Mrs. Heng Chenda

“All women workers across the country should improve their capacity, increasing their awareness and courage, they especially need to be brave in making decisions as well as advocating and standing for election too.”

Mrs. Heng Chenda is the vice president of the Cambodian Labour Confederation (CLC) and the chair of the Gender Committee Department in CLC. She graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Management.

From 1997 to 2000, she was a garment worker and consultant at her local trade union. Until May 2000, she was also a volunteer at the Coalition of Cambodian Apparel Workers Democratic Unions, where she later became a staff administrator. In 2008, she was elected as the Chair of the Gender Committee Department, and subsequently, as the vice president of the CLC in 2019.

The factors that motivated her to become an active labor rights defender were companies suppressing workers, poor working conditions, the delaying of salaries for workers, and employment instability. To help workers, she always goes with her colleagues to sign up new members at the local factory two times per day. After that, they provide training, arrange meetings and help solve disputes for workers.

Mrs. Chenda’s institution has achieved a number of successes, such as negotiating the resolution of a dispute for local workers, negotiating for the payment of workers’ salaries when the factories are closed, negotiating to reinstate pregnant women, and negotiating the resolution of a violation of workers’ rights in a factory by establishing a Women’s Committee to resolve the dispute at the local level.

Notwithstanding these achievements, Mrs. Chenda has personally faced many challenges, such as signing up members for the trade union until late at night, the authorities and companies forbidding her from doing so, monitoring by the authorities, and the authorities and companies using rude or harsh language when they go to sign up new members. She has also experienced violence, such as pushing, when she joined demonstrations with workers. To address these problems, she and her colleagues always inform the authorities about the legality of their work and tell the workers to be strong and to cooperate with unions.

She hopes that in the future workers can stabilize their employment, eliminate short-term contracts, set the minimum wage for all sectors, improve respect for workers’ rights by employers, increase the minimum wage, and that the government will respect and implement the law effectively for all relevant parties to protect workers from vulnerability. She says that gender issues should be promoted to include women’s voices in leadership roles and so that there is transparency and so that women can consult with women if they have a problem. For her institution, LGBTIQ issues are also promoted and they always invite LGBTIQ individuals to join all kinds of events.

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