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Transcultural Psychosocial Organization
Community Mental Health Programme

Mental Health NGOs in Cambodia

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Cambodia Phnom Penh/Siem Reap

Cambodia is a developing Southeast Asian nation of 16 million. It relies heavily on agriculture, the garment industry and tourism, it's most popular destination being Angkor Wat in Siem Reap. Cambodia is ranked as one of more corrupt nations of the world by international indexes.

1. About **2/3** of Cambodians today are **under the age of 30** due to decades of war
2. **40%** of women have **attended secondary school** or higher compared to 52% men
3. **53%** men reported perpetration of **economic abuse**
4. **24%** of children are **underweight**
5. About **1 in 29 children die** before they reach their 5th birthday
6. **More than half** of children are **physically abused**
7. **52%** of women have experienced **physical violence** before they turn 18
8. **25%** women have reported **domestic violence**
9. **1 in 3** men reported perpetrating **physical and/or sexual violence** against their intimate partner



Project Information

Special Studies: Visiting five NGOs focusing on mental health in Cambodia, I made comparisons in evaluation methods, therapeutic interventions, outcomes, and other points of interest.

Agency/Community Partner

- **AFESIP**
 - Residential treatment center for young women survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and trafficking
- **Women's Resource Center (WRC)**
 - Provides workshops in health literacy, financial literacy, gender empowerment, and more; mental health counseling; and drop-in services
- **Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO)**
 - Large organization which maintains a community mental health program; individual psychotherapy; training for clinicians; and mental health research
- **EMDR Cambodia**
 - Association of clinicians conducting community mental health programs and research activities
- **The Bamboo Centre**
 - Small clinic of mostly foreign psychotherapists offering services in a variety of languages to mostly expatriates

Outcomes

- Developed a vision for how an NGO can be **developed** and **maintained** by members of **oppressed** populations, working towards spreading empowerment, with **equitable** support from members of privileged groups.
- Greater understanding and appreciation of the **capacity** of developing countries to spread (mental) health education and empower their citizens.
- Deeper understanding of how specific interventions can be **translated cross-culturally** (e.g., EMDR).

Skills Utilized/Developed

- **Cultural Humility**
 - Openness to values which contrast with your own
- **Flexibility/Problem-solving**
 - Rapidly changing schedules; lack of responsiveness; bad traffic...
- **Networking**
 - Reaching out to those who may potentially offer connections, guidance, support
 - You never know!

Classroom Connections

I was equipped to complete a more thoughtful analysis of the organizations' evaluation methods and therapeutic interventions due to my coursework taken at the School of Social Work. The courses which were especially relevant were:

SW683: *Evaluation in Social Work*
SW698: *Social Work Practice in Mental Health*

Due to SW683, I was able to provide guidance to one of the NGOs in regards to their survey measures.

Lessons Learned

- Different communication styles
- Earlier is not always better
- Keep at it
- Do your research
- Utility of connections

References

- "Labor Force Report", International Labor Organization, 2013
- "Findings from Cambodia's Violence Against Children Survey", Unicef, 2013
- "Key Indicators Report", Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey, 2014
- "Why do some men use violence against women and how can we prevent it?", UN Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific, 2013

Career Connections

- Potential future research collaboration
- Potential future work collaboration
- Pave the way for future GIS students

Advice

- **Safety:** be informed on how to guard yourself from assault or theft
- **Utilize connections:** reach out to the Career Services Office to identify members of our SSW community who may have connections to that country
- **Expect things to go wrong:** If you expect challenges, then you'll be more prepared to go into problem-solving mode.
- **Accommodation:** find an affordable homestay or Airbnb in someone's home. Your hosts will often be a great source of

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