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## **Working conditions of beer promoters in Cambodia are improving but further progress required**

Co-operation between private and public sectors with NGOs prove effective in improving the work conditions for beer promoters in Cambodia

On 7<sup>th</sup> April, the employer organisation The Beer Selling Industry Cambodia (BSIC) met with Ministry of Women's Affairs and law enforcement representatives, NGO partners and beer promoters to review a monitoring survey recently conducted by the Center for Advanced Study (CAS). The purpose of the survey is to assess member compliance to the BSIC Code of Conduct, a series of prescribed standards of working conditions for beer promoters (BP) employed by BSIC and to assess how such compliance has benefited the BPs.

The monitoring survey is conducted with a representative sample of 500 beer promoters from the four BSIC member companies: Heineken, Cambrew Ltd. (Carlsberg), Cambodia Brewery Ltd. (Asia Pacific Breweries) and Guinness. 25% of the estimated 4,000 beer promoters working in Cambodia are regulated by the BSIC Code of Conduct. The study follows up on an internal baseline study presented in May 2008 and it also aims to identify compliant gaps and areas of improvements that can be swiftly followed up by BSIC.

"Joanna White, the consultant from CAS who led the research team, commented "The monitoring survey revealed that the concerted promotion of the BSIC Code of Conduct through staff training and in the workplace over past months, particularly through the introduction of the BSIC logo on beer promoters' uniforms, appears to have brought tangible benefits to beer promoters, most noticeably in the areas of sexual harassment and verbal abuse, which are reported to have declined since last year. Also, beer promoters are now more likely to report cases of sexual harassment to their direct superiors. These are all very positive developments. Another important finding is that beer promoters' satisfaction with their working conditions has risen substantially. However, the survey revealed a worrying lack of improvement in the proportion of beer promoters sitting with customers and drinking during work hours, and the frequency of attempts by customers to force beer promoters to drink. These issues require the immediate attention of the BSIC."

## **Areas of progress**

### **Working conditions**

- High awareness of BSIC
- Clear improvement in awareness and reports of having a written contract stipulating employee benefits and owning a copy
- A majority of respondents considered that wearing the BSIC badge had resulted in enhanced respect in the workplace.

### **Health and safety**

- BP experiencing regular sexual harassment has significantly dropped.
- Sharp increase in direct superiors encouraging beer promoters to use company transport.
- Nearly all BP reported that the provision of an improved training package, which includes ways of dealing with sexual harassment and customers who attempt to force BPs to drink alcohol, had changed their behaviour. This largely relates to the way BP negotiate with customers who pressurise them to sit and drink alcohol, or who attempt to sexually harass them.
- High awareness of grievance procedure.

## **Areas which require further initiatives and immediate action**

In order for the implementation of the Code of Conduct to have maximum positive impact on the BP working conditions a number of issues need to be addressed urgently.

### **1. Drinking with customers**

- Whilst 90% of respondents were aware of the no-alcohol policy, the monitoring survey revealed that a high proportion of BPs still drink during work hours. Moreover, the prevalence of the problem of customer pressure appears to have increased. This very serious problem requires BSIC immediate attention and action with the support from key stakeholders.

## 2. Recording of BP complaints

- BSIC members have not yet successfully implemented the new BSIC-wide grievance procedure in a standard fashion and direct superiors rarely record complaints. This halts the possibility of strategic action towards outlets and requires an immediate review involving BPs and supervisors across BSIC companies.

## 3. Company drivers

- Whilst direct superiors have improved in their role of encouraging BPs to take company transport home, a problem still remains with some drivers' behaviour. Hence, a review of driver policies and implementation of these is required.

## BSIC Action Plan 2009

Based on the monitoring survey findings BSIC has agreed on the following actions:

1. Draft and implement a No-Alcohol-At-Work Policy for incorporation into the employment contracts of all BPs of BSIC member companies.
2. Take disciplinary actions (possibly dismissal from work) against BPs if they flout the No-Alcohol-At-Work Policy.
3. Issue BSIC No-Alcohol cards (which give details of BSIC's no-alcohol policy and likely penalties) to BPs as a mode of deterrence which they can show harassing customers.
4. Quarterly "dip-stick" national surveys to monitor progress of the BSIC Code of Conduct.
5. Launch new Code of Conduct customer awareness campaign
6. Support "Respect the rights and dignity of promotion women" TV campaign by CARE.
7. Set up a special BSIC taskforce to renew implementation and monitoring of the grievance procedure.
8. Set up complaint boxes for anonymous complaints as it was proposed by BPs.
9. Review implantation of BSIC's Drivers' Code of Conduct/Policy and set out intervention and monitoring procedures.
10. Terminate the services of company drivers who flout BSIC's Drivers' Policy.

## Conclusion

BSIC has taken note of the improvements of the working conditions of their beer promoters in Cambodia since the first survey was conducted back in January–February 2008. But BSIC also notes that the areas mentioned above require BSIC’s full attention.

BSIC will continue its close cooperation with the Royal Cambodian Government and NGO partners to improve the working environment of its beer promoters.

“CARE is happy to be considered a partner of BSIC and has respect for the contribution that BSIC has made in protecting the health and safety of Beer Promoters in Cambodia. The model for Beer Promoters adopted by BSIC is unique in the corporate sector in acknowledging and acting upon the responsibility that an employer has towards protecting the health and safety of their workers. CARE hopes that such an example as set by BSIC is replicated not only by other breweries but other industries as well,” said Paula Gleeson, Chief of Party CARE Cambodia.

“The Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC) is concerned with working condition of beer promotion girls as they are highly vulnerable to verbal, psychological and physical abuse in the workplace and stigmatized for working in the entertainment industry. We believe working with prominent beer companies as partners made it possible to redefine the image and integrity of beer promoters as professional representatives of a company. Regarding the alcohol consumption, I think it will take further awareness for the promoters and general public to recognize such behaviour is unacceptable. Also now punitive measures are neither productive nor practical. I think it would be good to establish for the next stage”. Ms. Say Vathany, Director CWCC.

For more information please visit [www.bsic.com.kh](http://www.bsic.com.kh) or contact

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