

PROTECT:
**A Communication Strategy to End Violence
and Unnecessary Family Separation in Cambodia**
201~~9~~7-202~~4~~2

Summary



April 2017

Introduction

Violence against children happens everywhere, in every country and society and across all social groups. Institutionalization of children places them at increased risk of neglect, emotional, physical and sexual abuse. Cambodia's strong commitment to end violence against children (VAC) and unnecessary family separation is courageous and commendable. It is an important part of an ongoing global movement to end violence against children initiated by the *United Nations Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children* and integrated, more recently, in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, protecting children and keeping families together builds on traditional Cambodian values of family and community based nurturing and care.

Vision

While laws and policies are important for promoting peaceful homes and communities, **communication** in written, visual, verbal, online and other forms is also vital for lasting change to occur. The Cambodia PROTECT communication strategy outlined in this summary addresses the social and cultural norms that legitimize violence against children and normalize the belief that residential care facilities are beneficial to a child. Its components include a comprehensive strategy document, a monitoring and evaluation framework and a costed implementation plan.

The communication strategy is national in scope, but with focused implementation in five provinces: Phnom Penh, Kandal, Preah Sihanouk, Battambang, and Siem Reap. It is anticipated that partners can take on the implementation of the strategy in additional districts, using the same package of materials, messages, activities and indicators. The first phase begins in the first half of 2019~~17~~ and runs through 2019~~21~~~~21~~. A second phase, lasting through 2024~~2~~, will be planned, based on results from the first 20 months.

Reducing and ultimately ending all forms of violence against children in Cambodia – including unnecessary family separation-- requires a concentrated effort by people of all ages and from all walks of life. This includes government officials at local, provincial and national levels; religious leaders; parents and grandparents; teachers; children and adolescents, and many others.

The need for action is clear. Multiple studies consulted in the development of the Cambodia PROTECT strategy show that too many Cambodian children experience violence in their homes and workplaces, in schools and on the street. An increasing number of children, many of whom have a living parent are being placed in residential care. As in other countries, violence in Cambodia takes many forms:

- Physical violence
- Child labour
- Emotional violence
- Neglect
- Sexual violence
- Trafficking
- Child marriage
- Residential care

Overall goal

The overall goal of the strategy is “to enable children, their parents and caregivers and communities to prevent and respond to violence and family separation by raising awareness on the unacceptability of all forms of violence and unnecessary family separation, transforming prevalent norms and attitudes that

condone violence and promote unnecessary family separation, as well as building skills and self-efficacy to practice protective behaviours.” That sounds big but really has a simple meaning: implementation of the strategy will enable children, their families and community members, government officials and professionals to increase their knowledge about the harmful consequences of violence, understand ways to change attitudes regarding VAC and improve skills for using alternative, non-violent behaviours toward children and adolescents. The strategy promotes positive parenting practices by supporting parents, caregivers and other duty-bearers to recognize the different forms of violence that threaten the well-being of their children, reiterating the importance of keeping families together and enabling them to take positive protective actions. More specifically, the strategy seeks “to have 25 per cent of commune councils in the five focal provinces implementing the strategy by December 2018.” Partners can take on specific elements of the strategy and implement them in additional provinces, determining their own targets and baselines.

Approach

Evidence from the field of social and behavior change communication suggests that raising awareness and stimulating debate and discussion among different stakeholders can lead to transforming attitudes and practices that condone or perpetuate violence. Communication for development, or C4D as it is also called, helps break the silence and impunity surrounding violence against children. It promotes disclosure, reporting and reintegration. It generates awareness and dialogue, garnering commitment from officials at all levels, leaders in the community and nationally, and encouraging actions by families and children themselves to end such practices.

The strategy builds upon existing good practices in Cambodian culture. It is solution-oriented rather than problem-centered. It is designed to identify positive role models and build confidence, including among those most marginalized. The detailed strategy is multi-layered, cross-sectoral and combines universal theories of change with suggested practices or actions tailored for Cambodia. It promotes a steady progression from knowledge gain to attitude change to garnering commitment, all of which is expected to result in positive social and behaviour change – ultimately leading to lower levels of violence and family separation. This progression is shown in Figure 1.

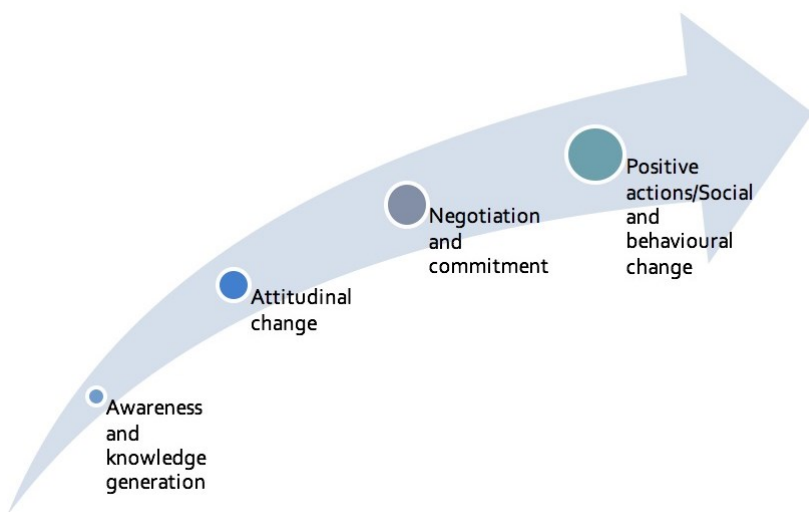


Figure 1: Social and behaviour change process

This progression reflects the art and science of social and behaviour change. Decades of research into what types of communication are most effective with which groups of people demonstrate that WHAT PEOPLE KNOW is only part of why they do what they do. To change their behaviour, they must also FEEL that it is the right thing to do or that they will benefit in some way from the change. Then, using this knowledge and emotional engagement, people must actually take the step and PRACTICE a new behaviour. And finally, the new behaviour or practice must be continually reinforced and sustained, ensuring positive change not only for the individual child and her or his family, but for the community and the society overall.

The Cambodia PROTECT framework developed specifically for this strategy uses a simple and clear English acronym. Perhaps something similar can be identified in Khmer.

- Promote a culture of zero tolerance
- Recognize specific vulnerabilities
- Orient all duty bearers and rights holders
- Transform attitudes
- Explore options and alternative solutions
- Commit to end violence and family separation
- Take positive actions

The Cambodia PROTECT framework builds on what has worked globally (*see Figure 2*). It promotes an environment where no form of violence against children is accepted and all relevant duty-bearers or stakeholders take positive actions to protect children from neglect, harm, abuse and violence. The strategy translates ideals and aspirations into culturally appropriate, doable and practical steps that individuals, families and communities can take to both prevent and respond to violence and family separation. It celebrates and promotes the abundant protective factors and positive parenting practices prevalent in Cambodian culture.

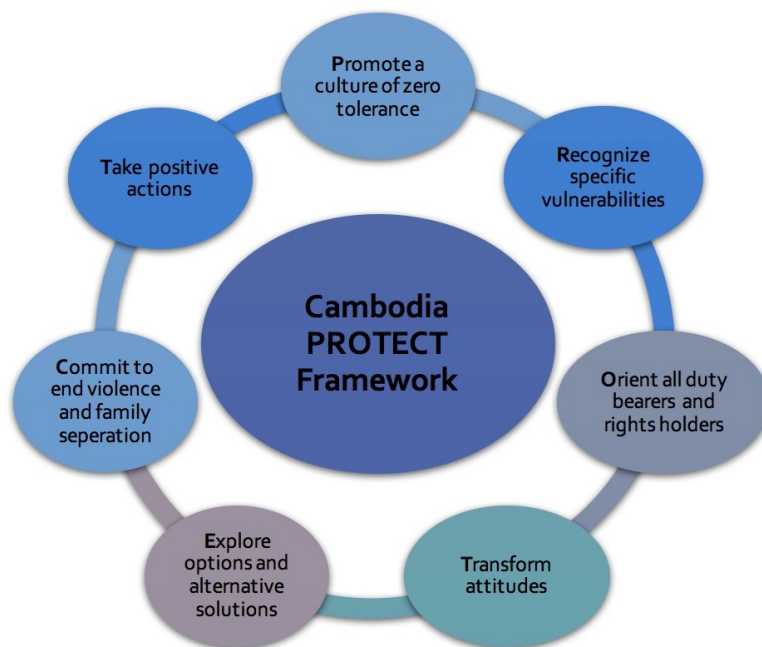


Figure 2. The Cambodia PROTECT framework

Each of the seven prongs of the strategy has two or more communication objectives attached to it. The objectives are defined to engage with:

- What people “know” (cognitive changes)
- What people “feel” (affective changes)
- What people “do” (behavioural changes)

Key activities

Four major communication approaches will be used in this strategy: Mass Media, Interactive Communication Technologies (ICTs), Community Engagement and Advocacy. Inside each of these approaches, a number of activities are suggested. These are linked to each other under an overall Entertainment-Education umbrella. They are essential components of a single package. If implemented together over the months of the strategy, real change will be seen (see *Figure 3*).

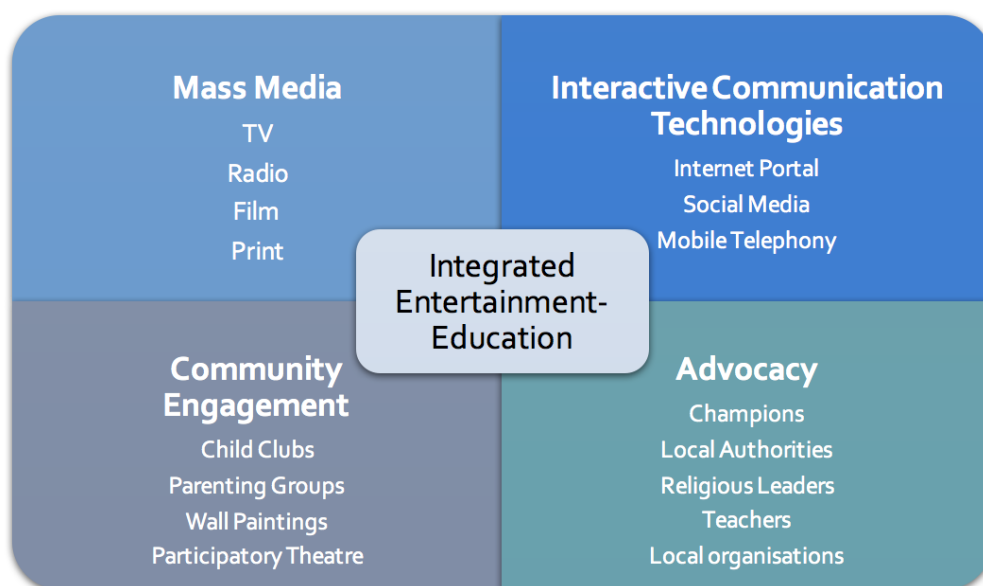


Figure 3. Integrated communication approach to the strategy

Multiple communication activities across media channels and community networks have been selected to reach different groups of people. Such an integrated and multi-layered approach is essential to reinforce consistent messages and effectively reach all audience groups. Anything less will fall short. Ensuring that all children are raised in loving, calm households, go to peaceful schools and feel safe in their communities requires the participation of everyone.

The who

Segmenting participants into groups allows for tailored interventions, including relevant approaches and messages for different groups. For the purposes of the Cambodia PROTECT strategy, primary, secondary and tertiary groups have been identified for maximum impact in the home, community and at the services and policy level:

Primary participants

- Caregivers — All adults in a household with children
- Parents
- Grandparents
- Extended family
- Older siblings responsible for child rearing
- Children: Young children (0-9) and adolescents (10-19)

Secondary participants

- Religious leaders such as monks, priests, pastors and Muslim preachers
- Village and commune chiefs
- Commune Committees for Women and Children (CCWC) members
- Teachers
- Village Volunteers

Tertiary participants

- Service providers
- Lawmakers
- Judiciary
- Police

Monitoring for results and the overall cost

Big questions always are, “How do we know how we did? What was the effectiveness of this communication strategy? Was it worth the cost?”

All too often, however, no provision is made to monitor or assess the effectiveness and impact of development initiatives. To answer these questions, a detailed Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) Framework is built into the Cambodia PROTECT strategy. A baseline and endline study is proposed along with regular monitoring activities. Along with the proposed activities, which have been detailed on an annual basis with estimated costs attached to each, agreement on the M & E framework by the national Steering Committee and corresponding provincial committees is essential. It is not a luxury; it is part and parcel of the program and is vital to its success and sustainability.

The estimated cost of implementing this strategy nationally between April 2019¹⁷ and December 2019²¹ is about US\$2.9 million (see Table 1). At first glance, taken in isolation, the figure may seem large, but it includes material development costs in the first year, as well as national and grassroots activities and staffing for the initial phase of the strategy. Out of an annual governmental budget of US\$5 billion, this strategy is designed to reap noteworthy benefits for the children and Cambodian society as a whole, at a reasonable cost.

Furthermore, in light of the significant costs of violence on children and the economy of the nation, this is a relatively small yet far-sighted investment. The findings from the *‘Economic Burden of the Health Consequences of Violence Against Children’* study released by the Government of Cambodia, report an estimated loss of at least US\$168 million in 2013, or 1.1 per cent of its GDP, as a result of the negative impact of some of the health

consequences caused by violence against children. The loss of productivity attributed to childhood violence in 2013 alone totaled US\$83.3 million, accounting for 0.55 per cent of the country's GDP.

Table 1. PROTECT strategy – projected budget summary

Categories	201 97	20 2018	20 2119	Total
Management and coordination	76,500	127,500	127,500	331,500
Advocacy	-	73,000	58,000	131,000
Mass media	558,000	278,800	208,800	1,045,600
Interactive communication technologies	11,000	11,000	11,000	33,000
Community engagement	30,000	583,500	605,500	1,219,000
Monitoring and evaluation	50,000	30,000	80,000	160,000
Total in US\$	725,500	1,103,800	1,090,800	2,920,100

What is next?

Consultation with national partners and experts was key to the development of the Cambodia PROTECT strategy. Following a final consultation meeting in early April 2017, the strategy, implementation work plan and proposed budget and monitoring and evaluation framework will be reviewed by the government prior to finalization. Once validated and adopted by the Government of Cambodia, they will provide the foundation for a multi-year effort to reduce and eventually end violence against children and unnecessary family separation. Actions envisaged for priority implementation before the end of June 2017 include:

- Government to review and approve the Cambodia PROTECT strategy;
- Establish management and coordination mechanisms;
- Select intervention sites and allocate resources;
- Conduct a national or provincial message development workshop;
- Initiate process to develop and pre-test communication materials;
- Conduct baseline study to establish data for measuring impact of communication strategy;
- Provide one or more training of trainers for the local authorities, school directors and teachers, religious leaders, champions and parents who will be most involved in implementing the strategy.

Another idea for consideration is to integrate the various components of the strategy under a “brand” with a catchy name, tagline, logo and other visual imagery that will capture the imaginations of the citizenry and resonate with forward-facing social trends.

In conclusion, the Cambodia PROTECT communication strategy provides guidance for a comprehensive response to protecting children from violence and family separation in Cambodia. The strategy strives for behaviour and social change, informing children and their families, while also engaging and empowering them to make better-informed choices and adopt practices that will impact multiple facets of child development and well-being, thus contributing to healthier, happier and more confident children, families and future generations.