

 

**HUMAN RIGHTS & FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION
EVENTS: LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE**
Sophal Ear / 5 May 2006
sophal@alumni.princeton.edu

BUILDING CAPACITY WORLDWIDE 1

Why?

- Document the events of late 2005/early 2006
- Identify strengths and weaknesses
- Examine lessons learned and networks established
- Inform other advocacy strategies and citizen movements

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Methodology

- Input from 73 informants*
- Period: IHRD (10 Dec) through Jan 2006
- Structured interviews with open-ended questions
- Collected in February-March 2006

* Coded for anonymity but which included NGOs, labor unions, youth associations, the media, government, the international community, and the private sector.

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Background

- Anti-Thai riots of 29 January 2003
- May Day (Labor Day, 1 May 2005)
- Mom Sonando interviews Sean Pengse (20 September 2005)
- PM declares “Those people who wrongly claim my fault in border issues may face lawsuits” (Kyodo News, 6 October 2005)
- Supplemental border treaty signed in Hanoi on 10 October 2005
- Rong Chhun signs CWC Statement same day

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Activities Up to IHRD

- National
 - Conference on Freedom of Expression in Cambodia at PP Hotel (24 Oct 05)
 - AFEC born 28 Nov 05, Yellow Ribbons distributed
 - International Human Rights Day (10 Dec 05)
- International
 - Human Rights Watch Statement (18 Oct 05)
 - UN SRSG for HR Leuprecht (20 Oct 05) and new SRSG (Ghai) visits Cambodia (28 Nov – 5 Dec 05)
 - European Union Demarche led by UK (11 Nov 05)

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Post-IHRD up to New Year's Eve

- Yeng Virak is summoned to City Hall to explain the “breach of trust” (13 Dec 05)
- Sam Rainsy tried and sentenced to 18 months prison in absentia (22 Dec 05)
- Arrest warrants for Kem Sokha and Yeng Virak reportedly issued 28 Dec 05
- Kem Sokha and Yeng Virak are arrested on 31 Dec 05, diplomats, CTN, HR Defenders, SRP Parliamentarians are present

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Activities After Arrests

- National
 - Core Committee met at least once/day to plan
 - CCHR Public Forums are ramped-up
 - Thumbprint campaign (180,000 collected by March 05)
 - Saturday events at Prey Sar (7 & 14 Jan 05)
 - Personal visits to Amb. by Te Chanmono
 - Joint and other statements/letters issued
- International
 - ASEAN non-interference
 - EU Troika
 - Numerous statements and letters issued (World Bank, ILO, major garment buyers etc.)
 - Swedish Minister of Justice visits Prey Sar Prison
 - Numerous articles and editorials published
 - US Assistant Secretary of State visits

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Interplay Between National and International Activities

- Symbiotic relationship between civil society and the international community
- International Community intermediates
- Strength and conviction of civil society enables certain members of the international community to speak-up
- “very dynamic after the [31 Dec 05] arrests” in contrast to earlier arrests

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What Worked and What Didn't

- Strengths
 - Collaboration and Coordination: Working Together
 - Innovative External Communications, Media and the International Community
 - Thumbprint Campaign
 - Symbolism and Aspiration: Yellow Ribbon
- Weaknesses
 - Lack of Information: Inadequate Internal Communications
 - Inconsistent International/Business Opinion
 - Lack of Leadership in Civil Society: Fear and Mistrust

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Lessons Learned

- United We Stand, Divided We Fall
- Develop Long-Term Strategy
- Improve Civil Society Rapport with Government and Donors
- Self-Reflection for Donors and Civil Society

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The Way Forward: Future Actions and Approaches

- Moving Beyond Phnom Penh
- Promoting Civic Engagement and Shifting to Freedom of Assembly
- Advocacy with Historical and Cultural Sensitivity
- **Recommendations (1):***
 - Regularizing Meetings for Information (Not Demands) Between Civil Society and Diplomats

* These and subsequent slides' recommendations were developed with Laura McGrew. This is just a sampling as there are many, many more recommendations in the report.

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Recommendations (2)

- Dialogue and Confidence-Building Measures
 - A Need for Dialogue
 - Confidence-Building Measures Among Government, Civil Society, and the Opposition
 - Share Information
- Expand Information and Public Space in Rural Areas
 - Increase Field-Based Involvement of CSOs and CBOs
 - Improve Access to Information

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Recommendations (3)

- Coalition-Building/Planning Ahead
 - Consolidate Newly Formed Coalitions and Gains
 - Focus on victims – Not Organizations
 - Improve Explanations and Marketing of Campaigns
- Expand and Explore Existing Networks
 - Explore Role of Youth Groups
 - Overseas Cambodians
 - Garment Buyers

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Recommendations (4)

- Civil Society Institutional and Capacity Building
 - Recognize the Problem/Self-Evaluate
 - Labor and Human Rights Capacity
 - Don't Cry Wolf
- Last But Not Least, Improve Communications Through Technology
 - Blogging (Citizen Journalism), Text Messaging
 - Watching More Television (!)
 - Rumor Control

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