



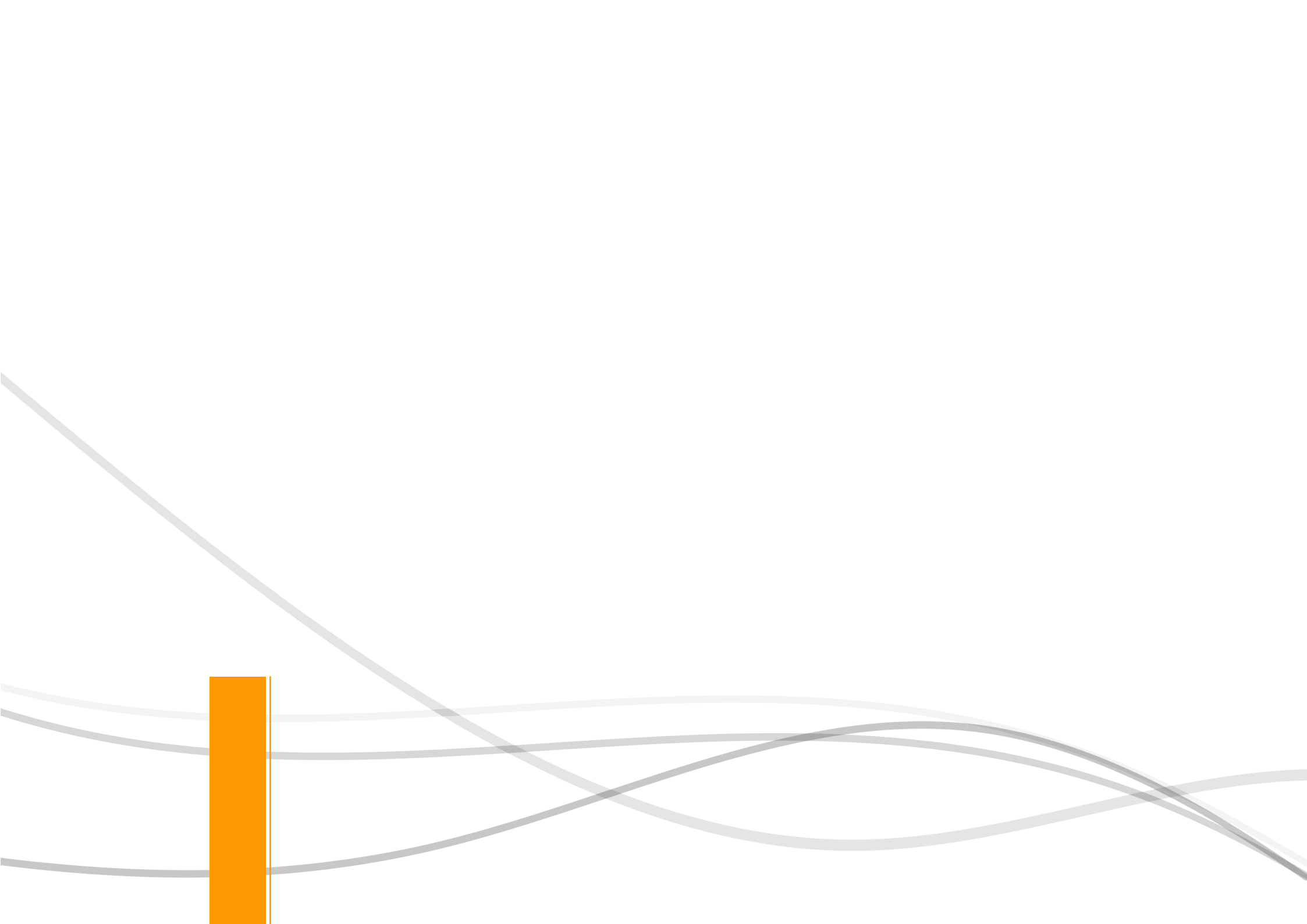
**W
A
C** **WOMYN'S
AGENDA FOR
CHANGE**

ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2004 - JUNE 2005

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INTRODUCTION

What is Womyn's Agenda for Change?

Womyn's Agenda for Change is a dynamic, activist-orientated NGO that helps to support the work of Cambodian women in four crucial areas – creating sustainable livelihoods, improving and accessing social services, ensuring life and security, and being heard. All our activities are undertaken with the goal of gender equity in mind.

WAC aims to provide an alternative to the mainstream approaches by bringing women into the empowerment process, rather than developing only the capacity of NGOs in Cambodia. We envisage women speaking with their own voices in conferences and gatherings at all levels, rather than being represented by middle-class NGO staff.

WAC works to facilitate links between women on the grassroots level, to involve women and incorporate gender issues into technical projects, like credit, irrigation, and agriculture, and in the various organisations which women are part of.

WAC seeks to influence national policy, primarily through engagement with selected government ministries, including the Cambodian Parliament and the Ministry of Women's and Veteran's Affairs, whilst working within the existing gender and development networks. WAC also uses its extensive community networks to conduct studies and fieldwork which enrich the understanding of gender issues and help provide a picture of the concerns of Cambodian women.

The Speak-Out Project

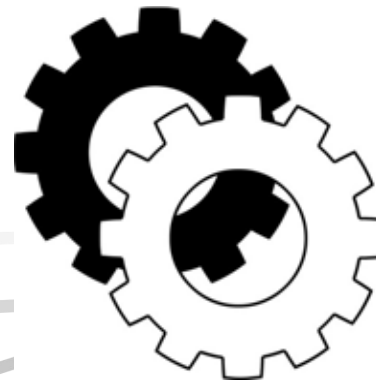
The Womyn's Agenda for Change Speak-Out project seeks to facilitate the development of the women's movement throughout Cambodian society, especially at village, street and grassroots levels.

The project's core objective is to provide ways for women to explore and analyse their feelings and insights, articulate their aspirations, and initiate mutually supportive action.

By empowering facilitators, Speak-Out challenges the model of NGO as service provider, and encourages NGO workers to be compassionate about gender issues both in their work and private lives.

The Speak-Out philosophy underpins all of WAC's work, most (but not all) of which is conducted in three major areas:

- sex workers
- garment workers
- globalisation and development



SEX WORKER EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

Project Background

The Sex Worker Empowerment Project or Sex Worker Speak-Out project is run in conjunction with the Women's Network for Unity (WNU), and focuses on community development and self-organisation among sex workers, including both direct and indirect sex workers, transgenders (TGs), men having sex with men (MSM) and lesbians.

The Sex Worker Empowerment Project began in 1999 with the formation of the WNU, a collective of sex workers which has grown to represent 5,000 active members in 13 provinces and cities, but is especially strong in Phnom Penh. WAC helped establish and continues to support WNU in its work. The project employs the Speak-Out philosophy to:

- Mobilise sex workers for mutual support and collective action in response to their needs and priorities, and broader strategic issues.
- Improve WNU members' abilities to analyse gender issues and negotiate, empowering them to challenge top-down development initiatives and to become active participants in the design and direction of programs that involve them.
- Document the Speak-Out process, creating a valuable activist resource.

Project Targets

- Identification of women at the grassroots level who can act as on-site organisers and assume the role of facilitator in their respective communities.
- Organisation of community-level gender analysis and awareness sessions.
- Identification of issues and facilitation of relevant group action strategies, with ongoing implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- Improvement of the capacity of Women's Network for Unity's HIV-prevention staff to manage and monitor sex worker empowerment activities.
- Increasing sex workers' control over their lives and futures.
- Adoption of safer sex practices by sex workers and clients in target areas.
- Gaining support and collaboration from local authorities and brothel owners in pursuing outreach HIV-prevention activities in target areas.
- Increasing the use of STD care services by sex workers in target areas.
- Basic administrative training at the WAC office for WNU members.
- Workshops with sex worker leaders, in order to form a peer education committee.
- Regular meetings with sex worker leaders to discuss campaigning on relevant issues.



TARGET AREAS	TARGET PROFILE
Phsar Touch	Direct and indirect sex workers in Phsar Touch, Prek Leap, Toul Kork and Leu-Phnom areas.
Railway Station	Direct and indirect sex workers around the railway station, Boeung Kok, Wat Phnom and along the river in front of the Royal Palace.
Building	Sex workers in the gardens and orange sellers in front of Building, (The Nose of Pig area).
Sansam Kosal	Groups of sex workers, transgenders, and lesbians in the Sansam Kosal, Chap Ampouv, Pkarom Tekrom, and Kilometer 4 areas.
Svay Pak	Sex workers in Kilometer 9, Svay Pak, Stoeung Kambut, and Kilometer 12 areas of Russey Keo district, Phnom Penh.
Kampong Speu Province	Direct and indirect sex workers and karaoke girls in the Wat Morom, Engtein 1 and Rek Reay restaurants, Sre-troyoung, and Prey-sloek bars and Soek-rong areas.
Kampong Chhnang Province	Direct and indirect sex workers in massage parlours and the Rorors-Pee areas.
Takeo Province	Sex workers and karaoke girls in the Tamoavs mountain area.
NYEMO	Working with NYEMO (an NGO) to reach their target groups in Phnom Penh.
Cambodian Prostitutes' Union	CPU has been involved in the sex worker empowerment project since last year. Their target groups are sex workers in the Toul Kork area.

Advocacy Work

- Two sex workers participated in the Private Sector Partnership Project workshop conducted by Care International on the working conditions of beer promotion women (or 'beer girls') in Cambodia. They discussed strategies for protecting the women from violence and exploitation and how respect and dignity could be brought to their profession. Key concerns identified were:
 - a. protection from clients who want to treat them like sex workers
 - b. a safe work environment, in which companies follow internationally acceptable codes of conduct
 - c. working with government to help organize an association of beer promotion workers
 - d. monitoring of working conditions
 - e. NGO-run community training on women's rights
 - f. appropriate representation by beer promotion women to the beer companies
 - g. respectful ways to refer to beer promotion women

Following this workshop, WAC met with groups of beer girls, who expressed their desire to form a union. WAC, East West Management Institute (EWMI), Care, and several local NGOs are working together to establish a code of conduct for beer distributors. EWMI is working with a local lawyer to get beer girls recognized as employees under labour and contract law.

- Four sex workers participated in a human trafficking stakeholder meeting conducted by UNIAP (United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region) at World Vision, sharing some of their experiences.
- WAC facilitated support for WNU from the Minister of Women's Affairs, Oeung Khuntha Phavey, in the form of a \$50 donation to a sex worker who was brutalised by police.
- On World AIDS Day 2004, WNU collaborated with other NGOs to give educational performances in the Wat Phnom area and held speak-outs in which sex workers shared

stories about their lives, educated each other about HIV/AIDS, condom use, and their legal rights as sex workers.

- 41 sex workers from WNU and 20 from the Cambodian Prostitutes' Union attended a meeting for the the Policy Project on Violence to work on a new problem solving strategy.
- Two sex workers participated in the Ministry of Women's and Veteran's Affairs meeting at the Juliana Hotel on Policy Change on Gender and HIV/AIDS.
- Two sex workers lobbied the Provincial Outreach Team at Kampong Chhnang to ensure access to their target groups. Some NGOs have attempted to block WNU's access to sex workers.
- Continuing advocacy work in the Cambodian media outlets, including the *Cambodia Daily*, *Phnom Penh Post*, *Association Press*, *Phnom Penh Thmey*, and television channels TV3, TVK and TV5.
- Meeting with UNAIDS staff from Bangkok, UNAID in Phnom Penh and an ABC journalist about the situation of SWs, the benefits of sex worker-to-sex worker outreach for HIV/AIDS reduction, and sex workers' opposition to unethical drug trials.
- Sex workers testified at the press conference conducted by UNIFEM about the reasons they had become sex workers, including family debt, domestic violence, drought and disaster, and lack of access to health care and education.
- WNU and WAC met with the National Council on HIV/AIDS Department to figure out how to work with sex workers in all 14 provinces. Following this meeting NCHAD signed a letter authorising WNU to work with independent sex workers in all provinces on HIV outreach and advocacy.
- At the end of June, 2005, WNU and WAC met with a sex worker group in Pursat Province called Rehabilitation AIDS Development, which would like to work with WNU and WAC for support and to increase their independence from FHI.
- Journalists from the *Phnom Penh Post* interviewed Sou Sotheavy (former WNU Secretary) and published a profile of her and the WNU.



International Activities

- One WNU secretariat member participated in the APPACH workshop in New Delhi and attended the APPACH Bangkok workshop.
- Four WNU members participated in a workshop organised by Empower (the Thai-based sex worker NGO) in Bangkok on credit unions, with other sex workers from Laos and regional Thailand. They shared their experiences and problems facing SWs in Cambodia, and also explained how they set up WNU as an independent group.
- Two WNU members participated in a conference in Bangkok in July, 2004, focused on HIV/AIDS and the proposed Gilead Tenofovir trials. This conference included a speak-out with sex workers from all the attending countries, and collaboration with ACT UP activists.
- A WNU team leader and a WAC staff member attended a regional workshop on ethical guidelines for drug trials, held in Pattaya, Thailand, in June 2005 and organised by the Thai Drug Users Network. At this meeting there was some friction between researchers and community leaders. Sou Sotheavy from WNU was elected from the workshop to attend the global consultation in Geneva.
- Sou Sotheavy, a team leader sex worker from WNU attended the global consultation on ethical drug trial guidelines in Geneva, Switzerland, on 22-23 June 2005. She was not allowed to bring her own translator, and spoke only once, however, community members from other countries were impressed that Cambodia had stopped unethical drug trials, and wanted to know how it had done so. 20 countries were represented.
- 21 Japanese students visited sex workers around Phnom Penh, so that sex workers could share the situation of SWs in Cambodia and their experiences.
- 60 sex workers had a meeting with an Italian journalist to share information about conditions of women and sex workers in Cambodia.
- 18 sex workers from different areas around Phnom Penh gave education and experience-sharing workshops to student groups from England, and Nepalese police, military and health department staff on exchange to observe different HIV prevention programs. They also took them to visit sex workers' areas around Phnom Penh.



- Experiences were shared by WNU members with Italian journalists and five donors from England. This included visiting sex workers in the railway station area.
- A group of six sex workers from Hong Kong came on an exposure program and met with WNU members from Phnom Penh and the provinces. They discussed their experiences, solidarity, advocacy work and drug trials.
- Melissa and Anna Louise, presidents of the International Network of Sex Workers, came to talk with sex workers in Phnom Penh about the network; how it operates, the importance of sex workers joining together to protect themselves, and by doing so how this can advance their interests.

Capacity Building

In order to provide sex worker leaders with opportunities to speak out, strengthen their own skills and build relationships with other NGOs, various activities were undertaken:

- WNU held many 'fun' meetings to choose team leaders in different areas. This is a strategy for encouraging team leaders to work on behalf of their members, and for members to recruit leaders that are honest, good hearted and want to work to protect their colleagues. There are now 22 team leaders from different areas of Phnom Penh and some of the provinces.
- Three sex workers participated in the NGO Banteay Srey's workshop on leadership in March, 2005. Two WNU secretariat members explained WNU's independence and its leadership activities.
- Two sex workers participated in Care's workshop to disseminate research on men having sex with men (MSM), which sought ways to reduce discrimination against MSM.
- Three gender issue workshop sessions were run with team leaders from the WNU.
- WAC arranged with CHRAN (an NGO) for WNU secretariat members to participate in their workshops and attend their monthly meetings.

- Two workshops for 25 sex worker leaders (including direct and indirect sex workers and five transgenders) were organized in order to discuss the advocacy process and long term health insurance to cover any potential side effects from the Tenofovir drug trial.
- 38 sex workers won scholarships for vocational training in Hair Dressing, Machine Sewing, and Make-up for Brides from the NGO Coalition to Address Sexual Exploitation of Children in Cambodia (COSECAM).
- A meeting with Care International to educate and share experiences to help them set up their pilot project with beer girls and gangsters, focusing on sexual health and HIV/AIDS transmission.
- Arrangements were made with the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC) to send three female victims (two of trafficking, one of violence by a client) to make formal complaints and undertake training and education at the CWCC centre.
- Sex workers participated in a meeting with CHRAN and other Cambodian NGOs to discuss Human Rights for people with HIV/AIDS.
- Five WNU secretariat members participated with Medicine Sans Frontiers (Belgium) as facilitators for an HIV/AIDS treatment workshop held in Siem Reap, and to share experiences on how to encourage sex workers to access treatment. After the workshop finished, the secretariat went to visit sex workers at AFESIP (Agir pour les Femmes en Situation Précaire and Cambodian Women for Peace and Development, but were denied access pending permission from the directors. They also visited patients at Siem Reap Hospital to find out how many sex workers are staying there or are receiving treatment with ARVs. They then went to visit sex workers in brothels with the MSF staff.
- In the last week of May there was a WNU meeting to elect seven new secretariat members for the sex workers' union.

Grant Proposals

- We prepared a successful application to the Tides Foundation for \$10,000 funding for WNU activities to support members, focusing on the principles: ARVs for all; reducing stigma against those living with HIV/AIDS; promoting successful adherence to ARV treatment regimens.
- A proposal was submitted to the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice in September for getting funding for: strengthening the WNU; work to reduce discrimination, violence, exploitation, and stigma; management, self determination, and sustainability for the WNU.

Outreach and Research

WNU members continued to visit and monitor fellow sex workers through outreach projects. These are primarily to help develop their community, to urge them to unite to empower themselves, to educate them about HIV/AIDS and other diseases, and to encourage them to consider their health and to support each other. Sex worker leaders went on monitoring visits to various areas including around Phnom Penh, Svay Pak, Kien Svay, Kampong Speu, Kompong Chhnang and Takeo provinces.

An important part of the outreach work is simultaneous research into the conditions and concerns of sex workers. The research helps in the design of future Speak-Out programs, and is building up an invaluable picture of Cambodian sex workers' lives.

Some of the specific member outreach activities through the year included:

- On the 8th of March, International Women's Day, 406 sex workers and over 600 garment workers had an advocacy meeting to promote women's rights and independence. There were educational sessions, empowering programs, role plays, and entertainment. This was to help promote organizing for labour rights.



- The secretariat helped Care to run workshops on strategies for working with sex workers. They collaborated with Care as facilitators in Poit Pe, Oddor Meanchey, and Koh Kong Provinces.
- One sex worker's boyfriend took her child away. The WNU secretariat helped her lodge complaints with the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center and human rights NGO LICADHO.
- Field visits were made to Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Speu, and Takeo to meet with and monitor sex workers in those areas.
- The secretariat arranged with hospitals such as Phum Kresh Sok-san (India), Calmete, and Sihanouk hospitals for sex workers to get AIDS treatment.
- The secretariat arranged for many sex worker leaders to travel to share their experiences with other sex workers in different areas around Phnom Penh and the provinces.
- At the end of June 2005, WNU held a meeting with the MSM group, which has grown considerably in size, and many experiences and solutions to problems were shared.
- A large meeting of beer girls was held in late June, 2005. They expressed interest in working and organizing with WNU.
- We have continued to provide income generation skills training, started in January, 2003, to *srey-sros* (transgender) members to support their performances of traditional and disco dancing. They sell tickets to performances raise money to support members with HIV/AIDS.
- In August 2004, two *srey-sros* won supporting acting and dancing roles in a popular soap opera screened on CTN and Channel 3.
- In 2005, seven *srey-sros* from the income generation skills training program got work starring in three programs on National TV.
- Two *srey-sros* dance group members are now back-up dancers on TV channels Apsara and CTN.

Opposing Unethical Drug Trials

In June 2003, the US department of health approved research by the US pharmaceutical company Gilead into trials of the drug Tenofovir in Cambodia. From then until March 2005, all the relevant documents were in English only. The researchers and health department staff said that they did not have time to translate them into Khmer. At this time the drug had never been tested on humans as an HIV prophylaxis, it had only been tested on monkeys and as a post-HIV infection treatment. This caused many sex workers, who were the intended test subjects, to be upset, believing that this reflected an attitude that treats sex workers as research 'animals', rather than humans with rights.

Sex workers objected to the research, arguing it should be done in the researchers' countries, where their own government could support the people tested should there be long-term health effects. This is not a feasible option in Cambodia.

Nevertheless, some women's health and other NGOs, notably those which receive USAID funding, persuaded SWs to participate in the drug trial. They said it is an opportunity for them to earn an easy \$3 dollars per month, and that there was little need to worry about their health because with the money earned they could buy medicine and good food to help deal with side effects. At that time there was limited research on long term side effects from Tenofovir. Subsequent research indicates common side effects include:

- Anorexia, asthenia, diarrhea, dizziness, dyspnea, flatulence, headache, hypophosphatemia, lactic acidosis, nausea, pancreatitis, renal impairment, rash and vomiting and possible risk of long term kidney and liver damage.

This is not to mention an increased risk of HIV infection because of the implied 'protection' offered by taking the drug.

The WNU secretariat and members opposed the Gilead trials on the grounds that they were to be conducted unethically, without sufficient information or health care provisions being



provided to subjects. They are not opposed to drug trials on principle, only trials they believe to be unethical.

Anti-Tenofovir Activities

- A workshop was held at WAC on Ethics and Drug Trials, from 4-6 January 2005. It was facilitated by Joe Thomas from APPACHA (Asia-Pacific People's Alliance to Combat HIV/AIDS). 15 sex workers, six garment workers and three members of the Thai Drug Users Network participated.
- 150 sex workers from all over Phnom Penh and 40 NGO staff gave a (second) press conference about the trials, on 15 June 2004, to journalists from print, TV and radio media outlets. Dr Khoal Vohit, from NCHADS (National Council on HIV/AIDS Department), was present to answer medical questions, and a monk from the Salvation Center Cambodia participated. Some of the messages presented were:

- WE ARE HUMAN BEINGS, NOT ANIMALS
- \$3 A MONTH CANNOT BUY A SEX WORKER
- SEX WORKERS' LIVES ARE NOT PLAYTHINGS
- STOP TESTING THIS DRUG IN CAMBODIA – TEST IT IN THE USA
- MORE AFFORDABLE ARVs FOR THE POOR
- PROVIDE ARVs TO HIV+ IF YOU ARE KIND
- IN THE USA THEY HAVE HUMAN RIGHTS – WHAT ABOUT CAMBODIA?



A group of sex workers are holding their messages in a second press conference on drugs trials, June 15, 2004, WAC boat.

After the WNU's second press conference on the proposed drug trials, some government support was forthcoming. A Cambodian Government official declared during the opening

ceremony of Khuntheak-Bopha II Children's Hospital, "Cambodia is not a rubbish bin and Cambodians are not rubbish. Stop the drug trial." However, several NGOs still lobbied WNU to participate in the trial. So on the 28 January 2005, the WNU secretariat and 21 members from around Phnom Penh and five CPU members held a meeting with researchers and some NGOs including Family Health International, Khmer Women's Cooperation for Development, Urban Sector Group, Khemara, and Cambodian Women for Peace and Development. WNU explained why it opposes the trials, and that the researchers had never discussed their work with sex worker representatives, and will not provide long term insurance for future health effects.

- WNU worked with journalists and sex workers from England and the USA to publish information about drug trials in Cambodia and the activities of the network in opposing unethical drug trials.
- Two meetings were held with UNAIDS to discuss Tenofovir and the new ethical guidelines for researchers conducting experiments in Cambodia (2004- 2005).
- WNU met with a French anthropologist in Cambodia on HIV/AIDS, to discuss the drug trials and the position of sexworkers.



Key Successes During the Year

Visits to sex workers – recording testimonies for abstracts for 7 ICCAP in Kobe and for Speak-Out programs.	Daytime and evening visits were made to target areas to assess the continued impact of the Government order banning karaoke bars. Additionally, we chatted and discussed their activities and issues for the AIDS conference in Bangkok.	Periodically throughout July 2004 – June 2005
Meetings with members, sex worker leaders, and the WNU secretariat.	This involved meetings of representatives from the sex worker groups. The different groups share experiences, problems encountered and various approaches to solving them. They discussed problems, upcoming activities and plans, and co-ordinated their roles and responsibilities.	Monthly throughout July 2004 – June 2005
Exchange visits and study tours to several provinces.	Secretariat members and team leaders went to Oddor Meanchey, Poit Pet, Koh Kong and other provinces to share their experiences and learn from each other. These trips have been very successful for sharing ideas and building solidarity between sex workers from the capital and regional areas.	Regularly throughout July 2004 – June 2005
Exposure Program - Hong Kong Group.	Six sex workers from Hong Kong came to learn from WNU members about ways of organising, how to build solidarity, and how to successfully campaign against unwanted drug trials.	May 2005
Collaboration with Care International	The WNU secretariat worked with Care to help make a documentary on gang rape and conduct a workshop on non-consensual sex.	July 2004
3 workshop sessions on gender.	With the WNU team leaders we did training on gender equality and related issues in different areas of Phnom Penh.	March 2005

Lobbying with the Gender and Development Network on the Platform for Action to Secure Women's Rights.	Three sex worker leaders from Toul Kork, Tralokbak and the Building participated in a three-day conference on the Platform for Action to Secure Women's Rights. This was an opportunity for sex workers to discuss, on their own behalf, potential human rights abuses in their lives. It was a forum to raise awareness and promote understanding of their situation, and help stop discrimination against them as 'bad girls'.	November 2004
Sex worker discussion group about advocacy.	Four meetings with sex workers were conducted in which they discussed sharing information about the Tenofovir drug trial and its side effects, their health concerns and how to organize on behalf of, and demand support for, their members.	July 2004 - June 2005
Workshops with SW committee and other interested sex workers.	Two meetings were held to further campaign planning around the issue of access to HIV medicine, and to discuss preparations for the 3 rd anniversary of the Women's Network for Unity.	October – November 2004
Asian Pacific Conference on HIV/AIDS and Governance.	One WNU secretariat member participated in the Asian Pacific Conference on HIV/AIDS and Governance in New Delhi.	December 2004
Making Sex Work Safe workshop.	With the Asian Pacific Network for Sex workers (APNSW), we held a seven-day workshop, Making Sex Work Safe. It covered: sharing skills among SWs in documentation, art and culture; art and culture for HIV/AIDS education; and strengthening the APNSW. There were 24 participants from the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, Hong Kong, India, USA, UK, Australia, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and 15 people from Cambodia (WNU, Municipality Health Care, and Village Committee Development).	December 2004
World AIDS Day.	38 sex workers from around Phnom Penh participated with KHANA (Khmer HIV/AIDS NGO Alliance) and CHRAN to reach people along the road to Kirirom and Kampong Speu province. The message was to reduce and prevent HIV/AIDS, communicated through performance and song.	December 2004

Facilitation of interaction workshops with NYEMO II among people living with HIV/AIDS.	This continues activities from the previous program period. It aims to promote and encourage women from NYEMO, including those living with HIV/AIDS. Two sex workers participate as facilitators on a bi-weekly basis. An additional objective is capacity building in monitoring and observation, sharing experiences, and facilitation techniques so that NYEMO staff and sex worker leaders can become facilitators and activists.	Bi weekly July 2004 - June 2005
International Women's Day.	On the 8 th of March, WAC and the WNU held a large awareness-raising festival for sex workers and garment workers on globalization, the rights of workers, and empowerment of Cambodian women.	March 2005
International Labour Day.	Over 400 sex workers and 600 garment workers came to activities organized by WAC and WNU on the rights of workers and working women.	May 2005
Providing premises and basic administrative training for the WNU secretariat.	WAC has provided space for WNU since 2002. Secretariat members come daily to work and learn basic office skills, including telephone use and report writing. We encourage the secretariat to share the skills they have learned with other members. Since March 2004, the network has been registered with the Ministry of the Interior.	July 2004 – June 2005

GARMENT WORKER PROJECT

SUPPORT TO WOMEN GARMENT WORKERS IN CAMBODIA

KAM 036

January – June 2005

Background

31 December 2004, was the last day of the existing preferential system for garment imports into the United States market; the Multi-Fibre Agreement, or MFA. In 2002, Cambodian exports (both quota and non-quota) to the USA totalled US\$961 million, out of a garment exports total of US\$1,350 million. Cambodia's total merchandise exports in 2002 were US\$1,400 million, which reveals the garment industry as the prime source of export revenue. In 2003, garment exports earned US\$1.57 billion, which rose to US\$1.95 billion in 2004, a 24% increase (Ministry of Commerce, 2005).

The garment sector employs over 250,000 Cambodians, the overwhelming majority of whom are young women. The industry provides desperately needed export revenue for the country, and a source of meager income for these many workers and their dependents.

In the 2004 UN Human Development Index, Cambodia ranked 130 out of 177 countries, following Ghana and preceding Vanuatu. Cambodia also qualifies as a Least Developed Country (LDC) in the World Trade Organization, but missed out on the complete range of exemptions possible for LDCs during negotiations held prior to the Cancun meeting. After the new government was formed in 2003, the process of Cambodia's accession to the WTO moved forward and the country officially became a member in October 2004.

Cambodia facts:

- *Population (2001): 13.5 million
- * Population under age 15: 38.6% (CIPS 2004)
- * Average life expectancy: 57.4 years
- * Adult illiteracy rate: female 40.7%, male 19.2%
- * GDP (2002): 4 billion US\$
- * Gender Development rank: 105/144 countries

Source: UN Human Development Report 2003



Stop rape now!
Stop all kinds of violence against women!
I hate rape. Stop it now!



Workers join with other workers in the region to sing workers solidarity songs during the workers exchange in the Philippines.



Workers meet at the drop-in centers for different learning sessions. They pass on information to other workers and tell them to keep an eye on their employers.

Industrial bodies in Cambodia have been anxious about the effects of the end of the MFA. The World Bank suggested to the Ministry of Commerce that Cambodia “market” itself as an “ethical producing” nation in an effort to pick up sales lost in the phase-out. The Asia Development Bank is exploring increasing the proportion of domestically owned and controlled factories because of the fear that foreign clothing companies will shift production to countries like India and China, where labour costs are lower. In this scenario, the result for Cambodia will be less demand for the production of goods, factory closures, and the possibility of widespread job loss. This would be devastating for the economy of a country only recently and very rapidly re-integrated into the global economy. The Minister of Commerce has stated that seventy factories have already closed down. (*Raksmei Kampuchea*, 15 March 2005). GMAC reports that only 12 factories have closed and 24 have suspended operations, a discrepancy which we believe lies in the number of small workshops and factories that have not been counted because they are subcontractors and therefore not members of GMAC. (*Phnom Penh Post*, May 6-19, 2005).

This year, WAC continued the process of assisting workers in their right to information and in their self-organisation efforts. This work is more important than ever, given the backdrop against which the industry is now operating.

Supporting Workers’ Self-Organisation

- WAC currently supports five workers’ drop-in centers, which have become hubs of learning, organization and discussion. In the second half of the year, workers set up two new centers in Mean Chey and Toul Sangke in addition to maintaining the centers in Teouk Tla and Dang Kor. The Bak Kheng drop-in center closed down in April 2005 after factory closings left no workers in the area. The centers are located where there is a high concentration of worker housing and factories.

Key activists at the drop-in centers make a concerted effort to be as welcoming and informative as possible for new members. In each centre there is educational material developed with workers in past workshops. There is also a range of documents relevant to

the garment industry and workers' lives, such as the Cambodian Labour Code, Instructional Education and Communication material (a kind of learning tool), information on labour rights and the conditionality imposed on Cambodia by international financial institutions, and legal books. Workers come to participate in group workshops and sharing sessions, to learn and to contribute. In some centers, workers who have studied English run free classes to teach their colleagues during the evenings.

The knowledge nourished at the drop-in centers is further spread among co-workers, to help others understand the causes of many of their problems. This encourages more workers to become aware of the centers and the opportunities provided there, and to come to use the resources for their own benefit and capacity building. Workers from the centers have started a savings scheme to raise money they hope can be used to start a worker-operated and managed garment factory. By participating in the activities at the centers, they can see the importance of access to information and have been inspired by the activities of other workers in similar situations around the world.

- WAC has facilitated economic planning on the part of garment workers. Two workers held a discussion with the Women Network for Unity (WNU) on how to open bank accounts so they could, in turn, tell their friends how it is done. This is an example of workers empowering other workers, a major goal of WAC. The WNU was inspired by the education and savings efforts of the garment workers and wants to help its member access the banks and learn new ways of saving money. Sex workers and garment workers are people that Cambodian society values very little. It is an important step for them to be seen to be saving for their futures.

- WAC staff helped to organize a joint effort by garment workers and sex workers as well as other organizations such as Friends and CWS to fundraise and do publicity work for (the December 2004) tsunami aid. Workers came to the WAC office to assemble lanterns. The proceeds from selling the lanterns went to help the victims of the tsunami. Many workers who could not participate in this event contributed by giving what money they could through the key organizers in their areas. Although they are themselves living in poor conditions, they



Workers making lanterns to sell to raise money to help the tsunami victims.



Rape is a serious problem that can happen to anyone. Join with us to stop it by signing this petition!



What are the organizing strategies used in the Philippines and Indonesia to make workers strong and hold the union accountable? We have this problem in Cambodia!



Workers role played during May Day about the changes in the factories after the quota system is phased out.

know what it means to be in desperate need, and did this out of a commitment to care for others.

- WAC has facilitated the participation of workers in forums that in the past have been the sole domain of NGOs and unions. As a result, their participation has enriched and enlivened discussion. For the first time, workers are hearing what is being said by representatives in their name, often things that they don't necessarily agree with. Workers are also hearing what is being said about them, by men who only consider them as workers and not as humans. This participation has led to some confrontation between workers and those who claim to speak for them. This is not a negative outcome, in fact it means that participatory democracy is starting to take place, that cultural norms are changing, and workers are challenging the power structures that previously remained unquestioned.

Facilitating Workers' Access to Knowledge and Information

- Key organizers from the drop-in-centers held workshops in their respective centers at least once a month to share knowledge and experiences on the impact of the MFA phase-out, the situation of women in Cambodia, gender and the environment, globalization issues, and the labor code. About 560 workers participated in these sessions over the past six months. The goal of the workshops is to raise workers' awareness of the impact of globalization on the environment and its implications for women. We discussed the disproportionate negative effects on women and children that result from the policies of IMF, World Bank, and the WTO.

- WAC provided training for 15 key activists around the themes 'Why the WTO is bad for you', Export Processing Zones (EPZs) and their damaging effects, the new rules of the world, and World Bank conditions. The training helps to strengthen the key activists' knowledge, which they share with their friends, and helps them conduct advocacy work with these issues in mind. The discussions have enlightened many workers and shown them that there is often another side to the stories they are told.

•In late February 2005, WAC conducted a workshop on migrant workers' rights. 98 garment workers attended from 32 factories around Phnom Penh. The number of workers migrating to other countries has been gradually increasing since the MFA phase-out. The purpose of the workshop was to provide information about the reality of migrant workers' lives both inside and outside Cambodia so that workers are well informed when considering migrating themselves. We presented information about the major destination countries as well as preparations a worker should make before leaving. Workers shared their experiences of migration from rural to urban areas. Two staff members from Oxfam Community Aid Abroad's (OCAA) provincial program attended. After the workshop, the OCAA staff expressed interest in working closely with WAC to bring this information to villagers in rural areas.

•The Women's Network for Unity ran a workshop for sex workers to inform them about the principles of ethical drug trials so they will be able to protect themselves against non-ethical trials in the future. Six garment workers attended. The participants outlined their needs and concerns in relation to drug trials and wrote a letter to the Prime Minister asking for his support in upholding standards for drug trials. In addition, preliminary steps were taken to form a Community Ethical Committee to review and discuss these standards in the future. There are already seven people, five sex workers and two garment workers, on the committee, which will play a vital role in informing and protecting people in the community who might be targeted as participants in unethical clinical trials.

•The NGO Forum worked with WAC to hold a workshop to teach farmers and garment workers about the impact of WTO policies on their lives and how to take action to change these policies. We shared the documentary 'Why the WTO is bad for you' with the workers and farmers, and then encouraged them to mobilize to change the policies which are harming them. Then they were taught advocacy skills with the hope that they would share this information with their friends and coordinate action. However, after about three years of going around the country conducting workshops on trade, the WTO and globalization with various groups of NGOs, civil servants, community members and farmers, we have to ask why WAC is still the only group mobilizing around these issues. By contrast, when we do



In the Bangkok conference, workers talked about the post-MFA situation impacting on workers. Many are unemployed as a result of factories closing down.



Within the first quarter of the 2005, seventy garment factories closed down, said Commerce Minister. Suspension or closure of factories usually passy no or very little compensation to workers.



In my factory, the employer put permanent workers on six month or one year contracts. It is a new tactic so we don't get benefits we are entitled to.

training with garment workers, they go on to discuss and work with their colleagues, and only ask for WAC assistance when they want any further clarification

- WAC facilitated the attendance of three garment workers, two of whom had lost their jobs, to a conference called 'MFA phase-out What Are Workers' Demands?' in Bangkok. All garment workers' trade unions in Thailand participated in the conference, which gave participants unique access to a notoriously closed group. During the conference, they heard what issues workers face in other countries, like China. The workers shared their stories about how their lives were affected by the phase-out, affecting their jobs, lives in the city, economic difficulties, and their families in the countryside. The participants agreed on a strategy for the future which included setting up an information center, training and educating workers about the impact of the phase-out and issues faced by workers, and developing a strong network of workers around the world. This network will enable workers to quickly inform and assist workers in other countries, especially when they are producing for the same brand or same investor. It will also increase workers' knowledge and hope because they will not be alone in the struggle for justice and workers' rights.

- Three workers participated in the Asia Monitor Resource Center (AMRC) workshop on occupational health and safety. After the workshop, the workers returned to the drop-in centers to share the information and their experiences with other workers. They have also incorporated this information into the regular workshops that the drop-in-centers hold. One of the workers who attended shared her knowledge of conditions in a dyeing and printing workshop. The facilitator has asked her to collect brand labels from this factory in order to follow-up on an unsafe situation, showing how even a little piece of information, or one worker's actions, can play a part in the campaign for better health and safety in the region.

Establishing a Dialogue between Cambodian Workers and Campaigns in the North

- Two garment workers gave a presentation to UNIFEM and UNDP on the impact of the MFA phase-out. They presented their concerns about factory closings, unemployment, and worsening working conditions. They also voiced anxiety about competing with other countries and large transnational corporations in a market with such polarised winners and losers. The workers of Cambodia are very concerned about the exploitation and working conditions that accompany this kind of competition. In this forum, workers got a chance to voice their concerns in front of representatives from the Ministries of Commerce, Labour, and Women's Affairs, and GMAC.

- WAC also organized and provided for two workers to attend a workshop on women and leadership in cooperation with the Banteay Srey organization. At the workshop, the workers were asked to share their experiences organizing in the factories, which served as an inspiring model for other women leaders.

- Two Italian journalists visited the workers in the DIC Bak Kheng factory, and interviewed them about the factors that led them to come to work there and how their lives have changed since then. Sharing stories about the conditions of workers with journalists is crucial for informing readers at the other end of the supply chain, and an opportunity for advocacy work in Italy.

- The Ziteng Group from Hong Kong came to speak with workers in the DIC Bak Kheng factory about workers' issues in both Hong Kong and Cambodia. They hoped the two groups could learn from each others' experiences, share stories, and gain understanding of workers in other countries.

- WAC facilitated discussion between garment workers and the Committee for Asian Women (CAW) in Bangkok in August 2005. During the same week we participated in the 'MFA phase-out: What Are Workers Demands?' conference. The Sam Han factory case was



The impact of the end of the MFA is more severe than the experts predicted. Rural households are losing their livelihoods.



In just one factory, all these workers lost their jobs. There are many more that face same situation. The free trade system is killing them and their families as production shifts to countries with cheaper labour forces.



The future is very frightening. We do not know if our factory will still be operating when we get up and go to work tomorrow.



When I grow up, I want to work in the factory so that I can help my family. We do not have rice to eat

discussed because Sam Han's investor is Korean and CAW has started working with the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCFU). In this case, the factory owner ran away without paying compensation to the workers. The case is still being heard in court.

- In late January 2005, the Asian Trans National Corporations monitoring network organized a workers exchange program in the Philippines called 'Building the Labour Movement in Asia'. One WAC member and one worker went on this regional exchange. The worker shared her experiences in the factories, the conditions in factories after the MFA ended, and the challenges she has faced when organizing workers.

- Oxfam Community Aid Abroad and WAC have begun a partnership to create dialogue between their target groups; families living in rural areas; and garment workers. OCAA was interested in hearing the WAC team and workers talk about their activities and how they could facilitate our work in the villages. We hope to continue to share information about migration and collaborate on how to best help our target groups.

- WAC participated in a conference organized by the Cambodian government to promote Cambodia as a desirable country for manufacturers to invest in because of its labor standards. It was a chance to hear about government plans, and from GMAC as well as buyers from northern countries so that we may better plan future activities. It also proved to be an opportunity for the Minister of Commerce to publicly expose his anti-union attitude.

- We met with a militant grassroots labour movement from the Philippines called Solidarity of Filipino Workers. Our approaches are different and we believe we can learn from each other. They have invited us to join a labour conference that they are organizing in November 2005 in the Philippines.

- WAC participated in the Asian Trans National Corporation monitoring network researchers meeting in Bangkok, in June 2004. The goal of the meeting was to discuss future research by the regional network. Participants established a research project to trace the movement of capital between factories in different countries. The project will also include research about

management tactics used when closing down or suspending factory operations and how those tactics differ between countries.

- WAC worked with the Workers Rights Consortium (WRC), which represents 135 American colleges and universities who buy clothing produced in 15 factories in Cambodia. WRC works with WAC to monitor the working conditions in the factories, such as the Cheer View Textile Factory, which produces five brands sold to the universities. We are concerned about the workers and are investigating details of factory closures to help protect them. WAC facilitated information collection on the Cheer View factory for its workers and the WRC. We know that the company's owner recently closed a factory in Indonesia due to bankruptcy and did not pay compensation to its workers. The WRC wants to inform Cheer View's workers about this incident so they can protect themselves against the same situation occurring here. WRC has given WAC suggestions about action workers in Cambodia can take to get fair compensation for their work. WRC is also very interested in sourcing products from the planned ethically-run workers' factory once it is operating.

Monitoring the Garment Industry

- Our research on the post-MFA period shows many problems occurring after factories close down and workers face job loss. Different institutions see the impact of the end of the MFA on workers differently. WAC, along with workers from the drop-in centers, sees the changes from the perspective of workers and their families. They have felt the effects most in the areas of labour force, working conditions, and management tactics used when factories close or suspend their operations. They also worked with the WAC team to collect 55 case studies from interviews with workers at either the drop-in centers or their rented rooms. By looking at individual case studies, we are able to develop a full picture of workers' lives since the phase-out, allowing us to analyze their social, living, and working conditions.

The WAC team, together with five unemployed garment workers, made two field trips to five villages in Prey Veng province to speak with villagers whose family members have lost their



When I grow up, I want to work in the factory so that I could help my family. We do not have rice to eat.



Workers talked with a legal consultant about how they should talk to their lawyer to get sufficient information before making a decision about their compensation.



Workers collected information about conditions in the factories and passed it on to the regional network for their campaign.

jobs in the garment sector. Many families expressed deep concern and fear about the impact job loss has on their daily lives. Even parents whose children are still working in factories spoke about how decreasing wages post-MFA has resulted in difficulties and debt. The effects of the phase-out are broader and deeper than most experts can imagine.

Rural households that depend on the garment workers' incomes for their livelihood fear empty stomachs and that their children are at risk. We talked to a grandmother who waits every day for her granddaughter who works in the factories to come back with or send some money to her. We have been documenting a human catastrophe that has severe mental health effects, and may well result in people starving and dying. The team plans to extend its research to more provinces where workers migrate from. Until now, we have focused on Prey Veng, Svay Rieng, Takeo, Kampong Speou and Kampong Cham.

- WAC worked with Asian Migrant Resource Center to investigate the deaths of two workers just outside the BSS factory, which dyes clothing. WAC collected information about the working conditions at the factory and AMRC worked with BSS factory workers to record the instructions for and ingredients of the chemicals used in the factory.

- Key drop-in center activists updated their information about workers lives post-MFA phase-out almost daily. We held two meetings at the WAC office to discuss their findings. We also held a general meeting to make available the information collected from workers. 100 workers from 53 factories attended. They described the terrible working conditions after the phase-out, including forced overtime, decreased piece price, high quotas, and the lack of negotiating power. Workers' problems have increased every month. At the second meeting, we focused on workers in Levis-producing factories after we heard their conditions have worsened dramatically. We commonly hear about workers being threatened that the factory will move to another country if they work too slowly or demand too much.

Advocacy Activities

- The Sam Han factory closed earlier this year and the factory owner left the country without paying any compensation to its 9,000 workers. The workers came to WAC and we helped them to organize and submit their complaints to parliament. The case has gone through many stages involving the union, the federation, the workers, and other parties. When a compensation offer was made to the workers, they again came to WAC for support in negotiating the terms of the offer. WAC provide a legal consultant who worked with them to prepare them to meet with their lawyer. Unfortunately, the lawyer resisted meeting with workers, then, during the meeting, told workers they were not allowed to make requests or ask questions. She also told them they should accept the \$27 per person compensation offer; otherwise they would regret it for the rest of their lives. Many workers feel that they need to reject the offer for the sake of other workers to show that it is an insult and that they should demand the respect and compensation they deserve.

- Garment workers met with CAW and WRC in Bangkok, to discuss the cases of the Sam Han and Cheer View factories. Upon their return, they shared the information from the conference with their friends and co-workers at those factories. The workers are trying to find more support from inside and outside the country and are pushing for more information and help from the unions. They have also conducted letter-writing campaigns to complain to Parliament.

- WAC has helped gather evidence about sexual assaults in the workplace, facilitated discussions on the topic with Legal Aid of Cambodia and Licadho, and coordinated meetings between sexual assault victims and lawyers. We have begun legal proceedings for a rape case involving a garment worker as she was leaving her factory and the daughter of another garment worker.

- On 8 March, WAC held an event to raise awareness about violence against garment workers under the theme 'We Can Stop Violence Against Women and Gender Discrimination'. 900 people attended. WAC is campaigning against all kinds of violence against women through



Workers discussed with the legal consultant about the process they should talk to their layer in order to get full information before making the decision about the compensation.

the thumbprint petition. Garment and sex workers worked with the WAC team to compile thumbprints in support of the cause. We have collected about 24,000 thumbprints so far and hope to reach our goal of 35,000 soon. The thumbprints will be sent to the related ministries to encourage them to address the issues faced by women in Cambodia.



- On May Day, WAC held another awareness-raising event with the theme ‘Workers Unite to Fight Corporate Exploitation’. Our goal was to educate and encourage mobilization, empowerment, and action. More than 1,150 people attended. Sex and garment workers composed their own songs and performed plays they had written themselves. The media from TVK, TV 9, Cambodia Television, Khmer Television, Radio ABC, and *Raksm ei Kam puch ea* came to cover the event and conducted interviews with the workers.

- In February 2005, WAC facilitated collaboration between a US documentary filmmaker and the workers at DIC Dang Kor. The filmmaker traveled all over the world to interview women in many different sectors about issues in their work, lives, and society. He asked the workers what Cambodian women workers encounter as they leave their homes to find work in factories in the city. Workers shared their views on the challenges of getting a job to support their families and those faced at

When I wore this T-shirt to the factory, the employer called me into the office and told me if I wear it to work again I will be in trouble.

the workplace. They spoke about the violence they see and face every day and how important it is for women to come together in solidarity to fight against these problems.

- In June 2005, WAC facilitated a meeting between workers in the Toul Sangke drop-in center and two young American men who are cycling through Southeast Asia, from Bangkok to Hanoi, in support of women's rights. They are funded by the Ford Foundation and hope to bring a awareness of women's issues in the region to Americans. They were very interested in discussing the conditions of workers in the factories, methods they use to organize their friends, and the social stigmatization of garment workers.



GLOBALISATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

January - June 2005



Background

This is the 10th year of the World Trade Organisation. When this institution was founded in 1995 it was promoted to developing and least developed countries as an institution that would bring about growth and reduce global poverty and income inequality by expanding free trade. A decade later, the evidence is clear that the WTO has brought about exactly the opposite:

- The Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) has proved to be nothing but a mechanism for dumping cheap subsidised grain and foodstuffs from the United States and the European Union on the agriculture markets of developing and least developed countries, destroying the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of farmers and agricultural workers and driving many of them and their dependents to suicide.
- The Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) agreement has functioned like a mafia organization, robbing our communities of their collective rights to resources, seeds, and indigenous knowledge, and frustrating development by allowing transnational corporations to monopolise technological innovations throughout the whole range of industries. It has also undermined the people's food sovereignty. Putting corporate profit above social services, TRIPs has facilitated a public health crisis in the form of HIV/AIDS that has drastically set back many parts of Asia as well as Africa.

- The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) provides foreign investors with rights equal to the national sectors, allowing transnational corporations to take control of public service sectors. This is the situation that makes the developing and least developed countries accounts for more than 50% of their GDP.

These are the reasons that WAC opposes the agenda of the WTO, and has campaigned around the slogans:

DUMP THE ANTI-DEVELOPMENT JULY FRAMEWORK!

NO DEAL IN THE HONG KONG MINISTERIAL!

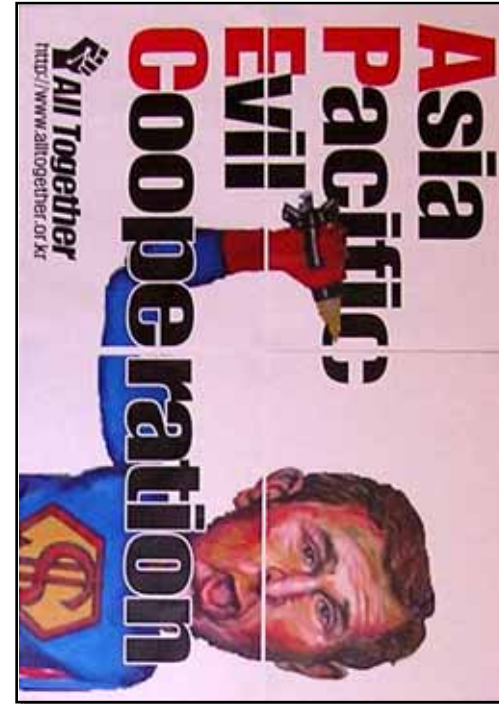
PROTEST AGAINST THEWTO!

DERAIL THE 6TH MINISTERIAL MEETING IN HONG KONG!

Globalisation and Development Activities

In Cambodia, perspectives on the new global system are very limited. WAC is the only organisation that works on this issue, which we think is extremely important for people to be informed about

For this reason, WAC has translated material on globalization issues into Khmer, and issued many of the mas press releases. Some of this material includes; PowerPoints on WAC research into indebtedness in the provinces; the pamphlet, '10 things you really should know about the World Bank'; several articles published in foreign journals; and the John Pilger documentary, 'The New Rulers of the World'. All documents that are translated into Khmer will be compiled and published for distribution to the people to help increase their awareness.



Other globalization campaign activities include:



- WAC, in collaboration with the NGO Forum and French NGO CCEDAC, conducted workshops with the farmers' network on the effects of trade and economic policy on farmers' livelihoods. The workshop was conducted at the CEDAC head office. WAC has conducted a study on the impact of liberalisation policy on the food security of the rural poor and farmers in Cambodia. This study looks at what the effects of liberalisation and privatisation on the farmers in four villages in two provinces. It is now in the process of being translated from English into Khmer version for distribution.

Asian Strategy Meeting on WTO Hong Kong

The Asian Strategy Meeting on the WTO was held in Hong Kong on 6-7 June 2005. The meeting was organized so that workers, farmers, NGOs and other representatives of civil society could plan how best to approach the WTO's Sixth Ministerial Meeting in Hong Kong in December. We believe that the WTO meeting is very significant for us, and should be

'derailed' because it is held only to advance the interests of northern transnational corporations. The Hong Kong meeting was a great opportunity to attend an international gathering and learn about other countries that are suffering from the new global system.



Asian Consultation on the World Social Forum 2006

On 4-5 June 2005, WAC arranged for two farmers' network members to go to Colombo for the World Social Forum Asian Consultation. This was a preparatory meeting in which they learned about the World Social Forum, World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation.

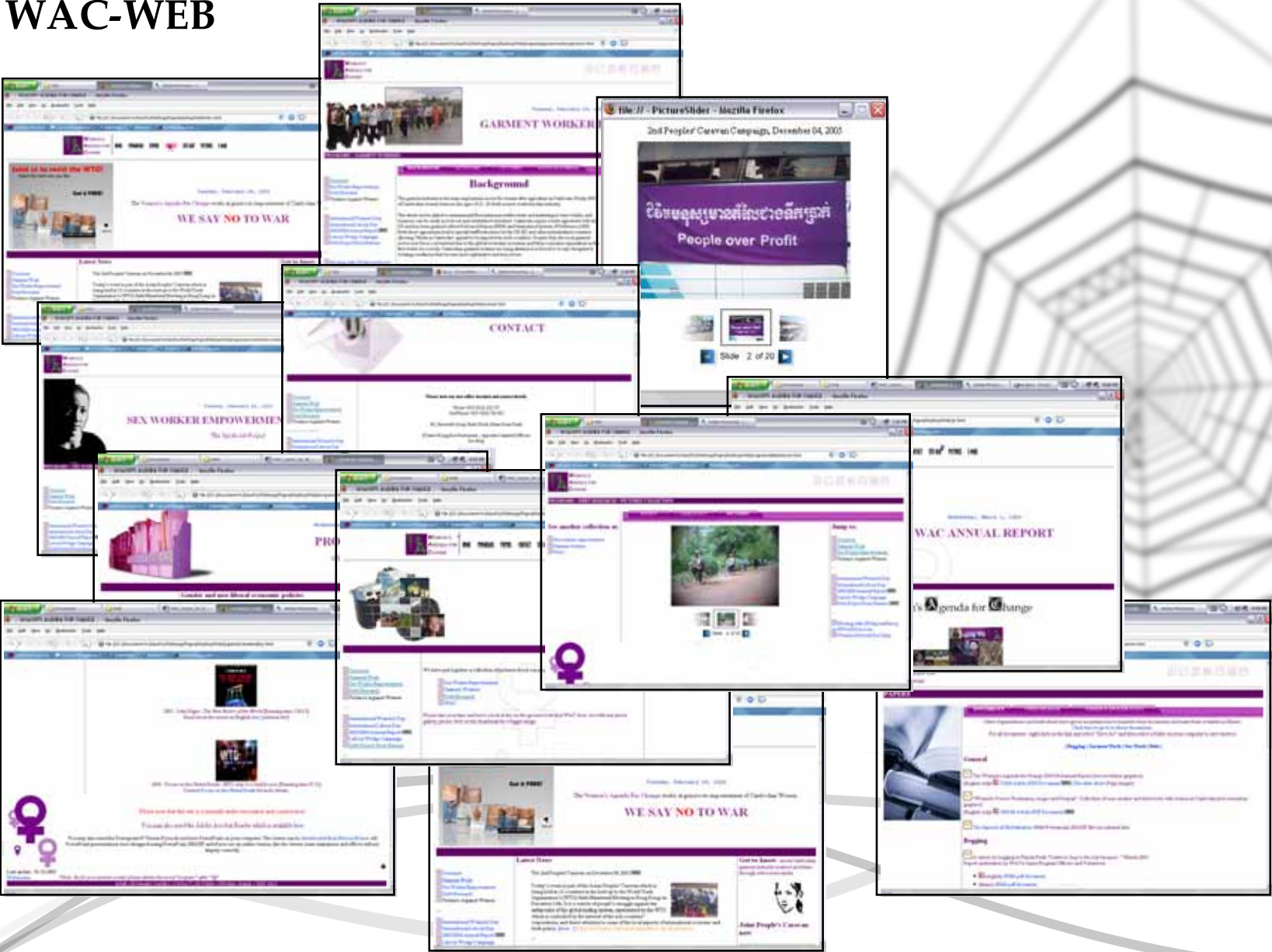
The Asian Consultation was attended by around 150 people, representing organisations from 14 countries across Asia. Two major decisions were made regarding the initiation of a coordinating mechanism for the WSF process in Asia and the organisation of events in Asia as part of a polycentric WSF 2006. There will be another consultation meeting in Bangkok in August 2005 to decide on where and when for the Southeast Asian 2006 WSF.



GLOSSARY

- ARVs – anti-retroviral drugs
- ‘beer girls’ – usually young, attractive women hired by beer companies to promote their products in restaurants and bars
- indirect sex workers
- karaoke girls
- MSM – men who have sex with men
- sway-sros* – transgender, literally ‘girl-boy’
- STD – sexually transmitted disease
- SW – sex worker

WAC-WEB





ROSANNA BARBERO, WAC COORDINATOR.
HER LAST YEAR AT WOMYN'S AGENDA FOR CHANGE, CAMBODIA.







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