



# ACTIVITY REPORT

## Cambodia

### CSO submission workshop

12-13 March 2018

#### Timeline for UPR engagement in the current cycle





## 1. Introduction



On 12-13 March 2018, some 70 participants joined the *Civil society submission workshop*, co-organised by *Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)*, *Office in Cambodia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)* and *UPR Info* in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The event brought together urban and rural human rights defenders working on a broad scope of human rights issues. CCHR and OHCHR staff contributed with their expertise to agenda sessions, as did representatives from the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ). The objective of the two-day workshop was to equip national CSOs to submit joint CSO submissions containing action-oriented, specific and relevant recommendations prior to Cambodia's 3<sup>rd</sup> UPR (January 2019). The workshop stressed the need to base submissions on credible first-hand evidence, and encouraged coalition-building and information-sharing amongst national civil society to increase their impact prior to the review.

The event represents the first step in a series of UPR activities to be undertaken by *UPR Info* and its partner organisation CCHR, as part of the [in-country programme](#) for Cambodia (2018-2019).

## 2. Activity

### 2.1. Overview

On the first day, the workshop was opened by welcome remarks from Mr Simon Walker, *OHCHR* Country Representative, Ms Sopheap Chak, Executive Director at *CCHR* and Mr Hans Fridlund, *UPR Info* Programme Manager. Each speaker underscored the need for concerted efforts from civil society to ensure that their concerns will be reflected in the upcoming review. The convening power of *CCHR*, as evidenced by the high number of participants, was also applauded and set the workshop off to a positive start.

The first segment of the Day 1 was devoted to a comprehensive introduction to the Universal Periodic Review. Led by Ms Aoife Hegarty, *UPR Info* Programme Manager, the presentation situated the UPR within the broader framework of the UN human rights system, described the phases of each cycle and outlined the roles of different stakeholders. Achievements resulting from UPR implementation were shared and the complementarity between the UPR, other human rights bodies and the SDGs was highlighted. The majority of participants had not previously engaged with the mechanism, which resulted in an interactive discussion around how to best utilise its entry points in Cambodia.

Highlights of Day 1 included a panel session with *CCHR* and *OHCHR* to discuss the involvement of national stakeholders in the UPR since the last review in 2014, and priorities for civil society in the preparation phase of Cambodia's third review. The panel speakers included Ms Sopheap Chak, Executive Director at *CCHR*, Ms Cybele Hauper, Head of Civil society and Fundamental Freedoms and Mr Ton Vong, Rule of law unit at *OHCHR*. Participants benefitted from a thorough update on the role of *OHCHR* in the UPR process, and the support it provides to national stakeholders. The importance for CSOs to build consensus around suggested recommendations through multi-stakeholder consultations, and the value of cross-thematic joint submissions were also noted. Questions from the floor prompted a conversation on the potential impact on the UPR process of the elections in July 2018, and how to most effectively share responsibilities when drafting joint submissions.

After lunch, Mr Kingsley Abbott, Senior International Legal Advisor at *ICJ*, provided a compelling presentation based on his experience from supporting Thai CSOs in the submission stage. His timely presentation was packed with good practices on national and international advocacy strategies to influence recommendations and the implementation process. Mr Abbott reminded participants that the successful UPR engagement by Thai CSOs can be replicated in Cambodia, thus boosting the confidence in the room.

During the workshop, *UPR Info* provided three main technical sessions to improve UPR knowledge amongst civil society stakeholders:

- Effective engagement at the UPR; creating long-term UPR strategies and a timeline of engagement for Cambodia;
- Technical training on the content, format and process of writing UPR submissions; and

- Advocacy strategies: preparing advocacy factsheets; encouraging States to make SMART recommendations.

On the request of participants, Day 2 started with a presentation of [UPR Info's database](#). The multiple search functions available and ways to disaggregate data was introduced, illustrating its usefulness in the process of developing CSO submissions and advocacy strategies. The next sessions were devoted to practical group work. Based on their own experiences and preferences, participants from different CSOs divided themselves into 8 thematic clusters:

- Gender/women/SOGIE/LGBTIQ
- Minorities and Indigenous Peoples
- Access to Justice
- Elections
- Land and Natural Resources
- Labour rights
- Public health
- Rights of the child

During the plenary feedback session, each Group Rapporteur presented four draft recommendations. A wide range of issues were addressed, including: freedom of assembly; abolishment of mandatory registration for trade unions and CSOs; compensation to landless persons; illegal logging; legalisation to allow for same-sex marriage; gender-responsive budgeting; protection of children of migrant workers; press and internet freedom; alignment of cybercrime law with freedom of expression; the rights of persons living with HIV/AIDS to access adequate health services; racial discrimination; and overcrowding in prisons and detention centres. Based on the wealth of questions and comments triggered by each presentation, it was evident that the interactive session was popular among participants. It also made a strong case for a joint cross-sectoral submission as participants provided information on issues addressed by other groups. It was furthermore encouraging to note that the several presentations highlighted the mutually reinforcing nature between their suggested recommendations and SDGs. Many groups had used *UPR Info's* database to research whether their topic had been addressed in past reviews, and phrased their recommendations in accordance with the SMART formula.

## 2.2. Achievements

The high number of CSO participants, encompassing a significant proportion of newcomers to the UPR, demonstrated the importance attached to the third cycle by national civil society. In this light, the workshop succeeded in: kick-starting the CSO submission processes; introducing activities that allow civil society to advocate for their recommendations as well as to facilitate their sustained UPR engagement after the review. On the margins of the workshop *CCHR*, *OHCHR*, and *UPR Info* discussed how to tailor-made support to national stakeholders based

on their capacities and needs. This tripartite partnership triggered by the workshop provides a fruitful foundation for next steps.

Considering that no LGBTIQ recommendations were made to Cambodia in past cycles, the work which started at the event towards inclusion of such recommendations in the next review is of paramount importance. In this vein, local organisations working on the topic has been connected to international CSO specialising on LGBTIQ human rights to provide further support.

The workshop succeeded in;

- ✓ Introducing the Universal Periodic Review to newcomers from across Cambodia;
- ✓ Sharing regional good practices from CSOs engagement with the UPR;
- ✓ Laying the foundation for joint CSO submissions through the establishment of eight thematic groups;
- ✓ Introducing *UPR Info's* database as a tool for strategic advocacy;
- ✓ Introducing national actors to key international stakeholders (international NGOs and UN agencies);

### 2.3. Lessons learnt

It will be important to review what can be done to enable gender balance in future activities, and to bolster active participation of women in agenda sessions. To ensure simultaneous translation of high quality, additional interpreters must be recruited in next steps. Several Embassies are keen to support the UPR work of CSOs and must be engaged in the run-up to the In-country Pre-session (November 2018).

## 3. Way forward

It will be important to decide whether each of the thematic groups contribute to a joint cross-sectoral submission and/or submit a joint submission on behalf of the respective group. The decision on which route to follow must be based on consultations between each Group Rapporteur and the members of their respective cluster. In the meanwhile, each Group Rapporteur is expected to submit the roadmap which they worked on during the workshop to *UPR Info*. This will constitute the baseline for the CSO submission/s. *CCHR*, *OHCHR* and *UPR Info* will continue to discuss the potential of conducting additional activities to finalise the submissions ahead of the deadline on 12 July. In November 2018, an In-country Pre-session will enable national CSOs to discuss the human rights situation in Cambodia, and share their suggested recommendations with resident diplomats two months before its third UPR in January 2019.

## 4. Testimonies

Contributors have been guaranteed anonymity.

*This is the first time we engage in the UPR. We originally joined the discussion on a thematic basis to look at SRHR and SOGI rights. This workshop now offer us an opportunity to engage in a broader discussion across different issues. We have been able to learn about the UPR, and we really see the potential of this mechanism. Instead of competing with one another, it is important that civil society comes together in order to consolidate a joint common position. **We must learn from each other, and work together for justice and equality.***

*The workshop has offered civil society an opportunity to come together and to increase their knowledge of the UPR. It has also offered a space to create a coherent approach for engagement with the UPR. I hope that civil society will **undertake strong advocacy activities at the international level, even though the situation is difficult in Cambodia at this time.***

*This workshop means a lot to civil society in general, which importantly includes organisations working on civil and political rights, as well as those working on economic, social and cultural rights, and for specific groups such as women, children and others. **The workshop offers a platform for different organisations to network, and to decide on a common strategy to identify priority human rights issues to be raised at Cambodia's third UPR.** Civil society can also share information on what actions have been taken to since Cambodia's last review. It is hoped that UPR will open the door for civil society and the Government to work as partners.*

The UPR is very new for me. I am very happy to see the kind of platform offered by today's workshop. **Learning from the best practices raised in the presentations, it gives me hope to engage with the UPR for the first time.** I hope that the recommendations prepared by civil society will be reflected at Cambodia's UPR and implemented by the Government.

"This is my first time to have a chance to participate in the UPR. I see it as an important means to monitor State commitments to human rights. **I am particularly interested to learn how small organisations can influence UPR recommendations.** In Cambodia, even though there has been improvement in human rights, we are still facing constraints and challenges. I hope that freedom of speech and the rule of law will be promoted in the UPR, as well as a more participatory political process."

## Annex 1: Agenda

# CIVIL SOCIETY SUBMISSION WORKSHOP IN PREPARATION OF THE THIRD UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW OF CAMBODIA

12-13 March 2018  
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

DAY 1 – 12 March	
08.00 – 08.30	<b>Registration</b>
	Welcome and Opening Remarks
08:30 - 09:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cambodian Center for Human Rights</li> <li>• Office in Cambodia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)</li> <li>• UPR Info</li> </ul>
Session 1: Effective engagement at the UPR	
09:00-10:30	<p><b>Objective:</b> <i>To introduce the UPR to newcomers; identifying where the UPR fits within the UN's human rights framework; demonstrate how CSOs can utilise the UPR to further their human rights objectives; effective CSO strategies; timeline of engagement for Cambodia's UPR.</i></p> <p><b>Facilitator</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UPR Info</li> </ul> <p>(20 minutes Questions &amp; Answers [Q&amp;A])</p>
10:30 – 10:45	<b>Tea Break</b>
Session 2: Panel discussion: Update on the UPR in Cambodia	
10:45 – 11:30	<p><b>Objective:</b> <i>To hear experiences of national stakeholders in the UPR process; what developments have happened since the previous cycle; what are the priorities of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle</i></p> <p>Moderator: Hans Fridlund, UPR Info</p> <p><b>Speakers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office in Cambodia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)</li> <li>• Cambodian Center for Human Rights</li> </ul> <p>(15 minutes each, followed by Questions &amp; Answers [Q&amp;A])</p>
Session 3: Regional civil society experiences from UPR submissions	



11:30 – 12:30	<p><b>Objective:</b> <i>The learn from, and be inspired by, experiences from Civil Society Organizations (CSO) in the region developing CSO UPR submissions.</i></p> <p><b>Facilitator</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UPR Info</li> <li>• International Commission of Jurists</li> </ul> <p>(15 minutes each, followed by Questions &amp; Answers [Q&amp;A])</p>
12:30 – 13:30	<b>Lunch Break</b>
<b>Session 4: CSO submissions to Cambodia's 3<sup>rd</sup> UPR</b>	
13:30 – 15:00	<p><b>Objective:</b> <i>Technical training on CSO submissions including deadlines; format; content; SMART recommendations; matrices; annexes etc. Identifying the role of individual versus joint submissions. Building coalitions; best practices</i></p> <p><b>Facilitator</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UPR Info</li> </ul> <p>(20 minutes Q &amp; A)</p>
15:00 – 15:15	<b>Tea Break</b>
<b>Session 5: Establishment of thematic groups</b>	
15:15 – 16:15	<p><b>Objective:</b> <i>Establishing thematic groups that will begin developing the joint submission. A Group Rapporteur will be selected for each group.</i></p> <p><b>Facilitators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cambodian Center for Human Rights</li> <li>• Office in Cambodia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights</li> </ul>
<b>Session 6: Submission structure</b>	
16:15 – 17:00	<p><b>Objective:</b> <i>The thematic groups establishes a timeline for the drafting process, including identifying structure, content, SMART recommendations etc.</i></p> <p><b>Facilitators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cambodian Center for Human Rights</li> <li>• Office in Cambodia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights</li> <li>• UPR Info</li> </ul>
17:00 – 17:15	<b>Wrap up of Day 1</b>
<b>DAY 2 – 13 March</b>	
09:00 - 09:15	<p><b>Recap: Quiz on themes discussed the previous day, additional inputs</b></p> <p><b>Facilitators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cambodian Center for Human Rights</li> <li>• UPR Info</li> </ul>
<b>Session 6 continued: Submission structure</b>	
09:15 – 11:30	<p><b>Objective:</b> <i>The thematic groups establishes a timeline for the drafting process, including identifying structure, content, SMART recommendations etc.</i></p> <p><b>Facilitators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cambodian Center for Human Rights</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office in Cambodia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights</li> <li>• UPR Info</li> </ul>
<b>11:30 – 11.45</b>	<b>Tea Break</b>
	<b>Session 6 continued: Submission structure</b>
<b>11:45 – 12:30</b>	<p><b>Objective:</b> <i>The thematic groups establishes a timeline for the drafting process, including identifying structure, content, SMART recommendations etc.</i></p>
<b>Facilitators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cambodian Center for Human Rights</li> <li>• Office in Cambodia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights</li> <li>• UPR Info</li> </ul>
<b>12:30 – 13:30</b>	<b>Lunch break</b>
	<b>Session 7: Plenary presentations</b>
<b>13:30 – 15:00</b>	<p><b>Objective:</b> <i>Group Rapporteur from each group presents the roadmap for thematic submission. Group feedback &amp; suggestions.</i></p>
<b>Facilitators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cambodian Center for Human Rights</li> <li>• Office in Cambodia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights</li> <li>• UPR Info</li> </ul> <p>(Depending on number of thematic groups, each Rapporteur will have approximately 10 minutes to present, followed by feedback)</p>
	<b>Session 8: After the submission: Advocacy strategies</b>
<b>15:00 - 16:00</b>	<p><b>Objective:</b> <i>Discuss the finalization, future workshops and validation of the submission, UPR Info's timeline of engagement in Cambodia; Introduction to UPR Advocacy Factsheets; modalities of the UPR Pre-sessions in Cambodia and Geneva; best practices from coalitions</i></p>
<b>Facilitators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UPR Info</li> </ul>
<b>16:00 – 16:15</b>	<b>Wrap up of Day 2</b>

## Annex 2: Group roadmap

### UPR submission drafting: Group roadmaps

#### Introductory questions

1. What is the human rights focus area(s) of your group?
2. How many organisations are involved in this group (please list)?
3. Who will be the Group Rapporteur (*the person responsible for coordinating the submission*)?

#### UPR submission: content

4. Give **four** examples of the type of SMART recommendations you are thinking to include in the submission.
5. Looking at *UPR Info's* database (<https://www.upr-info.org/database/>), have other countries made similar recommendations to Cambodia on your issues? If yes, who?
6. Were the recommendations supported or noted by Cambodia (you will find this information in the database, <https://www.upr-info.org/database/>)?
7. Provide any information/data you have on what actions have been taken to implement these recommendations, if any (*this will help you fill in the section "Updates since last review"*):

#### Coordination for finalising the submission

8. What are the next coordination steps that will take place amongst the group?
9. When will the Group Rapporteur circulate the draft report to the other members of the group?
10. How long will the members of the group have to provide final comments and changes?



Promoting and strengthening  
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## Contact

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UPR Info  
Rue de Varembe 3  
1202 Geneva  
Switzerland



Website <http://www.upr-info.org>



Phone: + 41 (0) 22 321 77 70  
Fax: + 41 (0) 22 321 77 71



General enquiries  
[info@upr-info.org](mailto:info@upr-info.org)



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