

## Press Release

For immediate release  
Monday, January 30, 2012

### **ILO Better Factories Cambodia 27<sup>th</sup> Synthesis Report**

#### **Garment sector continues to grow while some areas relevant to group faintings remain challenging**

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia – The International Labour Organization's (ILO) *Better Factories Cambodia* today releases its 27<sup>th</sup> *Synthesis Report on Working Conditions in Cambodia's Garment Sector*, which assesses compliance with Cambodian Labour Law and international labour standards in exporting garment factories.

The 27<sup>th</sup> Synthesis Report reflects compliance data from monitoring reports completed between May 1 and October 31, 2011. During this six-month period, *Better Factories Cambodia* produced monitoring reports for 169 of the 300 factories registered with the program. The 27<sup>th</sup> Synthesis Report contains a range of information drawn from these reports, including information on factory size across the industry, as well as comparative data on compliance with fundamental rights and selected working conditions to facilitate tracking of compliance levels over time.

This report shows employment in exporting garment factories reaching its highest level since that seen in the 21<sup>st</sup> synthesis report dated 31<sup>st</sup> October 2008, with 345,364 workers employed in the 300 active factories registered with the project. Compared with the previous report, there has been a 9% growth in the number of factories, and a 7% increase in the size of the workforce. 90.7% of the workers currently employed are women.

According to data from the Ministry of Commerce, garment exports from Cambodia rose to US\$3.47 billion during the first 10 months of 2011, an increase of 34% compared with the same period during 2010.

During the period covered by the report, at least 11 garment factories experienced fainting incidents and over 1500 workers fainted or collapsed during working hours. Various studies have indicated a number of possible causes, such as poor nutrition, poor hygiene, the lack of a morning meal, heat stress, poor ventilation, excessive working hours, poor industrial relations and mass psychogenic behavior in which one worker falls unconscious and others who witness this collapse as well.

The 27<sup>th</sup> synthesis report demonstrates that compliance levels are lower than 50 percent on several requirements that are relevant to the fainting incidents, such as exceptional overtime (5%), overtime limited to two hours per day (16%), sufficient



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soap and water available near the toilets (48%), and acceptable heat levels (38%).

According to figures from the Garment Manufacturers Association in Cambodia (GMAC), during the reporting period garment factories experienced 14 strikes involving 16,498 workers, which resulted in 81,584 lost work days.

Among the key findings in the report are the following:

- Three quarters of the workforce is employed in factories with 1000 or more employees, even though most factories monitored employ less than 1000 workers.
- 66% of the factories monitored have at least one union, down 10% from the previous report.
- The percentage of factories that engaged in discrimination is at 18%, up from 13% in the last report; the percentage that engaged in anti-union discrimination is at 4%, up from 3%; and the percentage that interfered with workers' right to freedom of association is at 5%, up from 2%.
- Monitors found no evidence of forced labour, but 7 workers were confirmed to be below the legal working age of 15.
- Compliance with exceptional overtime and overtime limited to two hours per day dropped to 5% and 16%, from 7% and 25% respectively, in comparison with the previous report, while compliance with voluntary and exceptional work on Sundays grew 6%, to 70%.
- Compliance with payments for maternity leave is at 65%, down from 73%, and the percentage of factories paying the \$7 attendance bonus when workers take annual leave is at 62%, down from 68%.
- Compliance with acceptable heat levels in factories is 38%, down 4% from the last report, but 1% more factories provided sufficient soap and water near the toilets (up to 48% in the current report).

The 27<sup>th</sup> Synthesis Report on Working Conditions in Cambodia's garment sector is available in Khmer and English and can be downloaded from [www.betterfactories.org](http://www.betterfactories.org).

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