CAMBODIA HIGH VALUE SILK

A SILK ROUTE TO REDUCING POVERTY AND IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS
Cambodia is known as the ‘land of smiles’. Arts and crafts have historically played an essential role in the country’s life and express its unique spirit. Silk weaving represents one of Cambodia’s greatest artistic expressions and within the country’s peaceful countryside the practice still reflects deeply rooted cultural and social traditions.

Today, the number of Cambodian weavers is estimated to be between 18,000 and 20,000, most of whom are concentrated in five areas: Takeo, Kandal, Kampong Cham, Prey Veng and the northwest part of the country. In these regions, silk weaving is economically significant for women as it is often a parallel activity to farming that allows them to generate additional income.

Internationally, Cambodian silk is continuing to build on its good reputation for its diverse handweaving techniques and quality, its unique and beautiful yellow silk yarn, and its concentration of fair and ethical businesses working with rural producers and marginalized communities.

The International Trade Centre’s High Value Silk Project of the Cambodia Export Diversification and Expansion Program (CEDEP I), October 2012 to March 2016, aimed to promote high-value silk exports. The goal was to increase the competitiveness of the Cambodian silk sector to create jobs, particularly for women, support export diversification, reduce poverty and boost income growth.

Cambodian companies participating in the High Value Silk Project benefited from individual coaching, advisory support and training to develop their products and markets. They also received support to establish business contacts worldwide and develop long-term partnerships.

This publication presents the main results and impact of the project and showcases success stories.

‘We joined (the project) in 2013 and through the years we can see that our staff and also our growth have been improving. Now we have a staff increase of 25% and our export markets have grown 50% in these last two years. We also had an opportunity to join in an international trade show (…) we can see that through our participation in the trade shows we (…) learned more about the market demand for our silk products and especially we (received) new orders and created more employment in the village and in our team.’

Anak Norm, General Manager of Villageworks
**MAIN PROJECT RESULTS AND IMPACT**

- **100%** increase in weavers’ monthly average income from silk weaving
- **88** new jobs created by the 14 project beneficiary companies
- **168** weavers newly contracted by the 14 project beneficiary companies
- **74%** increase in exports of Cambodian silk products by the 14 project beneficiary companies
- **46%** increase in the sales value of silk products sold to tourists
- **300** business linkages created with more than prospective buyers in 5 markets in Europe, the United States, Japan, Australia and New Zealand
- **127** new silk products designed by 13 companies
- **11** trade fairs attended and marketing missions organized during the project
- **7** study tours facilitated by the project
- **11** reports and studies on import markets, the silk sector value chain and silk yarn sourcing

**Cambodian National Silk Sector Strategy** designed under the leadership of the Silk Sector Development and Promotion Commission. The strategy aims to revitalize sericulture and modernize the silk sector in Cambodia, producing high-value products and providing sustainable income for women and men.

*Sources: Beneficiaries’ feedback, project data and end-of-project assessment survey*
‘We particularly benefited from attendance at trade fairs, where I met important buyers and fashion designers who were very impressed by our products (...) We also increased the sales at our shop in Phnom Penh by 10% to 20%, and identified 8 new weavers groups in villages to work with, thanks to the project.’

Seng Takakneary, Owner, SentoSaSilk
HIGH-VALUE IMPACT

BOOSTING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF THE CAMBODIAN SILK SECTOR
AFESIP FAIR FASHION

Building new partnerships for boosting business and securing women’s future

Women are clothed in strength. Established in 2003, AFESIP Fair Fashion (AFF) is a social enterprise that supports empowering and reintegrating women victims of trafficking, sexual exploitation and physical abuse, as well as women in other vulnerable situations. The objective is to help them return to a normal life with economic independence and dignity through fair employment and vocational training.

In 2005, the enterprise’s strong social mandate was its gateway to the external market. Although a great asset to AFF, the mandate alone was not enough to keep the business going. After a few years of operations, the company was struggling. Both exports and local sales had declined, international market requirements could not be met, donor support was reduced and the operating costs could not be covered with income from sales.

To meet these challenges, AFF joined the High Value Silk Project in late 2012. AFF received training, mentoring and support to improve operations and access to international markets. With the advisory support received, AFF for the first time developed an export plan and established partnerships for creating local sales channels through consignment stores and wholesalers.

After two years, AFF improved its operations, cost management and product offer. In 2014, the company exported to nine countries worldwide. It supplied established fair trade brands in Spain and the United States, as well as high-end boutiques in Cambodia and France, among others. Export and local sales of silk products reached 56% and 26% of total sales in 2014 respectively. In 2015, sales continued to grow and AFF planned to hire six new employees and outsource production to 10 weavers.

Today, AFF offers a beautiful line of high-quality silk apparel, including fashion accessories and jewellery, that reflect the company’s identity and social mandate. AFF is ready to captivate local and international markets.

See more at:
www.fairfashioncambodia.org
COLORS OF LIFE

Creating value for buyers and workers through a strong identity and unique designs

Life has many colours - those of widowers, people with disabilities, the unemployed, the blind and poor rural villagers. Established in 2009, Colors of Life is a women-owned enterprise working with marginalized communities and people with disabilities. Its aim is to support disadvantaged workers and to encourage their social integration through artistry.

Before joining the High Value Silk Project in 2012, Colors of Life already had a well-developed female fashion collection, which included handmade woven scarves, colourful silk accessories as well as decorative goods and ornaments. Yet, the company had not developed a clear brand identity and exports were very limited.

The project provided training and assisted the company to create new products and a export plan that reflected its newly developed brand identity. Colors of Life also received support to establish partnerships and connect to international markets and buyers.

The training on dyeing and visits to high-end clients supported by the project inspired the company to establish a dyeing centre in Phnom Penh. This new growth enabled Colors of Life, with the support of the project, to set up its new showroom located in the city’s touristic area to promote local sales.

Through the project’s initiatives, Colors of Life developed more than 100 new products.

Today, the company supplies various types of silk fabrics from different Cambodian regions and combines contemporary fashions and traditional weaving techniques to offer unique products.

The renewed offer attracted international buyers and exports almost doubled in two years. The social enterprise signed contracts to export to Italy, Switzerland, Australia and Germany; some of its products have been sent to the Japanese market. The company’s success is remarkable. In 2015, its exports were expected to grow by 150%.

To handle the new demand, Colors of Life doubled its number of weavers and is building a weaving centre in Takeo Province to accommodate orders from international buyers. The company plans to recruit more qualified staff, especially in sales and production. The future looks colourful and bright for Colors of Life.
CRAFT VILLAGE

Promoting eco-friendly silk products and sustainable economic opportunities

The beauty of a cloth is in the happiness it brings. Craft Village, a small, women-owned enterprise established in 2009, is committed to creating reliable and high-quality silk products while offering sustainable economic opportunities for weaving families. Since its establishment, the company has provided work to weavers in poor rural villages and helped them to maintain weaving traditions, as well as to improve the lives of their families.

In 2012, Craft Village’s product offer consisted only of scarves, but it wanted to grow. It joined the High Value Silk Project in 2012 and actively participated in training and events. With the project’s support, the company improved its production management, weaving techniques, product quality and design. It diversified its collection and connected to new buyers.

Craft Village’s product offer now includes cushion covers, dresses, accessories and gifts. By combining contemporary design and the traditional Cambodian Ikat weaving technique, the company brings to the market eco-friendly, high-quality silk products.

Innovations in product design allowed Craft Village to expand exports both in volume and markets, as well as to boost local sales and sales to tourists. The company’s annual sales grew by 57% between 2012 and 2014.

Exports of silk products grew by 16% with new buyers from Austria, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Singapore, Sweden and Viet Nam.

The project supported the establishment of a new shop, which resulted in a 156% increase in sales to tourists. Wholesale and consignment sales grew 31% and 187% respectively.

To handle the increase in demand, Craft Village increased its number of weavers from three to 20 and hired three new groups of weavers to outsource part of the production. The company plans to continue expanding, promoting sustainable silk weaving and exploring the international market.

See more at:
www.craftvillage.biz
GOEL COMMUNITY

*Developing organic silk products to meet market requirements while maintaining traditional craft production*

Creating harmonious groups of skilled traditional weavers and helping each other can strengthen families. Established in 2006 under the Church Mission, Goel Community encourages the revival of traditional production processes and is one of the few organizations in Cambodia dealing only with naturally grown and dyed woven fabrics. It operates a social enterprise that provides work to farmers in poor rural areas and supports them to learn craft production, which improves their livelihoods and the lives of their families.

In 2012, the Goel Community joined the High Silk Value Project and actively participated in training and international trade fairs. It received support to improve production, meet the requirements of export markets, better brand and market itself and its products, develop an export plan, and connect to buyers. The company also developed new product designs to respond to local and international demand.

Today, Goel Community offers a collection of products comprised of a cotton and silk mix that includes scarves, bags, toys and gifts. In 2012, the company received its largest order from a South Korean buyer.

It created a new showroom in the capital and established a new workshop centre that employs 12 weavers. Goel Community also subcontracted production to 59 weavers in rural areas.

See more at:
www.goelcommunity.org
KRAVAN HOUSE

Creating jobs for the disadvantaged through exports growth

Kravan House means ‘Blossom House’ - a flourishing and successful operation. Kravan House is a women-owned enterprise providing fair employment to disadvantaged people, craftsmen and women with disabilities in several villages to help them generate a decent income.

As part of the High Value Silk Project, which the company joined in 2012, Kravan House benefited from training and advisory support to improve product quality and design, as well as to better brand and market itself. It also received support to improve production and operations, establish its own sewing centre, develop an export plan, and connect to buyers and partners.

The company’s tie-dye product collection now includes silk fashion accessories such as bags, clutches, wallets and silk jewellery of multiple motifs and colours. The new product offer raised great interest from buyers. The company exported to new markets in Europe and increased sales to existing buyers. As a result, Kravan’s revenue more than doubled in two years.

To respond to the increased orders, the company hired new staff, mostly women. It also increased the number of weavers to whom it outsources production. Kravan House adopted azo-free dyeing practices following training received during the project. The company plans to continue on the sustainability path by obtaining the World Fair Trade Organization certificate.

See more at:
www.kravanhousesilk.com
LADY PENH DESIGN

Bringing Cambodian silk fashion to international markets

Timeless colours apply in our daily work. Lady Penh Design is a women-owned enterprise established in 2011. It aims to help local communities revive traditional weaving techniques and provide job opportunities to women and home-based weavers in rural villages.

As a young company, Lady Penh joined the High Value Silk Project in 2012. Through the project initiatives, the company learned about branding and market demand. Lady Penh developed its brand identity and shifted to more fashionable products. It received support to better market itself and to better address the international market though an export plan that defined priorities to boost sales.

In 2014, social unrest harmed the company’s operations and Lady Penh suffered from a drop in exports to one of its key partners. However, the project has helped the company find new buyers and business opportunities.

In 2015, Lady Penh Design connected to buyers in the United States interested in introducing the company’s products in the US market. As a result of the new contacts and ongoing negotiations, the company projected growth of 24% in 2016. Lady Penh is now designing a new collection of summer dresses to add to its wide offer of azo-free, high-quality silk scarves, fashion accessories and home textiles.

See more at:
www.ladypenhdesign.com
LOTUS SILK

Supporting rural development through organic silk exports

To produce organically is to believe in the future. Lotus Silk is a women-owned enterprise established in 2003 that supports organic silk yarn production and offers employment to vulnerable and disadvantaged people, both women and men.

Lotus Silk’s focus on organic production is helping to revive sericulture in the Kampot province. The company joined the High Value Silk Project in 2012. It received support to improve production to meet market requirements, as well as to better brand and market its unique organic silk products such as scarves, hair accessories and vintage clutch bags. The project also assisted the company to develop an export plan and to connect to buyers, including through creating a website and an e-commerce platform.

As a result, Lotus Silk was able to boost export sales and increase revenue. In two years, revenue from sales increased by 160% and exports sales grew tenfold. The company now exports to Europe and North America. To handle the new orders, the company created jobs. It hired 11 additional employees and outsourced production to five new weavers. If sales continue to grow, the company plans to contract more weavers in the coming years.

Lotus Silk believes the project’s support greatly improved its business performance. The enthusiasm has translated into confidence and an entrepreneurial mindset. The company plans to open a boutique hotel soon.

See more at:
www.lotus-silk.com
MEKONG BLUE

Creating livelihoods for women artisans through Mekong traditional weaving

Developing life skills and creating beautiful products. Established in 2001, Mekong Blue is the commercial branch of the Stung Treng Women’s Development Centre in Sre Po village, which aims to break the cycle of poverty and improve living standards by offering programmes in vocational training and employment, among others. Supporting more than 565 women, Mekong Blue is one of the finest silk producers in Cambodia and was awarded the Seal of Excellence twice by UNESCO-APHADA.*

Mekong Blue joined the High Value Silk Project in 2012 and benefitted from training and coaching to develop its products and access international markets. With the project’s support, it connected to buyers and partners and contracted more than 60 weavers to expand its producer base. The company also received support to open a showroom in the capital and to establish partnerships with consignment stores.

Export sales grew in the first year, but declined in 2014 due to decreasing sales in the United States. The project assisted

Mekong Blue to revise its export plan and identify new online stores in the country. As a result, the company expected export sales to double in 2015-2016. Sales to tourists increased by more than 20% over two years.

Today, Mekong Blue offers a wide range of silk products designed with beautiful colours shades and intricate Chorebab motifs. The company is planning to expand and diversify. It also plans to invest in new businesses such as an eco-friendly restaurant, hotels and tourism. Mekong Blue plans to encourage tourists to visit the village and discover the beauty of traditional silk weaving.

See more at:
www.mekongblue.com

* The UNESCO-AHPADA Seal of Excellence for handicraft products in Southeast Asia is awarded jointly by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the ASEAN Handicraft Promotion and Development Association (AHPADA).
PHALLY CRAFT

Building uniqueness - high value silk for high value social impact

Silk is timeless. Phally Craft is a family-owned non-profit business that employs and provides income to disabled workers and uses the proceeds from sales to support the Future Light Orphanage of World Mate. It works to preserve ancestral and eco-friendly traditional weaving techniques while innovating with contemporary designs and colours. Phally Craft received the UNESCO-APHADA Seal of Excellence for three consecutive years starting in 2001.

In 2012, the company joined the High Value Silk Project with the objective to become self-sustainable. Through the project, the company received support to improve its brand identity and product offer. It was also supported in better marketing itself, including by improving its shop to attract customers. With the assistance of the project, Phally Craft developed an export plan that defined target markets and strategies to connect to buyers.

Today, the company exports to Singapore, Japan and France. Sales to tourists tripled thanks to the new shop location and decoration, and the number of consignment store partners increased. As a result, the company’s revenue tripled in two years.

Following the project, Phally Craft plans to continue on its path towards self-sustainability and to set up its own workshop for weaving and dyeing. A training centre will also be set up within the next three years.

See more at:
www.phalycraft.com
SENTOSA SILK

Creating jobs through entrepreneurship and skills development

Cambodian elegance and high-value silk artistry. Sentosa Silk is a women-owned enterprise established in 2004 that employs and trains women with disabilities. The 100% handwoven products feature Khmer-style patterns, inspired by women and designed for women.

The company joined the High Value Silk Project in 2013. Through the project, it received support to improve and diversify production, better brand and market itself, better understand market trends and requirements, plan exports accordingly, and connect to buyers. In 2014, with the support and coaching of the project, Sentosa Silk received the Good Design Award from Japan.

The company was able to successfully incorporate its strengthened brand identity into its products and shop. Thanks to the new product design and marketing strategy, Sentosa Silk expanded sales by an estimated 20%. It established a client base in Europe and the United States. New national buyers include government ministries, foreign embassies and hotels, which purchase Sentosa’s home textiles and clothing products. As a result, the company contracted 11 new weavers.

Sentosa Silk recognizes the importance of the project in building its entrepreneurial skills and improving its performance. With the knowledge acquired and the award received, the company gained confidence. It invested in a new production site and plans to create the Sentosa Farm and Silk Yarn Bank, an enterprise that should assist weavers, intermediaries and exporters to source silk yarn made in Cambodia and to create more jobs across the value chain.

See more at:
www.sentosasilk.com
VILLAGEWORKS

Promoting fair trade and employment for women empowerment

Passion, pride and enthusiasm - the shining charms of Villageworks. Established in 2011, this women-owned company is a well-established social enterprise. It provides sustainable employment and income to artisans and women workers, creating an environment that prevents them from becoming victims of trafficking and abuse.

The company joined the High Value Silk Project in 2012. It offers a wide range of innovative products, such as scarves and home textiles made of silk. The company also produces a line of bags from recycled material. The project enabled the company to develop an export plan and connect to international buyers. It received training and coaching to improve production, brand identity and marketing.

With the project’s support, Villageworks became a fully registered member of the World Fair Trade Organization, an essential requirement for selling to German fair trade buyers. The company has also developed business relationships with buyers in Australia, other European countries, Japan and the United States.

As a result, sales increased by almost 30% over two years. It increased the number of staff by 50% and created 20 new jobs to handle new orders.

The company also set up a new sewing workshop, where it is providing employment to young people suffering from the effects of polio.

Following the project, Villageworks adopted azo-free dyeing practices and plans to develop its marketing to reflect the company’s eco-friendly products and respect for the environment.

See more at:
www.villageworks.biz
WATTHAN ARTISANS

Combining traditional and contemporary design to bring weavers to markets

Providing hope and empowerment through artistry. Established in 2004, Watthan Artisans Cambodia is a worker-run cooperative of artisans with disabilities. It aims to improve their living standards through training and employment, while also providing a regular income to weavers.

The company offers products using the traditional Ikat weaving technique with a contemporary look and feel. Products include clothing, home textiles and bath products.

Watthan Artisans joined the High Value Silk Project in 2012 and received support to improve production and product quality. Through the project, it developed a stronger brand identity and marketing strategy. The project also assisted the cooperative to diversify its product offer with attractive designs and to set up a showroom in the capital.

From 2012 to 2014, sales from silk products increased by 42%, while non-silk revenue grew by 20%. Watthan Artisans found new buyers in international markets and silk exports grew by 125% over the two years. Today, the cooperative has experience in exporting to Australia, Japan, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States. Sales in Cambodia have also increased.

As a result of the growth in sales, it contracted more than 80 new weavers, primarily women. Watthan Artisans estimates that the number of weavers working indirectly with the company doubled from 40 in 2012 to 80 in 2014.

See more at:
www.wac.khmerproducts.com
WOMEN FOR WOMEN

Exporting Cambodian silk - made by women for the benefit of women

To empower a woman is to empower the future. Women for Women is a women-owned enterprise created in 2005 that empowers women by providing vocational training on silk weaving and tailoring techniques and employment opportunities to enable them to have economic security and independence.

The company joined the High Value Silk Project in 2012 and received support to improve product quality and design. It developed a unique Women for Women brand identity, which was incorporated into a new product collection and marketing strategy. Through the project the company connected to buyers and started to develop an online platform to increase international sales.

Women for Women offers a wide range of exquisite fashion accessories of the finest quality silk, such as clutches, purses and cosmetic bags, as well as beautiful silk jewellery.

By participating in the project, Women for Women increased its revenue by 82%. The company established business relationships with buyers in Europe and the United States; revenue from exports sales more than tripled. Overseas sales now represent 30% of the company’s total transactions. Sales also grew in Cambodia. Today, Women for Women supplies high-end established brands and boutiques in the country. Sales to tourists more than doubled over two years.

To meet the increased demand, the company hired 13 new staff - 13 new jobs created for women. It also contracted twice the number of weavers. In the future, Women for Women plans to reflect its increased awareness of environmental sustainability in its marketing, a strategy that was developed through the project.

See more at:
www.womanforwoman.net
‘The additional income is typically invested in the development of small social business, training and education, with strong positive effects on both social and economic development’

Sylvie Bétemps Cochin, Project Manager, ITC
TRADE IMPACT FOR GOOD

CHANGING THE LIVES OF CAMBODIAN WEAVERS
For Moul Thary, 49 years old, weaving is a family tradition. She learned silk weaving from her parents and continued to honour the practice throughout her life by producing beautiful silk products in her village in the Kaoh Oknha Tei commune.

She used to sell her products out of her house to visiting customers and brought them to the National Museum to place on consignment. From these sales she was able to earn some income, but she knew that she could do much better.

Things changed significantly for Moul Thary when she joined the High Value Silk Project in 2014. Through training, she considerably improved her weaving skills. During a study tour, she met leading Cambodian silk exporting companies. Following this tour, she received orders from two companies. In 2015, she entered into an exclusive agreement with one of the companies to produce and supply ties and handkerchiefs.

Today, silk weaving is Moul Thary’s main income. With increased sales, she now employs four women weavers who are able to have a better living standard in the villages than they had in the city. But the most important thing for Moul Thary is that with the income from silk weaving, she is able to send her sons to high school and university in Phnom Penh and invest in the future of her family.
ROS SARITH

SILK WEAVER, PREK CHREY VILLAGE, KANDAL PROVINCE

Ros Sarith, 29 years old, is a young secondary school teacher in the Lvea Em district. Like many other women in her village, Ros Sarith is also a silk weaver, a tradition that she learned when young and now uses to complement her income.

Although she had been weaving for years, her technical skills were not up-to-date and it was difficult to find clients. In 2009, she started to participate in ITC implemented projects and received training to improve her skills.

In 2012, Ros Sarith joined the High Value Silk Project. With training and coaching her weaving techniques improved significantly and she was contracted by Craft Village, which she met during a study tour organized by the project.

Since then, her income from weaving has almost doubled. With the extra money, she and her family were able to save to build a traditional wooden house. Today, Ros Sarith is optimistic about the future. She plans to sell to more buyers and expand her weaving business. As her income increases, she hopes to subcontract work to other women weavers and help to improve their livelihoods.
This booklet was produced within the context of the High Value Silk Project of the Cambodia Export Diversification and Expansion Program (CEDEP I).

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High Value Silk Project
Cambodia Export Diversification and Expansion Program (CEDEP I)

This booklet was produced within the context of the High Value Silk Project of the Cambodia Export Diversification and Expansion Program (CEDEP I).

ABOUT THE PROJECT
The project aimed at promoting high value silk exports and increasing the competitiveness of the Cambodian silk sector to support export diversification and poverty reduction through employment creation and income growth, particularly for women.

PROJECT PARTNERS
A project of the Royal Government of Cambodia led by the Ministry of Commerce, managed by the International Trade Centre (ITC) and funded under the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF).

International Trade Centre (ITC)
The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. Our aim is for businesses in developing countries to become more competitive in global markets, speeding economic development and contributing to the achievement of the United Nations Global Goals for sustainable development.

www.intracen.org

Ministry of Commerce of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC)
CEDEP I is a program of the Royal Government of Cambodia led by the Ministry of Commerce through its Department of International Cooperation (DICO).

www.moc.gov.kh/

Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF)
CEDEP I is funded by the EIF Trust Fund. The EIF is a multi-donor programme, housed at the World Trade Organization, which supports least developed countries to be more active players in the global trading system by helping them tackle supply-side constraints to trade.

www.enhancedif.org
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https://www.facebook.com/CEDEP-i-Cambodian-High-Value-Silk-141914845991104/
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LO25ZQpTPte&feature=youtu.be

A project of the Royal Government of Cambodia
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