

Some of our highlights

Numerous meetings throughout the year with OHK, OI and OGB staff on the forthcoming OI Trade campaign launch “Trading away our rights”. Preparation leading to the campaign and international launch at WAC in February 2004.



Ongoing involvement, information and critique with various groups involved in the proposed HIV prophylaxis drug trials in Cambodia.



Preparation, hosting and participation in the Clean Clothes Campaign's *Olympic Campaign - Play Fair at the Olympics* at which over 50 southern workers groups attended.

Hosting of various functions throughout the year. Amongst others; March 20 - No To War film night screening of John Pilger's "Breaking the Silence", FCCC showing of a documentary on Montagnards and two parties held by the MSM community in Phnom Penh.

Environment, Gender and Globalisation Workshop with NGO Forum in October 2003.

Working with and providing country context for visiting Oxfam Representatives; Oxfam Japan, Netherlands, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Australia, Belgium, Oxfam International Board Chair and members of the Oxfam America Board.



Assisting organisations and media interested in Micro Finance to understand the Cambodian context; including Ockenden, Oxfam America, NOVIB, DANIDA, BBC, ILO, bilateral donors and governments.

Following involvement in a session at WSF, further development of the *Reconstruction or Empire Building* concept with staff members from Focus on the Global South. Agreement to work collaboratively on the subject in the forthcoming fiscal year.

Providing ongoing support and assistance to Members of the Parliament of Cambodia. Along with providing extensive advocacy opportunities, assistance has been given on ASEAN, AIFOCOM, WAIPO, AIPO and Draft National Laws.

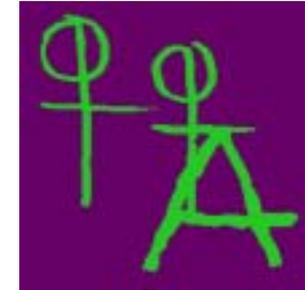


Return to village in Prey Veng to show the video shot there by a Hong Kong company that explores labour migration and women's employment choices.



Commence collaborative work with Oxfam Australia to assist their integration of HIV/AIDS, Migration and Trafficking into their program. Visit to field sites commencing in November 2003 and is ongoing.

Analysed Cambodia's WTO entry with a specific focus on the concessions Cambodia could receive as an LDC and what was not granted. Development of a position paper based on this information and provided this to local and international agencies working in Cambodia. This also was passed to Oxfam International who developed their own paper on Cambodia's WTO entry.



Continuation of trade tutorial sessions with WAC Staff; practical applications of their knowledge and skills to understanding problems and issues in Cambodia and the region.

Attended and addressed a meeting held by the Economics Institute of Cambodia to discuss the impacts and outcome of Cambodia's accession to the WTO.



Twelve months already?

This fiscal year is the fourth year of WAC in Cambodia. It only seems like yesterday that WAC was a one person operation being run out of a small office inside the Oxfam GB compound in Cambodia. Over time WAC has been able to grow with the assistance of Oxfam Hong Kong to become the dynamic and active agency that it is today.

As at the first of July 2004, WAC will move from being an Oxfam Hong Kong project to an independent entity. Under the aegis of Oxfam Hong Kong, WAC staff have been able to develop their individual capacities, learn and mature. We wish to thank our line manager, May Ling Chan, at Oxfam Hong Kong for the support and credibility that she has given us during our time working together.

WAC is concerned with the empowerment of grassroots women and we will continue our work with the same verve and vigour after June this year. Our work with partners will continue in the same vein and we wish to express our appreciation to all people and organisations who have provided us with support and collaboration over the last year and, for many, since the beginning of the project.

Gender disparities still exist in Cambodia and WAC will continue to highlight the causes of these to those who wish to understand the true nature of deepening poverty in this country. We also hope to broaden our understanding of the issues into other neighbouring countries where the path to liberalisation has not been as rapid as the Cambodian experience.

WAC will be maintaining its advocacy links to the Cambodian Parliament and as recognition of the assistance given to this group, the official office of WAIPO - Cambodia will be at WAC. This arrangement enables us to further the strong grassroots - analysis - advocacy - policy approach that WAC has always undertaken.

This last year we have consolidated on the work of the previous three, and we look forward to new fields ahead.

Cambodia... The statistics

Population:	13.5 million
Population under the age of 15:	42.7%
Average life expectancy:	57.4 years
Adult male illiteracy:	19.5%
Adult female illiteracy:	41.8%
Gender Development Rank:	105 / 144 countries
Gross Domestic Product (2002):	US\$3,200 million
Garment export earnings (2002):	US\$1,350 million
Merchandise exports (2002):	US\$1,400 million
UN Development rank (2003):	130 / 175 countries

WAC Faces



Garment Worker Program

Background

The latter half of this year presents a real challenge to the women garment workers of Cambodia. At midnight on December 31, the current garment quota import system into the huge United States market ends. The Multi-Fibre Agreement began in the 1970's as a way of protecting the US textile market from cheaply produced imports. It placed restrictions on the volume of garments that could be imported into the US from particular nations. Cambodia only became a party to the MFA in the mid 1990's, the garment industry subsequently expanded rapidly and is now the major export earner for the Kingdom. World Trade Organisation data from 2001 shows that the garment industry in Cambodia represents 82% of the countries total merchandise exports. In Bangladesh it is 78% and Sri Lanka it is 50%.

Over 200,000 people are employed in the Cambodian garment industry, and the overwhelming majority of these are young women. Cambodian Garment Manufacturers Representative Ken Loo has said that "Like the garment industry in most less-developed countries, we are at a crossroads from January 1, 2005, when the existing quota system as we know it will be phased out. With the end of preferential treatment [in the US market] Cambodia will have to fight harder for market share". Essentially, from all points of view, January 2005 represents the unknown for the Cambodian garment industry. Other southern countries whose economies are heavily dependent on garment exports like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Honduras face the same dilemma.



Photo by Daniele Calisese

Women in Cambodia receive less education and are given fewer opportunities for advancement. They are raised to feel responsible for the maintenance and survival of their homes. Single women working or living a large distance from their homes are ostracised by wider society and accused of being 'of bad character'. Workers hours are long, jobs are often not secure and their health and living conditions are poor. Discriminated against by society, preyed upon by the more powerful and isolated from family, these women are often the sole breadwinners of their families. Money that more and more families need just to survive. The Garment Worker program seeks to address these and broader issues.



WAC works with garment workers primarily to:

- empower them with broad knowledge about the industry that they work in,
- connect them with other southern and northern workers groups,
- facilitate links to northern campaigns on labour issues and workers rights,
- assist them in their efforts to self-organise,
- monitor changes in the garment industry from a gender perspective, and
- give workers access to forums where they can advocate for gender and social equity.

Empowerment through knowledge

□ WAC has undertaken workshops to inform workers on the World Trade Organisation. At each workshop approximately 50 Garment Workers have attended and over 40 factories in Phnom Penh have been represented. Cambodia gained entry into the WTO during the organisations meeting at Cancun, Mexico in September 2003, this is yet to be ratified in the Cambodian parliament. Entry into the WTO was a major concern among workers as the WTO will replace the existing rules when the MFA ends. There was and is not any alternative position in Cambodia about the WTO entry. Garment Workers were hearing issues about the WTO such as the potential loss of jobs, but prior to the workshops they were not informed about the links or potential impact of WTO entry, and how this related to their jobs and security.

□ WAC has produced further Information, Education and Communication (IEC) material for use by the Garment Workers. One major IEC produced was a translation into Khmer of the video *WTO: Why it is bad for you* which was produced originally in English by *Focus on the Global South*. This has been shown at many workshops and has received a very positive response from all who have watched it.

□ WAC developed a critique of the WTO and this has formed the basis for a new IEC. The original critique is aimed at a different audience, but the IEC it informs helps to raise awareness, consciousness and understanding of the MFA among Garment Workers.

□ Workers have attended workshops at the local NGO *Star Kampuchea* that have examined the draft law on Export Processing Zones (EPZ's). In its current form, the law will prohibit freedom of association that is in the Cambodian Constitution and companies would be exempt from the Cambodian Labour Code. No other Garment Workers were involved in this process, and those who attended have now taken concerns over the draft law to their Union Representatives. The analysis of the draft law has also been distributed among the participating groups. The workshops also produced a statement on the draft law to be submitted to the donors meeting.



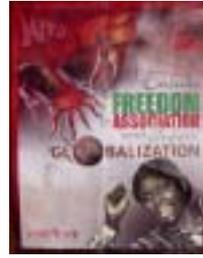
□ Garment Workers and some WAC staff attended the International Workers Solidarity Conference in Bangladesh. The conference focused on what will happen to Least Developed Countries (LDC) when the MFA expires at the end of December 2004 and the development of strategies post MFA. Outcomes of the conference were forwarded to representatives lobbying the WTO meeting at Cancun and shared with other labour groups around the world.

□ We collaborated with the Cambodian *Ministry of Women's and Veterans Affairs* and *Legal Aid of Cambodia* to print and distribute 3,000 copies of the *Labour Code*.

□ Garment Workers organised seven workshops on how to use the IEC materials. In this process, 40 workers learn how to use the IEC and educate 10 of their peers in small group sessions. Wide attendance to the workshops resulted in over 40 factories being represented.

□ WAC regularly informs Garment Workers about forums that have relevance to them. Workers are now taking their own initiative, and time off work, to attend many of these sessions. The workers have learnt and been exposed to new ideas and forums over the past year. It is from this experience and accumulated knowledge that they now have the confidence and desire to attend meetings which were once only the domain of NGO's. One of the things that brought this involvement to the fore was the information about the MFA and Cambodia's entry into the WTO and how this would directly impact on Garment Workers. As a result of this discourse between WAC and workers, they are frequently commenting that NGO's do not represent or fully inform them about issues that impact directly on their lives.

□ One worker accompanied by WAC staff had an exchange learning visit to a group of workers in Thailand. This group of former *Bed and Bath* employees, runs a workers solidarity factory after their former employer abruptly closed their operations in Thailand. After a long struggle to obtain their unpaid wages, they took a loan and opened their own factory. The workers there said 'sisters, it is hard but there is dignity in being involved in your job, not just being a labourer'. This factory a similar model that the workers groups in Cambodia wish to create. After the visit, the group also attended a one-week Training of Trainers course on Gender and Trade.



□ Three workers and some WAC staff attended the World Social Forum 2004 in Mumbai, India. Workers attended various workshops and discussions on workers' rights, globalization, labour standards, the end of Multi Fibre Agreement and the impact on garment industry, worker organization in the formal and informal sectors among many others. Workers spoke at workshops and shared with participants their working and living conditions faced by workers in Cambodia. The team found that the experiences of Cambodian workers are not that different from workers in other southern countries. The team who went to WSF in India held a workshop at *NGO Forum* to share their experience from WSF with other organizations in Cambodia and five garment workers participated in this workshop.

□ WAC has been approached by other labour organizations and trade unions to give presentations on the WTO and EPZ's. As well as presenting, WAC staff and garment workers have participated in these forums. This type of grassroots involvement and learning is of great benefit to all attendees. Additionally, WAC - OHK has been holding talks and visiting the other Oxfams in Cambodia in order to strengthen collaboration and sharing on labour, trade and gender issues.

□ After participating in different forums and workshops, both locally and internationally, garment workers now see the struggles and advocacy used by workers in different countries. The experiences at WSF concretely demonstrated that peoples movements are moving against globalization and neo-liberal policies that have created the conditions and situation they face today. They are coming back, telling their friends the experiences, facts and what they have witnessed. As a result, the drop in centres have become sources of information for workers who then talk about this with their friends. This information spreads rapidly among workers in factory after factory and allows workers to understand the larger global issues and what they will mean to their lives.

Links to Southern and Northern Workers Organisations and campaigns

□ WAC has provided research for the Olympic Apparel campaign to Oxfam International on factories producing the identified logos; Puma, Fila, Umbro, etc. Garment Workers were involved with the design and collection of cases for the campaign.



□ Numerous meetings were held with Oxfam, the Clean Clothes Campaign, the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) in the lead up to two global campaigns. One was the Oxfam International Labour Wedge and the other was the campaign for apparel producers involved in the forthcoming Olympics. This included a briefing made by representatives from Oxfam Hong Kong Head Office with the WAC and Garment Worker teams.

□ Meetings were held in August on trade and labour issues in preparation for the WTO meeting in Cancun. Garment Workers and a WAC staff member attended and provided input into the meeting in Bangkok held by *Focus on the Global South, Thai Labour Network* and *Oxfam*.

□ WAC hosted a visit of Danish university students who are advocating in the same spirit as the Clean Clothes Campaign. The students came to Cambodia to see how globalisation impacts on people in the south where there are no social security safety nets. The students have returned to Denmark and are in a process of consciousness raising among their peers. These consumers and activists of today realise that there is no value in boycotts as it is harmful to workers as this leads to less production and loss of jobs. They have devised more appropriate strategies in cooperation with the Garment Workers. Another outcome is that these students will research what clothes labels in Denmark are produced in Cambodia to allow them to effectively lobby the head offices of the corporations. As an outcome of this, the students have sought information on one label from the Garment Workers for their consumer campaign. This is an ongoing process.



□ Preparation was made for the Oxfam *Trading Away Our Rights* campaign, which included a visit by the British Actress Minnie Driver. WAC hosted a visit of representatives from Oxfam in December and organised for them to meet the workers and ensure that the workers were comfortable with and willing to participate in the process. Logistics, process and arrangements were undertaken as part of several home visits as well as focus group discussions. This is the first time a large international Organisation has started a campaign based on the ideas and preparation of the grass roots. One worker commented "I feel very honoured that there are other people thinking about us. I am motivated to speak as I know it is going to fall on interested ears". Garment Workers and the WAC team began a process of informing as many workers in as many factories as possible in order to maximise understanding, participation and ownership of the process. Workers held competitions in 30 different factories to choose their representatives.



□ There was extensive follow up and negotiation in collaboration with the *Asia Monitor Resource Centre* (AMRC) on the issues following a factory strike. Delegates from the AMRC met with company management in Hong Kong and subsequently in Cambodia. WAC staff accompanied the AMRC representatives to meet the management in Cambodia to present the demands of workers. WAC has followed up this meeting finding that most of the demands have been met. A positive outcome is that company management in Hong Kong have been soliciting advice from the AMRC on how to give funding to Cambodian organisations working on labour rights issues. This exercise demonstrated to the Garment Workers how effective regional labour networks and Head Office lobbying can be. Further discussions have been held with representatives from the AMRC on research and strategies to monitor Asian Transnational Corporations in

Asia as part of the ATNC Network monitoring group.

□ In March, WAC played host for the *Clean Clothes Campaign's "Olympic Campaign"* meeting with the presence of participants from different countries. The meeting lasted for three days and four female workers attended. WAC facilitated some of the discussions during the meeting. The focus of the campaign is women sport-wear worker's labour rights. To coordinate the campaign requires actions like marches, speeches, Trade Union networking, collection of relevant worker case studies, coordinated action on strikes and publicising issues like social security, etc. The four workers who participated in the meeting shared this information with their friends in the factories and at the drop in centres. Workers who participated in the meeting stood up and raised issues to a meeting that had participants from the north and south.

□ WAC facilitated meetings between workers and staff from *Focus on the Global South*. Discussion was focused on the roles of women workers in rebuilding the economy of Cambodia after the war. Workers understood that they are a powerful force in the economic development and rebuilding of Cambodia, especially so in export orientated businesses. The results of these discussions will feature in a forthcoming *Focus* publication.

□ A group of students from England came to learn the experiences and lives of workers in Cambodia. *TV4* from England also filmed the activities of the meeting and this will be aired as a documentary later this year. The workers present also asked a lot of questions of the students to see the different opportunities available to young people in a world so different to them. The visiting students promised to disseminate the information about the conditions Cambodian workers encounter and suffering caused by the way the large companies operate in third world countries.



Photo by Daniele Calisese

□ During this last year, the WAC team has brought in many different groups of people; from the government, NGOs, unions and media to talk with workers. These present opportunities for workers to bring out their concerns and have their voice heard by people around the world. Workers have actively participated and talked about their needs to different people they have met. From meeting to meeting, workers spoke with clarity and sincerity about their problems, working conditions and situations that they are in. They feel that since they have participated in WAC activities, they have learnt many new things and gained a broader amount of knowledge on complex issues that affect them. They have learnt much on the WTO, globalization and its impact on garment industry, and this is not knowledge they have had in the past. Through this they are able to identify the root causes of their problems; corporate power, greed and profit. They are able to articulate their concerns in diverse forums and have seen the effectiveness of various campaigns and strategies.

Assist Workers in their efforts to Self-Organise

□ Garment Workers have used a collective selection process to select representatives to participate in forums like the World Social Forum, Trading Away Our Rights, Bangladesh MFA meeting, etc. These processes have helped workers understand the organisation and selection process based on qualities like their life stories, activeness and understanding of the issues.

□ Three drop in centres have been opened near the factory areas. These centres serve as points for information, meetings, networking between factories and weekend workshops. Workers run these centres in their free time for the benefit of all garment workers in these areas.

□ Groups have been formed and inter-factory networks have been strengthened within Phnom Penh. Workers trust the WAC team and come to discuss and consult with us when they face problems. Workers say that the WAC team has enlarged the world they are living in. Before they only knew people who shared their room and worked in the same line but now they have had the chance to know many other friends from different factories. Disabled workers also feel no discrimination at all when they participate in WAC activities.

Garment Worker Program

Photo by Daniele Calisese



□ Discussions have been held between the Ministry of Commerce and the ADB on employment strategies for Cambodian Garment Workers and the feasibility of local ownership of some of the garment industry after the end of the Multi-Fibre Agreement (MFA). WAC has engaged in dialogue with the ADB in order to critique the plans, and to inform and get input from Garment Workers about a program that will directly affect

them. Whilst WAC will not be a partner with the ADB, we have suggested some reputable partner organisations. Seven meetings have been held so far. WAC has spread information from these meetings among the Garment Workers, principally so they are informed and can explore other income, business or employment opportunities that can be created or tapped into by unemployed workers. Meetings have also been held with representatives from the ILO Bangkok. Their aim is to explore alternatives for the situation post MFA for empowerment and employment through community based programs. During these processes the concerns of Garment Workers have been heard by policy makers and a collective economic alternative project has been drafted with these issues at their core.

□ Garment Workers are now holding discussions about activities and sharing information, either in the three new drop in centres or at other venues.

□ Songs, Role-play, Poems, IEC, Fashion Parade, MC work during big gatherings like International Women's Day and International Labour Day was initiated by workers themselves with the assistance of the WAC team. Workers feel more confident to talk, role-play, and sing in public about their problems which they have hid from a long time. "we must speak out about our problems so we can change the situation, if we continue to hide we remain vulnerable and easy to exploit".

Creation of an observatory to monitor changes in the garment industry from an gender and social perspective

□ The WAC team has undertaken two field trips. The first was to Prey Veng province to show the documentary *On The Edge* which featured the stories and families of workers from the surrounding villages. The second was to areas where patterns of migration were not fully understood; Steung Treng and Kratie. The results from both of these areas mirror other areas of Cambodia and will be incorporated into forthcoming program activities.

□ New research that has been undertaken focuses on health. Specifically the impact of privatisation of health care and the nutrition of female Garment Workers. The World Health Organisation and Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour previously produced a study on women's health in the garment industry that showed over 90% of women who were tested were anaemic. Women are starting with low health, and the research serves to identify the causes; food, over-work, exposure to illegal chemicals or substances, non-completion of health treatment regimes, or a combination of all. Four factories were chosen as research sites, and 307 women workers were interviewed. Analysis has been finalised and the report is available.

□ WAC has developed a process of monitoring the production outputs via factory and brand name. This involves networks of Garment Workers who will monitor and record activity within the factories into a daily pictorial diary. This will help the team to quickly identify any major shifts and changes in production and ordering that occurs. This monitoring also feeds into our ATNC Network activities.

□ WAC has compiled a database of factories producing garments in Cambodia. With the diaries collected above, this information is being cross-referenced to brand name and period of production. This will enable WAC to monitor and observe changes in the garment industry, particularly in the lead up to the end of the MFA in December 2004. The continued collection of case studies enables us to understand the gender social changes that are taking place. These also aid in understanding the dynamics of poverty. Namely the push and pull factors that drive them to enter factories in the city

□ Field visits continue to be carried out almost every day by the WAC team in order to collect information about working and living conditions and changes in the working systems in the factories. Workers from other factories accompany the WAC team during field visits in order for them to acquire exposure and build closer relations with their friends in other areas and raise consciousness about workers in different factories that face almost the same

problems. Garment workers as well as WAC staff are now assisting in the collection of workers stories and case studies. These form the basis for our program and would not be possible without the generous giving of time by all participants. Often these are collected in response to particular questions or needs by or partners.



□ The monitoring, negotiation and observation of a labour incident at a factory in Phnom Penh, owned by a Hong Kong based company, was finalised in April 2004. The WAC team with AMRC representatives made two visits to the factory in Cambodia. AMRC and Oxfam Hong Kong held meetings with the manager at the company's office in Hong Kong to further negotiate the case. During the second visit, the team learnt that there was another worker who had an occupational health complaint. As a result of all these negotiations, the company agreed to give an ex-gratia payment, via a third party, to the workers families. The WAC team facilitated the location of the workers families and called all parties to a meeting to finalise the process.

□ WAC and garment workers have participated in meetings of the Asian Trans National Monitoring Network (ATNC). This group has members in Thailand, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Indonesia, China and WAC in Cambodia. The group monitors the activities of Asian trans-national corporations and can apply pressure at many levels when workers labour rights are not being respected.



Advocacy for gender and social equity

□ WAC and Garment Workers have been involved in the drafting of statements on trade and EPZ's for the forthcoming yearly international donor's conference. The concerns of workers are at the forefront of these statements.

□ WAC participated in a workshop attended by representatives of the Cambodian Government, the World Bank and Asian Development Banks on the future of the garment industry post MFA. At this meeting the idea of branding Cambodia as a Human Rights Friendly production area was first aired. There are concrete measures in place by the World Bank in order to actualise this plan.

□ WAC was extensively consulted by the leading English language daily newspaper in preparation for a special edition on Cambodia's WTO entry.

□ STAR Kampuchea and local Trade Unions organised a workshop on the impact of WTO entry on the garment industry in Cambodia. WAC attended and gave a presentation that showed the links between various WTO agreements and their larger effects. This presentation dismantled the different agreements under the WTO and demonstrated their impact on women's lives.

Garment Worker Program

□ Continued advocacy through singing songs is considered to be a powerful, enjoyable and less harmful method for workers to raise their issues, rather than demonstrations. This strategy is safer and workers feel more confident to speak about their problems, needs and the nature of the discrimination they encounter. One worker commented "*imagine singing in a venue with so many people listening to us and some crying, then the politicians joined us on stage to sing along with us because they were so overwhelmed by our words and feelings*".

□ In February, 2004 WAC and garment workers hosted the Oxfam International Labour Wedge campaign in which a report, *Trading Away Our Rights: Women Working in the Global Supply Chain* was launched. On the day of the launch around 800 other workers participated. The event received global press coverage in 17 languages and was covered among others by *Associated Press*, *Agence France Press*, the *BBC* and *People Magazine*. The launch has acted as a catalyst for many other media organisations to approach WAC to undertake similar 'life story' approaches to the issues facing garment workers in Cambodia.

□ Numerous teleconferences, correspondence and meetings were held to organise the event, and garment workers were involved in the process since December 2003. They frequently met with Oxfam representatives, wrote songs and stories about their lives that they presented on the day. The Hollywood actress, Minnie Driver spent the week preceding the launch learning about the lives of garment workers in Thailand and Cambodia. In Cambodia she met workers, travelled to their homes in the city and country, learnt about the reasons they work in the industry and entered into their lives. It was a forum where the social group who were the focus of the campaign were involved, represented and participated, as opposed to being represented by organisations who only claim to represent workers.

□ On the launch day, workers elected representatives to tell their life stories, sing about their lives and perform a 'catwalk' life story parade. Workers participating in the day's presentation came from over 30 different factories in Phnom Penh. They attended regular training and practice sessions with Savors Modelling School prior during their free time and gave input into what would occur in the days leading up to and during the launch. Savors School taught the 'catwalk' models how to carry themselves and gave them confidence that what they were doing was right. As a result of the event, two workers have had contracts to appear in commercials or promotions. An additional five workers have been given scholarships to study at the school over the coming year.



Sex Worker Program

□ The workers appreciated the fact that they were involved in this process. They commented after the launch that they felt that they had agency in guiding what they wanted to say and do. The women workers passed comments about how in the factories they are poor and powerless, but they had the power to tell so many people what they face; hardships, changes and their position in society. They also regarded Minnie Driver highly, as for the past week she listened and valued what the workers said to her. One worker summed it up “*You could see that she took what we said into her heart and was grateful for what we told her. We all felt important and needed during preparations and at the time of the launch*”.

The past financial year has seen our commitment to Sex Worker Empowerment continue and it has been a year filled with challenges for both WAC and the Secretariat. The program has always been aimed at building a grassroots representative body of Sex Workers who can advocate for social and political change for themselves and their peers.

Crucial to this process is the building of capacity in the Sex Worker representatives to raise their concerns and undertake advocacy campaigns. The first major step in this process was the election of a seven member Sex Worker Secretariat in December 2003. Since that time WAC has been supporting the Secretariat through;

- providing them with office and meeting space,
- regional exchanges between other Sex Worker groups,
- supporting regular meetings of Sex Workers,
- providing the Secretariat with support, guidance and advice on many issues crucial to their survival,
- facilitating media and interactions with other organisations,
- providing HIV/AIDS education and materials,
- assisting in their exploration and understanding of broader issues that impact on their lives.

Through these interactions, the Secretariat have begun to be come a focal point for the organising of Sex Workers in Phnom Penh. It is a process whereby WAC and the Secretariat can teach, learn and understand broad issues in a supportive environment.



Sex Workers and the Secretariat of the Women's Network for Unity (WNU) continue to hold regular monthly meetings as a way of hearing each others problems and finding solutions. In this way they provide mutual support and assistance to those in need. Some of the problems faced by sex workers in the past year have been;

- The increase in gang related violence and gang rape on workers,
- Difficulties with authorities,
- Clients not paying and robbing workers,
- Social discrimination and associated violence,
- Local health services not effective or discriminating against Sex Workers,
- Lack of support for workers who have contracted HIV/AIDS,
- Increased costs of living, but falling price for services, and
- Pressure from others to join a drugs trial.

Through hearing each others stories of difficulty, the group is able to work together to find solutions or undertake advocacy campaigns. Some of the outcomes from these meetings have been;

- Workers have organised their own medical checkups at organisations who provide a reliable and effective service for them. Workers have identified health service providers at meetings who do not discriminate and provide inexpensive effective treatments,
- Groups in many locations have begun to undertake group savings schemes to help out friends who have contracted HIV/AIDS,
- Formation of support local networks for when workers are ill, have an accident or die,
- Development of advocacy approaches to raise awareness about violence, discrimination and rising costs of living,

- Holding of press conferences to highlight these issues,
- WAC helps facilitate workshops to spread information about the reasons for increased economic pressure and social discrimination,
- Undertaking regular outreach sessions in various locations to inform workers about hygiene, medical facilities, advocacy campaigns, condoms and STD prevention measures, and



- these meetings also serve as a point of sharing of information about common problems, localised responses and their effectiveness.

Members of the WNU and WAC staff have conducted workshops to inform and educate their members on these following important issues;

- Capacity building and understanding about proposed HIV drug trials,
- Formation, usefulness and potential for group savings schemes,
- Information exchange from network members about their experiences in relation to the drug trial process,
- Sharing of learning and exchange visits from India, Thailand and Hong Kong,
- Collaboration with CECI (Canadian Centre for International Studies and Cooperation) to conduct a workshop on gender equality, negotiation skills, Human Rights and self-help group formation.

The WNU and their members were approached late last financial year to be part of a forthcoming HIV drug trial to be held in Cambodia. As part of our relationship with the WNU, we have provided them with information about drug trials, ethics and contacts with other Sex Worker groups throughout the world.

Access to information, understanding their human rights, the implications of participation are vitally important. The WNU and their members are concerned about safeguards and is undertaking a vigorous advocacy and information campaign among their peers, local and international media and organisations about these issues. The trial is currently on hold and it is expected to commence later in 2004.



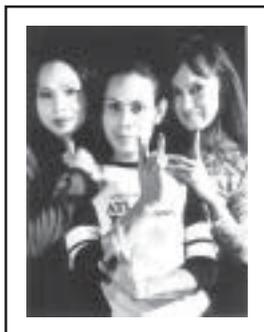
WAC facilitated overseas exchanges, advocacy and learning sessions with WNU Secretariat members. Key international exchanges were;



- The participation of four Sex Workers with *Empower* in Thailand to learn about group savings and lending schemes,
- Participation with *Ziteng* in Hong Kong for their May 1 rally to demand “Dignity and Rights for All - Sex Work is Work”, and
- Undertaking advocacy in Hong Kong to educate and inform others about the *Voices of Cambodian Women*.

Local participation in capacity building exercises;

- Attendance of the WNU Secretariat at *CHRAN* on services available and human rights issues for HIV+ people,
- Attending workshops at *Population Services International* on the results of a national study on HIV and social marketing of condoms,
- Meeting with representatives from *CARE* to help them design strategies for their project aimed at the elimination of gang rape,
- Meetings with *CPN+* network to assist they Srey Sros (transgender) community to develop leadership skills,
- Meetings with *NCHADS* on the proposed HIV drug trials,
- Participation at *NGO Forum* workshops on the ADB and World Bank,
- Participation at a *Policy Project* workshop on reproductive health,
- Undertaking intensive English language and bookkeeping training,
- Participation with *ACIL* on training for law students on trafficking, and
- Workshops with *UNAIDS* on interviewing skills and case study collection to form the foundation for a stop violence campaign.



All of these activities provide additional capacity and skills for the WNU Secretariat to effectively represent their members and their concerns.

The WNU and WAC have had many advocacy opportunities throughout the year. As WAC is often a site of call for foreign and local media, the WNU is often involved in helping individuals and organisations understand the hardships, experiences and life ambitions of Sex Workers.

- While in Hong Kong, two WNU members helped OHK and members of the local media understand the situation of women in Cambodia,
- The WNU has linked up with similar organisations in the UK and USA to advocate for workers rights in relation to the proposed HIV drug trial,
- On the drug trial issue, the WNU have held two press conferences outlining their concerns, which local and international media covered extensively,
 - During the Oxfam International Labour Wedge Launch, workers met with Minnie Driver and the assembled media to inform them on the situation of women in Cambodia,
 - Various student and organisational groups who have come to WAC to learn about the lives of women in Cambodia have spoken to the WNU as part of their learning process,
 - Members of the WNU spoke with Oxfam donors and activists during their learning visit to Cambodia, and
 - There have been numerous other times where the members of the WNU have provided their time and information to journalists or international organisations who wish to understand or report on the lives of marginalised women in Cambodia.

WAC has participated with and helped introduce the WNU to various organisations and groups in Cambodia. If the WNU is to become a truly independent body representing Sex Workers, it is important that they begin a process of recognition and participation with other organisations within Cambodia.



Examples of this networking, communication and participation over the past year are;

- Thirty eight WNU members participated on World AIDS day with KHANA and CHRAN at Kompong Speu where they provided education on HIV/AIDS, performed outreach and answered villagers questions,
- Ten members participated with other NGO's on the occasion of Human Rights Day,
- Workers have been referred to the Cambodian Women's Crisis Centre following incidents of violence, robbery or deception,
- The local NGO MEX has met with and requested a collaborative partnership with the WNU on trafficking and HIV/STD education,
- Two members participated with CWDA and the CPU workshop on workers experiences of violence,
- Meetings with CARE to discuss about gang rape and appropriate intervention strategies,
- Collaboration with Maryknoll Sisters on vocational training and support for people living with HIV/AIDS,
- Ongoing work with NYEMO to assist and provide support for hospitalised workers,
- Undertaking a collaborative approach with UNAIDS, HCC, Women's Ministry and UNFPA to investigate the killing of a worker by a group of men, and
- Meetings with the National AIDS Authority on their condom use policy.

The last year has seen the Secretariat become active in advocating for the rights of their Members - in consultation with their Members and following their concerns. The Secretariat, supported by WAC staff now attend policy and other meetings on issues that will directly impact on their lives and livelihoods. Activities seek to inform Sex Workers about their rights and provide appropriate methods to protect themselves from violence and disease. Other activities are aimed at raising awareness among the



their

public that Sex Work is a legitimate job and that society should not 'look down' on Sex Workers as a group. Sex Workers are people and are also suffering from the causes of deepening poverty, they are fulfilling obligations to their families and they demand that rights to earn a living are respected.

While there is now a group of Sex Workers that provides a voice for Sex Workers, larger challenges now loom on the horizon. These are principally the proposed HIV prophylaxis drug trials on 960 Cambodian Female Sex Workers and the ongoing issue of gang rape mostly perpetrated by young males.

Sex Workers have and will continue to raise awareness of the drug trial issue nationally and globally, especially at the forthcoming AIDS Conference in Bangkok. One does not have to be a scientist to realise that to understand if a drug is effective in preventing the transmission of HIV, one needs to be exposed to the virus during the course of the trials.

Gang rape is also an issue of increasing concern, and the Secretariat and WAC will continue collaborative work with the *Play Safe Project* of CARE. This work seeks to raise public awareness of the issue and try to educate young women and men that this is a gross violation of a workers rights. The Secretariat and WAC will also continue their advocacy campaign for a law to be passed that appropriately addresses the gang rape issue and provides adequate punishment for offenders.



In January 2004 over 100,000 people converged on Mumbai, India with the same belief - "Another world is possible". Activists from all over the world gathered in World Social Forum, Mumbai, India because they are fed up with the biased and unfair policies of the WB, IMF, ADB that are imposed and disable their countries. The following are reports from the various workshops and networking by WAC and Garment Workers who attended the Forum.



Globalization, poverty, labour and gender

- * Representatives from Sri Lanka, India, Malaysia reported that globalization caused escalating poverty, that women have to do everything to support the families in and outside the house but nobody knew how much the women suffered.
- * South Korea reported that workers are exploited by forced overtime with low pay. Other complaints were workers have no rights to establish Union in the factories. If there are Unions the employer facilitates and controls the Union.
- * Korea also reported 269 union activists were arrested by police and are in jail. They said "We want a strong union the same as the people who were arrested by policies. We need unions that can work on behalf of workers, thinking first about the benefit of workers but not employers. So stand up in solidarity with us."

For the last 25 years they said the Liberalisation system will be good for people but now we have seen that it's killing people and did not improve the life of the majority of the people. So this system must be changed or removed.

PRSPs are the tool of the liberalisation system, they promise:

- * To have active participation from people. BUT in reality there is no participation.
- * To provide health care, education, and water to the people. BUT in reality poor people can not access these basic services.

A speaker from World Development movement WSF reported Social and political consensus

- * In secret: US government; create a new purpose for World Bank
- * Water, health, education should be privatised
- * When countries accept World Bank loans there are a lot of conditions that they are forced to accept which takes away government control over its own economy.

Donor and creditor: the US order to World Bank

- * Do not approve any document that does not go along with the US government's policy (like free trade, liberalisation, privatisation, deregulation etc.)
- * The WB, IMF said that if you want assistance you have to sign PRSPs but the PRSPs stops government from expressing its idea so it is like putting the government into handcuffs.



2004 - Mumbai, India.

- * WTO is killing the farmers and poor people in the poor countries. WTO is a tool to create poverty as well.
- * Even as families become poorer by WTO policies gender discrimination and women's lack of power create a kind of sub-poverty in the family. Men's privilege means that of the money they earn each month they only share half of it with their wife and for family expenses and keep the other half for their own enjoyment

This is not the war of the North and the South but the war against multi-corporation, unjust trade policies and liberalisation, against the system of the imperialism, capitalism.

Human rights violation against Sex Workers

- * Indian and Bangladesh sex workers reported they come to be sex workers to earning money to support their families. Some were cheated by people who said that they will find a job for them; to be servants, but instead they forced her to have sex with them (father, brother, son). They said "We are the sex workers, but we are against all forms of trafficking."
- * They said because they use a lot of pesticides and chemical fertilizer to produce their food, they do not have good health. They need a lot of money to pay for the hospital and they need to pay for their cost of living.
- * They reported the best choice for them is sex work, but they have no rights and protection because the police always come to disturb, hit and ask for money. "Where is our human rights?" they asked. They have a husband and many children, but the husbands can't support the families and they are faced with domestic violence.

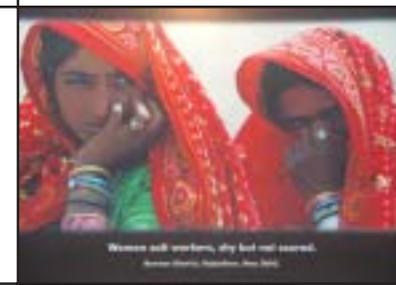
Globalization and labour rights

- * Since India, Bangladesh, Malaysia and other countries have been involved with WB, IMF they always use the word PRSPs. We believed their words. After that we became poorer and poorer because they have strict policies for our government to follow.
- * Under the free market everything we import is always cheaper. We use a lot of money to produce we can not compete with them. The cost of inputs is very high so we can't sell at a low price. We are poor countries and can not afford high technology.
- * Also if our crops are good we can sell at a low price but if we are faced with drought, flood or natural disaster and the crops are not good the prices will be high. In all these cases we can not compete with the rich countries.
- * WB and IMF policy introduced new seeds for crops and these new seeds we can not use again. We need to buy new seeds every season and we can not afford to.
- * Now we have enough negative experiences so we don't want to continue. We don't want WB, IMF, WTO any more.



FREE TRADE means FAMINE





The majority of the third world earn less than they need to spend to survive. To grow their crops they have to spend a lot on high cost of input where they cannot afford. They need to borrow money from the different sectors like private moneylenders or NGO credit program with high interest. Finally, the result is debt.

Garment Workers:

When the developed countries are faced with demands from workers and unions for higher wages and better working conditions the investors move to other less developed countries. So, the workers in developed countries are faced with job losses. And if LDCs do not have Most Favour Nation status they will not attract investors

When garment industries grow in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) many people migrate to find work in factories. So in order to compete with other workers and keep their jobs, they need to do overtime work so they get more and more exploited. Because wages are not high enough to meet the cost of living for themselves and their families, and they receive no subsidies from the Government, the workers cannot afford to pay for privatized services such as Health, Education, Water and Electricity

Sri Lanka,

After the garment factories finished their quota Sri Lanka created 3 free trade zone to attract investors and absorb more workers and forced workers to do overtime work - 100 hours per month.

Some workers are immigrants so they face a lot of problems with culture, language, exploitation, insecurity, and even sexual harassment at night. Also, some marry with local men and face problems with domestic violence and wife burning.

All the companies think about is profit and don't care about the welfare of the workers who are very low paid.

The Free Market system of WB, IMF, ADB is destroying local markets for domestic products like agriculture.

Through the policy of the WB, IMF and ADB the people in the south have come to be poorer and poorer so they don't want to participate with these unfair policies any more.



Gender and Trade Workshop



Participants from Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, China, the Philippines and Malaysia participated in this workshop in Phnom Penh over June 23-30, coordinated by Womyns Agenda for Change/Oxfam Hong Kong Cambodia. The workshop was different as it incorporated a fieldwork component that allowed participants to approach learning about the following issues by talking to people living in a rural village in Cambodia. Discussion of the issues preceded and followed this component.

The following were the major objectives:

- * To examine impact of trade liberalization in Mekong countries with a gender emphasis
- * To understand how the new international economic order is affecting third world countries' ability to develop
- * To examine the links between the IMF/WB policies and prescriptions; the WTO rules and regulations, and the struggle to maintain sovereignty for nation states.

Summary of Major Issues Arising

1. There are no education or health subsidies, whereas in the past there were – the government has shifted priorities under pressure from the lenders. Major cause of poverty and debt.
2. There are no mass organisations or formal support networks – former mass organisations have been co-opted or dissolved. Example of former Women's Union, which was turned into an NGO, took over Women's Union building and assets, now has a magnificent building in PP while lending to women at 5% per month interest!
3. The state structure itself is being co-opted by business interests – example of the village chief being co-opted by microfinance companies
4. Corporatisation/leasing of public utilities – private TNC's run their businesses using government buildings and infrastructure. The government borrows money from IMF/WB to build infrastructure, government has to repay loans, private TNC profits from fees for service and sends money to shareholders overseas. At village level we see lack of electricity due to lack of interest by profit oriented corporations, while local water is in private hands
5. Credit (microfinance) is a major problem for the poor. Interest rates are outrageous, the really poor are excluded from, those with meagre assets become enslaved to debt and lose land.
6. Land – most villagers had little or no land, none had enough to cover basic food needs, had to scramble for money to buy rice, at rising prices. Most fertile land owned by "a few big guys".



7. Labour market saturated – work means migration to garment factories, with exploitative conditions and entrance fees that bar the really poor, leaving sex work the other main option
8. Monopolisation of natural resources by private concessions upstream – resulting in lower water level of river, decline of seafood stocks, decline of water quality.

Recommendations

Participants decided that the issue of recommendations, policies and actions to counter the impact of neo-liberal policies should be something for each of us to look for in our work in the coming period. At this stage, we merely put forward a few ideas which, following our experiences back in our own countries, may be the basis of a more coherent action plan. These ideas included:

1. When foreign corporations invest in utilities areas (water, electricity, telecommunications), we should demand that the governments' social priorities take precedence over the needs of investors, for example government policy to spread such services to poor areas despite lack of profit from such areas (in fact the need to subsidise those areas)
2. Demand rich countries stop dumping subsidised food on poor country markets – poor countries have the right to take whatever measures they like to counter this
3. Empowerment of social groups, mass organisations, including informal organisations, from local to national levels, to give voice to the poor
4. More 'capacity building' for the people at the bottom to keep all those above them (governments, bosses, "donors", NGO's etc.) accountable, not just for middle class NGO's
5. Establishing links to trade unions and other forms of workers' self-organisation, particularly among women workers
6. Looking into how farmers' cooperatives can help poor farmers organise for better prices and resist exploitation, and pool resources to diversify while maintaining food security - study the actual roles of farmers' organisations in the various countries, or whether they exist at all
7. Pushing for new land distributions when land concentration and landlessness are becoming serious – rural people have a basic right to land to grow food
8. Building alliances with workers', farmers', environmental, citizens' movements in other countries, and looking at building such alliances in the north – there are many farmers movements, cooperatives and trade unions there also opposed to the new economic order
9. Raising public awareness of the these issues in our countries, and in particular raising awareness among poor and landless farmers and workers, especially women and migrant workers, about what is causing their situation.



Debt Research

These summaries of living conditions in one of the two villages of Cambodia's Takeo province are the product of an ongoing research project of the Womyn's Agenda for Change (WAC). Since the latter half of 2002, WAC staff have conducted interviews in rural areas of five provinces. Typically, interviewers spent one to two full days, staying overnight wherever possible, in each village visited, allowing sufficient time for a relaxed discussion in which those interviewed could express themselves fully.

In each village, selected due to existing Oxfam partner relationships, the interviewers attempted to visit 10 per cent of the households, whose inhabitants could range from a single individual to an extended family of three or even four generations. Sometimes, however, neighbours or passers-by joined in the discussion, enriching the information provided.

So far just under 250 household interviews have been conducted and translated. That is not a large enough number from which to compile reliable statistical data. But statistics are not the aim. The aim of the interviews is to allow rural Cambodians to describe in their own words the conditions of their daily lives, their hopes and the problems they face. Further reports based on the research will be released as the information is analysed and checked.

SC is located in Takeo province, very close to the border with Vietnam. There are 51 families in the village, which has no health centre and no permanent school.

The lack of a permanent school is mainly due to the village being under water during the wet season, from June to January. During the dry season, there is a temporary school. It has three teachers



and around 20 students, who are able to study as far as grade 3, although the curriculum differs from the government curriculum because of the interrupted school year.

SC's water problems have become worse since 1999, says the village's deputy chief, *MH*. That is when a dike was built at the border. Now flood waters that used to flow rapidly into the Vietnamese delta are held back for a longer period, and the water around their houses is deeper. This means that villagers in the wet season catch fewer fish, which prefer shallow water.

MH tells his interviewers, who have come from Phnom Penh, that life was easier four or five years earlier, when there were more fish and "conditions allowed us to fish during the day".

This remark may be an inadvertent reference to villagers slipping by night into the privately leased fishing lot, although the lot is guarded and *MH* says villagers are never found there. The lot has been privatised "for many years", but he is not sure who holds the lease, though he believes it is a Cambodian. He appears nervous when discussing the fishing lot, and the conversation quickly moves on. Later, other villagers say the fishing lot is controlled by a military officer.

The area in which SC is located was settled beginning in 1982, when the area was heavily mined and covered with thick forest. *CV* arrived then and was involved in clearing mines. For each 50 square metres of mined land that he cleared, an NGO, via the commune, gave him a 40 kg sack of rice. For every 10 mines he removed and handed in to the commune, he received another 40kg sack of rice.

CV says that the village was settled because it was feared that if no Khmers lived here, Vietnamese would settle the area. Many of the villagers are Khmers from the region of southern Vietnam that Khmers call Kampuchea Krom, and many have relatives still living there. Much of the villagers' production is intended for markets in Vietnam, and the Vietnamese dong is more widely used than the Cambodian riel (at the time unofficial rate in the village was 14000 Vietnamese Dong = 4000 Cambodian Riel).

For the first three or four years of settlement, the government provided subsidies such as seeds, ploughs, house-building materials, money, and cattle.

Declining rice production

MH says that, until a few years ago, most villagers got a reasonably good yield from their rice fields, but this has changed. Previously most families grew enough rice to feed themselves for 12 months and had a little left over to sell. In 2002, when this interview was conducted, only seven families sold any rice, and *MH* adds that this doesn't mean that they first ensured their own consumption.

He attributes the reduced yield to alternating flood and drought, but interviews with other villagers raise the possibility that the changing economics of rice production may also be involved. *MH* says that, since 1998, most of the villagers have been planting IR66 rice. This is a strain that requires fertiliser, pesticides, and water at the right time, and all of these cost money.

For instance, in SC, to irrigate one *kong* (30 square metres) of rice land for one season, farmers have to pay the owner of the pump four *thangs* of rice (one *thang* is 30 kg of paddy), or two *thangs* if the farmers supply the fuel for the pump. *KM*, a 39-year-old farmer, explains further:

“To farm my two hectares, I have to use 22 *thangs* of seed. I use six sacks of fertiliser, each costing 50,000 riel, mixed with six sacks of white fertiliser, costing 30,000 riel each. I use pesticides costing 150,000 riel. The 22 *thangs* of rice seed I buy from Vietnam. A *thang* costs 11,000 riel; I usually have the money to buy maybe 11 *thangs*, and for the other 11 *thangs* I pay later. To hire someone to plough and transplant twice in a season costs 150,000 riel. I could get a yield of about 400 *thangs* per year, but that was three years ago. From this yield I have to give the owner of the canal eight *thangs* and repay the seed that I borrowed from the Vietnamese, 11 *thang*. The Vietnamese come to buy the remainder at a rate of 200 riel per kilogram.”

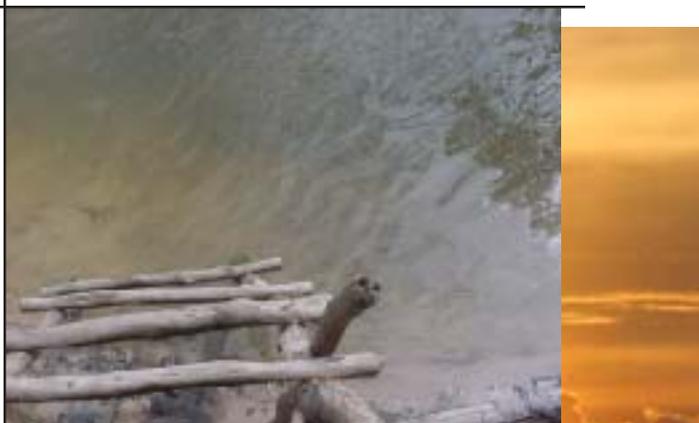
On those figures, even with a yield of 400 *thangs*, *KM* is working for only US\$360 a year.

MH reports that several families in the village have lost their land by “overextending” – borrowing too much to pay for seed and other inputs. Another 10 families have sold their land to pay for medical treatment or funerals.

According to the deputy chief, the remaining villagers generally own two to four hectares of rice land. But an interview at the house of *VV* gives a more complicated picture. *VV*, 65, lives with his daughter *KS* and seven children. The family lives by selling labour and by collecting morning glory and water lily to sell at a market in Vietnam.

During the interview, neighbours began dropping in at *VV*'s house. Before long, there were as many as 30 adults and children present, from eight families, all contributing their views and comments. They agreed that nearly all families in the village have land, but it is not always productive or accessible. They said that the deputy village chief, *MH*, has the best land in the village. The village chief has the most. The chief has at least 40 hectares along the canal which runs along the international border at the edge of the village. As a result, he can control the water flow into others fields. He holds the titles, and therefore says that the land and the canal (which is a fishing lot) are his.





About 20 families in the village are related to the chief or his deputy, who are related to each other by marriage. These families typically have eight to ten hectares of land, the group said, plus access to water and disaster relief.

The commune chief was supposed to build a dike and canal system at the back of *VV*'s house. This would have protected the majority of villagers' rice land and provided a steady supply of water. Construction was stopped because the land the canal would have passed through land that was owned by a colonel. So farmers who want to water their fields in the dry season have to pay for pumping, and the owner of the only pump in the village is the village chief.

"What would happen if a group of farmers bought their own pump?", the interviewers asked. There would be no point, the villagers replied. The chief would still demand payment for use of the water from "his" canal.

Each year since 1991, they continued, the chief has leased the fishing lot to business people from Vietnam. The fishing lot is guarded, sometimes by uniformed local police, who threaten to shoot trespassers. *KS* and her daughter were chased out of the lot once. She tried to stand her ground and argue: "I explained about our poverty and said, 'How can we get fish if we cannot come here?'"

The group revealed further grievances regarding the village chief and his deputy. A major complaint concerns the flood relief contributed by NGOs, which they say the chief monopolises for his relatives and political partisans. Six of the families present said they had received nothing of value from relief distributions (several had been given the large bucket the aid comes in, but it was empty).

"The flood relief is supposed to reduce poverty, but all it does is increase the wealth of the chief and his relatives," commented *CV*, the former de-miner. *KS* said that she and her father have lived in the village since 1986, but it is "the new people, those related to the chief, who get many things. There have been five distributions since 2000, and we all have received nothing."

According to *CV*, "The village chief has a house in Kampuchea Krom, and when the floods come, he goes there. But he still gets flood relief." *VV* said that during the flooding in 2001, the chief and deputy chief and all their families and relatives went to Kampuchea Krom, "but when it came time for relief distribution, they all came back. The families that stayed here got nothing." The son of the village chief lives in Kampuchea Krom, but he is listed in the family book as residing in this village, so he also gets flood relief.

Credit

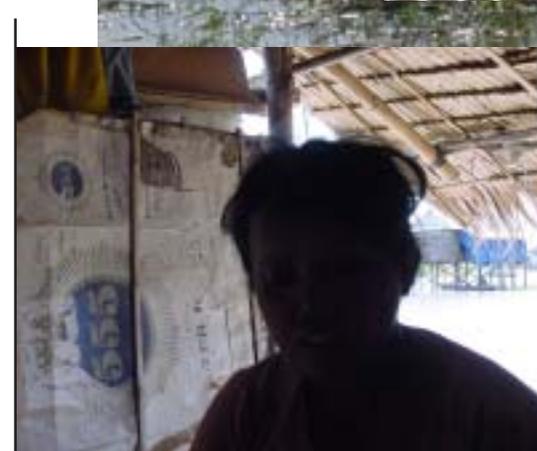
For the past three years, there have been no moneylenders living in the village. Before that, two or three families of border policemen provided loans, demanding land titles as collateral. The group at VV's house said that about 10 families lost their land in this way and are still in debt to the police.

Now the border police have gone to Poipet, but they always reappear in the village at harvest time. A loan of one *chi* of gold (currently about \$48, or 192,000 riels) for one growing season, about five months, can be paid back, including interest, with 60 *thang* of rice. At 200 riels per kilogram of rice, the repayment is equal to 360,000 riels, so the annual interest rate on such a loan is 210 per cent.

People in the village who borrow now usually do so from private lenders whom they know in Vietnam, who charge interest of 10% per month. These moneylenders "will not lend if they do not know you, and if you are poor, they will not lend," said KS.

KS said that she and her father have borrowed many times from an acquaintance in Vietnam, most recently when VV was treated there for typhoid, which cost 100,000 dong. They calculate that they owe around one *chi* of gold. KS sells her morning glory and water lily to the lender. Often the lender will calculate the going rate for the goods she is buying from KS and deduct 30-50 per cent, applying it as payment on the loan. A loan of rice is different: "When we borrow rice from the Vietnamese, we only pay back the amount we borrowed, either in rice or at market prices, but no interest".

KM, the farmer whose production costs were cited earlier, has borrowed from the border police: "I have to borrow one *chi* and use it to grow rice and pay back two *chi* after 4 months. There is a mortgage on the land title, and if I can't find money to pay back at the fixed time, they will take my capital plus the interest, but it is likely that I will have the money to repay. Two or three years ago, I had to borrow five *chi* to farm, and I fixed the repayment date four months ahead with five *chi* interest, altogether one *damleung*. When I harvest, I always pay back all my interest and loans, so rice that remains cannot support the whole household, but lasts for only four to five months."



SN and her husband are rice farmers. Both in their 40s, they have six children aged from 19 to two. They owe a Khmer moneylender six *chi* of gold. “For each *chi* of gold”, she said, “they charge interest of one *hun* per month” (1 *chi* = 10 *hun*).

“Before 1998”, *SN* continued, “we could grow 100 *thang* of paddy per hectare of rice land. But since then we have not been able to grow that much. Therefore we started to borrow money to grow [IR] rice. We paid for fertiliser and seeds, and then we could only get 30 *thang* of paddy per hectare, because of a shortage of water and not enough fertiliser. If we are not able to pay back the first loan with interest, we can not borrow more. I twice asked the moneylenders to postpone the repayment, and they agreed. The period of the loan is supposed to be four months. I sometimes take my children from school so that they can help me to earn money to pay back the debt. We are planning to borrow another three *chi* of gold to invest in growing more rice so that we can repay them some, but I am afraid they may not give it to us again.”

If they are desperate, *SN* and her family will borrow a *thang* of rice from another villager. This has to be repaid with 50 per cent interest after four months.

Of *SX*’s two children, one is a hunchback. She borrowed money from her parents and relatives to have him treated, but it was not enough to pay for the operation that was needed. She and her husband live by selling their labour in Cambodia or Vietnam and by catching fish, which they usually sell to Vietnamese traders.

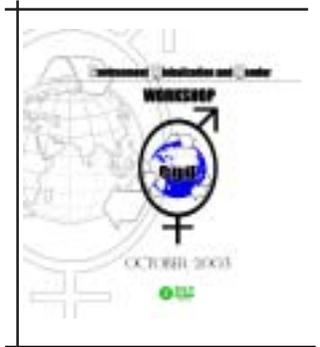
No one in Cambodia would lend *SX* money, but she can borrow from the Vietnamese who come to buy their fish. If she does this, they pay her only half the price of the fish. She borrowed 100,000 dong and has so far repaid 40,000 dong.



The NGO Forum on Cambodia assisted by the Womyn’s Agenda for Change – Oxfam Hong Kong (WAC-OHK) organized a workshop on Environment Gender and Globalization held at the OHK– WAC offices in Phnom Penh. Facilitators were staff from NGO Forum and WAC-OHK

The objective of the workshop was to demonstrate the links between wider macroeconomic policies imposed by International Finance Institutions like the ADB, World Bank and IMF and other powerful bodies like the WTO on the Government of Cambodia. Deregulation, free-markets, tariff reduction and the whole globalisation ‘package’ impact heavily on the lives of the poor in developing countries, and Cambodia is no exception.

What the workshop also aimed to demonstrate is that this deregulation and privatisation model ignores the potential for environmental destruction and over-exploitation. Former public areas are restricted as an alternative livelihood resource and people are forced into debt and borrowing to survive. The rich and powerful can exploit these resources for their benefit, without thinking of the adverse affects on the majority of the population.



The costs of producing for farmers have risen, while the prices received for agricultural production have fallen from competition with subsidised imports. Often this leads to loss of major assets and leads to labour migration. NGO’s that run micro-credit operations need to be aware of the adverse impacts of credit at the existing 3-6% a month interest rate.

A cross cutting theme is that the impact of all of this struggle and turmoil is greater on women than men. Women struggle to maintain a household on reduced resources, they are faced with increasing violence and discrimination from males and are generally the ones who undertake labour migration to sustain their families.



RAPE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA

In a time when Cambodia is trying to be more integrated into the world through the process of liberalizing its trade and investment, programs have been initiated that aim at reducing HIV/AIDS and violence against women. However, through the prescription and conditions the World Bank and IMF put on Cambodia when this country takes the loans, the situation of the people are becoming harder because this policy has created the social and economic discrimination against the people and as a result violence increases especially violence against women.

Although there have been attempts to strengthen the law on the protection of victims of violence against women, there are a lot of articles in the newspaper, especially local press, and radio reporting about women and girls being raped. Rape cases appear in different forms and happen everywhere. Incest is also increasing. In a country like

Cambodia where boy's education is promoted especially at higher levels, studies have shown that male university and high school students are the greatest perpetrators of rape in society. The statistics are staggering: 34% of males who attend school stated that they knew others involved in gang rape and 60% of male university students stated that they knew others involved in gang rape.

Every morning in the newspaper we read stories about women who have been raped and killed the night before. We asked ourselves "who will be the next?" When we look in the mirror we may be staring at the face of the next victim.

Women and girls are increasingly becoming the subject of violence, whether domestic violence, trafficking, or rape (in the form of marital or gang rape). This is not the peaceful Cambodian society that people talk about. Women and girls, live in fear of being attacked and raped by their male counterparts. We are living in a society where the number of safe streets and roads for us to walk on are disappearing everyday. This is neither peace nor development. The victims of this type of violence is growing on top of the vulnerable, exploitative, starving, discriminated against, excluded and stigmatized situation women are already facing daily.

The prevalence of death that was once limited soldiers killed in war has been replaced by girls and women at all ages that are being raped, violated and killed. Trafficking in women and girls is increasing and rates of HIV are increasing at alarming rates especially among housewives. Everyday there are 20 people affected by HIV/AIDS in which 10 of them are housewives. Rape, marital rape and gang rape are increasing!

We are calling for help and change. Today it is me, my sister, my daughter, my aunt, and my niece being raped. Tomorrow it might be your loved one. Do you want your children and the next generation to grow up in a society like this?

STOP ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN!

STOP ALL FORMS OF RAPE!

WE ARE HUMAN BEINGS NO MATTER WHERE WE COME FROM AND WHO WE ARE!

WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO LIVE IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT!

JOIN US IN ELIMINATING ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN!

Give us your help and support legally, emotionally and physically.

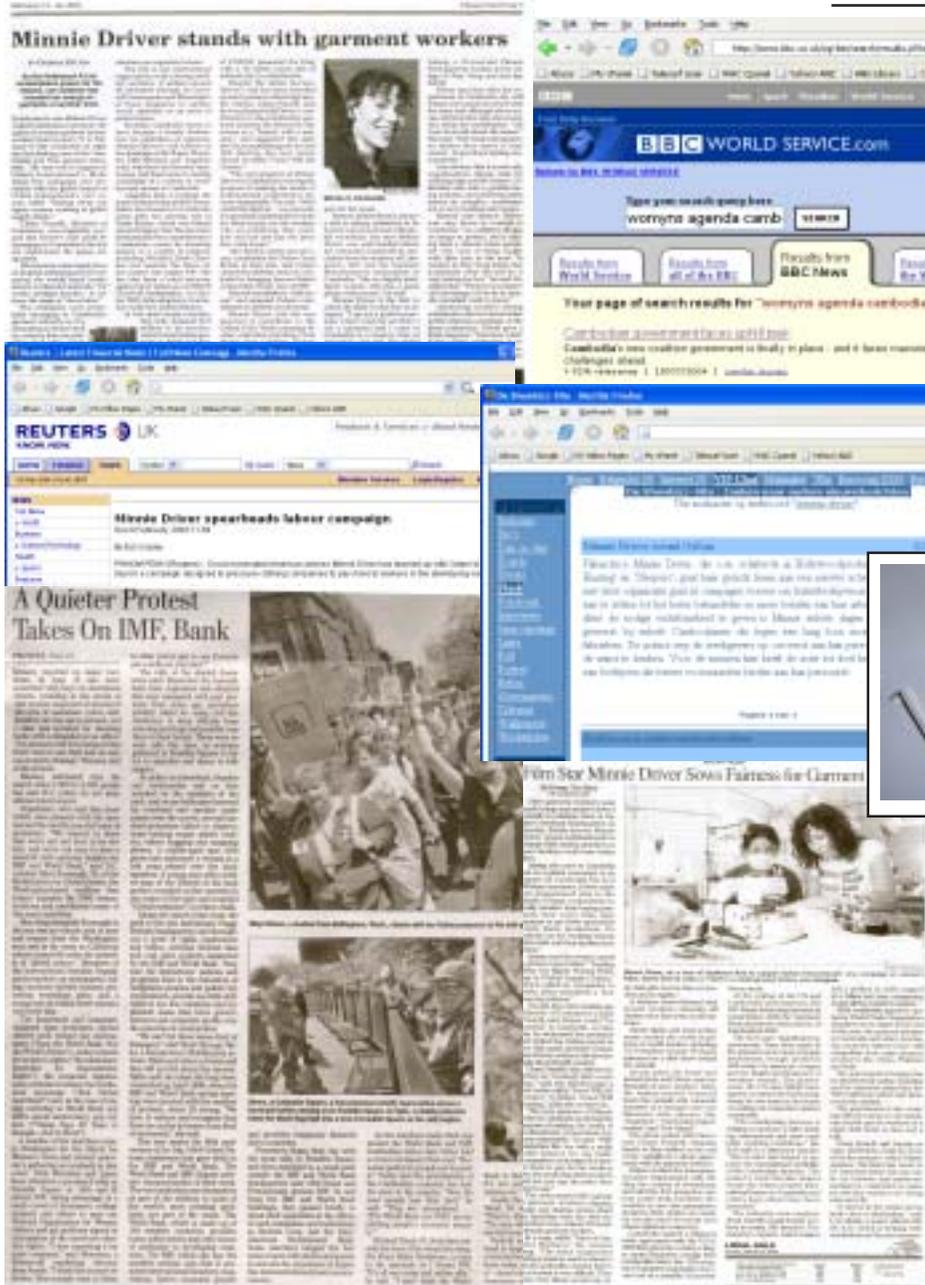


WAC in the Media

The collage consists of several overlapping news articles and web pages:

- Top Left:** A screenshot of a news article titled "The Tenofovir trial controversy in Cambodia". It discusses the ethical and medical aspects of a trial for HIV/AIDS treatment in Cambodia.
- Top Right:** A screenshot of a news article titled "Phnom Penh Girls". It features a photograph of a young girl and discusses issues related to child labor or exploitation in Cambodia.
- Middle Left:** A screenshot of a news article titled "Drug...". It discusses the impact of drug use on the Cambodian population and the role of the government.
- Middle Right:** A screenshot of a news article titled "Sex Workers Leery About HIV Trial". It discusses the concerns of sex workers in Cambodia regarding a trial for HIV/AIDS treatment.
- Bottom Left:** A screenshot of a news article titled "Taipei Times". It discusses the impact of the Khmer Rouge on Cambodia and the role of the government.
- Bottom Right:** A screenshot of a news article titled "The plight of Cambodia's working women". It discusses the challenges faced by women workers in Cambodia, including low wages and lack of social protection.

IT & Systems



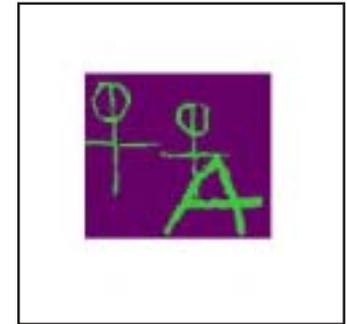
Further fine tuning of the WAC network occurred throughout the year. Older equipment was retired and one new computer was purchased. WAC now has a total of fifteen computers on the network with a current hub capacity for three more. These ports have been used by international volunteers who are assisting WAC with research and other work.

The WAC website [www.womynsagenda.org] has undergone a face-lift during the year. The intern responsible for systems work has based the new site on the previous ad-hoc implementation. The site contains more content and has been listed in major search engines since the beginning of this financial year. Total number of visitors to the site number 5960 over the financial year, with the number of visitors steadily on the increase throughout the year; from 161 for July 2003 to 751 in June 2004. Most frequently accessed pages include documents from our program and information about the impact of the neo-liberal agenda in Cambodia. Further development of the site will continue during this year and additional publications will be placed on the site.

WAC is also concerned with the impact that the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights Agreement of the WTO on Cambodia. As an anathema to this, we are undergoing an Open Source software roll-out, consisting of the Linux Operating System and OpenOffice.org. Both of these do not require payment for use and can be easily customised to our needs. Additionally Unicode - meaning all of the computer interface is in Khmer Script - is being locally developed for this system. Long term benefits of this transition are that staff can use a computer system in their native language, limited execution of viruses and the software has a large support community behind it. Microsoft Windows will be maintained, but over time, users will be encouraged to 'migrate' to use Linux..



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