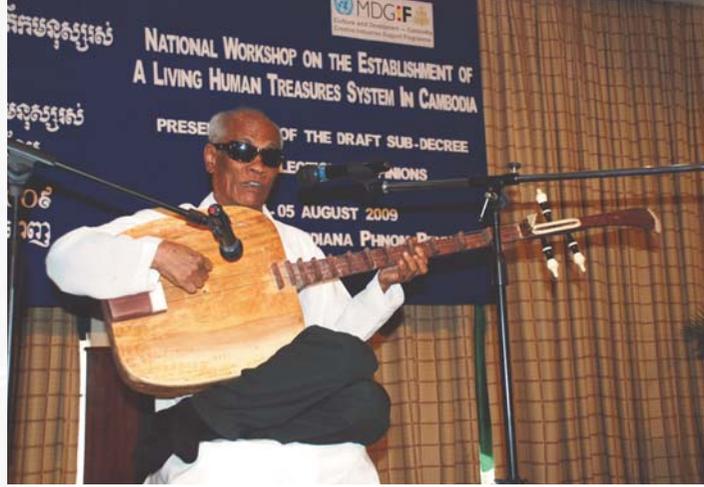


# Adoption of a National Living Human Treasures (LHT) System in Cambodia



Neoy Kong, the famous guitar player © MDG-F C&D Cambodia

The National Living Human Treasures system is a significant step towards promoting cultural creativity and safeguarding Cambodia's identity.

## BACKGROUND

In the time of the Khmer Rouge, artists, performers, musicians, dancers, intellectuals, writers and scientists were targeted, along with political opposition, and from 1975 to 1979, there was a systematic deletion of centuries of Cambodian culture that has yet to be fully restored. Even prior to the JP, UNESCO was closely collaborating with the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts (MoCFA) on a concept called "Living Human Treasures", to promote the identification and documentation of the many intangible cultural heritage elements that have existed for generations throughout Cambodia's rich cultural life. The title of Living Human Treasure is awarded to individuals or groups who possess a high degree of knowledge and skills linked to specific elements of intangible cultural heritage, that they can transmit to younger generations. Therefore, when the JP was envisaged, all parties agreed that one of its goals should be to push the LHT agenda forward.

## PROCESS

In order to secure maximum support from all stakeholders, the JP and the MoCFA agreed to collaboratively organize, along with all relevant government entities and many non-government actors, a National Consultation on the decree on LHT. This inclusionary process would not only give legitimacy to the decree but was also designed to ensure internal support within the government.

All documents were translated into Khmer, including the LHT Guidelines. The MoCFA upgraded the text to a draft-royal decree, which implies a stronger legal value, being signed by the King. The Royal Decree was signed by His Majesty the King in February 2010, and was disseminated to provinces after its approval.

# Outcomes

Social dialogue and sustainable development in Cambodia have been fostered by the adoption of a Royal Decree on LHT in February 2010, in the framework of the 2003 UNESCO Convention. The Decree was elaborated following a highly inclusive national consultation, resulting in increased social dialogue amongst government and non government actors, to the point where the MoCFA is now willing to replicate the process for the drafting of other legal texts, such as a national cultural policy.

The Government's legal commitment to establish a national LHT system is therefore a significant step towards promoting cultural creativity and safeguarding the country's identity in order to guarantee sustainable development.



## Empowerment of women through the promotion of cultural entrepreneurship



Women selling her products © MDG-F C&D Cambodia

Women saw an average overall increase in sales of 33%, or USD 50, which allows for the purchase of school supplies, medicine, salt, clothes, for their families.

### BACKGROUND

Rural households in Cambodia are poor and rely heavily on agriculture which is often not enough to feed a household all year round. Knowledge of entrepreneurial skills is limited in rural areas. Most handicraft producers are women, however, women tend to be relatively shy when dealing with buyers and middlemen at the marketplace. The JP sought to build the capacity of women to generate income through traditional handicraft production.

### PROCESS

The target population was selected based on a set of predefined criteria including handicraft tradition, willingness to learn, presence of local organization, and special attention to local livelihood activities (such as avoiding disturbing harvesting periods). Capacity-building through handicraft mentorship programmes, development of entrepreneurship skills, financial literacy, business planning, and rural marketing were designed following consultations with beneficiaries in order to evaluate their specific needs.

## Outcomes

Capacity-building programmes intended to enable 547 local female producers to generate supplementary income through sales of these handicrafts, were developed. As a result, sales are up on average by 33% (around USD 50), and women, as producers, own the revenue entirely. Job creation, income generation and women's empowerment have been targeted through the training of handicraft producers (mostly women) in handicraft production, entrepreneurship, financial literacy and rural marketing, thereby enabling them to produce, cost, market and sell their products from home, and lead community producer groups, instead of selling their labour force on large plantations owned by landlords. The beneficiaries have indicated that they would prefer to earn less and do their own handicraft activity at home, rather than working in other people's plantations, which often means leaving their household for two weeks at a time.

The training has strengthened the capacities of local communities, as women are now not only able to produce handicraft but also to do their own pricing, marketing and sales. Women are now generating supplementary household income, which subsequently strengthened their position within the family and earned more respect from their husbands. This has also brought about a reduction in domestic violence.

Women are now more prominent in their communities. They are leading producing groups, some of which have been officially registered as the Handicraft Association.

Furthermore, the project demonstrates that development can naturally lead to furthering the gender agenda, in that a gender-focused approach to a socio-economic goal proved to be efficient and successful.