



ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF PHNOM
PENH
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY



Press Release

Parenting and Parent-Child Interactions in Three Generations after the Khmer Rouge Regime in Cambodia (PPCIC) - Launching of Preliminary Findings

On behalf of the Psychology Department, Royal University of Phnom Penh, and the Sigmund-Freud-Institut, Germany, we are pleased to invite you to the launching of the preliminary findings of the study **"Parenting and Parent-Child Interactions in Three Generations after the Khmer Rouge Regime in Cambodia (PPCIC)" on 26 February 2015, at 8am-5pm, Sunway Hotel, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.**

During and after the Khmer Rouge (KR) regime, during which an estimated two million people out of a population of seven million were killed, a largely traumatized first generation now merges with a rapidly growing second and third generation. These second and third generation is affected by the first through the problems of a post-conflict society as well as directly through the problems of their own parents: poverty, non-functioning governments, lack of human rights as well as widely spread domestic violence including corporal punishment of children, sexual abuse, trafficking, substance abuse, gambling, and psychiatric conditions in parents.

In order to meet the needs of the new generations born after the Khmer Rouge regime that constitute almost 50% of the population, detailed knowledge about the current situations of parents and their children in regard to the experienced trauma and to their parenting style is inevitably required.

Therefore, the Psychology Department of the Royal University of Phnom Penh, in collaboration with the Sigmund-Freud-Institute of Frankfurt, Germany, has initiated an innovative study on the impact of the inter-generational transmission of trauma from the Khmer Rouge regime on parenting and parent-child interactions and on mental health in three generations. Included in the sample are 540 children aged around 14 years, and 200 mothers as well as 200 grandmother from the same family. The research measures give a multi-dimensional perspective on the mental health problems of children of the third generation and their parents.

Overall, the study found clear differences in education and number of born children between the grandmothers and mothers. All grandmothers and almost half of the mothers of our sample have experienced traumatic events during Khmer Rouge regime and Civil War. The exposure to severe traumatic events is reflected in high frequencies of anxiety, depressiveness and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in both generations, but especially in grandmothers. One consequence of these traumatic experiences is also the impairment of a sense of basic trust.

For the first time, the study systematically investigated the cultural beliefs about parenting in Cambodia. The study confirms that traditional parenting beliefs still play an important role in childrearing in Cambodia. In our sample, 98% of the grandmothers and mothers agreed with the saying “Strike the steel while it is hot”, and 34% reported that this saying involves corporal punishment. On the other hand, there is a slow shift between generations regarding the belief “Whatever the girl studies in higher education, she will end up as a housewife”. While almost all grandmothers agreed with this saying (89%), only two thirds of the mothers agreed with the saying, indicating a change in traditional beliefs concerning gender distinctions.

With regards to the effect of parenting practices on mental health adjustment of children, the study found a tendency of more emotional problems, conduct problems, hyperactivity-inattention and peer problems, if the parents use corporal punishment.

After further data analysis, the research findings will provide information enabling the Department of Psychology (RUPP) and other stakeholders in the field to develop tailored programmes for parents in need.

The study was generously supported by GIZ (German International Cooperation), UNICEF Cambodia, Terres des Hommes (TDH) and Investing in Children and their Societies (ICS).

Contact: Dr. Luise Laezer, Principal Investigator of PPCIC Study, 016 385 233, laezer@sigmund-freud-institut.de.