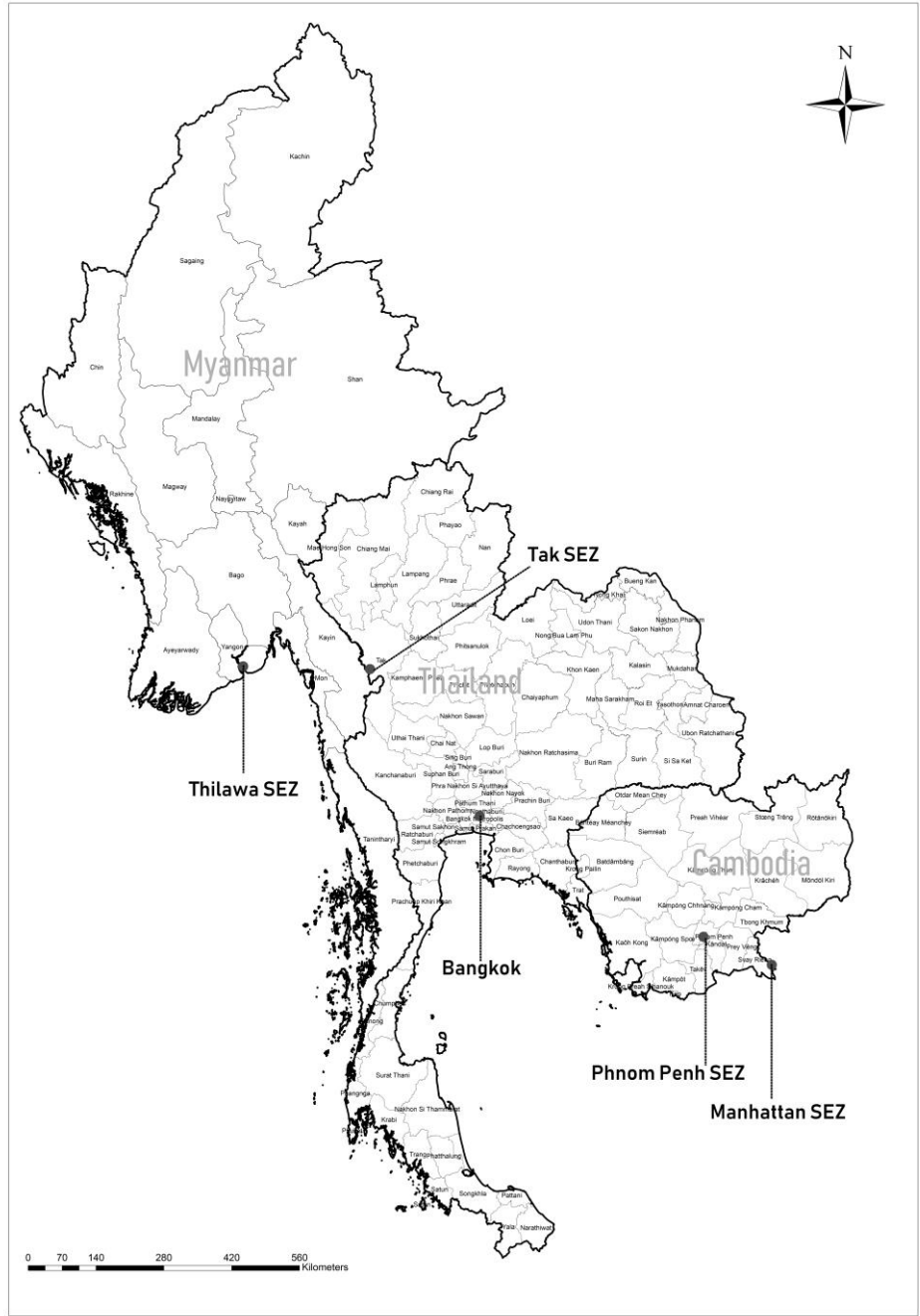


Skills development for migrant garment workers to improve their bargaining power: Cases of SEZs in the Mekong Region

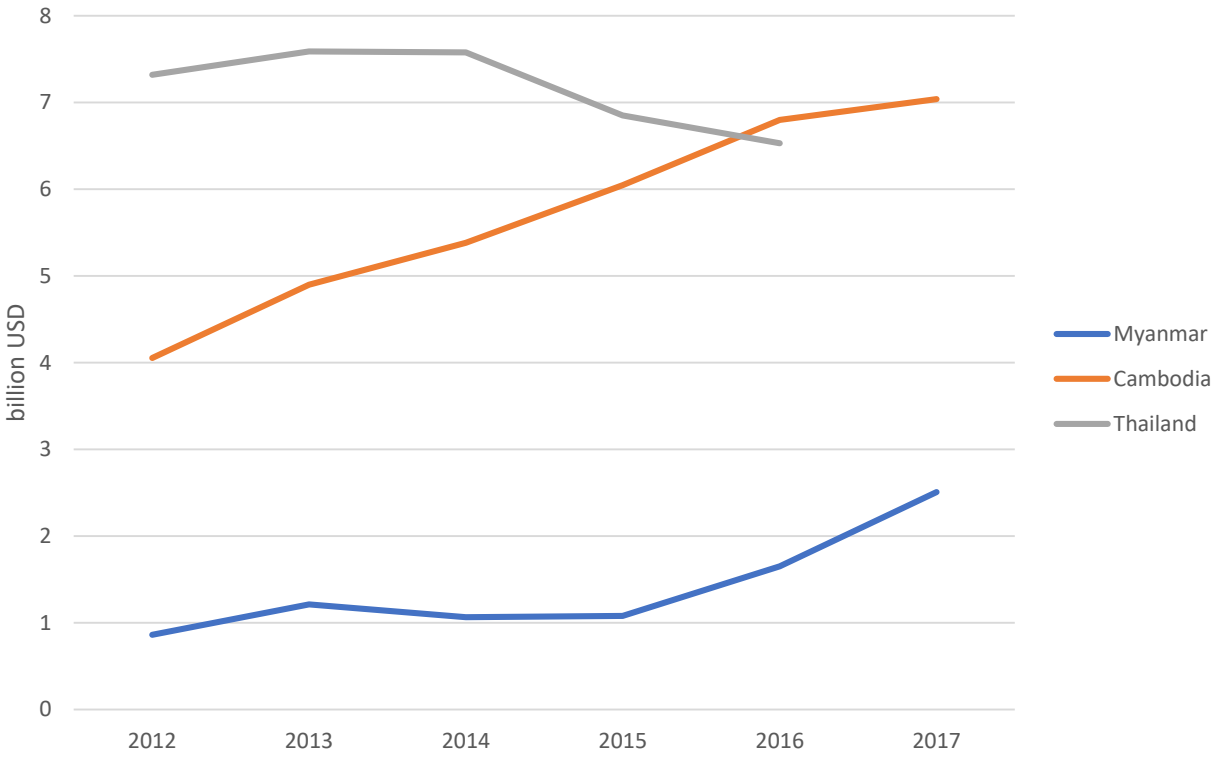
WIDER Development Conference "Transforming economies – for better jobs", 11-13 September 2019, Bangkok

Kyoko Kusakabe, Carli Melo, Thet Thet Aung, Mom Sokchar, Sai Aung Tun





Textile and clothing export



Migrant garment factory workers

- “Unskilled” or “low skilled” workers.
- Skills development not considered important.
- Government’s intention to diversify industry from garment industry (Cambodia/ Myanmar)
- Labor shortages

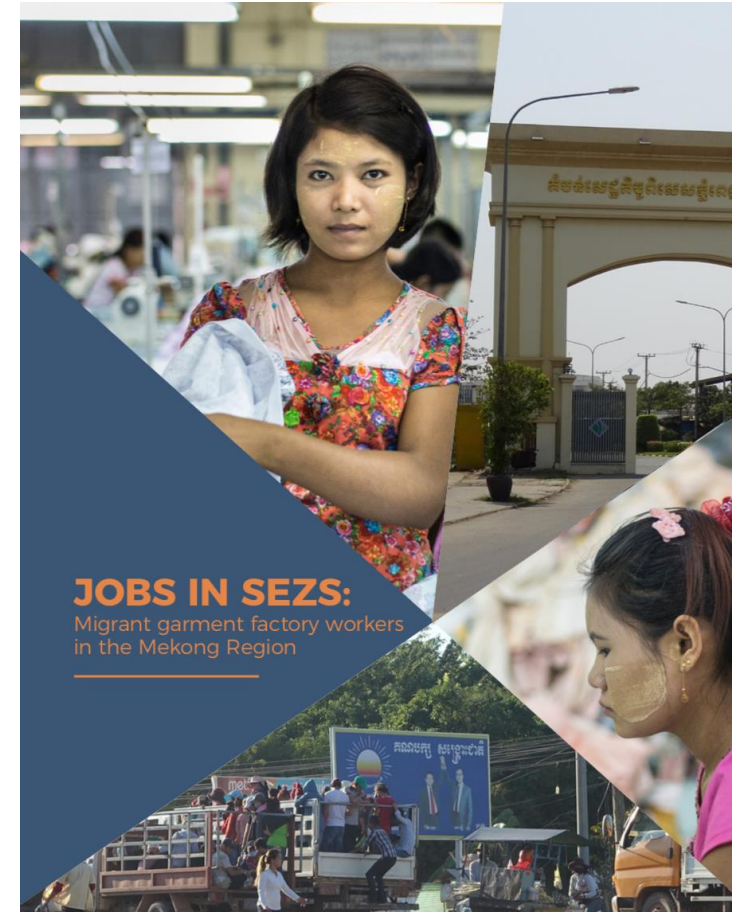


Table 1: Percentage of respondents who received training by sex of respondents

	Phnom Penh	Manhattan	Yangon	Mae Sot
Men	22 (95.7%)	4 (100%)	3 (12%)	11 (37.9%)
Women	154 (87.0%)	92 (95.8%)	17 (9.7%)	50 (29.3%)

“Skills do not get reflected in pay and I am only paid only at a piece rate. If there is a piece rate, there is no promotion. There is no promotion in the factory. Some worked for 20 years, and were receiving 250 baht. But now their pay is 180 baht per day” (Interview, November 2018).



Earnings and experiences in garment work among respondents

	Phnom Penh	Manhattan	Yangon	Mae Sot
Average year of starting to work in garment factories	2011	2012	2013	2010
Average wage during off season	196.4 USD/ month	205.5 USD/ month	119.0 USD/ month	164.5 USD/ month
Average wage during high season	247.5 USD/ month	247.7 USD / month	142.4 USD/ month	211.1 USD / month
Correlation between number of years in garment and wage	No significant correlations	Significant correlations during busy season wages	Significant correlations for both busy season and off season	Significant correlations only for busy season wages

- We can start business in village [if we stop working in factories], but all businesses are already started by others. There are several grocery shops in the village already (Interview, Manhattan SEZ, 24 February 2019).



Barriers to skills development

- No requirement for skills when applying for job
- Managers not keen to invest in skills development
- Priorities of workers



Opportunities for skills development

- There are many workers in one factory
- Skills training as compulsory
- Employers recognize the importance



Surveys and in-depth interviews were conducted with hundreds of respondents.
Credit: Tep Mealea

Recommendations

- Standardization of skills and certification for skills linked to wage level
- Skills competency standards should include soft skills as well
- Make training during working hours compulsory in all garment factories



Thank you

<http://dds.ait.ac.th/jobs-at-the-border/>