



The Culture of Peace Begins in The Family

The Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims Law has been adopted by both chambers of the Cambodian legislature. For this issue the World Bank Newsletter had the honor to interview H.E. Ing Kantha Phavi, Minister of Women's Affairs.

Q: The law against domestic violence has been adopted by both chambers: the National Assembly and the Senate. Would Your Excellency please describe how important this law is?

A: I would like to express my thanks to the World Bank's Newsletter for paying its attention to this law. The law against domestic violence and for the protection of the victims is crucial for Cambodian society. Cambodia has just emerged from a long war, lasting over three decades, which has fostered a tendency to confrontation, and a society with a culture of violence. Sometimes citizens who have disputes have not shown tolerance for one another by intensifying efforts to settle problems peacefully, but use violence instead. This is what I talk about: violence in society as well as in the family.

Having seen these problems, the Royal Cambodian Government encouraged the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) to prepare this law with the aim of improving family values, and of promoting and in-

creasing the culture of non-violence as well as the ethics, morality, virtue and compassion that we used to call the Clemencies of Buddhism, in order to encourage each

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PHOTO: TANG CHHIN SOTHY

The law aims to educate families to settle problems peacefully and give good examples to children

How the Poverty line and Poverty Rate are calculated

The World Bank is preparing a new Poverty Assessment for the Consultative Group Meeting to be held in March 2006. World Bank newsletter interviews Tim Conway, Poverty Specialist at the World Bank's Cambodia Office, about poverty rates, poverty lines and related indicators.



Tim Conway, Poverty Specialist at the World Bank office in Cambodia

Q: How is the poverty line calculated?

A: To calculate a "poverty line" requires household consumption data from a representative sample survey. For Cambodia, the latest data comes from the Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (CSES) 2004. Just under 15,000 households from throughout the country were asked questions about consumption and other important aspects of living standards. A similar survey was conducted in 1993/4.

From the consumption data collected in the CSES, the poverty line in Cambodia is calculated in the same way as in other countries. This involves first working out what food someone in Cambodia

needs to consume to meet their basic nutritional needs (2,100 calories a day). This is the *food poverty line*. Using data on household consumption collected in a sample survey (the CSES 2004), an analyst then finds how much households on the food poverty line spend on essential non-food goods and services (e.g. clothing, shelter, healthcare). These basic food and non-food allowances are added together, and give us the *poverty line*.

Q: What is the poverty line in Cambodia?

A: Separate poverty lines were identified for people living in Phnom Penh, other towns, and rural areas, reflecting different consumption patterns in these
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Cambodian family to try harder to solve problems peacefully.

This law also aims to educate families to try to settle problems peacefully and to give good examples to their children, so that the children will not engage in domestic violence after they get married. This law does not aim to punish, but to coordinate and to reconcile as much as possible. But if that fails, and if violence occurs that is deemed a penal offence, we would apply the Penal Code to punish offenders and we could also apply the Civil Code to settle these issues. This law is, therefore, a complementary one which will fill the gaps caused by other laws. I should mention that reduction of the culture of violence is part of the Royal Government's policy for the Cambodian Millennium Development Goals (CMDGs).

Q: How does violence affect society and the family?

A: Violence affects society enormously. For example, it inflicts distress on the victim's mind, inhibiting the ability to go about tasks in the community, affecting the family business as well as the economy of the community. Domestic violence is not an issue for the family alone; it is an issue for the community and the whole of society. So we have to solve it together. And there are the additional effects on the psyches of the children in the family, and the possibility that violence may set a bad example for them. Research has shown that children living in a family where violence is frequent tend

to imitate their parents when they grow up and have families of their own. Therefore we should take appropriate measures in accordance with the proverb: "Prevention is better than cure".

Q: Would Your Excellency please describe some causes of domestic violence?

A: There are many potential causes of domestic violence. The main ones are poverty, illiteracy, alcoholism, drug abuse, and inequality of relations between men and women. Some men think that after the wedding their wives belong to them. Sometimes, therefore, a husband will use violence against his wife: this is a gender inequality. The Royal Government is intensifying efforts to promote a culture of peace in society as well as in the family. If we want peace to reign in our society, we have to start with our family, move from there to the community, and finally extend the culture of peace to the whole society.

Q: Frequently we have heard of concerns about the efficiency of law enforcement. What is your reaction to these concerns?

A: I have recognized that this is the very issue we should be thinking about. However, with regard to the new law, the MoWA has been formulating plans of action to implement the Law against Domestic Violence and for the Protection of Victims with concerned ministries as well as Non-Government Organization partners.

Relevant documents the Ministry is preparing relate to dissemination of the law, and the organization of training courses for the public and competent officials. Some other documents relate to the roles and tasks of local authorities to intervene in time to rescue victims, and the new task of officials of the MoWA, acting as Justice Police: the Ministry may play a role as a plaintiff party. This work is crucial for assuring the efficiency of law enforcement.

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Q: Would Your Excellency please tell us about the role of the Ministry for Women's Affairs in implementing this law efficiently?

A: For victims to be rescued in time and offenders to be prevented from continuing to commit violent acts, it is the nearest local authority, such as the Commune Council, that should intervene. To this end, the Ministry is preparing and completing some laws by cooperating with other concerned ministries, especially the Ministry of Interior, in order to facilitate the intervention roles of local authorities in accordance with the law on commune-level management, and to draft new law on organizations relating to decentralization and deconcentration, etc.

Additionally, the MoWA, together with other concerned ministries and NGOs, is formulating a plan of action to eliminate violence, which has three components: (1) Prevention of violence, (2) Implementation of the law, and (3) Monitoring and evaluation. The preventive activities include a campaign of publicizing the law to make both citizens and local authority officials understand that people who engage in domestic violence are committing an offense. Regarding the implementation of the law, we seek to do our best to implement the law effectively by getting the close participation of concerned ministries. We have to organize training on this law for police officers and legal staff as well as officials from NGOs. The monitoring and evaluation are final stages of the process, because the law should first be implemented, then later monitored, and finally evaluated to assess whether the implementation has been successful or whether some modification of approach is needed. The results of monitoring and evaluation will be reported to the government.

In other words, the MoWA has a role in promoting the social and economic situation of women and strengthening the family values in Cambodian society; and it also has a role in coordinating and stimulating other concerned ministries to accomplish their tasks in response to the needs of women.

Q: Over the next five years, what does Your Excellency see happening with the implementation of this law?

A: As I have explained, part of the answer to this question is the plans of action designed by the Ministry for monitoring and evaluation of the new law's implementation. I can tell you that Cambodian society, especially

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three areas. When these are averaged, the national poverty line for 2004 is approximately 1,826 riels per person per day (or 9,130 riels per day for a family of five). At 2004 exchange rates, this is about \$0.45 per person per day (or \$2.25 per day for a family of five). About 80 percent of this is food; 20 percent is for non-food basic needs (clothes, housing, etc.). This reflects the reality of what households ac-

There the poverty rate fell from 39 percent in 1993/4 to 28 percent in 2004. If we apply this rate of poverty reduction to the whole country, we project back to estimate that poverty in Cambodia in 1993/4 was 47 percent (or somewhere between 45 percent and 50 percent). This means that the poverty rate has fallen by between 10 percent and 15 percent over the ten years between the 1993/4 and 2004 surveys.

This makes sense, given what we know

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Tim Conway, World Bank

tually spend on food and non-food items, as measured in the survey.

Q: What is the poverty rate in Cambodia now? What was it ten years ago?

A: The poverty rate – that is, the percentage of the population living under the poverty line – is estimated at 35 percent for

about rates of economic growth over the last decade and the pattern of distribution of that growth. It is also broadly confirmed by other indicators of improving living standards. In the 2004 survey, indicators such as quality of housing, ownership of consumer durables such as bicycles and

ize to say that 35 percent of the Cambodian population is under the poverty line.

Q: Is the World Bank proposing a lower poverty line for Cambodia than the international standard?

A: Categorically not. The poverty line and the comparison of survey data on household consumption against this line to calculate the poverty rate in Cambodia are calculated in the same way as in other countries. In dollar terms, national poverty lines in neighboring countries are the same or slightly lower than Cambodia's. Thus Cambodia's national poverty line at 1,826 riels per person per day in 2004 is roughly \$0.45. In Vietnam in the 1998 survey the poverty line was 4,900 dong per person per day (or \$0.35); in the Lao survey in 2002/3, the national poverty line was 3,065 kip per person per day (\$0.26).

Because the "normal" poverty line used internationally is often referred to as the "dollar-a-day" poverty line and the national poverty line is set at \$0.45 (1,826 riels) per day, some people feel that the national line is unfair to Cambodians.

This is not correct. The full description of the international poverty line is "\$1 per capita per day, 1990 PPP." The PPP stands for "Purchasing Power Parity". That means, the \$1 in the poverty line is the purchasing power of \$1 in the United States in 1990. When adjusted cost-of-living differences between countries, it comes out as 1,382 riels per person per day in Cambodia in 2004. To put it another way, what you could buy (and just survive on) for \$1 a day in the United States in 1990 – defined as the poverty line – you could buy (and just about survive on) for 1,382 riels per day in Cambodia in 2004. The international "dollar-a-day" poverty line is actually much lower than Cambodia's national poverty line (see Q2), and results in a lower estimated poverty rate (see Q3).

Q: What is the poverty rate for Cambodia according to the international ("dollar-a-day") poverty line?

A: In October the World Bank revised the dollar-a-day poverty estimates for East Asia. According to this, 19 percent of the Cambodian population were below the dollar-a-day rate in 2004, down from an estimated 29 percent in 1990.

Q: Why do we have two poverty lines, and so two poverty rates? Why are they different?

A: The national poverty line used see *HOW THE POVERTY* page 4



PHOTO: TANG CHHIN SOTHEY

The challenge for the Government now is to find new, sustainable sources of growth 2004. It is highest in rural areas and lowest in Phnom Penh.

It is harder to know precisely what the poverty rate was ten years ago, because the 1993/4 household survey did not cover the whole country: it was not safe for the survey teams to visit the outlying areas where the Khmer Rouge were still active. Almost all of the urban population were included in the sampling frame in 1993/4, but only 65 percent of the rural population were represented in the sample.

However, we can compare the rate of change in poverty between 1993/4 and 2004 in those parts of the country that were accessible and covered in 1993/4.

radios, and access to primary schooling have all improved relative to 1993/4.

Q: How is the poverty rate calculated?

A: The poverty rate (sometimes called the *poverty headcount* or *poverty incidence*) is calculated by comparing the distribution of household per capita consumption, collected during a random sample survey, to the poverty line. When we say the poverty rate in Cambodia in 2004 was 35 percent, we mean that 35 percent of the individuals surveyed in the 2004 CSES came from households with per capita consumption less than the poverty line. If the survey is well designed (and the CSES 2004 was), then we can general-

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cially the victims of violence, warmly welcome the adoption of the law: they understand that this law can help in settling family problems as well as broader social issues in reducing the culture of violence in society. This law contributes to assuring individual safety and social justice. It constitutes an important foundation of the Cambodian Millennium Development Goals for the reduction of all violence structures against women and for the promotion of social morality and values in Cambodian families which experience this problem.

Q: Has the Ministry had a budget sufficient to push the process you have described forward?

A: For the time being, the Ministry has received funding from Germany through German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) for preparing plans of action. GTZ has provided technical assistance and the Department for Cooperation and Economic Development of the Federal Republic of Germany (BMZ) has financed operations carried out by the MoWA and concerned institutions.

Q: To implement this law efficiently, what types of aid does the Ministry need?

A: As I say, Germany has contributed to one part of the process, especially for the activities relating to implementation of the law, by organizing training courses for concerned institutions and by strengthening technical skills for compe-

tent officials of the government and NGOs. However, other operations have not yet been financed by donor countries, such as conducting a dissemination campaign to help people throughout the country understand that domestic violence is an offence, arranging consultative forums on solving these problems, broadcasting the law through media etc... The MoWA is appealing to other donor countries to contribute their support for the activities which have not been financed yet.

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to calculate the national poverty rate in 1993/4, and the updating of this line (to allow for inflation) in 2004, have been produced specifically for Cambodia, but follow accepted standard international practice (see FAQ 1 above).

The *international* (dollar-a-day 1990 PPP) poverty line was adopted in 2000 by the international community – that is, all the Governments of the world, plus the World Bank, the UN agencies and other international bodies – as a common base, applicable across all countries, against which to *measure progress* in reducing global poverty. The first of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) commits the Governments of the world to “eradicate extreme poverty and hunger”: the first target under this goal, and the best-known MDG, is to “halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who live on less than \$1 a day (PPP).”

Discussions about poverty in Cambodia – who is poor, where the poor live, which groups are getting poorer or richer, whether inequality is becoming greater or less – should all be based on the *national* poverty line, which is designed specifically for Cambodia.

Q: Do other countries have this same difference between two poverty lines, and so two poverty rates?

A: Yes. For example, in Vietnam in 1998 the international, “dollar-a-day” poverty rate was estimated at 16.4 percent.

The poverty rate according to the national poverty line of 4,900 dong per person per day (\$0.35), based on the 1998 Vietnam Living Standards Survey, was 37 percent. In Laos the international, “dollar-a-day”

estimate in 2002 was 28.1 percent; in 2003 it was 25.8 percent. The poverty rate according to the national poverty line (3,065 kip per person per day, or \$0.26), measured in the third Lao Economic and Consumption Survey (LECS III) was 30.7 percent.

Q: Why did the World Bank revise down its estimate of dollar-a-day poverty for Cambodia in 2004 from 42 percent in April to 18.5 percent in October?

In April 2005 the Bank included an estimate of 42 percent dollar-a-day poverty in Cambodia for 2004 in a publication called the *East Asia Update*. In October 2005, in the *East Asia Update*, the Bank revised this 2004 dollar-a-day estimate significantly down, to 19 percent. Although dramatic, this revision is simply an attempt to improve the accuracy of the dollar-a-day estimates on the basis of new and better information. The critical factor that underpins the revision is that in April 2004 we were still working on projections of Cambodian household consumption based on the last available year (1997) in which there was a household survey. By October we had new data on actual household consumption from the 2004 CSES (entering, checking, and analyzing the survey data took time, so the information was only available in June). The October estimates were based on this actual (surveyed) consumption data; the previous estimate was based on a forward projection of the 1997 data.

Q: Is the rate of poverty reduction seen in Cambodia over the last ten years good, bad or average?

A: If poverty in Cambodia fell by between 1 percent and 1.5 percent per annum between 1993/4 and 2004 (from 45-50

percent to 35 percent), this is relatively good. However, it also needs to be put in context. Cambodia in 1993/4 was just coming out of over 25 years of civil conflict. It was also emerging from isolation, having been almost entirely cut off from international trade, investment and aid for two decades. Since the 1990s Cambodia has benefited from a significant influx of investment and trade (and aid) that has helped to lift growth rates to a high average of 7 percent per year.

The achievements in rapid growth and relatively modest poverty reduction between 1993/4 and 2004 need to be understood in large part as a one-off “peace dividend”: as the country was starting from a very low economic base, initial rates of improvement were likely to be rapid. Some countries emerging from similar twenty-year legacies of conflict have, with good policies in place, experienced higher rates of poverty reduction (e.g. 2.4 percent per year in Uganda between 1992 and 2000 surveys; or 2.5 percent per year in Mozambique between surveys in 1997 and 2003).

The challenge for the Government now is to find new, sustainable sources of growth which can continue to drive a rise in living standards for the poor; and to combine this with improved delivery of basic services such as healthcare and education. The challenge for donors is to help the Government do this with aid that is more coordinated and effective and better targeted to poverty reduction.

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