



Joint Statement of Civil Society Support for Children Deprived of Liberty in Cambodia

Phnom Penh, 5 May 2021

We, the undersigned organizations, congratulate the successful National Launch of the United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty (“Global Study”) in Cambodia.

We appreciate and respect the voices of children deprived of liberty that were raised at the National Launch through the sharing of personal experiences and the joint statement by the Child and Youth-Led Networks, which highlighted the challenges faced by these children and their requests to the Cambodian government. We empathize with the troubles, concerns, and pain expressed by the children, and we fully support their ten concrete requests made to the government for preventing situations that deprive the liberty of children and for protecting the rights and wellbeing of children already in those situations.

We agree with the Global Study that deprivation of liberty for children is a deprivation of their childhood and a form of structural violence against children. We underscore the importance of framing our understanding of deprivation of liberty to be inclusive of children in a wide array of situations, including children in conflict with the law, children in prisons with their primary caregivers, and children living in institutions and centers. We affirm that children deprived of liberty are entitled to the same rights as all other children, but also recognize that they are in particularly vulnerable situations with specific needs that require specialized attention.

We acknowledge that Cambodia has made significant progress over the years in establishing a child justice system, enhancing child protection mechanisms, actively deinstitutionalizing children, and fighting to end violence against children, including as a Pathfinding Country. However, there is still work to be done, and the Global Study can provide helpful guidance to support the government’s ongoing efforts.

We as members of the civil society feel a responsibility to support children around the country who are facing deprivation of liberty. We will join forces and collaborate with the communities to study and address the root causes resulting in deprivation of liberty for children at the individual and systemic levels, as well as to improve the diverse conditions faced by children currently deprived of liberty in a rights-based and child-friendly manner. We will pursue a holistic and interdisciplinary approach, encompassing child justice, child protection, social protection, education, and more.

We declare our firm commitment to work closely with the government, in meaningful partnership with children, to achieve positive outcomes for all children in Cambodia, both as a measure of prevention and of response to deprivation of liberty for children. To best prioritize and strategize our efforts, and to find the best and most promising solutions, we will engage both domestically and internationally, including through the 2021 World Congress on Justice with Children.

We are determined to advance and bolster our collective efforts to work for and with children, fully respecting their voices and pursuing an inclusive and effective approach that is sensitive to the needs and circumstances of children deprived of liberty.

This statement has been jointly prepared by the following civil society members of the Organizing Committee for the National Launch of the Global Study in Cambodia:

1. Adolescent and Youth Reference Group
2. Cambodian Children and Young People Movement for Child Rights
3. Child Advocate Network
4. Child Rights Coalition Cambodia
5. Legal Aid of Cambodia – member of the NGO Panel for the Global Study
6. Global Campus of Human Rights
7. Global Initiative on Justice with Children – represented by Terre des hommes

This statement is joined by the following civil society speakers at the National Launch:

1. Save the Children
2. This Life Cambodia



Save the Children



This statement is endorsed by the following civil society organizations in Cambodia:

1. Buddhism for Social Development Action
2. Cambodia Against Child Trafficking Network (Cambodia ACTs)
3. Cambodian Center for Human Rights
4. Cambodian Center for the Protection of Children's Rights
5. Cambodian Human Rights Action Coalition
6. Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
7. CARE International in Cambodia
8. Chab Dai Coalition
9. Children In Families Organization
10. Children's Rights International
11. Community Council for Development Organization
12. Community Legal Education Center
13. First Step Cambodia
14. Gender and Development for Cambodia
15. Hagar International in Cambodia
16. Italian Association for Aid to Children
17. Krousar Thmey
18. Legal Support for Children and Women
19. Phare Ponleu Selpak Association
20. Plan International Cambodia
21. SOS Children's Villages International
22. Terre des Hommes Netherlands
23. The Cambodian NGO Committee on CEDAW (NGO-CEDAW)
24. Women Organization for Modern Economy and Nursing



This statement is also endorsed by the NGO Panel for the Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, a group of 170 civil society organizations around the world that is co-convened by Defence for Children International and Human Rights Watch. The NGO Panel has been an important partner in the initiation and completion of the Global Study, as well as in its implementation and follow-up.



The National Launch of the United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty in Cambodia was held on 22 April 2021 through an online platform, attended by children and youth, government officials, civil society organizations, United Nations agencies, academia, development partners, and members of the public in Cambodia and abroad. Preparations involved pre-session consultations with children and engagement with the key line ministries. These voices, along with the voices of the civil society were highlighted during the National Launch, as a method of sharing information, recommendations, and commitments.

The Cambodian Preparatory Meeting for the 2021 World Congress on Justice with Children was also held immediately following the National Launch, resulting in productive discussions around the challenges, priorities, and promising practices in the field of child justice in Cambodia, and paving the way for better coordination among child justice organizations.

For more information, please contact the Organizing Committee at GSCDLCambodia@gmail.com. The Global Study can be accessed at <https://omnibook.com/Global-Study-2019> and <https://nochildbehindbars.com>.