

Media Release

Launch of Cambodian National Asbestos Profile

27 June 2019, Phnom Penh Cambodia

The Minister of Labour and Vocational Training (MOLVT) His Excellency Minister Ith Samheng will today launch the first Cambodian National Asbestos Profile.

The profile has been developed over the last 2 years following Pracas 340 setting up the Working Group of 13 Ministries employers and trade unions led by the Minister MOLVT His Excellency Mr Ith Samheng.

For the first time the profile reveals which Cambodian workers are at high risk of exposure to asbestos and therefore asbestos related diseases such as lung cancer and mesothelioma. Evidence is presented from research conducted in Cambodia on which products contain asbestos. International evidence is presented on health risks from exposure to asbestos and the global death rates from asbestos exposure.

Asbestos is the leading cause of death of all occupational disease in the world accounting for almost half of all occupational cancers according to the World Health Organization (WHO). There are 6 types of asbestos but the most common type is called chrysotile (white) asbestos. Chrysotile asbestos has been recognised for its strength and resilience, but exposure of the fibre to humans can also cause a range of cancers. For this reason nearly 70 countries have already banned all types of asbestos.

Those at high risk in Cambodia include construction and demolition workers, vehicle (car truck motorbike) maintenance, transport, power plants and power production workers, fire fighters and waste disposal workers. The use of asbestos-containing materials in the built environment (homes or workplaces), places the broader community at some risk also, as building materials require maintenance over time, which inevitably includes surface treatment or complete removal, and the potential release of asbestos fibres.

The Cambodian National Asbestos Profile is an important document for policy makers, workers and consumers in Cambodia in moving forward to take action to prevent asbestos related diseases and the heavy environmental, health and economic costs of continuing to use asbestos containing products.

The Profile has been developed with technical and financial support of Union Aid Abroad APHEDA, the Asbestos Safety Eradication Agency Australia (ASEA), the International Labour Organization (ILO), World Health Organization (WHO) and Australian Aid through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

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