

her  
+project

Investing in Women  
for a Better World



**OUR MISSION**

BSR's HERproject catalyzes partnerships along global supply chains to improve female workers' health and create business value.

# Investing in Women for a Better World

<b>heropportunity</b>	3
<b>herimpact</b>	11
How HERproject Works	12
Case Studies	16
Challenges and Lessons	26
<b>herfuture</b>	29
Join HERproject	30
Call to Action	32



Gazipur, Bangladesh

## Letter from the Director

### Dear Friends and Partners,

HERproject started more than three years ago with trust and generosity by way of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation in the San Francisco Bay Area. From a seminal research report on the health challenges faced by women factory workers to an initiative active in Asia, the Middle East, and North America, HERproject illustrates the vital role companies can play in advancing women's health.

Companies play another critical role: supporting pilot initiatives that prove why investing in women has such a positive return on investment (ROI). With the unfailing support of our partners at the Extending Service Delivery project in Washington, D.C., and funding from the Levi Strauss Foundation, BSR continues to implement ROI studies in a handful of factories in support of this effort.

By reinforcing the point that investing in women's health enhances worker productivity, reduces absenteeism, and lowers turnover, BSR is attracting company participants that might not otherwise have participated. This underscores the notion that innovation comes in many sizes and shapes, including nontraditional partnerships like HERproject that link brands, factory managers, and local NGOs.

Looking ahead, we are excited about the HERproject expansion into new focus countries, most notably Bangladesh, and outside of the factory setting. A generous investment in HERproject expansion from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) will enable growth outside of our existing focus countries (China, Egypt, India, Pakistan, and Vietnam) and into the farm setting in eastern Africa.

As always, we look to you—our friends, partners, and collaborators—for inspiration in this work. As the 2015 deadline for realizing the Millennium Development Goals approaches, we encourage you to participate in and build partnerships to advance the status of women and girls worldwide.

CHAD BOLICK  
BSR Director, Partnership Development

The benefits of investing in women are evident across the world: Women support their communities, repay their loans faithfully, and provide exemplary leadership on issues from politics to health. It follows that investing in women is good for business, too. And it turns out that workplace women's health-education programs deliver some impressive returns.

أنا أقدر هذه المعرفة و أعتقد أنه  
من واجبي أن أنقل هذه الرسالة التي  
أنعمت بها لقد بدأت بالتحدث مع  
النساء الأخريات في الحافلة و في  
المسجد و في السوق و في كل مكان  
أذهب إليه و أستطيع الوصول له

"I value this knowledge and believe that it is my duty to pass on the messages I am blessed with. ... I started talking to other women on the bus, at the mosque, at the market, and anywhere else I could reach."

SAMIRA EL-SAYED, PEER EDUCATOR, EGYPT

heropportunity

# Women invest in the future.

“When given an opportunity to participate, girls are a powerful force for social and economic change.”

MARK PARKER, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF NIKE, INC., WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM 2009

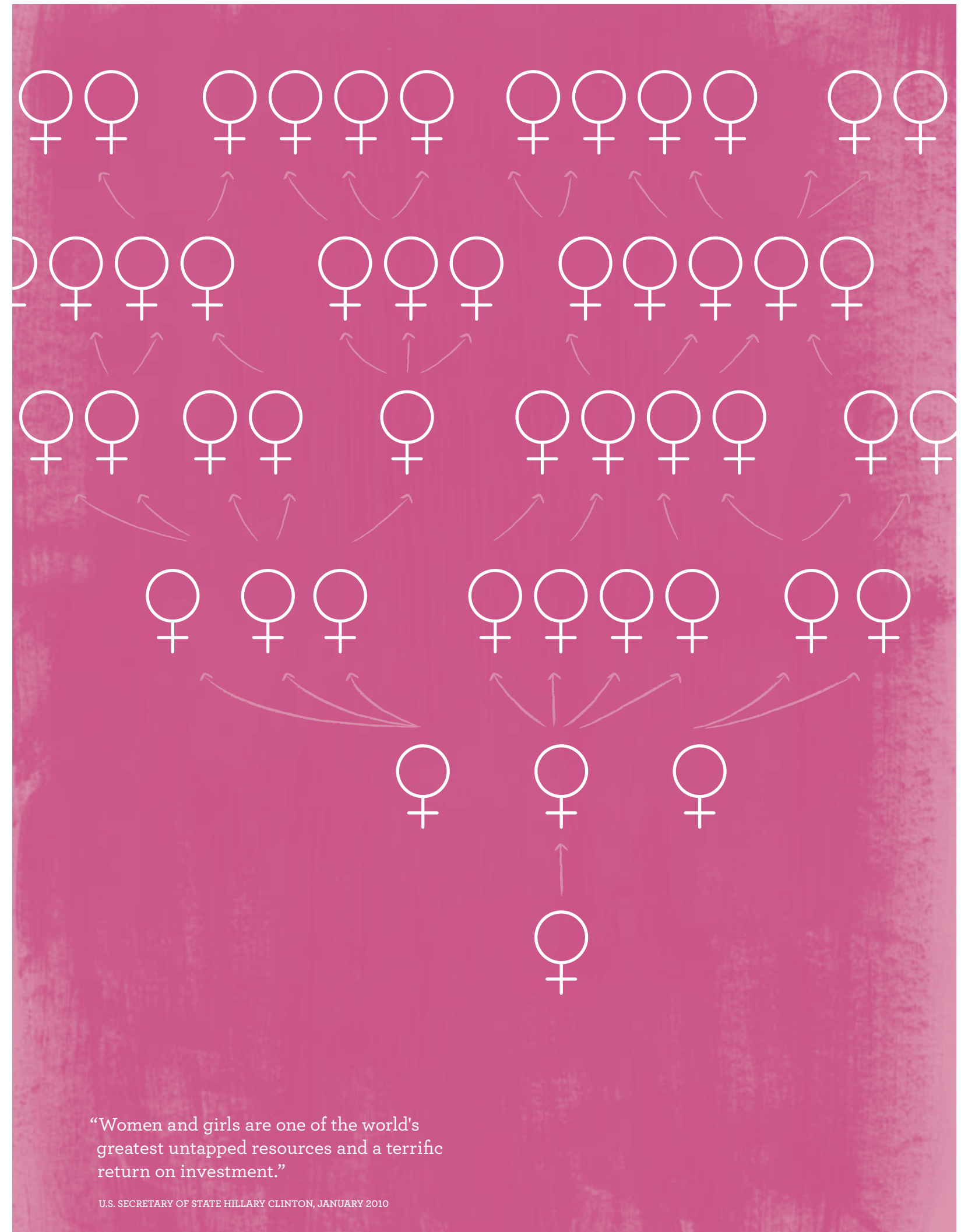
The Nike Foundation famously coined the term “the girl effect”: Invest in a girl’s education and help her start a small business, and you lift up her family, her community, her country, and eventually, the world.

In factories and fields throughout the developing world, young women are supporting the livelihoods of their families and communities by working in global supply chains of multinational companies. Women represent roughly 80 percent of the global workforce in garment manufacturing, and a large percentage of workers in other manufacturing sectors, such as home goods and electronics. Women also make up significant percentages of the workforce in horticulture, agriculture, and food processing.

While providing crucial inputs to global supply chains, these jobs also create opportunities for poverty alleviation and women’s empowerment. In their book *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunities for Women Worldwide*, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn advocate for the expansion of manufacturing in poor countries in Africa and the Middle East as a means of socio-economic development and promoting gender equity through widespread employment of women.

With their own income, women are more likely invest in the education, nutrition, and health of their children, helping to break the cycle of poverty. Women are also more likely to save and contribute to broader livelihood improvements in their community, creating better opportunities for future generations.

Companies are realizing the potential of investments in women, too. A 2010 McKinsey study, “The Business of Empowering Women”, found that among companies who invest in programs targeting women in developing countries, 34 percent have measured improved profits and an additional 38 percent anticipate similar improvements.



# The workplace can empower and inform.

“We’re huge believers in manufacturing, because it tends to be a large employer of women and an escalator for them.”

NICHOLAS KRISTOF AND SHERYL WUDUNN, OCTOBER 2009, *BSR INSIGHT*

While development dollars devoted to women and women’s health in particular remain low, NGOs and governments alike are investing in and implementing programs to promote women’s equality, support girl’s education, and improve critical health services in developing countries. But it is economic empowerment—through job creation in the formal sector—that offers the greatest and most sustainable opportunities for women globally.

The formal economy represents a space where the economic and societal contributions made by women can expand and be quantifiably demonstrated. Opportunities to earn income in a safe way help women become breadwinners before and after marriage. In both cases, the value of daughters and wives increases and may contribute to opportunities for women to play a larger role in decision-making about family spending.

In addition, the workplace setting offers an efficient and largely underutilized entry point for educating and empowering women in a safe environment.

Some key benefits of delivering information and services to women in their workplace include:

### Convenience

Women juggling overtime and family responsibilities will not seek information or treatment in their free time. Bringing information and services to them, in the one place they have to be, helps guarantee that their needs will be met without adding to their burdens.

### Window of opportunity

As employers, factories gather a target population of women in need: workers who are often young and unmarried, who come from rural communities where women tend to be marginalized, and who often lack educational opportunities. These women often need information and services the most, and too frequently have the fewest opportunities to access them elsewhere.

### Information and service delivery infrastructure

Factories often have a built-in capacity for health counseling and services delivery, financial literacy and services, nutritious meals, and professional training programs. Investment in these areas can take advantage of existing infrastructure.

### Scale and replication

With millions of factories in emerging economies worldwide, many of which are subject to monitoring by international companies, opportunities for replication are enormous.

# Health education and services are critical.

“Women workers in the developing world are often reluctant and uncomfortable asking questions or seeking advice in public settings about reproductive health, contraceptives, and family planning.”

“WOMEN’S GENERAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IN GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS,” *BSR*, 2006

Female factory workers represent a vulnerable population. Many female workers are young and undereducated migrants who move from rural areas to cities for jobs. Some move with their families and are supporting husbands and children. Others move by themselves and live in dormitories with other young, single women.

These low-wage women workers often suffer from anemia, poor hygiene, inadequate pre- and post-natal care, sexual violence, and exposure to infections and illness. Lack of education and access to resources contribute to unsafe sexual behaviors, sometimes leading to unwanted pregnancies or sexually transmitted infections. These circumstances lower women’s quality of life and inhibit their ability to provide for their families. They also contribute to high rates of malnutrition, maternal and infant mortality, and the spread of sexually transmitted and other preventable diseases like HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C, and tuberculosis.

The majority of these diseases or health conditions are preventable with proper care and safe behavior. However, in addition to limited access to services, many female workers lack awareness, or their knowledge is restricted by cultural biases or gender-based power structures that affect health decision-making.

Awareness-raising, and peer education in particular, is extremely effective in challenging these assumptions. Women are grateful for information they have never before received, and for the focus on their needs and those of their families. An environment focused on education rather than behavior change empowers the women to make better health choices for themselves.

### HEPATITIS B KNOWLEDGE INCREASE *fig 1*

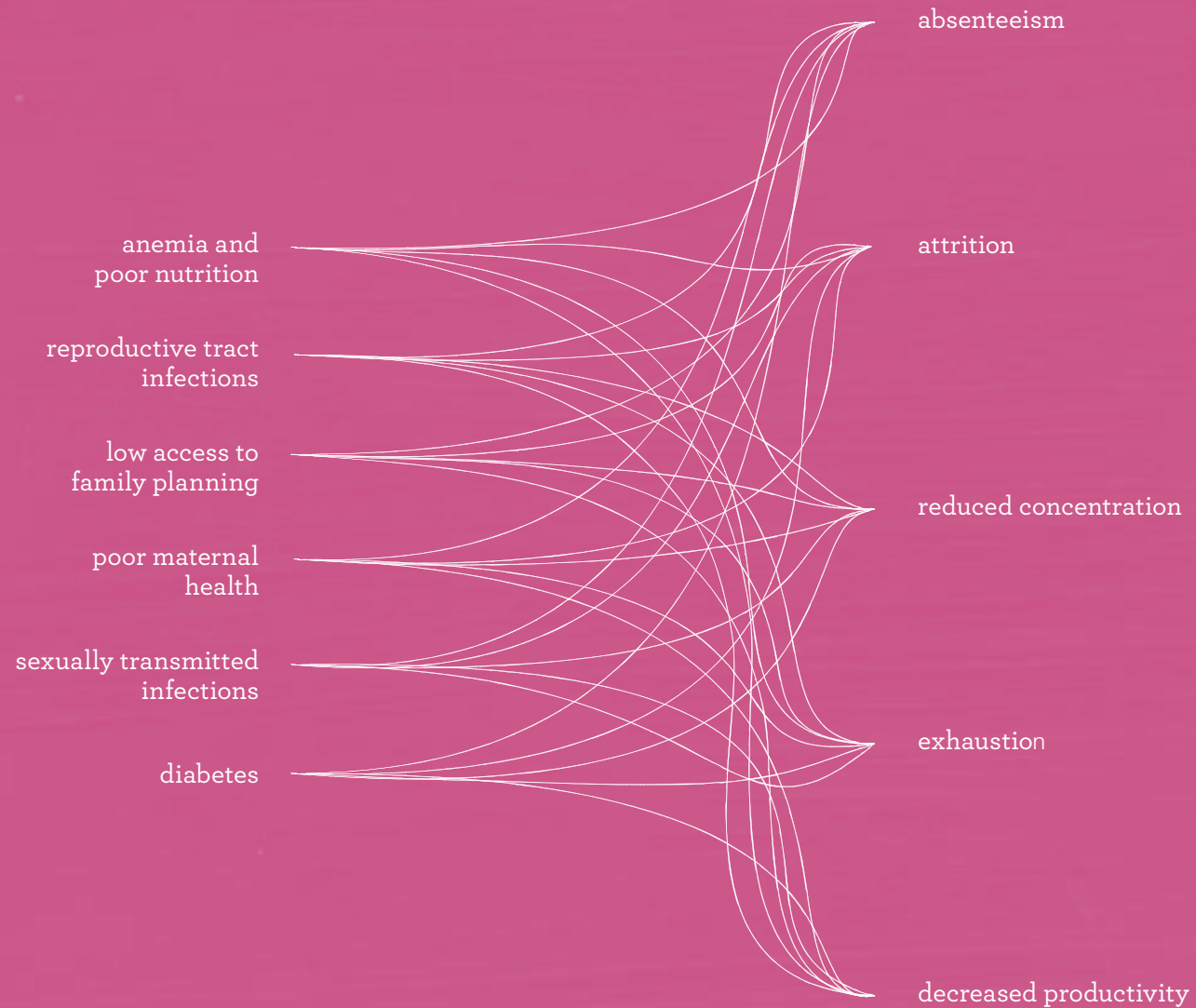
Following the completion of HERproject programs in factories in Mexico, Pakistan, and Vietnam, workers exhibited marked improvement in knowledge about hepatitis B symptoms and prevention.



# Healthy workers make for healthy returns.

## Health Problems

## Business Impacts



Preventable conditions or diseases severely impact workers' quality of life and greatly reduce productivity while increasing the likelihood of health-related absenteeism.

“As a corporate foundation committed to advancing the rights and well-being of workers in Levi Strauss & Co. supplier communities and beyond, we are funding HERproject ROI research, with the objective that a proven ROI will support uptake and replication at a scale we could never achieve on our own.”

DANIEL LEE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
LEVI STRAUSS FOUNDATION

Female factory workers' health has a direct impact on the productivity and stability of manufacturing operations often plagued by narrow profit margins, volatile customer demand, and high worker turnover and absenteeism.

In this context, workers who are loyal, healthy, and educated represent an invaluable resource, making investments in female workers' health likely to deliver significant returns.

A key to the success and sustainability of HERproject is our effort to demonstrate the business benefits of workplace women's health programs. Benefits to factories participating in HERproject include:

- » Reduced health-related absenteeism
- » Increased employee loyalty
- » Improved worker-management relations
- » Improved worker concentration
- » Increased leadership and communication skills of workers
- » Improved understanding of preventative health care by workers and their families
- » Improved worker hygiene, preventing the spread of flu viruses

ROI studies underway in Egypt, Pakistan, and Vietnam aim to provide quantitative evidence of the business case for workplace women's health programs. BSR and our partners are also working with suppliers to help them assess the return from their social investments. Showing the financial value of social investment, and sharing the tools to measure it, helps factory managers develop a sustained approach to women's health.

### RETURN ON INVESTMENT STUDY *fig 2*

In a 2006 study in one Bangladesh factory, HERproject technical partner Extending Service Delivery found a US\$3 to US\$1 ROI for their women's health education and clinic services improvement program. The ROI was in the form of reduced turnover and absenteeism tracked over 18 months.

#### ABSENTEEISM



#### STAFF TURNOVER



\$3:\$1 ROI

Empowering poor women across the world requires a broad campaign of education and opportunity that integrates business, civil society, government, and local communities. HERproject is leading that campaign.

做了一辈子的女性工作，从没想到艾滋病的健康教育工作可以做的这样的轻松和愉快！效果好还这样明显！回去一定要好好组织再学习，把这种宣传工作打大下去！

“After working with women for my whole life, this is the first time I realize that AIDS prevention and education work could be so impactful.”

WOMEN'S FEDERATION OFFICIAL, CHINA

herimpact



HERproject improves the lives of women and creates business value by...

1

Promoting investment by international companies in workplace programs that link women's health to business value

2

Creating local networks between health training service providers and supplier factories to create cost-effective, relevant, and sustainable interventions

3

Engaging female workers in workplace health education and access programs

## How HERproject Works

### BSR's HERproject

BSR spurs private-sector participation, fosters partnerships, ensures quality control, maintains low implementation costs, and supports sustainability.

**Companies** provide access to factories, cover initial implementation costs, and enable program replication and expansion. They benefit from subsidized participation in a quality-controlled program.

#### Companies

**Local NGOs** implement locally relevant workplace training programs. They benefit from access to factories, support from international companies, and access to HERproject's network of peers and tools.

#### NGOs

**Extending Service Delivery (ESD)** provides technical expertise on women's health and ROI data for HERproject globally. It benefits from access to underserved women and opportunities to test models for sustainable workplace programs.

Changing women's lives through workplace programs requires more than one company, one foundation, or one NGO. That is why partnerships are at the center of this initiative. HERproject partners include eight multinational companies, 30 factories, eight local organizations, and multiple clinics, hospitals, and public-sector population and health departments. Each play a role in making HERproject a success.

### Factories

**Factories** provide access to workers and support worker participation and clinic improvements. They benefit from healthier workers who are less absent, more productive, and less likely to leave.

**Workers** spread health information to their co-workers and communities. They benefit from opportunities to improve their health and preventative health behavior.

### Workers

**Public and private hospitals and clinics** partner with NGOs or factories to expand awareness and use of their services by female workers. They benefit from the generation of increased demand for their services.

Launched in 2007, HERproject has active or completed programs in six countries: China, Egypt, India, Mexico, Pakistan, and Vietnam.

As of January 2010, HERproject workplace programs had touched more than 50,000 women.

HERproject uses peer education and improves existing factory clinic resources to provide low-wage women workers with access to critical health information and services.



## Case Studies

HERproject impacts female factory workers, their managers, local NGOs, and participating companies in a variety of ways.

From health awareness to health behavior change, leadership skills development to worker-management relations, and global company collaboration to local-level partnerships, HERproject is showing the value of investing in women's health along supply chains worldwide.



## Impact: Raising Health Awareness

HERproject increases knowledge of general and reproductive health through an intensive training and peer-education program.

### Project

Working with Hewlett-Packard and our local partner, Health and Community Development, Ciudad Juárez (SADEC), we launched HERproject in Mexico's Ciudad Juárez. With violent crimes against women common and high instances of hypertension and diabetes, Juárez is a particularly dangerous and unhealthy place for young women, making it an ideal location for a workplace women's health program.

At Pegatron, one of HP's participating suppliers, 47 peer educators were trained and later shared their knowledge with 1,090 (or 94 percent) of their female co-workers. Women used breaks, meal times, and factory-provided commute buses as opportunities to share information. The factory clinic also provided checkups to support the educational program activities, such as diabetes screenings, breast and uterine cancer screenings, blood-pressure screenings, vaccinations, a health fair, and pregnancy and child-care counseling.

In addition to conducting quantitative surveys of 10 percent of the female factory population, Pegatron's on-staff social worker, Vicky Corona, and BSR HERproject Manager Racheal Yeager interviewed female factory workers, peer educators, the factory nurse, and factory managers to discuss their experiences with HERproject. Interviewees felt that HERproject created multiple benefits for both individuals and the company.

About the program, HP's Supply Chain Social and Environmental Responsibility Global Program Manager Zoe McMahon said, "In addition to improvements in workers' understanding of many preventable diseases, the HERproject program has also provided an avenue for women to become spokespersons on behalf of other women workers with factory management about important health topics."

### Benefits

#### EDUCATION

Peer educators cited the knowledge they gained as the program's greatest benefits. One peer educator said she valued learning about new things and being able to use that knowledge to help others. A Pegatron production manager, Frank Solis, pointed out that HERproject was educational for management as well as workers.

#### PREVENTATIVE CARE

Workers said that preventative care was the most important knowledge they gained, and many said that they would now visit the doctor more regularly as a result of the project. Pegatron's human resources director recognized

the business benefit from the lack of new employee disability claims for preventable diseases during the project period. The nurse said: "We consider HERproject to be a useful and practical exercise for our employees to become more involved in preventative health care."

#### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Both the nurse and the human resources staff said HERproject helped them do their jobs better. The project improved worker relations and helped with recruitment. Clinic professionals learned how to communicate better with workers by observing how peer educators understood and shared health information with their colleagues.



# 60%

increase in the number of pre-natal medical visits during respondents' last pregnancy

## Impact: Changing Health Behavior

HERproject raises awareness and promotes behavior change through simple improvements to in-factory health services, and demonstrates the business value such as reduced absenteeism and turnover, and higher productivity.

### Project

In focus groups in one factory in Karachi, Pakistan, female factory workers shared that they were missing up to three days of work a month during their menstrual cycles. Women reported monthly pain, infections, and embarrassment due to a lack of knowledge about proper hygiene and limited access to sanitary napkins. Nearly three-quarters of

women interviewed also reported that they had never seen a condom and they expressed extremely limited knowledge of sexually transmitted infections and prevention. For example, though most had heard of AIDS, not a single woman knew about HIV or how the virus was transmitted.

### Health Impacts

Feminine hygiene became a major entry point for the program to educate workers about family planning, sexual health, and other issues. HERproject partner AKU persuaded factory management to provide sanitary napkins in the factory clinic at a subsidized cost. The clinic now dispenses approximately 450 napkins per month, and 33 percent of women are now using sanitary napkins.

Women's increased use of sanitary napkins, combined with their increased knowledge of hygienic practices during menstruation, reduced health complaints. Rashes and pain, often due to reproductive-tract infections, were reportedly reduced by 11 and 18 percent respectively.

In addition to feminine hygiene, peer educators also raised sensitive issues like family planning and sexually transmitted diseases. To make discussions more culturally acceptable, these topics were framed as "preparing for married life."

The method was effective, and workers began asking for contraceptives. To meet the demand, AKU worked with the local government and Marie Stopes International to enroll the nurse in a certification program to dispense contraception. The Population Welfare Department, government of Sindh, donated family-planning products, including condoms, oral contraceptive pills, injections, and intrauterine devices to the factory.

### Business Impacts

The health awareness and behavior changes in the factory have also had positive business impacts. Because of changes specific to menstrual health, women reported a 25 percent reduction in poor concentration in work, 28 percent less absenteeism related to menstruation, and 33 percent less difficulty in meeting production targets.

Overall, reported absenteeism was 11 percent lower, with a 24 percent reduction in the mean number of days absent. Women who reported taking the maximum number of allowable days off was reduced by 46 percent. Initial ROI analysis has confirmed that women in the factory worked an average of 2.5 more hours per month during the project period, representing an additional 615 days of work per year.



83%

knowledge of the importance of tetanus toxoid immunization during pregnancy increased from 30 to 83 percent

## Impact: Promoting Cultural Change

The peer-education model creates an environment for the discussion of cultural myths and fears, encouraging new mindsets and behavior.

### Project

In many conservative countries, religious and cultural beliefs prevent mothers from educating their daughters about menstruation and feminine hygiene, which creates a pattern of discomfort, embarrassment, and potential health risks. Family planning is similarly off-limits, and societal and cultural myths and practices that may be harmful to women's reproductive health are allowed to continue.

In such countries, the workplace is a rare location where women are alone outside the home, creating a critical point for interaction on these sensitive issues. In Egypt and other countries, women are using HERproject to discuss difficult topics and promote behavior change among their peers and within their communities.

### Impacts

In Egypt, peer-educator-training sessions have been used to discuss traditionally taboo topics, from menstrual hygiene to female genital mutilation (FGM). Women surveyed in two participating factories had differing views of FGM, with 32 percent in one and 67 percent in the other arguing that FGM was a necessary practice. In both factories, however, women demonstrated a willingness to listen to their peers' opinions and to voice their own in a setting they felt was safe.

Women are also using community and religious gathering places to share women's health information more widely. Samira El-Sayed, a peer educator in Ismailia, Egypt, said that when she talked to her peers on the bus, most responded positively. "Not only did I spread the messages to my family and to all my friends in the village, I also asked the sheikh in the mosque to conduct a seminar," she said. The sheikh agreed, and El-Sayed led the seminar. In the same way, she gained permission from the doctor at her village's health clinic to hold seminars for women there, including a campaign on safe pregnancy. Now El-Sayed receives calls and visits from girls in her village who have questions about reproductive health issues and are too shy to talk to their mothers. "I am

proud that my mission is of value to my community," El-Sayed said.

By making women the teachers of their peers, and creating safe environments for difficult discussions, HERproject helps promote dialogue around myths and misconceptions within and beyond factory walls. Such commitment to awareness-raising motivates behavior change: A year after HERproject was launched in Pakistan, female factory workers are not only using sanitary napkins themselves, they are providing them to their sisters and daughters. These women are changing cultural paradigms for a new generation of women.

"It is inspiring to see how quickly female workers who are educated and empowered by HERproject are able to change the behavior of their peers, and positively influence their family and community members," says Zoltan Valcsicsak, senior manager of community affairs at Levi Strauss & Co. "But it is even more encouraging when the project starts demonstrating its power to help create a workplace that is based on more trust, more open communication, and more employee ownership. Then we start seeing a significant change coming to the factories."



51%

of workers surveyed in two factories said they had missed work due to painful menstruation

## Impact: Building Leaders

HERproject builds leadership skills by training women to act as peer educators within the workplace and community.

### Project

HERproject maximizes opportunities for women's empowerment and leadership development by creating health ambassadors within the workplace and the community. From India to Mexico, HERproject peer

educators develop communication and leadership skills, and they use those skills to share their knowledge with their co-workers, with their communities, and with their families.

### Profile

**GOWRAMMA NAGESH**  
PEER EDUCATOR  
HERproject INDIA

A 30-year-old woman with a 13-year-old son and an 11-year-old daughter, Gowramma Nagesh and her husband, who works in a potato-chip factory, live in Bangalore, India, where they migrated for financial reasons. Previously, they were farmers in a village 75 kilometers away. Now, Nagesh lives closer to the factory where she works.

Based on her strong communications skills, Nagesh's managers recommended that she become a peer educator. In an interview with St. Johns Medical College's Dr. Deepthi Shanbhag, Nagesh explained that the HERproject program has helped her take on many roles in the factory and in her community:

#### TEACHER

Nagesh gained the confidence to speak to groups and answer questions about women's health. She developed her own techniques to teach more effectively, including using simple language and repeating key messages in different ways to reinforce them.

#### COUNSELOR

Nagesh regularly counsels co-workers and women in her neighborhood about reproductive health issues, such as family planning. One woman she

advised was apprehensive about using contraception. However, after taking Nagesh's recommendation, she and her husband are now using contraceptives successfully and happily.

#### COMMUNITY "NURSE"

Nagesh's co-workers and neighbors regularly seek her assistance in answering health questions, and they often ask her to accompany them on trips to the hospital or clinic. Occasionally, Nagesh helps neighbors administer medicines or doctor-recommended care.

#### PROBLEM-SOLVER

Nagesh is known as a resource in the factory by many co-workers. For example, when the ladies' room workers asked her about the proper disposal of sanitary napkins, Nagesh gave a health presentation to the factory cleaners to help them address the issue.

Nagesh has also made changes to improve her health and the health of her family. For example, she knows the importance of taking a child to the doctor right away, she has improved her own menstrual hygiene (and has helped family members do the same), she is eating more fresh vegetables, and she has started a regimen of ergonomic exercises.

## Impact: Improving Worker-Manager Relations

By creating opportunities to develop communications and leadership skills among workers, HERproject builds a foundation for improved worker-management relations.

### Project

In southern China, the world's largest light manufacturing hub, worker-management relations are a significant challenge. In 2008 alone, unhappy workers filed 70,000 labor dispute cases. In this context, improving worker-management relations holds significant business value for factories participating in HERproject.

To glean insight from factory managers and workers, HERproject's He Zheng distributed anonymous surveys to three factories, two Timberland suppliers, and one shared Timberland and LS & Co. supplier. She received responses from 29 management staff and 71 workers, and she conducted in-depth interviews with two managers.

### Impact

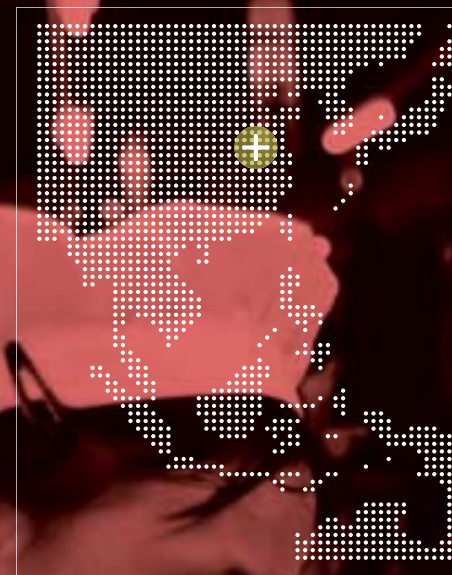
What Zheng found spoke volumes about the business value of HERproject: All managers and all but one of the workers felt that HERproject had the potential to improve worker-management relations.

Workers felt that HERproject represented an investment by management in workers' personal needs and in their communications skills. This investment made workers feel grateful to management, whom they felt were making an effort to meet their personal needs. One worker's sentiments illustrate the positive outcome of this feeling: "Each time I feel the management really cares about us, I get happier and make a greater effort in my work."

Management was impressed with the potential and capacity demonstrated by workers through the program, remarking on peer educators' communications and project-management skills, and their ability to analyze and tackle obstacles. The progress and potential demonstrated by workers increased management's trust of workers, which likewise improved workers' trust of management. According to one worker: "Now I have confidence in talking to a group ... and I know that my supervisor thinks highly of me."

The communications around women's health has also brought workers and managers closer together through sharing personal health experiences. For example, one manager remarked that Chinese women are typically too shy to explain necessary leave due to menstrual pain or gynecological infections, instead offering unclear reasons to management. As a result, managers often become confused or angry, which weakens relations. HERproject helps break this embarrassment, and makes managers more understanding. According to one manager in Zhongshan City: "It is a managers' responsibility to understand workers' needs, and HERproject provides me with an opportunity to learn about their needs."

Timberland shares the workers' and management perceptions. "Programs like HERproject create platforms for trust-building between workers and management in factories, which is absolutely critical for us and for our suppliers in China," said Colleen Von Haden, code of conduct senior manager at Timberland. "What's more, that trust will form the foundation for improved working conditions and better quality of life for workers in Timberland supply chains and beyond."



"I have to admit that I used to underestimate the normal worker's capability, until I saw what they did in this HERproject. They organized the events themselves, they taught themselves, and they dealt with the obstacles by themselves. It's a surprise to me, and it tells me that they can do a lot."

FACTORY MANAGER, 2009

"We believe that supporting programs like HERproject to improve women's health education is simply the right thing to do. HERproject's peer-to-peer education model encourages women to share their knowledge with other family and community members, extending the benefits of HERproject well beyond the factory floor."

TIM BOYLE, CEO & PRESIDENT, COLUMBIA SPORTSWEAR

## Impact: Launching Local Partnerships

HERproject promotes local ownership of HERproject activities and a focus toward long-term investment in women's health. In China, HERproject factories have built public-private partnerships with local government women's clinics.

### Project

With the help of local HERproject partner Guangdong Women's Professional Technical College, two Nordstrom suppliers have built lasting partnerships with local government-

funded women's clinics called Women's Federations, which provide women's health services, family-planning products, and counseling.

### Impact

As part of HERproject activities, participating Nordstrom suppliers established partnerships with the Women's Federation clinics, who participated in the peer-educator trainings and shared information with workers about the services they provide. During one factory's peer-educator training, management invited local TV media to attend and report on the event to call attention to female workers' reproductive health and HIV/AIDS prevention, and to attract attention by other factories.

In program exit interviews, one factory committed to providing women's health trainings to all new employees and to maintaining the partnership with the Women's Federation. One year later, the factory is an official member of the Federation, which provides family-planning products and a free annual gynecological exam for each female worker in the factory, including a type-B ultrasonic exam if the woman wishes. Since this practice began, 500 women have received exams and less than 1 percent of female workers have been diagnosed with diseases.

The two Nordstrom suppliers communicate regularly with their local Women's Federations, using them as a government resource for their workers on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS prevention, which has contributed to

HERproject's sustainability. In addition, the Women's Federations provide both factories with supplies of condoms for their clinics.

The Women's Federations also feel they have benefited from the collaborations with the factories. Before the program, local Women's Federations seldom interacted with female factory workers, who work in closed manufacturing complexes. "After working with women for my whole life, this is the first time I realize that AIDS prevention and education work could be so impactful," said one Women's Federation official after she attended the peer-training event at one factory. "I am going to promote the work to a big audience in many other enterprises in our town." So far, one Women's Federation has formed relationships with three other factories beyond HERproject.

Nordstrom is pleased with the resulting factory ownership. "Our ultimate goal for any worker-enrichment program is for factories to realize the benefit of the investment and assume ownership day to day," said Anthony Curtis, program manager of social responsibility, at Nordstrom. "We are thrilled to see that our initial investment has led to a sustainable relationship between our factories and local health resources. This is the image of success for Nordstrom participation in HERproject."



500

workers in one Nordstrom supplier have received free gynecological exams



## Impact: Creating Global and Local Networks

HERproject helps strengthen relationships between factory management, local NGOs, workers, and international brands, building a foundation for sustainability and enhanced impact and reach.

### Project

As a company partner, Abercrombie & Fitch has found that HERproject's unique model of collaboration and network-building can enhance the company's impact on workers and worker communities in its supply chains. HERproject has also helped expand Abercrombie & Fitch's human rights program to cover women's health.

HERproject was implemented by partner Marie Stopes International Vietnam (MSIVN) in four factories near Ho Chi Minh City. In exit surveys and interviews in two of the four factories, MSIVN found significant behavior changes among workers, as well as improvements in worker health awareness. In addition to the traditional women's health topics, peer educators in this program also wanted to address a serious occupational health issue: commonly occurring eye strain and headaches.

One female worker described her knowledge as "much improved." "Before, the project workers did not know clearly about how to prevent HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B, or [more common] eye tiredness," she said. "After receiving many education messages, we know about prevention methods, and we can apply them to protect ourselves."

Peer educators also worked with factory management to incorporate the HERproject health messages within radio broadcasts in one factory. Radio broadcasts occur during the lunch hour and are used by factory management to inform workers of production procedures, schedules, and regulations. Peer educators suggested the radio broadcasts, obtained approval from the factory board of directors, and used the system to broadcast HERproject health topics to a large audience.

Factory management felt that the program's contribution to improved worker health also enhanced factory productivity and worker-management relations.

"Participating in HERproject in Vietnam helped us create a framework for similar programs in other countries," said Kim Harr, senior manager of global human rights at Abercrombie & Fitch. "Moving forward, all of our workplace programs will benefit from the lessons we have learned and the networks we have built, and that will enable us to cater to the needs of our supplier communities, through HERproject and other initiatives."



Peer educators suggested radio broadcasts, obtained approval from the factory board of directors, and used the system to broadcast HERproject health topics to a large audience

## Impact: Fostering Company Collaboration

HERproject brings competing companies together to improve program activities and increase impact.

### Project

In Vietnam, three companies that compete in the consumer marketplace are supporting HERproject in a shared factory to further progress for women. In the factory near Ho Chi Minh City, representatives from Clarks, Columbia

Sportswear, and Timberland work together with factory management and local HERproject partner Life Centre to implement a factory-based training program and ROI study.

### Benefits

#### COMPANY COLLABORATION

Active participation by local staff of the three participating companies enhanced program implementation, trust-building, problem-solving, and recognition of worker and factory accomplishments. The three brands worked as a team to show support to the factory's top and middle management to make necessary accommodations for worker participation. For example, when companies were trying to plan the training of the peer educators, Jasmine Tri of Timberland explained, the factory was having trouble finding time to hold the training during the peak production months in summer. Together with HERproject partner Life Centre, Tri and the other brand representatives worked with production supervisors and peer educators to develop a schedule to meet the needs of the factory and the program.

#### INCREASED FACTORY COMMITMENT

The participation of multiple brands increased the commitment of the factory. If only one brand was funding the project, it would likely be limited to workers dedicated to that brand's products, and in a large factory, the brand would have limited purchasing power among the factory's overall clientele. The participation of three of the factories' major clients allowed

activities to target all of the factory's 6,000 workers and helped ensure ongoing success for the program.

#### SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES AND RESOURCES

Sharing responsibilities among the three brands helped save time and resources in overseeing the program, said Ahn Pham of Columbia Sportswear. Tracey Nguyen of Clarks said the close collaboration with her peers at Columbia and Timberland gave an added bonus of professional development opportunities and cross-learning about supplier monitoring and relationship building.

#### WORKER PARTICIPATION

Their collaborative efforts have produced a highly effective program. Pham participated in a festival at the factory to talk about health and celebrate the accomplishments of HERproject and other initiatives.

"I had many workers approach me to express how much they enjoyed the HERproject in the factory," Pham said. "One worker named Lan told me that she noticed my feet were swelling due to my pregnancy. She then advised me to go the hospital, as this might be an indication of high blood pressure during pregnancy." Lan had learned to spot the symptom from the peer educator in her working station.

“We took a chance on HERproject because it sought to engage the private sector not for financial contributions, but for access to a vulnerable population of women. Using the workplace to raise women’s health awareness and promote access to critical health services, BSR and their global partners have realized significant impact on both women’s health and making the business case for investment in women’s health.”

LANA DAKAN, DAVID & LUCILE PACKARD FOUNDATION

“As focused as we are on improving the quality of life for workers in our own supply chains, Timberland is equally committed to creating even greater impact through our network of peer companies who are pursuing similar objectives. HERproject has given us the opportunity to work with competitors on the shared goal of educating and empowering the female factory workers who make our products.”

## Challenges and Lessons for the Future

BSR and our partners are constantly learning lessons through successes and challenges alike. In addition to supporting workplace programs, we are creating a network of professionals across borders who can share what worked and what didn't to support enhanced program impact.

## Working with Factories

Workplace programs are often perceived as interfering with factory production. As a result, factory management and line supervisors are sometimes reluctant to provide the support that is critical for program success. Such challenges, as well as the contrast of highly supportive factory management, has taught HERproject partners the following lessons:

- » Involve line and production managers in the project-planning phase. This will reduce the likelihood of disengagement and will help ensure that their needs and concerns are heard and incorporated from the start.
- » Sign individual memorandums of understanding between factory management and the implementing partner, if possible. This helps establish an independent relationship and puts in writing the expectations of factory management.
- » Work with factory management to consider how to fit HERproject activities into existing factory operations and programs. This will enhance effectiveness and sustainability.
- » Communicate peer educator successes to line and human resource managers to keep them engaged and to acknowledge peer educators.
- » Require monthly reporting on in-factory activities. This will encourage factories to meet peer-education targets in a timely manner, and will enhance accountability of management to the program.
- » Include workshops for factory line supervisors in HERproject activities. This will help build understanding of the program and will likely increase support for the project.

## Best Practices for Peer Educators

Peer education is efficient and cost-effective. But it is not without its own challenges—most of which stem from poor selection of women to serve as peer educators. HERproject partners recommend the following to maximize benefits from a peer-education model:

- » Select only permanent workers as peer educators (PEs).
- » Take care in selection to prevent PE turnover—make participation a reward for long-standing loyal service or for demonstrated leadership or excellence.
- » Have PEs self-select, or nominate others, for participation. This may increase their commitment.
- » Involve line managers in selection or self-selection of PEs to ensure their early participation and buy-in. But also be careful that the line managers do not select their least productive workers.
- » Allow PEs to conduct outreach in pairs or groups, which will reduce pressure on individuals.
- » Create visual designations of PEs, such as badges, armbands, or a centrally located poster with photos of PEs. This will help them feel special and important, and will establish their role in the program for their peers.
- » Pay PEs for their time participating in HERproject as other work is paid. This will enhance their commitment. Other kinds of recognition, such as merit certificates and special events, also help increase PE ownership of the program.
- » Post a training calendar in a public space to help spread awareness of trainings and help workers and management alike prepare for upcoming events.

## Factory Clinic Integration

Programs that acknowledge and integrate existing factory resources will be the most successful. Most factories have existing clinics, where workers can receive first aid and can rest when they are ill. These clinics and the nurses who run them can serve as the focal point for workplace health programs.

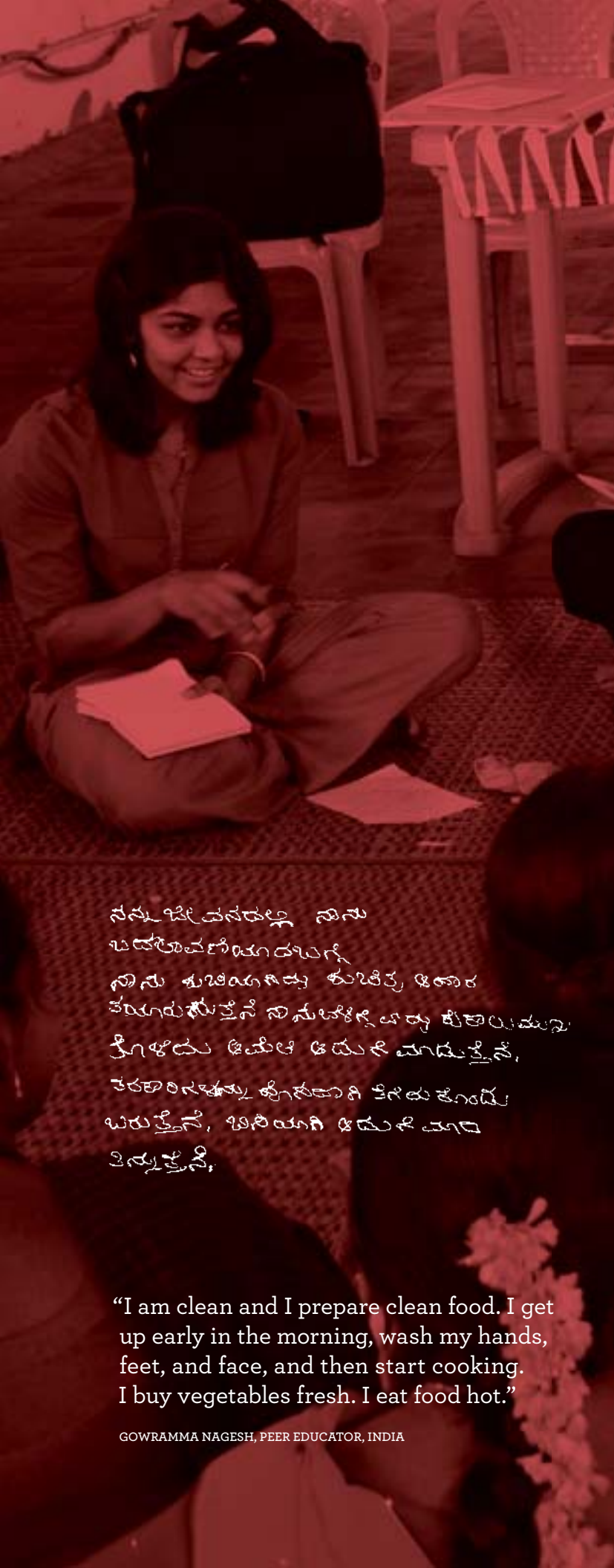
- » Clinic nurses or other health care staff should assume the management role in the program as the project progresses so that the factory can easily maintain activities after HERproject ends.
- » Strong participation of the factory nurse combined with an upgrade to factory-based product and counseling offerings can contribute to converting health awareness into behavior change.
- » Seek opportunities to provide women's health trainings to factory nurses.

**“HERproject in Pakistan has shown that existing factory nurses can provide many more services than they normally do through some additional training and management support.”**

DAVID WOFFORD, ESD



The future depends on you. Make your organization part of the movement to invest in the health and prosperity of women and the world. Join HERproject or design your own program.



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ಬದಲಾವಣೆಯಾಗಿದ್ದಾಗ  
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ತಯಾರಿಸುತ್ತೇನೆ ನನ್ನ ಬಟ್ಟೆಗಳನ್ನು ಕೈತೊಳೆಯುವ  
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ಬರುವುದು, ತಿನ್ನುತ್ತೇನೆ ತಿನ್ನುತ್ತೇನೆ  
ತಿನ್ನುತ್ತೇನೆ.

“I am clean and I prepare clean food. I get up early in the morning, wash my hands, feet, and face, and then start cooking. I buy vegetables fresh. I eat food hot.”

GOWRAMMA NAGESH, PEER EDUCATOR, INDIA



# Join HERproject

HERproject is open to participation in Bangladesh, China, Egypt, India, Pakistan, and Vietnam. Companies interested in participation should consider potential country locations and factory candidates, and should contact BSR to learn more: [getinvolved@herproject.org](mailto:getinvolved@herproject.org).

**FACTORY PROGRAM MODEL**

The HERproject workplace program uses a peer-education training model (see HERproject Steps, right). The program is 12 months in duration and includes engagement with factory management to establish roles and responsibilities, an assessment of female workers' health needs, peer educator trainings, and factory-based outreach activities. Programs also engage clinic staff and middle management to ensure that factory-based support is built and sustained after activities begin. The program concludes with a discussion with factory management on methods to maintain the established investment in female workers' health.

**FUNDING MODEL**

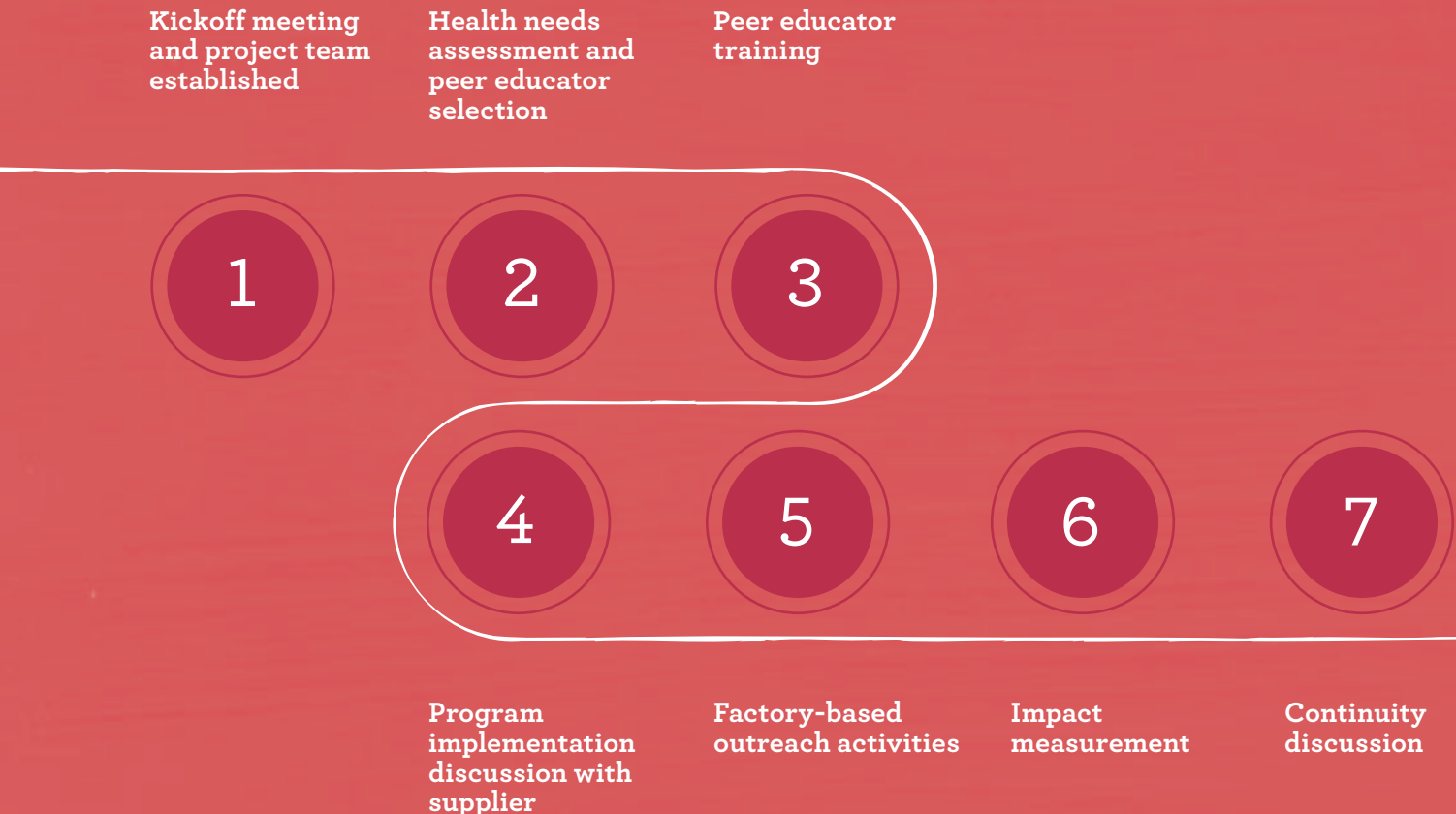
HERproject is funded by a combination of public and private contributions (see figure 3, below).

- 1 BSR receives funding from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Levi Strauss Foundation, and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. With this funding, BSR oversees program design, selects and manages local partner relationships, and engages international companies for participation. We also make strategic investments in local HERproject partners.
- 2 International companies provide funding to cover the cost of program activities in their individual suppliers. These costs range from US\$4000 to US\$6000 per factory per year, and are given directly to the local HERproject partner.
- 3 Suppliers absorb the costs associated with program implementation, such as staff time and meeting space for training activities. Suppliers sometimes also share program costs with international companies, or cover additional incidentals, such as HERproject partner transportation.

**HERPROJECT FUNDING MODEL** *fig 3*



## HERproject Steps



## Call to Action

There are many ways to contribute to women's education and empowerment in the developing world.

## Civil Society and Donors

Think beyond corporate contributions: How can the private sector help you access a larger number of female workers?

### NGOs Targeting Women

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Think about ways to deliver information or services for women within the workplace. Meeting women where they are can remove the burden of outreach. Also explore opportunities to encourage women's ownership of activities, as this can increase opportunities for empowerment and can help when addressing culturally sensitive issues.

#### EXAMPLE

Engage plantation owners in rural programs to benefit their workers, train factory-based health and social welfare professionals to enhance the services they deliver, or pair financial services companies' micro-lending programs with women's groups for group counseling, peer education, or business networks.

### Organizations Funding Programs for Women

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Think about corporate partnership as more than just financial. If you can show that your program can be as good for business as it is for women and development, you may be able to achieve far-reaching, replicable impact beyond your expectations.

#### EXAMPLE

Approach corporate responsibility professionals as potential colleagues, and acknowledge their financial objectives as a for-profit company. Think about the diverse benefits your program might provide. For example, you could link an existing program with a company's corporate volunteering program to take advantage of the skills and time of their employees.

## Companies

No matter which industry you represent, make sure all your corporate policies, including supplier codes of compliance, support gender equality.

### Consumer Product Manufacturing

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Investigate the gender demographics in your supply chain. Acknowledge the different needs of female workers, and ask your suppliers about the services they offer for women.

#### EXAMPLE

Identify a need that is going unanswered—such as a daycare center, safe transport home, financial literacy, opportunities for professional development or upward mobility, or accessible pre- and post-natal care—and determine a way to address it. Try to make the workers a part of the solution, and give them opportunities to take a leadership role.

### Food and Agriculture Companies

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Take lessons from community initiatives targeting women as well as workplace programs in the manufacturing industry. Whether they are your employees or your employees' wives, create or support community activities that provide information and services to women.

#### EXAMPLE

Farms are often in rural areas, where social services are less accessible. If a woman and her husband must travel many miles for her to receive pre- and post-natal care and to deliver her baby safely, explore options to create a women's health clinic closer to the farming community.

### Financial Services Companies

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Explore opportunities to link savings and financial education services to low-wage workers in their manufacturing workplace or agricultural community. A savings account can help protect money earned, can create a mechanism for monitoring fair wages and overtime payment, and can facilitate the sending of remittances to rural areas or home countries. Savings accounts and financial literacy can also elevate a woman's status within her family and can increase her decision-making powers on family spending. Many studies have shown women are more likely to reinvest earnings into children and family welfare—thus creating a cycle of healthier, wealthier, and more stable families and children.

#### EXAMPLE

Through the WING project, BSR member company Australia and New Zealand Banking Group (ANZ) and AusAid are working together to help female garment workers in industrial areas in Cambodia to safely and cost-effectively send money to their families in rural areas.

### Pharmaceuticals and Consumer Health Products

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If your company manufactures medicines, vitamins, or nutritional supplements specifically for women, think about partnering with consumer product or food and agriculture companies to provide those products at a subsidized cost to female workers.

#### EXAMPLE

Factories (and many large agricultural plantations) have canteens and clinics where it would be easy to offer basic products and services to meet women's needs. HERproject surveys have revealed high levels of anemia and inadequate nutrition throughout Asia; providing products to alleviate these conditions will contribute to better general and maternal health outcomes, and healthier workers.



# HERproject team

BSR's core HERproject team includes supply chain and gender experts from BSR's global offices in Asia, Europe, and North America. The team manages country programs and company engagement with additional support from our global partner, Extending Service Delivery.

- 1 **Ayesha Barenblat** (Director, Advisory Services): As director of BSR's consumer products industry practice, Barenblat plays a critical role in recruiting companies for HERproject participation and in keeping HERproject relevant to the private sector.
- 2 **Chad Bolick** (Director, Partnership Development): One of HERproject's founders, Bolick provides strategic program guidance and manages relationships with program funders.
- 3 **Angie Farrag** (Manager, Advisory Services): Egyptian by birth, Farrag manages HERproject Egypt from BSR's Paris office.
- 4 **Nandini Hampole** (Associate, Advisory Services): A native of Bangalore, India, Hampole manages HERproject in India and supports program activities throughout South Asia.
- 5 **He Zheng** (Associate, Advisory Services): Based in Guangzhou, China, He manages HERproject implementation in factories throughout the Pearl River Delta.
- 6 **Pei Bin** (Director, China Partnership Development): An expert on workplace training programs, women's empowerment, and China's migrant population of factory workers, Pei Bin provides strategic guidance to HERproject China.
- 7 **Peder Michael Pruzan-Jorgensen** (Managing Director, Europe, Middle East, and Africa): From BSR's Paris office, Pruzan-Jorgensen provides high-level support for European company engagement and strategic program guidance.
- 8 **Cody Sisco** (Manager, Advisory Services): An expert in supply chain initiatives, Sisco oversees relationships with European companies from BSR's Paris office.
- 9 **Fengyuan Wang** (Associate, Advisory Services): From BSR's Hong Kong office, Fengyuan manages HERproject in Vietnam.
- 10 **Racheal Yeager** (Manager, HERproject): Yeager oversees the global HERproject team as well as country-level program activities, communication, and expansion. She also manages relationships with U.S.-based companies.

**EXTENDING SERVICE DELIVERY (ESD): GLOBAL TECHNICAL PARTNER**

Our global partner, Extending Service Delivery (ESD), is a five-year project funded by USAID that helps address unmet need for family planning (FP) and increase the use of reproductive health and FP services in communities, especially among poor and underserved populations.

**Shawn MacDonald** and **David Wofford** are senior advisors to the ESD project on corporate responsibility and reproductive health, and work closely with BSR on HERproject program design and ROI analysis. **Alana Hairston**, a program officer at ESD, provides additional expertise on reproductive health for HERproject program content and design.

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Design: Tomorrow Partners, Berkeley, California



a BSR initiative

Launched in 2007 in China, BSR's HERproject links multinational companies and their factories to local NGOs to create sustainable workplace programs that increase women's health awareness. Working with HERproject partner Extending Service Delivery, BSR also seeks to demonstrate the return on investment for factory-based women's health programs. HERproject is active in China, Egypt, India, Pakistan, and Vietnam. Participating companies include Abercrombie & Fitch, Clarks, Columbia Sportswear, HP, Levi Strauss & Co., Nordstrom, and Timberland. HERproject is generously supported by the David & Lucile Packard Foundation, the Levi Strauss Foundation, and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Visit [www.herproject.org](http://www.herproject.org) for more information.



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[www.herproject.org](http://www.herproject.org)

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