



Cambodian Men's Network

2011 Assembly Report



The 2011 CMN assembly

Over 350 activist men from throughout Cambodia joined the 2011 Cambodian Men's Network Assembly on the 12th of October in Phnom Penh. A diversity of local and national authorities, Government staff, villagers, police and NGOs, joined the event to draw attention to the impacts of violence against women and share ideas for taking action to eradicate violence against women in Cambodia.

In a packed conference hall, the assembly featured presentations from varying perspectives on what is being done to combat violence against women and what can be done. Emotive personal stories from prior violent offenders, women that had dealt with abuse and law enforcement agencies provided unique insights into the causes of violence and methods for eliminating violence.

Men highlighted and challenged negative cultural expectations that normalised male dominance over women and a lack of accountability for violent offenders. CMN members explained their processes of intervention, working within the cultural context, to reconcile conflict and change abusive attitudes. Previously violent offenders discussed the negative impacts of violence against women for everyone, advocating to the network that a violence-free environment can and must happen.

Although the legal framework for dealing with violence against women has improved in Cambodia, speeches highlighted that although law enforcement has improved, more needs to be done. "The introduction of the domestic violence law has led to some convictions against perpetrators of domestic violence, which is beneficial for creating a deterrent. However, we also need to be more proactive to prevent domestic violence before it needs to become a criminal issue" explained Mr. Chum Kongkea, a representative of the Men's Core Groups.

Addressing some of these issues was the Bakan District

Assembly aim & objectives

Aim: Publicly advocate that violence against women has to be addressed by men and everyone, including men will benefit from the elimination of violence:

1. Create opportunities for CMN members to share experiences and encourage model behaviour.
2. Share information about the connection between national and international efforts to eliminate violence against women.
3. Strengthen cooperation and motivation amongst men to combat violence against women and negative gender stereotypes, and promote gender equality.

Police Chief, Mr. Pen Tung. Drawing on personal experiences, Mr. Pen advocated the benefits of improving gender equality, as witnessed in his personal life, and applying gender equality attitudes to his work. Police in his district are actively responding to cases of violence against women and working with the courts to send a strong deterrent message, while also working to intervene before violence occurs. Violence against women has dramatically decreased in Mr. Pen's district and he implored other law enforcement officials to take action to eliminate violence against women.

Presentations from two United Nations (UN) agencies and Pez y Desarrollo (Peace and Development, a Spanish NGO) linked community-based and national work with regional efforts to eliminate violence against women.

During breaks, before and after the event, participants were able to network and share experiences with other activists. Conference packages and display boards also provided valuable resources for future activities. Following the assembly, key participants spoke with T.V, print and radio, with messages disseminated throughout Cambodia.



Local law enforcement in the CMN

"I do not tolerate any form of violence and I take immediate action to intervene if violence happens. I can claim that violence against women has now decreased and rarely happens in my district, especially in the target communes of GADC."

Bakan District Police Chief, Pen Tung (pictured left)

"After attending the CMN Assembly today, I am very glad because I gained knowledge and experience to share with my community. In the future, I think we must empower women and children, and share knowledge and skills to all community people."

Commune Police Chief and Core Men's Group member, Chin Sophal

CMN assembly outcomes

The high attendance of different stakeholders, thought provoking presentations, strong media coverage and networking opportunities, especially sharing experiences, ensured the CMN assembly was successful at achieving its stated aim and objectives. The proceedings of the event and exit interviews confirmed the importance of the event in strengthening men's involvement in eliminating violence against women in Cambodia.

In terms of the overall aim, the selection of presentations, matched with broad media coverage delivered strong public advocacy about involving men to eliminate violence against women. The diversity of presentations encouraged engagement with the many perspectives involved in dealing with violence against women. These messages will be advocated throughout Cambodia by the CMN, as CMN member and Commune Council chief, Yim Yon explained in an exit interview;

"The assembly was a valuable forum for reducing violence against women through men's actions. I will bring all key messages from this event to disseminate in the commune by stressing that men have to participate in reducing violence against women and children."

Focusing on the three objectives, the assembly delivered on strong results primarily through presentations combined with informal networking opportunities. Presentations by a police officer, reformed violence perpetrator and other men explored concepts of model behaviour and the need for all CMN members to prevent, intervene and respond to violence against women. These presentations highlighted the benefit for everyone of eliminating violence against women and improving gender equality. The audience responded very positively.

The two UN agencies and Paz y Desarrollo presentations were central to sharing information about the connections between national and international efforts to eliminate



ABOVE: A representative from the Ministry of Women's Affairs speaks with the media at the assembly.

Media coverage

- 4 Khmer TV stations
- 5 Khmer & English newspapers
- 5 Khmer radio stations
- GADC and media web coverage

violence against women. James Lang, Coordinator of the UN program Partners for Prevention, discussed the common challenges across Asia and the Pacific in decreasing violence against women. He emphasised the need to further engage men in the process and increase the focus on prevention efforts and behavioural change.

The structure of the event did not permit substantial time to networking, with the focus primarily on presentations. Increased opportunities for networking could have been beneficial, but considering the already strong network of the CMN, it was appropriate to prioritise presentations and sharing of experiences. Overall, the assembly was very successful at achieving its aim and objectives.

Networking and advocacy

"Today's assembly was very interesting because I met most of the CMN members from the 12 provinces and the Core Men's Groups, who represent the grass roots men network. They shared their good experiences in the communities about working with men to address gender-based violence... This knowledge and concepts are the foundation for me to preparing programs for broadcasting on the National Radio of Kampuchea."

National Radio Kampuchea employee and CMN member, Thol Ngorn Thai



ABOVE: During breaks, men and women could network, share ideas and learn about CMN activities.



The future of ending violence against women

The Cambodian Men's Network has been operating for over 10 very successful years. As Governments and civil society increasingly recognise the need to proactively engage men to eliminate violence against women, the CMN with its extensive experience, will play a vital role in engaging men throughout Cambodia.

The CMN assembly reinforced the commitment of men to work together to eliminate violence against women in Cambodia. Here are some of the thoughts of men involved in the assembly;

"I will promote the domestic violence law to the community, counsel violent men, organise a youth group to reduce gender-based violence and promote gender equality." **Kosal, 36 year old CMN Member**

"Khmer tradition and discrimination against women is a challenge for equality. I will educate people on human rights and gender." **Daun, 52 year old CMN Member**

"The assembly is an opportunity to send messages to the national and international level. It showed model behaviour and we could exchange experiences between the grass roots and other levels. The assembly will improve cooperation." **Sameth, 52 year old CMN Member**

The 2011 CMN Assembly could not have happened without donor support. Thank you for making this event happen to strengthen the effectiveness and reach of the CMN to eliminate violence against women. There are many challenges ahead, but as the conference highlighted; change is happening and dedicated men at all levels are active in creating a Cambodia that is free from gender-based violence.

The CMN will continue to expand upon our strong foundations of active men and achievements. We will work with all levels of society to strengthen cooperation and increase action to eliminate violence against women in Cambodia. Thank you for your support.

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