

CIVIL PEACE SERVICE (CPS)

RECONCILIATION AND JUSTICE IN CAMBODIA

Speaking out for justice

The aftermath of the Khmer Rouge has continued to emotionally devastate Cambodians for almost forty years. Brutal torture, sexual violence against women, starvation and mass killings occurred from 1975 to 1979, and resulted in the death of 21 percent of Cambodia's population, or 1.7 million people. Several high-level Khmer Rouge war criminals have been on trial in the Khmer Rouge Tribunal since 2010, which has already resulted in one guilty verdict.

To strengthen the reconciliation and the peace-building process, the Civil Peace Service (CPS) ensures that Cambodian citizens and Khmer Rouge survivors are thoroughly informed about Tribunal processes to foster public opinions about the outcomes. It is hoped that understanding, and a feeling of citizen ownership of the legal process will result in a genuine sense of justice.

Cambodian civil society and government institutions in partnership with CPS carry out outreach and education about the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. Since 2007, several civic groups and the Victims Support Section of the Tribunal have implemented outreach programs in all provinces of the country.

In public forums, representatives from the Tribunal respond to questions from the people. These events are aired on the radio, thereby addressing an even wider audience, as survivors call in to share their thoughts and experiences. As a result, two movies have been produced addressing forced marriages during the Khmer Rouge regime and truth telling.

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A lasting and powerful educational legacy for future Cambodian generations will tell the story of survivors of the Khmers Rouge. These stories reach other Cambodian women, men, young people and children through a wide range of engaging outreach materials.

The tribunal achieves new depths

According to the Tribunals internal rules, Civil Parties (CP) can participate in the process of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal to support the prosecution and second, to seek collective and moral reparations. In the first trial, more than 90 survivors actively participated with CP status. They revealed their stories in the courtroom, sometimes with emotion, and sometimes with their own interrogative questions for the defendant.

This powerful process gives the Tribunal a human face, and allows survivors to take ownership of the trial process. Civil Party testimony has furthermore contributed to the accuracy and effectiveness of legal investigations and decisions. In July 2011, the number of CPs involved in for the second case was 3,850.



Pg. 1 Photo left: Kdei Karuna: Culmination Ceremony during Victim-Former Khmer Rouge Dialogue Project

Pg. 1 Photo right: TPO Self-Help Group with female Civil Parties

Pg. 2 Photo left: Public court hearing at the ECCC

Pg. 2 Photo right: Youth for Peace -Transformative Art Workshop in Svay Rieng



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Expert support strengthens survivors' voices

Because of the overwhelmingly large number of CPs, most will not have the opportunity to share their experience within the walls of a courtroom. This is unfortunate because many survivors long to have their stories heard. In order to meet this need, CPS partner Transcultural Psychological Organization (TPO) implemented a "Testimonial Therapy," which gives survivors an opportunity to tell their stories. In this form of therapy, an individual's testimony is read aloud, and a ceremony that may include Buddhist monks and other survivors follows.

Written testimonies are then stored in a place of significance. The first results of this healing process are very promising. In addition, and with a similar impact, TPO and Cambodian Defenders Project (CDP), both CPS partners, organized hearings for women survivors of gender-based violence during conflict.

TPO is also able to encourage those who testify at the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. To support the survivors' mental strength, a psychological counselor sits nearby to offer reassurance and guidance in times of need.

Ownership leads to peace

For decades, external factors and authoritarian politics have inhibited the way Cambodians have dealt with memories of their suffering. Finally, 'bottom-up' means for authentic remembrance have been developed.

Youth for Peace, a CPS partner, has developed workshops called "Understand, Remember, Change." In these workshops, communities living near former mass killing sites establish "memory committees." The memory committee interviews survivors and perpetrators from their villages who have been silent for decades. The interview content creates a wealth of information that will serve as the basis for museums and peace libraries.

Participating survivors experience validation from sharing their stories after so much time, and they get recognition for their suffering. The message: the Cambodian people do not have to wait for others to validate their suffering and pay for the honor of their loved ones. The best results are achieved under their own leadership.

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