

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Title: Consultant(s) to conduct study on garment factory workers' mental health

Location: Dong Nai, Binh Phuoc, and HCMC

Duration: April - June, 2025

Reporting to: Research and Learning Specialist



Since 1989, CARE in Vietnam has partnered with a wide range of organizations to implement over 300 impactful projects across the country. We believe that true sustainable development can only be achieved by addressing the root causes of poverty, social injustice, and inequality. In collaboration with our partners, we are committed to empowering women and their communities—whether smallholder farmers, workers, or owners of micro and small enterprises—by enhancing their skills, confidence, and capacity to engage in economic development, adapt to climate change, and strengthen their resilience to natural or major disasters. Together, we aim to foster a society where development is inclusive, equitable, and accessible to all.

Project information

Poor mental health is one of the biggest issues facing us today.¹ By 2030, the cost to the global economy of all mental health problems could amount to \$16 trillion.² The U.S. Surgeon General released a framework in October of 2022 highlighting the essential role that workplaces play in promoting and supporting the mental health and well-being of workers and communities.³ However, rarely is the issue talked about in the context of the factory workers who assemble our day-to-day goods. Many factory workers in the world today are domestic or international migrants. Their time in the factory is characterized by suboptimal working conditions, long hours, limited space for working and living and, in some cases, harassment. They manage all these pressures while living in a new setting environment. These conditions may continue to worsen as factories race to the bottom for human labour to compete with automation.⁴ While the reports of workers at factories committing suicide have largely ceased, the mental health crisis has not. It is simply not being talked about – or measured accurately.⁵

The textile and garment industry is a driving force in Vietnam's labor market, providing jobs for over 2.5 million people (about 12% of the industrial workforce, equivalent to 5% of the total workforce of the whole country). Around 70% of Vietnamese garment workers are migrant from rural to urban,⁶ and nearly 80% of them are women,⁷ representing a much higher proportion than average for the manufacturing sector and the economy as a whole. The relative size and gender composition of this workforce underscores the garment industry's pivotal role in supporting livelihoods, especially for women across the country. Despite the disproportionate representation of women in Vietnam's garment workforce, women rarely occupy management roles, workers face heightened risks of gendered or sexual harassment and discrimination, and workplaces may be otherwise unsafe or under-unionized.^{8,9}

In this context, CARE Vietnam under LULULEMON support has carried a study to better understand workers' mental health situation in the garment factory setting, looking at different perspectives on key determinants and mental health impacts on workers' overall wellbeing and their productivity in Vietnam context. The study is expected to suggest solutions/concepts (at both supply chain level and factory level, including stakeholder

¹ [lululemon's Global Wellbeing Report Shows the Pressure to Keep Up with Wellbeing is Making People Feel Unwell | lululemon](#)

² [Mental health crisis could cost the world \\$16 trillion by 2030 | Reuters](#)

³ [The Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being | Center for Work, Health, & Well-being](#)

⁴ [Factory workers are facing a mental health crisis. Here's how to respond | World Economic Forum](#)

⁵ [Life and death in Apple's forbidden city | Apple | The Guardian](#)

⁶ [Thực trạng lao động di cư trong nước và sinh kế của họ ở Việt Nam hiện nay – Một số kiến nghị bảo đảm sinh kế bền vững cho lao động di cư trong nước ở Việt Nam trong thời gian tới - Tổng Liên đoàn Lao động Việt Nam](#)

⁷ [PowerPoint Presentation \(masvn.com\); VIETNAM TEXTILE INDUSTRY: Positive signals in key market; February 2024.](#)

⁸ [Summary Report - Apparel and Footwear Sector Children in Vietnam.pdf \(unicefusa.org\)](#)

⁹ [Women Factory Workers in Vietnam Face High Levels of Sexual Abuse: Report \(globalcitizen.org\)](#)

mapping) supporting apparel companies and their workers in securing workers' mental health and wellbeing; and opportunities to replicate/scale in Vietnam context. The study findings will be used to inform future programming interventions for increasing workers' mental health, wellbeing and productivity.

Objectives

To meet above purposes, the study will aim to meet and answer following objectives and questions:

The 1st objective is to **conduct an initial assessment of factory workers' mental health and factory's stress levels** in the context of apparel industry, as well as to explore factory stakeholders' perspective on impacts of mental health on workers' overall well-being and their productivity.

- How is factory worker's mental health in the garment industry?
- How is stress level in the garment factory increasing risks to worker's mental health?
- What are garment worker's experiences and perspectives on impacts of their mental health on their overall wellbeing and productivity?
- What do other factory stakeholders perceive about impacts of mental health on their workers' overall wellbeing and productivity?

The 2nd objective is to **identify key determinants of mental health** in the garment factory setting, including drivers and prohibitors of factory workers good mental health in the context of garment industry.

- What are existing policies as well as informal practices on working culture, growth career opportunities, financial security (e.g. wage), GBV, working parents, physical working conditions, and available health services/benefits in the factory?
- How do factory stakeholders (including workers and factory management board) perceive on impacts of the above existing practices on workers' mental health?

The 3rd objective is to **get insights of workers' needs to support their mental health and opportunities** to reduce factory stress level and increase workers' mental health in the garment factory setting.

- What are garment workers' needs to enhance their good mental health?
- How are legal frameworks including regulations and FTA requirements enhancing factory workers' wellbeing including their mental health?
- How do factory management perceive on those regulations and roles of each actor in the garment supply chain?
- What is their planning for improvement including challenges?

Tentative methods

This is formative research aiming to explore current situation of garment workers' mental health and wellbeing. Therefore, the study utilizes possible channels to reach stakeholders (workers, factory representatives, government and non-government representatives) and employs quantitative and qualitative data collection tools using participatory techniques to get information and insights as much as possible, not representative information.

CVN is looking for a consultant to work with CARE researcher for this study. The study will apply a combined qualitative and quantitative research method, in which the quantitative data collection will be carried out by CARE. The consultant is expected to propose a plan for the qualitative data collection with high quality standards. In general, the data collection techniques will be participatory, gender and culturally sensitive and appropriate for workers and relevant stakeholders. Overall, the approach and work-plan will be discussed carefully between CARE researcher and consultant team.

Scope of work and key deliverables:

A consultant or a group of consultants will be recruited to work closely with the CARE researcher to support conduct desk review, develop qualitative data collection tools and workplan, conduct qualitative data collection, process qualitative information collected, accommodate qualitative findings and quantitative survey

results (provided by CARE researcher) and draft the report, detail tasks below:

- Conduct desk-review to inform the inception report (max 5 pages, in English) of key points on related research topics and development of qualitative data collection tool, in closed discussion and consultation with CARE team.
- Draft qualitative data collection tool and finalize based on inputs from CARE team.
- Work together with CARE researcher to conduct qualitative data collection at 3 factories in Dong Nai, Binh Phuoc and HCMC adhering strictly quality control plan and ethical research requirements agreed between CARE and consultants,.
- Synthesize qualitative information in the form of thematic system related to research topics including fieldnotes will be provided to CARE.
- Accommodate qualitative findings and quantitative results (provided by CARE researcher) to develop a brief of key findings and potential interventions (PPT format) to present to CARE team
- Draft a full report (max 30 pages in English).

Key deliverables:

- Inception report: outline key points from desk review (not more than 5 pages in English)
- Qualitative data collection tools
- All field-notes and pictures from field-team and recordings (if have)
- Qualitative data synthesis: the completed qualitative data matrix.
- PPT presentation on key findings with CARE team in English?
- Final report (not more than 30 pages in English).

Tentative Timeframe

| No | Activity | Deliverable | Timeline | Working days |
|----|---|---|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. | Consultant Recruitment | Qualified consultant | By end of April | |
| 2. | Desk review (including working with CARE researcher to refine data collection tools) | Inception report (including final qualitative data collection tools) | By 1 st week of May | 3 |
| 3. | Qualitative data collection at 3 factories in Dong Nai, Binh Phuoc and HCMC | Qualitative notes | By mid-May | 8 (actual time) |
| 4. | Data and information processing (including working with researcher to accommodate quantitative data and qualitative information from data collection) | PPT presentation of key findings from quantitative and qualitative survey shared to CARE staffs | By end of May | 5.5 |
| 5. | Write the 1 st report (30 pages max.) | First draft report | By mid-Jun | 7 |
| 6. | Gather feedback and refine the report) | Final report | By end of Jun | 1.5 |
| | | | Total | 25 days |

Number of days can be adjusted upon discussion with the consultant.

Selection criteria

- A master's degree in social sciences such as: Anthropology, Sociology, Human Geography or any other disciplines related to social and behavioural research;

- Experience in conducting applied research, field research in the community and applying qualitative information collection techniques, including: in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, using participatory facilitation tools (such as pictures, paintings, role-plays, games, etc.);
- Experience in documenting and skills in analysing information including information synthesis, interpretive analysis, and information generalisation based on research topics as well as case-study analysis.
- Practical understanding about workers' mental health and wellbeing, and impacts on workers' productivity and company's business, determinants associated with workers' mental health such as working environment and GBV, working culture (career growth, promotion opportunity, ect) and physical and/or occupational health in factories as well as other policies and benefits to support workers' mental health and wellbeing.
- Experience in conducting research with factory workers and migrant workers, providing programs supporting workers, especially workers working in garment and textile.
- Ability to work collaboratively in a team environment, demonstrates flexibility, adaptability and initiative in fieldwork settings and strong verbal and written communication skills in both Vietnamese and English.

Application procedure:

Interested candidates should submit the following documents in English, clearly stating the title of the Terms of Reference to email: Procurement2@care.org.vn before 9 AM on 16 April 2025

Applications including: (i) CVs, (ii) a brief of study plan, (iii) proposed budget inclusive all associated consultant costs (including income tax), and (iv) an example of a previous similar piece of work

Only short-listed applicants will be contacted for interviews. Please do not make telephone contact after submitting the application.

CARE is an equal opportunity employer committed to a diverse workforce. Women, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities are strongly encouraged to apply.

Thanks for your interest in CARE! We are committed to each other and to the protection of the people we serve. We do not tolerate sexual misconduct within or external to our organisation and imbed child protection in all we do. Protection from sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse and child protection are fundamental to our relationships, including employment, and our recruitment practices are designed to ensure we only recruit people who are suitable to work with other staff and the people we serve. As well as pre-employment checks, we will use the recruitment and reference process to ensure potential new consultant/supplier understand and are aligned with these expectations. To find out more, please contact the Human Resources Team Leader.