

FILM SCREENING AND DISCUSSION ON SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE DURING THE DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA REGIME

23 MARCH 2017

**SAMBOR MEAS PAGODA, ANDOUNG CHEK VILLAGE,
CHEUNG KREAV COMMUNE, ROLEA BIER DISTRICT, KAMPONG CHHNANG
PROVINCE, CAMBODIA**

Summary Report

On Thursday 23 March 2017 Khmer Mekong Films (KMF) and the WSD Handa Center for Human Rights and International Justice, with technical support from the Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation (TPO) and financial support from the British Embassy in Phnom Penh, travelled to Kampong Chhnang Province to hold an event on sexual and gender-based violence during the Democratic Kampuchea regime. The event incorporated excerpts from six-part Khmer-language miniseries 'Time to Speak Out,' a joint production from KMF and the Handa Center. The series explores various themes related to forced marriage and sexual violence during Democratic Kampuchea, and explains attempts to address such crimes at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC). The six episodes were originally broadcast on Cambodian television channels My TV and CTN in December 2016 and January 2017.

The screening and discussion event took place with local community members in Sambor Meas Pagoda, Andoung Chek Village, Cheung Kreav Commune, Rolea Bier District, Kampong Chhnang Province. 92 villagers (68 female and 24 male) from four villages (Tapen, Andoung Chek, Tek Chenh and Prey Kong) attended the afternoon event, many bringing along their children or grandchildren.

Ms. Kakada Lov, representing KMF, opened the event by thanking participants for taking their time to attend the film screening. Ms. Lov introduced more detail about the purpose behind the "Time to Speak Out" miniseries, explaining that the excerpts that would be shown would include the experiences of some survivors of sexual violence and forced marriages during the Khmer Rouge regime. She encouraged the villagers to share their own stories, if they felt comfortable doing so.

Following the remarks from Ms. Lov, Mr. Van Neing, the chief of Prey Kong Village also welcomed villagers to the event and encouraged their active participation in discussions. He recognised that many of those attending would have personal memories of the DK regime, and recounted his own experience of witnessing a group wedding ceremony at which ten couples were married. He said he knew of couples who had been married during that period who had stayed together, and others who had since



divorced. Van Neing said that prior to the event he had particularly invited some couples he knew who were married during group ceremonies in the DK regime.

Ms. Chariya Om, TPO Project Coordinator, reiterated her thanks to the village chief and all those villagers attending the event. She introduced the agenda for the afternoon, explaining that short excerpts of 'Time to Speak Out' would be played, followed by discussions after each excerpt.



The first excerpt introduced some background about this sensitive topic and provided information on the progress of ECCC proceedings, particularly in Case 002/01 and ongoing Case 002/02 which dealt specifically with charges related to the regulation of marriage. After watching the first clip, participants were invited to discuss the ECCC and its treatment of those accused of committing crimes as part of the Khmer Rouge regime. This was a particularly animated segment of the discussion, with many attendees asking questions of the Handa Center representative about the ECCC's mandate and progress. Some villagers asked why only senior leaders were being charged by the ECCC, and others expressed their desire for harsher punishments for crimes that had occurred. Mr. Lina Tay, representing the Handa Center, explained to villagers that the two surviving senior leaders charged in Case 002, Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan, are each now serving a life sentence.

Another excerpt from 'Time to Speak Out' featured former Civil Party lawyer Ny Chandy explaining why and how the crime of forced marriage was prosecuted at the ECCC. Villagers were then asked to discuss how to define forced marriage, as well as their own experiences witnessing forced marriage and other crimes during DK. Several people chose to share their personal experiences. One man spoke of his own marriage under the regime. He told his peers that he had made a request to authorities to marry the woman he loved, and that he therefore did not consider his wedding "forced." One female villager told the group that she had been forced to marry a man during the DK regime and they remain married to this day. She said that she accepted the match in fear for her life and recalled that, although she had made a request to authorities, her parents had not been allowed to attend her wedding ceremony.



Another man recounted that during the regime he had told some people in his unit about his romantic interest in a woman, however was warned that he could not choose who he would marry or he would be sent for "reeducation." He recalled witnessing a man in his village be brutally punished for loving a woman against the instructions of the authorities, and so he had hid his own feelings at that time out of fear.

After all the excerpts from 'Time to Speak Out' had been screened and villagers had shared their experiences with the support of trauma specialists from TPO, the event

concluded with a more light-hearted ‘hot potato’ game. Villagers tossed a paper ball to each other while music played in the background. The ball was made of layers of questions for further discussion, as well suggestions for activities such as singing, dancing or telling jokes. This exercise ended the event on a more positive note; summarising the main points of the mini-series while at the same time encouraging villagers to interact with each other and clear the air after the sensitive topics discussed.

Of the 92 attendees, 79 completed evaluation forms after the event. Staff from the Handa Center, KMF and TPO assisted those participants who had trouble completing the forms alone. 65% (39 of 60) of those who responded to the question in the survey were aged 55 and over, meaning they likely lived through the DK regime. 94% (70 out of 74) said they had learned about the history of crimes of sexual violence or forced marriage under the Khmer Rouge regime during the screening event. 93% (70 out of 75) said they had learned more about what the ECCC is doing to prosecute crimes of sexual and gender-based violence and forced marriage that took place during the DK regime. 87% (67 out of 74) said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the event and a number expressed interest in similar such events in the future focusing on the ECCC and the prosecution of sexual and gender based violence in Cambodia more generally.

Watch all six episodes of “Time to Speak Out” online at:

www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLzODsMoQsXUUhRYgbmzjJ5k9mvXYQPAku.

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Thanks to:



British Embassy
Phnom Penh



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