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Gender and Development for Cambodia

PRESS RELEASE

WOMEN'S GROUPS APPLAUD PROMISE OF NEW LAW ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Phnom Penh, 21 November 2000

Husbands who beat up their wives could soon be punished under a new law covering domestic violence, according to a promise made by Prime Minister Hun Sen at the Council of Ministers' meeting last Friday.

In response to a request by Minister for Women's Affairs Mu Sochua, the Prime Minister agreed that a review process of existing draft legislation could begin in January next year.

"Women's groups have been working towards this for a long time, so this promise really gives us something to celebrate," said Menh Navy, Coordinator of the Gender and Development Network (GADNet), a grouping of agencies working on gender issues.

For years, Cambodian agencies working with women in crisis have found that police and court officials usually will not take statements or press charges against violent husbands.

Women's groups drafted separate domestic violence legislation in 1997 in association with UNCHR, but the draft never passed through the Council of Ministers. The existing draft Criminal Code, currently under review, does not include articles specifically on domestic violence.

Existing government research shows that at least 1 in 6 Cambodian women are victims of domestic violence, but smaller-scale studies suggest the real number could be much higher. A recent study of Cambodian schoolchildren by the Royal University of Phnom Penh's Psychology Department showed that 41% of children aged 10 to 12 years had witnessed domestic violence in their own home. Domestic violence is thought to be particularly intense in Cambodia, with half of all reported victims receiving injuries - some from sticks, chains, ropes and knives.

The Prime Minister's promise comes at the start of an NGO campaign to stop violence against women, due to kick off on Saturday with public distribution of white ribbons as a symbol of peace and non-violence at markets and some high schools around Phnom Penh.

For further information on the 16-day Campaign to Stop Violence Against Women, contact:
Menh Navy/Delia Paul Ph: (215-137)

For photographs of the white ribbon distribution on Saturday, November 25, visit

Psar Thmei	8.30-9.15 am	Psar Orassey	9.30-10.15 am
Psar Olympic	10.30-11.30 am	Riverside in front of Royal Palace	4-5.30 pm