

# HERrespect

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# What is HERproject?

*Empowered Women, Dignified Work, Better Business*

## About HERproject

BSR's HERproject is a collaborative initiative that strives to empower low-income women working in global supply chains. Bringing together international companies, their suppliers, and local NGOs, HERproject drives impact for women and business via workplace-based interventions on health, financial inclusion, and gender equality.



## Our Programs



**Increasing the ability of low-income women to take charge of their health**



**Expanding financial inclusion of low-income workers**



**Promoting gender equality and tackling violence against women**

## Our Impact



**1,000,000**  
Women



**620,000**  
Men



**900+**  
Factories  
& Farms



**70+**  
Companies

# About HERrespect

- HERrespect seeks to **encourage gender-equitable attitudes and relationships** among women and men, which can ultimately contribute to **preventing violence and harassment** in the workplace and in intimate relationships. :



## Building capacity of workers and managers



Changing attitudes on gender norms through training



Building skills to prevent and address violence



Conducting joint sessions between workers (women and men) and management to develop assertive communication skills



## Improving policies and practices at the workplace



Reviewing policies and processes to prevent and address workplace violence



Informing workers of policies and process applicable in the factory, as well as local laws



Creating linkages to community services and local initiatives

- HERrespect was developed with funding from DFID's What Works program. We have partnerships with NGOs/ gender experts in each country of operation, ensuring that the program is adapted to the local context and gender dynamics.

# Key Outcomes of HERrespect

Through HERrespect, we see the following improvements for participants:



**Less acceptance of violence against women**



Increased awareness on **what constitutes sexual harassment.**



**Less acceptance of gender-unequal statements**



**Greater sense of empowerment** as participants feel they can play a role in stopping violence



**Greater awareness on internal support mechanisms** for affected women (e.g. policies and processes) and **higher male engagement** contributing to greater and more sustainable shifts in gender equity

**The biggest takeaway is that HERrespect supports shift in attitudes, which are often the most engrained**

# What we are hearing from business

Companies face increasing pressure to act on GBV and there is a growing understanding of the benefits of tackling the issue

## GBV prevention is a business issue...



In **Cambodia**, turnover, absenteeism, and presenteeism related to violence cost USD \$89 million / year for the industry (0.52% of Cambodia's GDP).  
In **Vietnam**, garment workers needed one additional hour per day to reach production targets because of prevalent verbal abuse.

## ...that can contribute to brands reputation



**50% of consumers** considered that it is the brand's responsibility to ensure that clothes are ethically made and do not contribute to violence

## ...and can ensure alignment with international and national regulations



The ILO just adopted a legally-binding **Convention on the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work**  
Over **50 countries** have prohibited sexual harassment at work through national legislation or labor codes.



# Opportunities and challenges

Business is not a traditional partner with civil society on women's empowerment and rights, but our experience demonstrates that we can build **powerful and impactful partnerships**.

## Opportunities

- **Companies can bring assets and incentives** to women's empowerment programming – financial resources but also skills and incentives in their supply chain.
- **Partnerships with companies allow for scale and reach**, including reaching women that may not be reached through community-based programming
- **Potential community spillover effect** of GBV programs that are workplace based.

## Challenges

- **Some companies still perceive GBV as a private matter**, and don't understand how it also impacts business performance.
- **Companies may also be hesitant to broach this subject** with the fear of rise in the number of complaints and their own reputation.
- **Companies often do not have the skill sets or experience** to take on a sensitive issue like GBV, potentially resulting in inadequate services or further risk of GBV for women – that's why partnership is crucial.

# Tips to engage with the private sector

Avenues for NGOs to successfully engage with the private sector:

- **Understand the industry** and the environment where the company operates.
- **Showcase relevant experiences** and share the quantitative and qualitative impacts of your interventions.
- **Build trust** by providing references that can vouch for your work and integrity.
- **Prepare a business and social case** of a GBV intervention. Companies might be skeptical of the relevance of a GBV prevention program for their business. A clear communication of the business and social benefits of the program can ensure buy-in.
- **Link to business commitments** and broader company strategy and objectives, especially when those relate to women's empowerment or worker safety and wellbeing.
- **Offer your expertise.** NGOs can provide legal and gender expertise on prevention of sexual harassment and play an advisory role in companies. For example, in India it is mandatory to have an external representative (mostly from an NGO or a legal expert) in the Internal Committee.

## Do's and Don'ts

- **Speak their language.** Always look and act professional. Adapt your vocabulary: avoid jargon and don't assume they master all concepts.
- **Respect their time.** Companies operate under very thin margins, and each minute counts. Always be on time, give notice if a change arises.
- **Be flexible.** Be ready to change plans and to adapt to their constraints. Identify the essential pieces of your program, and the "nice to haves", this will lead to more efficient negotiations. If not possible for private sector company to fund a program entirely, explore cost share agreement or consortiums.