Cambodia to officially observe World Day Against Child Labour

ILO-IPEC, Cambodian National Council for Children, MoSALVY holding joint-events – 1st June

PHNOM PENH (ILO News) – The Royal Government of Cambodia has announced it is officially recognizing World Day Against Child Labour, the first time the Government has observed this international day, focusing on the elimination of child labour worldwide.

The ILO, through its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), along with the Cambodian National Council for Children (CNCC), and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSALVY) are co-sponsoring a series of events on June 1st, the day Cambodia traditionally observes International Children’s Day. The special observance of World Day Against Child Labour and the plight of children forced into work will be among the key themes.

The CNCC coordinated events will include a children’s march with as many as five-thousand child participants, and a rally in Samdech Hun Sen Park, on the banks of the Tonle Sap. Distinguished speakers include H.E. Ith Sam Heng, Minister of Social Affairs, Labour, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation and other senior Government officials. ILO-IPEC is taking part in the events with officials joining the march and supplying t-shirts to the children.

This year, World Day Against Child Labour, officially observed on 12 June, is focusing on the difficulties children face when working in the homes of others. Child Domestic Workers, as they are known, are routinely found in major towns and cities in Cambodia, but many suffer abuse at the hands of their employers and other members of the household. One of the most common problems is lack of access to education. In some cases, human traffickers have sold children into domestic debt-bondage.

In order to impress upon heads of households that all children in their homes must attend school, the slogan of this year’s World Day campaign in Cambodia is: For Every Child: Schoolwork Before Housework. Stop the Worst Forms of Child Domestic Labour.

ILO-IPEC and MoSALVY are also planning a televised round-table discussion on the issue of child domestic labour and the Government’s plan of action to deal with the most abusive situations and other worst forms of child labour. The half-hour programme will be pre-recorded by TVK and broadcast repeatedly during a two-week period on TVK and three other Cambodian TV channels nationwide.

“The Government’s commitment to observe World Day Against Child Labour is encouraging,” said Mr. Ouk Sisovann, a National Project Manager for ILO-IPEC. “We have a long way to go to eliminate child labour in Cambodia, but the commitment by Government, Workers and Employers groups, as well as NGOs and others to combat the worst forms of child labour and child trafficking appears solid.”

Earlier this year, preliminary results of an ILO-IPEC supported survey on the working conditions of child domestic workers in Phnom Penh estimated there were nearly 28,000 Child Domestic Workers (CDW) in the Capital. Of that number, approximately 60% were believed to be relatives of the employer (nieces, nephews, etc.). The survey, conducted by the National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, determined only a small minority of CDWs were able to attend school, most worked very long hours, and more than half worked seven days a week
(70% for girls) with almost no rest time. The newly published survey will be available from the ILO-IPEC office in Phnom Penh as of 12 June.

Worldwide, it is estimated that there are 246 million child labourers — some as young as five. More than 170 million children are working in hazardous conditions and more than 8 million are involved in the worst forms of child labour ranging from forced or bonded labour, to armed conflict, prostitution, pornography, and other illicit activities harmful to children.

In 1999, ILO Member States, including Cambodia, unanimously support Convention No.182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, agreeing to bring about an end to child labour, and to take immediate action to eliminate the worst forms of child labour.

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