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CENTER FOR ALLIANCE OF LABOR AND HUMAN RIGHTS-CENTRAL

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STATEMENT

Cambodian Citizens Continue to be Cheated by Brokers Who Promise Job Offerings in South Korea

Phnom Penh, May 29, 2025

Cambodian citizens continue to be deceived by brokers who use fraudulent tactics and fake promises of high-paying jobs abroad. On January 24, 2025, 48 Cambodian nationals - among nearly 300 reported victims from various provinces, including Prey Veng, Takeo, Kampot, Kandal, Svay Rieng, Preah Vihear, Kampong Cham, Kratie, Kampong Chhnang, Battambang, and Phnom Penh - sought assistance from CENTRAL. They reported being scammed by brokers who guaranteed employment in South Korea with daily wages of approximately USD 100.

In July 2023, the group of brokers and their associates began advertising and broadcasting Facebook Live videos, falsely claiming they operated a company that could provide job placement services in South Korea. Applicants were told they must pay USD 4,000 each in processing fees - USD 2,000 upfront upon application, and the remaining USD 2,000 upon beginning work in South Korea. The brokers promised full refunds if applicants were ultimately unable to work in South Korea.

The victims met the brokers at a flat in Phnom Penh, signed agreements (although most were not provided copies for their records), and transferred payments via bank accounts. The 48 victims collectively paid an estimated USD 230,000 to the brokers and their affiliates.

Based on investigative outreach and case mapping, we estimate that approximately 300 individuals may have been defrauded of nearly USD 750,000. None of them have secured jobs in South Korea or received any compensation to date.

These citizens are now facing severe financial hardship, including the burden of repaying loans taken out to pay the brokers. Some have died from illness, others have sold their homes, and several have left their hometowns in search of work to repay debts and support their families.

Appeals from the victims:

- We urge the relevant institutions - including the courts, Ministry of Interior, and other competent authorities - to help resolve the matter, deliver justice, and ensure compensation for us, the victims.
- We call on these institutions to expedite legal proceedings, as we are facing daily hardships, including insufficient resources for food and basic needs, alongside the burden of mounting debt.
- Finally, we urge all Cambodians considering overseas employment to exercise caution and thoroughly verify any information to avoid being deceived by dishonest brokers.

CENTRAL's call to action:

Migration for work is a choice that allows Cambodians to seek income to support their families, repay debts, and save for the future to solve any upcoming problems. However, Cambodians who intend to migrate for work and those who have already done so often face serious challenges, including:

1. Excessive service fees for overseas job placement services.
2. Lengthy processes for obtaining employment in the destination country
3. Complicated procedures, and lack of accessible, comprehensive information.
4. Encountering unregulated, opportunistic groups or individuals acting as unauthorized brokers.

These issues impact both aspiring migrant workers from Cambodia, and those already abroad. They also push Cambodians to migrate under risky conditions without proper legal documentation, some of whom have fallen victim to criminal brokers offering false promises of overseas employment for Cambodian citizens.

Recommendations:

- Relevant bodies including the government, civil society, and private sectors, should step up the promotion of rights, laws, policies, and comprehensive information on safe labor migration.
- Authorities, ministries and service providers involved in labor migration should address the challenges migrant workers face, such as high fees, slow processing times, complicated procedures, and exploitation by illegal brokers.

- Relevant institutions and authorities must provide legal support to ensure access to justice and the protection of migrant workers' rights, particularly those who have suffered from recruitment fraud, labor exploitation, human trafficking, and other abuses at the hands of illegal brokers.
 - The government, civil society, and private sector should also invest in vocational training and expand domestic employment opportunities for Cambodian citizens and returning migrant workers.
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