



Opportunity, Equality, and Access for Women

Posted on August 25, 2014 by Admin

This past weekend, I was privileged to speak to a remarkable group of young women at the opening ceremony of a two-week leadership institute sponsored by the Women in Public Service Project, the Harpswell Foundation, and Pannasastra University. A total of 63 young women are participating in the institute, where they will hear from experts and participate in workshops on critical thinking, leadership, ethics, and public service. These young women represent a new generation of Cambodian women who are ready to make a positive impact on society and to take on leadership roles in their communities.

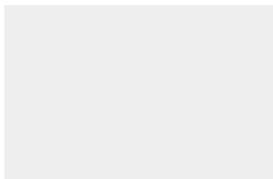
In my remarks, I shared my thoughts about the importance of having more women in leadership positions in Cambodia and the three things that women and girls need to achieve their full potential: Opportunity, Equality, and Access. Without opportunity, equality, and access, women and girls will always be at a disadvantage compared to their male counterparts. Why? These three pillars are what I see as the necessary tools to build a capable and confident generation of women leaders in business, science, education, and policymaking, in effect a more productive and responsible society. The leadership institute is one small but important step towards achieving these objectives, and I am encouraged by the possibilities and creativity the institute fosters.



— At the opening event of the Leadership Institute, I spoke about the three essential steps for building the next generation of women leaders in Cambodia: Opportunity, Equality, and Access.

This gives me an opportunity to describe the vision behind the Women in Public Service Project, which was launched in 2011 by the U.S. Secretary of State at the time, Hillary Clinton, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. With support from the U.S. Department of State, the Women in Public Service Project develops partnerships around the world to advance the pillars I mentioned above, opportunity, equality, and access.

The Harpswell Foundation and Pannasastra University of Cambodia (PUC) are the hosts of this month's leadership institute in Cambodia. The Harpswell Foundation was founded by U.S. academic and humanitarian Alan Lightman and operates two facilities in Phnom Penh that provide housing and support for outstanding Cambodian women while they attend university. PUC is one of Cambodia's premier private universities and a frequent U.S. Embassy partner. The south campus in Phnom Penh also hosts an Embassy-sponsored American Corner and an Educational Advising Center, which provides free counseling about opportunities to study in the United States.



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— Many of the young women of the Harpswell Foundation are excellent students who also take an interest in preserving Cambodia's traditional art forms. At the opening ceremony for the Leadership Institute, they performed an Apsara dance to welcome the participants and wish for a successful program.

Joining me at the launch was the director of the Women in Public Service Project, Dr. Rangita de Silva de Alwis. Dr. de Silva de Alwis made an impassioned appeal to Cambodia's young women, encouraging them to promote themselves and to fight for greater opportunity.

Another speaker at the inauguration was H.E. Dr. Ing Kantha Phavi, Cambodia's Minister of Women's Affairs. I want to personally thank Minister Phavi for sharing her valuable perspective on the steps that the Cambodian government is taking to encourage women to take on positions of leadership in government and society. Dr. Phavi herself is an excellent example of the positive impact that women can have in government and public policy in Cambodia.



— H.E. Dr. Ing Kantha Phavi, Cambodia's Minister of Women's Affairs, spoke at the opening ceremony and encouraged the participants to contribute to Cambodia's social, economic, and political development.

In recent blog entries (such as [this one](#) and [this one](#)), I discussed the importance of creating opportunities for women to succeed in government, business, and other fields and described some of the many ways that the U.S. Embassy supports women's development and equality in Cambodia. It is truly gratifying to be able to lend my support to partners like the Women in Public Service Project, the Harpswell Foundation, and Pannasastra University who share our interest in helping Cambodian women to become leaders. I wish the participants in the leadership institute the best of luck and look forward to following their progress in the future.

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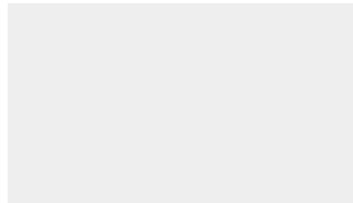
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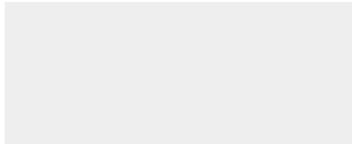
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Supporting Cambodia's Young Women

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Posted on [August 15, 2014](#) by [Admin](#)

In recognition of International Youth Day on August 12, I would like to expand on the theme of [my last blog](#) to talk a bit more about what the Embassy is doing to help young women in Cambodia pursue their dreams and goals.





— Earlier this year, I visited the young women and sisters at the Don Bosco Vocational Training Center for Girls in Phnom Penh with colleagues from USAID.

Earlier this year I had the honor to visit the Don Bosco Vocational Training Center for Girls in Phnom Penh, which has been chosen to receive a grant from the U.S. Embassy. The Don Bosco training center is one of several institutions run by the Salesian sisters of the Catholic Church in Cambodia and offers training to disadvantaged and orphaned girls.

Seeing the girls at the school was an emotional experience for me. These are girls who are determined to be successful despite the obstacles they have faced in life. Having a daughter myself, I know that as I've watched her grow through the years, I want to offer her the best opportunities in life. I was so impressed to meet the sisters and other staff of the school who have dedicated their lives to helping others seek such opportunities. I left the Don Bosco center recommitted to the Embassy's goal of supporting initiatives that help empower women and girls to achieve their full potential.

According to the 2013 Global Gender Gap Report of the World Economic Forum (<http://www.weforum.org/issues/global-gender-gap>), Cambodia ranks 104 out of 136 countries in women's equality, which is the lowest ranking of any of the Southeast Asian countries on the list. One of the areas where Cambodia scores lowest is the level of educational achievement for girls. Only 78 percent of girls are enrolled in primary-level education versus 93 percent for boys, and a troubling 34 percent of women are illiterate versus 17 percent for men (which is also too high). This gap clearly puts girls in Cambodia at a disadvantage, because they do not have equal access to basic education.

To help reduce the gender gap in Cambodia, the U.S. Embassy is working on a number of initiatives to support women's equality. For instance, USAID is providing leadership training to 260 women from eight provinces so they can put their talents to use as leaders in their communities. In addition, Peace Corps volunteers have formed a gender and development committee which works to promote involvement of women and girls in education and health care decisions and to reduce domestic and sexual violence through early engagement with boys and men.



— As an example of the work the U.S. Embassy is doing to promote access for women and girls, USAID supported a Women's Dialogue in 2013. This photo was taken at the Women's Dialogue at Sangkat Deum Mean, Takmao town, Kandal province, on March 2, 2013.

The Don Bosco Vocational Training Center for Girls shares many of the same goals that we do, and so I was very pleased that the Embassy was able to award a \$39,000 grant this year to help the girls to make good choices in life and to become active citizens in their communities. Thanks to this program, girls from the Don Bosco center will be in a better position to compete in school and the job market and to become productive and engaged citizens.



— A picture of me with students at the Don Bosco Vocational Training Center

The girls at Don Bosco have limitless energy and enthusiasm and they fill me with hope for the future of Cambodia. These girls work hard and deserve the same opportunities as boys to accomplish what they want in life, no matter their backgrounds or hardships. The U.S. Embassy strongly supports the mission of Don Bosco and the many other organizations that are dedicated to improving the lives of Cambodian girls.

What more can be done so that we can all support equality for girls in Cambodia? Please let us know in the comments section.

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Posted on [August 12, 2014](#) by [Admin](#)

Caitlyn

Obama



Obama

(AP Photo/Susan Walsh, File)

Obama

SILAKA



SILAKA

(USAID)

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A Strong Voice for Cambodian Women



Posted on [August 11, 2014](#) by [Admin](#)

I recently reached a bittersweet milestone – my youngest child and only daughter, Caitlyn, left home to attend college in the United States. Like all good fathers, I want my children to have the best chance to succeed in life, but I sometimes worry that she may not have the same opportunities as her classmates and colleagues simply because she is a woman. Unfortunately, discrimination against women continues to be a problem, even in the United States.

The U.S. government places a high priority on women's rights, both at home and around the world. The very first bill signed into law by President Obama when he took office in 2009 was a law to make it easier for women to file lawsuits for pay discrimination in the workforce, and it has remained a top priority ever since.



— President Obama signing an executive action to help close the pay gap between men and women in April 2014. (AP Photo/Susan Walsh, File)

I share President Obama's commitment to improving the rights, security, and dignity of women and girls and will do everything in my power as Ambassador to help Cambodians to build a country where men and women live and work together as equals.

One extraordinary Cambodian who is dedicated to this goal is Thida Khus, the founder and executive director of SILAKA, a Cambodian NGO that provides training on gender equality and good governance. I first met Thida shortly after arriving in Cambodia as the Ambassador in 2012. We soon became friends, and she graciously agreed to be a member of my Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Advisory Council, which helps me to better understand the issues facing Cambodia and the ways that the U.S. government may be able to help.

Thida has worked on women's issues in Cambodia for more than two decades, and during this time she has developed a wealth of information and experience. She is a tireless advocate not only for women's equality but also for the poor and for all who struggle for recognition of their basic human rights.

One of Thida's biggest concerns – and one that I share – is the lack of women in leadership positions in Cambodia. Thida understands that if Cambodia is going to continue to develop, women must play an increasing role in all sectors of society, from business to education to politics. In order for this to happen, Cambodian women must have the same opportunities as men and to compete with men on an equal basis. This is not a problem that is limited to Cambodia but it is particularly acute here, where women hold only a small fraction of government positions.



— Thida Khus, founder and Executive Director of SILAKA.

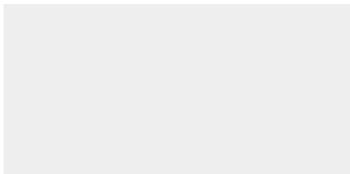
The U.S. Embassy in Cambodia works hard every day to reduce gender inequality and to promote the inclusion of women. For instance, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) provides loans to women farmers as part of the HARVEST program, which seeks to reduce poverty and malnutrition by increasing food production. These USAID-backed loans target women farmers because we understand the crucial role that women play in Cambodian economic society, particularly in rural areas. Access to finance for women farmers empowers them to become more financially independent and more active in their communities.

But for all that we do to support women's rights in Cambodia, it pales in comparison to the efforts of home-grown organizations like SILAKA that work on these issues day in and day out. No outside government or organization can advocate for human rights in Cambodia as effectively as Cambodians can, and so our primary goal is to support their efforts and to serve as a resource.

For example, the Embassy provided financial support in 2012 and 2013 to an organization called the Committee to Promote Women in Politics (CPWP), which is currently chaired by SILAKA. The CPWP focuses on projects that empower Cambodian women at the grassroots level to participate in government by giving them training in decision making, leadership, public speaking, and networking.

Thida is an active and outspoken member of the CPWP, where she has advocated for a candidate list system that alternates between men and women in an effort to ensure that women are better represented in government. Known as a "sandwich" system, Thida's proposal would greatly increase the number of women in commune councils, in the National Assembly, and at every level of government. It is a proposal worth considering.

Thida's voice on women's rights issues is heard far beyond Cambodia, including at the highest levels of government. When then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Cambodia in 2012 to launch the Lower Mekong Initiative, Thida was invited to participate in a high-level dialogue on women's empowerment. In her comments, Thida made a compelling case for the need to increase the number of women leaders across the Lower Mekong region. Thida's passion and commitment to women's rights – not just in Cambodia but around the region – made a powerful impact on me and on everyone else who heard her speak.





— Former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, at the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy Dialogue at the Sofitel Hotel in Siem Reap, Cambodia in 2012.

Earlier this year, on International Women's Day, Hillary Clinton told a UN panel that equality for women "remains the great unfinished business of the 21st century." I wholeheartedly agree. No society can achieve its full potential until women – a full half of the population – have the same opportunities as men.

I am grateful for all that Thida Khus does to support women's equality in Cambodia. People like Thida and her colleagues at SILAKA give us hope for the future, but there is still a long way to go. I hope that Thida's example will inspire you to help in this important effort.

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John Kerry

Luis

Cdebaca

Obama

Valarie Jarrett

Samantha Power

(

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Tweeter #lgivehope



(FBI)

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<http://www.state.gov/tip/index.htm>

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Kerry

(ECCC)



(AP/ ECCC,)

John Kerry

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DC-Cam

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Hillary Clinton

John Kerry

ECCC

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A Historic Verdict

Posted on [August 8, 2014](#) by [Admin](#)

"More than 30 years after the Khmer Rouge slaughtered some 1.7 million people, Cambodians have received a small measure of justice and a reminder that justice may not be swift, but justice is resolute."

– Statement of U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry , August 7, 2014

On Thursday morning, I had the honor to witness history in the making. The Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), which is supported by the U.S. government, handed down a guilty verdict in the cases of Nuon Chea, former deputy secretary of the Communist Party under Pol Pot, and Khieu Samphan, former head of state during the Khmer Rouge regime, finding them guilty of crimes against humanity during the forced evacuation of Phnom Penh. Both were sentenced to life in prison. This verdict sends a clear message that the world will never forget what happened in Cambodia from 1975 to 1979 and that we will never give up on the search for justice.



— Inside the courtroom of the war crimes tribunal in Phnom Penh. (AP Photo/Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, Nhet Sok Heng)

In a statement shortly after the verdict was announced, Secretary of State John Kerry recalled the words of photojournalist and Khmer Rouge survivor Dith Pran, who said, "The dead are crying out for justice." As Secretary Kerry noted, through the work of the ECCC, Cambodia and the international community are joining together to make sure that those cries are finally answered.

The scene at the tribunal was very emotional, as would be expected for an event nearly 40 years in the making. As we waited for the verdict to be read I sat directly behind many of the witnesses who bravely testified during the trial about their suffering at the hands of the Khmer Rouge. Their heart-wrenching accounts of inhumanity and violence are now a permanent part of the court's record.

The crimes of the Khmer Rouge are almost too horrific to mention, but the stories of the victims must continue to be told lest we forget. According to some estimates, as many as two million Cambodians were killed, many after being brutally tortured. People were taken from their homes and forced to live in inhumane conditions in the countryside. Men, women, and children were starved, raped, and brutalized. Families were broken apart and babies were literally ripped from the arms of mothers. It was truly four years of hell on earth.

The U.S. Government is committed to helping the Cambodian people to seek justice for these awful crimes. Since 2009, the U.S. government has provided more than \$18 million in financial support to the ECCC, or approximately 10 percent of the operating budget. We also provide support for the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), which collects and archives documents and stories from the Khmer Rouge era and has served as the main source of evidence to the ECCC.

The court also has support from the highest levels of our government. In 2010, then-Secretary of

State Hillary Clinton visited Cambodia, saying that "although I am well aware the work of the tribunal is painful, it is necessary to ensure a lasting peace." Before becoming Secretary of State, John Kerry played a key role in establishing the ECCC when he served as the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. As his statement shows, Secretary Kerry continues to take a personal interest in the work of the court.



— A Cambodian woman waits outside the court before the tribunal delivers its verdicts. (AP Photo/Heng Sinth)

It has been nearly 40 years since the Khmer Rouge first came to power. That is a very long time to wait for justice.

Unfortunately, many of the top leaders of the Khmer Rouge died before they could face trial, including Pol Pot and Ieng Sary. History will have to be their judge. But thanks to this verdict, Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan will be forever known as the perpetrators of some of the worst crimes of the 20th century.

Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan had their day in court. They received due process and they had an opportunity to present their defense, which is more than they gave to any of their victims. But when the verdict was announced, I noticed that Nuon Chea refused to stand and accept the ruling of the court. He was a coward to the end, and that is how he and Khieu Samphan should be remembered.



— Cambodian former Khmer Rouge survivors, Soum Rithy, left, and Chum Mey, right, embrace each other after the verdicts were announced. (AP Photo/Heng Sinth)

It is too soon to appreciate the full impact of this verdict and of the ECCC, and it will be many years before we can do so. For now, we should be grateful that some measure of justice has been achieved for the victims of the Khmer Rouge and for the Cambodian people.

In the meantime, the work of the ECCC continues. This was just one phase of the trial of Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan and only covers a portion of their crimes. A second trial against Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan, which includes charges of genocide, began last month, and I expect that the ECCC will handle this case just as professionally as they handled the first. I have been consistently impressed with the commitment and hard work of the judges, lawyers, and staff of the ECCC.

As Secretary Kerry said, "the effort to try those most responsible for these horrific crimes was long overdue and absolutely vital." The United States stands with the Cambodian people in their search for justice and we will continue to provide support to the ECCC as it carries out its essential work. No matter what happens in the future, I hope that this verdict will offer some measure of healing to the victims of the Khmer Rouge and to their families.

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Ending Modern-Day Slavery

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Posted on [July 31, 2014](#) by [Cambodia Admin](#)

As Secretary of State John Kerry recently noted, there are more than 20 million people enslaved around the world, and we each have a responsibility to help put an end to this crime. This is why the U.S. Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, under the leadership

of Ambassador Luis CdeBaca, is carrying the fight against human trafficking around the world. Here in Cambodia, the U.S. Embassy has made this fight one of our top priorities. During President Obama's visit to Cambodia in 2012, his senior White House advisors Valerie Jarrett and Samantha Power (now U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations) highlighted this issue and met with survivors of trafficking and representatives from leading anti-trafficking NGOs during a discussion that I hosted. It is heart-wrenching to hear so many stories of Cambodians forced to work in inhuman conditions or subjected to sexual exploitation. The U.S. Embassy remains committed to working alongside Cambodians to advance efforts to end human trafficking in this country.



— Embassy staff supported a social media campaign for the United Nations World Day against Trafficking in Persons, which encourages people to express their solidarity with victims of human trafficking. This picture was posted on our social media using the hashtag #Igivehope.

Human trafficking is one of the toughest human rights challenges of our time. The U.S. government has been leading the global fight against human trafficking by focusing on the four Ps: Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, and Partnership. Each year, the U.S. Department of State publishes the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, which documents the nature and scope of human trafficking in countries around the world, including the United States, and identifies a broad range of anti-trafficking actions that governments can take. Carefully compiled by the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, the report is the world's most comprehensive review of governmental anti-human trafficking efforts.



— The Trafficking in Persons Report is a comprehensive anti-trafficking resource for governments around the world. Secretary of State John Kerry called the report a "roadmap" to confront the scourge of trafficking.

Using the TIP Report's recommendations, the U.S. Embassy actively engages with the Cambodian government to explore ways to improve local capacity to fight trafficking. Multiple U.S. agencies, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Homeland Security Investigations, and the State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security, work together to help their Cambodian counterparts strengthen law enforcement and prosecution of trafficking cases. To enhance our anti-trafficking efforts, the Embassy conducted an anti-trafficking training this month for every one of our American and Cambodian staff. The training was presented by an inter-agency group – including experts from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, and the U.S. Department of State – to help our staff learn ways to identify trafficking victims and prevent others from falling victim to trafficking.



— The Counter Trafficking in Persons Program (CTIP II), funded by USAID and implemented by Winrock International, aims to improve the anti-trafficking capacity of Cambodian government agencies and non-governmental organizations. (Photos: Winrock International)

In addition to drawing on the strengths of other U.S. agencies and supporting their work, partnership with civil society is an absolutely critical component of our fight against human trafficking. For that reason we are working to improve cooperation between the Cambodian government and civil society and we support a number of programs that strengthen NGOs so that they can respond to victims' needs and more effectively educate vulnerable communities about how to protect themselves.



— One way the CTIP-II Program works to prevent human trafficking in Cambodia is by providing information to migrant workers, students, and children on how they can protect themselves from traffickers. (Photo: Winrock International)

As we think about the victims of human trafficking, let us also remember that their hope for regaining freedom and dignity depends on our commitment to make a difference. I hope that recognition of the "United Nations World Day against Trafficking in Persons" this week helps to inspire concerted efforts by governments, civil society, and individuals to end trafficking in persons.

I encourage all of you to visit the web page of the U.S. Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, where you can read the 2014 TIP Report and learn more about the actions that you can take to help combat human trafficking: <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/index.htm>.

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Posted on [July 29, 2014](#) by [Admin](#)



Hillary Clinton



Clinton



Global Leadership Award
Vital Voices Eleanor
Roosevelt Award for Leadership in Human Rights





(Global Leadership Award)

Vital Voices

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