

The true story of the winners

“I am Precious” is the first dress design and song writing competition to show hidden talents of Cambodian garment workers. The competition attracted more than four hundred entries from promising designers and songwriters. The idea of the competition was to show appreciation of the garment workers abilities and skills through self expression, and in particular creating something that they could call their own, based on their aptitudes and experience in and outside the factory. Here the six winners share their experiences and feelings after the competition, the winning dresses are also displayed and the songs can be downloaded.

Song writing competition

First place

Ms. Touch Sreynith, 24, working at Hung Wah Garment (Branch 1)

On the final day I sat in front of the stage with the other song writers with the same goal; to wait and listen to their own songs. When the singer started singing my song I almost cried because the song is about the difficult life of factory workers and I pity myself and other factory workers.

I never thought that I was going to win the contest. I just wanted to listen to my song that would have been enough for me. When they called my name as the winner I really wanted to cry as it is my own ability that helped me win this competition, the people that I want to thank the most are my parents because they gave me life with this skill.

In the future I want to study English to get a good job and I want to have time to continue my writing skill.



Literal English translation of the song lyrics:

- I. The car was heard leaving the home. It was heading for Phnom Penh. I sadly said goodbye to my parents, with the hope of returning with money for my mother.
- II. Arriving in the city, in a factory owned by people from other countries. Working as a factory worker, I gradually earn money for my parents.
- R. Oh factory! It's only you that relieves my stressful life. I enjoy a glorious life and a bright future. The family is free from suffering.
- III. Mother! You are at home and don't worry. My life is very valuable. Factory work is not shameful, but it provides a lot of benefits to society.



Garment Workers Value Campaign and Competition

Second place

Mr. Reach Sarath, 29, working at PCCS Garment

I joined song writing contests before, so this time I was not so afraid. The song that I wrote is one of my favorite songs and it took me two days to write it. Even if I couldn't win the first prize, I still could win the second prize. I am so happy because I did this all by myself. After joining this contest, I've learned a lot of new things from my competitors that really help me in my writing. I look forward to joining the new contest next year.

In the future I want to open a small shop in my homeland and I also want my daughter to study to become a doctor.



Literal English translation of the song lyrics:

- I. The song I'm singing is meaningful to tell people, male and female workers of a true story that workers work hard everyday and show their accomplishments to help the nation.
- II. Cambodian workers both young and old leave their houses and relatives to find work to support their lives and do honest work to help society.
- R. That is the value of factory workers - working for money to support their siblings. Please don't discriminate but give value to them. Several years already they are away from home.
- III. I advise male and female workers to maintain their value and peaceful lives, don't lead immoral lives as they'd inflict suffering upon us and cost us our value.

Third place

Mr. Penh Rotha, 28, working at Supreme Garments

This is the second time that I joined in a song writing competition, but I never thought that this contest was so big. Before I was the first winner but this time I got third prize, however I am still happy because I did it with my own skills.

I like to make song meanings happy, like the song that I wrote for this contest. There were two reasons that made me decide to write this song. The first reason is, I'm kind of person that always give hope to myself, and I also like to give ideas and hope to other people (all factory workers). We are poor but we are precious. We shouldn't lose hope with our lives, we should live happily with things that we have, like the meaning of my song is " The more u try the more you get ", so if we keep trying to survive, our life will change to be better in the future.

In the future I want to be a businessman and hopefully then my wife can stop working and spend more time with our children.





Garment Workers Value Campaign and Competition

Literal English translation of the song lyrics:

- I. In the world, people of all nations and religions, no matter whether they are men or women, black or white, destitute people or millionaires, young or old, they are equal in terms of right to freedom, values, right to employment, and non-discrimination.
- II. Poor or rich people are all human though they are rural people coming to work as garment factory workers. We must be honest to each other, help each other and love each other with mutual trust. We are friends. We do not discriminate in terms of race and class.
- III. Though we are poor and though we are workers, we are precious. We should not be upset. We should work to our best regardless of how tired we are. We have knowledge through our learning. We can become rich through our efforts. These traditional sayings are true. If we are persistent and try hard, we will enjoy prosperity in the future.
- IV. All work is precious for our nation. If individual families are prosperous, the whole society will be flourishing and consist of good citizens who do not do drugs, do not sell opium and are not thieves. Good family, no poverty, prosperous nation.

Dress design competition

First place

Ms. Sem Sok Ny, 18, working at Maxlin



I spent about 7 days to design the dress, I had no hope to win the competition but one day my friend told me that I was among the ten finalists, it really surprised me! But I almost lost the opportunity to join the final competition. One day two well dressed strangers came to interview me and asked me to go with them but I didn't because I was afraid they were bad people. In contrast, they were good people and I regretted that. Fortunately they came to ask me again and this time I went with them.

When the final day came I was so happy. When they called the name of the second and third winner I closed my eyes and thought that I won't win the first prize but when they called my name I almost flew, it was incredible. My mom will build a new room for me with the money that I won, the bicycle I will ride it to work everyday, for the dress I will keep and take care of it because it is a prize that came from my ability.

I am now famous in my factory and my working friends encourage me to continue my designing.





Garment Workers Value Campaign and Competition

Second place

Ms. Pol Kunthea, 35, working at Maxlin



When I was a child I liked to take banana leaves to cut and design like clothes. I never thought that I would have the chance to join a competition like this. I'm so happy to get the second prize.

First when I went to register to join the competition I had no hope in myself, but after I was chosen among the ten finalists, I was surprised and shocked, especially when the final day came and I had to stand on the stage. When I got the prize both my hands were shaking and my heart almost came out. I'm so happy to win this prize. I hope the competition will happen again because I will join and I won't be afraid anymore.

In the future I want to open a hair salon and have enough money to support all my children to finish their study.



Third place

Ms. Kim Khun Kongkea, 24, working at Wilson Garment



The Cambodian flag was my inspiration for the dress I designed. I like drawing on paper without using too many colours. I spent about 2 hours in designing this dress, I used red and blue pen to colour with.

I was very shocked and surprised when I heard that I was chosen for the final contest and that I had to stand on stage with an audience of 500 people, this made me very afraid. When they called the winner's name and I knew that I got the third prize I was so happy and my both feet almost lifted. I'm so proud of what I have created and I love my prizes, I keep them all in my bed room.

In the future I would like to design clothes and have an own shop.



For more information about the competition please see earlier web archives or contact Vanna Pol at vanna@ilo.org or Minna Maaskola at maaskola@ilo.org