



**AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY
PHNOM PENH**

MEDIA RELEASE

PARTNERING TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, we are reminded of the horrific acts of violence against women that take place every day – in Australia and in our region.

Violence against women persists as one of the most heinous and prevalent human rights abuses.

While there is no shortage of good work being done in every country, the statistics remain deeply disturbing, and the impact of violence on individual's lives and on the well-being of our communities is devastating.

Globally, more than one in every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex, or abused in some other way. Most often, the perpetrator is someone she knows, including her husband or another male family member. In some parts of the Pacific, the reported rate is as high as two in three surveyed women. In Australia, one woman is killed every week by a current or former partner. In Cambodia one in four women has experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime.

Australia's National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children reported that in 2009 violence against women and their children cost the Australian economy an estimated AU\$13.6 billion and, without appropriate action, this could rise to AU\$15.6 billion by 2021-22.

Violence affects women first and foremost, but also their children, families and communities. It is also a burden on national economies, as well a barrier to lasting peace and a threat to sustainable national development. Poverty studies in Cambodia have shown that violence against women contributes to movement into poverty due to lost income and assets, the costs of illness and injury, and divorce and family breakdown. Debt and poverty also make women and girls more vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

In Cambodia, various studies by both international and local experts have shown that one in three women and one in four men believe it is acceptable in certain situations for a man to use violence against his wife. International evidence shows we can create the change necessary to prevent this violence against women and their children. To do this, we must address the attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate, justify, excuse and fail to counter such violence.

Australia recently launched its Second Action Plan: Moving Ahead 2013-16 which calls for the Australian community to unite in making a significant and sustained reduction in the levels of violence against women and children. During the Second Action Plan, we expect that cultural change will advance; women will feel encouraged to report their experiences; and more members of the Australian community will actively reject violence.

Recognising that violence against women is an issue that affects women and girls around the world, Australia is committed to supporting and partnering with other countries to end violence against women.

Australia is contributing more than AU\$20 million to ending violence against women in Cambodia. Earlier this year, we signed an agreement with the Royal Cambodian Government to work together on this issue and to change attitudes and prevent violence so that women and girls can feel safer in communities.

Australia has joined with local and international partners to provide health, psycho-social counselling, shelter, education and legal services to women and girls experiencing violence. So far, close to 500 women and girls have benefited from this support. In conjunction with UN Women, we have also supported the Ministry of Women's Affairs to develop the second National Action Plan on Violence Against Women. We have enabled the implementation of an internationally recognised national study to determine the prevalence violence against women across Cambodia.

Over the next three years we will continue this support, as well as funding innovative approaches to engage with communities and local authorities across Cambodia to challenge attitudes and behaviours that tolerate violence against women.

Each individual, community and government has a responsibility to speak out against violence against women. In our workplaces, in our schools and universities, in our communities and in our homes, we must all say "enough".

Australia's Prime Minister is leading by example as a White Ribbon Ambassador. At the highest level of the Australian Government, Prime Minister Abbott has made clear that Australia has zero tolerance for violence against women.

Our collective efforts are needed to achieve profound and lasting change around the world; not just for the benefit of women and girls, but for all of us.

H.E. Ms Alison Burrows, Australian Ambassador to the Kingdom of Cambodia

*Media Enquiries: Simon Fellows, Deputy Head of Mission
Phone 023 213 470
25 November 2014*