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Transcultural Psychosocial Organization
Community Mental Health Programme

TPO Cambodia Newsletter

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By Dr Chhim Sotheara, Executive Director

Dear friends of TPO,

I wish you a Happy Khmer New Year and may the God of Khmer New Year bring you good health, prosperity and success!

In February, TPO Cambodia celebrated its 20th anniversary with an event and the inauguration of its Mental Health Treatment Center in the presence of His Majesty, King Norodom Sihamoni of Cambodia, all staff, donors, government representatives, partner organizations, beneficiaries, friends and other guests. It was a memorable day for us!

In our newsletter this month, we will focus on 20 years of caring for mental health, our celebration, the story of the TPO building as well as some activities from the first quarter of 2015. We do hope you enjoy reading our newsletter. Thank you so much for your cooperation and support.

In Focus: 20 Years of Caring for Mental Health

In Cambodia, there is an enormous gap between what is needed in terms of services for mental health and what is available. Many people have problems with poor mental health. TPO studies in 3 provinces (in 2000) estimate that up to 40% of Cambodians suffer from mental health problems. Of course the country's traumatic history plays a big role, but there are also other factors that influence mental health such as poverty, domestic violence, substance abuse, and rapid economic and social change. And often the budget for and the quality of the services that exist are very limited. Also, in Cambodia there is generally very little understanding of mental health issues.

To help close the gap, TPO Cambodia has been working tirelessly since 1995, providing psychosocial and mental health care to mostly disadvantaged people in rural areas, and advocating for more widely available, affordable quality mental health services and policy change to promote mental health. During these 20 years, TPO has provided mental health care and support to more than 200.000 Cambodians. Today, TPO is still a leading organization in the mental health field in Cambodia.



At the TPO exhibition, Dr. Sotheara Chhim talks about TPO's work to His Majesty and other guests during TPO's 20th anniversary and inauguration of its building

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TPO works with any individual, family or community requiring psychosocial support or mental health care, with a special focus on Cambodia's most underserved communities and the disadvantaged, largely rural population in the provinces. We are well-known for our **grass-roots community-based mental health** projects in the provinces and our **Treatment Center** in Phnom Penh. We are also a **Training Center** in the field of mental health. We are the only psychosocial organization in Cambodia engaged in **transitional justice activities** in the context of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC, also known as the 'Khmer Rouge Tribunal'), providing comprehensive psychosocial services to ECCC civil parties since 2007: on-site support at the tribunal, culturally-sensitive trauma therapy, self-help groups, truth-telling activities and a counseling hotline. Much of our work is also linked to and contributes to **conflict resolution, peace building** and **social justice**.

Day in day out, TPO also works on **raising awareness** across Cambodia about mental health, promoting mental health care and psychosocial well-being, and **advocates for more and better mental health services** in Cambodia. We also conduct **research** and offer **consultancy**, mostly in collaboration with partner organizations and research institutes.

20th Anniversary and Inauguration of our Mental Health Treatment Center

On Saturday 21 February 2015, we celebrated our 20th anniversary and inaugurated our Mental Health Treatment Center in the presence of hundreds of guests. It was a memorable event, attended by His Majesty, King Norodom Sihamoni of Cambodia and guests from the Royal Palace, ministries (Ministry of Health and Ministry of Social Affairs Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, Ministry of Women Affairs and Ministry of Interior), local authorities (municipal governor, district governor and commune chief) as well as TPO's donors, NGO partners, beneficiaries, students and friends.



Hundreds of guests attended the 20th Anniversary and Inauguration of TPO's building

The event started by welcoming His Majesty and the traditional well-wishing dance. Then Dr. Sotheara Chhim, in his speech, welcomed everyone and talked about TPO's programs and services, its challenges and success, funding supporters, stakeholders, beneficiaries and the story of the TPO building.

After that, His Majesty, King Norodom Sihamoni of Cambodia, addressed the audience with a message of appreciation in support of TPO's activities. His Majesty offered the Royal Golden Book to TPO as a sign of recognition and appreciation and also donated a royal gift of 5000\$ to support TPO's work. There were also royal gifts for TPO staff (54pax), beneficiaries (70pax), partner-students from the Royal University of Phnom Penh (130pax), the well-wishing dance team (11pax) and women who offered flowers and helped cut the ribbon (4pax). Then, His Majesty cut the ribbon to officially inaugurate TPO's building and visited the Mental Health Treatment Centre and exhibition about TPO Cambodia.

Inside the building he also met with TPO clients and before leaving, His Majesty took the time to have his photo taken with TPO staff and wish them and the guests all the best.

Watch videos of the event at <http://youtu.be/estLUbc6fdU> (episode 1) and <http://youtu.be/KlYJo-81yS8> (episode2).

See the photo gallery at <https://www.facebook.com/tpocambodia?ref=hl>

The Story of the TPO building

The TPO Treatment Center is a charitable donation from the people of the Netherlands via ICCO (Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation) to improve the mental well-being of the people of Cambodia. The total cost of this building is US\$367,676 (US\$132,000 for land, and US\$235,676 for construction). While ICCO funded the building, US\$11,314.75 came from the generous contributions from private foreign individuals and US\$18,808.55 was funded by TPO itself.

Owned by TPO Cambodia, this building is an important step in TPO's long-term sustainability and stability, making the organization less subject to rising rental prices while also providing appropriate and modern treatment spaces, great training facilities and, overall, a suitable base to effectively operate from as an organization.

TPO's 'big blue building' will underpin TPO's further growth and development as a CENTER OF EXCELLENCE for Mental Health in Cambodia. It is located in Phnom Penh Thmey. Address and contact details can be found on TPO's website:www.tpocambodia.org

Long-Term partnership with Palo Alto University

Since 2004, TPO has been working with Palo Alto University (PAU, <http://www.paloalto.edu/>) to conduct a study on the topic of 'Cambodian women who are victimized by intimate partner violence'. Building on this success, PAU has now decided to intensify and build a long-term partnership with TPO, to the mutual benefit of TPO and PAU. TPO key staff will have access to the PAU Library and one staff member is offered a fully funded fellowship to study online for a Master Degree of Business Psychology. Joint research will be carried out and TPO and PAU will publish research papers together. PAU students will also have the opportunity to do research with TPO. TPO staff can also benefit from support, coaching and technical advice from PAU in the field of training development, business planning and organizational development.

At TPO we are very excited about this opportunity and grateful for PAU's support to our work and mission.

" Like Ghost Changes Body" - in Khmer

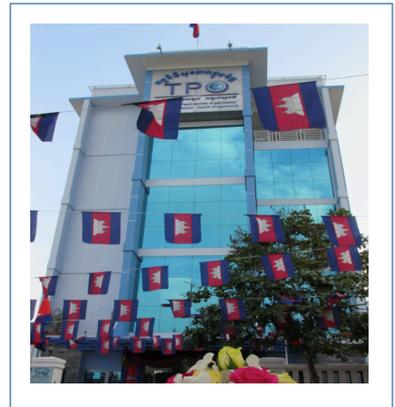
Our study 'Like Ghost Changes Body' about forced marriage during the Khmer Rough regime is now also available in Khmer. It can be downloaded from our website at

http://tpocambodia.org/fileadmin/pdf/TPO_Khmer_Book_28.02.2015_PM_.pdf

A hard copy can be sent on request via our admin team. Currently, we are working on a publication containing the full case study interviews of victims of forced marriage who participated in the research.



His Majesty, King Norodom Sihamoni of Cambodia cuts the ribbon to inaugurate TPO's building, 21 February 2015



TPO's building

Building on this success, PAU has now decided to intensify and build a long-term partnership with TPO, to the mutual benefit of TPO and PAU.

Press & Media Highlights

Sarath YOUN, TPO Project Leader and Counselor joined the **CTN TV** Talk Show 'Your Turn' to talk about how parenting styles and the quality of education relate to the transformation of Cambodian society over 3 generations (in Khmer):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSY2sWz8yHc>

Seang Leap, TPO Project Coordinator talked in Khmer about psychosis and mental health treatment available on **CNC TV** (17 Mar). This was linked TPO's plan to help mentally ill patients who have been locked up by their family or relatives out of desperation.

On **CNC TV's** program 'Sokapheap Neak (Your Health)', **Seum SANG**, **Psychiatric Nurse and TPO Counselor/Therapist**, talked on 5 March (in Khmer) about the benefits of relaxation exercises for mental health.

TPO's 20th anniversary event and the inauguration of our treatment center on 21 February 2015 was broadcast on local TV channels such as **TVK**, **CNC**, **CTN**, **Sea TV**, **Bayon TV** as well as other media such as:

-**DAP**: <http://www.dap-news.com/2011-06-14-02-39-55/86635-2015-02-21-04-46-18>

-**Fresh News (FN)**: <http://m.freshnewsasia.com/index.php/2054-2015-02-21-05-43-15.html>

Cambodia's Prime Minister has taken note of TPO Cambodia's anniversary too: <https://www.facebook.com/t pocambodia?ref=hl>

You can watch the video of our event here

<http://youtu.be/estLUbc6fdU> (episode 1) and <http://youtu.be/KIYJo-81yS8> (episode2).

Inger Agger, PhD, is a licensed clinical psychologist and an associate of NIAS (Nordic Institute of Asian Studies) in Copenhagen, Denmark who researched trauma in Cambodia in cooperation with TPO Cambodia and with support from DIGNITY-Danish Institute Against Torture. Her research article was published in the journal *Transcultural Psychiatry*: 'Calming the Mind: Healing After Mass Atrocity in Cambodia'. In this insightful article she explains how Cambodians appeal to elements of Buddhism to help calm their minds and heal from trauma. The article can be found at:

<http://tps.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/1363461514568336v1.pdf>

On **CNC TV's** 15 'minutes news' show, **Dr. Sotheara CHHIM**, TPO **Executive Director**, talked about TPO's work, its history and its 20th year anniversary and inauguration of TPO's Treatment Center (in Khmer).

On 28 January **VOD Radio** (through Sarika Radio on 106.5 FM) had **Borom LONG**, TPO Cambodia's **Prison Project Manager** talk in Khmer about 'mental health issues for prisoners and how prison life affects mental health'. **Voice of Youth (VOY)** interviewed **Sok Phaneth**, TPO **Clinic Manager** about the prevention of mental health Disorders among HIV-Aids affected people in Roka Village, Battambang province, and **Leap Seang**, TPO project coordinator (psychologist) talked in Khmer about sleep disorders on **CNC TV**.



A delegation from PAU visited TPO in February 2015



His Majesty and H.E. Mr. Mam Bunheng, Minister of Health, with TPO staff in front of the TPO building