

## Over 110 garment factories close

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The garment workers leave from a factory in Phnom Penh on September 22, 2020. [Hong Menea](#)

A government official said on November 22 that at least 110 garment factories had closed in the first nine months of the year and left more than 55,000 workers without jobs – but union leaders worry those numbers could be much higher.

Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training undersecretary of state Ngoy Rith said as of early September, 111 factories had closed in the garment, footwear and travel product sectors. He added the number of closures was similar to the first nine months of last year, when 110 factories closed.

“These closures have left 55,174 workers jobless. This job loss increased somewhat from the same period last year, which saw 53,226 workers laid off,” he said.

Rith said the government had been effective in introducing measures to keep factories open in one of the most important sectors of the Cambodian economy. He added that the global market for garment products had been virtually shut down by the Covid-19 pandemic and other factors.

He said the number of suspended employment contracts was gradually subsiding, noting that the number of garment factories that had frozen work contracts had decreased to 52, which affected the incomes of roughly 14,000 workers.

But Fa Saly, president of the National Trade Union Confederation, told The Post on November 22 that the actual numbers might be higher than the figures released by the labour ministry and that more Cambodian workers were losing their jobs and incomes each day.

“It is really hard to assess these losses. Workers are still struggling to make a living and certain workers have migrated abroad. But there are still a lot of workers who have no jobs – it is worrisome,” he said.

Saly said even though Cambodia is under the General System of Preferences (GSP) programme, which will facilitate imports to the UK starting in January, he was still not optimistic.

He called on the government to seriously address these problems and ensure that the Kingdom’s workforce has good working conditions and more jobs.

In late September, the government rolled out extensive measures to manage the impact of the Covid-19 crisis and to bolster the economy from October to December.

The government, after studying economic developments in the region and the world, also introduced six rounds of stimulus measures worth about \$1 billion.

The first goal of the measures was to sustain and restore businesses so they can help drive economic growth in the post-Covid-19 era.

The second goal was to help the livelihoods of poor and vulnerable families through a cash hand-out programme.