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## Director's Message!

*By Dr Chhim Sotheara, Executive Director*

Dear friends of TPO,

**June** is the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, we joins with UN to realize this day every year!

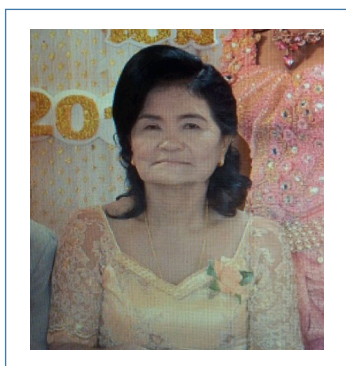
TPO Cambodia is committed to offer psychological and psychiatric treatment to Khmer Rouge torture survivors. As a member of the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT, [www.irct.org/26june](http://www.irct.org/26june)) the organization has been promoting 'the Right to Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture in Khmer Rouge Regime'.

In this month newsletter we feature a story of torture victim who has benefited from TPO's Testimonial Therapy, as well as updated activities, a new project and events from April to June with a recap of recent press coverage about TPO. Thank you for all of your support! We do hope you enjoy reading this newsletter.

## In Focus: Torture, Survival, and the Truth

*Sokhkin, a 59-year-old woman was the youngest of a poor but loving family with 10 children. After her mother fell ill, her father committed suicide when Sokhkin was still a child. Beginning in 1972, the Khmer Rouge (KR) began slowly killing various siblings of hers, until 1975 when the Khmer Rouge invaded her village, forcing the village to evacuate.*

In 1977, two unit Chiefs informed Sokhkin and six other female comrades told me that they would have a meeting the following day to be forcibly married. The next evening, a truck came to transport me and six other women [...]. Halfway, near a banana plantation, I decided to jump off the track. A generous old woman [saw me] and took me to her house. After she'd been looking after me for a month, everything was revealed [...]. The KR came to arrest me [...] and I was jailed for nearly a month. They interrogated me and forced me to marry. I made the commitment with comrade Kun who I had never met before. **I felt frightened and worthless.** There was no honor in it and there were no parents or elders there to be the witnesses.



*DAOT SOKHKIN, Khmer  
Rouge Torture Survivor*



*TPO staff introduced participants to TPO's work during field trip with GIZ staff in Kampot province*

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*In the trip, some GIZ staff expressed their appreciation regarding TPO possessing strong relationships with local authorities, civil parties and intervention program for the Muslims group*

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*Dr. Sotheara, TPO Executive Director and DFAT's delegates meet with children group during trip to Battambang*

The militiamen knew that I was not getting on well [with my husband]. I was arrested and sent to be [tortured] four times. They hit me with a whip and a stick, forced me to roll up my trousers and then ordered me to crawl on the levee of the rice field while they fired shots near me.

In 1978, I was arrested and jailed [...]. The KR shaved my head, but they left some hair on my head in the shape of a cross. **They mocked me like I was a toy.** I felt completely hopeless and that I had lost all chances of survival. In 1979, the Khmer Liberation Forces and Vietnamese Army arrived and killed the KR. They helped us remove shackles, and told us to run away from there.

One month later, my neighbor told me that she had seen my mother and that she could take me to meet her. We met my dear mother, my older brother, older sister-in-law and my niece whom I had been separated from for ages. In 1984, I married a man who was a former soldier. The wedding was held according to Khmer tradition [...]. We lived together very happily. In the future, I hope that I can live with children and grandchildren, and that my children can look after me when I get older. **My family's living conditions are fair and we can live happily.**

Sokhkin is now married, the mother of 3 children, and working as a farmer in the Kampong Speu province of Cambodia.

## Field Trip with GIZ Staff

On April 8<sup>th</sup>, TPO's Justice and Relief for the Survivors of Khmer Rouge project funded by GIZ (Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit) organized a field trip for around 65 GIZ staff in Cambodian Muslim community in Kampot province. On this occasion, youth and GIZ staff could hear what civil parties (CPs) experienced during Khmer Rouge regime and participated in TPO's intervention. They also had the opportunity to ask questions related to CPs' experiences, how they can benefit from TPO interventions and how TPO works in the Cambodian Muslim community. Afterward, TPO accompanied the GIZ staff to visit the salt field, where TPO conducts self-help group, as well as the pagoda where the therapeutic sessions with Cambodian Muslims in their community will be held. In the trip, some GIZ staff expressed their appreciation regarding TPO possessing strong relationships with local authorities, civil parties and intervention program for the Muslims group. Additionally, GIZ also sent an email appreciation about this project activities.

## DFAT Delegates Visit TPO Battambang

On May 11<sup>th</sup>, TPO Executive Director Dr. Sotheara Chhim accompanied delegation from Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to visit TPO project funded by DFAT on 'Improving Mental Health for Survivors of Gender-Based Violence, Sexual Assault' in Banan district in Battambang province. The delegations have visited self-help groups for female survivors of GBV, lead discussions with group members about how importance it is for them to be in the group, as well as what has changed for them, and what should they do after TPO withdraws from the province etc... the delegates also visited the chicken farm of the self-help group members, as well as the psychological support youth groups which has resulted in the improvement of their mental wellbeing.

## New Project Partnership with Victims Support Section of ECCC

In partnership with Victims Support Section (VSS) of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) <http://www.eccc.gov.kh> with funding support from United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) [www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org), TPO Cambodia has started project 'Promoting Gender Equality and Improving Access to Justice for Female and Survivors of Gender-Based Violence under Khmer Rouge Regime', phase II from January 2016 to December 2018.

This Project's goal is to reinforce and improve gender-sensitivity with relevant stakeholders and partners, raise awareness on GBV under the Khmer Rouge (KR) and its link to the current situation of violence against women and women's human rights, support and strengthen mental well-being to the survivors, support them to get effective participation in activities at the court & outside to ensure their stories are heard, and they are satisfied with their redress. Females and survivors of gender based violence under Khmer Rouge Regime, who are civil parties of the ECCC, and community members are the target group. Activities such as:

- Training to legal professionals and community resource persons on Mental Health First Aid, GBV under the KR, current GBV and psychosocial problem
- Conduct outreach to community members to spread information on GBV under the KR and what is going with the ECCC.
- Establish self help group for female and survivors of GBV such as forced marriages, rape, and other forms GBV under the KR.
- Conducts testimonial therapy (TT) with survivors of GBV under the KR and concludes individual therapeutic sessions with a public ceremony at a killing field and at a pagoda accompanied by TPO partners, students, and religious authorities.
- Provides on-site support to civil parties at the ECCC.
- Provide individual counseling to female civil parties and survivors of GBV under the KR and hotline counseling to continue follow up with intake clients twice a month after the intervention.
- Provide psychiatric treatment at TPO's clinic to survivors who experienced GBV and has severe psychological distress.

## Video Launching event

On 23 May, TPO-Cambodia in collaboration with United States Agency for International Development (USAID) [www.usaid.gov/cambodia](http://www.usaid.gov/cambodia) organized a launching event for a brief documentary video of the 'Former Khmer Rouge (KR) and Victim-Survivor (VS) for Healing and Reconciliation Program', at the Meta House, in Phnom Penh.

The objective of the launching event was to promote grassroots efforts of KR survivors in building better peace and reconciliation by sharing their success story at the national and international levels. These extraordinary efforts have helped Cambodian people cope with trauma and learn how to live peacefully together in the same communities, whether a former Khmer Rouge member or a survivor of the regime.



*TPO's counselor conducted need assessment with community resource people*

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*TPO Cambodia has started project 'Promoting Gender Equality and Improving Access to Justice for Female and Survivors of Gender-Based Violence under Khmer Rouge Regime', phase II from January 2016 to December 2018*

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*Photo extract from Documentary Video 'Former Khmer Rouge (KR) and Victim-Survivor (VS) for Healing and Reconciliation*

60 participants who were representatives from the US Embassy, USAID, and Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, and other national and international organizations/institutions attended this event.

The video highlighted a first pair of the two Khmer Rouge members meeting with their direct victim in Battambang province to reconcile with one another after they had not seen each other for more than 35 years since the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime. The video is available on TPO's website <http://tpocambodia.org/videos-8-2/>

The video is produced in the former KR and Victim-Survivor dialogue program is implemented under the Truth, Reconciliation, and Healing project funded by USAID.



*TPO's counselor read a testimony of a survivor in the process of ceremony with Cham*

## Testimonial Ceremony with CHAM

TPO's project 'Justice and Relief for the Survivors of Khmer Rouge' is focusing in 2016 on survivors of the ethnic Cham. From May 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup>, it organized testimonial therapy with 5 Cham survivors in Pram village, Svay Khlaing commune, Krouch Chhma district, Tbong Khmum province. Each of the survivors obtained 5 individual sessions with a therapist in which they disclosed the events that led to their suffering. During this very emotional process, they are also deciding, what they want to make known to their families and their community. On the last day of therapy, they participate in a public ceremony at the village mosque where the account of their suffering is read in front of an invited audience.

About 60 people joined the public ceremony, consisting of family & community members, youth, authorities as well as 2 international visitors listened to the testimonies and acknowledged the survivors. The testimonial ceremony was concluded with a guided exhibition on the repressive methods under the Khmer Rouge and how they affected physical and mental health.

## Training to Tuol Sleng Museum staff

On June 22<sup>nd</sup>, TPO conducted a training to Tuol Sleng Museum staff about 'Mobilizing Resources in Stressful Environment'. During the training, TPO trainers provided education and resources on the topic of stress, resource identification, stress management and how to work with distressed tourists. Guided relaxation exercises and facilitated discussions were also presented to the participants.

The participants were also invited to do group work in order to increase their understanding about the topics.

After the training, the participants were asked to give feedback to TPO staff regarding any knowledge they gained during the training about different forms of stress, understanding of their own resources/coping skill styles, and how to use these skills when dealing with distressed individuals visiting the Tuol Sleng Museum. Participants were also informed that there would be a follow up workshop offered in the coming months focusing on more intensive stress management in the work place.



*Relaxation exercises in the process of Training on Mobilizing Resource in Stressful Environment*



## UN day in support of victims of torture



*TPO staff and Torture survivors free birds on TPO rooftop as a symbolic act for Torture survivors*

In 2016, TPO Cambodia highlighted the 26<sup>th</sup> June as International Day in Support of Victims of Torture by joining to spread the camping message from partners, as well as organizing an event on June 23<sup>rd</sup> in honor of torture survivors of the Khmer Rouge Regime.

The Khmer Rouge survivors, guests and TPO staff gathered at TPO headquarter to talk about the right to compensation & rehabilitation for the victims of torture as this right was also established in Cambodia.

The event began with a guided meditation by one of TPO's counselors. Next, Dr. Sothara MUNY, one of TPO's technical advisors, reminded the audience about the importance of this day, and the development of rehabilitation rights for victims of torture. In the presence of TPO staff the 2 survivors finally freed a dozen of caged birds on the TPO rooftop in a symbolic act. Afterward, Mr. Ith Udom, shared some of his torturous experiences and expressed how meaningful this event is for him and other survivors. The event was concluded with closing remarks of Dr MUNY, as well as a grounding exercise for all participants. TPO Cambodia disseminated information about the event with some photos via TPO's Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/tpocambodia/> which is followed by nearly 4000 people.

## Press & Media Highlights

**Japanese TV NHK** broadcast TPO's project on 'Truth, Healing and Reconciliation-Toward a Shared Future'.

<http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/newsroomtokyo/.../20160627.html>

In the **Channel News Asia** report, **Dr Sotheara Chhim**, TPO executive director, stated that 'mentally ill patients at state-run facilities often receive bio-medical treatment rather than psychological or psychosocial treatment...' This means the government services mainly lack counseling, psycho-education and community-based intervention that addresses the issue through a holistic approach'. Check out this link: <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/cambodia-s-health-care/2811180.html>

**Blue Media** reported (in Khmer) about TPO video launching event on Former Khmer Rouge (KR) and Victim-Survivor (VS) for Healing and Reconciliation Program' funded by USAID on May 23 2016 at Meta House.

<http://tpocambodia.org/videos-8/>

On **CNC** (Cambodia News Channel, in Khmer) May 8<sup>th</sup>, **Mr. Seang Leap**, TPO project coordinator (psychologist/counselor) talked about 'Understanding on problem in addiction'.

TPO in collaboration with the **Woman Media Center** (WMC FM 102 MHz) with funding support from GIZ has continued monthly Radio program called 'Past in the Present'. On May 6<sup>th</sup>, **Dr. Muny Sothara**, TPO technical advisor talked about 'Mental Health in Khmer Rouge times'. Listeners can listen via **FM 102 Mhz Phnom Penh**, **FM 104.25 MHz Kampong Thom** and **FM 92.25 MHz Svay Rieng**.

**Ms. Kali Mason** ran marathon to raise fund for TPO Cambodia to treat mentally ill patients who were chained by family members due to the lack of access to treatment. Check out at <https://www.gofundme.com/oicx9w>



*TPO staff showing message to support survivors of torture*