



## Legal Justice - an ICC Strategic Focus

In 2018, around 49.3% of all children aged between 12 and 18 were victims of physical abuse, according to a study made by World Vision<sup>1</sup>. In this study, a 14-year old ninth-grader from Kampot province says that violence against children in her community is occurring almost every day. Sadly, this is similar in other parts of Cambodia too. The celebration of this year International Children's Day on June 1<sup>st</sup>, was a good time to remind ourselves that children are an important foundation to the development of the society. As a Khmer proverb says: "Children are bamboo sprouts that replace the old bamboo". At ICC, we believe children are valuable human beings and deserve to be protected from any forms of exploitation and abuse.

From 2012 until the end of 2018, protection of children was always at the very centre of ICC's Voice of the Children (VOTC) project. Some of the successful achievements from VOTC project deserve to be mentioned. One achievement is the empowerment of spiritual leaders, villagers and authorities and their understanding of the importance of child protection, as well as their own role and responsibility in protecting children. Another achievement is the creation of 21 Child Protection Committees (CPCs), who speak and act on behalf of children with the relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, VOTC project has been successful in improving the lives of children within their families and their communities in both Pursat and Takeo provinces.

In order to build upon the impact already achieved by VOTC towards child protection and fulfilment of child rights, a spin-off project called ICC Child Rights project has been created. The core focus of the VOTC project was on mobilising the civil society to be active in child protection. But in order to ensure that laws and policies are in place and being applied, there is a need to mobilise the state sector as well. Therefore, the new ICC Child Rights project

will focus on advocating for child protection and child rights within the existing Cambodian state structure.

This structure includes Women and Children Consultative Committees (WCCC) at provincial and district levels, and Commune Committees for Women and Children (CCWC) at operational level. Those committees are set up throughout the country, and their main role is reporting and processing legal cases related to women and children. The core purpose of the ICC Child Right project is to assist and support the state sector via WCCCs and CCWCs to fulfil their responsibility in child protection and enforcement of laws and child rights. Also, it is necessary to improve the existing relationship, interaction and collaboration between the state sector and the civil society sector, in order to achieve substantial and sustainable results, for the sake of children's protection and their wellbeing. Furthermore, the Child Rights project will contribute towards the implementation of the National Strategic Development Plan in the aspect of child protection and child development.

The ICC Child Rights project started at the beginning of 2019, and is operating in Takeo and Svay Rieng provinces, where ICC has already built relationship with key stakeholders in the state sector related to child protection. Several staff from VOTC project have moved on to the Child Rights project, which means experience, knowledge, contacts, etc. are carried on to the new spin-off project.

ICC aims to see that, through effective and efficient WCCC and CCWC operation on all levels, children are experiencing fulfilment of their given rights and legal justice, leading to safer childhoods, improved schooling, stronger self-esteem and better life value.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.phnompenhpost.com/national/violence-against-kids-raised](http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/violence-against-kids-raised)