

Towards a living wage – the first People's Tribunal in Cambodia

31 January 2012

On **5 and 6 February 2012**, to call for the installment of a living wage, the Asian Floor Wage Alliance (AFWA) and the **Asia Floor Wage-Cambodia (AFW-C)**ⁱ an alliance of over nine unions and NGOs in Cambodia are holding Cambodia's first ever **People's Tribunal on Minimum Living Wage and Decent Working Conditions** for garment workers. The Tribunal will take place at the **Cambodian-Japan Cooperation Center** in Phnom Penh. Five judges and key expert witnesses will help shape the debate. The Tribunal findings will be announced during a press conference held at **Basac Restaurant, 10:00AM – 11:30AM, 8 February 2012**.

The garment industry in Cambodia represents 90% of all exports. However, despite its relative economic importance, workers receive only half of what is needed to safely support their families and the statutory minimum wage is currently the lowest in the Mekong region.

The Tribunal will hear the testimonies of garment workers, experts and key stakeholders and hopes to address the issue of ongoing poverty facing the thousands of Cambodian workers employed in the industry. *“Despite experiencing sustained growth in the sector, Cambodia’s minimum wage allowance is only \$66 dollars including a month including health allowance and amounts to only half of that required to adequately meet the average worker’s basic needs.”* said **Tola Moeun, Head of Labor Program of the Community Legal Education Center**.

Over 200,000 workers in Cambodia went on strike recently in protest of the pervasive existence of low wages and poor working conditions in the garment sector. *“Their low wages are particularly unjust when considered in contrast to the market price of the products they create. Furthermore, they are leading to the malnutrition to be a common ailment experienced by workers. This in turn is negatively affecting their long term health as well as their productivity. Both Better Factories Cambodia and government representatives have attributed low wages as one of the primary causes to phenomenon of mass fainting, which last year alone claimed over 1000 causalities.”* said **Mr. Ath Thorn, President of Cambodian Labor Confederation (CLC)**.

The People's Tribunal in Cambodia is the second of its kind to be held in Asia, the first being held in Sri Lanka earlier this year. *“These Tribunals provide ordinary workers a space to express their collective concerns and communicate their demands”* said **Dr. Vong Sovann, the President of Cambodian Confederation of Trade Unions**.

Representatives from international retailers have been invited including **Adidas, Puma, GAP, and H&M**. *“Wages make up only a small fraction of the final retail price of garments – the cooperation of big brands is a crucial factor to unlocking improvements for workers.”* said **Ms. Anannya Bhattacharjee, International Coordinator for Asia Floor Wage Alliance**.

For interviews

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ⁱ AFW-C consists of Cambodia Confederation of Trade Unions (CCTU), Cambodian Labour Confederation (CLC), Cambodian National Confederation (CNC), Cambodia Women Movement Organization (CWMO), National Union Alliance Chamber of Cambodia (NACC), Cambodian Confederation Unions (CCU), Cambodia Worker Center for Development (CWCD), Community Legal Education Center (CLEC) and the American Center For International Labor Solidarity (ACILS).