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Dear APLE Stakeholders, Supporters and Colleagues:

At this moment every year, I always feel excited and very proud to share with you our Annual Report. With my confidence, you will find the 2014 report more comprehensive and characterising entirely what APLE does, what makes us a successful organization, and what changes we looks to in the future.

This year, we celebrated our 11th anniversary in Cambodia and new successes that have moved APLE closer toward achieving our vision of ‘freedom from sexual abuse and exploitation for all children’. Proudly, these achievements have been mainly secured by our four interlinked programs, which continue to provide continuity of service to the affected populations and enable APLE to maintain its strong position in the reduction of child sexual abuse and exploitation.

Our program activities are core to our achievements noted hereafter. First, the awareness and training enabled a large volume of inspiring educational materials to be disseminated and provided important tools to encourage lasting change. Second, working alongside the Cambodian police to investigate suspected incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation, we saw an increase in their technical skills and willingness to conduct high-quality and timely investigations. Third, our social workers remain integral to identifying the specific needs of victims and coordinating long-term support for them, as well as offering expertise to partners on how to work with child victims. Fourth, our lawyers supported and represented hundreds of victims and witnesses in court, providing high quality and reliable assistance. Lastly, in response to a growing need, we expanded into Battambang in April with positive results thus far.

Internationally, we are encouraged by the success of our Ring the Alarm petition to have the Dutch child sex advocacy group Martijn re- banned. This petition is a glowing example of how collaboration and unity can protect children around the globe. Further to this, APLE gave expert trainings to Project WATCH partner NGOs in Nepal and the Philippines to help them develop and strengthen a system to monitor and investigate child sexual abuse. We look forward to doing the same for our partners in Indonesia and India in the future.

APLE is grateful to our supportive donors, who provide not only generous funding, but also partnership, moral support, and a great deal of financial flexibility to us. We are also honoured to have three new donors supporting our operational expansion to Battambang, enhancing our staff’s welfare and capacity, and strengthening our advocacy. This is an inspiration that fuels desire to work hard.

Our future is optimistic; our team remains committed to doing what is right to end child sexual abuse and exploitation. In 2015, we aim to capitalise on sustainability of services, counter online child exploitation through our new Internet Hotline, and explore innovative approaches, such as group counseling and training-of-trainers, to find more effective methods of working.

Because of all the support you provided us this year, we have accomplished a great deal, but we are also humble. We know where our strengths are and where we need to improve. It remains a long way to curb the problem, but we are now ready to start a new fight.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, I would like to express my deepest gratitude and pride in my colleagues at all levels for working tirelessly and dedicating their personal happiness to rescuing and protecting the most vulnerable children from dangerous predators. I would also like to thank our generous donors for their trust and long-standing support of the way APLE is seeking to make Cambodia a safer place for children.

Everyone can be a part of giving all children freedom from sexual abuse and exploitation. Thank you for doing your part.

Seila Samleang
Executive Director
An overview of our achievements in 2014

58
victims rescued

464
direct beneficiaries of social support

489
direct beneficiaries of legal support

50
training and awareness sessions

2212
participants in training and awareness

37
cases opened

23
suspects arrested

27
suspects convicted and sentenced
Since Cambodia won independence in 1953, the country has experienced upheaval, followed by twenty years of relative stability. An annual economic growth of 7.5% has led to a decrease of 4.2% in those living below the income poverty line since 2013; however, 18.6% still live on less than $1.25 per day and 46.8% suffer from multidimensional poverty. Despite efforts to combat it, corruption is a constant concern; it remains deeply embedded and plagues many official bodies, particularly the judiciary and police.

The Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation (2008) has had a positive impact in regards to creating specific criminal offences for child sexual abuse and exploitation; however, it can be argued that the law is inadequate due to weak understanding and inconsistent implementation. While the legal situation is changing for the better, underlying issues remain; the judicial system relies on victim testimony, which allows some suspects to evade prosecution. In Cambodia, poverty, corruption, lack of education, and unclear legal procedures continue to foster a vulnerable environment for children.

The majority of children who are victimised come from poor, uneducated backgrounds and find the post-arrest experience intimidating and confusing. The reliance on victim testimony for prosecution creates additional trauma, especially during the trial where many victims must testify about the abuse in the presence of the suspect. Furthermore, distrust of the judicial system leads many victims to either avoid reporting abuse or withdraw their complaint prior to final sentencing.

The situation for children in Cambodia is improving; however, work still needs to be done to ensure justice and protection are achieved. APLE applauds the progress and encourages continued focus and efforts in this field.

**Note:** APLE has permission to use all photos. The identity of clients is protected though pseudonyms and blurred photos.

**Sources:** Transparency International 2014; World Data Bank 2013; UNDP Human Development Indicators 2014; US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report 2013
APLE is a non-governmental organisation [NGO] that has been active in Cambodia since 2003. APLE is the only NGO specialized in street-based child sexual abuse and exploitation in Cambodia, making us invaluable experts in this field. APLE has 45 dedicated staff whose skills range from lawyers to social workers, investigators to project managers. To date, the organisation has rescued 692 victims from further abuse and raised awareness or trained 10,106 individuals.

**Vision**

Freedom from sexual abuse and exploitation for all children

To reduce all forms of child sexual abuse and exploitation through prevention, protection, promotion of prosecution, and partnership

**Mission**
Our

‘Continuity of Service’

Model

The four programs that APLE operates interlink to provide continuity of service to those affected by child sexual abuse and exploitation. Continuity of service is highlighted as key to helping victims overcome trauma and heal in a positive way.

Awareness and Training Program

APLE makes every effort to be a well-known and positive presence in the community, to instil trust and encourage knowledge dissemination.

Investigations Program

If abuse is suspected, our child protection agents work in collaboration with the police to initiate the evidence gathering and rescue process.

Social Support Program

From the moment of arrest, our social workers protect, support, and respond to the needs of the child. They also liaise with the child and their family, partner NGOs, and the government to determine the safest place for the child.

Legal Support Program

Finally, our lawyers are on hand to provide legal advice, counselling, and representation to the victims, if the child and their family request this from APLE.
Awareness and Training

Achievements

In 2013, APLE reached 2212 people through 9 educational activities for 457 children, 20 awareness raising events in communities, and 21 training activities for key partners. As a result, the participants’ knowledge increased by 67%. The participants are now equipped with a greater understanding on how to prevent abuse, the impact of abuse, grooming techniques, and how to report suspicious behaviour.

In order to encourage lasting change and sharing between participants and the wider community, APLE disseminated 2557 materials at the activities. The materials range from information cards to training manuals and are all designed to inspire vigilance and community monitoring.

Key Facts
BBU Students

In August 2014, APLE conducted a training session for 49 students at Build Bright University [BBU] in Battambang. The training educated the youth on child sexual abuse and exploitation, grooming, signs of sexual abuse, and how to report suspicious activities. The students were very engaged and asked many questions during the training. One student also shared an experience in which they had seen something suspicious, but did not realise it at the time. At the end of the training, many students suggested that APLE should provide a more in-depth training for them, as well as conduct awareness raising activities in the community.

In December, APLE organised an educational campaign in a town near Battambang. 183 people participated, including children, parents, caretakers, and youth from the surrounding villages. In addition, 11 of the BBU students volunteered to facilitate this event. They were excited to be involved and share their new knowledge with others. The event was a huge success, with all participants enjoying the day and expressing thanks to APLE.

Two days later, two of the BBU students saw something suspicious in the city. Armed with the knowledge that these children might be at risk, they reported this to APLE and we were able to take immediate action.
In 2014, APLE conducted preliminary investigations into 227 cases. 37 cases were opened due to high-levels of suspicion. Throughout the year, we worked with Cambodian police on 49 cases and with foreign law enforcement on 19 cases. Thanks to the tireless work of the police, 10 foreigners and 13 Cambodians were arrested after evidence of child sexual abuse and exploitation was gathered.

In response to the increase in the technical skill and willingness of police to conduct high-quality and timely investigations, APLE has begun to take on a more mentorship role. We monitored 17 rescue and raids this year, all of which met expected standards in Cambodia. Finally, we have established 111 new informants across Cambodia; APLE educates informants on how to identify and report suspicious behaviour and deeply values their support.

**Key Facts**

- **58** victims rescued from abuse
- **23** perpetrators arrested

**Suspicious Behaviour Reports to APLE**

- Direct Calls to Staff; 80
- Emails; 51
- Hotline Calls; 93
Institutional Abuse

Institutional child sexual abuse and exploitation is a continuing concern in Cambodia. Many NGOs and residential care centres have weak or no child protection policy in place. In addition to this, few conduct background checks on employees or volunteers before allowing them access to vulnerable children.

This year, APLE discovered another serious child sexual abuse case of an NGO director abusing children in his care. The suspect was arrested in October for allegedly abusing a number of underage boys. The investigation revealed that the suspect selected boys from poor and uneducated families who were barely making it through each day. The boys were given support, a salary, and a place to live by the suspect. Having few options, the boys agreed to work and live in the NGO; they state the abuse began shortly after they arrived.

“He had never let me free for any single day; even when I had a serious fever, he brought me a tablet [...] and then still forced me to have sex with him. I was so happy every time he was out for a party, so that I could sleep without abuse.”

A Cambodian police general told APLE of his shock at hearing the boys describe the abuse in explicit detail. The suspect has been charged and is awaiting trial.

While the situation for children is improving, many, particularly those in alternative care, are still vulnerable. It is imperative that these children are protected through child protection policies, strong oversight of residential care centres and NGOs, and enforced background checks.
Social Support

Achievements

Our social workers provided trauma counselling to 464 people affected by victimisation, including 58 new victims who were rescued in 2014. Ongoing medical care was arranged for 27 clients, while 17 received additional services such as welfare or rescue support. In an effort to give high quality support to those in need, social workers closed 558 cases dating back to 2003 after assessments determined that support was no longer needed.

APLE liaised with partner NGOs and the Department of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth Rehabilitation to arrange placement in safe shelters, if deemed necessary, for 31 victims. APLE also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with a partner NGO to outline collaboration in the provision of long-term counselling and support to clients.

Key Facts

Recipients of Social Support

- Victims; 199
- Vulnerable Children; 68
- Family Members; 182
- Witnesses; 15

21 referrals for medical examinations

178 follow-ups conducted
An Henglin

As a young girl, An Henglin’s favourite subject was art. Her mother took her to study in a special art school, which is where her passion for singing began. Unfortunately, her parents divorced soon after, and she was unable to attend the school. When Henglin was 14, her aunt told her mother about a Khmer singer she knew, Ou Reaksmeay, who lived in Phnom Penh. Reaksmeay took Henglin out often, to bars, karaoke, and restaurants; however, the relationship soured when Reaksmeay gave Henglin’s phone number to a male friend without asking.

In early January 2014, Henglin did not return home for two days. Her mother tried desperately to locate her, but could not. During this time, Reaksmeay took Henglin to dinner with a 50-year-old Khmer-American man and promised Henglin that she would help her become a famous singer if she had sex with the man. Henglin, thinking her dream could come true, agreed. During the next two days, she had sex with the man several times; however, her dreams did not come true. Instead, Reaksmeay threatened her to keep quiet and then sent her home. Henglin’s mother immediately filed a complaint with the police.

After the abuse, Henglin was scared and embarrassed because she felt the offender was powerful and her friends and neighbours would find out what happened. Due to this, she was offered a place in a recovery centre, where she built new friendships and found hope for her future. In the shelter, she receives healthcare and counselling, cooks twice a week with friends, and attends Khmer, English, and computers lessons every morning. She keeps in touch with her family and proudly tells them about the vegetables she is helping to grow and the things she learns in class. Henglin is recovering emotionally, aided by the conviction of Reaksmeay, which helps her feel safe and free again.

Henglin’s dream is to own a beauty salon. She is now attending vocational training for this, which she will continue when she is reintegrated to her family in February 2015.
Legal Support

Achievements

Our legal team provided pre-, during, and post-trial assistance to 489 clients affected by victimisation. As a result, the victims, families, vulnerable children, and witnesses were able to testify confidently. 16 Cambodians and 11 foreigners were convicted. 15 of these were ordered to pay between 250USD and 5000USD compensation and 4 deportation orders were given and 2 were upheld at the Appeal Court.

Our lawyers also conducted 107 follow-ups with clients to update them on the status of their case or inform them of the verdict. At these meetings, clients often expressed satisfaction that they filed a complaint and with the results of the court case.

Key Facts

Represented

224 victims in court

Suspects convicted

27

223 Family Members; 227 Victims; 25 Vulnerable Children; 14 Witnesses;

Recipients of Legal Support
Mandatory Deportation

In Siem Reap in 2011, two boys aged 13-15 came into contact with a Swiss national, Knuchel, who took the boys to temples and lakes. During one of these excursions, Knuchel touched their genitals. Soon after, he also performed oral sex on the boys and had them do the same to him. The boys were confused, but were given $5-10 USD so they did not ask questions. Knuchel continued to groom the boys, providing clothes and shoes and promising a bicycle. The abuse soon escalated and Knuchel had sexual intercourse with one boy over a period of approximately 2 years, giving him $15-20 USD each time. Knuchel was also seen grooming an 11-year-old boy; this luckily did not reach the stage of sexual abuse before his arrest.

On October 13th, 2013, Cambodian police arrested Knuchel and charged him with purchase of child prostitution. In December 2013, the two boys testified in front of the Investigating Judge, recounting the horrific abuse. In July 2014, Knuchel was convicted, sentenced to 2 years in prison, ordered to pay 10 million Riel (2500 USD) compensation to one boy, and given a deportation order. Knuchel appealed his conviction in August 2014; as a result of this, his deportation order and compensation have not been executed. Knuchel was released from jail in October 2014 after the judge suspended one year of his prison term. He is now living in Siem Reap again and posing a serious threat to children in the area.

It is largely due to this case that APLE is prioritising mandatory deportation of convicted foreign sex offenders as a key advocacy point in the coming years. The failure to execute Knuchel’s deportation order greatly affects his previous victims, who feel scared that he is back in the community. In addition, many children may fall prey to his grooming in the future and his continued presence in the community erodes trust in the Cambodian criminal justice system.
**Ring the Alarm Petition**

Our Ring the Alarm petition, signed by 194 organisations from 50 countries, ended in the successful re-banning of the pedophile advocacy organization Martijn by the Dutch Supreme Court in April. Martijn sought to normalise and glorify sexual relationships with children, which is a serious concern to APLE and others. Our success represents an unprecedented example of international collaboration and unity among child protection organisations around the globe.

**Youth Involvement**

In 2014, APLE began to involve youth in our activities. Youth in Cambodia are educated and engaged – qualities we hope to harness to spread awareness. We conducted 2 training events at universities with 94 participants. Not only were the students active throughout the training, 11 later joined us to conduct a campaign in a nearby village. The students have expressed a desire to do more work with APLE in the future, as well as learn more about how they can help.

**Highlights**

**Local Partnerships**

In an effort to optimise the strengths of each NGO, APLE often works with partners that are highly skilled in the long-term rehabilitation of victims. M’lop Tapang has been invaluable in supporting and counselling victims from APLE cases in Sihanoukville. In 2014, APLE signed a MoU with World Hope International in Phnom Penh to formalise our collaboration on victim care and replicate the great partnership we have with M’lop Tapang.

**Prosecution of Prominent Figure**

Last, but not least, we would like to commend the police and judiciary for their hard work and commitment to fighting child sexual abuse and exploitation in Cambodia. 2014 saw a prominent former military officer sentenced to 5-years imprisonment for the rape and attempted rape of underage girls. While APLE is disappointed he was given less than the minimum 7-years, the conviction of such a powerful figure speaks volumes to the changing context in Cambodia.
Cooperation with the FBI

We continue to build strong cooperative relationships with foreign police. In 2014 we worked closely with the FBI in a case against a U.S. national, who is currently serving a 1-year sentence in Cambodia. Upon his release, APLE advocated and helped arrange for the offender to stand trial in the U.S. for other child sex crimes committed in Cambodia. We are proud of our work with the FBI, especially as the victims in this case were deeply attached to the offender due to grooming.

Sharing our Expertise

As a leader in combating street-based exploitation in Cambodia, APLE often participates in overseas conferences to share our knowledge. In 2014, we were honoured to speak at two major events: the Regional Cooperation Forum on Online Child Exploitation Materials in Sydney, Australia and ECPAT’s Regional Consultation in Taipei, Taiwan. Through these, APLE aims to raise awareness about our work, the situation in Cambodia, and achievements being made.

International Work

Learning from Others

APLE was selected by INHOPE to start the first internet hotline in Cambodia. This hotline will be part of an INHOPE network that currently spans 45 countries. To learn more, APLE visited a hotline partner in Japan. This visit gave APLE a clearer understanding about how to create and run a web-based hotline, as well as insight into combatting online abuse. APLE will be using this knowledge and partnership to start our internet hotline in 2015.

Training our Partners

APLE is proud of our NGO partners who are doing similar work in other Southeast Asian countries. To build their capacity, APLE conducted two on-location training in Nepal and the Philippines. In the past 11 years, APLE has acquired expert knowledge on case management systems, child-friendly procedures, and investigative techniques, which we shared with our partners during the training. We hope it helps them to protect children in their country.
In past years, we have noticed some people have a number of misconceptions about APLE. To clarify and strengthen our work, as well as eliminate confusion, we have restructured our operations into a portfolio-program-project hierarchy.

Our work is focused on sustainability and partnership, responding to the need for APLE to consider stepping back from our work and helping governmental structures take over. Feel free to contact us if you would like more detailed information about the operational restructure.

Operational Restructure

Child Protection

- Investigations
  - Child Protection Hotline
  - Community Watch
  - Police Assistance
- Legal Support
  - Legal Assistance
- Social Support
  - Court Support
  - Partnership
- Awareness and Training
  - Awareness Raising
  - Capacity Building
  - Collaborative Action
“In case after case, members of APLE have demonstrated a **willingness to go above and beyond** the norm in order to keep children safe and to prosecute those who would otherwise harm them.”

- **Special Agent in Charge, FBI**

“APLE is a fantastic non-governmental organization that we feel **privileged to support**.”

- **Donor**

“I want to thank APLE for all their **help and hard work**. I am very grateful for all the assistance [APLE] offered: the counseling, the legal knowledge; the information; and winning the case. Thank you.”

- **Father of victim**

“We appreciate APLE’s **tireless work** on high-profile sexual abuse cases, particularly in their honest comments that the sentences are often not long enough for the crime.”

- **Partner NGO**

“I want to be a police officer when I grow up so I can **protect children** like APLE did for me.”

- **Female victim**

The cooperation between the AHTJPU and APLE “should serve as a **model example** of cross disciplinary cooperation and efficiency in the international fight against sexual abuse of minors.”

- **Belgium Police Liaison Officer, Embassy of Belgium**

“If APLE were not based in Sihanoukville, we would have a **lot more dangerous suspects** posing threats in our community”

- **Partner NGO**
The Year Ahead

In 2015, APLE is focusing on three key areas. We hope to make significant progress in the fight against child sexual abuse and exploitation by prioritising these topics.

**Sustainability**

In recent years, we have received several reports of abuse taking place online. To enable us to respond effectively to these reports, APLE is launching Cambodia’s first internet hotline to combat online child sexual abuse and exploitation in 2015. We will also provide training on online safety to encourage a safe internet use. We are looking forward to developing our skills to effectively combat this crime in Cambodia, and partnering with hotlines around the world to protect children globally.

**Online Abuse**

Knowledge and skills sustainability among beneficiaries and the general public are key to achieving a long-lasting impact. In 2015, APLE is increasing dissemination of on-the-job training for law enforcement. APLE’s end goal is that police have the necessary knowledge and technical ability to respond to suspected incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation on their own; our new approach involves police officers earlier in investigations in order to reach this goal.

**Innovative Approaches**

After 11 years of work, it is time for APLE to reflect and refocus. In addition to aforementioned new approach to investigations, we are testing new methods in our other programs. Firstly, APLE is pursuing group counselling to enable victims to meet each other and partake in activities that enable healing and/or sharing. Secondly, APLE is training instructors on child sexual abuse and exploitation with the aim that they will disseminate the knowledge within their workplace, family, and community.

To learn more about our work or to see how you can join us, please visit www.aplecambodia.org
APLE is a locally managed NGO and an equal opportunity employer. At present, APLE has 45 dedicated staff whose skills range from lawyers to social workers, investigators to trainers, and administrative staff to accountants. All staff have undergone extensive background checks and are highly qualified and dedicated to combating child sexual abuse and exploitation in Cambodia.

APLE also hosted 6 interns in 2014. To ensure the highest standard of child protection, all volunteers are asked to commit to six months and submit references and a background check. APLE has been lucky to have excellent volunteers in the past and whose support has been invaluable to APLE’s work.
APLE runs solely on donations from international NGOs, government institutions, and general donations. Our total income for 2014 was:

$519,213

Our total expenditure was:

$491,834
Thank You!

It is with heartfelt gratitude that we say thank you to our donors from 2014, without whom our work would not be possible. Your support inspires us to keep working hard to protect children in Cambodia.

For more information, please visit: www.aplecambodia.org

Facebook: aplecambodia.org

Report abuse: reportabuse@aplecambodia.org or +855 (0)92 311 511