



Press Release – Phnom Penh, 7 March 2012

CCHR calls on Cambodians to combat homophobic violence against women

[The Cambodian Center for Human Rights](#) (“CCHR”), 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 the Kingdom of Cambodia (“Cambodia”), today releases a press release calling on Cambodians to combat homophobic violence against women. Tomorrow, 8 March, is International Women’s Day (“IWD”), when people around the world celebrate this historic day by marking the economic, political, cultural and social participation and achievement of women. To commemorate this 101st IWD, the United Nations declares its overall theme to be “Empower Rural Women – End Hunger and Poverty”, while Cambodia has her own theme – “My marvelous mother!”.

In 2008, the Royal Government of Cambodia’s (the “RGC”) Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency phase II was established, which recognizes that “*Women are the backbone of the economy and society*”. However, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (“LGBT”) women have not been acknowledged or mentioned, despite these vulnerable people facing elevated risks of violence, discrimination and exclusion. Thus, while women as a whole have to confront domestic violence and inequality, LGBT women have been facing two sets of problems.

On 5 March 2012, Extra, Canada’s Gay & Lesbians News reported ([“Sex work in Cambodia”](#)) that transgender people have been rejected for jobs even in low wage restaurants and garment factories, and that transgender people have been facing so much discrimination from family, friends and society that they cannot get regular work. Transgender woman Sam Sela was quoted as saying that transgender people have many talents that Cambodian society is not ready to acknowledge. On 29 February 2012, the Cambodian Herald News Portal ([“Transgender actress appeals for halt to discrimination after winning Best Gay Actor Award”](#)) reported that Miss Poppy, a transgender actress and VJ for SEATV’s “Deum Phum Chong Phum” program, who recently won the Anachakr Dara Award for Best Gay Actor, has appealed to Cambodians to stop discrimination against her.

Mr Hem Sokly, CCHR SOGI Project Co-ordinator, says:

“CCHR should like to acknowledge the RGC’s achievement in promoting gender equality, with the reservation that every woman regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity deserves full recognition, respect and equality. The RGC should ensure LGBT women’s physical and mental safety by enacting an anti-discrimination law and including an LGBT agenda into its policy manifesto in order to end discriminatory practices and tackle homophobic attitudes and violence against LGBT women. The RGC should also ensure that everyone is free from violence and discrimination, and that all Cambodian citizens can enjoy the same rights, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.”

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