share the discussions

with co-workers (Pike 2020). This in turn negatively impacted the ability of PICC members to represent and feel supported by their workforce.

Similar to Alois (2016, 2018) and Miles (2015), the findings in Lesotho demonstrate that PICCs can have a positive impact on labor standards. Workers' opportunity to exercise voice in a meaningful way, and see changes in their workplace, can facilitate more open communication and improved relationships between workers and managers. The issue, however, is sustainability. The long-term positive impact of the PICCs was not sustained in Lesotho, not only because the program shut down in Lesotho, but also because the PICCs largely failed to meet the criteria they needed to be well-functioning (Anner 2017a): Elect, Represent, Protect, Empower.

### *Elect*

The first feature of a well-functioning worker-management committee is that there must be proper election procedures in which worker representatives are selected by the workers themselves. Not only does it give legitimacy to the elected worker reps, it may also allow them to participate in meetings more effectively. In Bangladesh and Vietnam, 100% of respondents said their BC rep was elected by workers, compared to roughly 63% in both India and Philippines, and the much lower 27% in China and 0% in Guatemala. It's possible that something similar to what Anner (2017) described was happening, with regard to management 'suggesting' a worker rep when it seemed workers were reluctant to nominate anybody. He also found that some workers distrusted the election process. The fact that 60% of workers in Guatemala would take their workplace issues to a supervisor, compared with the 16% that would go the BC, might suggest this is the case.

### *Represent*

Given that fewer BC worker reps were selected by workers in India, Philippines, China and Guatemala, one might expect that these BC reps did not represent the workers as well as they did in, say, Bangladesh and Vietnam, where workers claimed that 100% of BC reps were properly elected. However, only the workers in Guatemala expressed low perceptions of the BC's usefulness, potentially influenced by the fact that they did not feel comfortable approaching the BC, nor did they feel consulted by the BC or satisfied with their decisions. This was slightly different in India and the Philippines, whereby only 63% of worker reps were elected by workers, but respondents said they felt comfortable approaching their BC rep and that, even if they were not consulted, they were satisfied with the decisions of the BC. As mentioned earlier, this could potentially come back to the issue of trust. When looking at respondents' feedback to the quality of worker-management relations, workers in Guatemala reported the lowest perceptions.

Despite some positive feedback in the survey and the qualitative data, the findings indicate that BC worker reps do not have a lot of time to meet with workers – whether formally or informally – to get their input and prepare for BC meetings, or to then share that information with them after meetings. Though progress and

improvements are being made, providing BC worker reps with time to prepare for, participate in, and then share information with workers will extend the reach of the WPC, both in breadth and depth, with clear linkages to implications for business performance discussed earlier in this report.

### *Protect*

In Bangladesh, engagement in the WPC training led BC reps to identify and resolve the issue of retaliation towards workers who spoke up about their problems. In that case, anti-retaliation policy was developed and, according to the BC management rep, 'strictly enforced' coupled with training to BC worker and management reps. These worker-management committees are likely to fall outside the scope of state-sanctioned regulatory protection, making workers vulnerable to retaliatory action by their managers who can 'fly under the radar' so to speak when it comes to reprisals.

It's not clear whether the other factories in this study have explicitly instituted anti-retaliation policy but this would be an appropriate step in ensuring that worker reps feel comfortable speaking up in BC meetings. Additionally, this extends to regular workers who should also be able to participate through voicing their issues to the BC. In Guatemala, only 52% of respondents said they would feel comfortable sharing a workplace issue with their BC rep. In India, only 68%. Why they felt this way is a question that should be explored further. On one hand it could be due to retaliation. On the other, cultural norms may play a role. In the factory in Northern India – a part of the country that is relatively well known for having more rigid parameters on gender roles – the BC in India was predominantly male for the first two years. It's possible that female workers might have felt somewhat more reluctant to raise issues with an all-male BC. As detailed demographic information on the respondents is not included, it's not possible to examine further whether this could have been a contributing factor in the responses.

### *Empowerment*

Feedback from both workers and managers indicates that the improvement in communication and workplace relationships led to a greater sense of agency, ownership, confidence, voice, and empowerment among the workers. Empowerment in this case was expressed as feeling that workers could make a difference – that their voice mattered. As mentioned earlier in the report, this is different from 'empowerment' as characterized by Anner (2017) who argues that the greatest degree of empowerment will emerge from strong, democratic and representative unions and encompassing collective bargaining. He also notes, however, that worker power in PICCs could be leveraged through the mandate of Better Work, labour law, and international standards.

The bottom line is that workers need to have some form of leverage in order to meaningfully participate in the BCs such that they are able to effect change – and not simply change on the non-cost-sensitive issues. BC worker reps are empowered by the transformation in workplace communication which has boosted their confidence and invigorated their daily work. But insofar as having leverage, they might rather be buoyed by the

fact that WPC is making business sense to management; or that the current management has good intentions. The risk is always sustainability, and ensuring there is both a framework and a foundation upon which these dynamic improvements can continue to positively impact the workplace.

Anner (2017) suggested that another way of examining worker leverage would be through looking at outcomes and whether violations of 'cost sensitive'<sup>14</sup> issues had been resolved or were still outstanding. Though compliance data was not provided for this evaluation, quarterly grievance data gives some indication of the types and frequency of issues being raised (and resolved). In brief, the data indicates that 100% of cost-sensitive grievances raised in India and Bangladesh were resolved, as were 89% in Vietnam and 83% in the Philippines. Only 50% were resolved in Guatemala (though only two issues were raised, compared to 27 in Vietnam, 25 in India, 12 in Bangladesh, and 6 in the Philippines). Incidentally, no cost-sensitive issues were raised in China. More detailed information is available in Appendix 4.

From this overview it appears that cost sensitive grievances are for the most part resolved – at least within the six factories included in this study. However, very few workers in most of the factories are raising these grievances through the BC. In Vietnam, 86% of all grievances were brought to the BC. In Bangladesh, this figure was down to 30%. Aside from these two examples, most workers across the other countries are voicing their grievances through complaint boxes, HR, and worker surveys. This suggests there is some way to go in terms of workers utilizing the BC as a meaningful channel for raising issues.

Brief analysis of this type of data is not enough to make a strong link between the type of empowerment described by workers and managers in the qualitative feedback, and the leveraging of worker power in BCs. More careful analysis would be needed for this. The feedback from interviews and focus groups is however encouraging, and analysis of that qualitative data suggests a clear link between workers' empowerment – through increased confidence, agency, ownership – and more cooperative, productive work relationships.

The 360° perspectives did not kick up contradictory stories from BC management reps, worker reps or regular workers. Rather they blended together to tell a coherent story about how the WPC is having an impact on the shop floor. Though respondents all had positive feedback, there were varying degrees of enthusiasm. The strongest forms of support for the WPC came from those countries where workers had been empowered in terms of contributing to decision-making; highlighting areas in which they believed changes could lead to greater efficiencies, voicing a concern and having it addressed immediately. Being given the phone numbers of the managers and told to contact them anytime, that no issue was too small, heightened their sense of responsibility and accountability. Managers saw the benefits this had in the workplace, and for their audits, and encouraged ongoing informal conversations with other workers to share information.

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<sup>14</sup> Any issue that has cost implications, for example: minimum wages; overtime wages; social security and benefits; replacing safety masks when they become lost or misplaced, etc.

The topic of unions and collective bargaining was somewhat sensitive – and in large part left aside – in this evaluation, in part due to a clear distinction at an operational level between WPC bipartite committees and trade unions. On a couple of occasions respondents raised the topic themselves, at which point I would probe them on whether there was a union in their factory and/or whether workers want a union. Both workers and managers in one factory said they wouldn't want one because, "if there's a union, there's a big possibility that the company will close". A management rep in another factory said that workers "never emphasize trade union because our BC has most achievement...all the workers are happy with the BC and the management is also happy to work with the BC."

Though Gap Inc. respects the industrial relations climate in each participating country, and it is not the intention to undermine trade unions, this statement reflects a common response from managers engaged in other varieties of transnational labour arrangements – that is, 'we don't need a union here because we are already doing more to treat our workers well'. A recent body of literature on CSR and labour standards engages with the question of CSR and unions as complements or substitutes. Though the WPC is not CSR in the common form we might understand as buyer codes of conduct enforced in the workplace, it is a form of corporate social responsibility whereby Gap Inc. is trying to play a more direct and widespread role in its supply chain by improving how workers and managers address and resolve workplace concerns. Additional investigation is warranted into the impact that unions and collective bargaining are having on worker leverage in the BCs. Furthermore, an examination of the relationship between trade unions, collective bargaining, and the BCs would be a good addition to the literature on private regulation and labour standards (Jackson et al. 2018).

## **7 Recommendations**

The following two recommendations draw broadly from the preceding analysis and detailed discussion put forth in this report:

**Recommendation 1:** Include the "Elect, Represent, Protect, Empower" framework as a new WPC training module for both Gap Inc. staff and BC members. Currently BC members learn how to set up the BC, and understand that worker reps should be elected. There may be issues in leaving it at this, as we know from other research that workers may not be engaged in the election process. This means adapting the training to include, for example:

- Taking into greater consideration the amount of notice given to workers to think about who they want to elect as their representatives
- Taking time to meet with workers and explain how the BC reps can help them in the workplace, perhaps including examples/stories of previous times when workers have been able to make an impact in the workplace

- Conduct a ‘check’ on workplace policies that are in place to protect workers from retaliation and discrimination. Revise them or establish them if they are not already in place. At a minimum, protections for workers who bring issues to the BC, and protections for BC worker reps who raise issues in meetings.
- Include training on local labour law and international labour standards, as well as what other forms of protection the WPC offers workers

**Recommendation 2:** Include “Knowledge Dissemination” in the WPC training module on BC Roles and Responsibilities, including that it should remain a topic in all subsequent BC meetings. Management and worker reps should map out floors, departments, workers in factory. Make sure BC worker reps are spread out across the factory. Discuss the possible methods for sharing information – formal, informal – and methods for communicating information quickly but efficiently. At the same time, management should take input from workers to learn what the best times and forums are for sharing information. Acknowledging production constraints, this might happen on the line when production is slower, or during breaks, though ideally management will also set aside a regular time for BC worker reps to share what they’ve learned with regular workers. This needs dedicated attention, otherwise the training will suffer from short reach and not be able to maximize outcomes in the workplace. Workers in Guatemala barely knew anything about the BC and overall had weaker perceptions of its usefulness or their comfort level in approaching the BC with an issue, whereas workers in India felt like they had a direct channel to management (and therefore to change) through their BC reps.

## **8 Conclusion**

Overall the WPC program appears to be having a positive impact on the shop floor. Workers and managers are enthusiastic about the changes that have taken place in terms of workplace relationships, and described through many illustrative examples how this is impacting their daily work. Though encouraging, one should be cautiously optimistic. Workers in Lesotho also had overwhelmingly positive feedback about the Better Work PICCs in the first impact assessment. By the second impact assessment, issues surfaced around a weakening of the PICC function, which hindered their ability to address workplace concerns (Pike 2020). Making the impact stick will be a key challenge for Gap Inc. and for bipartite committees.

Continued attention to improving communication and nurturing cooperative work relationships is an important starting point. These are the tools that unlock the door to more functional grievance channels, productive problem solving, and the kind of proactive risk assessment that position factories to perform better, and overall improve the quality of workers’ lives. If this key rests with only a handful of representatives who are privy to the WPC training, the prospects for ongoing improvement are bleak. Knowledge dissemination is going to be a critical component of the success of the WPC, which will be challenging given the global ‘sourcing squeeze’ (Anner 2018) on production and the immense pressures that management is under. There may be ways to ‘find time’ and increase knowledge dissemination without negatively impacting competitiveness, such as strategizing

on more efficient means of sharing information (e.g. new forms of technology; regular PA announcements; multiple bulletin boards; use of 'change agents' in the factory, etc.).

To end with a quote from a BC worker rep in India, which illustrates the potential power of the training to empower workers: "I'd really like to thank Gap for bringing this training to us because it made us feel like we have a lot more agency and like we can take accountability for what is happening to us in our lives. I'm grateful for the opportunities that this has opened to us, both in the workplace and also in our personal lives."

### **Appendix 1: Logistical Considerations**

With the exception of Guatemala, most interviews took place in the late evenings (EST) as participants preferred to hold interviews in the mornings but were in time zones that were +11 or 12 hours ahead of EST. Given this, the window for conducting interviews was generally from around 7pm-11pm EST, and no more than two interviews would be conducted on any given night. All of the focus groups with BC worker reps and regular workers required the presence of a translator. A flexible schedule and access to an internationally diverse student population at York University facilitated a decent level of efficiency with the interviews (19 interviews/focus groups in one month).

Five students from York University assisted with translation and transcription services in Bangladesh (Bengali), China (Mandarin), Guatemala (Spanish), Philippines (Tagalog), and Vietnam (Vietnamese). A family member provided Hindi translation for the interviews in India. During the video meeting on Zoom, we spent several minutes upfront to allow the workers and student to exchange introductions and ensure they felt comfortable with the process. I would pose a question, the student would translate, workers responded in their own language, and this was translated to me. All meetings were recorded, and later transcribed by the student who translated. This served as an additional check for them to make sure they had recorded workers' feedback verbatim.

Though the logistics of remotely facilitating focus groups is an important concern, it should be considered a necessary component of any research or evaluation of programs that are intended to benefit workers. In this evaluation, it helped to complete the 'chain' of feedback BC management reps, BC worker reps and regular workers who all came from the same factory, and either directly or indirectly engaged in or exposed to the WPC.

## Appendix 2: Limitations

Due to time and budgetary constraints, research for this evaluation was conducted remotely through Zoom interviews with participants. This naturally creates a degree of distance between the interviewer and interviewee, though the interviews conducted for this research felt quite personal, open, dynamic and informative. Though it would have been ideal to travel to each of the countries and engage in interviews with participants along with a local interpreter, this mode of investigation generated some valuable insights regarding the impact of the WPC thus far.

In the Phase 1 evaluation, factories were selected randomly from among those who had been trained by the Gap Inc. staff interviewed. BC management reps were then selected from those factories based on their fluency in English language. In some cases, only one management rep from a BC was fluent in English, so this limited 'random' selection. In the Phase 2 evaluation, I sought to interview the same BC management reps, to learn from them how things had changed over time. This was valuable for consistency over time, though the sample was still limited to BC management reps who spoke English.

These management reps were then asked to organize all of the BC worker reps in their respective factories to meet with me for a focus group discussion. Though it does not eliminate the possibility that management reps could have 'briefed' the worker reps, I made it clear to worker reps that there were no 'right' answers, and that this was simply an investigation to understand where/how the program could be improved. I tried to address the limitation of potential 'briefing' or 'coaching' workers by taking time to explain to BC management reps that I was trying to understand the 'reach' of the program, and that getting genuine feedback from the worker reps would help me to provide Gap Inc. with feedback on what they could further do to assist the BC to function effectively.

Whether the selection of regular workers was entirely 'random' cannot be 100% confirmed given the research design. Having incorporated this element into the research design for the first time in this evaluation, I used the opportunity to build on the relationships I had established with BC management reps, and continued to seek their involvement in organizing the research. In subsequent evaluations, I would ask BC worker reps to select the regular workers, to further eliminate the chance of bias. Most of the regular workers who participated in the focus groups replied that they were asked to attend this meeting, and most knew it was about the WPC. Several workers did not know much about the WPC, and in at least two of the four focus groups I spent time to explain what the WPC was about. This lack of awareness could imply that they had not been coached on what to say. Nonetheless, selection of workers remains a limitation, and therefore constrains the ability to generalize the findings from regular workers (though doesn't take away from the findings among BC members).

Despite building trust with BC reps, it's possible that regular workers may have felt shy or intimidated in a meeting held remotely with someone on the other side of the world. Acknowledging this, I hired five students from York University who represented five of the six countries involved in the research and could therefore speak

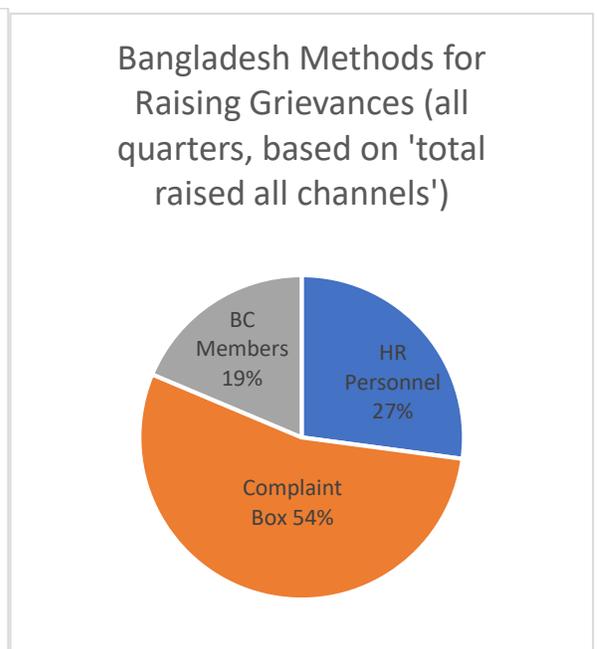
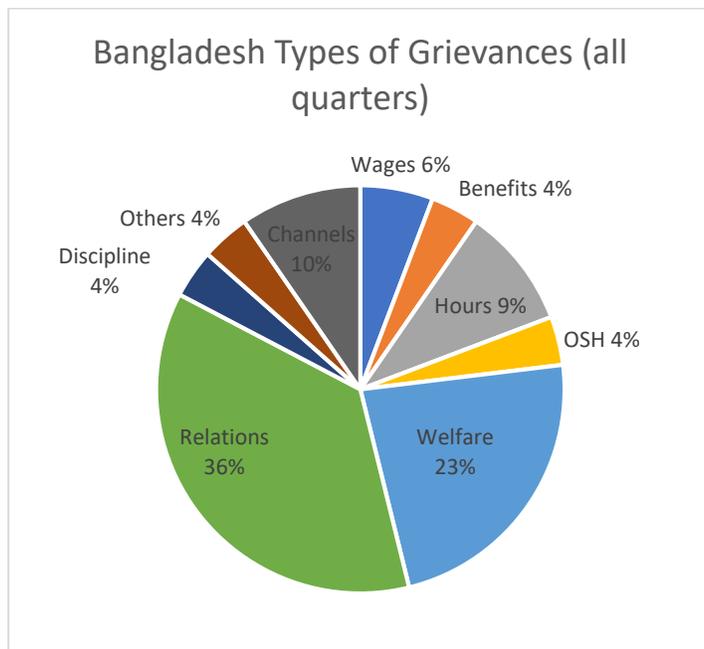
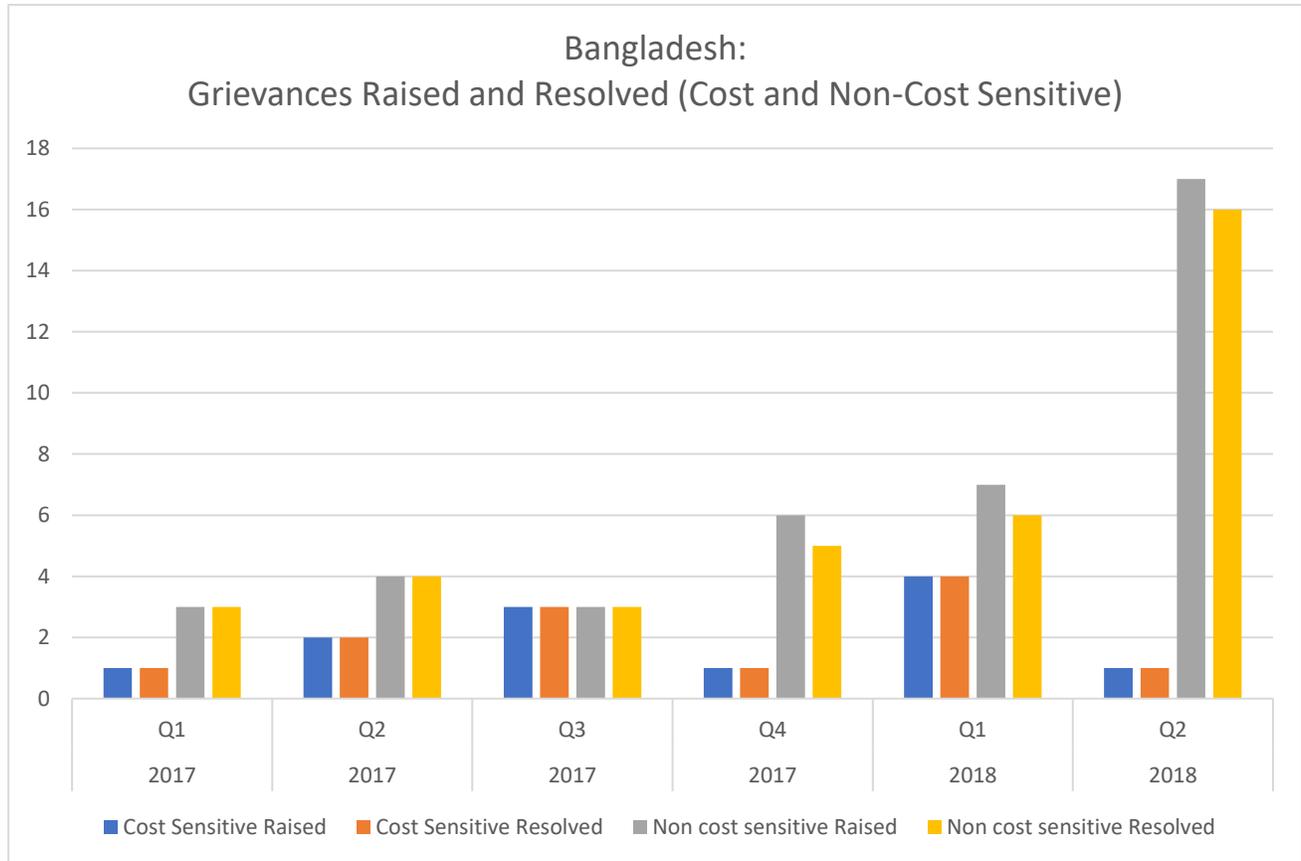
those languages (I had a family member assist with translation for research participants in India). This served to ease the workers, first of all through being able to speak their own language, secondly through spending time upfront to introduce ourselves and let them ask the student interpreter any questions they wanted. This often turned into small discussions about where exactly the student was from, how they like Canada, if they miss home, etc. and added a degree of familiarity and comfort. Workers could also see the comfortable dynamic between my students and I, and were generally made to feel that there were no right or wrong answers, and that their feedback was really helpful in terms of providing feedback on improving cooperation in their workplace.

By way of a preview, the feedback from both BC reps and regular workers in this Phase 2 evaluation was quite positive. Though some might critique that this is too 'sunny' or almost 'too good to be true', I would take the findings with a grain of salt. These are the early days of the program, and since the Phase 1 evaluation most BC reps have now completed the eight modules and have had a chance to see some initial improvements in their workplaces. Whether and how these improvements will be sustained over time is a larger question to keep in mind and evaluate in the upcoming years.

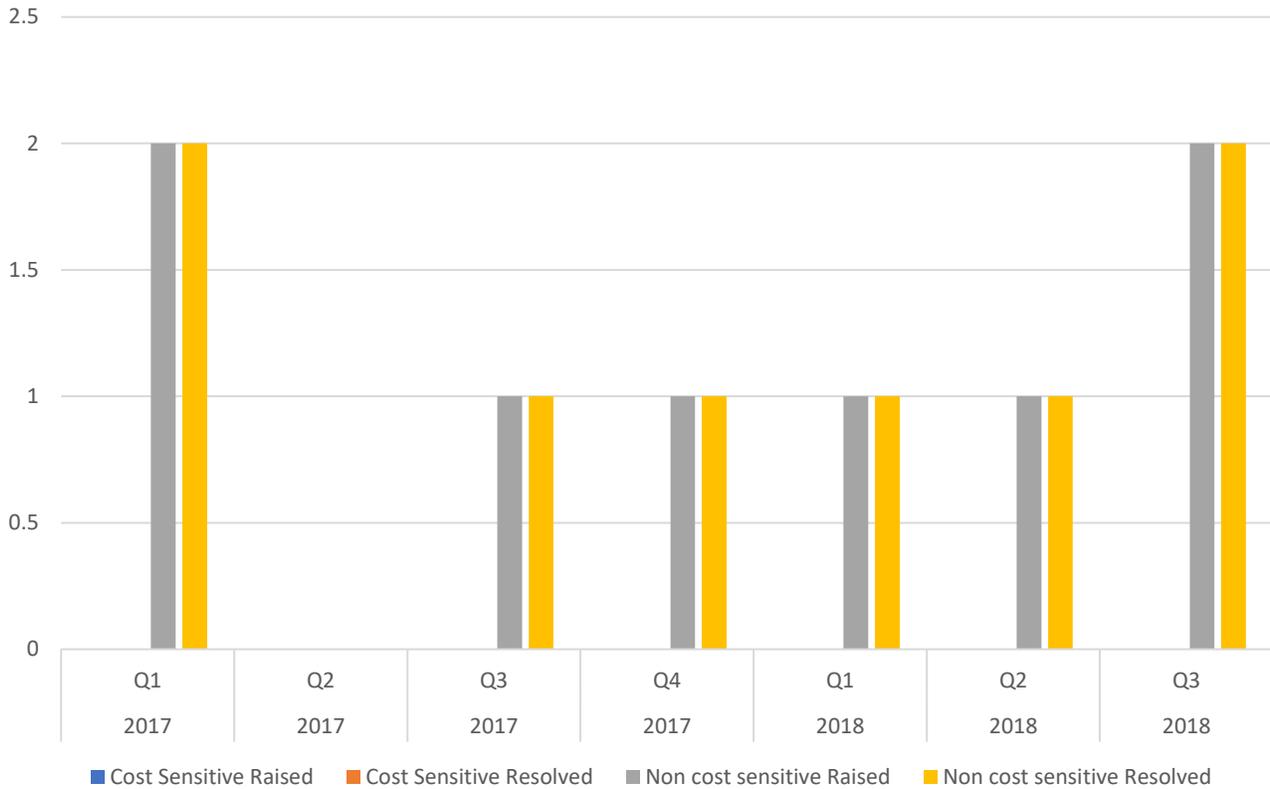
### **Appendix 3: Baseline-Endline Survey for Non-BC and BC Representatives**

1. Is there a Worker Management Committee or BiPartite Committee at your facility?
2. How well do you understand the function of the Bi-Partite Committee?
3. If you have a workplace issue, suggestion, or complaint, who do you usually approach about it?
  - a. If selected others, please specify
4. Do you know who the Bi-Partite Committee representative from your department is?
  - a. If YES, please enter the representative's name here (Endline: "Who is your BC Rep?")
5. How was the Bi-Partite Committee representative from your department selected?
6. Does the Bi-Partite Committee representative of your department ask for any suggestion, complaint, or feedback from you?
7. If there is a workplace issue, how comfortable are you sharing it with your Bi-Partite Committee representative?
8. Have you ever shared a complaint or suggestion with your Bi-Partite committee representative?
9. How do you hear about the decisions made in Bi-Partite Committee meetings?
  - a. If selected others, please specify
10. How satisfied are you with the decisions that are made by the Bi-Partite Committee on workplace issues?
11. In your opinion, how useful is the Bi-Partite Committee for the workforce as a whole?
12. How would you describe the quality of the relationship between workers and management?
13. Do you have any other suggestions on how the Bi-Partite Committee can be improved?
  - a. If yes, what suggestions do you have for improving the Bi-Partite Committee?

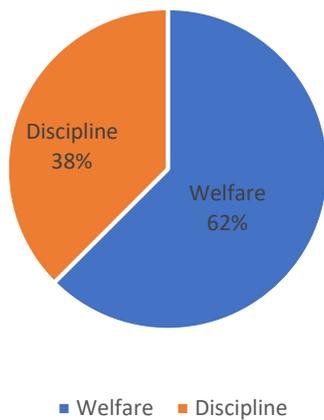
**Appendix 4: Grievance Impact Data**



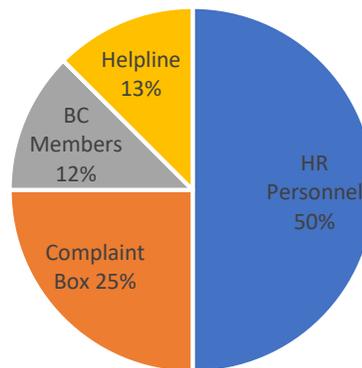
### China: Grievances Raised and Resolved (cost and non-cost sensitive)



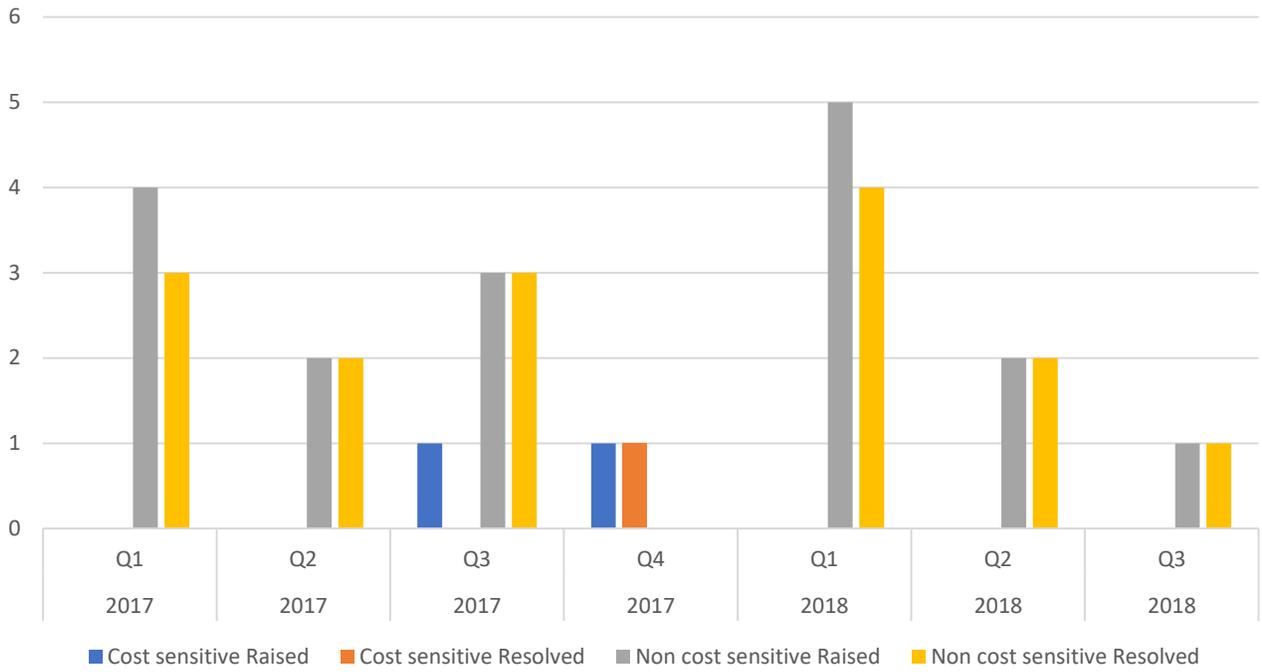
### China Types of Grievances Raised (all quarters, based on 'grievances raised')



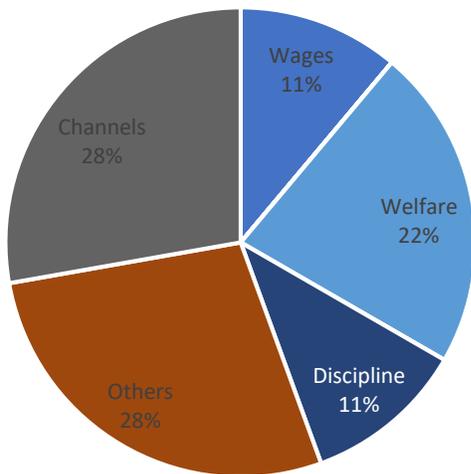
### China Methods for Raising Grievances (all quarters, based on 'total raised all channels')



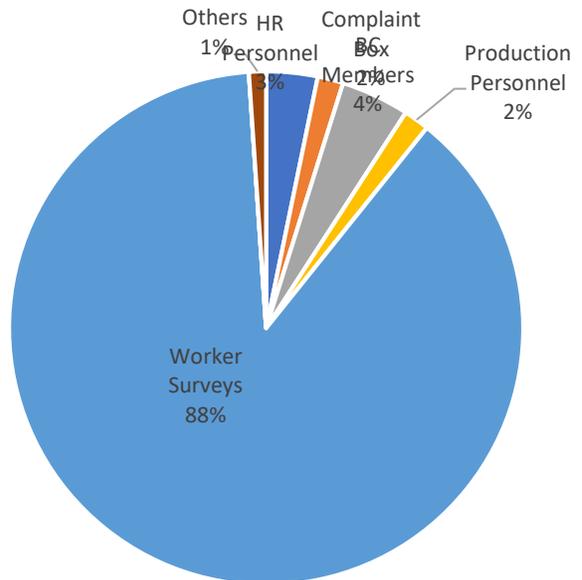
### Guatemala: Grievance Impact Data: cost and non-cost sensitive



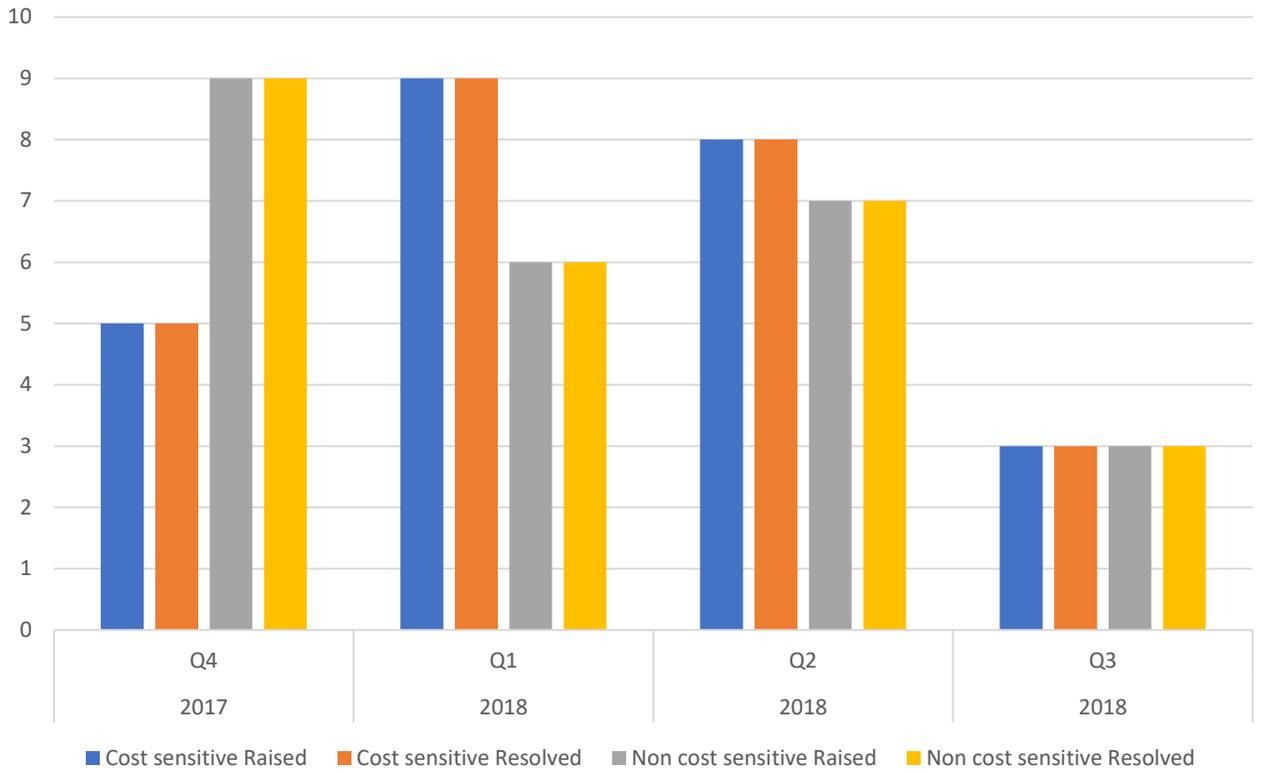
### Guatemala Types of Grievances Raised



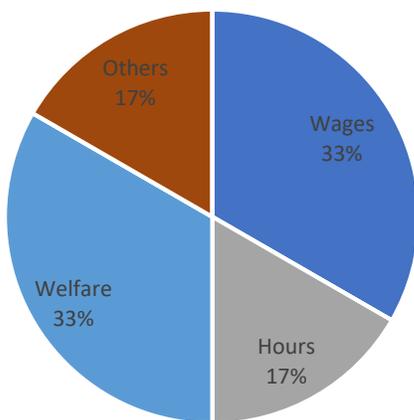
### Guatemala Methods for Raising Grievances (all quarters)



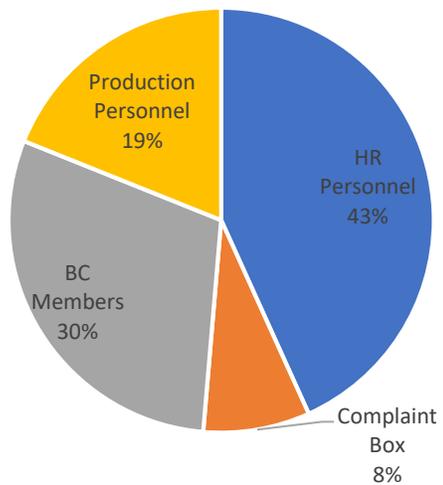
**India:**  
Grievances Raised and Resolved (cost and non-cost sensitive)



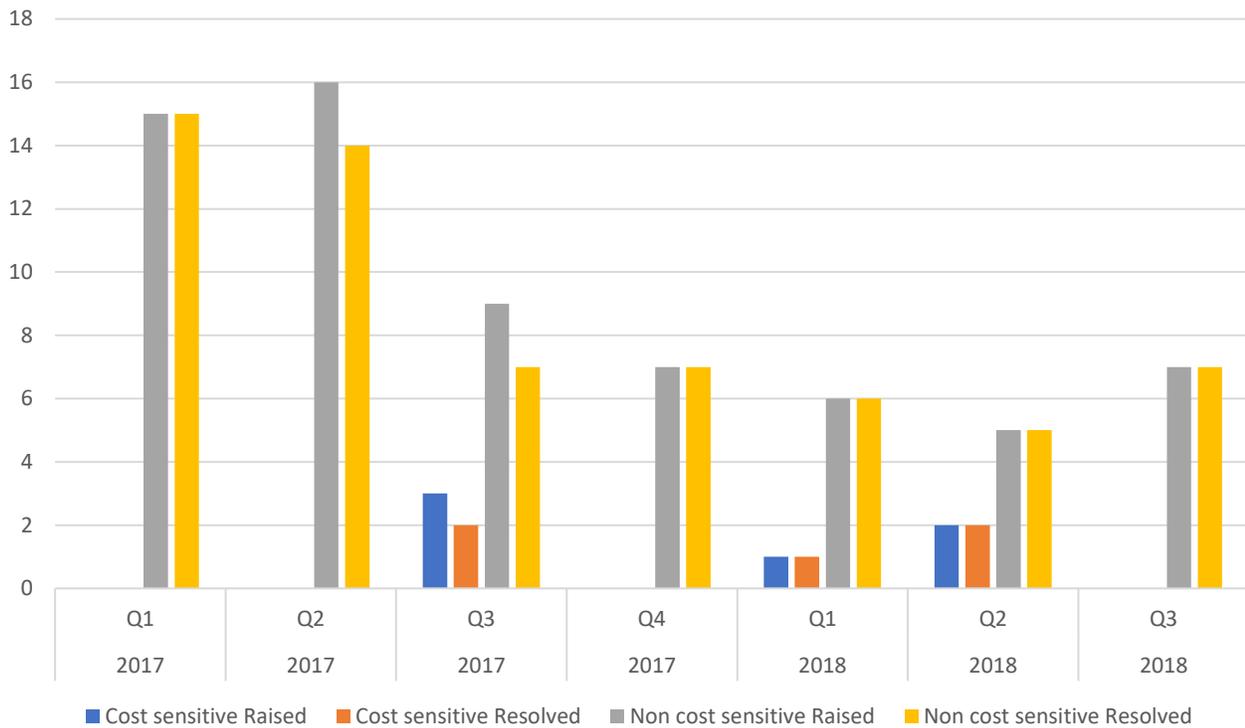
**India Types of Grievances Raised (all quarters)**



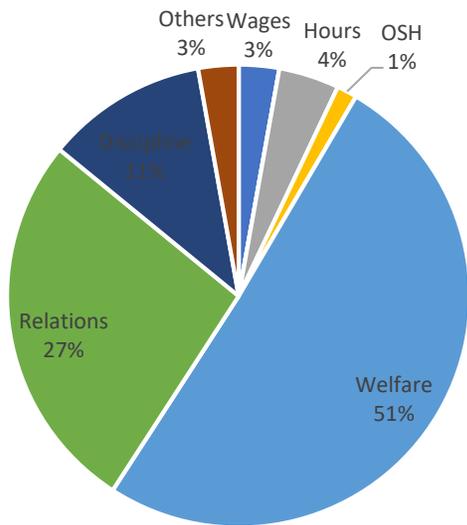
**India Methods for Raising Grievances (all quarters)**



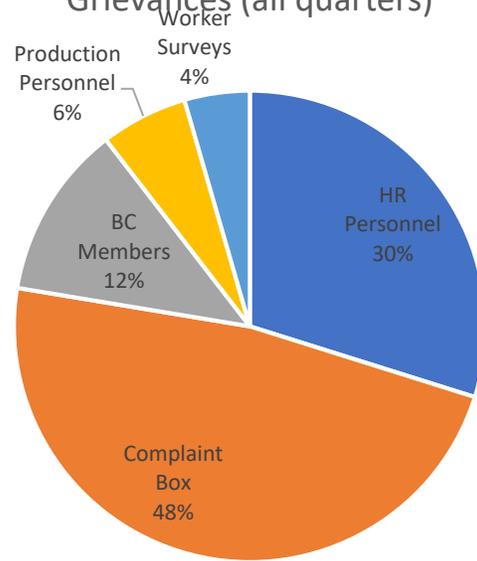
### Philippines: Grievances Raised and Resolved (cost and non-cost sensitive)



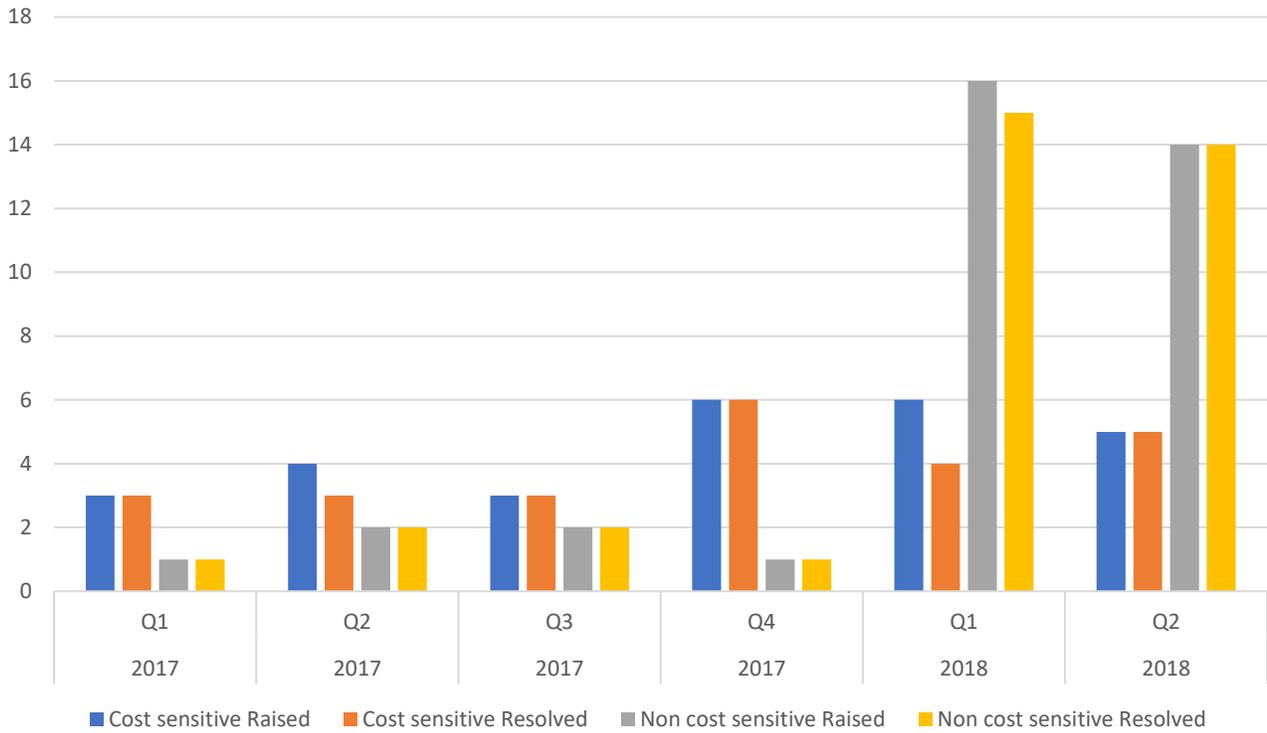
### Philippines Types of Grievances Raised (all quarters)



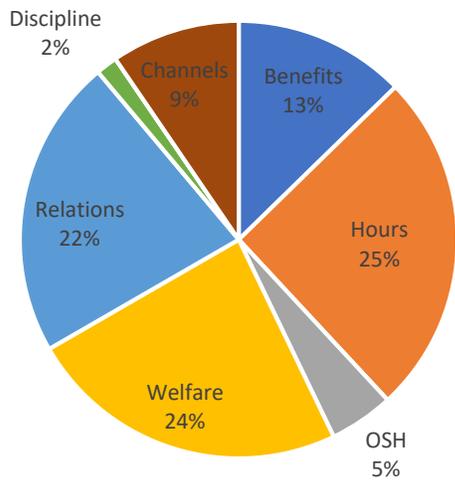
### Philippines Methods for Raising Grievances (all quarters)



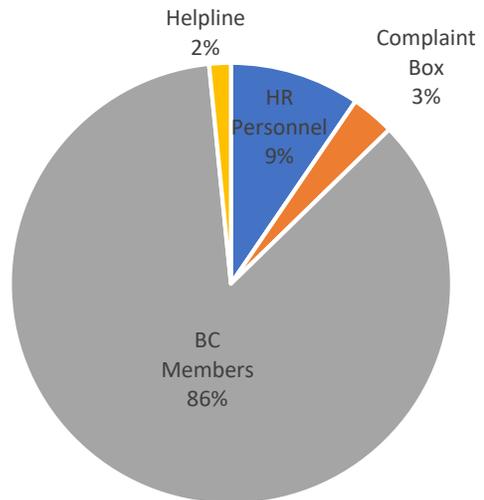
### Vietnam: Grievances Raised and Resolved (cost and non cost sensitive)



### Vietnam Types of Grievances Raised (all quarters)



### Vietnam Methods for Raising Grievances (all quarters)



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