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## **BSR Factory-Based Women's Health Program Delivers 4:1 Return on Investment for Business**

**SAN FRANCISCO—August 16, 2011—**[BSR](#)'s factory-based women's health education program has the potential to deliver a US\$4 return for every US\$1 invested in the project, according to a [new study](#) funded by the Levi Strauss Foundation and USAID in Egypt and Pakistan.

The [HERproject](#) (or Health Enables Returns) program, which uses a peer-to-peer model to educate female factory workers on basic health issues, has been implemented in more than 80 factories, reaching approximately 100,000 women in Bangladesh, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Vietnam.

The USAID-funded project Extending Service Delivery and its partner Meridian Group International, Inc., conducted the return-on-investment study in four factories in Egypt and Pakistan, in partnership with BSR, the Levi Strauss Foundation, and HERproject implementation partners, the Center for Development Services in Egypt and Aga Khan University in Pakistan. The study authors looked at absenteeism and turnover rates based on interviews, focus groups, and surveys with factory management and workers to determine the business benefits of the program. In one factory in Ismailia, Egypt, absentee rates fell from 19 percent to 10.7 percent, and turnover decreased from 14.5 percent to 8.1 percent, resulting in an estimated savings of \$48,000, which is equivalent to a 4:1 return on investment.

"This study—and the stories we have collected in our [recent report](#)—prove that investing in women's health pays off, not just for the women, but for business and the community at large," said [Racheal Yeager](#), HERproject Manager at BSR. "We hope this new evidence will encourage more widespread investment in workplace women's health programs."

The study revealed that HERproject offers many benefits:

- » Lower rates of worker absenteeism, early leave requests, and staff attrition
- » Fewer mistakes in manufactured garments
- » Workforce development, particularly of factory nurses and HERproject peer educators
- » More workers using existing resources such as facility nurses, doctors, and clinics
- » Improved worker satisfaction with management
- » Improved recruitment
- » International buyers' improved perception of factories' reputation

One factory manager in Karachi, Pakistan, told researchers that women now have access to a qualified health instructor. “They are able to discuss their health issues more openly, which is not very easy in our culture, where many things are considered taboo,” he said. This has made his factory a desirable place to work. “Our labor pool has increased tremendously,” he added.

The Pakistan example illustrates the positive cycle HERproject creates for women and for business. Women workers, often with low levels of education and limited professional skills, learn to share information quickly and easily through existing communications channels. As women change their behavior based on better information, their confidence increases and work productivity improves. As a result, management notices these changes and rewards the workers for improvement. Then the positive cycle of improvement begins again.

“We hope the results of the study will encourage more factories to invest in women’s health,” said Levi Strauss Foundation Executive Director Daniel Lee. “This study helps us demonstrate to our suppliers that empowering women and improving their access to health education and services is not only good for workers, but also good for business.”

HERproject is currently seeking funding and company participants for its 2012–2015 program cycle. Companies or foundations interested in learning more can contact Racheal Yeager at [ryeager@bsr.org](mailto:ryeager@bsr.org). To read the study, visit [www.bsr.org/en/our-insights/report-view/herproject-business-returns-from-womens-health-programs](http://www.bsr.org/en/our-insights/report-view/herproject-business-returns-from-womens-health-programs).

### **About BSR**

A leader in corporate responsibility since 1992, BSR works with its global network of more than 250 member companies to develop sustainable business strategies and solutions through consulting, research, and cross-sector collaboration. With offices in Asia, Europe, and North America, BSR uses its expertise in the environment, human rights, economic development, and governance and accountability to guide global companies toward creating a just and sustainable world. Visit [www.bsr.org](http://www.bsr.org) for more information.

### **About Levi Strauss Foundation**

The Levi Strauss Foundation drives pioneering social change by funding community programs that advance justice and provide opportunities for disadvantaged people. Its global philanthropy is grounded in the enduring values of Levi Strauss & Co.: originality, integrity, empathy, and courage. Levi Strauss & Co. is one of the world’s largest apparel companies and the leader in jeanswear, marketing its products under the Levi’s®, Dockers®, and dENiZEN™ brands.

The Levi Strauss Foundation supports the Company’s commitment to responsible sourcing by partnering with nonprofit organizations that advance the rights and well-being of apparel workers in places where our products are made. Since 1999, more than \$8 million have been invested in programs that have benefited more than one million workers in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, with special attention to the needs of women in apparel factory settings. For more information, go to <http://levistrauss.com>.