

Carlsberg promises support to Cambodian beer promoters

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An Angkor Beer promoter protests at the Cambrew headquarters in Phnom Penh last year. Photograph: Meng Kimlong/Phnom Penh Post

Danish brewer Carlsberg has vowed to improve the working conditions of Angkor and Carlsberg beer promoters in Cambodia as it tries to stamp out coerced workplace drinking.

The company announced late last week it had joined forces with the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) to confront issues beer promoters specifically in Cambodia face, such as pressure from customers to drink while working and sexual abuse.

“We are pleased with the co-operation agreement with LO that will help us in our goal to provide our sales promoters with decent, dignified and safe employment,” Carlsberg Group spokeswoman Anne-Marie Skov said in a statement dated Thursday.

The company and the union group will also work to erode the negative stigma attached to beer promoters and encourage freedom of association and collective bargaining, the statement adds.

[The Post reported on Wednesday](#) that 85 per cent of the 1,660 beer promoters surveyed by Ian Lubek, adjunct professor of psychology at the [University of Guelph](#) in Canada, between 2004 and this year drank regularly at work to earn tips from demanding customers.

“Our research shows that beer promoters are consuming on average 1.5 litres of beer per night – that’s six glasses of beer, 27 nights a month,” Lubek said.

The promoters’ average wage of \$75 and their monthly expenses of \$180 made many desperate for money, he added.

Lubek yesterday welcomed international unions’ interest in working conditions in Cambodia, but wanted LO to verify whether workers for Carlsberg or Cambrew, which produces Angkor Beer, could join whatever union they chose.

“At the time of the 2011 strike [over beer promoters’ overtime payments], Carlsberg executives in Denmark suggested I contact the large, ‘in-house’ union that they said represented many of the Angkor beer sellers, headed by a former HR director of Cambrew,” he said, adding that it was actually the external Cambodian Food and Service Workers’ Federation that had organised the strike.

Lubek said he hoped the gap between what beer promoters were paid and their living expenses would be addressed.

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