



World Teachers Day 2012 CITA Report



Introduction

On October 5, 1966, UNESCO and ILO published the Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers. In 1994 UNESCO proclaimed that October 5th would be celebrated as World Teacher’s Day; a day on which the contributions of those working in the field of education would be recognized all over the world. The theme chosen for World Teachers Day 2012 was “Take A Stand for Teachers”, this theme was used by teachers’ unions around the world to address issues that affect teachers in within their education sectors.

In Cambodia, the Cambodian Independent Teacher’s Association (CITA) organized national celebrations to recognize World Teachers Day 2012. CITA was established in March 2000 and formally registered with the Ministry of the Interior (MoI) in July 2001. CITA is the only independent, nonpartisan, non-profit, non-governmental teachers’ union in Cambodia, and represents close to 10,000 teachers through 21 branches across the country. Through national and international campaigning, CITA advocates for the improvement of the condition and status of teachers, and lobbies the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) to recognize teachers’ rights.

The four issues pertaining to the status of teachers, that CITA addressed on World Teachers Day 2012, included—Teacher’s Salaries, Teacher’s Participation, Education Spending and Teacher’s Labour Rights.



World Teachers’ Day 2012, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

World Teachers Day 2012: Cambodia

Dedicated, well educated and well paid teachers are crucial for the development of the education sector of any country. In a country that has a history of socio-economic destruction like Cambodia, the development of the education sector as recommended by international organizations including the UNESCO becomes even more crucial. Between 1975 and 1979, the education system in Cambodia was completely destroyed, and the majority of the intellectual or educated class found themselves the victims of the Killing Fields. It is therefore necessary that the present and future generations have access to a well-developed education system which is the result of dialogue between the Government and teachers, and a school administration and professional teachers which consists of dedicated and qualified educators.

Between October 1st and October 5th, CITA held its celebration of World Teachers Day in three stages—a press conference, a public event at Freedom Park and submission of petition to the Ministry of Education.

Central to the celebration was The CITA Education Report Card, which was presented at the press conference held on October 1st. The Education Report Card evaluates the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports' performance across four key areas against regional and international education practices and recommendations for the period 2007-2012. The four areas as mentioned above are Teacher's Salaries, Teacher's Participation, Education Spending and Teacher's Labor Rights. Each area is awarded a grade between A and E inclusive, and the grade is accompanied by recommendations for improvement. The final grade average of the report card is a "Grade E – Could Do Much Better".

The press conference was held at the CITA headquarters in Phnom Penh, and attended by reporters from The Cambodia Daily, Phnom Penh Post, Reaksmeay Kampuchea, Radio Free Asia and Voice of Democracy. CITA Presiden, Mr. Rong Chunn introduced the concept of World Teachers Day 2012 as well as the Education Report Card that addressed the four issues mentioned in the introduction of this report. To conclude the press conference CITA presented awards to students and teachers that had taken part in the GCE-Cambodia Big Picture Campaign. This campaign which took place in April focused on Early Childhood Care and Education with a children's art exhibition as the central event. The press conference was also used to publicly launch the CITA submission to the Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendation concerning Teachers. The report highlighted where the government had failed to uphold the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers.

On World Teachers Day a public event, attended by teachers, workers, trade unions and civil society organizations, was held at Freedom Park in Phnom Penh. Over six-hundred and fifty people participated in the event which had a dual purpose; the first was to present the Education Report Card to the public, and the second to demand that the government of Cambodia uphold its commitment to the UNESCO/ILO Recommendations Concerning the Status of Teachers.



Teachers Hold Placards during World Teachers' Day 2012, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

To initiate the event, CITA President, Mr. Rong Chhun, he stated: *“Every year October 5th is globally recognized as World Teacher’s Day. On behalf of the Cambodia Independent Teachers’ Association, I would like to thank the respected teachers, guardians, workers, trade unions and civil society organizations who are attending this event. This event is symbolic of CITA’s message to the government to pay attention to teachers, and to draw the public focus towards the role of teachers in Cambodia’s economic development as they are the key towards producing and developing the country’s human resources.”*

Mr. Rong Chunn emphasized that the main purpose of the event was not only to celebrate but to also provide an opportunity to seek solutions to the problems teachers are facing. He explained to those attending that in order to assist in this solution-seeking process the Cambodia Independent Teachers’ Association had sent an open letter to the government and stakeholders on the following points:

1. *Raising the basic salaries of all teachers to 6,700 riel per index by 2013*
2. *Use the modern banking system to transfer teachers’ salaries and school budgets*
3. *Establishment of an Anti Corruption unit within MoEYS to counter informal fees*
4. *Reform the allowances paid to teachers’*
5. *Increase investment in Education in the national budget*
6. *Publish all School Budgets and involve the community in decision making*
7. *Extend Trade Union rights to Teachers’ Associations*
8. *Establish a joint Teaching Council to promote the professionalism of teaching*
9. *Provide regular CPD courses for teachers to increase their skills*

World Teachers Day Guest Speakers

After Mr. Rong Chunn’s opening statements, the two guest speakers at the event—Mr. David Welsh (Solidarity Center/ACILS) and Mr. Thaov Varin spoke about their views on the state of the education sector, the direction in which it was heading, and viable solutions.



Mr. David Welsh, Country Director for the Solidarity Centre/ACILS addresses participants at World Teachers’ Day 2012, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Mr. David Welsh, Country Director of The American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS)

Mr. Welsh opened his speech by thanking those who had chosen to attend the World Teachers Day event, and expressed his view of the purpose of the day itself—“ I would like to commend World Teachers’ Day which held annually to identify the important role of teachers in society.”

He then explained that Cambodian teachers needed access to the freedom of all rights, most specifically the right to establish unions, and participate as equal stakeholders in the formulation of education policies and reforms. His speech then focused on the issue of minimum wage for teachers. He explained that the present wages are too low and should be raised because this would have a domino effect by improving the living conditions and standard of living of teachers thereby providing them with the initiative to be more effective in their field. He also observed, “So far, the Cambodia government has ratified many international conventions including ILO conventions 87 and 98. However these conventions have not yet been implemented.”

Mr. Thaov Varin, Member of Parliament for Sam Rainsy Party

In his speech Mr. Varin used an interesting analogy to emphasize the importance of teachers in society: “I would like to tell the audience that teachers are our second parents, without them we would not have jobs or be in the positions we are in today. Despite this the government seems to limit events such as this which may pave the path for the development of the role of teachers in society”. He called on teachers to protest against the suppression of their basic rights, and to demand that their salaries be raised. Mr. Varin observed that the basic salary should be “at least one million riel”.

CITA Provincial Office Representatives

The speeches of the guest speakers were followed by the remarks and speeches of the presidents and representatives of the provincial offices of CITA.

Teacher Kim Darany, President of CITA, Pursat Province Office.

Kim Darany emphasized the main purpose of World Teachers Day within the context of Cambodia in her speech: “The purpose of organizing this event is to send a message to the Government about the necessity to promote and develop the education sector”. She stated that the intended message has three points: First, the Government is required to increase the quality of education by not discriminating between teachers on the basis of political affiliations. Second, the Government must fully implement both national and international law pertaining to education. Third, that the Government and Ministry of Education provide adequate provisions namely textbooks and school supplies in schools which lack the funds to do so.

Teacher Ngon Sarun, CITA Representative, Kratie Province Office.

Taking the opportunity presented by World Teacher’s Day Ngon Sarun spoke and stated that in protest of the rampant corruption in the education sector he had withdrawn from his position as vice-director. He focused on the issue of teachers’ salaries. He explained how the low salaries were the main cause of corruption, and low quality of teaching within schools as teachers were forced to look for other jobs. Furthermore in order to make more money they bribed students specifically during the examination period. He too called upon the government to establish 1 million riel as the base salary.

Teacher Chuon Cham, President of CITA Kampong Chhnang Province Office.

Mr. Cham said, “the purpose of our association’s celebration of World Teachers Day is to remind the Government about the difference between teachers’ salary in underdeveloped Cambodia, and developing Cambodia. It seems that as the country develops, the salary of teachers is getting less instead of more. Our demand that the base salary be raised is not a sign of irrational pressure but a necessary demand to develop Cambodia’s human resources.” He then focused on the issue of the informal enrollment fee demanded by the education authorities, and he called on every school to stop taking this fee from students. Such practices he explained to the audience of teachers only served to fuel the rampant corruption, which is slowing down the development of the education sector.

Teacher Phat Sotheary, Vice-President of CITA Preveing Province Office.

Phat Sotheary explained that the quality of education in Cambodia is poor due to the restrictions placed on the rights of teachers including the right to freedom of expression and activity. He spoke about the discrimination faced by members of The Cambodian Independent Teachers' Association at the hands of the educational authorities. This she said creates fear amongst teachers about pledging membership to teachers' associations. In relation to this issue, Phat Sotheary stated that she would like to call on parliamentarians to bring this case to the attention of the Government. Finally, she proposed that the Government to raise teachers' salaries to the same amount specified by Mr. Sarun

Teacher Ros Tith Malai, CITA Representative, Phnom Penh Office.

Ros Tith Malai echoed the observations made by Mr. Cham about the effect of the inadequacy of teacher's salaries. "Teachers obtain a salary not only from the government but from students as well through private tutoring or the illegal selling and distribution of snacks and food in the classroom". She also stated that she believes that teachers are aware of the deficiencies and corruption in the education system but are too frightened to initiate change. Finally, she focused on the Priority Budget (PB) that is spent without any transparency of expenditure. She thereby called on the Anti-Corruption Unit, and especially donor organizations and countries "to review and observe the Education spending."

Conclusion of World Teachers Day 2012 Event

To conclude the series of speeches and the event itself, Mr. Rong Chhun conveyed his thanks to the donors who had financially supported the event namely ATL, EI, INTO, and ACILS. He then said, "I would like to now launch the march to submit the petition and Education Report to the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders so they are aware of our recommendations".

Mr. Rong Chunn led the march from Freedom Park to the Ministry of Education, Prime Minister's Cabinet and National Assembly to submit the petition and Education Report. Over 600 persons participated in the parade, which concluded with the successful submission of both documents. It remains to be seen whether the Ministry of Education will incorporate the recommendations into its policies, and also allow teachers to engage as equal stakeholders in the policy making process.

Response from Media and Stakeholders

The Cambodia Daily, The Phnom Penh Post, The Cambodia Herald, Reuters and Radio Free Asia were amongst the mainstream press that covered the World Teachers Day press conference and celebrations. The Daily published an article on October 3, 2012 that covered the press conference, and on October 6, 2012 a op-ed written by Anne Lemaistre, UNESCO representative in Cambodia. The op-ed was politically neutral, and acknowledged the role of the Ministry of Education in the development of the education sector while emphasizing the need for open dialogue between the MoEYs, teachers and teacher associations, and "strategies and actions to address teacher recruitment, preparation, deployment and remuneration". These

are the same demands that are put forward by CITA in its Education Report Card, and report to the CEART. In addition to its articles on the press conference, and celebrations at Freedom Park, The Cambodia Herald closely monitored the week leading to the World Teachers Day. An article titled “ *Teachers seek to march in Phnom Penh on World Teachers Day*” highlighted that Mr. Rong Chunn had to acquire permission to both hold the event at Freedom Park and the march. Following the CITA celebration opinion pieces by the UNESCO Country Director and the Executive Director of NGO Education Partnership (NEP) were printed in the national press.

For further information on CITA, World Teachers’ Day 2012, CEART and The Education Report Card:

1. What is World Teachers’ Day ? http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news/news_details/2316
2. What is CITA ? <http://www.cita.org.kh/>
<http://www.cita.org.kh/File/Education/CITA%20Campaigns%20and%20Policies%202011-2015.pdf>
3. What is CEART ?
<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/education-building-blocks/teacher-education/ceart/>
4. CITA Submission to CEART
[http://www.cita.org.kh/File/Education/CITA%20submission%20to%20CEART%20\(ILO-UNESCO\)%20August%202012.pdf](http://www.cita.org.kh/File/Education/CITA%20submission%20to%20CEART%20(ILO-UNESCO)%20August%202012.pdf)

Budget

Name of Organization	Donation Amount
EI	\$5,00.00
CITA/ATL	\$1,000.00
INTO	\$1,000.00
ACLIS and Trade Unions	\$300.00
Total	\$2,800.00

Expenditures	
Item	Cost of Item
A2 Paper	\$8.00
Water	\$129.20
Document Copying	\$141.55
Transport	\$2,521.00
Total	\$2,799.75

