

## **“Cure the problem not the people”: Landmark report on LGBT rights in Cambodia presents facts, experiences, and recommendations**

PHNOM PENH (7 August 2014) – Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Cambodia continue to face abuse and discrimination at home, at school, in the workplace and in the media. LGBT rights advocates are calling protection from ill treatment and for equal opportunities, according to the first comprehensive report of its kind released today.

According to the report’s author, Vicente Salas, “Cambodia is a neutral country for LGBT persons: neither punitive nor positively affirming”. While LGBT behaviour is not criminalized in Cambodia, as it is elsewhere, Cambodian laws and policies are also silent about LGBT persons and rights, the report notes. There is no anti-discrimination legislation or sanctions for those who violate the rights of LGBT persons, or reference to inheritance, tax or family rights facing LGBT persons.

Many LGBT persons reported rejection by their families, or subjection to such treatment as forced marriages, attempted ‘cures’ for being LGBT, and mental and physical abuse. Such treatment prompted many LGBT persons to run away, or resulted in psychological issues including depression and increased suicidal tendencies.

The OHCHR Representative in Cambodia, Wan-Hea Lee, cited in her opening remarks, a 2011 global study conducted by OHCHR, according to which, “83 countries still criminalize LGBT behaviour, seven countries have a death penalty for same sex relations; fewer than 50 countries punish anti-gay discrimination in full or in part and only 19 countries have banned discrimination based on gender identity.” “There is clearly much that needs to be done,” she said, adding, “I look forward to seeing the report used by all, to cure the problem, not the people.”

“This report highlights many legal and policy opportunities for national and local governments to work together to better protect and empower Cambodia’s LGBT community,” said United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission Director Rebecca Black. “Supportive laws to combat discrimination that are implemented and well understood at the community level will enable LGBT persons to fully participate in social activities and contribute greatly to the development of Cambodia”, she added.

“This country report is the culmination of a process of consultations, research, and a national dialogue that we began last fall with the launch of ‘Being LGBT in Asia’ programme in Cambodia. This report provides a comprehensive overview of the situation facing LGBT persons and civil society organizations in the country. UNDP hopes that the findings and recommendations contained in it will be used by community organizations, government agencies, and development partners to better inform future LGBT and human rights programming in the country,” quoted by Saurav Jung Thapa, Technical Officer – LGBT and Human Rights, UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre, Bangkok, Thailand.

Claire Van der Vaeren, UN Resident Coordinator, Cambodia commended OHCHR Cambodia, UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre, and USAID for producing the landmark country report. “Promoting LGBT rights is part of a broader development and human rights agenda pursued by the United Nations in Cambodia and throughout the world. It is only when marginalized populations, including sexual and gender minorities, are included in the development framework that we’ll achieve the goal, as set out in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of all human beings enjoying their rights and freedoms without

distinction of any kind. I join the Secretary-General and other senior leaders in calling for equal rights for LGBT persons in Cambodia,” she said.

The first ever-comprehensive report entitled ‘Being LGBT in Asia: The Cambodia Country Report’ on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights in Cambodia was launched on 7 August, 2014 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR Cambodia), in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme Asia-Pacific Regional Centre (UNDP APRC) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The report provides an overview of the LGBT rights in Cambodia related to laws and policies, social and cultural attitudes, religion, family affairs, education and schooling, work and employment, community and society, health, media and recommendations for the future.

This country report is a product of a broader initiative, ‘Being LGBT in Asia’, which was launched in December 2012. It is the first-of-its-kind Asia-wide learning activity carried out with Asian grassroots LGBT organizations and community leaders alongside USAID and UNDP. In Cambodia, it has additionally partnered with OHCHR. With a focus on eight countries – Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam – the initiative examines LGBT lived experiences from a development and rights perspective.

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### **About ‘Being LGBT in Asia’ Initiative**

*‘Being LGBT in Asia: A Participatory Review and Analysis of the Legal and Social Environment for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Civil Society’ is a joint initiative undertaken by UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre and USAID Regional Development Mission Asia together with grassroots LGBT organizations and community leaders to understand the challenges faced by LGBT persons in Asia. The initiative promotes understanding of the challenges LGBT persons face in terms of stigma and discrimination and steps toward LGBT-inclusive development within USAID, UNDP and development partners through research reports and multimedia products. In Cambodia, the initiative has partnered with OHCHR country office.*

To read the full report, please visit,

[http://asia-pacific.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/library/hiv\\_aids/being-lgbt-in-asia--cambodia-country-report](http://asia-pacific.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/library/hiv_aids/being-lgbt-in-asia--cambodia-country-report)

More on Being LGBT in Asia

[beinglgbtinasia.crowdmap.com/page/index/1](http://beinglgbtinasia.crowdmap.com/page/index/1)

[www.facebook.com/beinglgbt.inasia](https://www.facebook.com/beinglgbt.inasia)

About LGBT rights in the United Nations system

Combating discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity -

[www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Discrimination/Pages/LGBT.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Discrimination/Pages/LGBT.aspx)

United Nations for LGBT equality: UN Free and Equal – [www.unfe.org/en](http://www.unfe.org/en)

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