

Debenhams' response

10 February 2020

Business & Human Rights Resource Centre invited Debenhams to respond to the following items:

- "Worker reps, factory management to meet today over missing wages", 20 January 2020, *Khmer Times*: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50681284/worker-reps-factory-management-to-meet-today-over-missing-wages>
- "Workers at Struggling Factories Protest Over Unpaid Wages", 21 January 2020, *VOD*: <https://vodenglish.news/workers-at-struggling-factories-protest-over-unpaid-wages/>

Debenhams sent the following response:

"On 20th January 2020 we were made aware by Better Factories Cambodia (BFC) that approximately 877 workers at Dignity Knitter Limited factory went on strike from the 17 January to 20 January 2020, due to December wages not being paid. Once notified we worked in collaboration with BFC and our supplier partner to understand more about the on-going situation. We have since received and confirmed the following updates:

- The factory agreed to pay a first payment for the December wages, however as both parties did not reach complete agreement of all points, labour officials forwarded the collective dispute to the Arbitration Council.
- The decision from the Arbitration Council meeting is expected mid-February 2020 and will outline timelines for compensation of the workers

As a partner member of BFC we are continuing to collaborate with them as they monitor the negotiations between the factory management and the workers' union. The BFC programme focuses on capacity building and providing training services to support dialogue between the workers and factory management as well as worker well-being. We are also in contact with other brands and retailers that use the same factory to ensure that we are all working together to reach a solution. We will therefore continue to closely monitor this with our supplier partner, the factory and BFC and provide support as they work to facilitate the agreement between all parties as part of the Arbitration Council.

The Debenhams Supplier Code of conduct, clearly states:

"Wages and benefits paid for a standard working week, within the legal working hours limit and meet a minimum national legal standards or industry benchmark standards, whichever is higher. In any event wages should always be enough to meet basic needs and to provide some discretionary income."

This is supported by the Debenhams Ethical Trade programme, which includes continuous monitoring and improvements of the supply base, sustainable purchasing practices and working in collaboration with NGO's, Trade Unions and other civil society organisations, to support human rights and worker wellbeing."