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Republic (CO-Bangkok)**

ILO/EU Project on "Improving Social Protection and Promoting Employment"

**NATIONAL TRIPARTITE CONSULTATION REPORT ON
"NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT POLICY FOR CAMBODIA WITH A FOCUS ON YOUNG WOMEN
AND MEN"**

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Raffles Hotel Le Royal, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

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1. Workshop Introduction

The *National Tripartite Consultation on “National Employment Policy for Cambodia with a Focus on Young Women and Men”* took place at Raffles Hotel Le Royal in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 16 August 2012 and was co-organized by the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MOLVT) and the ILO-European Union Project on Improving Social Protection and Promoting Employment. The consultation aimed to build on the past work towards national employment policy development in Cambodia. The consultation was prepared to facilitate technical presentations and discussions among the tripartite constituents and other concerned agencies with the following objectives:

- Reviewing what have been done with regards to the employment policy development in Cambodia;
- Presenting and discussing what the policy is supposed to address and what are the key considerations and process to be undertaken to make the policy well developed and responsive to the needs; and
- Concluding the consultation phase and preparing the way forward, moving towards the development of the policy document and its endorsement; and
- Collecting ideas and recommendations and building partnership among relevant key stakeholders to contribute to the policy development.

The Workshop was organised in the following format:

- The workshop began with a political commitment made by representatives of the government and social partners towards the development and implementation of the employment policy in Cambodia.
- The workshop proceeded with an overview of the employment policy and policy development process model from the ILO perspective and experiences, the Cambodian labour market and a conclusion of what have been done and remained to be done toward having the policy.
- Two panel discussions were then organised, each followed by a discussion. The panels aimed to bring both experts and representatives of most related government and other agencies to contribute in various ways to the employment policy development.

2. Welcome and opening session

Moderator: Mr. Ouk Ravuth, Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training

2.1. Welcome address by the ILO representative

Mr. Jiyuan Wang, Director, Country Office for Thailand, Cambodia, Lao PDR, ILO

Mr. Jiyuan expressed his pleasure to deliver his remarks in the opening session and welcome the participants to this important tripartite consultation. He noted that the ILO had taken seriously the government’s request for assistance to the development of the labour policy and that the policy development was considered

in the decent work country program 2011-2015 as one of the top priorities for promoting decent and productive work for all in Cambodia which was required in the ILO Convention 122 which Cambodia has already ratified. While commending several achievements in the past years in Cambodia, Mr. Jiyuan also drew attention to challenges in the labour market which needed to be addressed and the employment policy development was key to overcome the identified challenges.

Mr. Jiyuan then explained the aim of the consultation which was to develop a common understanding of the challenges in the labour market and the way forward having the policy and provided the ILO's commitment to support the employment policy development process that the government and its partners have endeavoured to undertake. Mr. Jiyuan appealed for further support and active engagement of all relevant stakeholders to successfully develop and implement the employment policy which will help ensure productive employment opportunities for Cambodian youths and job rich growth toward sustainable and inclusive development.

2.2. Remarks by the Employers' Representative

Mr. Senaka Fernando, Deputy Secretary General of the Cambodian Federation of Employers and Business Associations (CAMFEBA)

Mr. Senaka began by expressing his pleasure and honor to speak in this forum and highlighted the global commitment starting in 2001 to find decent and productive work for youth through the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the decent work program in Cambodia in 2006. Mr. Senaka then pointed out to the 2008 economic crisis and its resultant high unemployment in Cambodia at that time and acknowledged the establishment and very helpful work of the National Employment Agency (NEA) to address challenges in the Cambodian labour market. He then emphasized the importance of collaboration of the tripartite parties to contribute to the development of the employment policy in Cambodia including through the policy dialogue and further work.

Mr. Senaka then drew attention to CAMFEBA's commitment and readiness to engage and support the efforts to the employment policy development. In concluding his remarks, he thanked the Ministry of Labour and the ILO for their coordination and financial and technical support to this policy development.

2.3. Remarks by the Workers' Representative

Mr. Som Aun, Representative of the Cambodian Trade Unions

Mr. Som Aun first expressed his strong support to organization of this forum which he found it significant to the development of the employment policy focusing on youths. He then highlighted the significance of youths for the country and the Cambodian labour market and the need for them to have decent work. He said the employment policy addressed these demands if we prepared it well. He would like to see the policy addressing gap in education in urban and rural areas and the mismatch of labour supply and demand, improving youth's knowledge and

vocational skills and creating jobs. Finally, he wanted the policy to be in line with political and economic context of the country and thanked the ministry of labour and the ILO for organizing this event.

2.4. Opening remarks by the Representative of the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training

H.E Oum Mean, Secretary of State, Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training

After welcoming representatives of the ILO, employers and workers' organizations and other relevant government and development partners, H.E Mr. Oum Mean reminded the forum of the past two years' cooperation between the government and other agencies to develop key important policy studies on employment and social protection with the aim of developing a proper policy to address challenges in these two areas.

H.E Mr. Oum Mean drew attention to the government's commitment to addressing employment issues through implementation of the rectangular strategy and roles and duties of the ministry of labour and vocational training. The government has over the past years made significant achievements in the field of labour including ensuring rights and benefits, good working conditions and occupational and health for workers, more matured industrial relations and interventions for child labour and migration workers and technical and vocational training. Raising the need to address key challenges in the labour markets mainly high number of youths entering the market, mismatch between labour supply and demand and the need to develop our youths' skills to be compatible with new technologies and new labour supply from other ASEAN countries, H.E Mr. Oum Mean suggested the development of a national employment policy to address those demands and challenges and that the tripartite parties and development partners needed to work together and contribute to this important policy development.

H.E Mr. Oum Mean told the participants that the workshop was mainly organized to facilitate further consultations and identify more support documents and studies needed to analyze and develop the national employment policy in Cambodia. This process would also consolidate and forge partnership among policy makers and international organizations related to the policy. To realize our aim to have the national employment policy, H.E Oum Mean set out a three-point recommendations: (1) an establishment of an inter-ministerial mechanism to guide and monitor development and implementation of the policy, (2) enhancement of cooperation with national and international specialists to review and comment on the draft policy (3) further support of the ILO to conduct further studies to support this policy development.

Finally, before officially opening the tripartite dialogue forum, H.E Mr. Oum Mean thanked the participants for their attendance in the forum and in particular the ILO and EU for their financial and technical support to this work.

3. Presentation Session

3.1. Presentation 1: Where are we now? A review of past work and ILO support in Cambodia

Ms Sukti Dasgupta, Senior Employment Specialist, ILO

Ms Sukti gave a background leading to the realized need to have the employment policy. She attributed the economic crisis in 2008 when Cambodian workers were hit the most, especially the unskilled ones as a starting point for this policy. She then picked up ILO funded studies' findings on the Cambodian labour market which indicated that interventions for youths and women in particular were desperate. She also considered the Cambodian ministry of labour's request in mid 2010 to the ILO for assistance to this policy development and importantly the start of the EU-funded project on employment and social protection in Cambodia through their background and policy studies and coordination of consultations among stakeholders based on the studies as the key motivations to have this policy development process undertaken.

She then described a series of capacity building and consultation workshops organized last year by the ILO with the aim of determining the development process and contents of the employment policy. Early this year, a workshop was organized discussing this issue and recommending further studies in four areas including rural employment, macro policy and its impact on the labour market, migration and skill gaps. The studies have been commissioned and some main findings would be shared in this workshop. The workshop also agreed on establishment of a national inter-ministerial and tripartite committee to guide the employment policy development. Most recent forum on this subject was the two day employment diagnostic workshop organized with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to understand the constraints and challenges the Cambodian labour market faced.

Ms Sukti also highlighted the key objective of the workshop which was to share each other what has been done in this process and to take comments and advice on the way forward and key issues for focused policy making. Another workshop was also planned to be organized late this year to discuss studies' findings and recommendations and right after then the drafting of the policy will begin. Ms Sukti stressed the need for Cambodia to have a well functioning labour market that addressed both employment quantity and quality issues. Finally, Ms. Sukti reiterated the ILO's commitment to support the government in this development process and it was crucial that the government and the stakeholders owned the process and policy and determined how the policy should be.

3.2. Presentation 2: What is a National Employment Policy?

Presenter: Ms Makiko Matsumoto, Employment Specialist, ILO

Ms Makiko first explained the objectives and scope of the policy by making reference to the ILO employment policy convention (C122) which defined the policy as aiming at stimulating economic growth and development, raising level of living, meeting manpower requirements and overcoming unemployment and underemployment. Ms Makiko then showed interactions between the employment

policy, national policies and the ILO convention and the need to build coherence and coordination between those policies.

Makiko outlined a model of different steps to be undertaken in the policy development process. The first step consisted of identifying stakeholders, setting an inter-ministerial steering committee and a technical team, determining the timeframe, and planning the resource. Ms Makiko then gave a checklist for the policy planning process which provided different elements to be prepared for preparation, formulation, validation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the policy. In concluding, Makiko gave the following recommendations for this policy:

- *Setting appropriate policy goals and targets at the outset*
- *Having a balanced process taking into account of broad dialogue with stakeholders, analysis of the factors that determine the labour market outcomes, coordination and coherence of policies and the need to monitor and evaluation information.*
- *Having some flexibility in adjusting the policy goals and targets.*

3.3. Presentation 3: The employment challenges in Cambodia: The policy visions and expectations on National Employment Policy

Presenter: H.E Mr. Seng Sakda, Director General, Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training

As a contribution to the employment policy development, H.E Mr. Sakda divided his presentation into three parts: three stage employment, challenges in the labour market and recommendations for the employment policy development process. First, in the three stages of employment, pre-employment was the period where people got educated and trained for employment. Youth persons can choose to prepare themselves for work through two ways, the academic and vocational training although the former was more common than the latter in the Cambodia's context. Mr. Sakda said that people did not recognize the importance of vocational training yet and there was a mismatch in the labour market, resulting in youth unemployment and lack of human resources for some companies. Mr. Sakda then discussed the employment stage which had a lot to do with skill developments, working conditions, industrial relations, occupational health and safety, and social protection including pension scheme. He took the opportunity to elaborate each one and what the government had done on these areas. Regarding the post employment, it had to do with programs for those retiring from work. He said the government had developed a law on social security for people under the labour law and a national fund for veterans including for retirees, disabled people and their families.

H.E Mr. Sakda identified a number of key challenges in the labour market including lack of studies on key areas in the market, for example, categories of job, employment demands, a disconnect between training and skill demand, lack of labour market information, absence of the labour market policy and labour market vision. H.E Mr. Sakda later on advised that these challenges be addressed by the national employment policy and there was a need to ensure collaboration of the stakeholders in this policy development. Finally, H.E Mr. Sakda informed the

participants of the advancement with regard to establishment of the inter-ministerial mechanism to manage and expedite the policy development process.

Discussion

Facilitators: H.E Mr. Seng Sakda, Ms Sukti Dasgupta and Ms Makiko Matsumoto

A participant from an entrepreneurship agency asked the ministry of labour to explain the structure of the steering committee and requested that (1) private sector representatives were included in the committee and (2) interaction between job seekers and providers was increased.

A participant from a recruitment firm thanked the organizers for inviting him to the forum and expressed his strong support to this policy development as this policy would be useful for youths in Cambodia. According to him, the policy would improve skills of youths and workers which were at the moment did not have the capacity to take up skilled jobs and therefore were generally unskilled.

A labour ministry representative strongly appreciated the efforts to develop the policy and drew attention to the need to have a job category prioritization which was absent at the time. He also pointed to the need to address labour supply and demand mismatch in the labour market.

A union representative asked the ministry of labour to indicate the number of years a worker needed to work to be entitled to health care service, to give percentage of workforce managed to get into work and the number of people entering into labour market annually.

A representative from the tourism ministry highly appreciated the development of the employment policy and advised the ministry of labour to examine the anticipated competition as a result of the common labour market in ASEAN and specifically the ASEAN Integration 2015 which established common standards for ASEAN countries to adopt and enforce, something useful for the employment policy to take into account especially when the target of 2015 was approaching.

A representative from the ADB recommended developing a roadmap for the employment policy development as there was a high demand for having the policy. He also shared the experience of youth policy development which he had been involved and there was a council of ministers' guideline for such policy development. Finally, he suggested the need to develop a technical drafting team under the guidance of the steering committee.

Responding to these requests, H.E Seng Sakada appreciated the questions and suggestions made by the participants and promised to have a tripartite body where private sector was also represented there. The National Employment Agency through their job centers had been bridging the gap between job seekers and providers. He noted that entitlement to the health service would be starting in 2015 as planned and would be for those under the labour law. As for whether we had got the decent work, Cambodia had ratified all of the core ILO conventions

which many other countries had not dared to do so and the ratification commitment contributed to having decent work in the country. Finally, not all of the 300,000 people entered the labour market every year as some of them created jobs for themselves and the government had been working to attract investment to create jobs in other sectors. The ministry of labour took special note of advices of the ministry of tourism and the ADB.

Ms. Makiko thanked the participants for sharing ideas and experiences which were useful to the policy development. She said it was good to know there was a guideline for this and surely a roadmap would be developed soon and a small technical team responsible for drafting the policy would be set up.

Ms. Sukti emphasized the need to have tripartite consultations and structure of the steering committee and to determine decent work indicators for Cambodia. Skill gap was being studied by NEA and the results from the study would be shared once they were available. Skill development, job creation would most likely be addressed by the policy. ASEAN common market and tourism were something we needed to look into in our policy consideration as their developments would have effects on the employment situation in Cambodia. Migration was indeed an area requiring a debate in the country.

4. Panel Session

4.1. Panel 1: National Employment Policy for Cambodia: Policy recommendations

Moderator: H.E Dr. Hang Chuon Naron (Ministry of Economic and Finance/Supreme National Economic Council)

Panellists:

- 1) Dr. Muhammed Muqtada, International Expert on Employment and Development Policies, addressing macroeconomic policies*

Dr. Muhammed argued that the National Employment Strategy was significant since Cambodia was fully committed to attaching the Millennium Development Goals which included the goals of reducing poverty by half and achieving full, productive employment and decent work. He furthered argued that it would be risky planning to depend solely on growth to deliver the above outcomes, without an understanding of how growth could induce reductions in poverty. He went on to provide some insights on the current employment challenges in the Cambodian economy and policy issues that were pertinent to the design and formulation of the strategy. These included a rethinking of the macroeconomic policy framework, developing sectoral policy priorities and articulating and integrating labour market and social protection policy.

- 2) Dr. Kang Chandararot, CIDS, addressing rural employment*

Dr. Chandararot began by stressing the importance of making the employment policy to be sustainable and successful. He argued for the employment policy to address not only the demand, but also the supply side of the labour market. Raising the preliminary findings of his survey, he gave some observations for the

policy developments. First, rural employment made up a big proportion of the total workforce. Second, keeping or ensuring labour supply for agricultural work was crucial for farming households at rural areas and the decision to engage in outside work or not. This was why some companies/factories could not find enough labour and there was a move of the workers to rural areas during the agricultural times. Finally, job needed to be stable, promising and reliable for rural families to release their family members for the job outside. These points needed to be taken into consideration when developing and implementing the employment policy.

3) H.E Dr. Hong Choeun, NEA, addressing skill development

Dr. Choeun made a few observations to contribute to the discussion and employment policy development. First, having enough, sustainable and quality job was more challenging now in the current job market. The world economy was not good and thus having negative effects on jobs globally. With the developed countries bringing back the labour intensive industries and some other skilled and service sectors and the anticipated ASEAN labour market, Cambodia needed to prepare itself to be coping with this situation. Skill development for workforce was key to survive and succeed in this regional and global market.

Secondly, there were areas such as information gaps, suitability of skill training, monitoring and evaluation in the labour markets which had been not developed enough to meet the labour market demands and we need to address these gaps through the employment policy together with other interventions of the concerned agencies. Thirdly, NEA had planned to conduct a skill gap study covering a big part of the employment to identify skill gap situations to inform the employment policy development.

4) H.E Dr. Sann Vathana, CARD, addressing social protection

H.E Dr. Vathana first explained three relationships between employment and social protection; first decent work and social protection extension for workers and families were necessary for inclusive growth; second, inclusive growth resulted from job creation and social protection extension was not the burden of the society but it provided physical infrastructure and industrial product increase and third there would be a population increase and more than 50 percent of the people would be working adults having their dependants. H.E Dr. Vathana then indicated some challenges in the Cambodian labour market which included precarious employments, poorly skilled and educated workforce, high demand for jobs, limited social protection and high competition and labour flow among ASEAN.

H.E Dr. Vathana proposed three solutions to overcome the identified challenges. First, labour productivity improvement through labour market policy to increase work productivity, better working conditions and higher wage. Second, formalization of informal sector through social protection extension and a reduction of unemployment and precarious jobs. Third, human capital development through education and health improvement.

5) Mr. Khleang Rim, ILO, addressing migration policy

Mr. Rim provided an overview of international labour migration in Cambodia by explaining the migration destinations, state agreements, trend, push and pull factors and regulations and policy. He then identified key challenges in governing the labour migration which included limited implementation of labour migration policy due to institutional capacity at central and local levels, disincentive to legal migration both in Cambodia and destination countries, limited regulation of recruitment practices, gaps in labour migration information system, social costs of migration and limited investment of remittances and skills to develop alternatives to labour migration.

Mr. Rim then set out the following key recommendations for labour migration in Cambodia:

- investment in institutional framework,
- enhanced cooperation with other ministries,
- effective implementation of legislation on regulation of recruitment practices,
- a transparent mechanism to review the costs of migration,
- a revolving loan fund for migrants,
- improved data collection and information system,
- labour migration assistance coordination and planning,
- skill development of workers, and
- strategies and policies to enhance development impact of migration.

Mr. Rim concluded by introducing ILO's labour migration regional project including key interventions of this project in Cambodia.

6) Mr. Matthieu Cogna, ILO, addressing youth

Mr. Mattieu first gave an overview of international youth employment and its significance in the world of work. He raised a number of concerns over youth employment including high youth unemployment, poor quality of youth employment, little voice and participation of youth in policies affecting them. He continued to underscore activism, interest and commitment of the Cambodian government in engaging and improving youth situations via youth policy development and other support programs. Still, there had been youth problems in terms of education, jobs, youth policy implementation, participation in decision making...etc Finally, he suggested to include youth in the employment policy development and implementation and make the policy to focus on youths.

Discussion

A CARD representative asked if CIDS's study on rural employment had been complete and how it helped the employment policy. Dr. Chandararot referred to the background paper he had prepared for the ILO which addressed to some degree the topic under his study. The findings would help make the policy responsive to the need of rural workforce and their families.

A union representative encouraged the forum to pay special attention to informal economy workers and sectors and the policy therefore needed to focus on this sector where conditions were much worse compared to the regulated and formal sectors.

A CIDS representative asked if NEA's study would look at the future job vacancies in addition to the current vacancies. NEA representative mentioned that to some degree future vacancies were also examined though not specifically.

4.2. Panel 2 : Building partnerships for developing and implementing a national employment policy

Moderator: Ms. Makiko Matsumot, ILO

Panellists:

1. *Ms. Thoeun Samnea, Ministry of Woman's Affairs*

Ms. Samnea highlighted gender inequality in employment in Cambodia by giving figures on the proportion of men and women in agriculture, rural areas and major job categories and the income level where women are in disadvantaged and lower positions. She then raised migration issues by characterizing it as on the increase and women are vulnerable due to their economic need, poor working conditions and lack of information. Ms. Samnea then explained the ministry of women's affairs' interventions in rural employment as the ministry established and operated a number of centers for women development which provided vocational training and helped the trained women to transfer their skills to other women in communities. She shared challenges and successes in the centers and noted that the ministry would continue their efforts in the work of the centers.

2. *Mr. Nuon Sophorn, Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energy*

Mr. Sophorn started his presentation with presenting an upsurge trend of large, small and medium enterprise establishment in the country which had created jobs for many Cambodian workers. He then shared what the ministry of industry had been doing which was strongly related to the employment policy. Among areas of commitments the ministry have made were labour intensive industry attraction, promotion of agro-businesses and factories using raw materials produced locally, development of laws and regulations facilitating businesses, strengthening inspection on product quality which should be considered in the employment policy development.

3. *Mr. Ros Keng, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports*

Mr. Keng described the ministry of education's activities related to employment policy. He explained the ministry's commitment to making the school curriculum responsive to the job demands and running vocational training and voluntary work programs for students in and out of the schools. The second part of his presentation was focused on an element of the youth policy which was related much to the employment policy as the element addressed the upgrading of education and vocational skills for youth.

4. *Mr. Paul Vandenberg, ADB*

Mr. Paul responded to the title of the panel by raising a number of points. First, he signified collaboration and synergy building between the ILO and ADB, the former had a great deal of skills and experience in designing labour policy and tripartite working while the latter was experienced in working with the government and other partners in infrastructure, social sectors and loans. Such partnership needed to be enhanced and furthered. Second, he noted the significance of building coherence between various policies. Pointing out to existing national policies, he encouraged preparation of the employment policy by taking into account of other related existing and being developed policies. Third, he identified a need for the employment policy to make use and consolidate all existing achievements like data, programs and plans.

5. *Ms. Moraship Ouch, UNDP*

Ms. Moraship addressed the topic by making two observations, what UNDP had done in relation to employment policy and secondly what UNDP could contribute to the employment policy development. On the first point, she pointed to a study on skill needs for youth to be conducted in collaboration with the Supreme National Economic Council (SNEC) and a pilot project in Siem Reap aimed at building human capital there. She also raised UNDP technical and financial support to national industrial policy development and implementation of the creative industry project aiming to enhance skills of indigenous people. On her second note, she underscored UNDP's experience and knowledge in policy development which could be used for the employment policy development. She advised that an inclusive and participatory approach be undertaken in the process if the policy was to be implementable and successful.

Discussion

Facilitator: Ms. Makiko Matsumot, ILO

A representative from the Center for the Development of Cambodia (CDC) highlighted the importance of partnership in the policy development, especially the private sector. CDC welcomed the initiatives and the on-going process and would like to take part in the process.

A ministry of labour representative asked the speaker from the ministry of education if the vocational skill training provided to students would contribute to the drop-out. In response, the ministry of education representative rejected the assumptions saying there was almost no relationship between the two and skill training was from the experience useful for the students' future.

5. Closing session

Ms. Sukti Dasgupta, Senior Employment Specialist of the ILO, first thanked the representatives of the tripartite parties and other concerned agencies for their active participation and discussion in the forum. All discussions were meaningful, informative and significant for further employment policy development. She also reiterated the ILO's continued support to the employment policy development process the Cambodian government and social partners are undertaking.

Mr. Morm Saron, representing the trade unions, expressed his pleasure that the trade unions were given the opportunity to take part in this consultation. He noted that the employment policy was crucial for Cambodian people and workers as the policy would create more jobs for them. He wished to see the policy improving youths' skills and opportunities. He encouraged the ministry of labour to take ideas and comments from this forum into consideration in the development of the policy. Finally, he provided unions' commitment to be involved in this policy development.

Mr. Senaka on behalf of CAMFEBA at the forum recommended the ILO and the Ministry of Labour to address in the employment policies a number of key issues including skill mismatch between labour supply and demand, skill gaps, informal sector workers, lack of education in rural areas. In addition, he emphasized the importance of a number of critical support to this process which was mainly donor coordination, tripartite working and preparation to implement the policy.

H.E Seng Sakda, Director General of the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, first thanked the ILO for financial and technical support to organize this consultation. He gave assurance to the participants that the inputs from today forum would be utilized in furthering the policy development process. H.E Sakda noted that the MOLVT had advanced in the process of setting up the tripartite Steering Committee to lead this work and importantly the ministry would be working collaboratively with the ILO and other concerned parties to develop this policy. Before closing the consultation, he encouraged all the concerned parties and agencies to continue their participation and contribution to this work.