

A black and white photograph showing several women working in a textile factory. They are focused on their tasks, with their hands near rows of spools or bobbins. The image has a red overlay at the bottom, which contains the title text.

HERproject China: Empowering Women Workers





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Letter from the Director

Since 2007, HERproject has been providing women's health education and access to services through factory programs in China. We created the program to respond to the overwhelming need of young women working in factories to improve their awareness and ability to take better care of their health.

Seven years later, HERproject has grown significantly within China and expanded to many more countries around the world, including Bangladesh, India, Egypt, and Kenya, among others. Together with a global network of 16 implementing partners and 30 multinational companies, our work has shown that the workplace can support health interventions and that women working in factories take action to improve their health when they are provided with the information they need. We've also seen business benefits—from quantitative evidence of return on investment (ROI) to intangibles like improved attitudes and relationships.

HERproject has reached more than 100,000 women in China alone, delivering meaningful changes to women's lives by helping them improve their hygiene, reproductive health, and confidence in seeking health services. Through our peer-to-peer education methodology, we've also helped participating women become health leaders in their factories and communities. As one peer educator we interviewed said, "This project not only enabled me to acquire women's health knowledge but also developed my organizational and leadership abilities." Later in this report, we share inspiring stories from Mrs. Li and Liu Guofeng, who are spreading the information they learn through HERproject to their daughters and neighbors.

These stories are our stories, and they tell of an alternative future for women working in factories—that they can take home more than wages and lead their communities in creating better lives for both girls and boys.

HERproject presents particular value within China's modern labor context. Amid high and rising worker turnover, the workforce's increasing demands for better conditions and enhanced pay and benefits, and an ever growing shortage of labor as the one-child generation grows up, HERproject can provide meaningful solutions to employees and employers alike. This report shares some of those solutions and encourages more companies to join us in our efforts to improve women's lives as a priority for inclusive and sustainable business in China and beyond.

In many ways, wage-earning women hold the highest potential in the global economy—both from an economic standpoint and from a gender-equality perspective. We know they are risk-takers. They're also influencers. Their wages support multiple family members, and their earning power is respected by whole communities. If we can make factory jobs better and more responsive to these women's needs and wants, the benefits will multiply tenfold.

Join us in celebrating the contributions of HERproject to date and in growing a movement that will continue to do more for working women in China in the years to come. Healthy, empowered women are an asset to the Chinese economy—let's work together to support them in reaching their potential.



Racheal Meiers
Director, HERproject



Empowered women
are at the center
of an inclusive
and sustainable
Chinese economy.

The benefits of investing in women are evident across the world: Women are more likely than men to support their communities, beginning with investing 90 percent of their income into their families' health and education. Investing in women is good for business, too. HERproject research has shown an ROI as high as 4:1 (in U.S. dollars) from programs; participating factories have seen health-related absenteeism reduced by up to 50 percent.

The HERproject Opportunity

Women are driving growth in China's manufacturing sector.

Gender inequity limits progress and profit.

According to the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), there are nearly 63 percent more female workers in China today than there were in 1988. Women comprise 42.7 percent of China's total workforce, and in ready-made garment (RMG) and electronics sectors, this percentage is higher.¹

Despite their contributions, women still face strong gender inequalities and challenges related to harassment, discrimination, inadequate workplace safety, poor working conditions in factory settings, and lack of opportunities for promotion. Often living far away from their hometown without community networks and the company of family members, women are isolated in urban environments. Finally, with little access to health information and health services, they face a high risk for general and reproductive diseases, which affects their lives. The implications extend to their workplace, in turn affecting their absenteeism and overall productivity.

How Do HERproject Programs Work?

HERproject uses a three-prong approach in each of our factory and farm-based programs.

1▶

Peer education trainings

Use a train-the-trainer approach to increase the knowledge and improve the behavior of the entire workforce.

- Peer trainers are selected according to criteria.
- Trainers meet once per month and learn about a new topic every other month.
- Trainings are held on topics, including hygiene, nutrition, family planning, HIV/AIDS, maternal health, and infectious diseases.



2▶

Making workplaces better for women

Enhance human resources and employee social services to respond to women's unique needs in the workplace.

- Implement factory clinic standards and record-keeping tools.
- Enable factory-based clinics to stock certain women's health products.



3▶

Linking women to products and services

Leverage the workplace as an access and demand generation point to increase the availability and uptake of critical products and services for women. Increase access to critical health products and services within and outside workplaces, including:

- >> Condoms;
- >> Hormonal contraception;
- >> Nutritional supplements;
- >> Pre- and post-natal care;
- >> Sanitary napkins;
- >> Testing and treatment for infectious and non-communicable diseases.



HERproject empowers women.

An empowered female workforce can help address business challenges.

HERproject helps empower women at work and at home by giving them the knowledge and tools to improve their health, and giving them the confidence to develop a stronger voice in the workplace and at home.

China's manufacturing sector is at a critical turning point as it shifts from an era of abundant "low-cost" labor to one where employers are vying for workers, especially younger workers. One of the most significant challenges is recruiting and retaining workers, including women. The pool of labor in China is shrinking, and the workers' needs are changing. Younger workers are looking for higher compensation, a better working environment, and long-term development. For example, wage rates in the Pearl River Delta (PRD) area, such as Shenzhen and Guangzhou, are no longer competitive, so workers are going instead to the Yangtze River Delta (YRD) or the Bohai Sea region for better career opportunities. Most factories have not adjusted their management practices effectively to address these trends.²

1. "Between the Lines: Listening to Factory Female Workers in China," BSR report, March 7, 2013, www.bsr.org/reports/bsr_female_factory_workers_china_en.pdf.

2. Cao Zixiang, "PRD Talent Shortage Analysis in Pearl River Delta," 2011, www.allpku.com/xsgx/showviewpoint.aspx?id=2014.

什么是艾滋病？

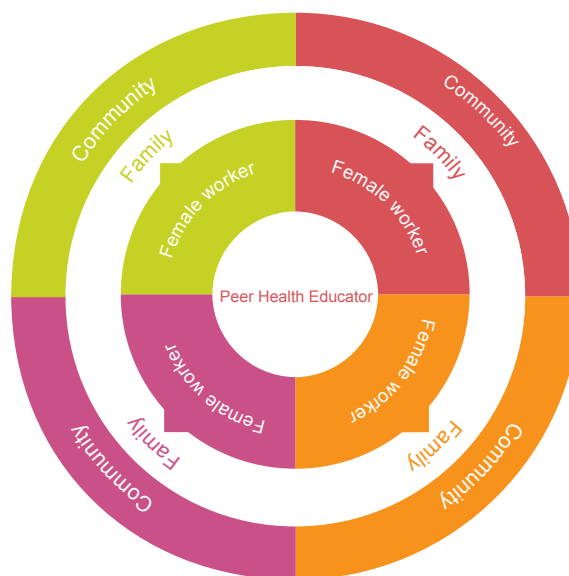


Our Model

HERproject was launched in 2007 in China with support from the David & Lucile Packard Foundation and participation by Nordstrom and five of its supplier factories. It promotes increased health knowledge, improved health behavior, and wider access to critical health services. BSR has found that such health outcomes promote business benefits in the way of reduced turnover, reduced health-related absenteeism, and improved productivity.

HERproject workplace programs use a three-prong approach to improve health awareness, behavior, and access to products and services. Peer education trainings are the most direct ways to enhance female workers' knowledge. The peer-to-peer methodology allows women in similar life circumstances to share information, knowledge, ideas, and skills to maximize the reach of participants' training. Generally selected by the factories, peer health educators (PHEs) receive about 24 hours of health training over the course of the program based on the specific health needs identified at the workplace. PHEs are then tasked with sharing their knowledge with their peers in their factory through formal and informal trainings both during and after working hours. Outcomes are further enhanced by teaching communication and leadership skills to women with predominantly low levels of education.

Promoting women's health in factories also produces better workplaces. For example, some factories have designated a special portion of the canteen for pregnant workers and provided them with an alternative lunch menu to meet their unique nutritional needs. Other factories have developed women's committees to focus on women-related issues and to organize awareness-raising activities (e.g., on World AIDS Day or Women's Day). HERproject also actively seeks to link women and the factory to local health service providers, including the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in China, in order to access reproductive products (e.g., condoms) and health training materials.



Peer Health Education Model










关爱女性

关爱自己

Our Impact in China

Within China, the majority of women working in the RMG and electronics industries are migrant workers with limited health awareness or education. Furthermore, these women lack access to critical health services. In a study that BSR conducted between 2002 and 2006 examining the reproductive health risks facing female factory workers in Asia and Central America, BSR identified the most critical health challenges facing female factory workers in China:

-  Hepatitis B
-  Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)
-  Breast cancer and cervical cancer
-  Unplanned pregnancies and unsafe abortions
-  Low awareness of HIV and high stigma against those living with HIV
-  Poor hygiene habits, including menstrual hygiene
-  Poor health-services-seeking behaviors and shyness discussing sensitive health issues

The study also revealed that local NGOs, which had been able to deliver successful health education at the community level, were unable to reach women working in factories because of management's suspicion of and lack of trust of the NGOs.

The pressing health needs of Chinese female workers, combined with their lack of health services access, compelled BSR to create an initiative that leveraged its access to international companies and their supply chains in China. We tailored this health education to address the most critical health challenges facing Chinese female workers and aiming to improve their health and their lives. HERproject seeks to address many of the above health issues with a specific focus on reducing unplanned pregnancies, increasing awareness of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and improving hygiene habits and health-services-seeking behavior.

Since 2007, HERproject China has been implemented in more than 80 factories in collaboration with 14 global companies, has trained more than 2,000 peer health educators (PHEs), and has reached approximately 100,000 Chinese women workers. To implement the programs, BSR has collaborated with Marie Stopes International China, as well as independent trainers. The peer education model adopted by HERproject encourages workers to share what they learn with their coworkers, family members, and neighbors; nearly 92 percent of women workers report that they have shared what they learned with others. Most of the factories are located in PRD and YRD, but there are several in Qingdao, Northeast China and Chongqing, and Southwest China. The majority of HERproject's activities are within the RMG and electronics industries, workforces with a large percentage of female workers.

Our Monitoring and Evaluation Approach

In every participating factory, HERproject partners conduct a written Health Needs Survey (baseline survey) at the beginning of a factory program to understand the workers' current health awareness, behavior, and access to services. When the project ends, BSR conducts an Impact Evaluation Survey (final survey) to observe changes that have occurred during the HERproject program. We survey 10 percent of the total number of female workers. Participants are selected in partnership with the factory and with consideration for production schedules. BSR and our partners observe the survey process to make sure that it is independent and that respondents are not interfered with. Surveys are supplemented with one-on-one interviews with workers and peer educators in each factory.

The findings in this report are based on data gathered from 42 HERproject participating factories from 2008 to 2012, in the electronics products and RMG industries across the YRD, PRD, and North China. In total, 4,616 female workers were surveyed.

Industry	Number of Factories Surveyed	Location			Number of Women Workers Surveyed
		Yangtze River Delta	Pearl River Delta	North China	
Ready-Made Garments	29	17	8	4	3,134
Electronics Products	13	11	2	0	1,482



Health Impacts

HERproject programs successfully improved women's health awareness and behavior, access to services, and confidence in seeking health services. Specific improvements were measured in knowledge and behavior related to personal hygiene, safe sex, family planning, HIV transmission, and stigmas related to HIV infection.

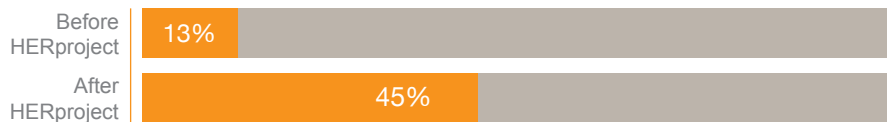
IMPACT ON BEHAVIOR: PERSONAL HYGIENE

Female Chinese factory workers generally do not have a solid understanding of the importance of maintaining good personal hygiene to reduce their rates of infection. For example, only 75 percent of the workers initially interviewed said that they cleaned themselves every day. HERproject educated the workers about the connection between health and personal hygiene and improved this percentage to approximately 90 percent.

- **Chart 1: Increase in daily personal hygiene among workers**



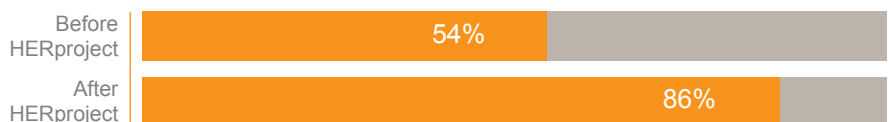
- **Chart 2: Increase in personal hygiene habits (both daily and after sexual intercourse)**



IMPACT ON BEHAVIOR: SAFE SEX AND CONDOM USE

The majority of young female workers are sexually active, but they do not practice safe sex and, therefore, have a high risk of contracting an STI. HERproject teaches participants about the importance of using a condom to prevent diseases and unplanned pregnancy. As a result, the percentage of women reporting condom use increased from 54 percent to 86 percent.

- **Chart 3: Increase in condom use when having sex with a casual partner**

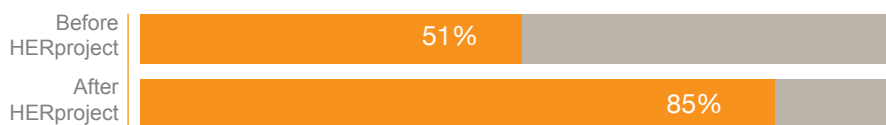




IMPACT ON AWARENESS: FAMILY PLANNING

BSR has seen that women workers have very little knowledge about family planning products. Specifically, workers do not know that condoms are an easily accessible and economic way to prevent an unexpected pregnancy. HERproject introduces family planning products generally, with a particular emphasis on condom use.

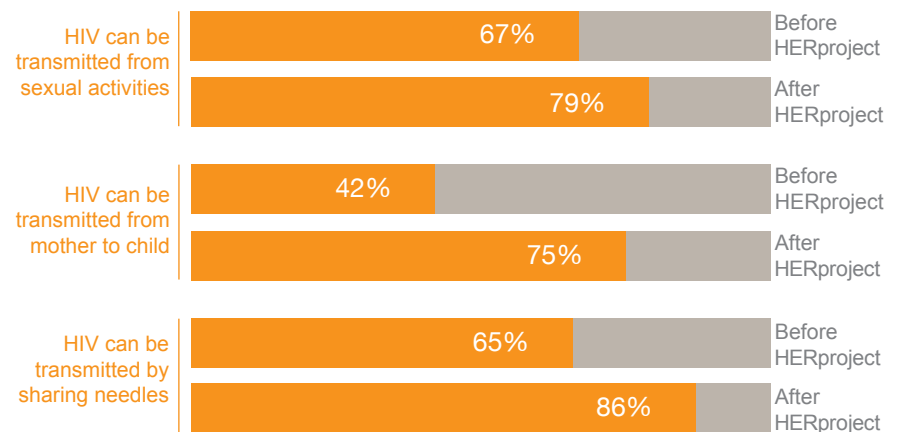
• Chart 4: Increase in awareness that condoms prevent pregnancy



IMPACT ON AWARENESS: UNDERSTANDING HOW HIV IS TRANSMITTED

Female workers in China believe that they are not at risk of contracting HIV and, therefore, have limited interest in learning about how the virus is transmitted. HERproject includes a concrete introduction of HIV symptoms and both transmission and prevention methods.

• Chart 5: Increase in understanding of how HIV is transmitted

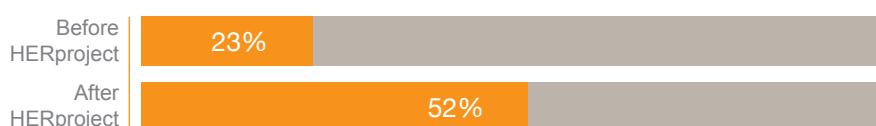




REDUCTION OF PREJUDICE AGAINST PEOPLE WITH HIV

Limited knowledge of HIV leads Chinese workers to feel prejudiced toward people living with the virus. HERproject helps lessen the stigma by promoting scientific HIV knowledge and reducing blind fear.

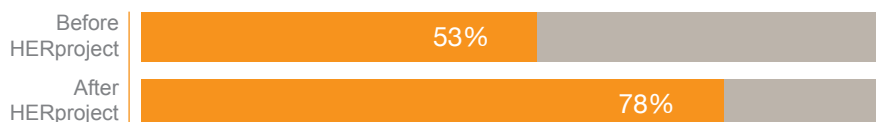
- Chart 6: Reduction in prejudice toward people with HIV



IMPACT ON ACCESS: NEARBY CLINICS AND HEALTH SERVICE PROVIDERS

A number of Chinese female workers have limited awareness of nearby health service providers, and they do not know where and how to seek help from them; HERproject helps the factory to map out credible service providers and inform workers about how to access them.

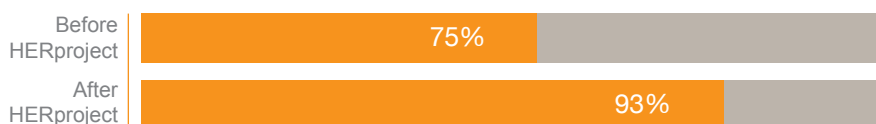
- Chart 7: Increase in awareness of health service providers



IMPACT ON ACCESS AND CONFIDENCE: SEEING A DOCTOR WHEN FEELING ILL

BSR saw limited health-services-seeking behavior among women workers. Workers reported that they do not seek out a doctor when they feel ill. Improper medical attention means that they have a higher risk of more serious stages of infections and illnesses. HERproject educates female workers about the importance of seeking a professional diagnosis from a doctor.

- Chart 8: Increase in awareness of the importance of seeking a professional diagnosis





Business Impacts

Workers who are loyal, healthy, and skilled are more valuable to their employer. From data analysis and business impact measurement in the 42 factories mentioned earlier, HERproject in China has demonstrated the returns in several different ways: an increased sense of belonging from workers; enhanced communication between workers and peers, line supervisors, and factory management; reduced absenteeism and turnover; and empowered women workers who play an important role in stabilizing the workforce of the factory.

AVERAGE REDUCTION OF HEALTH-RELATED ABSENTEEISM

Comparing the data from baseline and endline surveys, the average rate of absenteeism due to menstruation pain was reduced by 4 percent. As women learn more about their bodies and how to care for themselves, their health conditions are enhanced, which results in reduced absenteeism.

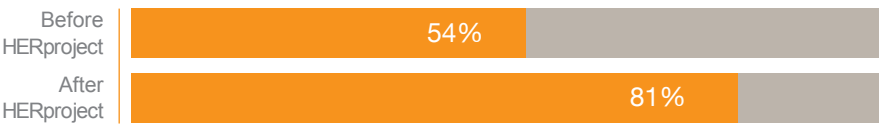
- Chart 9: Average rate of absenteeism due to menstruation pain



IMPROVED WORKER-MANAGEMENT RELATIONSHIP: INCREASED SENSE OF BELONGING AMONG WORKERS

HERproject also raises workers' satisfaction and perception that their management cares about them: HERproject surveys found workforce satisfaction increased dramatically from 54 percent to 81 percent. Interviews also revealed that HERproject trainings and outreach activities made employees' after-work life richer. HERproject peer educators said the program created opportunities to learn and practice new skills and show new capabilities; many of them were recognized by line managers and received promotions and other opportunities to take on more responsibilities at work. All of these benefits enhanced loyalty and may have contributed to reduced turnover rates and higher productivity.

- Chart 10: Increase in workers' sense of belonging



中国民间美术文化
(民间工艺与民间美术)

姓名	性别	年龄
王小明	男	20
李小红	女	19
张华	男	21
陈伟	男	22
刘芳	女	23
赵强	男	24
周丽	女	25
吴刚	男	26
孙悦	女	27
郑伟	男	28
王芳	女	29
李强	男	30





Our Voices and Our Stories

We have heard many inspiring stories.

The workers and the PHEs share what they learn with their colleagues, families, and friends, which enlarges the social impact of HERproject. Factory management's attitude has changed to focus more on women's issues, which increases the workers' satisfaction and eases the burden of turnover and absenteeism due to reproductive health problems. Most participating brands have grown the involvement of their suppliers over time—citing better supplier relationships, improved compliance, and tangible impact for the workforce as their reasons for doing so.



Case Study: Mrs. Li Helps Her Family and Colleagues

Mrs. Li, an employee in a Nordstrom supplier's factory, shared her experiences with us. When Mrs. Li's twelve-year-old son became ill, she took him to the hospital and learned that the cause of his illness was related to poor daily hygiene—particularly because he did not properly wash his genitals. When HERproject launched in her factory, she was happy to see that the workers, especially mothers, had the chance to gain reproductive health knowledge that could have educated her about issues like the one she had with her son.

Mrs. Li is one of the most active PHEs in the factory; she always encourages her colleagues to participate in more trainings and leads the group through which workers use

games to learn more health knowledge. Mrs. Li directed a drama show with several of her women colleagues called *Help My Daughter* to show other workers how to share information about reproductive health, daily hygiene, and contraception with their children, especially their daughters. During the rehearsal, Mrs. Li helped explain the contraception methods and emphasized that neither the rhythm method nor withdrawal are effective methods. Mrs. Li realized that there is much false sexual knowledge available online, which may misinform children and teenagers, and so in the show she covered how to distinguish the correct information, which many of the workers found very useful.



Case Study: Liu Guofeng Helps Her Family and Community

Liu Guofeng, an employee in a Primark supplier's factory, shared some of her stories with us. "HERproject taught me, my colleagues, my family, and my friends about women's reproductive health knowledge and made us healthier. I especially enjoyed sharing what I learned with my daughter. She even shared what she learned from me with her classmates," Guofeng said.

Guofeng mentioned that before she was exposed to HERproject she didn't understand the importance of educating her child about reproductive health and didn't have enough information to share with her. Many of her colleagues had the same problem and had never received such trainings before. After the trainings she and her colleagues were eager to share what they had learned with their family members, friends, and neighbors.

After the first training course where Guofeng learned about women's reproductive health, she shared what she had learned, especially about how to care for the women's reproductive system, the structure of the reproductive organs, and menstruation with her daughter, Yingying. Because children do not usually receive enough or proper reproductive health education from school, when Yingying heard this information, she felt embarrassed. Many children,

like Yingying, lack reproductive health knowledge. After Guofeng educated her daughter, she felt the trainings were very valuable. Guofeng felt proud to be a PHE, not only in the factory, but also in her family.

Yingying's classmate Xiaoyun was also curious about reproductive health, so Yingying shared the information that she had learned from her mother. For example, she told Xiaoyun that women need to change their sanitary napkins every three to four hours. Realizing that she had valuable information to share with her classmates, Yingying decided to be a "peer health educator" in her class.

Guofeng also enjoyed sharing what she had learned with her neighbors. For example, she showed them how to use a condom with a banana. She reminded them to use a condom at the very beginning of intercourse; otherwise, they still have a chance of becoming pregnant. She likewise reminds her neighbors to pay attention to the expiration date of the condom. She said that her neighbors feel she has changed. She used to be very shy when she talked about sex-related topics, but now she's more open to talking about them. She always offers advice to her neighbors and even her friends' friends if they have any reproductive problems or concerns.

Case Study: One Factory's Story

“Female workers gain health knowledge from HERproject and distribute this information to their peers and their family, as well as next generations.”

—Emma Lai, Vendor Compliance, Divisional Manager, Li & Fung

After completing HERproject, 99 percent of the female workers believed that the factory management cared about their health, up from the baseline of 52 percent.

“A supplier to Li & Fung, located in Huidong County in Guangdong province, experienced great benefits from HERproject. The factory employs about 300 female workers, over 80 percent [are] from rural areas, over half are over 35, and nearly 90 percent have less than a junior high school education. The factory had never provided any health trainings or taken any female-specific health education measures before HERproject.”

— A peer educator

HERPROJECT IMPROVES RELATIONSHIPS AMONG WORKERS

Female workers come from different places, and they split the majority of their time between their workshop and dormitory. Their acquaintances are usually limited to roommates and coworkers on the same production line.

The peer education model that HERproject adopted was an important contributing factor to breaking down the barriers among workers. Peer education transformed the traditional training into an easygoing, equal platform and encouraged

communication about emotions, personal issues, and sharing of experiences.

In addition to promoting women's health knowledge, the factory organized several activities to involve all female workers. One such activity was a tea party themed “Caring for Women's Health and Fighting against HIV Together,” where female workers were invited to attend and share their experiences, ask questions, and engage in an interesting discussion. The factory also opened a Sunshine Room, where approximately 200 books and magazines related to female health are available for female workers to borrow. Peer educators took turns being in charge of the room. Female workers could sit in it during their spare time and discuss private topics with peers because they knew it was a safe and secure place for women. They could also watch films related to HIV and women's health and have open discussions with each other. They were able to break their normal social routines and seek mutual support from their peers.

“Now we can talk openly about various women's health issues. We have become much more open. Some female workers even ask direct questions, such as “How do I use a condom?” or “How do I relieve menstrual pain?” This was unimaginable in the past! We would never discuss such private topics before HERproject.”

— A peer educator



HERPROJECT IMPROVES COMMUNICATION BETWEEN LINE SUPERVISORS AND LINE WORKERS

In a factory, the relationship between line supervisors (managers) and workers is very important because they work directly together. This Li & Fung supplier selected some line supervisors to be peer educators and encouraged them to be health consultants for female workers. By doing this, HERproject provided a communication bridge between the line supervisors and common workers, strengthening their connection.

"In the past, we just worked in the production line, and we seldom talked with the line supervisors. But during HERproject some of our line supervisors were peer educators, and we started discussing women's health topics with them and consulted them for advice. As a result, during our menstrual period we were not as shy as before. When we told the line supervisors, they understood us."

— A female worker

HERPROJECT REDUCED ABSENTEEISM AND RETAINED WORKERS

A production manager reported that in the past some unmarried female workers would ask for two to three days off during their

menstrual period because they feared that their coworkers would embarrass them if they accidentally leaked. Women would stay in the dormitories when they menstruated. When women's health became an open topic and they knew it was no longer embarrassing to talk to their coworkers about related issues, workers started to come to work while they were menstruating. The production manager reported that this change resulted in reduced rates of absenteeism.

During interviews, some female workers told us that this factory was the only one that had such a female-focused health program. "We are thousands of miles away from home, but we are able to feel 'at home' because we are cared for. We know that the factories nearby don't have these trainings—we have some friends who work in other factories. We have spoken with them, and they have told us," said one worker.

"The turnover rate last year was around 15 percent, but it decreased to 3–4 percent this year [when HERproject was implemented]. In the past we encountered 10–15 abortion cases annually, but that number is much less now. The young workers now have the awareness to take proper precautions [like contraception] . . . So this project was very beneficial for our factory."

— Wu, Production Manager

Case Study: Voices from HP

Since 2009, 17 of HP's factories in the Pearl River Delta Region, Yangtzi Delta River Region, and Chongqing areas have implemented HERproject. About 34,000 women workers have received the reproductive health training, and 560 women workers have been trained to be peer health educators. As explained in

HP's "2011 Global Citizenship Report," "Facilities that have taken part in HERproject have reduced the number of major nonconformances found in full reaudits by about 49 percent on average, compared with an 8 percent decrease on average for all other suppliers in the same region."

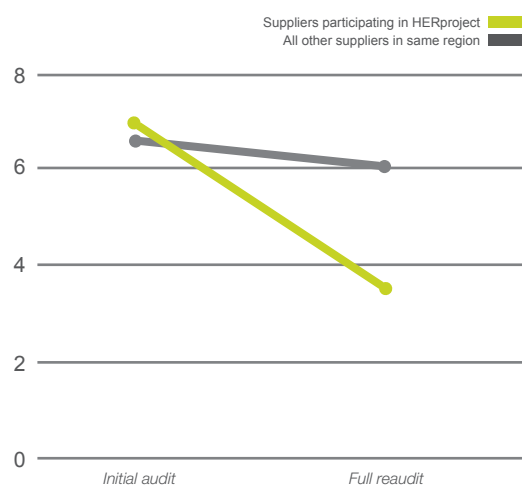
SUPPLY CHAIN SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY PERFORMANCE ARE CORRELATED

HP found that their suppliers that participated in HERproject reduced compliance violations significantly, especially in respect to health and safety indicators and worker communication. Suppliers believe the biggest benefit of HERproject was an increase in the women workers' level of engagement with the factory and their morale, which was important when the company was trying to change some persistent issues.

"We are glad to see that the suppliers that participated in HERproject have increased social and environmental responsibility performance as evidenced in their audit results. In my opinion, those companies that participated show strong SER [social and environmental responsibility] commitment, because implementing health trainings is not a compliance requirement. Actually this is a kind of caring program for workers and beyond compliance requirements. Factory management cares about the health and wellness of workers. Additionally, the factory develops peer educators so they can pass on their knowledge to their colleagues, friends, and relatives. As a result, their SER commitment is reflected in their overall better performance in audit results."

— Ernest Wong, Social and Environmental Responsibility Program Manager, Supply Chain, HP

HERproject participation and SER performance, 2007–2011
(average number of major nonconformances)



Source: "2011 Global Citizenship Report," HP, www8.hp.com/us/en/pdf/hp_fy11_gcr_tcm_245_1357670.pdf.



THE IMPACT OF HERPROJECT IS SUSTAINABLE

HERproject's impact lasted well after the program was officially over. Many of HP's supplier factories implemented the Worker Health Plan after the one-year program. For example, the factories continued to have a close relationship with the local medical networks and also integrated women's health training into their staff orientation. Some of them established a special caring room for pregnant women and new mothers. HERproject provides more than just health trainings; it is also an innovative way to build workers' capacity. The PHEs improved their communication skills,

presentation skills, and organizational skills. The factories also learned about the capabilities and hidden potential of their workers.

"The factories found that HERproject is a good investment. They feel like they have ownership of the program. We treasure this win-win partnership and find that it builds trust between us and the factories."

— Ernest Wong, Social and Environmental Responsibility Program Manager, Supply Chain, HP

Our Lessons

BSR learns from our successes and challenges and is committed to sharing lessons learned to strengthen HERproject and similar programs and to advance women's empowerment in China. Based on our working experience with factories and partners and the questionnaires with brand representatives, we were able to review the challenges they faced during the HERproject China programs. We found three major challenges and have conceived possible solutions and action plans to address them.



The impacts we're looking for are: Spreading knowledge and behavior change that promote a healthy life for employees and their families and local society. Additionally, we seek attendance for the factory to achieve high productivity and safety. The third impact is to build a systematic management system that can enable the factories to take on more social responsibilities.



—Spirit Yu, Productivity Improvement Specialist, Primark

Securing Factory Buy-In and Commitment

A common initial challenge is encouraging suppliers to care about investing in women's health. Management is often worried that trainings and outreaches will interfere with factory production and will cost their business rather than benefit them. Convincing management otherwise is critical to the program's success. We have developed several tools to help build buy-in and commitment from factories early on in the program and throughout the year.

Empower buyers to be our champions. BSR provides a full orientation for buyers joining HERproject in China. Within this orientation, BSR helps buyers understand the business case for their suppliers, as well as the importance that their suppliers buy in. This process clarifies their role and provides them with talking points to engage suppliers.

Use a kick-off meeting to solicit multiple perspectives and make commitments public. The kick-off meeting is an important opportunity for BSR, the buyer, partners, senior management, middle management, and workers to meet and discuss HERproject face-to-face. The kick-off meeting gives factory management and workers an overall understanding of the program. In addition, BSR organizes an informal talk immediately following the kick-off meeting and engages in the initial negotiation among BSR, the partner, and the factory management (especially the production manager and human resources). This meeting gives BSR a better understanding of the peak and low production seasons. It also is an opportunity for the management team to learn more details about the outreach activities and gain their support for future implementation.

Track ongoing progress to acknowledge support and elevate challenges. BSR and partners collect monthly reports that track trainings, peer educator outreach, and the number of workers reached. This information helps suppliers monitor and share their progress with buyers and calls attention to the areas that may cause extended delays.

Organize regular check-ins to create accountability and enable everyone's voice to be heard. BSR organizes quarterly calls among BSR, the partner, brands, and factory management team to gather feedback from factories, compare progress to the work plan, confirm the next steps of the plan, discuss challenges, and provide recommendations. These calls also provide opportunities for factory management to share success stories and to enhance their relationship and reputation with sponsoring buyers.

Sustaining HERproject Activities after the Initial Year

In order for HERproject to have true impact, participating factories must commit to maintaining some investment in women's health. If they do this, then we have been successful, not only in reaching their current employees, but in changing the way they do business to be more supportive of women's health and women's empowerment more broadly. However, this is a challenge for many factories—they don't know how to run a women's health program, they don't have sufficient knowledge among their staff to maintain activities, or they don't want to invest in materials or personnel to implement trainings. BSR has developed an approach and a set of publically available tools to help factories maintain women's health programs after the initial year. As a result of these efforts, in 2013, every participating factory in China committed to maintain HERproject activities after the initial year.

Create a health management plan. HERproject now begins the discussion of sustainability at the kick-off stage of projects. Factories are encouraged to design their own health management plan and practice putting it into place during the program year. The plan is then reviewed and revised on a biannual basis, and at the end of the program, the factory formally commits to the plan.

Use the HERproject Curriculum.³ BSR created the HERproject Curriculum in partnership with our global network of partners and the Levi Strauss Foundation. The curriculum, available online for anyone to download, is a collection of one-hour training modules and materials on different health topics that are designed for the factory or farm setting. Each module includes a training guide, health manual, training materials, post-training quiz, and links to external resources. These training modules are designed for both experienced and new trainers. The HERproject Curriculum is available in both Chinese and English.

Use the HERproject Toolbuilder.⁴ The HERproject Toolbuilder is an online tool to help trainers, health workers, and factory human resources departments build training materials for different health topics. It helps users to create training tools, including posters, booklets, flipcharts, and flyers. The toolbuilder includes more than 200 hand-drawn images, photographs, and black-and-white sketches on all the HERproject health training topics. The toolbuilder can be used in any language and is free.

Measuring Impacts on Health and Business

HERproject has worked to build an evidence base of the business case for investing in women workers' health in order to encourage greater private sector investment. Despite having provided some of that evidence, we find that every factory and buyer that participates wants to demonstrate impacts in their individual factories. Conducting such studies can be expensive and cumbersome. At the same time, because it is important that factories and buyers develop tools and systems to track the key performance indicators of women's empowerment programs, including HERproject, BSR has developed some tools to help companies measure HERproject impacts.

Prove the ROI. BSR has published studies showing HERproject's ROI in Egypt and Pakistan, which are available on our website.⁵ These studies are intended to help factories understand the benefits of women's health programs.

Develop tools for factories to measure ROI. BSR designed a guide for factories to assess the business case for onsite investments in the health of their workers, particularly female workers. The HERproject ROI how-to guide⁶ is intended to help the factories and brands to understand ROI and how to measure it.

3. HERproject Curriculum, BSR, www.herproject.org/resources/curriculum.

4. HERproject Toolbuilder, BSR, www.herproject.org/toolbuilder.

5. "HERproject: Health Enables Returns," BSR, 2011, www.bsr.org/reports/HERproject_Health_Enables_Returns_The_Business_Returns_from_Womens_Health_Programs_081511.pdf.

6. "HERproject Partner Toolkit: Establishing a 'Return on Investment' Program in Factories," BSR, www.herproject.org/downloads/BSR_HERproject_Toolkit.pdf.

组工作执掌

项目在工厂的实施
组会议，负责向领导汇报项目工
组工作等
项目工作推广(GA部门协调每周时
间表/运营管理及财务/生活管理
等并验证项目结果的有效性等
负责组织开展并监督部门内部培
训：NB5
系统培训，负责健康知识的推广及
其他相关工作等

pr  ject

HERproject has contributed significantly to educating female workers on health care, a basic human need. Female workers are demanding that their jobs teach them a more diverse set of skills, such as communication skills, and offer them opportunities for career development. In light of their demands and the development of women's empowerment in China, we have begun to further examine how we can better meet these demands and improve women's lives in different ways.

We have some ideas, and we want to hear yours! Join us in creating innovative programs to invest in women in China in 2014 and beyond.

The Future of HERproject in China

1

Scaling Up HERproject in Chinese Companies

Currently HERproject is mostly limited to factories in the supply chains of a few international companies. Chinese companies can participate directly in the program in order to better support their female workers' needs and to cultivate a healthier, more productive workplace. We invite Chinese companies to join HERproject directly, to participate in a program that delivers benefits to your workforce, to your production, and to your reputation.

2

Raising Awareness and Expanding Partnerships to Support Women in Manufacturing

In addition to a lack of awareness of the importance of health, there is a lack of understanding of gender equality, women's development in society, and career planning to enable women's professional advancement. HERproject has benefited greatly from our partnerships with government agencies, grassroots NGOs, experts, brands, and factories over the past seven years. Based on our experience, public awareness of women's issues is still low. BSR is working to build collaboration around women's empowerment, particularly in the manufacturing industry.

3

Integrating Innovative Technology into HERproject

With new information technology being developed quickly in China and smart phones becoming a common communication channel, we are considering using some innovative methods to increase HERproject's reach and impact. Possibilities include establishing an e-community platform in factories using 3G wireless mobile service or cloud data management for women to use to download HERproject Curriculum and share information with each other.

4

Women in Factories: A New Program to Help Women Advance at Work

Women manufacturing workers' needs go far beyond healthcare. Based on a survey conducted by BSR in 2012, women are also demanding career planning and communication skills. In 2013, BSR launched a new program called Women in Factories (WiF), which will train 26,600 women workers and 4,500 women leaders from 45 factories in China with the objective of enabling women to improve their lives through enhanced knowledge and better workplace skills. Women manufacturing workers will have greater opportunities for career development, while improving their lives and those of their families. Factories will gain from increased worker productivity, increased human resources capacity, and an internal pipeline of women leaders with strong potential. Working intensively with the factory's human resources department, BSR's goal is to equip the next generation of women to become leaders in their workplaces and communities.

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**LEVI STRAUSS
FOUNDATION**



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Netherlands



PHOTO CREDITS

All photos are from HERproject participant factories who have granted us approval to use them in this report.

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A BSR Initiative

Launched in 2007 in four factories in China, HERproject is a global public-private partnership to empower low-income women workers along global supply chains. Recognized as a leading innovation for women's health by the UN Every Woman, Every Child initiative, HERproject drives impact for women and business via workplace-based interventions on health and financial inclusion. Operating in 10 countries with 30 international companies, 200 factories and farms, 16 civil society partners, and multiple health-care providers, HERproject has improved the well-being, confidence and economic potential of over 250,000 women, and contributed to better health behavior and outcomes for as much as a million of their family and community members. Visit www.herproject.org for more information.



BSR works with its global network of more than 250 member companies to build a just and sustainable world. From its offices in Asia, Europe, and North and South America, BSR develops sustainable business strategies and solutions through consulting, research, and cross-sector collaboration. Visit www.bsr.org for more information about BSR's more than 20 years of leadership in sustainability.



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