

Chapter Ten: Welfare

10.1. General Introduction

As is pointed out in the ILO manual, *Improving Working Conditions and Productivity in the Garment Industry* –

“Work-related welfare facilities are often ignored. Who cares about toilets, first-aid kits, lunchrooms or lockers? What do they have to do with the hard realities of production? One answer is that workers care. During each working day, workers need to drink water or some other beverage, eat meals and snacks, wash their hands, visit a lavatory, and rest to recover from fatigue. This can be difficult or easy, unpleasant or comfortable, a health risk or an aid to hygiene and nutrition. The essential welfare facilities in your factory show whether you care about workers more than you care about your machines. Worker dissatisfaction can be costly.”

10.2. Core Information

In this section we will look at some of the most important welfare facilities that should be provided in your factory, including:

- Drinking water;
- Sanitary facilities;
- First-aid and health care facilities;
- Rest areas;
- Lockers and changing facilities;
- Canteens and eating areas;
- Child care facilities;

Drinking Water

Fluids are essential for all workers. In the hot, humid conditions that exist in many garment factories, workers sweat and begin to dehydrate. As we have already seen in section 4 on *Temperature*, this will result in fatigue, loss of concentration and loss of productivity. Workers must be provided with readily available drinks (ideally drinks that contain electrolytes are best as water alone can lead to muscle cramps). In Cambodia this is a legal requirement under Prakas 054 -

Prakas 054 requires:

- **Employers shall provide sufficient hygienic drinks for his/her employees;**
- **Such hygienic drinks must be put in a container with a cover and a spout at the bottom;**
- **The drinks container must be put near the workstations;**
- **The employer must arrange for hygienic glasses or other drinking vessels to be used;**
- **No one is allowed to bring intoxicant drinks in to the workplace or to supply them during working hours.**

Some key points to remember with the supply of drinking water are:

- provide water containers conveniently near each group of workers thereby minimising the time spent going to/from the container to get a drink;
- make sure that the container is not too near the toilets, washrooms, machinery, electrical cables, junction boxes etc., where it can become contaminated by dust, bacteria, chemicals, etc., or cause accidents;
- make sure that the water is clean and safe to drink either by drinking boiled water or ensuring that it has been properly filtered or treated;
- if piped water is used, again it must be clean and safe and the taps should have signs which clearly demarcate potable and non-potable water with signs such as “Safe Drinking Water”. Try to provide cool water in the container and never leave it uncovered in the sun or near a hot process;
- as required under Prakas 054, hygienic drinking vessels must be provided as must facilities to wash them;
- if the water is provided in a container, is the water replaced daily.

Sanitary Facilities

What are the sanitary facilities like in your factory? (See pictures 59 and 60)



Picture 59 and 60: Look at these toilets from different garment factories. Which one would you prefer to use?

It isn't just the state of the toilets that is important, the number of toilets is also essential as outlined in Prakas 052-

Prakas 052 on Toilet Arrangements stipulates that:

- **The employer shall arrange to have decent and sanitized toilets for employees and workers on the premises;**
- **The number of toilets must be arranged separately between male and female workers and employees as follows-**

Number of workers/employees (male or female)	Number of toilets
1 – 15	1
16 – 35	2
36 – 55	3
56 – 80	4
81 – 110	5
111 – 150	6
151 – 1000	One additional for every 50 persons
More than 1000	One additional for every 70 persons

- **Installation must be arranged as follows:**
 - **floors and walls are not seeping;**
 - **door can be closed with latch from inside;**
 - **has good lighting;**
 - **if the toilets are outside, there must be a cover to keep off the rain;**
- **The soiled water must be drained away with proper sanitation;**
- **Where the establishment employs 150 female workers or more, there must be one high-seat toilet for every 50 workers;**
- **There must be clean, clear water and sufficient soap at each toilet for workers to wash;**
- **Each toilet must be cleaned at least once a day.**

Thus, the regulations require clean toilets and washrooms for the workers, with separate facilities for male and female workers. Clean towels should also be provided if electric hand dryers are not available. Some factories also provide sanitary napkins for their female workers.

First-aid and Health Care Facilities

As we have already seen accidents do occur in the workplace and workers require immediate first-aid as a result of any injuries suffered (refer back to picture 13 which shows a needle in a worker's finger). This requires two items:

1. Trained medical support/first-aiders;
2. first-aid equipment.

Again, Cambodian regulations are fairly specific and clear on this subject as in regulation 330:

It states:

- Employers of enterprises employing at least 50 workers shall establish a permanent infirmary;
- On the location and size:
 - it shall be near the workplace;
 - it shall be accessible to all patients;
 - it shall have adequate ventilation and lighting;
 - it shall be free from noise, dust, smoke and other contaminants;
 - it shall be in proportion to the number of personnel but, no smaller than 20 square meters.
- The number and type of medical personnel shall be in proportion to the number of workers as follows:

Number of employees	Number of nurses (male or female)	Number of physicians	Minimum presence of medical personnel per 8 hour shift
50 – 300	1 person on standby	1 doctor or 1 infirmary	2 hours
301 – 600	1 person on standby	1 doctor	2 hours
601 – 900	2 persons on standby	1 doctor	3 hours
901 – 1400	2 persons on standby	1 doctor	4 hours
1401 – 2000	2 persons on standby	1 doctor	6 hours
Over 2000	3 persons on standby	1 doctor	8 hours

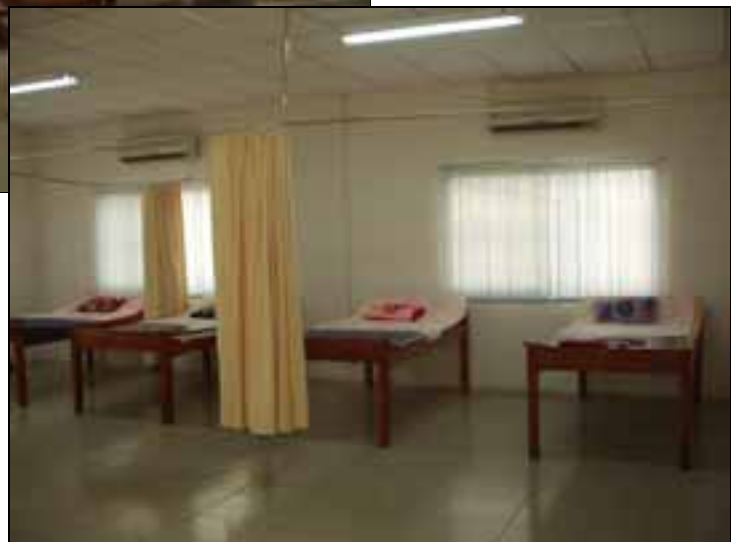
When the factory needs to work overtime, the infirmary shall have nurses and physicians on standby during that time.

- The minimum equipment (*see pictures 61 and 62*) it shall have will be:
 - a table;
 - 3 chairs;
 - a cupboard for documents;
 - a cupboard for medicines;
 - 2 beds with mattresses and sheets;
 - a sterilizing machine
- Enterprise employing more than 200 workers shall have sufficient beds for patients at a rate of 2% up to a maximum of 20 beds;
- If the enterprise is multi-sited, any part of the enterprise employing more than 50 workers that is more than 5 km away from the main site shall have the requisite medical cover as though it was a separate factory.

Some enterprises have less than 50 workers in which case the regulation stipulates that:

- if there are less than 20 workers, the factory shall have one first-aid box and one first-aid worker;
- if the workforce is between 20 and 49, the enterprise shall have one first-aid room with one nurse and be equipped as outlined above.

There is obviously a need to verify the qualifications of all medical staff working in the factories and to ensure that the first-aiders receive the most appropriate training. For example, Communique (number 139) from the MOSALVY, lays down some very specific guidelines for the qualifications required for all factory doctors, duties, terms of contract, etc. If your factory does have a number of trained first-aiders, it is important that every worker knows who they are. Their names should be put on the notice boards along with their photographs and, in some factories, they wear specific first-aid badges so that they can be recognised easily in case of an emergency.



Pictures 61 and 62: Good examples of what is required in the infirmary.

It is also important for the doctors/nurses/first-aiders to keep records of all accidents/injuries/treatments in an accident book. Obviously this is good practice to help you keep a tally of all dressings/medicines used so that more can be re-ordered, but, it also helps you to identify any health and safety problems you may have in certain sections of the factory. For example if one group of workers keeps coming because of needle wounds, then you should have maintenance look at the machine guards, If other

workers from the spot cleaning section are coming complaining of nausea and headaches, are they being affected by chemical being sprayed? In other words, the accident book is much more than a simple register – it can help to identify health and safety problems.

The factory should also have the requisite number of first-aid boxes that are clearly marked and located so that they are readily accessible in case of an emergency. A list of the contents and the names of first-aiders should be attached next to the box. The contents need to be regularly checked and replenished as necessary. A typical first-aid box should include:

- a leaflet giving basic advice on first-aid treatment;
- a number of individually wrapped sterile adhesive dressings of assorted sizes;
- sterile bandages and gauze pads;
- triangular bandages for slings;
- cotton wool for cleaning wounds;
- antiseptics;
- scissors, tweezers and safety pins;
- an eye bath, an eye wash bottle and sterile eye pads;
- some basic medicines such as aspirin or antacids (only where there is no medical facility or nurse/doctor).

All too often, first-aid boxes are locked (see pictures 63 and 64) –if this practice is followed in your factory, the key must be placed on a hook next to the box and not in the manager’s office (he may be away or in a meeting and have left messages not to be disturbed!). First-aid boxes are often locked to avoid the contents being removed for unauthorised use – it must be explained to everyone in the factory that the contents of the first-aid box are for use in an emergency only, and that next time it could be them!



Pictures 63 and 64: Locked first-aid boxes. Look closely at the picture on the right – not only is the first-aid box locked, it is kept in a locked cupboard! Rest Areas

It is important that workers have rest breaks away from their workstation and there is somewhere cool, clean and comfortable for them to relax. Productivity is higher and fatigue lower when workers have short breaks from their work throughout the day. Getting away for short periods from a noisy, dusty, hot workplace will help them to recover quickly. Special attention must be paid to pregnant workers, not only in terms of lighter duties, but also more frequent rest periods.

Lockers and Changing Facilities

Wherever possible, lockers and changing facilities should be provided for workers. Workers should be able to change into work clothes in changing areas that are private and allow the workers to wash or, if possible, shower before going home. This reduces the chances of taking contaminated work clothes back home to the family environment. The company should take care of all laundering of work clothes at no cost to the workers.

Workers should also be provided with lockable lockers in which to keep their clothes and personal belongings without fear of theft. The use of such lockers also adds to workplace safety as the workers don't take unnecessary personal items into the work areas.

Canteens and Eating Areas

Many factories provide meals for their workers at subsidised or no cost. The meals provided should be healthy and nutritious and prepared under hygienic conditions. The canteen should be clean, cool and airy (see picture 65).



Picture 65: A clean, bright, airy canteen in a garment factory.
Childcare Facilities

Many employers don't want to lose their workers when they become mothers, especially if they are highly skilled. These workers are often the most committed and efficient workers. Accordingly, an increasing number of employers are providing free child-care facilities in the workplace. These are bright rooms with some toys and a few pieces of furniture. It means that mothers can be in contact with their children during their breaks and take them home at the end of the working day.

REMEMBER:
Children must NEVER be allowed inside the factory!

10.3. Checklist for Welfare Facilities

	Yes	No	Action required
Is there an adequate supply of cool, safe drinking water at convenient places in the factory and away from the toilets?			
Unless the water is piped, is the water contained in suitable vessels, renewed daily and, as far as possible, free from contamination?			
Are clean cups or drinking vessels provided?			
Are adequate and suitable washing facilities provided?			
Are soap, running water and clean towels available in the washrooms?			
Are there the required number of separate toilets for men and women?			
Are the toilets regularly cleaned and close to the working areas?			
Are the toilets properly illuminated?			
Have "lockers" been provided for workers to keep their personal belongings and clothes separately for men and women?			
Have clothes drying facilities been provided?			
Are suitable resting facilities available for female workers?			
For workers with young children, are child care facilities available?			
Is there a separate, clean, comfortable and hygienic place for meals (not the workplace) available?			
Are cooking facilities available?			
Are properly equipped first-aid boxes available with a full list of contents?			

10.3. Checklist for Welfare Facilities (continued)

Are the first-aid boxes clearly sign posted, accessible and unlocked?			
Are there the correct numbers of first-aid boxes as specified under the regulations?			
Is there at least one first aid-box on every floor of the factory?			
Is the first-aid box placed under the responsibility of a trained first aider?			
Is a trained first-aider available at all times and on each floor of the factory?			
Is there a notice that clearly identifies the name (+ picture) of the trained first-aider/s?			
Do the first-aiders wear any identifying clothes/badges?			
Is there a well-equipped medical room in the factory?			
Is there a company doctor or nurse on site as specified under the regulations?			
Is there an occupational accident/illness book on site that records all workplace accidents and ill health?			

10.4. Summary

As was stated at the beginning of this section, some employers may think that the provision of proper welfare facilities is an unnecessary expense - why spend money, that to them, is directly linked in their minds to increases in productivity. How wrong they are – by showing that you care for your workers, the morale and general feeling of well-being amongst the workforce will pay dividends. Workers, especially your most skilled workers will want to stay – it isn't simply a case of more money.