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SEX WORKERS ARRESTED ON PP MUNICIPALITY GOVERNOR'S ORDER

As part of the government's efforts to suppress the country's prostitution, the Phnom Penh municipality in October started using the so-called iron grab to crackdown on prostitution, leading to the arrest of many sex workers in the city.

In his letter dated 10 October and addressed to the governors of the municipality's seven districts, including police and military police chiefs, Phnom Penh Governor Kep Chuktema ordered them to take strong action against prostitution, especially on the main streets, in massage and karaoke parlors, pubs and other nightclubs.

After getting the order, Phnom Penh police chief Touch Naruth immediately ordered his forces to take action. By 20 October more than 20 women were arrested by the police on charges of being sex workers. The ladies were sent to the Municipal Department of Social Affairs for education in the next day.

Many sex workers have made complaints that poverty and the lack of skills force them into

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PLHIV AND AIDS WORKERS HAIL CEASEFIRE BETWEEN CAMBODIAN-THAI TROOPS AT THE BORDER



A young lady draws a cart full of her belongs while her sister is pushing from behind. Hundreds of Cambodian villagers, including PLHIV, living along the Cambodian-Thai border evacuated their homes after deadly fighting between the Cambodian and Thai troops on 15 October.

People Living with HIV (PLHIV) and AIDS workers living and working near the Cambodian-Thai border expressed their satisfaction that the two nations had agreed to resumes talks for peace after the outbreak of deadly fighting in three different places along the border in the northern part of the country on 15 October. They said if the gunbattle had become more serious and extended, it would have caused mass evacuations and interrupted services and food supplies for PLHIV.

For more than one-hour exchange of rocket and gunfire resulted in casualties on both sides. It happened after the four-month standoff along the Cambodian-Thai border, near the ancient temple of Preah Vihear. The standoff started in mid July after the temple was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site, which angered Thai nationalists who maintainain that the site belongs to Thailand and who accused their political leadership of caving in by agreeing to the listing.

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KHANA TO JOIN MTV EXIT TO RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

BRITISH SUPERSTAR AND HIV/AIDS ACTIVIST WILL VISIT CAMBODIA

KHANA will join MTV EXIT for a campaign to raise national and international awareness on human trafficking and prevention activities among Cambodians. The campaign, "A National Campaign in Cambodia: Road to EXIT 08", consists of a series of four concerts in Cambodia, occurring in November and December.

With USAID support, the concerts will be held in four different places: Sihanouk Ville on 22 November, Kampong Cham on 29 November, Siem Reap on 7 December, and the final event in Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capital, on 12 December. A number of foreign stars will be joining the concerts to perform with their Cambodian counterparts. Road to EXIT 08 will be a televised touring event combining cutting edge, live concerts with hard-hitting messages about trafficking and exploitation. Tens of thousands of people are expected to attend the concerts, while millions more are expected to view the show on Bayon TV. Near the main concert area different games stalls & performers, competitions, and activities will serve the attendees, and create excitement and buzz around the events. MTV EXIT premiums and other items



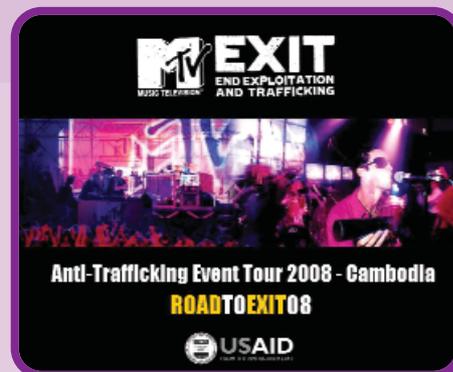
Sir Elton John

will be used as prizes for the winners of the competitions.

The campaign is part of the public awareness activities of MTV EXIT in Asia and the Pacific. The campaign aims to increase awareness in Cambodia about human trafficking and sexual exploitation, as well as to inspire young people to get involved and take action. The tour will incorporate key anti-trafficking NGOs into each event and will work with these local organisations to launch creative initiatives to promote positive change.

Cambodia is concerned about human trafficking, especially the trafficking of women and children. On 15 February, the Royal Government of Cambodia launched a new legislation to punish all crimes against human trafficking and sexual exploitation. The law states that the country needs to implement the UN protocol on the issue, while protecting human rights and dignity and improving and building on the country's proper customs and cultural values.

KHANA – whose implementing partners and networks are up to 66 from both governmental and non-governmental organizations -- is participating in the campaign. During the concerts, KHANA is providing various forms of support including; booths to pass out information and publications to the attendees, including the organization's monthly bulletin "Purple Brief" and other IEC materials; cooperation with other NGOs if there are relevant issues to discuss on stage. These forms of involvement are part of producing powerful messages relevant to the campaign, which represents a great opportunity to get local partners involved on an international playing field.



With USAID support, MTV EXIT is conducting a series of concerts in Cambodia in November and December, part of its campaign to raise national and international awareness on human trafficking and prevention activities in Asia and the Pacific.

MTV EXIT has been raising awareness and increasing prevention of human trafficking throughout Europe and Asia Pacific since 2004. This year, with funding from USAID, MTV EXIT is organizing a national campaign for Cambodia, and working with local people to identify and promote the key messages. Throughout 2009, the MTV EXIT campaign will travel to the Philippines, Indonesia, Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand, and Nepal.

In a separate story, Sir Elton John, British superstar and heavyweight activist in the fight against HIV/AIDS, has told a US magazine he is planning a visit to Cambodia. According to DPA report, Sir Elton and partner David Furnish have raised more than 150 million dollars for projects to assist people living with the virus through the Elton John Aids Foundation since it started in 1992. The visit would be Sir Elton's first to Cambodia, the report said. The trip is not part of MTV concerts. *(By Chhay Sophal)*

Continued from p. 1: PLHIV and AIDS workers hail ceasefire between Cambodian-Thai troops at the border

After the clashes, thousands of Cambodian civilians, including PLHIV, not only near disputed areas but also in some other places along the border evacuated their homes for safety, while Thai citizens in Cambodia also fled after their embassy in Phnom Penh urged evacuations.

"Fearing that fighting will erupt, our PLHIV living next to the border moved to the city center

for safety," said Yorn Nath, HIV-positive widow, living in Pailin, a town several kilometers away from the border in northwestern country. Nath, who is also an HIV peer educator in her community for Battamabng Women's AIDS Project (BWAP), said she and other PLHIV are happy to hear of the ceasefire. "When fighting erupts along the border, our people fled their homes to escape bullets and artilleries. Such fleeing

effects to our PLHIV who get ARV and food supply from the WFP."

Ms Ing Siv Heng, BWAP Director, said her organisation covers more than 150 PLHIV just in Pailin. She said she is happy to hear that the two sides are engaging in peace-talks to return to a normal situation. "If fighting happens and extends, our PLHIV are facing challenges with their health." *(By Chhay Sophal)*

REFRESHING FOOD SUPPORT FOR HIV/AIDS PROGRAMME



Refreshing workshop on food support for PLHIV on 14-15 October in Kampong Thom province.

In cooperation with its partners, including KHANA, the United Nations World Food Programmes (WFP) conducted a workshop on 14-15 October in Kampong Thom province. More than 40 participants from 25 organisations participated in the two-day event.

The workshop aimed at building and refreshing all WFP partners on food support for HIV/AIDS programs, sharing case studies and best practices related to food management, phase-in and phase-out experiences and impact of food support among WFP partners. During the workshop, participants also discussed several issues related to food management, phase-in and phase-out

guidelines, beneficiary selection, and WFP projections for the next year's plan.

Fourteen people from KHANA and several others from its implementing partners participated in the discussion. KHANA working with 66 implementing partners and networks throughout 17 cities and provinces, is a WFP partner. Twenty six implementing partners in 15 cities and provinces have received WFP food support through KHANA. Selected People Living with HIV (PLHIV) and Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) households are eligible to receive 30 kg of rice, 1 kg of vegetable oil, and 0.5 kg of salt through WFP food support.

Continued from p. 1: Sex workers arrested

the business. "I know it is not good for the country's culture but how can I earn a living while I am illiterate", said Meas Chanrath, a 25 year-old sex worker in Phnom Penh. She said she also feels scared by the police's arrests but has no choice, "when police arrest me, let it be because I do not know how survive," she added.

According to an official from Phnom Penh Municipal Department of Social Affairs, the same women have been sent to his department. "Police sent arrested sex workers to our department but we recognize that some of them are the same we got previous time. Of course we educated them but they said they do not know what to do," said the official, who asked not to be named. He said the department has no rights or guidelines to punish the women but just educates them before their release.

According to the National Center for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STDs (NCHADS), there are an estimated 3,430 direct sex workers and 13,723 indirect sex workers in Cambodia.

During the 9 month period from January to September 2008, KHANA, through prevention activities has successfully reached out to 5581 indirect sex workers, such as karaoke and beer promotion girls, exceeding the target outreach goal by almost 900 individuals. Despite successes with indirect sex workers, during this same period, reaching out to direct sex

workers has proven to be more problematic than prior to January. KHANA recorded 636 direct sex workers who engaged in prevention activities, which falls approximately 281 people short of the hopeful 917, as specified in KHANA's plan.

On 15 February, the country's anti-trafficking law was approved, with the aim of cracking down on crimes of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. The controversial article 23 states: "Prostitution in this law shall mean having sexual intercourse with an unspecified person or other sexual conduct of all kinds in exchange for any value". Since the launching of the law, sex workers and AIDS activists have expressed their concerns over local police warning owners of karaoke parlors, night clubs, bars and hotels that they will be fined if their premises contain condoms. According to reports by a few NGOs, many brothels have closed since the inception of the law and sex workers are in hiding, while people are afraid of talking openly about or displaying condoms. Some sexworkers also complained that they were arrested by local police and asked for money for their release.

In her welcoming remark at the 3rd National AIDS Conference on 10 September in Phnom Penh, Ms. Erin Soto, Mission Director of USAID/Cambodia, said cooperation is needed to "ensure [that] implementation of the new anti-trafficking legislation does not hinder the

Since early this year, and exacerbated by the recent business crisis around the globe, the World has been in a food crisis and international food aid agencies have warned of a reduction or end to food supplies. The WFP has already announced that it will cut some food supplies. It has already cut the supplies to some 450,000 Cambodian primary-school students who previously received breakfast through a WFP supported program. By the end of 2008, WFP expects to distribute over 5,200 metric tons of food to 70,000 PLHIV and OVC beneficiaries alone and its donations will be used to target the most in need.

WFP, however, confirmed in April that monthly food rations to TB patients, pregnant and lactating women and their infants under the Mother Child Health programme will continue without interruption throughout 2008. WFP is feeding nearly 89 million people, including 58.8 million children, worldwide.

(By Chhay Sopha)

continued success of HIV prevention programs." The 100% condom use program would only remain effective if "condoms are available in all entertainment establishments," she said.

Speaking in his closing remarks on the last day of the 3rd National AIDS Conference on 12 September, Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Cabinet of Ministers Sok An said he understands some of the challenges in responding to HIV that have arisen due to the country's new law. He said he had also learned that police had arrested some women who have condoms on suspicion of being sex workers.

Because of this, he said, sex workers are hiding in secret places where they cannot access condoms, which leads to HIV transmission. He said he had talked to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sar Kheng to find an effective way to crackdown on prostitution without affecting HIV prevention.

He warned that prostitution is unacceptable, as it affects the country's proper custom, culture, reputation and dignity. He, however, also recognized the truth that prostitution is everywhere around the world, including Cambodia, and that "the crackdown and complete elimination of prostitution in the current situation is an absolutely impossible mission".

(By Chhay Sopha)

NSP AND HARM REDUCTION IN CAMBODIA: CLARIFYING MISCONCEPTIONS AND MOVING FORWARD

Harm reduction programs are programs that see drug use as a reality but attempt to reduce its harmful consequences to individuals and society. Born into the public health arena about 15 years ago in the U.K., "Harm reduction" has become an approach increasingly explored throughout most of the industrialized world. An example is the Needle Syringe Program (NSP), which makes sterile injecting equipment available to people who inject drugs. In the late 1980's the link between injecting drugs and an increased risk of contracting HIV became a worldwide concern. In 1988 New York State alone reported that injecting drug users (IDUs) had surpassed all other risk factors as a cause of new cases of HIV and AIDS. A recent report provided by the Reference Group to the UN on HIV and Injecting Drug Use indicated that out of 128 countries analyzed, countries from low and middle incomes show 40% of IDUs being HIV positive. Evidence based research suggest that countries slow to implement harm reduction techniques, such as NSP, have a higher rate of HIV infection amongst people who inject drugs today, compared to countries who implemented NSP early on.

Cambodia's Universal Access Indicators and Target areas have been formulated to provide measurable goals to be achieved by 2010. Indicator 10 "aims to increase the exposure of HIV prevention services provided to IDUs, from 15% during the baseline studies, to 80% in 2010." Despite consistent obstacles accessing this vulnerable group, methods such as outreach services and certain harm reduction strategies have proven to be effective in providing necessary information, reducing the amount of psychoactive injecting drug use and reducing the transmission rates of HIV and other blood borne viruses.

First piloted in Cambodia in 2004, the NSP today is carried out by Mith Samlanh and Korsang. At the heart of their activities these NGOs are working towards obtaining basic human rights for the people they reach out to. Korsang, partners with KHANA, are working towards dismantling the stigma and discrimination surrounding IDUs within the Cambodian community. "Stigma and discrimination makes it harder to access IDUs

as they might withdraw from friends and family and we can't find them, to help them", said Shhort, Korsang. He further explained that although Cambodian society seems to 'accept' the NSP and some other harm reduction services, there seems to be a lack of understanding about 'why and how' such services can create a safer environment for everybody, "People in the community ask why we are spending time and money on people who inject drugs" he said. Continued efforts to desensitize the community to reduce societal stigma and discrimination around IDUs were highlighted during this interview.

Despite current obstacles within society, participants in the NSP in Cambodia, report learning from such invaluable services. Chandara, former IDU and a current staff member of Korsang spoke recently with KHANA about how Korsang specifically educated him how HIV was transmitted - through shared needles/syringes and how Korsang supplied him with clean needles to avoid HIV transmission. Chandara has been tested for antibodies to HIV - he is HIV negative-unlike an estimated 50% of IDUs Korsang test.

Thinking about an NSP effort in Cambodia requires that policymakers, politicians, communities, researchers and frontline workers ask the questions: What health risks exist when taking psychoactive drugs? How can we reduce harm? A comprehensive harm reduction package, recently gaining UN approval, has been recognised as a crucial element to controlling the HIV/AIDS epidemic, consisting of; NSPs, substitution therapy (ST), and care, support and treatment for IDUs.

KHANA works with the following partners to carry out prevention and support services for IDUs; CCASVA, MHSS, OEC, SFODA, KDFO, SEADO, KBA, BSDA, within Phnom Penh and 6 other provinces: Kampong Speu, Kampong Chhnang, Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, Kampong Cham and Prey Veng. KHANA is conscious to aid in the delivery of frontline HIV programs and services to the nation. An example of this is by ensuring KHANA's staff receive adequate training. Currently KHANA's Director of



A young lady carries her sleeping son while injecting her husband with heroin. She is also an addict. (File picture)

PMO, Dr. Tith Khimuy is completing the Leadership in Harm Reduction course at the Australian National University. The intention is to filter the knowledge and expertise gained to KHANA's staff, KHANA's 66 partners and to other agencies, organisations and government bodies as needed. Furthermore, KHANA aims to support the up-scale of harm reduction activities to IDUs, inline with the Royal Government of Cambodia.

Cambodia has awakened to the alarming association between IDUs and high HIV transmission rates and the severe health, social and economic ramifications impacting Cambodia's development. With political commitment and community support, an environment that harbours and protects injecting drug users can build the capacity of this vulnerable group, enabling them to participate as active members of society and to reduce HIV transmission rates.

(By Emma Garter)

KHANA's Purple Brief is a monthly news bulletin covering real life stories of Cambodians living with, and affected by HIV and AIDS. The publication also raises significant awareness of the impacts of HIV and AIDS on the broader national and international communities.

The KHANA Communication Committee (KCC) is responsible for the development and publication of the monthly bulletin and the content does not reflect the views and opinions of the donors.