



Annual Report 2013

Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Cambodia



TPO VISION

Cambodian people live with good mental health and achieve a satisfactory quality of life.

TPO MISSION

To improve the well-being of Cambodian people with psychosocial and mental health problems, thereby increasing their ability to function effectively within their work, family and communities.

TPO VALUES

TPO people are
professional,
committed,
and always **strive for quality.**

They are **keen to learn**
and real **team players.**

They are **trustworthy**
and **honest** people
who always demonstrate
respect and **empathy**
and **value each individual's opinion.**

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Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friends of TPO,

TPO Cambodia is pleased to present its annual report, which reflects our 2013 activities and achievements.

Time flies and very soon, by the end of 2015, the member countries of the United Nations will assess whether their commitments have helped them reach the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals. Cambodia has committed to fight against domestic violence and provide counseling by mental health professionals to survivors of domestic violence, but it is doubtful whether this goal will be reached by the end of 2015.



Despite the progress made in dealing with domestic violence and its fallout, there is still little prospect of sufficient funding for mental health services in Cambodia, both from international donors as well as the Cambodian government. International donors have shifted their focus from Cambodia to other parts of the world where they have prioritized their assistance. There is no funding support from the government of Cambodia for mental health, which makes for a huge imbalance between demand for and supply of mental health services in this country.

TPO Cambodia heavily depends on the support of foreign donors. Thanks to them we have managed to fulfil the need for mental health care for some of those who need it most. We work hard on raising public awareness of mental health and psychosocial issues, train key community resource people, and provide individual and group counseling for survivors of gender-based violence, to name but a few of our initiatives. This way, TPO Cambodia contributes considerably to the Cambodian government's effort to reach this millennium development goal by the year 2015. This achievement comes from a concerted effort from TPO staff at all levels who are tirelessly providing psychosocial and mental health care to disadvantaged people in the most rural areas. Our international donors have been so kind to provide the funding and support to enable us to do this important work.

We strongly believe that our work makes a difference to people with mental health problems and their families, enabling them to function more effectively within their work, families and communities. We believe in our cause and hope that our donors, supporters and beneficiaries continue to do so too.

On behalf of TPO Cambodia, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to our international donors and the taxpayers from their respective countries for their kind contributions in supporting mental health work in Cambodia. Thanks to their support, we have been able to make a difference for many people with mental health issues in Cambodia throughout 2013.

Sincerely Yours,

Dr Sotheara Chhim, Executive Director TPO Cambodia, May 2014

IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH FOR SURVIVORS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

This four-year project (2012–2016), which aims to contribute to the promotion of gender equality and improve access to psychosocial services for survivors of gender-based violence and sexual assault, is funded by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), formerly known as AusAID. In 2013, after having conducted the project orientation workshop with local authorities, NGO staff, government staff and other stakeholders in an earlier phase, TPO has been working towards the project's goals by initiatives at three levels.

At the **community level**, TPO counselors have sourced and subsequently trained 35 community resource people in the identification of people with psychosocial problems and the provision of support to them. They all have improved their understanding of mental health and 31 of them have progressed to supporting 61 clients by managing and referring them to TPO counsellors for individual counseling and participation in self-help groups. TPO counselors have provided mental health education through 9 psycho-education sessions in which a total of 625 community members participated (472 women and 153 men). In addition, TPO counselors and local stakeholders have worked together on setting up a functional network for supporting survivors of gender-based violence in the community.

At the **family level**, TPO counselors and the community resource people have set up and facilitated 7 new self-help groups for both men and women dealing with issues such as alcoholism and domestic violence. The 7 groups total 71 members (of which 43 are women).



Above: Grassroots psycho-education by TPO counselors in a rural community.

TPO has also provided confidence-building counseling and clinical treatment to **individuals**. The 71 members of the new self-help groups benefitted from this. Also, 16 others, who had been identified as having psychosocial/psychological problems, received individual counseling from TPO. Ten of these cases have been closed while 5 clients are continuing to receive counseling. One client has passed away.

All participants of the self-help groups as well as those who received individual counseling showed a significant improvement of their mental health. They have also reported the reduction of incidents of domestic violence in their families.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR WOMEN

Throughout 2013, TPO has contributed to increasing access to justice for female survivors of gender-based violence through comprehensive community mental health services and referrals to legal, medical and other rights-based support services. The two-year **Access to Justice for Women** project (2012–2013) is funded by GIZ (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit*; German Society for International Cooperation) operating on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) has been co-funding this project, which has also received the support from Cambodia's Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA). Thanks to GIZ this project continues in 2014.

TPO has been targeting women in the Angkor Chum district of Siem Reap province and the Stong district of Kampong Thom province. The strategy has been to train community resource people, provide psychosocial support, raise awareness about gender-based violence and mental health, establish self-help groups, provide individual counseling and inform people about and refer them to medical, social and legal services available. Here is a snapshot of the work done in 2013 and the positive outcomes:

- **further strengthened the capacity of community resource people trained in 2012:** in 2013 they have enhanced their understanding of mental health and psychosocial support, and gained a better understanding of TPO's strategy.
- **366 clients** were managed and referred to (mainly) TPO by these community resource people in 2013: 48.5% of the clients received individual psycho-education from the trained community resource people, 20% were helped through TPO self-help groups, 17.5% received individual counseling from TPO, and 14% received various other types of treatment, with positive effects on their well-being.
- **14 new self-help groups** were established by TPO counselors and community resource people, with a total number of 106 participants: 94 are female survivors of gender-based violence, 12 are men with a drinking problem. All self-help group participants showed a significant improvement in the state of their mental health. They have also reported the reduction of incidents of domestic violence in their families.
- TPO organized a visit to a saving group for 41 members of the self-help groups. As a result, **11 new saving groups** were established.
- 23 clients were **referred** by TPO counselors **to medical, legal or financial services** from other NGOs. All clients were satisfied with the services from TPO and the other NGOs. They have expressed feeling much more confident now accessing other services with support of TPO.



Above: Rural men meet as a self-help group to support each other and find healthy and sustainable solutions for the problems they experience.

WOMEN IN TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE PROJECT

Promoting gender equality and improving access to justice for female survivors and victims of gender-based violence under the Khmer Rouge regime has again very much been a focus of TPO in 2013. The **Women in Transitional Justice** project is funded by the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women for a 3-year period (2012–2014). To achieve the project's goals, TPO has been working together with the Cambodia Defenders Project (CDP), the Victims Support Section (VSS) and the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC).



Above: Members of a TPO self-help group with their family tree drawn during Art Therapy.

Much of our resources went into **establishing self-help groups** for survivors of gender-based violence and rape under the Khmer Rouge. In 2013, after conducting a community needs assessment in close cooperation with local authorities, we've established 4 community-based self-help groups with 40 female survivors of gender-based violence in total. TPO's self-help groups are based on the principles of empowerment, mutual respect and sharing. Talking openly, sharing stories and expressing feelings with each other, participants were able to support each other, to better understand their painful past and to deal with the social and psychological effects of their traumatic experiences. Participants in these groups have increased their ability to process their past and heal psychologically. TPO has also developed a self-help group manual specifically designed for gender-based violence and its effects.



Another priority in 2013 has been **trauma treatment** for survivors of gender-based violence. We conducted in-depth psychological assessments of 20 female survivors of gender-based violence under the Khmer Rouge and established that 15 of them were suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress. They were invited to participate in Testimonial Therapy, a short-term, culturally sensitive trauma treatment approach. Before implementing the therapy, TPO developed a treatment protocol. Survivors who participated in Testimonial Therapy significantly reduced their Post-Traumatic Stress symptoms. Buddhist rituals and practices helped them restore their dignity and find justice for themselves and their loved ones.

Left: Testimonial Ceremony at the Choeung Ek 'Killing Field' Memorial with survivors of gender-based violence under the Khmer Rouge regime.

To **raise awareness about gender-based violence under the Khmer Rouge** and its consequences for victims as well as its implications for today's society, we conducted 5 community forums using 'Forum Theatre' as a method to initiate dialogue. The audience consisted of 60 to 70 villagers, aged between 20 and 70, per theatre play. These public dialogues enabled community members to increase their knowledge about gender-based violence, both under the Khmer Rouge and today, by generating discussion about different types of gender-based violence, the impact on victims, preventive mechanisms at the community level, and types of assistance for victims.



Right: TPO staff in a Forum Theatre scene in which a female survivor of gender-based violence is stigmatized by the community. The public is invited to join the acting and come up with solutions for the situation.

In conclusion, the activities conducted under this project have significantly contributed to improving the mental well-being of female survivors of gender-based violence. ECCC Civil Parties increased their knowledge of gender-based violence under the Khmer Rouge and of women's rights today. Services and activities reduced the psychological suffering of victims and strengthened awareness about gender-based violence among survivors and the general population. It also strengthened local support schemes for survivors.

EXPERT WITNESS TESTIMONY AT THE ECCC

In 2013, Dr. CHHIM Sotheara, TPO Cambodia's Executive Director, testified as an expert witness on the psychological impact of the various traumatic experiences described by Khmer Rouge survivors he has observed in his work as a clinical psychiatrist and academic researcher.

During his testimony, he answered questions on the psychological impact of issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder, survivor guilt, political and religious-based violence, and geographical dislocation.

Right: Dr. CHHIM Sotheara takes the witness stand at the ECCC. Photo courtesy of the ECCC.



JUSTICE AND RELIEF FOR SURVIVORS OF THE KHMER ROUGE

In 2013, TPO continued to bring **Justice and Relief for Survivors of the Khmer Rouge** by supporting witnesses and civil parties participating in the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), also known as the 'Khmer Rouge Tribunal'. This project, which also aims to raise awareness of trauma, torture and mental health issues with the wider population, is funded by GIZ (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit*; German Society for International Cooperation), Swiss Foundation, UNVFVT (United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture) and the Australian Embassy (via the Direct Aid Program of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade). Working in close cooperation with the Witness and Expert Support Unit (WESU) and the Victims Support Section (VSS) of the ECCC, TPO again provided a variety of psychological services in 2013:

- 472 Case 002 Civil Parties and 32 Witnesses received **on-site psychological support** before, during and after the trial. This consisted of reducing participants' anxiety through psychological briefing prior to the proceedings, monitoring their emotional state, providing psychological support during the trial, and debriefings afterwards.
- 230 Civil Parties received additional psychological support and counseling through TPO's well-established **telephone counseling**, amounting to 433 counseling sessions.
- 24 of these 230 clients also received additional specialized tertiary mental health **services at TPO's Treatment Center** in Phnom Penh through a total of 93 psychiatric consultations. **Testimonial Therapy** was provided to some.
- 15 live **radio shows** were broadcast alongside 90 re-broadcasts informing the Cambodian public about mental health issues as a consequence of the Khmer Rouge regime, as well as the proceedings at the ECCC.
- About 350 Khmer Rouge survivors, teachers and students participated in the **outreach and study tour** organized by TPO in collaboration with partners Youth for Peace (YFP) and Youth Resource Development Program (YRDP) in 2013.

In Testimonial Therapy as applied by TPO, Khmer Rouge survivors are invited to talk about their traumatic experiences. With a counselor they restore their painful memories and convert them into a written testimony, which, in turn, is read aloud and delivered to the survivors by monks from a local pagoda in a Buddhist ceremony. This ceremony takes place in presence of other survivors, relatives, community members, local authorities, government officials, NGO representatives, youth and others. This helps the public acknowledgement of suffering, the de-stigmatization of survivors and restores their dignity. It also allows the survivors to ease the suffering of the spirits of ancestors and pay respect to deceased relatives.

Khmer Rouge survivors, feeling emotionally supported by TPO, have increased their participation in the ECCC proceedings. They have actively engaged in the TPO activities and have felt confident disclosing their past experiences to TPO's counselors and psychologists and to other survivors. They have increased their knowledge about mental health and are now equipped to deal with their emotions in more effective and healthy ways. The Witnesses/Experts Support Unit and the Victims Support Section of the ECCC as well as Khmer Rouge survivors themselves have consistently provided positive feedback about TPO's psychological support service at the ECCC.

PREVENT TORTURE AND IMPROVE PRISON CONDITIONS IN CAMBODIA

In 2013, and in partnership with LICADHO (Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights), our efforts to **Prevent Torture and Improve Prison Conditions in Cambodia** continued unabatedly thanks to funding by the European Union's EIDHR (European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights). This project, approved by the General Department of Prisons in Cambodia, aims to improve the conditions for inmates in Cambodia's prisons, particularly for survivors of torture, and ensure their rights are respected. It supports prisoners, both male and female, in four of Cambodia's 26 prisons with legal, medical and mental health services. The prisons we are currently working with during this 2012–2013 project are Correctional Center 1, Correctional Center 2, Kandal Provincial Prison and Kampong Chhnang Prison. In 2013 TPO has delivered these services:

- 94 inmates (71 men, 23 women) – 2 of whom experienced torture in police custody – received **psychiatric treatment and counseling** from TPO. This amounted to a total of 780 sessions in the 4 target prisons.
- 77 inmates participated in the **life skills training program** which helps them develop their personal awareness, interpersonal relationships and plan their future.
- 48 inmates participated in **self-help groups**.
- In addition to the 4 target prisons, we also supported inmates in 3 other prisons: 18 inmates in Battambang prison and 7 inmates in Banteay Meanchey prison received **clinical mental health assessments** while 4 inmates in Kampot prison received **crisis intervention**.



Above: Prisoners learn to support each other with the help of TPO's counselors.

The outcomes of these interventions have been positive for the inmates we have worked with. They have increased their self-awareness and ability to self-reflect. Their ability to use positive coping mechanisms and make better plans for the future has also grown. Destructive behaviors have decreased. Prison guards have reported finding the services from TPO very helpful and say that, as a result, it is now easier for them to manage the inmates. Prison medical staff have commented that some patients, after the TPO interventions, have shown more respect to their parents and relatives. Most importantly, the prisoners themselves have stated that with TPO's support, they have managed to improve their situation and feel better adapted to their circumstances. Some quotes from the inmates about the TPO prison program:

"If I would not have had treatment from TPO, I would still be a mentally ill person. I did not even know why I ended up in jail. The mental health treatment made me a normal person again. I can improve my life by learning to read and write with the help of the prison staff. I have never attended school before."

"Joining the group improves my thinking and I practice meditation, which helps me sleep better. Before I never used [these techniques] and I could not control myself when I got angry with someone."

"I realize now that there are many chances for us to change ourselves. We need to take those opportunities."

"Because of such strong feelings of anger, I killed my husband. I have been condemned as a cruel woman, but in fact nobody understood my feelings. I feel so happy to have joined this group and receive such support and understanding."

"Before, I spent so much money using drugs. I feel so much regret that I had nobody to educate me and help me to stop taking drugs. Now I've committed to stop taking drugs and after release I will never allow myself to fall into taking drugs again."

"Since learning in this group, we are better aware of our feelings and have learnt how to talk respectfully to others, even to the new prisoners in the cells. We have learnt that, by showing respect to others, we get respect back."

"I was feeling so upset with my family who had not come to visit me at the prison that I almost became aggressive. But since joining the self-help group, I can control myself better."

"Since participating in this group we feel better and love each other in the group and especially in the cells. Previously, we often had arguments because we had never had any supporters like this to educate us. We are really thankful for this opportunity."

"I feel different now. Before, I never cared about the feelings of anyone else. I only cared about myself. But now I have changed and I care about other people's feelings as their feelings are also important."



Above: Inmates engaged in TPO's Art Therapy as a way of exploring their inner self and expressing their feelings and thoughts with others.

Much of TPO's efforts in 2013 were also aimed at **building the capacity** of the prisons' health staff and partner NGOs by furthering their knowledge about mental health and enabling them to identify prisoners with psychological problems and refer them to the appropriate services. We developed manuals for conducting the life-skills training program and for facilitating self-help group therapy for women. Ten medical staff in 4 prisons received on-the-job training with regards to mental health issues they encounter working with prisoners.

Finally, our project staff have engaged in meetings with government officials and partner NGOs, as well as in **advocacy events and awareness raising campaigns** about prison conditions and to promote mental health care in prisons. The project will continue in 2014–2016 with funding from Dynamic Share.

MENTAL HEALTH & PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTION: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH BETWEEN PSYCHIATRIC OUTPATIENT CLINICS & COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH WORK

The year 2013 saw the conclusion of TPO's project to provide **Support to Mental Health Systems in the provinces of Kampong Thom and Kampong Cham**, funded by the Belgian government through the Belgian university NGO Louvain Coopération (LD). This last project phase made part of the health program TPO and LD have been running together for six years (2008–2013) and covered 3 referral hospitals and 8 health centers in Kampong Thom province and since 2012, 1 referral hospital and 1 health center in Kampong Cham. In 2014, TPO and LD will further work together in Kampong Cham province.



Above: A TPO trainer delivers Mental Health First Aid training to members of a Village Health Support Group in Kampong Thom province.

The overall aim of this project is to improve the quality of mental health care and increase access of mentally ill people to the mental health clinics by establishing a good working relationship between mental health services at the hospital level and community mental health work at the grassroots level. Achievements during 2013 include the following:

- **452 people received mental health services** through the 5 outpatient departments (OPDs) of 3 health centers in Kampong Thom province and 1 referral hospital and 1 health center in Kampong Cham. The total number of clinical work sessions done by the outpatient department staff and social workers totals 1850 consultations, 733 counseling sessions, 779 psycho-education sessions and 488 home visits. Social workers delivered **569 coaching sessions** in counseling, psycho-education and home visits.
- We **supported 11 health staff** (5 delivering medical treatment and 6 non-medical treatment) in these 5 OPDs and **coached them** in counseling, psycho-education and home visits.
- We established a mental health service in a newly renovated room at the **Prasath Health Center** in Kampong Thom province and trained staff in basic counseling.
- TPO trainers delivered **Mental Health First Aid training to 2 Village Health Support Groups** (VHSGs) totaling 50 participants in Kampong Thom province and **a refresher course** to 1 VHSG with 21 participants in Kampong Cham province.
- We developed **leaflets** for the public on Headache, Anti-depressants, Sleeping Problems and Anger Management.
- TPO organized and hosted a **Continued Medical Education workshop** on “Mood Disorders and Understanding Psychiatric Conditions in the Elderly” at TPO's Phnom Penh office in December. A group of 43 psychiatrists from hospitals in Phnom Penh and the

provinces, as well as TPO staff, participated in the workshop to learn from international experts.

Dr Angelina Chan, Senior Consultant Psychiatrist (Singapore), updated the attendants on the latest in the “Management of Mood Disorders” while Dr Ng Li-Ling, Senior Consultant Psychiatrist (Singapore), elaborated on “Understanding Psychiatric Conditions in the Elderly”. Both linked their topics to the needs of the Cambodian Psychiatrists.

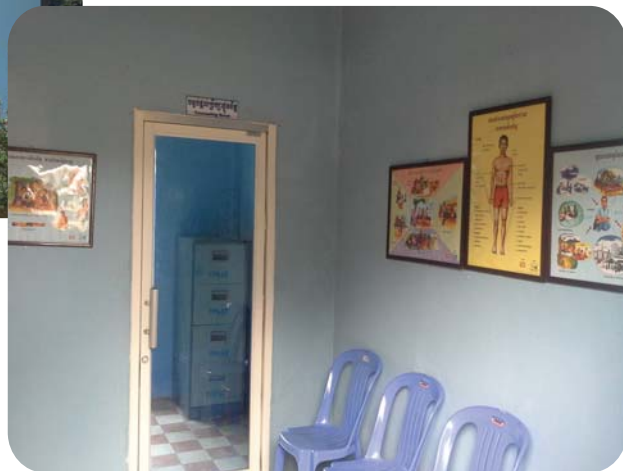
- We conducted **research** on the “Added value of a non-medical approach in the integrated mental health structures of Cambodia”. Research will continue into 2014.
- Organized a **reflection workshop** in Kampong Thom to review how the project is tracking.



Above: Dr. Angelina Chan on “The Management of Mood Disorders” at the Continued Medical Education workshop held at TPO’s office in Phnom Penh.



*Left & Below:
The Mental Health Service established by TPO
at the Prasath Health Center with funding
from Louvain Coopération.*



The story on the next page, provided by TPO Social Worker Bopha, illustrates both how the integrated approach envisaged works and what the positive, longer-term outcomes of the project can be for the beneficiaries.

– **NO LONGER ABANDONED** –

Sokun was found chained with one leg to the middle pillar of an old house. He looked pale, was thin, and had bad hygiene. He was aggressive and very unwelcoming to visitors. Communication with him was impossible. His thinking was impaired, he was delusional, talked to himself, had poor insight, loudly hallucinated, was irritable, and had blunted emotions. He displayed aggressive behavior and caused damage. He was very withdrawn.*

He had been sent to see a Kru Khmer (traditional Khmer healer), who had performed cultural rituals but this had not cured him. He was abandoned and chained because he was aggressive and violent and damaged other people's property. His family lacked the financial resources to deal with the situation.

Sokun's case came to the attention of a Village Support Health Group who informed and consulted a TPO social worker. The social worker referred Sokun to a health center for medical treatment and home visits by social workers were also organized.



Above: Sokun as he was chained to the house before treatment by TPO.*

Medication and multi-vitamins were prescribed. Sokun, his relatives and some other key people benefitted from a series of 10 home visits by a TPO social worker. Meetings were held with the village leader to seek resources for the care of the client, with Sokun's older sister, with his uncle, with his neighbors and with the Village Health Support Group. The VHSG and a TPO social worker met with Sokun's family members to support them psychologically.



Above: A much improved Sokun at the house after receiving mental health treatment and support from TPO.*

As a result of these interventions, Sokun's mental health has much improved. He is no longer chained and is now able to help out with work around the house. The villagers' attitude towards him has changed dramatically. They have stopped discriminating against him and are supporting him. Sokun is no longer abandoned. Sokun, the villagers and authorities alike have welcomed the project's interventions and value the help TPO and LD have brought.

** the name of the client has been changed to protect his privacy*