

Young Women's Garment Group

FEDA began this project in 1997-8. The idea behind setting up this Garment production facility in the Ksach Poy village was to curb the migration of rural women to urban areas, and to keep resources in the village.

Because of the uncertain security situation in Cambodia, people often want to stay close to their families. Women who go to work in the cities are perceived in Khmer culture as prostitutes. They often simply work in factories in the city, but have to pay a lot for accommodation and travel and are split from their families in order to help their families survive.



In Ksach Poy village about 10 women went to Thailand and Phnom Penh to work. The leader of the women at FEDA's garment factory - known to all as Mom - says "They think they can make more money elsewhere, they think they will be more happy when they go to the big city."

By staying in the village the women have much lower costs. They also have time to plant rice with their family and to help at home in other ways.

As well as allowing the district's young women to stay with their families, the factory brings money into the village which benefits local markets, and businesses in the village.

The Textile Factory Today

Today there are 60 women registered with the FEDA Women's Factory. About 20 work at home on their own machines, and the other 40 come to work in the textile building in Ksach Poy Village. Women come from eight different villages in the area: Chher Teal, Kampong Chalong, Balang, Chrab Krasaing, Ksach Poy, Kampong Seima, Kampong Ampil, and Svay Pao.

The women are aged from 16 to 40, with the majority aged between 20 and 30. Most of them come from families of five to eight people, but some have as many as ten in their family. Of the 60 women only 5 are married.

In addition to their work at the factory they also plant rice and undertake household chores like washing, cooking and cleaning.

There are two categories of garment workers at the factory. The more experienced can make 7000 riel (USD 1.75) per day, while the less experienced can make 3500 (88 cents) riel per day. Shifts at the factory run seven days per week for nine hours per day, but are flexible depending on the availability of the workers. Workers are paid by the piece, so there is no minimum number of hours a particular woman has to work. Those who wish to earn more money by completing more pieces do more hours. The women spend the

money they earn on rice, other food, clothes for their families, medicine, and education.

In Phnom Penh garment factories, the average wage is from USD 40 – USD 60 per month. Women live in collective housing and travel to work every day, sending home the rest of their salaries to their families. Shifts in Phnom Penh are usually 12 hours per day.

The FEDA women's garment factory contract is run by a small company in Thailand, which sends pre-cut patterns for the women, and provides the buttons, zippers etc. Once the garments are finished they are taken back to the Thai border. They are sold through small shops in Thailand. 3% of the profit goes to FEDA for machine repair and capacity building.

Most recently the FEDA women's factory has been making male shorts, with many pockets. The factory can make about 150 shorts per day. Shipments are sent every two days by motorbike to Poipet (on the Thai border). Previous contracts have included other types of garments such as school uniforms.

Mom says “The factory is important to the villagers because the women can earn money to help their families without having to go far away. They can stay near their parents, help look after their families in the evening, and save more money because they do not have the added costs of living outside of their home.”