



TPO Cambodia Newsletter

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Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO), TPO Building, #2-4 Okhna Vaing Road (St 1952), Sang Kat Phnom Penh Thmey, Khan Sen Sok, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, (855-23) 63 66 991-2-3
admin@tpocambodia.org
www.tpocambodia.org
www.facebook.com/tpocambodia

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Best Wishes Pchum Ben!

By Dr. Chhim Sotheara, Executive Director

Dear Friends of TPO,

This month, Cambodia is observing a special Buddhist ceremony called 'Pchum Ben', in which 2nd October is the last day of the ceremony. Many Buddhists return to their hometown to meet parents, relatives as well as to visit pagoda to offer food to the monk during the ceremony period. TPO staff have organized a visit to a pagoda in the neighborhood of TPO to celebrate this ceremony and to dedicate food and other stuff to monks in order to past on to our deceased relatives.

In this newsletter, we present to you a few current highlights, including: a new project we were awarded by USAID, mental health first aid training, self-help group activities, a recent video launching event, as well as a list of TPO press and media coverage from July through September.

Thank you for all of your support! We do hope you enjoy reading this newsletter. I wish you and your family all the best!

In Focus: Mental Health First Aid

Mental health first aid (MHFA) is provided to individuals who are in a mental health crisis or who have recently experienced trauma. MHFA helps the individual stabilize psychologically until longer term professional treatment is provided later if necessary.

The MHFA program was founded by Australian couple Betty Kitchener and Professor Tony Jorm in 2000. Since this time, MHFA training has spread to every state and territory in Australia and has been adapted in many other countries through MHFA International (<http://www.mhfa.com.au>).

In 2009, TPO Cambodia joined MHFA International and modified the MHFA treatment protocol to be more effective within the Cambodian culture. In 2012, TPO invited Dr. Angelina Chan, a psychiatrist and trainer from Mental Health First Aid Singapore (<http://www.mhfa.sg/>), to provide 'training for trainers' who will teach MHFA to others in the Cambodian health and social services sectors. After her visit and expert guidance, TPO developed a new training course on MHFA, an instructional video, and a manual in Khmer, which provides guidelines for practicing MHFA.



Logo MHFA-Cambodia
Designed by TPO

MHFA training is suitable for a wide range of participants, including health care professionals, teachers, social workers, field workers, police and security personnel, supervisors, human resource personnel, and even members of the public

These tools also serve to raise awareness in Cambodia about psychological crises.

MHFA courses can provide knowledge and skills:

- Recognizing the signs and symptoms of mental health problems
- Knowledge of the possible causes and risk factors for these mental health problems
- Provide appropriate urgent support for individuals experiencing a mental health problem or crisis
- Know what action to take if the crisis involves suicidal behavior or thoughts, a current panic attack, a traumatic stress reaction, a drug overdose, or threatening psychotic behavior.
- Know which evidence-based medical, psychological, and alternative treatments are available and effective.

MHFA training is suitable for a wide range of participants, including health care professionals, teachers, social workers, field workers, police and security personnel, supervisors, human resource personnel, and even members of the public. For more info, contact the TPO Training Center on training@tpocambodia.org.

New Project Funded by USAID

In August 2016, the U.S. government, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) announced a three-year award (<https://kh.usembassy.gov/usaaid-announces-project-promote-healing-reconciliation-victims-torture-khmer-rouge/>) for TPO to implement a new project called 'Healing and Reconciliation for Victims of Torture of Khmer Rouge Trauma'. This work will be carried out in collaboration with the Kdei Karuna Organization (KdK) (<http://www.kdei-karuna.org/>) and The Center for Victims of Torture (<http://www.cvt.org/>).

This project aims to improve the mental well-being of torture victims and affect positive cultural change regarding the effects of torture through the following activities:

- Community needs assessment and capacity building for local facilitators
- Psychoeducation for community members to increase their knowledge and awareness of trauma and other related mental health conditions
- Self-help groups to provide victims of torture a safe place where they can meet, find understanding, and express their feelings
- Testimonial Therapy for victims of torture to foster their psychological healing and improve their social functioning
- Exploratory history education to teach the process of reconciliation and peace building
- Truth-telling and community-based dialogues help raise public awareness and knowledge, and reduce mental health bias.
- Outpatient and telephone counseling
- Psychological support to civil party members at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC)
- Ongoing clinical training and supervision to TPO therapists
- Document and disseminate the testimonies from the victims of torture



Community dialogue activity

The targeted groups are individuals who were tortured during the Khmer Rouge (KR) regime and are still struggling with trauma symptoms,

civil parties at the ECCC, victims of KR gender-based violence (GBV), local facilitators, family and community members who may have been affected by torture during the KR regime, and children of victims of torture. This project will be implemented in 15 communities in 15 provinces, including: Kratie, Svay Rieng, Tbong Khmom, Kampong Chhnang, Siem Reap, Pursat, Kandal, Kampong Thom, Kampong Cham, Battambang, Kampot, Takeo, Prey Veng, Mondulkiri and Kep.

Self Help Group activity

This past August, TPO continued to provide interventions for survivors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Svay Antor and Me Sang in Prey Veng Province, under the project *Promoting Gender Equity and Improving Access to Justice for Female Survivors and Victims of GBV under the KR*. The two ongoing self-help groups are being attended by 16 women and have completed five of the eight total sessions. One new all-female group was started in Me Sang. Self-help groups can benefit survivors by providing a safe and supportive environment for them to share their traumatic experiences with others survivors who can understand them well. Most women survivors don't talk about these events with their families because of the stigma and their reluctance to burden others with their suffering. But among participants with similar experiences, the participants can speak freely about the violence they endured and its impact on their daily lives. They also receive emotional support and guidance from the counselors.

Video Launching event

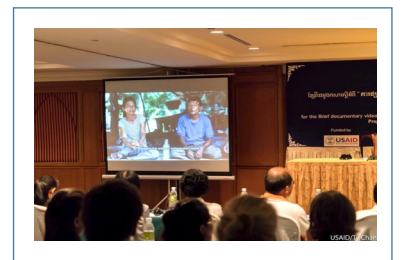
On 16 September, TPO Cambodia—in collaboration with USAID (<https://www.usaid.gov/cambodia>) held a launching event for the documentary video *Former Khmer Rouge and Victim-Survivor Dialogues for Healing and Reconciliation, Part Two*. This video was produced by TPO as part of the *Truth, Reconciliation and Healing* program. It was the second in a series of videos featuring former Khmer Rouge members and their respective victim-survivors. The new film follows two families, once friends before but torn apart by the wars, as they attempt to reconcile the events of their past. Filming the conversations with the families took place over the course of a year. The video documents the reconciliation process using actual video dialogue exchanges, the face-to-face dialogues, and the final community based-religious ceremony.

At the event, posters with photographs and brief narratives from other former Khmer Rouge members and victim-survivors who have received therapy from TPO revealed their personal journey of healing from their traumas. The event started with welcoming and opening remarks by TPO Executive Director, Dr. Chhim Sotheara, and USAID's Mission Director, Ms. Polly Dunford. A panel discussion comprised of representatives from the Victim Support Session of the ECCC, TPO staff, and representatives from the Youth for Peace organization discussed the process of healing from trauma through various mechanisms, including legal, education, and psychology. Around 90 participants, including representatives from the US Embassy, USAID, the ECCC, and other national and international organizations and institutions, attended the event.



Self Help Group activity for GBV survivors in Prey Veng Province

Self-help groups can benefit survivors by providing a safe and supportive environment for them to share their traumatic experiences with others survivors who can understand them well



Video Launching event on 16 September at Sunway Hotel

Press & Media Highlights

On **German DW News**, **Dr Sotheara Chhim**, TPO's Executive Director talked about 'the lack of resources in mental health cripple the care for mentally ill patients in Cambodia'. <http://www.dw.com/en/scant-resources-cripple-care-for-cambodias-mentally-ill/a-19530990>

Seeing is Believing mentioned that this year they had the honor of screening and fitting staff at TPO Cambodia with prescription eyeglasses. <https://www.facebook.com/seeingisbelieving.npo/?fref=ts>

A campaign to raise funding for mental health services for prisoners by our donor **Mark Moser** on **Indiegogo**. <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/mental-health-services-for-prisoners#/>

TPO appeals for more Australian funding for domestic violence program by **Mojo Correspondent**. <http://mojocorrespondent.com/camodian-ngo-appeals-for-more-australian-funding-for-its-domestic-violence-program/>

Dr Sotheara Chhim, TPO's Executive Director and **H.E. Angela Corcoran**, Australian Ambassador to Cambodia talked about 'the Australian Aid to promote mental health for women survivors of GBV' in Battambang on Radio **FM 92.70** (Battambang), **FM 99.70** (Kampot) **FM 103** (Siem Reap) and **FM 92.50** (Kampong Cham).

TPO was mentioned in a story by **Friend International** 'So, we referred Sreynunon to our partner TPO, they are a really good organization, one of very few working in the field of mental health in Cambodia' <http://friends-international.org/blog/index.php/chom-chao-stories-2-sreynunon/>

Article about 'TPO's Operation Unchain Project' composed by **a journalist student of School of Media, Film and Journalism, Monash University** in Australia. <http://mojocorrespondent.com/operation-unchain-cambodian-ngo-frees-mental-health-patients-from-captivity/>

TPO received a new award from **USAID** for a new project 'Healing and Reconciliation for Victims of Torture of Khmer Rouge Trauma' was in the press, **USAID's website**, **Cambodia Daily**, **KhmerTime**, **VOD** and **VAYOFM**: <https://kh.usembassy.gov/usa-id-announces-project-promote-healing-reconciliation-victims-torture-khmer-rouge/>
<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/archives/project-expands-treatment-for-kr-victims-116973/>
<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/28646/kr-victims-need-healing/>
<http://vodhotnews.com/16/08/2016/us-still-improve-the-treatment-of-the-victim-from-khmer-rouge/>
<http://vayofm.com/news/detail/71335-929053045.html>

Mr. Lemhour, TPO's counselor at the **Khmer Rough Tribunal**, provided psychological support to Mr. Yun Bin (next photo) who was testified about his suffering from torture during Khmer Rough time <https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/at-tribunal-farmer-tells-of-escape-from-well-of-corpses-116738/>

TPO partner and supporter **Center for Victims of Torture**, has published article to raise fund for a operation unchain project to help mentally ill patients who were locked or chained in rural communities of Cambodia. <http://www.cvt.org/PATHCambodia>

Story about TPO's work 'focusing on healing for Khmer Rouge survivors' by **law students from Monash University**. <http://mojocorrespondent.com/khmer-rouge-nightmares-continue-for-survivors/>

Dr. Chhim Sotheara, TPO's executive director commented in **The Cambodia Daily** related planned center for mentally ill. <https://www.cambodiadaily.com/archives/planned-center-for-mentally-ill-faces-low-supply-of-experts-115420/>



Dr Sotheara Chhim, TPO's Executive Director and H.E. Angela Corcoran, Australian Ambassador in Radio Studio, Battambang province



Mr. Lemhour, TPO's counselor providing psychological support to KR victim at the ECCC



TPO Staff celebrated Pchum Ben ceremony at a pagoda in Phnom Penh (Wat Chum) on 23 September