



Summary Report of Women Forums

on

“Reclaiming Information Communication Technology to end Violence Against Women”

For Seminar on December 26th, 2008



Organized by:



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Summary Report of Women Forums on "Reclaiming ICT to End Violence against Women"

Cambodia Millennium Development Goals¹:

Cambodia Millennium Development Goal 3: *Promote gender equality and women's empowerment*

Overall target 8: *Reduce significantly all forms of violence against women and children*
Target 3.17: *Increasing the population percentage aware that violence against women is wrongful behavior and a criminal act to 100 by 2015.*

I. Violence against women

a. Definition:

Violence against women is committed in various forms such as physical, psychological, economic abuses, etc. The term "violence against women" was defined by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1993. In the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women which was duly adopted by the General Assembly (General Assembly resolution 48/104 of 20 December 1993²) and is by now widely used, article one states "Violence against Women" mean any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

b. General situation:

Based on reports, statistics suggest that violence against women is astonishingly pervasive. Overall, it is estimated that one out of 3 women worldwide will suffers some form of gender-based violence in their lives. Forms of abuse include beating, rape, attack, being trafficked, murder, humiliation, restriction of social contacts and mobility, etc (UN Commission on the status of women 28/2/00)³.

Violence against women is one of the most visible outcomes of gender inequality and women's lack of empowerment. Therefore, it is impossible to achieve the third Millennium Development Goal as long as such abuse persists (Ending Violence against Women and Girls-Protecting Human Rights, GTZ).

¹ <http://www.mop.gov.kh/Default.aspx?tabid=156>

² [http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/\(Symbol\)/A.RES.48.104.En](http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/(Symbol)/A.RES.48.104.En)

³ <http://www.peacewomen.org/un/ecosoc/CSW/CSWindex.html>

II. Objectives of the Women Forum

The objectives of the Women forum are to:

1. Identify and analyze the root causes of discrimination and relationship between causes and consequence
2. Analyze and identify appropriate strategies and advocacy for common solutions, and
3. Mainstreaming the awareness of rights with an aim to eliminate discrimination, increase necessary capacity and leadership capacity of women.

To promote **gender** equality in a society in which women can exercise their **Rights** in a balanced way and can build competence to become **self-sufficient**

III. Women Forums

To join in the global campaign on “**Say NO to violence against women**”, three women forums on “**Reclaiming ICT to End Violence against Women**” were conducted by the women program of the **Open Institute** from September to November 2008 at the Open Institute. More than **70** participants from **30** institutions attended the forums. They are decision making persons representative of governmental institutions, non-governmental organizations working on women’s affairs, human rights, research and media agencies such as Ministry of Women Affairs, Cambodian National Council for Women, Secretariat of Senate, UNIFEM in Cambodia, Cambodia-Canada Legislative Support Project, Cambodian NGO Committee on CEDAW, People Health Development Association, Positive Change for Cambodia, Cambodian Defenders Project, Licadho, Women for Prosperity, Cambodian Women’s Crisis Center, Khmer Women’s Voice Center, Pact-Cambodia, Cambodian Women for Peace and Development, Women Development Association, Dan Church Aid, Actionaid International, Canadian Cooperation Office, Cambodia Village Phone Company, Khmer Youth Association, Cambodge Soir, Voice of Democracy and Royal University of Phnom Penh.

Presentations were made by professional experts in Cambodia on gender, laws and rights to share their work experience and the activities of their organizations concerning violence against women to achieve Cambodia Millennium Development Goals 2015. Participants were very active to join the discussions and exchanges of ideas and experience in the meetings. As a result, some findings were identified and recommendations were also made.

Also as part of the campaign, under the cooperation with the UNIFEM in New York, UNIFEM in East Asia and South East Asia, and UNIFEM in Cambodia, the women program localized and posted the template “**Say NO to violence against women**” to the Women Web Portal to invite visitors to join the event by provide their signatures to support the campaign. The People’s Health Development Association (PHD) also joined the signature collection campaign. As result, there are **5075** signatures were collected and sent to the UNIFEM in New York on 11 November 2008 for further distribution to His Excellency Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General, to support his efforts in International Day of Violence Against Women on 25 November 2008.

IV. Findings

The following issues were identified during the women forums:

✚ **Reasons concerning violence against women**

1. Men are always more valued than women by culture of Cambodian society. Some social, educational, poverty and traditional issues prevents women from fully enjoying their rights;
2. Most of violence is caused by men or masculinity; and

3. Violence cases are increased in a crueler manner and in different forms. It happens in almost everyone life which is rarely disclosed.

✚ Impacts of violence against women:

1. Most of female victims dare not report their cases since they are afraid of being stigmatized and looked down by the society. This silence caused negative impacts on their mentality, health, household livelihoods, and loss of future. They are also marginalized from social and economic development. This is not only affects the victims but also the society as a whole.
2. Women represent more than 70% of the total labor forces. Therefore, if women are ignored or discriminated or if gender stereotype persists, this mean more than half of the labor forces are cut for country development and it caused gender inequality.

✚ The importance of the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) to end violence against women: challenges and solutions:

1. Almost all ministries and institutions working on women issues have been using ICT in their activities to reduce violence against women such as disseminate information through the internet, to provide police's phone numbers to villagers for complaints whenever violence occurs, broadcasting information on radio, television, publishing and distributions of brochures, etc;
2. ICT facilitate for searching documents that is important for project development or the associated works;
3. Information draws attentions from national and international watch dog that might bring further measures or the creation of other mechanisms to prevent violence against women and children. These actions will work toward, step-by-step, the reduction of irregular act or other abuses;
4. ICT can be used to empower women and to build network from an individual to another individual, from one community to another community to make them aware of women problem to minimize gender stereotype;
5. Although ICT is in rapid growth, but not many women in South East Asia can access to ICT. This keep women distances from the pool of global knowledge, lack of opportunities to develop themselves and to participate in social development.
6. Only 8 of 28 women organizations host their websites: 6 websites in English and 2 websites in Khmer which most of information are related to the backgrounds of their organizations. Only 9 of 29 organizations whose work on Human Rights related issues have their own websites and are mostly in English.

✚ Cooperation between governmental institutions and civil society to end violence against women:

1. Government and non-governmental organizations have been working together such as on the development of the law on The Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims. They are also in good cooperation for solution approach toward violence happened in the communities;
2. Cambodian National Council for Women (CNCW) has been working on the dissemination of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women (CEDAW) in the provinces/municipalities and conducting training of trainers for the convention; and
3. Non-governmental organizations cannot do the government job but we can cooperate together and encourage the government to perform their obligations better.

✚ Challenges(points to be improve) in ending violence against women:

1. Up to now, there is no global research at national level on violence against women has been conducted (reports have been done by different institutions and organizations which the findings are overlapped and non-coordinated);
2. The cases of divorce at local level are handled by Commune/Sangkat Councilors and district officials whose legal knowledge is limited;
3. As far as dissemination of information related to laws and violence is concerned, it is noted that only 8 of 28 women organizations have their own websites in which 6 websites are in English and 2 websites are in Khmer with most of the information is about organizational profile. Only 9 of 29 organizations working on Human Rights host their websites and mostly in English.
4. The Cambodia Millennium Development Goals states *"Increasing the population percentage aware that violence against women is wrongful behavior and a criminal act to 100 by 2015."* But until now, there is no research conducted to show the percentage of Cambodian population who are aware that violence against women is wrongful behavior and a criminal act.
5. The prevention of violence against women has been done by almost all organizations but the outcomes has not been included in national overall report;
6. The weakness of the use of ICT is that women those are weak and living in poor communities are not able to have access to ICT. Therefore, there is a need of an analysis to balance the advancement of ICT and social integration to make ICT accessible to everyone;
7. There are some difficulties faced by non-governmental organizations in working on violence against women: general perceptions of Cambodian people, corruption, poverty, lack of cooperation from authority, police and courts.

V. Recommendations

1. It is recommended that a national research on violence against women in Cambodia be conducted;
2. Government and civil society should work together to conduct a research to identify indicators of Cambodian population awareness on violence against women in response to the Cambodia Millennium Development Goals 2015, stating that increasing the population percentage aware that violence against women is wrongful behavior and a criminal act to 100 by 2015;
3. Government and civil society should work together within the same contents and frame-work to end violence against women;
4. There is a need of an analysis the advancement of ICT and social integration so that ICT is available for everyone;
5. Government and non-government organizations should find out strategies in working together to prevent violence against women focus on dissemination of laws related to women and violence against women for a better understanding of women, especially women living in the rural areas; and
6. Government and non-government organizations should continue their cooperation on a joint project through the Ministry of Women's Affairs and other organizations working on the women issues.

VI. Conclusion

Based on the findings and recommendations as a result of discussions during women forums, it is reflected that although government and non-government organizations have been working together to prevent and eliminate violence against women, there is a requirement to improved the work done. The recommendations also included that there are some other issues have not yet been addressed and need to be fulfilled.

Government and civil society should work together on a joint/global project with a common goal in the prevention and elimination of violence against women. These efforts

would be of funding agencies interest that might influence the strategies of donors' fund granting.

For the 3 women forums' report on "**Reclaiming ICT to end Violence Against Women**", please visit: <http://women.open.org.kh/km/womenfourm-reclaiming-ict-end-vaw-report>

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