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ADHOC Creates Nationwide Network Providing Information and Watching Khmer Rouge Tribunal

By Phaktra Neth

In terms of providing spiritual assistance and knowledge concerning the Khmer Rouge trial, ADHOC will start a new big program entitled "Information Dissemination, the Khmer Rouge Tribunal Watch and International Criminal Court". The program will be implemented with Cambodian people at local levels throughout Cambodia in early June.

The program will last for three years and is co-supported by the European Union and Stichting Oxfam Novib with a donation of €1.3 million by focusing on two important topics: the Khmer Rouge Trial and International Criminal Court [ICC]. In the launching ceremony of the program on the 4th of April, Mr. Thun Saray, President of ADHOC, said, "Although the two topics are different, we will implement them in the same activities because the Khmer Rouge Trial and the International Criminal Court have a close link."

The Extraordinary Chamber in the Courts of Cambodia [ECCC] prosecutes crimes committed during a period between 1975 and 1979 whilst the International Criminal Court is for crimes which will happen in the future. Concerning the Khmer Rouge Trial, Mr. Thun Saray claimed that he would do four essential activities to spread information to the people such as conducting forums to inform and educate people in every district around the country. Moreover, the forums are to provide psychological and legal assistance to victims and witnesses and to watch the process of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal and to urge for a new draft code of criminal procedures adopted. Regarding the International Criminal Court, he would do three things such as conducting training courses for a number of important people in some provinces in order to get them understand the International Criminal Court, aiming to have provisions related to the International Criminal Court integrated in the existing draft code of criminal procedures as well as in a new one and to lobby the government to denounce the bilateral agreement with the US not to surrender Americans to the ICC and to investigate whether there have been crimes in Cambodia under the ICC's jurisdiction.

To spread the information to Cambodian people, ADHOC has trained 48 staffs, 44 of whom are from provinces and other 4 are from Phnom Penh. Before starting their work, the staffs have received a training and been tested in a pilot project. The information dissemination program will be held by gathering people in a place to inform them up-to-date information about the progress of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal and to distribute some related document to them.

Regarding the implementation of the "Information Dissemination, the Khmer Rouge Tribunal Watch and the International Criminal Court Program", Mr. Thun Sary highlighted, "Most Cambodian people in rural areas have insufficient means to access to information concerning the Khmer Rouge trial and the ICC." Through the program, he hoped that the people would be able to obtain a number of crucial information which will make them better understand the importance of their participation in the process of the Khmer Rouge trial. The participation of the people which is recognized by Cambodian law of the criminal procedures would contribute to a fair and transparent trial. Even though he has considered that the program would produce results which were more significant than the attendance of the people in the tribunal, Mr. Thun Saray highlighted that the two activities complemented each other and shared the same objectives which are aimed at spreading information about the Khmer Rouge tribunal to all Cambodian people throughout the country.

The ADHOC's program will allocate one part of its fund to the Victims and Witnesses Support Unit due to the fact that the extraordinary chamber does not have enough money to spend on it. The program is a better option to fill the lack of financial resources and to motivate victims and witnesses to participate in the trials with which the tribunal will succeed.

Mr. Winston McColgan, European Union Chargés d'affaires in Cambodia, said that such an information dissemination program would bring reality of the Extraordinary Chamber in the Court of Cambodia to people at the local levels to allow them to participate in the process of the tribunal. He mentioned that the European Union welcomed the creation of the ECCC, saying, "We want to see justice is found for victims of the Khmer Rouge regime and the justice must meet the international standards which Cambodian people deserve to have."

"Like the Cambodian government, we believe that the ECCC will be a prior contribution to the development of judicial and legal system in Cambodia as well as to providing justice in the system," said Winston McColgan, adding, "Base on this ground, we are hopefully waiting fore and want to see the tribunal to start soon." The ADHOC president believed that it was a historical movement for Cambodian victims as people are allowed to live their life peacefully, to forget everything happened in the past and to usher in a new chapter of country's history in a bid to build and develop the country.

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