My Life…, My Suggestions…

Cambodia Children’s Report

compiled by:

Technically coordinated by:

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Cambodia Children and Young People Movement for Child Rights (CCYMCR):
Is an independent, impartial, non-religious and non-political network formed by children and youth led groups or organizations and individual child or youth as members working voluntarily for the sake of children in Cambodia.

Our Vision:
CCYMCR envisions Children in Cambodia receive their full rights, become good citizen, and live in happiness.

Our Mission:
Understanding, participation and the right claims of children in Cambodia through capacity strengthening, advocacy and follow up of child right implementation.

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Introduction

How is this Children’s Report compiled?

Children’s Findings and Suggestions

3.1- Children and Families
3.1.1 Parents beating and using abusive language against children
3.1.2 Parents’ lack of care and warmth for children
3.1.3 Parents forcing children to earn a living to support families

3.2- Children and Health
3.2.1 Limited child healthcare services

3.3- Children and Education
3.3.1 Parents’ failure to send children to school
3.3.2 Teachers’ punishment against children

3.4- Children and Special Protection
3.4.1 Discrimination against children
3.4.2 Children being forced into using drugs

3.5- Children and Participation
3.5.1 Limited opportunity in expressing opinions & making decisions
3.5.2 Poor access to appropriate information
The Cambodia Children and Young People Movement for Child Rights is a network of child and youth-led groups or organizations established in 2002. To date, the movement’s membership consists of 20 groups/organizations working in 16 capital-provinces around the Kingdom of Cambodia. The most important role of the movement is to disseminate and monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Cambodia.

The Cambodia Children and Young People Movement for Child Rights is pleased and proud to issue this children’s report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, “My Life..., My Suggestions...” and to submit it to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva, Switzerland, the Royal Government of Cambodia, national and international organizations as well as the civil society. Through this report, we, the representatives of the Cambodia children, would like to highlight the real situation we have been facing and to make a number of important recommendations to engage the Royal Government in solving all problems that affect the living and development of the children. It should also be noted that the Cambodian Children and Young People Movement for Child Rights in 2004 prepared and submitted the children’s report entitled, “Children’s Views on the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Cambodia 2000-2004.” However, that report was temporarily suspended because the Royal Government of Cambodia failed to submit the report on time; the government only submitted the second and third reports on the implementation of the convention on the rights of the child for the period of 2000-2007 in early 2009.

We, as children, hope that this report of ours will be considered and responded by all relevant actors including the United Nations, international community and the Royal Government of Cambodia through effective measures and practical actions to ensure that Cambodian children truly receive all those rights.
Flow Chart of the Process for Monitoring the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Cambodia

- Dec 1997: First report of the Royal Government
- Sep 1999: NGO CRC Report
- Jun 2000: UN made recommendations to government
- Dec 2004: The first Children’s Report-CCYMCR
- Feb 2009: Second and third reports of the Royal Government
- Oct 2010: The second Children’s Report-CCYMCR
2. HOW IS THIS CHILDREN’S REPORT COMPILED?

With the technical support from the Child Rights Foundation and financial support from Save the Children, the Cambodia Children and Young People Movement for Child Rights has prepared a process to compile this report as follows:

- Establishing a children and youth working group to be tasked with researching documents related to children, entering data, drafting and designing the report paper;
- Organizing a workshop on Child Rights and Children’s Participation in the Monitoring the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; developing a joint plan for providing other children with opportunities to participate and voice their concerns and recommendations;
- Holding direct consultations with children at the grassroots level in 15 capital-provinces with 440 participants aged from 9 to 17 years old with 38% of them being vulnerable children (orphans, children dropped out of school, children of soldiers at border areas, migrant children), 26% of them being labored children (garbage scavenging children, children working at brick-making establishments and rubber plantations, children selling tokens of souvenir, begging children, shoe-polishing children, children working at construction sites, children doing waged work), 21% being school children, and 15% being child victims (of violence, living with HIV/AIDS, children with disabilities, child victims of trafficking and abuses and drugs). It should be noted that 7% of all children above are ethnic minorities;
- A children and youth working group is tasked with analyzing information and data obtained from the consultation meetings at the grassroots level and research findings from other documents;
- Drafting the Children’s Report to be reviewed and adopted by the national children’s conference;
- Organizing the National Children’s Conference to discuss, verify and adopt the report. Immediately following the adoption of the Children’s Report, the Cambodia Children and Young People Movement for Child Rights has presented the report to representatives from the Royal Government, relevant national and international organizations as well as journalists;
- The children and youth working group finalized the report, and then translated it into English and submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.
Flow Chart of the Development of the Children’s Report 2010

- **Set up a report writing working group**: Jul 16, 2010
- **Collect and study other research documents related to children**: Jul-Oct 2010
- **Workshop on Child Participation in CRC Monitoring**: Jul 30-Aug 1, 2010
- **Consultations with children in 15 capital-provinces**: Aug-Sep 2010
- **Drafting the Children’s Report**: Sep-Oct 2010
- **National Children’s Conference to review & adopt the Children’s Report**: Oct 22-25, 2010
- **Submit the Children’s Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child**: Oct 29, 2010
- **Publication and Dissemination**: Nov 2010
3. CHILDREN'S FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

- Parents beating and using abusive language against children
- Parents' lack of care and warmth for children
- Parents forcing children to earn a living to support families
- Limited child healthcare services
- Parents do not send children to school
- Children do not attend school perpetually
- Parents asking children to drop out of school
- Children being punished by teachers
- Discrimination against children
- Children being forced into using drugs
- Limited opportunity in expressing opinions and making decisions
- Poor access to appropriate information
3.1.1. Parents beating and using abusive language against children

**Article 19 of the CRC:**

“States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child...”

In response to the above article, the Royal Government has made the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Victim Protection in 2005 as well as disseminated the law nationwide. However, parents or guardians still commit violence against the children often in the forms of beating and scolding etc.

The consultations with children at the grassroots level in 15 capital-provinces have revealed that among 440 children, 180 children (41%) used to be beaten by their parents and 209 children (48%) used to be cursed and scolded frequently by their parents.

**K.K.** is a 13-year-old girl living in Don Chhay village, Sdao commune, Ratanak Mondul district, Battambang province. She told that she had often been beaten by her father when he got drunk. One day, while he was cultivating land for growing mints, his friend came to ask him to go to drink and when he got back home he beat her mom, siblings and her. She said, “Suffering much pain, I run to the village chief for help, but he ignores. So, I have to continue to stand living in this situation because it becomes a habit in my family and we just can’t find any way to solve it.”

*It might be a little for you, but it is too much for me!*
We, as children, would like to suggest that:

- The Royal Government strengthens the effective enforcement of the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Victim Protection;

- The Royal Government and civil society raise awareness and educate on methods for controlling anger and peaceful giving of advice for children, and urge parents to adopt these methods in the everyday life;

- The Royal Government and civil society disseminate the rights of the child among the local authorities and have them develop a plan for continued dissemination to the people and for promoting the implementation of the rights of the child in their communities, particularly remote areas;

- The local authorities pay more attention on intervening and preventing domestic violence, especially violence against children.
3.1.2. Parents’ lack of care and warmth for children

Article 18 the CRC:

“...Parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The best interests of the child will be their basic concern...”

Regarding this issue, the Royal Government has implemented a program to provide healthcare services to young children and infants in the communities. As for education, the Royal Government has made efforts to encourage parents to send their children to school. Despite these efforts of the Royal Government as well as the civil society organizations in taking action on childcare, we have observed that some parents still do not pay attention on caring for the children’s health and nutrition, and do not encourage children to study both at school and home, and particularly they do not provide the children with warmth.

The consultations with children at the grassroots level have revealed that among the 440 children who had participated, 26% said their parents did not pay attention to them, did not provide care and affection and did not pay heed on their health, nutrition, education and equal affection for them.

N.S.N is 17 years old and she lives in Ekapheap village, Pal Hal commune, Tbeng Meanchey district, Preah Vihear province. As a soldier, her father was sent to stand by at the base and her mother went to live there with him leaving her and her small siblings behind miserably. She describes about her hardships, “I have never received love, affection, and warmth from my parents like other children do because they go to work far away leaving me and my younger siblings at home alone. They just visit home once every two to three months.”

I say what I experienced...
We, as children, would like to suggest that:

- The Royal Government and national and international organizations develop and increase awareness and education activities related to child care through various programs;

- The local authorities encourage parents to pay enough attention to the health, nutrition and education of their children and promote consultations between parents or guardians and children in order to know children’s needs and their parents’ situation;

- Parents pay increased attention to their children by spending time with them, praise and encourage them as well as give them more love and affection;
3.1.3. Parents forcing children to earn a living to support family

Article 32 the CRC:
“States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development...”

The Royal Government has so far made significant efforts to reduce child labor and to eliminate worst forms of child labor by issuing a number of PRAKAS (ministerial orders), circulars and laws and establishing a child labor department to cooperate with local and international organizations in order to implement programs in response to the above issue. However, we have observed that some children still work to earn money to support their families.

During the consultation meetings at the grassroots level, we have found that among the 440 children participated, 112 children (25%) from 6 provinces were asked to do various jobs by their parents including pulling carts across the border, doing waged work, begging, working in the rubber plantations, working at the construction sites and factories, scavenging for scraps, logging and finding firewood on the mountains.
K.C.T is a 16-year-old girl living in Srah Srang village, Banteay Srey commune, Siem Reap district, Siem Reap province. She has 9 siblings; her father is an employee of the Apsara Authority and her mother does not have any occupation. At present, she sells tokens of souvenirs to earn money to support the family. Her parents always beat her when she earns no money. Her father does not give the money he earns to the family but to buy wine to drink with his friends. Her mother plays card, and if lost, when she gets home she beats her and her younger siblings. K.C.T sells tokens of souvenirs, does the cooking and looks after her younger siblings. This has forced her to drop out of school at grade 2 when she was 13 years old. She is very upset because she could not go to school like other children and what she most wants now is the return to school and the family with warmth and affection.

Listen to my real story then act...!

We, as children, would like to suggest that:

- The Royal Government provides support to poor families in order for them to create an income-generating business to feed their families;
- The Royal Government cooperate with other NGOs and institutions to increase the extensive dissemination of the Labor Law and impact of child abuse and child labor exploitation;
- The Royal Government further strengthens the effective enforcement of the Labor Law in relation with children;
- The competence authorities hold owners of business establishments responsible for children suffered from work-related accidents and punish business owners who violate the labor law;
- The local authorities ensure that there is no document forgery or issuance of illegal birth certificates such as the ones that increase the children’s age.
3.2.1. Limited child healthcare services

Article 24 the CRC:
“States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services...”

We, as children, would like to extend our thanks to the Royal Government for its efforts to renovate and construct more health posts, health centers, and hospitals and allow for the existence of more clinics as well as to establish an equity fund to ensure equality between the poor and the rich, especially for the children.

However, according to the results of the consultation meetings at the grassroots level, 23% of the children said that hospitals were far from their houses; health centers were small, understaffed and under-equipped, and physicians used impolite words; some medicines on sale did not have quality and expired; lack of inspection on the quality of expired goods and food products with chemicals that harm people’s health, especially children’s health. These factors contributed to the alarmingly increasing rate of child mortality.
We, as children, would like to suggest that:

- The Ministry of Health strengthens the capacity of physicians and the effective implementation of professional code of ethics as well as strengthen the quality of healthcare services by equipping healthcare facilities with adequate medical equipment and medicine;

- The Ministry of Health conducts regular checking visits of the health centers to check physicians’ behavior and performance, medicine and medical equipment;

- The Royal Government establishes health centers in remote areas; provide adequate physicians, medicine and medical equipment as well as provide necessary means for transporting patients to health centers in remote areas;

- The Royal Government collaborates with local and international organizations to continue programs to provide vaccinations to children free of charge, especially in the remote areas;

- The Royal Government takes tough measures to check the quality of medicines at pharmacies, and food products and goods expired and with chemicals.
3.3.1. Parents’ failure to send children to school

**Article 28 the CRC:**
"1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

(a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;

(b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need...”

Currently, we observe that at the opening of every school year, the Royal Government and local and international organizations have conducted campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of education and encourage parents to send their children to school. However, some parents, particularly those living in remote areas, still do not send their children to school.

The results of the consultations with children in 15 capital-provinces have revealed that 10% of the children participated were not sent to school, 5% did not attend school perpetually and 4% were asked to drop out of school by their parents.

We, as children, would like to suggest that:

- The Royal Government and local and international organizations continue to widely disseminate information on the importance of education among parents;
- The Royal Government expands programs to help children and poor families in order to enable them to send their children to school;
- The local authorities urge and encourage parents to send all their children to school.
3.3.2. Teachers’ punishment against children

**Article 28 the CRC:**

“... 2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child’s human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention...”

In response to the above issue, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Kingdom of Cambodia has been pushing educational institutions to implement the Law on Education and the teachers’ professional code of ethics, which aim at promoting education quality and eliminating the practice of punishing students in school.

However, according to the results of the consultations with children at the grassroots level, 45% of the children participated said they used to receive punishment in school in various forms such as beating, scolding, standing on one leg, clearing grass, running around the school building, being thrown at with whiteboard markers or chalks.

We, as children, would like to suggest that:

- The Royal Government increases the teachers’ salary to an appropriate level and curb the soaring of goods prices that affect people’s daily lives;

- The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport continues training for teachers and widely disseminate positive teaching methodologies to avoid the practice of punishment;

- The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport conducts regular visits to monitor the learning and teaching and the implementation of the teachers’ professional code of ethics in order to ensure that no punishments are imposed on students;

- The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport takes tough measures to impose disciplinary actions on any teachers that commit wrongdoing.
3.4.1. Discrimination against children

Article 2 the CRC:
“1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child’s or his or her parent’s or legal guardian’s race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child’s parents, legal guardians, or family members.”

Regarding the above issue, we have observed that there has been dissemination of information against discrimination against all people through the media, particularly discrimination against families living with HIV/AIDS.

However, it has been seen that children are still discriminated against. The recent consultations with children at the grassroots level have shown that 27% of the children faced discrimination with regard to their situation such as poverty, racial difference, having HIV/AIDS and disability etc.
P.S.L is a 12-year-old student at a school in Bakan district, Pursat province. He has contracted HIV from his mother, who has been infected by his father. After his parents passed away, he lives with his grandmother. Villagers have known that he is infected with HIV and they don’t allow their children to play with him for fear that they might be infected. His teacher does not like him either. Such discrimination has made him sad even though he has received learning material support from an NGO. Finally, he has requested the village and commune chiefs to help explain his neighbors and other people in the community to not discriminate against him.

Your play makes me hurt for life...

We, as children, would like to suggest that:

- The Royal Government increases awareness to counter discrimination against (children living with HIV/AIDS, orphans and children with disability) through the creation of educational spots and urge people from all circles to provide children with encouragement;

- The Royal Government strengthens the implementation of child-friendly programs at schools and in the community in order to create a societal atmosphere free from discrimination;

- The Royal Government continues to regularly provide accommodation, food, financial and material support (monthly, quarterly, semi-annually or annually) to poor children of both sexes including ethnic minorities in order to ensure that they have the opportunity to receive knowledge, general education and skills like other children;

- The Royal Government provides free healthcare and medical treatment to children with disability and children living with HIV/AIDS.
3.4.2. CHILDREN BEING FORCED INTO USING DRUGS

**Article 33 the CRC:**
“States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislative, administrative, social and educational measures, to protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances as defined in the relevant international treaties, and to prevent the use of children in the illicit production and trafficking of such substances.”

In an effort to prevent and eliminate the above issue, the Royal Government has created laws, circulars and other sub-decrees aimed at checking, preventing and prohibiting children from drug use.

According to the results of the consultations with children at the grassroots level, 4% of the children participated in the consultations indicated that they used to be forced to use drugs and to carry drugs including amphetamine, wine, glue, cigarettes etc.

**L.NH.** is 9 years old and he has 5 siblings. He is the third child in a poor family. His father passed away when he was at a very young age, and facing hardships, his mother and elder sister crossed the border to work in Thailand leaving **L.NH.** and his two other younger siblings with their uncle and old grandmother.

**L.NH.**’s mother and elder sister have gone without any information. His uncle does not do anything and is a drug addict. He forced **L.NH.** to cross the border to beg in Thailand and all he earned was taken by his uncle. He even forced **L.NH.** to use drug in order to have the strength to beg since **L.NH.** was at the age of 5. He said, “Due to poverty and lack of food, and because I didn’t go to school, my grandmother took me and my younger siblings to a children’s center until today.” He added, “I feel warm here because I have someone to take care of me, I have friends and receive education that I have never had before and I think that I have a new life that will bring me a good future.”

I say what I hurt...!
We, as children, would like to suggest that:

- The Royal Government strengthens the effective enforcement of the law against the production, trafficking and use of drugs and stop the sale of addictive substance to children;

- The Royal Government establishes more education centers for children and youth who are victims of drugs separately from the education centers for the elderly and girls and provide capacity building training on the rights and how to work with children to center staff;

- The Royal Government and local and international organizations increase education and dissemination on the anti-drug law and the impact of drug use to the people and children.
3.5.1. LIMITED OPPORTUNITY IN EXPRESSING OPINIONS & MAKING DECISIONS

**Article 12 the CRC:**

“1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child...”

We, as children, would like to thank the Royal Government and local and international NGOs for providing children with the opportunity to participate in the national and international forums and other programs. However, we have observed that the children’s expression of opinions remains limited at the community level and most often their opinions do not receive attention from the adults.

Among the 440 children participated in the consultations, 238 children (54%) stated that their families did not give them opportunity to express their opinions even if those issues relate to their personal life. According to researches, children have little chance to participate in decision making in the family, school, community and society. The research paper (Youth in Local Governance “An assessment of youth engagement in Local Governance in Cambodia”) revealed that the adults and youth themselves always consider local governance as the work of the adults or public officials. The adults usually consider children as being too young to know what is right and what is wrong. In the process of developing commune/sangkat development plan, children and youth have not been invited to raise issues, vote and make any decision.
Children & Participation

We, as children, would like to suggest that:

- Commune/Sangkat Councils provide children with more opportunities to express opinions and make decision on issues related to their life and the commune development;

- The Royal Government and local and international organizations facilitate and support the organization of the national children conference at least once a year to share experiences and discuss children’s issues as well as make recommendations for the Royal Government and civil society organization to review, consider and respond;

- The Royal Government provides children with opportunity to meet once every year so that they can present to the Royal Government and civil society their issues and recommendations for improving children’s conditions;

- The Royal Government and local and international organizations provide spiritual, material and financial support to the activities implemented by the children and connect national level children’s groups/clubs with those at the village, commune/ sangkat, provincial levels in order to strengthen children’s participation at all level in a quality manner.
3.5.2. Poor access to appropriate information

Article 17 the CRC:

“States Parties recognize the important function performed by the mass media and shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health. To this end, States Parties shall: (a) Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child and in accordance with the spirit of article 29;...”

With regards to the dissemination of and access to information, the Royal Government has encouraged an open and diversified media including a children’s newspaper (My News) and youth journalists’ group (SKY). Meanwhile, the Royal Government has taken some measures to monitor and prevent the spread of information that affect children.

However, it is a regret that such information has yet to reach remote areas. The consultations with children at the grassroots level revealed that 45% of the children participated in the consultations never received any useful information for themselves.

We, as children, would like to suggest that:

- The Royal Government takes immediate measures to eliminate the display of pornographic and brutal movies that adversely affect children and the society as a whole;

- The Royal Government and local authorities introduce the use of information board at schools or in public areas, particularly in remote areas in order to provide relevant information to children;

- The Royal Government and local and international organizations increase children-related programs to enable them to have access to information, which is appropriate and useful for the children's development.
Our future relies on YOU ALL!

Help Us Today, We’ll Help Other Children Tomorrow!