



**AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY  
PHNOM PENH**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**AUSTRALIA SUPPORTS COMMUNITIES ELIMINATING VIOLENCE AGAINST  
WOMEN THROUGH SOMROH SOMRUEL**

On 16 March, the Australian Ambassador HE Margaret Adamson launched an AusAID-funded research report entitled “*Somroh Somruei* and Violence against Women”, as part of the Australian Government’s long-term assistance to Cambodia’s criminal justice system. The report was commissioned by AusAID, in cooperation with the International Women’s Development Agency and local NGOs ADHOC and Banteay Srei, as part of the Community Action against Violence project.

Speaking at a function for women leaders to celebrate International Women’s Day, Ambassador Adamson said “Research among Cambodian families has shown that more than one in every five married women has experienced domestic violence. Australia is working closely with several Cambodian government and non-government institutions to reduce this figure. By addressing violence in the home, we are working to make communities safer for everyone.”

“Violence will only be addressed by changes to attitude and behaviour, including stereotypes of women’s status. These changes must also take into account Cambodian cultural practices, including the preference of many women to seek redress from local authorities, such as village chiefs, rather than from the police and the courts,” said Ambassador Adamson.

*Somroh somruei* is a traditional Cambodian form of conflict management through conciliation. Today’s report found that this practice remains widespread, as citizens consider it easier, cheaper and more effective than conflict resolution at higher levels.

Researchers also found great variation in the mediation methods used, and that conciliators need to have a better understanding of the women’s human rights and Cambodian law, particularly when dealing with domestic violence. The report recommends developing guidelines for the mediation of domestic violence based on best practice and sharing them nationwide. The report also recommends keeping better records of conciliation processes.

The Royal Government adopted a Domestic Violence Law in 2005, while a national action plan to prevent violence against women is awaiting approval by the Council of Ministers. The Ministry of Women’s Affairs has also organised various training and promotion campaigns for law enforcement officers, commune councils and the public. But many challenges remain in implementing and enforcing the law and policies.

Australia is working in a long-term partnership with Cambodia to improve the responsiveness of police and courts to domestic violence and to increase community confidence in these institutions.

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