



មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលសិទ្ធិមនុស្សកម្ពុជា
Cambodian Center for Human Rights

CCHR Press Release – Phnom Penh, 31 March 2015

On the International Transgender Day of Visibility, CCHR Calls on the Government to Promote and Protect the Human Rights of Transgender People in Cambodia

Today, 31 March 2015, marks the sixth annual International Transgender Day of Visibility. On this day, the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (“CCHR”) calls on the Royal Government of Cambodia (“RGC”) to take positive steps to promote and protect the human rights of transgender people in Cambodia.

Before the first International Transgender Day of Visibility was organised in 2009 by activists in the United States, the only other international day dedicated to the transgender community – the Transgender Day of Remembrance – was a day of mourning for people who have been killed as a result of transphobia. Consequently 31 March is meant as a day to celebrate the transgender community around the world.

In Cambodia, transgender issues have not been extensively researched, and there is no definitive data available about discrimination against transgender people. However, CCHR’s Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (“SOGI”) Project has contact with a wide network of transgender people throughout the country, whose personal accounts suggest transphobic discrimination is not uncommon, including in the workplace and schools.

Discrimination against transgender people is an issue that has been studied in detail elsewhere in the world, and the findings are certainly cause for concern. Transgender Europe’s Trans Murder Monitoring Project [identified](#) a total of 1,509 cases worldwide in which trans people were murdered between 2008-2014. In the United Kingdom, a 2014 [study](#) found that 48% of trans people under the age of 26 had attempted suicide, compared to 26.25% of their non-transgendered peers.

In February 2014 Cambodian transgender activist and Executive Director of the Cambodian Network for Men Women Development, Sou Sotheavy, was awarded the internationally renowned David Kato Vision and Voice Award. David Kato was a prominent Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (“LGBT”) rights activist in Uganda who was murdered in 2011. This high-profile award recognises and supports the work of leaders like David Kato who strive to uphold the human rights and dignity of LGBT people around the world.

Speaking about the Cambodian transgender community and the need for greater visibility, award-winning activist Sou Sotheavy comments:

“Being transgender, visibility is often a problem. Open discussion and feeling safe enough to come out to family and friends are crucial factors in raising awareness of transgender issues among the general public. Only when the public understands transgender issues will they accept the transgender community.”

The International Transgender Day of Visibility is a day to acknowledge not only the contributions of individuals like Sou Sotheavy, but to recognise the place of all transgender people in society and celebrate diversity in Cambodia.

Sidara Nuon, CCHR's SOGI Project Coordinator, comments:

“Unfortunately in Cambodia transgender people, as well as other members of the lesbian, gay and bisexual community, often have to deal with intolerance and discrimination both from their families and society more broadly. We need to see a change in attitudes so that transgender people feel accepted and safe in their communities. The government should lead by example and promote and protect the rights of transgender men and women to live their lives free from discrimination.”

For more information please contact Mr Nuon Sidara, Project Coordinator of the SOGI Project, via telephone at +855 (0) 9796 66566 or email at sidara.nuon@cchrcambodia.org or CCHR Consultant Tim Molyneux via telephone at +855 (0) 96 939 5296 or email at tim.molyneux@cchrcambodia.org.

Notes to Editors:

CCHR, founded in November 2002, is a non-aligned, independent, non-governmental organization that works to promote and protect democracy and respect for human rights – primarily civil and political rights – throughout Cambodia.

CCHR is a member of the World Organization Against Torture (“OMCT”) SOS-Torture Network; the International Freedom of Expression Exchanges (“IFEX”), the global network for freedom of expression; the Southeast Asian Press Alliance (“SEAPA”); and the World Alliance for Citizen Participation (“CIVICUS”).

The Cambodian Human Rights Portal www.sithi.org is the 2011 winner of the Information Society Innovation Fund Award in the category of Rights and Freedoms and the 2013 winner of the Communication for Social Change Award awarded by the Centre for Communication and Social Change at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia.