

Editorial

WSM and their partners focus on social protection, and that involves decent work, decent pay. The struggle for decent pay is the red thread in this edition, and it shows the work done by our partners on different levels to achieve this.

In India, domestic workers agreed on fixed rates to apply towards their employers, and will then lobby for these rates to become a legal minimum wage, which is currently still lacking for Tamil Nadu State. At the plant level, where CFTUI managed through successful negotiating to get a 223% salary increase for workers who hadn't received a salary bump in twenty years. In Cambodia, the struggle of the garment workers for 177USD as legal minimum wage is in full swing and received a lot of international support. And lastly, AHW in the Philippines fighting against privatization of the health sector.

In the past, WSM ran a campaign in Belgium with the slogan: "If their wages don't increase, ours will go down." It underlines that our work isn't only governed by values of solidarity, but also by sound common sense and self-preservation. It is the same logic that makes national trade unions include migrant workers and fight for equal pay, showing solidarity, but also avoiding competition. A message reiterated during the BWI conference in Kathmandu focussing on migration of construction workers. United we stand, divided we fall...

- Bruno Deceukelier, Asia Coordinator WSM

Think about it & do it:

The difference between who you are and who you want to be, is what you do.

A NDWM demonstration held in Chennai demanding the Government to fix minimum wage, adopt National legislation for Domestic Workers and ratify the ILO convention 189 regarding Domestic Workers.

Minimum Wage is our Right

In the south of India, in the Gandhipuram area of Pudur–Madurai, live around 900 families, mostly unorganized workers, such as flower vendors, construction workers, tailors and approximately 200 domestic workers. Domestic Workers in this area work two to five houses a day. They are underpaid; some of them only receive old clothes or stale food as wages.

In 2003, NDWM-Tamilnadu initiated an empowerment process of Domestic Workers and they started organizing themselves in a Union. These members participate in monthly meetings, where they learn about their rights and collective bargaining.

Contrary to many other Indian States, the Tamil Nadu government doesn't have a fixed minimum wage for domestic workers, so they have initiated a process to agree among each other and standardize their own wages towards employers. Especially in Pudur, Madurai Tamilnadu, the domestic workers union is strong and they lobby so the government will use their rates as minimum wage. After internal consultation, they fixed an hourly rate of Rs. 30, which is printed and distributed and all the domestic workers in that area demand that same salary. The Union leaders are also very active to negotiate better wages along with their members; and leaders often intervene to solve social conflicts between employers and domestic workers.

NDWM



Building Worker Power to Challenge Transnational Capital: Cambodia Minimum Wage Campaign

Massive increases in the costs of goods not matched by wage increases, working exhausting overtime hours just to get by, having to choose between resting when you're sick and feeding your family. I'm sure this reality sounds very familiar to many of you. It is what we face every day as garment workers in Cambodia, struggling to survive on a minimum wage of only \$100/month. The current position of the Garment Manufacturers Association in Cambodia (GMAC) is to give only \$110. National tripartite wage setting process has been slow and inadequate and is stacked against workers, hence the need for other and additional strategies. We work hard every day to create huge profits for our employers and buyers but still cannot meet our basic needs. In 2013, H&M, the largest buyer in Cambodia, made net profits of \$2.4 billion, Inditex \$3.3 billion, Walmart \$16 billion, the list goes on. The multinational brands are the true exploiters of our labour.

On 17th September 2014, C.CAWDU and a coalition of Cambodian unions launched a comprehensive national and international wage campaign targeting the major buyers in Cambodia. We are demanding that the buyers negotiate legally binding collective bargaining agreements with unions, guaranteeing a minimum wage of \$177 in their supplier factories in Cambodia. They should agree to increase their freight on board (FoB) price to reflect this increase and make a long-term commitment to only source from factories where workers' rights are respected. Past experiences have shown that without a campaign, the minimum wage will only increase by a very small amount, \$5 or \$10. We have been struggling a long time for a minimum wage increase and justice for our colleagues who lost their lives – we can wait no longer.

The most important aspect of any campaign is the strength of workers at the grassroots level. From past experience, C.CAWDU recognized the importance of working in coalition with other unions who have similar goals. We trained thousands of activists in many different areas about the global economy, root causes of low wages, skills for organizing and our plan of action in order to build consciousness, militancy and discipline. These activists in turn educated and mobilized tens of thousands of their coworkers. C.CAWDU also called on unions and supporters throughout the world to show solidarity. Unions and supporters in more than 45 cities in five different continents took action, like workers within the supply chains of these brands wearing our sticker to work, numerous protests outside brand offices and headquarters, and demonstrations in front of Embassies.

Our campaign launch was a huge success. On 17th Sept, workers from more than 135 factories in approximately 50 geographic areas in Cambodia took action. More than 10,000 workers wore our T-shirts and around 100,000 wore stickers. As planned, they joined together in front of their factories at lunch, displayed the banners, did the union handclap and chanted:

What do we want? - 177 dollars! - How will we get it? - Solidarity! Solidarity! - How will we get it? - Resist! Resist! Resist! Su Su Su (which means resist and never give up the struggle)

Workers in Canada Zone, the area where the January shootings took place, marched in a sea of orange T-shirts to demand \$177. The action day built a lot of momentum and we are in a good position now to continue our organizing and campaigning.

In response to our action, eight European clothing brands issued a public letter to the Cambodian government and GMAC in which they indicated their support for a living wage in concept and committed to adjust their FoB prices to reflect any minimum wage increase that is mandated in Cambodia. This message from the brands is an important development and shows they are feeling our pressure. But just a letter isn't enough - the brands must take additional action



immediately to ensure a higher wage for Cambodian workers. To achieve long-term stability and decent wages, we need the ones who make the biggest profits to be accountable.

We cannot beat these huge multinational companies by only organizing on a national level. The real way to build worker power and challenge the power of these huge multinational companies is for workers throughout their supply chains to build genuine solidarity, unite, and take strong coordinated actions against those who have the real power to change things. The support demonstrated by unions and supporters around the world is the core foundation of solidarity and had a tremendous impact. Through this precedent setting success, we want to continue to build our unity and grow, not just in Cambodia but with workers around the world to win a bigger victory. Su Su Su!



C.CAWDU

That's the way CFTUI crumbled the cookie with Indian Foods

One of the achievement of CFTUI in Tamil Nadu in the South of India took place at a company called INDIAN-FOOD Private Ltd, located 18km from Madhurai. It produces food items, one of the main one being biscuits. In this factory, there are 97 regular workers, which are divided into three categories: skilled, semi-skilled and labour. The workers had not received a wage increase in the last twenty years, though this should have happened every three years. They were initially paid as follows (column one):

CATEGORY OF WORKERS	Monthly salary before (June 2013)	Demands from CFTUI Trade Union	After agreement (June 2013)
Machine Operators (skilled)	7.591 INR	25.000 INR	18.566 INR
Helpers (semi-skilled)	6.790 INR	20.000 INR	13.000 INR
Supporting staff, such Khalasis (labour)	5.575 INR	18.000 INR	13.000 INR

Besides the regular workers, 150 casual daily workers also work in the same factory. They were involved in the food processing units like the other workers, but the daily casual workers were never paid wages as per the minimum wage act of Tamil Nadu state. According to this legislation, they are supposed to get between Rs 142 to Rs 200 per day, but they would receive only between Rs 100/- to 150/-.

The above issue came to CFTUI's notice and we negotiated with management, with the demands as noted in the table (column 2). Negotiations started in 2011 and took nearly 3 years. Fortunately, there was no need to go on strike due to the convincing approach of the local union supported by CFTUI, during the visit of the then General secretary and the present President. They met the management representatives of Tamil Nadu and the local leaders and were able to get the management to agree for better wages for the workers, with an average increase of 223%. The yearly bonus was also increased from Rs 8,000/- to Rs 12,000/- for the regular workers.

CFTUI also demanded to pay legal minimum wages for the casual daily workers. A lot of discussions took place which also involved the National President. Eventually, in June 2013, a tripartite agreement was reached before the Labour commission to enhance the wages of workers, as noted in the table's last column. Regarding the casual daily workers who are carrying different types of jobs, the management agreed to increase their salary from Rs 142 to Rs 200/-, in accordance to the minimum wage act in Tamil Nadu.

The main lesson the local union learned is the advantage of belonging to a national level confederation, which can negotiate on their behalf when the situation is difficult. This achievement is one of the reasons that CFTUI got so many unions in its fold in Tamil Nadu, with currently 84 affiliated unions and 300.000 members.

CFTUI



International Human Rights Award for Amin

By awarding the 2015 Nuremberg International Human Rights Award to Amirul Haque Amin from NGWF (Bangladesh), the international jury for the first time honours an activist who fights for social and economic human rights. The jury decision should be seen as an appeal to the entire garment industry to ensure that good working practice is adhered to in all elements in manufacturing chain. Congratulations to Amin!

Health workers in the Philippines hold indignation action on proposed 2015 health care budget

On 24 September 2014, health workers, supported by Alliance of Health Workers, expressed their indignation inside the House of Representatives in Manila on the amount allocated to the national public health care budget for 2015 and the way this budget will be spread. They chanted slogans like “Health is a right for the people”, “No to Privatization” and “The Secretary of the Department of Health should resign!”

Although the total public health care budget for next year will increase by 3,4% until 86,58 billion Philippine pesos (equivalent to 1,9 billion USD), this will not go to the improvement and extension of hospital services. The budget for hospital services, which is meant to fund the 72 public hospitals where poor people go for treatment all over the country remains only 22.4% of the total proposed budget. Low budgets force hospitals to charge almost all patients high rates so as to maintain its operations. In the meantime, 43% of the budget is eaten up by Philhealth, the National Health Insurance Program, for which the poor cannot pay the premium required and which does not guarantee the people’s access to health because it’s so expensive and offers low coverage.

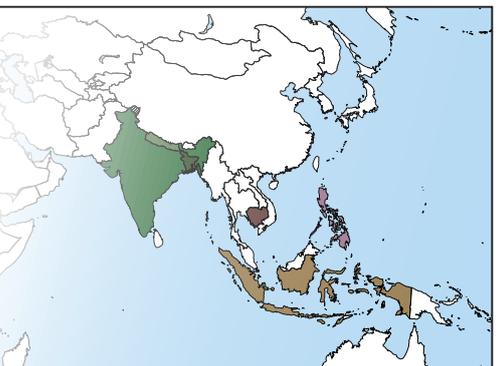


At the same time the government is pushing for a so called “Public-Private Partnership” for the 72 hospitals that function under the Department of Health. This PPP is nothing more than a synonym to privatization of public hospitals. Under the banner of ‘modernization of hospitals’, public funds are used for a cosmetic facelift of the hospital infrastructure so that it becomes more attractive for private investors. In the coming months, AHW will continue its struggle against privatization of the Philippine Orthopedic Center and other hospitals!

AHW

World Solidarity, a Belgian NGO, believes strongly in the power of people working together. Creating Decent Work worldwide in order to guarantee a better and dignant life is our ultimate goal. WSM is part of the Belgian Christian workers movement, an umbrella organisation comprising the trade union ACV-CSC, young workers movement, women movement, elderly people, a health insurance system, etc.

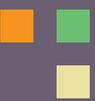
WSM has over 70 partner organisations in 30 countries. In Asia, WSM works in 6 countries (India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines) on labour rights and social protection. WSM also supports partners in times of crisis with emergency aid and relief programs.



Previous electronic versions can be found on brunowsmasia.blogspot.com. Compiled by WSM, it has as purpose to stimulate the exchange and sharing between the partners and inform relevant third parties of the program on Right to Social Protection in Asia. All the information in these newsletters is published in good faith and for general information purpose only. Though we strive to verify as much data as possible, WSM is not responsible for any incorrect information. It is created with the support of the Belgian Development Cooperation. The views presented in this Newsletter do not necessarily represent the official position of WSM or the DGD. If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, or for comments, suggestions or to submit articles, please send an email to bruno.deceukelier@wsm.be.

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World Solidarity - WSM 
Haachtsesteenweg 579 - 1030 Brussels - Belgium
Tel: +32 2 246 36 71 - Fax: +32 2 246 38 85
www.wereldsolidariteit.be - www.wsm.be - www.solmond.be