

#Social dialogue between management and workers

#Cambodia

Made in Asia

Good practices on the way to a sustainable textile and garment sector

Social dialogue committees to find beneficial solutions for workers and management

The Challenge

As workers are the affected parties in cases of noncompliance with social and labour standards, using workers feedback and resolving these issues may be key to improve working conditions and employee satisfaction while ensuring compliance with the relevant standards.

In Cambodia, every enterprise of a certain size is required to have workers' representatives, who are the spokesmen for workers' grievances. Workers can file complaints and grievances regarding their working conditions by speaking to the so-called Shop Stewards. The Shop Stewards present the grievances to the employer.

The Cambodian Labour Law specifies the grievance channels, but not how to manage and resolve these complaints. But the latter is the linchpin to achieve real improvements for the factory workers and to ensure compliance. To manage resources efficiently and use the full potential of the Shop Steward system, Dewhirst Cambodia thought of ways to manage complaints and grievances most effectively.

Dewhirst Cambodia formed so-called Social Dialogue Committees consisting of Shop Stewards and the factory management. The Social Dialogue Committee is a platform where worker representatives and the management discuss issues which are forwarded by the workers and find mutually beneficial solutions to resolve workers' complaints.

The Initiative

As of its foundation in 2011, Dewhirst Cambodia implemented a Social Dialogue Committee. Currently, it consists of 28 members with three or four people from the management (sometimes including the general manager) and worker representatives including Shop Stewards or unions or both of them. The Dewhirst Cambodia is required by law to have 23 Shop Stewards. The committee meets at least twice a month, in urgent cases more often.

Every two years a new Committee is formed. The worker representatives are elected by the workforce, the representatives of the management are chosen by the general manager. The worker representatives are receiving complaints from the workers. In the committee these issues are raised and possible solutions are discussed. The relevant department will introduce a corrective action plan

to solve the problem. The committee reviews the implementation of the plan by the relevant department.

The Benefit

First of all, the Social Dialogue Committee realizes real improvements for the workers. The committee discussed for example the issue of heat in the factory or the issue of connection of the toilets to the production site. The management came up with the following solutions:

- A roof was installed to connect the production buildings to the toilets.
- Additional fans and cooling systems were installed to reduce the heat in the production site.

Furthermore, the Social Dialogue Committee improves the situation for the management. Through the platform for exchange between management and the workers, trust and commitment of the workers towards management and the company are gained. By finding solutions to workers' grievance, the workers feel heard and recognized. As a result, management perceives improved employee satisfaction which results in a better retention rate and higher productivity.

Quotes

"The social dialogue gives us the chance to raise our concern to the management, and the management takes action very fast. The factory management really takes care of us!"

Ms. Ken Sinat, Trouser trainer and a member of the workers' committee.

"With the social dialogues, we understand the needs of the management and the management understands us. That was really important to create the trust we now have on this committee. The management is fast in implementing the corrective action plan and the provided benefits exceed the legislations."

Ms. Vuthea, Merchandise and Planning and a member of the workers' committee.

Dewhirst Cambodia Co. Ltd is producing jackets, trousers and waistcoats. 2,300 workers work for the factory.

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