



Joint Declaration

World Day for Safety and Health at Work 2026 Safe Work, Safe Transport, Healthy Lives: Advancing Psychosocial Well-being, Safe Workplaces, and Universal Social Protection for Workers in Cambodia

Phnom Penh, 28 April 2026

On the occasion of World Day for Safety and Health at Work, 28 April 2026, we, the undersigned civil society organizations, trade unions, federations, and labour rights organizations in Cambodia, come together to reaffirm that every worker has the right to a safe, healthy, and dignified working environment. This day is an important moment to recognize the workers who have been injured, made ill, or lost their lives because of unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, and to renew our collective commitment to prevention, accountability, and justice.

In Cambodia, occupational safety and health remains a serious and urgent issue across many sectors, including garment, footwear, travel goods, construction, transport, and other manufacturing sectors. For many workers, OSH is not an abstract policy matter. It is part of daily life: the air they breathe inside the workplace, the heat they endure during production, the water they drink, the sanitation they can access, the machinery they use, the chemicals they are exposed to, the pressure they face to meet targets, the transport they depend on to reach the factory, and the stress they carry home to their families.

Too many workers in Cambodia still face unsafe conditions at work and on the road to work. Workers continue to report problems linked to poor ventilation, excessive heat, lack of sufficient rest, inadequate drinking water, workplace exhaustion, unsafe machinery, overcrowded production areas, weak emergency preparedness, and dangerous commuting arrangements. In recent years, and again in recent months, [fainting incidents](#) and concerns about heat stress have reminded us that workplace safety cannot be treated as secondary to production. OSH must be treated as a core labour right and a matter of life, health, and human dignity.

For workers in the garment, footwear, and travel goods sectors, around 80 percent of whom are women, OSH is closely connected to wider conditions of work and life. Low wages, long working hours, production pressure, fatigue, poor nutrition, insecure employment, and weak voice at workplace level all affect workers' health and safety. A worker cannot be truly safe when she is forced to work under extreme heat, commute in unsafe transport, skip rest, fear losing wages for illness, or remain silent about hazards because of retaliation. Workplace safety must therefore include not only protection from injury, but also protection of [physical health, mental well-being](#), and social dignity.

We also emphasize that safe transportation is an integral part of occupational safety and health. Many workers travel long distances in overcrowded trucks, trailers, vans, or other unsafe vehicles to reach factories and workplaces. They frequently [face accidents](#) during their commute, resulting in [injuries and, in some cases, fatalities](#). A safe workplace must begin from the journey to work and continue through the entire working day until workers return home safely. [Cambodian laws and policies](#) recognize that occupational safety and health extends beyond the workplace itself. Under national labour law and social security provisions, accidents occurring during commuting are treated as occupational risks, highlighting that worker safety begins from the journey to work and continues until workers return home safely. However, gaps in implementation mean that this protection is not yet fully realized in practice.

We are also concerned that OSH is often approached too narrowly. Occupational safety and health must include: safe buildings, safe machinery, fire prevention, ventilation, heat protection, access to clean water, adequate toilets, hygienic canteens, protection from hazardous substances, safe transport, maternity protection, mental well-being, and freedom from harassment and violence at work.

However, despite these legal and policy measures, implementation at the ground level remains limited, inconsistent, or not fully effective in many factories and enterprises. In practice, many workers continue to face unsafe and unhealthy conditions in their daily working lives, including excessive heat, poor ventilation, lack of clean drinking water, weak sanitation, unsafe machinery, insufficient protective equipment, high production pressure, and dangerous commuting conditions. Recent compliance findings from Better Factories Cambodia show that important OSH problems remain widespread in practice.

We acknowledge that Cambodia has established an important national legal and policy framework on occupational safety and health (OSH), including the Labour Law, ministerial regulations (Prakas) issued by the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MLVT), labour inspection mechanisms, occupational injury protection through the NSSF, and national OSH planning processes. These are important commitments and should be broadly recognized and promoted.

The Royal Government of Cambodia, through its [3rd Occupational Safety and Health Master Plan \(2023–2027\)](#), has further committed to ensuring safe and healthy working conditions for all workers across sectors, including those in informal and precarious employment. The plan emphasizes strengthening labour inspection and enforcement, promoting tripartite cooperation, and aligning with international labour standards.

However, despite these legal and policy measures, implementation at the ground level remains limited, inconsistent, or not fully effective in many factories and enterprises. In practice, many workers continue to face unsafe and unhealthy conditions in their daily working lives, including excessive heat, poor ventilation, lack of clean drinking water, weak sanitation, unsafe machinery, insufficient protective equipment, high production pressure, [mental stress due to low wages](#), and exposure to verbal abuse and gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) by unequal power relations, as well as dangerous commuting conditions.

Recent media reports indicate that [factory fires](#) and industrial incidents continue to occur in Cambodia. Between 2024 and 2026, several cases of factory fires were reported across Phnom Penh and key industrial provinces, resulting in worker injuries and, in some cases, [fatalities](#). These incidents highlight ongoing gaps in fire prevention, emergency preparedness, and workplace safety enforcement.

The 2024 [compliance findings](#) from Better Factories Cambodia demonstrate that serious OSH challenges remain widespread in practice, with persistent compliance gaps across the sector. Approximately 50% of factories are non-compliant with risk assessment requirements, while 41% still lack a proper OSH policy.

On this World Day for Safety and Health at Work, we call on the Royal Government of Cambodia, relevant ministries and authorities, employers, factory owners, and global brands to take immediate and concrete action to protect workers in law and in practice.

We, the undersigned civil society organizations, trade unions, federations, and labour rights organizations, jointly call for the following demands:

Our key demands are as follows:

1. Strengthen enforcement of OSH related laws and standards.

Increase regular, independent, and transparent labour inspections, especially in high-risk sectors and workplaces. Ensure meaningful penalties and corrective action where violations are found.

2. Take urgent action on heat stress and ventilation.

Require factories, establishments and workplaces to assess and prevent heat-related risks through

ventilation, cooling measures, shaded areas, access to drinking water, short-rest breaks, emergency response, and adjusted production practices during extreme heat periods.

3. Guarantee safe and dignified transportation for workers.

End the use of unsafe and overcrowded transport for workers. Establish and enforce minimum safety standards for worker transportation, including vehicle condition, seating, capacity, driver accountability, and road safety monitoring.

4. Ensure access to basic health and welfare protections at work.

All workplaces must provide clean drinking water, sanitation, adequate rest areas, first aid, functioning emergency systems, and quick referral for treatment when workers are injured or unwell.

5. Protect workers from retaliation when reporting hazards.

Workers, shop stewards, and trade union representatives must be free to report unsafe conditions, near-misses, injuries, and health concerns without intimidation, dismissal, discrimination, or union-busting.

6. Establish effective workplace OSH committees with worker participation.

Workers and unions must have a real voice in identifying hazards, monitoring conditions, and designing preventive measures. This committee could play a broader role in addressing GBVH related issues too because GBVH is part of OSH matters.

OSH cannot be effectively addressed without genuine worker participation representatives.

7. Expand protection for women workers and vulnerable workers.

OSH measures must respond to the realities faced by women workers, migrant workers, young workers, pregnant workers, workers with disabilities, and informal or precarious workers. This includes attention to reproductive health, sanitation, harassment, and gender-responsive workplace design.

8. Recognize psychosocial health and well-being as part of OSH.

Stress, overwork, verbal abuse, intimidation, production pressure, harassment, and gender-based violence all undermine workers' health. A safe workplace must also protect mental health and emotional well-being.

9. Ensure compensation and social protection for all injured or sickened workers.

All workers injured at or sickened arising from work or while commuting must have timely access to treatment, income protection, and compensation through the relevant mechanisms, including the employment injury and health care scheme.

10. Hold brands and buyers accountable.

Global brands and buyers must not shift risks onto suppliers and workers through unfair pricing, excessive production pressure, short lead times, or practices that undermine safe working conditions. Responsible sourcing must include responsibility for workplace safety and health and their community.

11. Signing binding and enforceable agreements on OSH

Global brands and buyers must take responsibility by building and signing binding and enforceable agreements on occupational safety and health (OSH), to guarantee safe working conditions, protect workers' rights, and ensure accountability throughout the supply chain

Today, we stand in solidarity with workers across Cambodia. We honour those who have suffered injury, illness, and loss because of unsafe work. We support workers who continue to raise their voices to safeguard their lives, ensure standardized labor conditions, and uphold their dignity in the workplace. And we reaffirm that economic growth must never come at the cost of workers' lives, bodies, and well-being.

A safe and healthy working environment is not a privilege. It is a right.

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