

16 DAYS CAMPAIGN AGAINST GENDER VIOLENCE 2004

Speech by

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Chairperson of CAMBOW

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គណៈកម្មាធិការស្ត្រីកម្ពុជា

CAMBODIAN COMMITTEE OF WOMEN

Your Majesty,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

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On behalf of the Cambodian Committee of Women (CAMBOW), let me begin by thanking the Queen Mother for Her presence and all those who have come to join this opening ceremony for the 16 Days campaign against gender violence and watch this domestic violence drama performed by NICFEC and the Fine Arts Association.

First, I would like to give you a brief background to the 16 Days campaign:

1. Background of the 16 Days campaign

The 16 Days campaign against gender violence is a global campaign for women's rights. It starts on 25th November and continues until 10th December with the aim of stopping violence against women and commemorating all activists who have died fighting to end gender violence and promote equality for women, both within families and nationally and globally. The 25th November is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women which commemorates the assassination of three political activists, the Mirabal sisters, by the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo in Dominican Republic on 25th November 1960.

During the 16 day period we also observe 1st December which is International Day Against AIDS. The 6th December remembers the 'Montreal Massacre' when 14 female engineering students were killed in Montreal in 1989 by a man who blamed them for being feminists. Finally, 10th December marks the day on which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed in Paris by the United Nations in 1948.

The 16 Days Campaign originated in 1991 from the Women's Global Leadership Institute and since this time over 1,700 organizations in approximately 137 countries have participated. CAMBOW has sent reports on its activities for the 16 Days campaign since 2001.

2. Goals of CAMBOW

In 1992 Cambodia ratified the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In reality, violations against women continue to occur and there is no mechanism within domestic law to protect women. As a result local NGOs working in the field of women's rights decided to form a coalition, CAMBOW, to advocate for the promotion and protection of women's rights. CAMBOW was established in 2000 after receiving permission from the

Ministry of Interior, and now has 35 local NGO members. (please see the Programme for the list of CAMBOW members). CAMBOW takes this opportunity to congratulate the government, particularly the Ministry of Women's Affairs, for considering CAMBOW as a partner in the promotion and defense of women's rights.

3. Activities of CAMBOW

CAMBOW has monthly meetings for planning and organizing activities. The Chairperson of CAMBOW is elected every two years by secret vote and LICADHO is currently the Chair for the second time. There are three main activities: promotion, advocacy and networking.

Promotion

For promotional activities CAMBOW disseminates information using drama, radio, television, press releases, newspapers, roundtable discussions and the CAMBOW website.

Advocacy

Advocacy activities include:

- Making recommendations on draft laws (domestic violence and anti-trafficking laws).
- Organizing campaigns such as for International Women's Day (8th March) and the 16 Days campaign, since 2000.
- Public hearings with members of the Senate and the National Assembly, police, lawyers, local authorities and victims, concerning domestic violence draft laws.
- Organizing seminars to collect recommendations from participants concerning domestic violence and anti-trafficking draft laws.
- Arranging press conferences on domestic violence and anti-trafficking issues.
- Discussing the situation of women in Cambodia with the Queen Mother on two occasions and obtaining Her advice on the issues.
- Visiting the President of the National Assembly and obtaining his support for the recommendations on the domestic violence draft law.
- Meeting with the Commissions on Health, Social Action and Women's Affairs in the National Assembly to lobby for the domestic violence draft law.
- Peaceful march from Independence Monument to Wat Phnom and drama performance at Wat Phnom on domestic violence.

Networking

- Working in the provinces with NGO members of CAMBOW and other NGOs, and also with the Ministry of Women's Affairs.
- Supporting regional NGOs campaigning against human trafficking and domestic violence.
- Activities planned with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to promote CEDAW and raise awareness of domestic violence.

4. The Consequences of Domestic Violence

CAMBOW identifies many problems facing women in Cambodia such as the trafficking of women and children, domestic violence and rape against women and children, acid attacks and land grabbing. Domestic violence continues to occur and is becoming a more serious problem. The statistics from the Ministry of Planning reveal that one woman out of four is a victim of domestic violence.

Research from local and international NGOs shows that after a woman becomes a victim of domestic violence there may be a number of serious consequences:

- The woman may be psychologically traumatized, depressed, ashamed, fearful and she may be unable to sleep, suffer nightmares, anorexia and weight loss.
- She may not want to go out and may lose her job.
- She spends money on medical care which affects both the family economy and the national economy.
- Children also become victims: they do not trust themselves and blame themselves for not being able to help their mother. They have problems at school. Many of the boys imitate their fathers and use violence in their own families in the future. Many of the girls do not want to be married and have relationships with men, and are also psychologically traumatized and cannot work. Some girls also marry men like their fathers, who may use violence against them and their children.
- The parents and relatives who stay in the same house may also be traumatized.

To summarize, violence in one family can affect the whole of society.

5. The 16 Days Campaign 2004

Recognizing this problem the Ministry of Women's Affairs and CAMBOW have decided to highlight domestic violence in the 16 Days campaign to show that both families and society are involved and emphasize the need to find solutions to prevent domestic violence and protect families.

We have decided to educate about domestic violence through a drama called "The Tears of the Victim". The Ministry of Women's Affairs and CAMBOW will disseminate this story by video to the 24 provinces. Education is an essential tool, as Hilary Clinton said in Beijing in 1995, "Educating one woman is like educating the whole nation". If our society understands that using violence against woman is like using violence against the whole society we will be able to find strategies to prevent domestic violence in the future.

Before closing I would like to thank:

- Her Majesty The Queen Mother, who has always promoted and protected the rights of women by offering financial support and coming to join the 16 Days campaign on two occasions.
- Members of the Senate, Parliament and government for supporting the promotion and defense of women and children's rights . We hope that this support will continue.

- The Ministry of Women's Affairs, especially the Minister, State Secretary and all officials who helped to organize this event.
- Members of NGOs, especially members of CAMBOW, for their valuable contribution.
- The Media for attending this opening ceremony. We hope they will publicize this event to a wide audience
- Ambassadors and international participants for their support
- A special thanks to the donors, CDP, Forum Syd., GAD, GTZ, PADV, TAF, without whom we could not conduct this campaign.

We pray to Thevoda to bless Our Majesty the King, His Majesty the Former King and Her Majesty the Queen Mother, and all participants.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Dr. Kek Galabru, (Chairperson of CAMBOW)

1st December 2004