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## Report

### On

## Youth Evaluation of the Achievements of the Royal Government of Cambodia or Elected Political Parties in Training and Job Creation

*Cambodia-Japan Cooperation Center, Phnom Penh, August 14, 2007*

103 youth voters, of whom 42, equal to 40%, were female, attended a forum organized by COMFREL in cooperation with the Youth Council of Cambodia, the Khmer Youth Association and the Youth Resource Development Program. The participants evaluated the achievements of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) or elected political parties regarding training and employment creation after some discussion and presentations from five speakers (a parliamentarian, various experts, a youth association director and a representative from the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training – MoLVT).

The evaluation focused on five main issues: 1) implementation of policy on job creation; 2) strengthening of the Labor Law and international conventions to ensure compliance with the rights and interests of both employees and employers; 3) establishment of the Vocational and Professional Training Network coupled with the Employment Center for Youth; 4) establishment of training and dissemination centers for civic education for youth and extra public libraries; and 5) strengthening of control on foreign labor in Cambodia with the aim of solving employment issues and absorbing new technologies. The five issues were scored by participants on a scale of 1 to 5: **1 represents absolutely dissatisfied and 5 very satisfied.**

Mr. THUN Saray, First Representative of COMFREL and President of ADHOC said during the forum: “Ownership of the voter refers to the ability to decide to vote for any political party without being subject to any influence, intimidation or vote buying. However, voters should keep on observing and monitoring the political platform, and particularly keep on pushing for the fulfillment of promises by elected political parties.”

The results of the evaluation are as follows:

- 1- RGC's implementation of policy on job creation:** youth participants scored performance at an average of **2.19**, falling into the category of **dissatisfied**. 7% of participants gave a score of 1 (absolutely dissatisfied); 72% gave a score of 2 (dissatisfied); 17% gave a score of 3 (fairly satisfied); 3% gave a score of 4 (satisfied) and 1% gave a score of 5 (very satisfied).

Discussions during the forum and reports showed that even **university graduates are not sure that they will be able to obtain employment**. According to the World Bank in 2007, around 70% of youths under the age of 30 are unemployed. **In upcoming years**, according to other estimates, **the number of people in Cambodia reaching the age to enter the labor market is going to have increased to between 300,000 and 350,000 annually**. Discussion found that only between 50,000 and 60,000 youths are currently employed per year.

There is concern that over **1.5 million** Cambodian children are working in the **informal sector**. This is a significantly high number. Among these children, according to the NGO Position Papers on Cambodia's Development in 2006, a total of **250,000 children** are working in the **worst conditions of child labor**.

The RGC's 2006 Report on the Implementation of the National Strategic Development Plan 2006-2010 (NSDP) shows that the number of people recruited by enterprises and who could find a job on their own combined was **38,664**, of whom **20,096 actually applied for a job**. A different 2006 report by MoLVT shows that MoLVT sent **3,636 legal workers abroad**, of whom **1,690 went to Malaysia** (1,459 women and 231 men), **1,501 to the Korean Republic** (1,341 men and 160 women) and **445 to Thailand** (226 women and 219 men).

Estimates by the RGC and MoLVT in particular, and by other researchers, are as follows:

- In 2007, there are **513** garment factories and **406,358** workers, according to a presentation on August 14, 2007 by **Mr. HOEUNG Sophon**, Director of the Department of Labor Market Information, MoLVT.
- The tourism sector creates around **250,000** jobs, according to the RGC's 2006 Annual Progress Report on the NSDP 2006-2010.
- The number of both legal and illegal migrant workers abroad is around **180,000**.

**2- The strengthening of the Labor Law and international conventions to ensure compliance with the rights and interests of both employees and employers:** youth participants gave an average score of **2.38**. This falls into the **dissatisfied** category. 7% of participants gave a score of 1 (absolutely dissatisfied); 58% gave a score of 2 (dissatisfied); 26% gave a score of 3 (fairly satisfied); 9% gave a score of 4 (satisfied); and no participants gave a score of 5 (very satisfied).

Discussions and actual reports revealed that garment industry factories monitored had no evidence of forced labor, paid regular wages for both normal time and overtime. ILO Better Factories Cambodia in 2005 noted that 83% of factories complied with minimum wage requirements of US\$45 per month (the RGC, unions and employers recently increased this to **US\$50** per month). 96% paid the correct rate for overtime and all respected the 18 days of paid annual leave. 71% of factories monitored ensured that overtime was voluntary. Most large garment factories exporting to markets in developed countries **met relatively high health and safety standards** as conditions of their contracts with buyers.

In June 2007, the National Assembly, albeit contested by some unions, approved the draft amendment to the Labor Law, reducing the nighttime wage from **200%** to **130%** of the daytime wage.

According to the NGO Position Papers on Cambodia's Development in 2006, to date, the Cambodian Labor Law **does not cover the informal sector**, where most children work. Areas such as family-based agriculture and domestic work are not included. The Law fails to define child labor exactly, in terms of kinds of work, conditions of work or work hazards. Currently, there is a *Prakas* on hazardous work, which helps to clarify what is light work for children aged 12-15. Five more *Prakas*, relating to child labor in plantation work, fishing, brick making, salt production and garment/shoe making, help to clarify working conditions for children. The worst forms of child exploitation, such as trafficking, are to come under a separate relevant legal framework.

The NGO Position Papers also note **the lack of capacity to properly enforce and monitor laws relating to child labor**. Issues such as **understaffing, insufficient funds, lack of awareness and inability to work within a system of law** also hinder law enforcement. **The lack of clear paperwork**, such as birth certificates, and a high level of fraud in handling paperwork, often makes it even more difficult to verify a child's age. Estimates on the number of people currently working in

Cambodia's commercial sex industry vary. A study conducted by World Vision and the RGC in 2000 suggested that **80,000 women and children were working in prostitution throughout the country.**

According to a USAID report in 2002 ("Measuring the Number of Trafficked Women and Children in Cambodia"), **over 20% of commercial sex workers in Cambodia have been trafficked from outside the country.** 84% of women over 18 who have been trafficked are Vietnamese. A large proportion of trafficked females are under the age of 18. Sexual exploitation of children is one of the direct consequences of tourism.

**3- The establishment of the Vocational and Professional Training Network coupled with the Employment Center for Youth** obtained an average score of **2.47**. This score, again, falls into the category of **dissatisfied**. Of the participants, 10% gave a score of 1 (absolutely dissatisfied); 47% gave a score of 2 (dissatisfied); 29% gave a score of 3 (fairly satisfied); 14% scored at 4 (satisfied); and nobody scored at 5 (very satisfied).

Discussion found that the RGC **had yet to establish a clear strategic plan and national youth policy.** The RGC's promise to establish the dissemination center and to train youths on citizenship had **not been achieved.** There is **no employment training system and a lack of resources.** Additionally, there are no clear objectives in existence in terms of technical and professional training.

The RGC 2006 Report on the Implementation of the NSDP 2006-2010 shows that, in 2006, **10,686 people, youth in particular, completed their studies at public training centers** (excluding NGOs and private sector establishments).

*Regarding points 4 and 5, although there was a shortage of information, discussion threw up remarks and comments for youth participants, who then scored the points as follows:*

**4- The establishment of training and dissemination centers for civic education for youth and additional public libraries** was given an average score of **2.47**. This again falls into the category of **dissatisfied**. 19% of participants scored at 1 (absolutely dissatisfied); 50% scored at 2 (dissatisfied); 23% scored at 3 (fairly satisfied); 13% scored at 4 (satisfied); and only 3% scored at 5 (very satisfied).

**5- The strengthening of control on foreign labor in Cambodia with the aim of solving employment issues and absorbing new technologies** was scored on average at **2.31**, again falling into the category of **dissatisfied**. 1 (absolutely dissatisfied) was scored by 11% of participants. 50% scored at 2 (dissatisfied); 17% scored at 3 (fairly satisfied); 9% at 4 (satisfied); and 5% at 5 (very satisfied).

**In total, youth participants gave an average score of 2.83 to the RGC or elected political parties on achievements in training and employment creation. Clearly, the satisfaction level is very low.**

Youth participants prioritized some issues related to training and job creation as recommendations for the RGC and elected political parties, to help them make an effort to fulfill their promises. Political parties contesting in the 2008 General Elections should consider including these prioritized issues in their political platforms. The issues are as follows:

- **Strengthen the quality of training and education to meet market demand.**
- **Establish more job practicing centers for youths to acquire job experience.**
- **Control illegal foreign labor in Cambodia, strengthening the enforcement of the Law on Immigration.**
- **Prepare plans and training for future labor markets, such as mining and the oil industry.**

- **Push for the retirement of old officials in accordance with the Law on the Statute of Civil Servants.**
- **Create a labor market by enabling more investment opportunities and strengthening good governance.**

### **Rational and Methodology**

This forum evaluation is a **new initiative**, one which aims to allow citizen voters (youths in particular) to **begin monitoring and evaluating** (by scoring) **the fulfillment of promises by the RGC or elected political parties**. The forum is also a place where voters, particularly youths, can discuss and voice their concerns and comments with elected officials or political parties. **COMFREL** invites guest speakers to participate, such as leaders of youth associations, researchers and members of parliament. Voter participants are given a chance to listen to the speakers' presentation on relevant reports. Discussion is held, as well as a question-and-answer session between participants and speakers.

This is the first time that **COMFREL**, in cooperation with the **Youth Council of Cambodia**, the **Khmer Youth Association** and the **Youth Resource Development Program** has organized the **"Youth Voters' Voice Forum"**, focusing on the achievements of elected officials or political parties on **training and job creation for youth**. The forum is one part of COMFREL's **"Government Watch"** program.

This topic is also one of the sides of the RGC's Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency. It is also a key area for reform (points 66, 63 and 64 of the RGC's 73-Point Political Platform). It is an issue **seriously affecting** the livelihood and future of voters.

COMFREL will soon organize a series of forums of this kind, focusing on other topics related to the political platform of the RGC.

***COMFREL's mission is to help to create an informed and favorable democratic climate (1) for free and fair elections through lobbying and advocacy to establish a permanent and suitable legal framework; education to inform citizens of their rights; and monitoring activities that both discourage irregularities and provide comprehensive data to enable an objective, non-partisan assessment to be made of the election process, and (2) for the general public to fully understand democratic processes not just before elections but after and between them. It arranges, towards this end, educational sessions and public forums to encourage citizens to participate in politics and decision making. It encourages constructive advocacy and lobbying for electoral reforms that increase the accountability of elected officials. Finally, by providing comprehensive observation and monitoring it enables objective, non-partisan assessments to be made on the progress of commitment made in political platforms and on the performance of elected officials.***

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