Bridging the Employment Gap?

An exploratory research on the accessibility into the workplace of survivors and at-risk populations in Cambodia
Abstract

This research is a joint project between Emerging Markets Consulting and Chab Dai Coalition in Cambodia.

The goal of this study is to see an increase in sustainable and safe employment among survivors and at-risk populations of trafficking and exploitation within Cambodia and begin a wider dialogue on the issue of sustainable employment within Cambodia. By documenting the relationship between vocational training organisations and the business sector [defined in this work as a combination of freedom businesses, social enterprises, and commercial businesses] the study sought to determine the practices and partnerships of and between vocational training organisations and the business sector. The information gathered is designed to facilitate deeper engagement between both sectors and for the betterment of vocational training program development and business recruitment practices.
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About

Chab Dai

Chab Dai has been building partnerships and competency within the anti-trafficking movement since 2005. Founded in Cambodia, Chab Dai means “joining hands” in Khmer, and is an organisation committed to working with diverse stakeholders to abolish all forms of abuse and exploitation.

The organisation was initially established as a response to the rapid but uncoordinated growth of anti-trafficking organisations coming into Cambodia to address this issue. Recognizing the gap in collaboration, Chab Dai’s founder Helen Sworn connected with these stakeholders to explore if they would be willing to work together. Two years later, Chab Dai Coalition was established after conducting a baseline assessment among existing organisations to identify the main issues, who was doing what to address them, and the gaps and overlaps in this work. Today, this coalition has grown to a membership of more than 50 agencies comprising of both international and local NGOs working on the issues of human trafficking, exploitation and abuse.

Chab Dai also recognized the need for additional programs beyond coalition building and capacity support of organisations. With the ever-changing trends of human trafficking in Cambodia and around the world, Chab Dai began grassroots projects working on prevention and community engagement, advocacy, community-based client care and legal support and established a research team dedicated to highlighting the voices of survivors of sexual exploitation.

Emerging Markets Consulting (EMC)

EMC is a consulting and investment advisory firm in the Mekong region. Founded in Cambodia in 2004, it has a permanent presence in Lao PDR (since 2009) and Myanmar (since 2014) and employs 30 fulltime consulting staff across all three offices.

During the last decade, EMC has completed over 400 consulting projects for private sector and development sector clients across South and Southeast Asia, including Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand, Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines and China.

Introduction

With so few opportunities for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the mainstream employment sector to connect within Cambodia, the opportunity to create sustainable economic empowerment for survivors and those at risk of human trafficking is being missed. It is critical for vocational training organisations to be aware of and understand the economic shifts and areas of growth and decline within various employment sectors. These shifts impact employment opportunities, and vocational training graduates have a greater chance of success when the curriculum is evolving with the job market needs and opportunities.

In May 2017, Emerging Markets Consulting (EMC) presented at Chab Dai’s Bi-Annual Member Meeting on the employment market, trends, and challenges within Cambodia. An interest to explore this area in more depth was cultivated, as multiple attending organisations realized that their knowledge relating to the growing, plateauing, and declining market sectors was extremely limited. As a result, in conjunction with EMC, Chab Dai set out to further investigate the current business sector and vocational training landscape.

This joint piece of research was created for three key purposes:

1. Inform anti-trafficking organisations of the current status regarding the Cambodian employment market
2. Contribute to raising the standards of vocational training, education and pathways to employment for survivor and those at-risk of human trafficking and exploitation
3. Raise awareness amongst commercial businesses of the opportunities and benefits of employing survivors and those at-risk

This study is unique in its aim to collate data on the vocational training sector and business sector with the purpose of comparing the data sets to identify gaps, and then theorizing recommendations to address them. An open dialogue between these separate entities, grounded in evidence-based research, provides an opportunity to begin
the process of bridging these gaps. This has the potential to increase cooperation and collaboration, and ultimately, produce a smoother and more sustainable transition into employment for survivors and those at risk of trafficking and exploitation.

**Literature Review**

Cambodia’s economy has seen rapid growth, shifts in industry output, and changes in labour force demographics. These three key areas shaped this study’s methodology, bringing context to the issues observed. Research conducted by Chab Dai’s in-house research team has also lent context to the situation.

Chab Dai’s Butterfly Longitudinal Re-Integration Research (BLR), centered around survivors’ journeys after exploitation, has observed a pattern of negative long-term impact resulting from a lack of economic empowerment for survivors of trafficking and exploitation. Over the last nine-years of the study, interviews have yielded multiple accounts of individuals having returned to their villages with training that has no market value within their communities. The BLR’s 2018 “Experiences in Shelter Care” has highlighted this concern

“In other shelters where a narrow set of options were offered, participants were more likely to feel forced into a training that was not useful for them... Numerous women shared that even though they completed shelter-based vocational training, they did not feel that they had sufficient technical skills at the end to actually run a successful business...”

“Experiences in Shelter Care.” Pg. 185

This type of situation is not easily rectified. Acknowledging the vast gap between both sectors is the first step in addressing these kinds of obstacles present in survivor re-integration.

However, research conducted within Cambodia concerning the business sector is still fledgling. With just a few key businesses and organisations carrying out studies, the amount of accessible information on this topic is limited. While there have been studies on the general market, little has been made public, and access to data is restricted for a variety of reasons. Similarly, while there have also been studies conducted on vocational training programs, these have largely been internal evaluations. Aside from the scarcity of studies, the rapid change within the country also accounts for difficulty in acquiring relevant and up-to-date data.

Cambodia’s economy has grown drastically in the past 20 years. The current economy has been built on a foundation primarily of agriculture, garment manufacturing, construction, and tourism. A study carried out in 2015 notes the increase in agricultural productivity has played a major role in the country’s overall economic growth and estimates 80% of the population live in rural areas, where these farms are located (Asia Development Bank and International Labour Organisation, 2015). A greater demand within the country for garment manufacturing and tourism has come from Foreign Direct Investment, which is highly influential in the shifts of market sectors. The service industry has remained stable and bent significantly toward tourism. While these sectors have steadily grown in the past 15 years, some economists predict a plateauing effect if the economy output is not diversified (Asia Development Bank and International Labour Organisation, 2015).

Cambodia has sustained an expansion in gross domestic product (GDP) at 7.8% per year on average from 2000 through 2014. GDP growth dropped to just above 7% in 2010 and has hovered slightly above or below this point since then, with the World Bank estimating 2017’s growth at 6.815% GDP increase (The World Bank, 2019).

There was a dip in GDP growth during the global financial crisis between 2007 and 2008. While its impact was not as significant when compared to other countries in the region, it revealed a weak connection between Cambodia and the global financial sector and drew attention to the need for a diversified export market. However, some economists have stated that the weak connection between Cambodia’s banking and financial sector to the international banking system insulated the nation from the destabilizing effects of the crisis (The World Bank, 2019).

It also spurred the Cambodian government to reevaluate and alter its banking and financial frameworks. This response was to ensure the credit crisis that stalled the Cambodian construction sector would never be replicated (Cambodia Development Resource Institute, 2013). While diversifying efforts within the Cambodian export economy have been slow, they have begun to gain momentum in recent years.
Despite the relatively slow diversification of the country’s exports, the Cambodian workforce is expanding quickly. Cambodia currently has a young labour force with an extremely low dependency ratio. The term ‘dependency ratio’ is used to describe the relationship between those individuals who are dependents and cannot work (aged 0-14 and 65+) and those who are not dependents and able to work (aged 15-64). When a country has a lower dependency ratio, it means that the majority of the population falls within the working age range, and the minority fall within the dependency age range (Asia Development Bank & International Labour Organisation, 2015).

The bulk of the largest five-year cohort in Cambodia, those aged 20–24, had already entered the labour market by 2015. While this increase in worker numbers was significant, the majority of this group lack education and training. In contrast, the next generation of 20-24-year old’s, which will hit the labour market by the end of 2019, will likely be better educated, but their cohort size significantly smaller (Asia Development Bank & International Labour Organisation, 2015).

This education, however, may be contributing to the problems faced by Cambodians in their job search and their job retention. The reason for this lies within the education system in Cambodia, which primarily utilizes rote learning. This focuses on the use of repetition and memorization and does not afford students the chance to activate cognitive critical thinking or develop higher reasoning skills (Mayer, 2002). While rote learning is often used foundationally while memorizing the alphabet or times tables, its practical, career building application is limited. Without having learned to think beyond simple memorization, problem solving becomes increasingly more difficult (Mayer, 2002). Within Cambodia, a deficiency in critical thinking and problem solving has been cited by many in this study as a cause for concern, especially within the economic context.

Negative impacts on the adolescent working population, which is often the target age for most vocational training programs, have been observed in light of Cambodia’s current economic climate. According to a report completed by UNICEF in 2016, focused pressure on children to help lighten the economic burden of their families has resulted in an increased number of working adolescents, whose education is often forgone for manual labour positions and menial jobs. A study carried out in 2007 found that the labour force participation rate for adolescents aged 10-14 was 44% and 71% for those aged 15-19 (WHO, 2014). Without an education in an evolving job market, finding a steady income will become more difficult, and with familial pressure to provide monetarily for multi-generation families, there is a need to structure training according to what will be profitable in the long term. This struggle to find work within Cambodia has led to an estimated 200,000 Cambodians crossing borders to find work in 2017 (Australia Aid and International Labour Organisation, 2017, p. 2).
These issues are recognized by employers and the Cambodian government; both site major ‘skills gaps’ (which will be discussed at length later in this report) within the Cambodian workforce (National Employment Agency, 2016; Cambodia Development Resource Institute, 2014). With education seen as a low priority, many occupations continue to remain vacant due to a lack of qualified applicants.

Methodology

A mixed method study design was developed by Chab Dai and EMC, consisting of a semi-structured qualitative and quantitative survey, as well as in-depth qualitative interviews with business professionals and vocational trainers.

Two distinct but parallel online surveys were created. The first survey was designed for vocational training organisations, asking about their program length, subject matter, structure, student population, and their success rate (defined as the number of students who were employed after the completion of the training program). The second survey targeted social enterprises, commercial businesses and freedom businesses. This survey was written to gather information about sustainability, employee demographics, entry level requirements, and general market sector reflections.

In this report, a ‘freedom business’ is defined as a business set up for the express purpose of employing survivors and at-risk populations of trafficking and exploitation. ‘Commercial business’ is defined as any business that makes profit by selling or trading in goods and services. A ‘social enterprise’ is defined as an organisation that applies commercial business strategies to their socially conscious projects, but remain dependent on investors or donors, as their paradigm is not financially self-sustainable.

In addition to the online survey responses, Chab Dai conducted multiple in-depth interviews with vocational training organisations and freedom businesses, and EMC interviewed commercial businesses. As with the parallel surveys, these interview questions differed between sectors, but had a similar focus. The reasoning behind adding this additional data collection was to create a mix-method study that was able to contextualize the data gathered from the quantitative survey with qualitative responses.

Ultimately, three surveys were released: A single long form vocational training survey, totaling 52 questions, and two business surveys. The first business survey was a long form used for the general contacts of EMC, with a total question count of 49. The second business version was shortened for the express purpose of distribution amongst the American and European Chambers of Commerce. This survey totaled 20 questions, selected from the long form business survey and altered slightly to combine multiple questions for maximum data attainment.

At the close of survey distribution, a total of 31 online surveys were completed. The long form vocational training survey had 10 responses, the long form business survey a total of 12 responses, and the shortened business survey a total of 9 responses. Of surveys among the business cohort, a total of 7 responses were from freedom businesses, 8 from commercial businesses and 6 from social enterprises. EMC and Chab Dai conducted a total of 12 in-depth interviews with business professionals and vocational trainers. The specific sectors worked in by businesses and the sector focus for vocational training organisations can be found in Appendix A.

Limitations

This project is an exploratory study, and the total number of respondents is fewer than many other quantitative research projects.

Due to the number of freedom businesses, social enterprises, and vocational training organisations operating within the country being fewer, the respondents that did participate were a fair representation of these subdivisions. However, the number of commercial businesses operating within Cambodia are numerous, making the 8 commercial business respondents, 7 of which completed the shortened business survey, an ungeneralizable data representation of the commercial business subdivision. It does not wholly reflect the current number, climate, or impact they have on the working population within Cambodia.

While the survey data numbers are reflective of the pool in which participants were referred, the majority of respondents indicated they worked solely within Phnom Penh, with only three stating they had locations outside of
the city. This study does not give a full country overview, as respondents do not reflect diversity of location. With the addition of in-depth interviews, this study is fashioned to be mixed method study as opposed to a purely quantitative study.

**Results**

While this project collected a wide range of information, this report will focus on five key areas:

1. Hiring and recruitment
2. Projected market growth
3. Employee and student characteristics
4. Certification and requirements
5. Job preparation recommendations

**Hiring and Recruitment**

*Referral Mechanisms:* Researchers have observed that the job market has historically relied on networking and ‘word-of-mouth’ to fill positions of employment. With advances in technology and the continued spread of information, job placement has shifted to alternative mediums such as online job sites, newspaper ads, and social media platforms. While this has impacted how businesses recruit employees, networking is still highly important.

When businesses were asked how employees were hired, they were given the option to select multiple options. Nearly half of business respondents indicated they posted their vacancies externally, and approximately two-thirds of respondents stated that roles were filled by a ‘referral from a friend.’

The survey also inquired if there had been instances in which individuals approached the business itself directly to ask for a job. While less than one third of freedom businesses and commercial businesses had hired this way, 50% of social enterprises had.

When vocational training organisations were asked if they assisted in the job search of graduating students, all but one stated they did. Of those, almost three-fourths stated that their placement process was highly relational. While the procedural aspects of these mechanisms differ, each relied on a cultivated relationship between businesses or partner programs and organisations.

*Hiring from NGOs:* All business respondents were asked to cite if they had filled a vacancy through an NGO referral. 43% of respondents indicated that they had done so. Further analysis of the numbers showed that 71% of freedom businesses and 67% of social enterprises had recruited from the NGO sector. However, not a single commercial business had utilized NGO referrals for hiring. The most frequent avenue utilized by commercial businesses were a ‘referral from a friend’ at 62.5%.

**Freedom Businesses, Social Enterprises, and Vocational Training Organisations Demographics:** Freedom businesses, social enterprises, and vocational training organisations were asked about their current number of employees or students. Of the 21 respondents, all fell within three categories: Small (1-20), Medium (21-60) or Large (61-150). All respondents were asked to detail the location of their vocational training centers and businesses. 23 replied that they were located solely within Phnom Penh, while only three stated they had locations outside of the city.
Projected Market Growth

All 31 respondents were asked to identify the sectors they expected to see grow in the future and asked to explain the answers. Businesses and vocational training organisations discussed the evolution of tourism within Cambodia. Some went further to state that, with the recent increase of foreign investment, they observed a higher demand for upscale restaurants and hotels. This increase of people and new business also requires more back-end support such as information technology (IT) and service industries, causing a rise in demand for employees offering these skills.

Growth and Curriculum: Going further, the projected market growth sectors were cross referenced with curriculum offered by vocational training organisations. The majority were sorted into the preset parameters outlined in the market sector growth question. A total of 10 vocational training organisations responded. The current focus of vocational training curriculum, highlighted in figure 3, when compared to the projected market growth, highlighted in figure 3.1, shows a lack of alignment between the subject matter of the vocational training organisations and the projected market growth by comparable sectors.

Many vocational training organisations selected the ‘other’ option to further detail the specific areas of curriculum offered, which fell under broader market sectors. The specifics of each respondent can be found in Appendix A.

Employee & Student Characteristics

The ‘Ideal’ Employee: Both the vocational training and business surveys included questions pertaining to employee characteristics. When businesses responded to what an ‘ideal’ student or employee would look like, responses fell into four major categories: language ability, education, specialized skill sets (i.e. drill work, sewing skills, etc.) and soft skills.

Soft skills are defined as:

“...a set of transferable skills and key personal attributes which are highly valued by employers and essential for effective performance in the workplace. Unlike professional or technical skills, these employability skills are generic in nature, rather than job-specific, and are common to all work roles and workplaces across all industry types - for instance, communication and teamwork.” -The University of Sydney, Employability Skills.

These attributes were common in survey results and discussed further in the in-depth interviews. Soft skills were cited as one of the biggest deficits in the Cambodian workforce across all respondents. When discussing the origin of this deficit, rote education systems, discussed previously in the literature review, were often mentioned as a contributing factor.

Out of the 18 businesses who responded when asked to describe their ideal employee, 15 cited attributes associated with soft skills. Words and phrases like ‘hardworking,’ and ‘team spirit,’ were mentioned along with ‘punctual’ and ‘good communication.’
**Demographics:** Businesses were asked if they had a preferred age bracket to hire from. Of the 12 responses to the question, four chose the 16-24 age bracket, seven the 24-34 age bracket and one the 35-50 age bracket. Vocational training programs were also asked to specify what age bracket they preferred to teach. 60% of vocational training organisations stated they preferred to train individuals between the ages of 16 and 24. The remaining 40% stated they had no age preference.

Regarding gender demographics, all 12 of the businesses that responded to the question stated they hired females, while six responded that they also hired males. All 10 vocational training programs responded that they taught females, and four stated that they also taught males. Additional demographic information can be found in figure 4.

**Gaps in Skill Sets:** Businesses were asked to identify what types of skill gaps they were looking to fill within their company. Of the 18 respondents, 10 indicated they wanted to fill specialized skill gaps (i.e. sewing, drill work), five indicated they wanted to fill gaps in soft skills, and the final three indicated they wanted to fill language gaps.

**Employee Challenges:** Similarly, when asked about the greatest challenge businesses faced with employees, 11 of the 16 responses focused on issues associated with a lack of soft skills. These included ‘lateness,’ ‘dishonesty,’ ‘attitude,’ ‘time management,’ etc. None of the respondents outlined a lack of hands-on skill or cited ‘hard skills’ as being the challenges they had with employees. Only one respondent raised the struggle of an employee lacking proper language skills.

**Certification and Entry Requirements**

**Online Certification:** All businesses were asked to indicate whether holding an online certification was an important factor in their chances of being hired by their company. Of 21 respondents, 15 replied it was not important, three that it was relatively unimportant, and another three that it was important. Of the three respondents who indicated it was important, one stated they required a university diploma, one stated ‘any’ online certification, and the one respondent indicated they require a food and beverage certification.

**Education Requirements:** All businesses were asked what the education requirements were for entry level positions, with the choices being ‘primary’, ‘secondary’, ‘university’ and ‘none’. Commercial businesses were the only ones to respond that a university level education was necessary. The data shows that commercial businesses indicated the need for education most, social enterprises coming in second, and freedom businesses coming in third. See Figure 4 for breakdown by business type and educational requirement.

**Skills Assets:** All businesses were asked if the following three skill sets would be considered an asset to their company: computer knowledge, the ability to speak English and the ability to perform manual tasks/labour. 67% of respondents marked manual tasks/labour, making it the highest ranked asset, next was computer knowledge with
48% of respondents marking it as an asset, and lastly language, as indicated by 43% of respondents marking it as an asset.

**Entry Level Requirements:** Businesses were asked to indicate if there were specific requirements for entry level positions, and then asked to outline those requirements. While 40% of the respondents did not specify, 30% indicated that the hard skills required were specialized (i.e. sewing, drill work, administrative work etc.), two responded with school or education requirements, two responded with language and two for issues relating to attitude, which could be categorized as a soft skill.

Commercial businesses, social enterprises, and freedom businesses were asked about their process for testing and assessing individuals before they began work. Two businesses detailed that they carried out interviews in conjunction with a probationary period, while one stated they interviewed in conjunction with a questionnaire. Each component was broken down in Figure 5.1, with many organisations using mixed methods. Find a comprehensive list of the respondent’s processes in Appendix B.

**Additional Training:** 16 of the 21 business respondents stated that they allocated funds for additional training upon hiring an employee. Eight specified that this additional training was specialized in nature (i.e. warehouse management, retail sales), two indicated it was additional language classes, two that they were teaching soft skills to employees, and one offered ‘leadership training’ within their restaurant context.

**Job Preparation Recommendations**

When asked how young people could prepare for the business market, answers varied considerably. The data gathered from the 21 respondents were sorted into three main categories: ‘soft skills’, ‘study/education’ and ‘experience’. Soft skills, as defined in earlier sections of this report, are those attitudes that are transferable in any workplace. Many of the responses dealt with attitude and mindset, which were then categorized as soft skills. One respondent simply stated, ‘be ready to work’, which was categorized as a soft skill due to its relevance to any sector. Another mentioned the willingness to ‘learn and work hard’, and another the willingness to ‘put forth the effort’.

Study/education was mentioned by several respondents in different ways. For example, one stated “feeling more serious about education”, while another said, “study hard”. Education recommendations were given primarily from commercial businesses.

The final category, ‘experience’ included answers that suggested general work experience in addition to specialized skill sets (i.e. sewing, drill work). Statements given along this theme included “do an internship” and “prepare some skill and work for experience”.

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**ENTRY LEVEL POSITION PROCESS**

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<tr>
<td>School/Certification Records</td>
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<td>Hands on Skills Test</td>
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<tr>
<td>Probation Period</td>
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<tr>
<td>On the Job</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5.1**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

<table>
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<th>Freedom Business</th>
<th>Commercial Business</th>
<th>Social Enterprise</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study/Education</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 6**
Conclusions

As the economy shifts and changes, the potential increase of exploitation and trafficking due to economic vulnerabilities is a real possibility. This only increases the need for sustainable job creation for survivor and at-risk populations.

When discussing the crisis of employment in Cambodia, the estimated number of those unemployed is, at this time, undocumented. The relative impact of vocational training organisations, freedom businesses, and social enterprises in this study will therefore be attributed to the estimated 200,000 Cambodians who left the country for work, as those who migrate for work are at greater risk for trafficking and exploitation and therefore labeled an at-risk population.

If all freedom businesses and social enterprises reached full capacity within their set size brackets, the maximum number of Cambodians employed would total 510. Similarly, if all vocational training organisations were to reach full student capacity within their reported size bracket, they would be training a total of 540 students. This clearly shows the need for both upscaling current vocational training programs and increasing freedom business and social enterprise initiatives.

The avenue for expansion with the greatest potential is the commercial business sector and as discussed in this report, zero commercial businesses stated they had filled a position using NGO referrals.

While the sampling of commercial businesses was smaller, many came from EMC’s relationship with the Chambers of Commerce, indicating these businesses are well connected within the professional and governmental network. The fact that a commercial business can be highly active within the business community and still have little to no interaction with NGO vocational training organisations, further illustrates the distance and separation between the sectors. Therefore, there is a need to deepen engagement with this sector to magnify collective impact and fill the existing employment gap for survivor and at-risk populations in Cambodia.

New networking mechanisms and referral partnerships need to be developed. With 78% of vocational training organisations from this research stating that their job placement procedure is relational, this could be a positive indicator of potential for these organisations to expand partnerships. However, it could also be an indicator of preferential relational referral behaviors, in which they rely on preexisting relationships that are already familiar. The prospects of creating partnerships between vocational training organisations and commercial businesses is a complex issue. The first step of this process would be to make each sector aware of each other and begin a dialogue between stakeholders from both sides.

An additional key finding arose from the in-depth interviews, which revealed concern regarding the centralized-urban locations of training programs and hiring freedom businesses and social enterprises. As stated within the literature review, an estimated 80% of Cambodia’s population live outside the large city centers of Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. These initiatives then, often do not reach rural survivors and the larger at-risk populations. Similarly, skill sets seen as useful in the city centers do not always translate to more remote markets, where many at-risk communities live and where survivors often reintegrate back into.

The ‘skills gap’ in Cambodia is one that is reported as foundational and highly critical to employment and training challenges. The need to improve these skill sets is imperative when discussing what the business sector is looking for in a potential employee. As mentioned in the results section, ‘ideal employees’ were often cited as those with a greater possession of soft skills. Similarly, when giving recommendations for individuals moving into the job market, many cited the need to improve soft skills.
Another issue that negatively impacts those reintegrating is the misalignment of training curriculum and market opportunity. As previously discussed, with Cambodia’s continued economic growth, there is ongoing opportunity for growth and expansion. A school or training program’s goal is to educate students for the purpose of finding sustainable, safe employment and to do this well, programs need to be informed about shifts in the marketplace. The findings outlining the discrepancy between the expected market growth areas and corresponding curriculum shows the gaps among the two sectors that will need to be rectified in order to better serve survivor and at-risk populations.

**Discussion and Recommendations**

One of the purposes of this study is to open a dialogue within and between sectors. In this section, questions are posed for each sector to spark conversation, help expand an understanding of the role each plays regarding survivor and at-risk employment and encourage review and revision of programs, businesses, and organisations.

**For Vocational Training Organisations**

1. How often is the curriculum reviewed and updated and does this relate to projected market changes?

2. Would you consider the skills taught within the program to be transferable to a student’s rural community?

3. What does ‘holistic’ vocational training’ look like?
   3a. How involved should vocational training organisations be in areas of a client’s wellbeing outside of skills and employment?
   3b. Are ‘soft skills’ taught in addition to the technical / manual skills taught within the program?

4. Does the vocational training organisations internships and/or work opportunities to students?

5. Are students offered the opportunity to receive mentorship, before, during, or after training?

6. What mechanisms are used within the organisation for employment placement?

7. When does the process of considering / introducing an employment placement begin?
   7a. Who initiates this process?
   7b. How is employment placement readiness evaluated?

8. What due diligence does the organisation carry out before referring students to an employment placement?
   8a. Does this process vary between placements within a commercial business or placements within a freedom business? If so, how?

9. Within your regional context, how do you handle the issue of confidentiality when introducing your student into a new employment placement?

10. What is the follow-up commitment from the organisation to the student?

*Holistic defined in this context as: involvement in all areas of a student’s life, including emotional, spiritual, and mental well-being, in addition to technical training.*
For All Businesses

1. What does the business’ recruitment process look like?

   1a. Where are employees recruited from (i.e. advertising on public sites, recruitment/hiring agencies, universities, colleges, mainstream training centers, etc.)? What are the strengths and weakness of utilizing these options?

   1b. Have vocational training organisations or other NGOs that work with at-risk or survivor populations ever been utilized in the recruitment process? What have been or could be the pro and cons of working with these organisations?

2. Does the business have a social responsibility policy?

   2a. If so, what are some examples of social impact the business has had?

   2b. If so, does it include details regarding at-risk or survivor populations?

3. Does the business offer internship opportunities for students in training?

   3a. If so, what does this internship opportunity look like?

4. If the business has employed survivors and at-risk populations, what have been the successes and challenges in relation to:

   4a. Technical skill sets

   4b. Work ethic (i.e. timeliness)

   4c. Interaction with peers and bosses

For All Sectors

1. What practical steps can we take to expand our current referral and recruitment networks in order to better serve survivors and at-risk populations?

2. How can commercial businesses and vocational training organisations strengthen their referral partnerships?

3. What are potential growth areas for vocational training organisations and businesses in providing personal and professional support to students and employees who have come from these vulnerable populations?

4. There are national and international businesses who are now intentionally employing survivors within their workforce. How can businesses learn from these models and replicate them within their own structure?
## Appendix A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Business</td>
<td>Retail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Business</td>
<td>Financial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Business</td>
<td>Other <em>(unspecified)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Business</td>
<td>FMCG</td>
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<td>Commercial Business</td>
<td>Mining</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commercial Business</td>
<td>Factory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commercial Business</td>
<td>Construction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commercial Business</td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom Business</td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom Business</td>
<td>Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom Business</td>
<td>Service <em>(hair and skin salon)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom Business</td>
<td>Retail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom Business</td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom Business</td>
<td>Factory <em>(Garment Production and Retail)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom Business</td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Enterprise</td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Enterprise</td>
<td>NGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Enterprise</td>
<td>Retail <em>(Professional and school uniforms, custom clothes design)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Enterprise</td>
<td>Retail and production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Enterprise</td>
<td>Retail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Enterprise</td>
<td>Factory <em>(Professional and school uniforms, custom clothes design)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocation Trainer</td>
<td>Food</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocation Trainer</td>
<td>Retail, Hotel, Financial Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocation Trainer</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
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<td>Vocation Trainer</td>
<td>Retail, Fashion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocation Trainer</td>
<td>Retail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocation Trainer</td>
<td>Food, Agriculture, Sewing, Hair &amp; Beauty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocation Trainer</td>
<td>Food, Garment</td>
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<td>Vocation Trainer</td>
<td>Retail, Fashion</td>
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<td>Vocation Trainer</td>
<td>Factory, Ministry of Labour Department Staff- Capacity Building</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocation Trainer</td>
<td>Food, Hotel, Construction, Agriculture, Printing, Mechanical, Electronic, Computer, Media Communication, Secretarial</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### How do you test your employees before hiring them?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Method</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews, video, and photos</td>
<td>Sewing skills test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewing skills test</td>
<td>One-month trial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewing skills test</td>
<td>Assess family and educational background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day-work experience</td>
<td>Competition of our training program. Passing a benchmark exam. Hired into positions they’re strong in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application and interview including a questionnaire to test their intentions and goals.</td>
<td>2-day interview process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking to provide certificates / diploma</td>
<td>On all levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On all levels</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation period</td>
<td>On-the-job testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Interview, computer skills, probation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interview, visit, probation</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


References


Cambodia Development Resource Institute. Cambodia’s Skill Gap: An Anatomy


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Principle

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