

Restricted Rights Updates: Cambodia

POLICY UPDATE

- In February 2014, the Ministry of Labour announced the minimum monthly wage would be raised to \$100 (\$95 basic pay and \$5 food allowance) in February 2014, leading to widespread strikes in January in which unions called for \$160 per month. These strikes were violently suppressed by state security forces.
- A study released in September by UK-based Labour Behind the Label and Phnom Penh-based Community Legal Education Centre reported that individual workers require an income of at least \$150 to cover their basic needs.
- Approximately 20% of Cambodians live below the country's poverty line.
- Cambodia's labour law was passed in 1997 barring employers from discriminating against any union activity and setting a stringent process for settling industrial disputes. But in practice, corruption and wilful ignorance negate many of the law's standards.

Sources:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/01/cambodia-garment-worker-strike-unravels-20141755530526443.html>

<http://thediplomat.com/2014/02/protests-strikes-continue-in-cambodia/>

MIGRATION STATISTICS AND OTHER

- Cambodia has an estimated total of nearly 1.9 million migrants (both Cambodian and foreign nationals). 1.8 million migrants (97.5%) are internal migrants, while 44,827 persons (2.5%) are foreign nationals. More migrants live in urban than in rural areas.
- The unemployment rate was under 3% in 2012. An estimated 202,304 persons aged 15 or older were unemployed (106,991 males and 95,313 females).
- 46.5% of migrants state that the reason for migration was because their family moved. 22.6% said they moved to look for work.
- The majority of trade union members worked in the industry sector (18.8% of all employees) followed by the service sector (5.1% of all employees) and then the agriculture sector (0.2% of all employees). The largest proportion of trade union members (37.5% of all garment employees) worked in the garment sector.
- In general, female youth seem to enter and exit the labour force at an earlier age than male youth.
- Despite falling unemployment rates, poverty remains high. This raises concerns about the quality of jobs, especially with such a large proportion of workers in vulnerable employment.

Source: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/asia/-/ro-bangkok/-/sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_230721.pdf

KEY ISSUES

- Garments are the largest formal sector private employer in Cambodia, and the major export, accounting for more than 80% of Cambodia's exports.
- There are approximately 600,000 garment workers in Cambodia, of which 90% are women.
- Around the Phnom Penh Special Economic Zone that includes many garment manufacturers, unions staged strikes in December 2013, demanding a \$160 a month minimum wage as the current salary rate for the workers does not reflect the increasing living cost driven by inflation. The government responded with crackdown in January 2014 that resulted in the deaths of four people and the arrests of 23 workers and activists.
- The call for a higher minimum wage is backed by the opposition Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP) which had campaigned for an increase to US\$150 per month in the lead up to the July elections, and has since been leading rallies and strikes calling for a new election and alleging vote fraud in the last election.

- According to the garment manufacturers' association, garment workers mounted 131 strikes from January to November 2013, up from 121 for all of 2012, making 2013 the most strike-prone year since record-keeping started in 2003.
- In March 2014, workers at 2 garment factories in Kampong Speu province's Complete Honour Footwear Industrial Cambodia Co. Ltd and Dai Yi Fashion in the Russey Keo district of Phnom Penh were locked by their managers inside their workplaces when they tried to participate in a week-long boycott of overtime.

Sources:

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/workers-%E2%80%98locked-inside%E2%80%99-during-overtime-strike>

<http://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/as-workers-boycott-overtime-cpp-goes-on-counteroffensive-53241/>

http://migration.ucdavis.edu/mn/more.php?id=3888_0_3_0

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/01/cambodia-garment-worker-strike-unravels-20141755530526443.html>

<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303870704579295890463145628>

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