



# TPO Cambodia Newsletter

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## យើងយកចិត្តទុកដាក់ថែទាំសុខភាពច្បាប់របស់ជនរងគ្រោះដោយអំពើពុករលួយក្រុងកម្ពុជា ពីសម័យខ្មែរក្រហម

**We Care for Mental Health of Survivors of Torture under the Khmer Rouge Regime.**



**USAID**  
ជំនួយពីពលរដ្ឋអាមេរិក



*By Dr. Chhim Sotheara, Executive Director*

Dear Friends of TPO,  
 We marked and celebrated the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture with UN on this day every year! (We initiated a 26 June campaign to honor torture survivors of the Khmer Rouge Regime and their community members).  
 In this newsletter, we would like to share with you about “A story of a torture victim who involved in TPO’s Truth, Reconciliation & Healing project”, “TPO’s latest publication”, “TPO’s capacity building plan with the VBNK”, “IOM’s funding support to TPO Mental Health service”, “Testimonial Therapy with GBV survivors”, and “UN Day in Support of Survivors of Torture.” As well as TPO in the press in this 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter.  
 We do hope you enjoy reading this newsletter. Thank you!

## In Focus: Story-torture, survival & healing

My name is Voern. I was born in 1944 in Kampong Chhnang province. When I was seven years old, my parents sent me to study at the Sambor Meas Pagoda in Kampong Chhnang province. There, I studied Khmer literature, math, and the Dharma for four years.  
 In 1977, during the Khmer Rouge regime, a soldier came to me and commanded “Angkar is asking you to go with me!” I thought I would be killed. He pointed upward and ordered me to come with them to the Sambor Meas Pagoda. The first question they asked me was “Are you supporting Khmer Sor?” I denied it. They continually asked this question again and again, but I kept denying it. They started beating me on my back until I lost consciousness. I realized that my clothes were wet when I woke up and I felt intense pain all over my body. I was later sent to a detention center at the Sambor Meas Pagoda, which was a living hell for me and other prisoners. This is just one part of my true story. Before therapy, I found it hard to be reminded about the past.



*Mr. Voern, a torture survivor of Khmer Rouge regime*

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*Since I received treatment, I feel it is easier for me to speak about my past history and accept what happened to me. I am now able to forgive the Khmer Rouge perpetrators that tortured me.*

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It felt just like I was reliving those experiences again when I thought of them. I was in a state of constant fear and this led me to have nightmares. I kept telling myself not to think about or recall the story ever again, but this did not work. I met with TPO staff and received psychological treatment (Testimonial Therapy) in December of 2016.

I was reluctant to join their activities because I knew they would remind me of my painful past, however, I eventually decided to receive the treatment. On the final day of this treatment, with the support of my TPO counselor, I decided to tell my community members what happened to me and how I was tortured at this pagoda. After this event, more people learned about the history of this pagoda and that it was used as a detention center during the Khmer Rouge regime. After I broke my silence, people in the community honored me for sharing my past and they were interested to learn about the truth. Some people came to me to ask for more information about my history, and some even invited me to join community events with them. I feel that I have gained more respect from my community as a result of my participation in therapy.

Since I received treatment, I feel it is easier for me to speak about my past history and accept what happened to me. I am now able to forgive the Khmer Rouge perpetrators that tortured me. Recently, I decided to join TPO's group therapy with other survivors of torture. I feel even more support and relief than before. Whenever I go to meet my group members, I feel fresh and relaxed. So much so, I don't even want to go back home. I am thankful for USAID and TPO. Without their support, I never would have thought I could find any peace in my mind.

## Voices of Former KR Member-Survivors Book Available

The TPO produced book "Voices of Former Khmer Rouge Member-Survivors" in both Khmer and English is now available on TPO's website <http://tpocambodia.org/for-the-public-clients/>. It presents the stories of 10 former Khmer Rouge member-survivors from four provinces: Kampong Chhnang, Battambang, Pailin and Banteay Meanchey. It was created under the TPO 'Truth, Reconciliation, and Healing' project funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID). A hard copy can be sent on request via admin team [admin@tpocambodia.org](mailto:admin@tpocambodia.org).

## Capacity Building Plan with VBNK

From this year until 2019, TPO will be participating in the Cambodian Civil Society Strengthening (CCSS) project, which is supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by the East-West Management Institute, Inc. (EWMI). VBNK ([www.vbnk.org](http://www.vbnk.org)) is EWMI's implementing partner for the project component addressing capacity development, including organizational and advocacy capacity. VBNK has collaborated with TPO to build capacity for the organization. In this process, VBNK conducted an organizational needs assessment on 28 November 2016 and 23 December 2016 with TPO staff from relevant components related to organizational management, operation, governance, program/services and included those with advocacy experience. Additional consultations between VBNK and TPO have been held this year to prioritize TPO's capacity development needs, and to set goals and plan assistance.



*Book Cover-Voice of former KR member-survivors*



*TPO & VBNK meet to prioritize TPO's capacity development needs*

As a result, the areas of Human Resource Management, Financial Management and Strategic Planning were included in an action plan that became effective in mid-2017. Ultimately, these joint efforts will yield increased capacity and institutional effectiveness of TPO.

## IOM's funding support to TPO Mental Health service

TPO received funding supporting from the International Organization for Migration (IOM-<https://www.iom.int/countries/cambodia>) for 1 year (February 2017-2018). The purpose of IOM funding TPO is to improve the quality of their mental health services for those in need. TPO has been collaborating with the Royal University of Phnom Penh's Social Work Department on the related social care and psychological treatment service at TPO. These funds have enabled TPO to set up the database system for client management, staff allocation for social workers and psychologists, and medical expense management at TPO treatment center in Phnom Penh. For more information about TPO's mental health treatment service, please contact us at 023 63 66 991/016 222 597 or email: [clinic@tpocambodia.org](mailto:clinic@tpocambodia.org). Starting from July 1st, 2017, our working hours is from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. 7 days a week.



*Activity at the TPO treatment center reception*

## Testimonial Therapy for GBV survivors

Between the 24th and 28th of April, 2017, Testimonial Therapy (TT) was conducted for five Gender Based Violence (GBV) survivors of the Khmer Rouge at Bou Pagoda, Banteay Meanchey.

TT includes individual therapeutic sessions and TT ceremony which is combined with group exposure, reading testimony and Buddhist healing ritual. Through this activity the survivors be able to share or speak out about their past with young generation/public and learn coping skills to overcome their psychological reaction to trauma.

During TT ceremony on the last day, the GBV survivors were invited as a group to explain photos of Khmer Rouge experience to help them recover and confront with their hurtful experience following with reading ceremony on summary of the survivor's testimonies by TPO counselors to audience and Buddhist Bank Skoll to dedicate to the death with blessing from monks for those survivors. The audience 60 people included local authority, elderly, teachers, and high school students participated in the TT ceremony and acknowledge their stories.

This activity is conducted under the project of Promoting Gender Equality and Improving Access to Justice for Female Survivors and Victims of Gender-Based Violence under Khmer Rouge Regime. It is collaborated with the Victim Support Section of the ECCC and funded by the UN-Trust Fund.



*Exposure therapy session. Testimonial Therapy, on April 24th to 28th, 2017 in Banteay Meanchey.*

## UN Day in Support of Survivors of Torture

On the occasion of the UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, TPO Cambodia initiated a campaign to honor torture survivors of the Khmer Rouge Regime and their community members. The campaign led TPO staff at the TPO Headquarters included beneficiaries comprised of 70 people in Kampong Thom, Kampong Chhnang, and Kandal as well as at our Testimonial Therapy ceremony on 24 June. The ceremony was attended by approximately 180 community members who are survivors of torture under the Khmer Rouge regime, as well as their family members, neighbors, students, local authorities, and religious leaders.



*Message for supporting the tortured victims at TPO HQ, conducted by TPO's staff.*



The main themes of these events were “We Care and Support the Mental Health of Survivors of Torture during the Khmer Rouge Regime”, and “We Stand Together to Prevent Torture from Happening Again”.

You can see a video slide show about the campaign activities in our Facebook page and website.

This activities were organized under the “Healing and Reconciliation for Survivors of Torture during the Khmer Rouge Regime Project” and were supported by USAID.

Beside our campaign we have spread the messages and campaign material about this day on TPO’s Facebook page at

<https://www.facebook.com/tpocambodia/> which is followed by more than 6000 people.

## Press and Media Highlight

**United Nations Human Rights in Cambodia** mentioned and post TPO’s work in support of victim of torture on June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<https://www.facebook.com/OHCHRCambodia/posts/1167940210018131>

**Dr.Chhim Sotheara**, TPO’s Executive Director talked in Khmer about “Stress and how to treatment” on **Blue TV Cambodia** on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017.

<https://www.facebook.com/BlueTvCambodia/videos/1462814203781353/>

**Dr.Chhim Sotheara**, TPO’s Executive Director in a video by **Asia Foundation**, promoted about studying psychiatric skills.

<https://www.facebook.com/WEduShare/videos/443554172690864/>

**Ms. Sun SoLida & Mr. Bun lemhour**, TPO’s counselor on radio **FM 99.5** on June 16<sup>th</sup> 2017 with topic about “Money & Broken”

<https://www.facebook.com/Familyfm99.5/videos/1894047387479640/>

**Dr.Chhim Sotheara**, TPO’s Executive Director talked in Khmer about “Stress and Depression” on **Sea TV** on June 8<sup>th</sup> 2017.

<https://www.facebook.com/SEATVEducation/videos/1371274892940384/>

**Ms. Hoy Vathana**, TPO project coordinator and counselor talked in Khmer about “Psychological supporting from community to GBV victims” on **FM 102** Radio on May 26<sup>th</sup> 2017. <http://gbvkr.org/kh/publications-and-materials/radio/>

**Dr.Chhim Sotheara**, TPO’s Executive Director interviewed by **Thmey Thmey newspaper** on “Psychotic disorder”

<https://thmeythmey.com/?page=detail&id=52646>

**Dr Chhim Sotheara**, TPO Executive Director interviewed by **Thmey Thmey Newspaper** about “suicide”.

<https://thmeythmey.com/m/?page=detail&id=52402>

TPO’s work in providing psychological support and other partners in project “Pka Sla Krom Angkar” in Battambang province last week was mentioned by our donor **USAID** on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 17.

<https://www.facebook.com/USAIDCambodia/photos/pcb.641745226021230/6417369>

In **Phnom Penh Post’s** article “Cycle of abuse in Cambodia”, **Dr Chhim Sotheara**, TPO’s executive Director commented about childhood trauma.

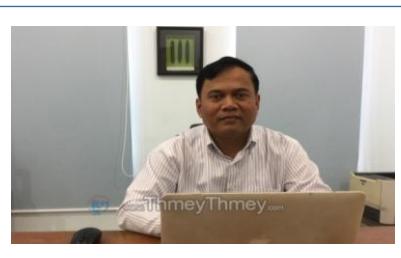
<http://m.phnompenhpost.com/national/cambodias-cycle-abuse>

## Want More...?

Like TPO’s facebook [www.facebook.com/tpocambodia](http://www.facebook.com/tpocambodia).



*TPO’s campaign on June 26th, 2017 in Kandal province-180 people attended.*



*Dr. Sotheara interviewed with Thmey Thmey News at TPO office.*



*Ms. Hoy Vathana, the Project Coordinator and Counselor in FM102 Studio on 26 May 2017.*