

Voices for Gender Equality

JOINT STATEMENT



Phnom Penh, March 8, 2019

JOINT STATEMENT: On International Women's Day 2019, CSOs call on the Royal Government of Cambodia to address systemic women's rights violations

Phnom Penh, 8 March 2019 – On the occasion of International Women's Day 2019, we, the undersigned civil society organizations, urge the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) to take action to address the following key challenges to women in Cambodia:

- 1) Limited gender-responsive funding in local and national budgets;
- 2) Restrictions of the rights of women human rights defenders (WHRDs); and
- 3) Limited access to justice, especially in domestic violence cases.

We commend the RGC on including many civil society groups in the first consultation meeting to develop a new action plan on violence against women and girls and on indicating their intention to focus on the needs of disadvantaged groups, including lesbians, in [developing](#) new gender policies in 2019. However, past policies have not included clear costing for dedicated funding from the RGC, necessitating non-state actors such as UN agencies, foreign governments, and civil society organizations to provide funding for basic services and programs, rather than the government. Most government ministries do not collect data on gender, nor do they track progress on gender issues. Consequently, [public data about gender inequality is lacking](#). We urge the RGC to require specific funding in the national budget to ensure that duty-bearers are able to implement, monitor and evaluate all new gender policies.

[Women human rights defenders](#) in Cambodia promote and protect human rights in areas as diverse as gender, environmental, labor, land, indigenous and LGBTIQ rights. They face violence and harassment as a result from their families in the form of [domestic violence](#), as well as in the form of judicial harassment, including imprisonment, often with devastating effects. We urge the RGC to recognize and include WHRDs' needs and rights in the new action plans on gender equality and preventing violence against women.

We also applaud the RGC's [commitment to review](#) the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims ([DV Law](#)). Women survivors of domestic violence face discrimination [in the justice system](#) due to a lack of women working in the judiciary, gender stereotypes, inadequate [legal aid](#), lack of trust in the [domestic court system](#), and [lack of access to courts](#), particularly for women living in rural areas. Authorities routinely [pressure women to use informal mediation](#) to address incidents of domestic violence, while the law on [domestic violence has fundamental gaps in coverage and encourages mediation over prosecution](#). [The result of this is that few cases ever reach the courts, and those that do seldom result in convictions](#). We therefore urge RGC to review and amend the DV



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Law to prevent [systemic referral to mediation](#), as suggested by the CEDAW Committee, and train all duty-bearers at the national and subnational levels on gender-sensitive approaches to intervention in domestic violence cases.

We further call on RGC to accept and take action to fully implement all recommendations relating to women, girls, WHRDs and gender discrimination put forward by member states during Cambodia's [third UN Universal Periodic Review](#).

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