

# PURPLE BRICS

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## AIDS EDUCATION IN DRIVING SCHOOLS AND BUSES

In an effort to raise public awareness on HIV and AIDS and to bring the country's AIDS prevalence down from 0.9%, the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation has started cooperating with both state and private driving schools. It is also finding partners or donors to produce some spots to be shown on public buses.

In his session on the second day of the three-day 3rd National AIDS Conference, Mr. Vann Than, official from Ministry of Public Works and Transportation, said that as part of its National Operational Plan, the ministry plans to have such projects nationwide. "Between 1,500 and 2,000 people get licenses from the driving schools every month just only in Phnom Penh capital. This is a bit huge number. It is therefore a good opportunity to raise awareness for them. If the driving students fail to answer the questions on AIDS, they cannot pass the exam to get the license," he said. There are more than 10 driving schools in Phnom Penh, and most of them have their branches in provinces, he added.

According to Mr. Vann Than, the ministry also wants to have a project to produce spots on HIV and AIDS and the spots will be shown on buses taking passengers from Phnom Penh to provinces. "Each bus has VCD and DVD players. So the drivers can show the spots to their passengers, a big part of raising awareness on the epidemics and its effect. But such project we need partners and donors."

There are several private public transportations and thousands of passengers travel on them daily, according to Mr. Vann Than. (By Chhay Sopal)

## KHANA OFFERS AWARD TO CAMBODIAN JOURNALISTS



H.E Sok An, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Council of Ministers, hands over an appreciation letter and a symbol of US\$1,000 bill to one of the three winners. H.E Dr. Mom Bun Heng (left), Health Ministry Secretary of State.

On 12 September at the closing of the 3rd National AIDS Conference, KHANA offered the "Purple Award" to three Cambodian print journalists for their best articles on HIV and AIDS. The winners got US\$1,000 with a Parker pen and an appreciation letter each and the Award was honorably handed over by H.E Sok An, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Council of Ministers.

The award aims at encouraging the Cambodian journalists to actively participate in reducing the impact of HIV and AIDS through their news articles. According to the terms of the competition, the articles must address categories related to HIV and AIDS, such as increasing awareness and education, reducing stigma and discrimination, and showing compassion to People Living with HIV and those who are affected by AIDS in the country.

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# SUCCESSFUL NATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE WITH LOTS OF COMMITMENTS

After six months of preparation, hundreds of participants gathered in Phnom Penh from September 10 to 12 to discuss the progress made in responding to HIV and AIDS and other related issues in the country, as well as to consider the future challenges and solutions. Participants included policymakers, AIDS and Drug activists from both governmental and non-governmental organizations, People Living with HIV, Sex Workers, and Men who Have Sex with Men.

The theme of the conference, "A Greater Multisectoral Response to HIV and AIDS: Towards Universal Access in Cambodia," was selected to represent the collective national commitment to further address and overcome the challenges faced with HIV and AIDS.



Dr. Oum Sopheap (left), KHANA Executive Director, welcomes Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Council of Ministers His Excellency Sok An (right) at the first day of the conference.



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Council of Ministers His Excellency Sok An (middle) receives monthly bulletin "Purple Briefs" and CDs from KHANA staff at KHANA booth at the conference.

occurred both inside and outside the meetings and breakout sessions, as participants explored the dozens of posters and booths displayed by NGOs and other

affected communities in both the planning of the Conference and the event itself, as moderators, entertainment and hospitality.

The Opening Ceremony was presided over by His Excellency Sok An, representative of Prime Minister Hun Sen, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Council of Ministers; Princess Norodom Mary Randdaridh, the Chair of NAA; Mr. Tony Lisle, the Country Coordinator of UNAIDS, Cambodia; Ms. Erin Sato, the Mission Director of USAID/ Cambodia; and others. Day Two began with a plenary session on the current situation of HIV/AIDS in Cambodia, followed by another session entitled "Launching and Sharing the HIV/AIDS Tools in Cambodia" and an afternoon of breakout sessions. The day ended with a satellite session in which participants discussed their experiences and lessons learned in management and implementation of funding from the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

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Dr. Oum Sopheap (second from right), KHANA Executive Director, welcomes journalists on 9 September at the pre-press conference at KHANA Conference Hall on the process of organizing the "3rd National AIDS Conference". H.E. Dr. Teng Kunthy (third from right), NAA Secretary General.

The Conference Co-Chairs H.E. Dr. Teng Kunthy, Secretary General of the National AIDS Authority (NAA), and Dr. Oum Sopheap, KHANA Executive Director, led 18 government agencies and non-governmental organizations in organizing the Conference. It could not have been done without the support of a range of organizations, government sources and outside donations, with sponsorship totaling more than US\$84,000.

During the two and a half days of the conference the exchange of information

organizations to highlight their achievements. The Conference itself reflected its theme through a participatory process that involved



Special interview between Dr. Oum Sopheap (left), KHANA Executive Director, and CTN news anchor at the final day of the conference.



Special interview between H.E. Dr. Teng Kunthy (right), NAA Secretary General, with NTK news reporter at the final day of the conference.

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A satellite session discussing and sharing of exchange learning on the management and implementation of funding from the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.



Princess Norodom Mary Randdaridh (right), the Chair of NAA, visits KHANA booth and talks to KHANA staff member.

The final day of the Conference addressed the challenges of “What’s Next?,” beginning with a plenary on future responses and continuing with a full day of breakout sessions. The Conference closed with a wrap up session presented by the Co-Chairs of the Scientific and by the Co-Chair of the Conference and the Permanent Deputy

Chair of NAA. The final speaker was His Excellency Sok An and the evening ended with an award ceremony honoring three selected

journalists from the local print media, who were recognized for their contribution to raising public awareness on HIV/AIDS with a certificate of appreciation and a thousand US dollars each.

The Third National AIDS Conference, with over 900 participants, represented a unique opportunity for stakeholders to come together and share experiences and lessons learned while also considering future



Delegates stand for the Cambodian National Anthem the conference opening ceremony. (Front row from left) Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Council of Ministers His Excellency Sok An, his wife, and Princess Norodom Mary Randdaridh. (Second row from right) Ms. Erin Sato, the Mission Director of USAID/Cambodia, and Mr. Tony Lisle, the Country Coordinator of UNAIDS/Cambodia.

challenges and solutions in addressing HIV and AIDS in Cambodia.

The 4th National AIDS Conference is planned to be organized in 2010 in order to respond to a recent revision of the National Strategic Plan II 2006-2010 (NSP II) and the integration of the NSP II with the Royal Government’s Rectangular Strategy, the National Strategic Development Plan, and the Cambodian Millennium Development Goals.

*( By Chhay Sopha)*



Orphans dance to welcome delegates at the opening ceremony at the 3rd National AIDS Conference.



MSM dance performance at the first-day dinner reception

**Continued from p.1: KHANA offers Award to Cambodian journalists**

Twenty four articles from fifteen local working journalists were sent to KHANA for competition. The articles had already been printed in their newspapers and magazines between 1 December, 2006 and 31 October, 2007. According to the original plan, the award ceremony was to have taken place at the World AIDS Day of 1 December, 2007. It was delayed, however, as KHANA wanted to organize it for the 3rd National AIDS Conference.

Six judges -- three are AIDS activists from both governmental and non-governmental organizations and three others are professional journalists -- properly and fairly marked the articles in three steps and on different

criteria: general concepts on HIV and AIDS based on accuracy, language use, journalism writing craft, using news sources and vocabulary.

Mr. Puy Kea, a Phnom Penh-based correspondent of Japan’s Kyodo News and one of the judges, said that, though the three selected articles do not reach international journalism standards, they represent the best articles on AIDS among the 24 articles submitted. He said that this indicates the first step that the Cambodian journalists take part in competition. “Learning from this competition, I think journalists will take their past experience and try their best for the next competition,” he added.

It is the first time that KHANA offered award to journalists since its establishment in 1996.

*( By Chhay Sopha)*



Three winners hold their appreciation letters at the awarding ceremony. The woman in the middle is a mother of one of the winners who was not available to attend the ceremony.

# GOVT. OFFICIAL: PROSTITUTION CRACKDOWN AND AIDS PREVENTION NEED TO BE RECONCILED



Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Council of Ministers Sok An gives his remark at the closing 3rd National AIDS Conference.

In a demonstration of his understanding of some of the challenges in responding to HIV that have arisen due to the country's new law on "Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation", Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister Sok An has urged AIDS workers to send a joint-appropriate request to the royal government to help review the law.

Speaking in his closing remarks on the final day of the three-day 3rd National AIDS Conference on 12 September, H.E Sok An, who is also Minister of the Council of Ministers, said he really understands the difficulties that strict implementation of the law causes for AIDS workers who work for HIV prevention through condom use

The anti-trafficking law was launched on 15 February this year 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 of a few NGOs, since the inception of the law many brothels have closed and sex workers are in hiding while people are afraid of talking openly about or displaying condoms. The reports said such law enforcement affects the 100 % of condom use program, and may lead to the widespread of HIV and AIDS. Some sex workers also made complaints that they were arrested by local police and asked for money for their releases.

On 4 June, a group of sex workers gathered in Phnom Penh to urge the government and lawmakers to revise the law. As a result of this law, they said, sex workers are being arrested, detained, fined and forced out of their jobs. 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.

In his reaction, H.E Sar Kheng, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, said that sex workers had to prove that his police had committed such acts in order for the ministry to take legal action to punish them.

Based on the country's roper custom, culture, reputation and dignity, Deputy Prime Minister So An said, prostitution is unacceptable. He, however, 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".

Sok An said he also learnt that police had arrested some women who have condoms as police suspected that they are 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 for crackdown on prostitution that does not affect HIV prevention.

Sok An's reaction was made after Ms. Erin Soto, Mission Director of USAID/Cambodia, had mentioned in her opening remark at the first day of the conference that the 100% condom use program would only remain effective if "condoms are available in all entertainment establishment". She said cooperation is needed to "ensure implementation of the new anti-trafficking legislation does not hinder the continued success of HIV prevention program".

Sok An compared the law enforcement and HIV prevention to taking medicine for health. "If we take much Aspirin to release headache, it can affect stomach. It is the same. If we strictly implement the law it can affect HIV prevention. Therefore, prostitution crackdown and AIDS prevention must go together. While we are keeping the country's cultural value, we also want to have HIV prevention in the country at the same time". ( *By Chhay Sophal* )

## UNAIDS OFFICIAL: PREVENTION IS URGENTLY NEEDED IN CAMBODIA

At Cambodia's 3rd National AIDS Conference in Phnom Penh in September, Tony Lisle, UNAIDS Country Coordinator to Cambodia, said AIDS prevention in the country is the key to stopping new infections, and without it the country will face a crisis in treatment in the long run.

"The implications of HIV prevention failure are clear: unless we act now, treatment queues will get longer and longer and it will become more and more difficult to get anywhere near universal access to antiretroviral therapy," Tony said in his opening remark at the three-day conference on 10-12 September. He said that, though the treatment imperative remains as strong as ever, the best way in the long run to stop people from getting AIDS is to reduce new infections "in the first place."

Tony affirmed that the Cambodians aged 10-24 represent about 36% of the country's population, or 4.6 million people, and need innovative prevention. He also said that the country's vulnerable groups, such as sex workers, men who have sex with men and drug users, are at high risk and prevention must be improved. "Cambodia continues

to witness serious concentrated epidemics among these populations. We are now seeing patterns of 'double or triple risk' behaviour; for instance MSM and sex workers who inject drugs and who also sell sex to men and women. Additionally, HIV prevention coverage for all of these populations remains unacceptably low."

Tony said IEC, posters and billboards are not going to reach the target groups. He argued that "social and behavioural communications and sex education programming need to be relevant and innovative; only then will we be able to establish the foundation for generation of HIV-Free adults".

The most effective way to achieve effective prevention is through the 100% condom use program. Speaking in his open remarks, H.E. Sok An, Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Council of Ministers also urged promotion of the 100% condom use program.

In her speech at the Conference, Erin Soto, Mission Director of USAID/Cambodia, expressed her appreciation of the Cambodian government for its close work with "the donor community, civil society



Tony Lisle, UNAIDS Country Coordinator to Cambodia, delivers his remark at the 3rd National AIDS Conference on 10 September while H.E. Sok An (far left), Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Council of Ministers, looks on.

and NGOs, implemented the 100% Condom Use Program, which is saving lives." She said the next step for the Cambodian government is "to ensure the sustainability of its HIV/AIDS programs through increased budget allocation".

Though the rate of Cambodian adult prevalence has declined from 2% in 1998 to 0.9% in 2006, AIDS experts warned that if prevention is not taken as a priority the country could see a second wave of infections. Over 29,000 Cambodian people are now taking ARV medication. ( *By Chhay Sophal* )