



THE WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN

25 November 2005

What is the White Ribbon Campaign?

The campaign started in 1991 when a group of Canadian men Banded together to put a stop to violence against women. They chose the white ribbon as a symbol of men's opposition to gender violence. They chose 25 November as the international day of men's solidarity against gender violence. The Cambodian Men's Network joined the campaign in 2000.

Every year, more and more men's groups throughout the world, from Canada to Cambodia, South Africa to Sweden, speak out against crimes like sexual harassment, rape, domestic violence, sexual exploitation of children, and gender-based discrimination of all kinds.

What does it mean to wear a White Ribbon?

In Cambodia, each year, group of women and men who are committed to building a peaceful and just society for everyone set aside sixteen days campaign actively for their goals. These sixteen days start on 25 November (International day for the Eradication of Violence Against Women) and end on 10 December (International Human Rights Day). International AIDS Day comes within this period, on 1 December.

Therefore, we urge Cambodian men, women, boys and girls to wear the ribbon for these sixteen days and to carry the message that violence against women is not just a problem for women. "Gender-based violence is every one's problem". In order to stop the violence, we need reflection, discussion, debate and call for proactive steps to be taken to end it.

Philosophy of Cambodian Men's Network

Cambodia has been impoverished by more than thirty years of war. The cost of the long war can be measured by the number of people who died, by riles and the national debt, by the number of houses, roads, bridges and factories, and by the size of the Cambodian migrant communities living in countries throughout the world. The greatest cost of the war, however, was the loss of our morality.

Buddhist culture stresses respect for the life of all creatures. In war, there are few moral choices: men kill or are killed by others. Soldiers obey the order that are handed down by superiors. Decision-making based on personal morality has little place in war. The war gave men guns but it took away their power to make moral choices.

The war did not make moral choices. The war did not make Cambodian men more powerful, it makes most men powerless. Some men express the anger at their powerlessness through violence. They think that violence against woman; child or another man is an acceptable way to control another person. Control over another person, they think gives them power.

Therefore, the Cambodian Men's Network believes that violence against women is about men's problem which men themselves have to solve for the good of themselves and for the good of the whole society.

CMN believes that all forms of violence and discrimination against women are unacceptable and is human rights issue. Violence can be psychological and emotional as well as physical. Sexist joking, sexual harassment, domineering behavior towards female colleagues poisons the workplace. Name-calling, abuse, threats, and beating destroy the family. Forced or coerced sex increases women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS infection and Violence can affect women's willingness to be tested, which can have a detrimental effect on HIV/AIDS control treatment and prevention programme. So that, the eradication of domestic violence against women and assuring to women's health is to bring family and community health.

If we remain silent about these things, we allow other men to corrupt the places where we live, work and relax.

CMN believes that most Cambodian men want to rebuild Cambodia as a safe and moral country. CMN believes that violent men can be changed and also all Cambodian people can be the messengers for change.

CMN will be active part of 16 days campaign for this year 2005 with the hope that, this year campaign will help and contribute in disseminated processing of law on The Prevention of Domestic Violence and The Protection of Victims which has just approved by National Assembly and Senate.

So please wear the white ribbon from 25 November to 10 December this year. And speak out in order to eliminate violence against women.