



For Immediate Release

November 6, 2017

Attn: News, Business, Tech Editors

Contacts: Ms. Laura Vyda, IPEN, LauraVyda@ipen.org +1 510 3871739
Ms. Pham Thi Minh Hang, CGFED, hangpham@cgfed.org.vn
Mr. Joe DiGangi, IPEN, joe@ipen.org

Samsung Workers on the Line: Unique Report Reveals the Lives of Vietnamese Women Workers Making the Samsung Smart Phones in Your Pocket

Report: <http://ipen.org/documents/electronics-workers-vietnamese-women-report>

(Göteborg, Sweden) In an unprecedented study on the experiences of women working at two Samsung factories in Vietnam, a report released this week documents health and workplace violations by the electronics industry giant. The workers' experiences of frequent fainting, dizziness, miscarriages, standing for eight-to-twelve hours, and alternating day/night shift work are documented in a report released this week by the Hanoi-based [Research Center for Gender, Family and Environment in Development](#) (CGFED) and [IPEN](#), a global network of environment and health NGOs working to reduce harmful chemicals.

Samsung dominates the global phone market as well as the electronics sector and economy of Vietnam, where 50% of its smart phones are produced. The electronics sector is a significant area of growth for Vietnam, as electronics exports outpace other exports. However, Vietnam has no labor codes specifically protecting the health of electronics industry workers, who are overwhelmingly women.

The study combines industrial sector research and qualitative narratives of 45 workers, and is the first of its kind in Vietnam to shed light on the experiences of the predominantly female electronics industry workers. Because Samsung is notoriously secretive, it offers a rare glimpse into life on the Samsung factory floor.

Key Findings:

- All workers reported extreme fatigue, fainting and dizziness at work.
- Workers reported that miscarriages are extremely common—even expected.
- Workers must stand throughout their 8-to-12-hour shifts and many are kept on alternating day and night shift schedules, regardless of weekends.
- Pregnant workers usually stand for the entire shift to avoid having the company deduct money from their wages for taking breaks.
- More than half of the interviewed women have children, but they are separated from them. The children live with their grandparents in another town or city.
- Workers reported problems with eyesight, nose bleeds, and stomach aches, as well as bone, joint, and leg pain.
- Workers' lives are controlled inside and outside of work. Breaks are short and limited, and workers must request special passes to use the restroom. Workers are restricted from speaking about work because of fear of reprisals.
- The need for further research regarding chemical exposure is necessary. Despite the fact that workers are stationed in open factory settings where other workers use a variety of substances, they did not consider assembly line work a chemical risk.

The study, says the Hanoi-based research group that conducted the research, is a rare opportunity for consumers and policy makers to learn about the harsh working conditions that the female workers making the ubiquitous phones must endure.

“We hope that people buying smart-phones will be more aware of the workers on the assembly lines making their phones,” said Ms. Pham Thi Minh Hang from CGFED. “The women we interviewed endure ongoing labor code violations, workplace dangers and health hazards. All the women reported dizziness or fainting at work. This is not normal. They reported inhumane

overtime and intense production demands. Workers are often prevented from speaking out about their working conditions by company rules that claim all expressions about life inside the factory constitute trade secrets. We hope that the information in this report will bring about better protections for workers, and that consumers will demand decent working conditions for workers who make the electronics in their homes and pockets.”

The report underscores the need for better protections for Vietnam’s large and growing electronics work force, and the need for transparency around industrial chemicals used throughout electronics production.

“This study is important because the lives and rights of workers in the electronics industry in Vietnam have been neglected in research and policy,” said Joe DiGangi, PhD., IPEN Senior Science and Technical Advisor. “Companies make a lot of money in Vietnam, but their profit rests on the tired shoulders of the female-majority workforce. Comprehensive regulations should be developed and enforced to ensure worker safety in the electronics industry. Economic development must be concerned not just with GDP, but equally consider impacts on the health of workers and communities in developing and transition country economies where the electronics industry is rapidly expanding.”

###

Founded in 1993, the **Research Centre for Gender, Family and Environment in Development (CGFED)** has been carrying out social scientific research and intervention activities, targeting at women’s development and gender equity. As one among the first Vietnamese non-governmental organizations (NGO), CGFED is proud of its work building the foundation and the development of a young NGO community among member of the Vietnamese civil society.

IPEN is a network of non-governmental organizations working in more than 100 countries to reduce and eliminate the harm to human health and the environment from toxic chemicals.