

Key Objective

The overall objective of this programme is to enhance the capacity of the Ministry of Health to continue the development of mental health in Cambodia, independently manage and support the training of medical and mental health professionals, conduct research in psychiatry and provide mental health services throughout the country.

Beneficiaries

- Cambodians suffering from mental illness
- Cambodian medical and mental health professionals

Concrete Benefits

Increased number of competent mental health professionals:

- 10 new physicians undergoing 3-year training as specialist psychiatrists
- 10 new nurses undergoing 18-month training as psychiatric nurses
- Continuous medical education and support system for the trained psychiatric nurses and psychiatrists

Better education for mental health professionals:

- Theoretical and clinical training for an estimated 50 general practitioners, nurses and other health workers per year in the delivery of basic mental health services

Better and more accessible mental health services for Cambodians:

- At least 8 new out-patient departments established to provide regular mental health care
- Continuous support to the country's main psychiatric facility, in Phnom Penh, including clinical services to approximately 200 patients daily at the out-patient department and 30 patients per month at the crisis unit
- Continuous development of the Psychosocial Rehabilitation Centre, assisting mostly schizophrenic patients to integrate them in their families and society, and to enable them to participate in household chores and even hold outside jobs

Cambodian National Program for Mental Health



Mr. Theat Try, psychiatric nurse with IOM, during a home visit to interview one of the children in a family with high risks of psychological problems. The mother had 15 children, out of which 7 died during the war. Her husband lost a leg due to a mine explosion and subsequently died in a second mine explosion. The woman could not be interviewed because she had been abusing alcohol. ©John Vink/ Magnum Photos/IOM 2006

- Continued clinical and administrative support to the existing psychiatric out-patient departments in several areas
- Delivery of mental health services to 23 of 24 provinces in Cambodia
- Established collaborations between psychiatric out patient departments and NGOs working in the field of mental health in the different provinces
- Tighter cooperation between governmental organizations, NGOs and communities on mental health promotion and education
- Piloted community mental health activities in at least 15 psychiatric out patient departments
- Establishment of a community-based referral network in target areas
- Development of guidelines for management of the national program at all levels
- Introduction of a computerized documentation system for clinical files

Donors and Partners

Donor

- Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation

Partners

- Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
- University of Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
- University of Oslo
- Technical School for Medical Care, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
- World Health Organization

Project Details

Start date

- 1 June 2006

End date

- 31 May 2009

Project countries

- Cambodia

Project description

The basic psychiatric services and facilities that had been established in Cambodia prior to 1975 were entirely destroyed by the Khmer Rouge regime. It was only after the United Nations–sponsored elections in 1993 that such services were restored, as the high prevalence of mental disorders among the estimated ten million Cambodians, including post traumatic stress disorders and other psychosocial problems, needed immediate attention.

“The project may represent a global first in the context of the development of what is fast becoming a comprehensive national mental health service from zero capacity over a period of twelve years. It is an achievement of epic proportions.”

– Dr. Vincent Keane, Chief of Mission, IOM Cambodia

The first Cambodian National Health Plan of 1993 made psychiatry, along with general public health concerns, one of the priority areas for training and services. To address these issues, in 1994, the first of a series of National Mental Health Projects was initiated through a collaborative effort of the International Organization for Migration, the University of Oslo and the Ministry of Health with generous funding from the Norwegian government. Its goal was to establish a National Mental Health Program that would provide a comprehensive coverage of mental health services accessible to all. Key components in providing such a service would be training of health professionals, diversification of services appropriate to the Cambodian population with a wide geographic coverage and the pursuit of research on mental health issues relevant to the Cambodian population.



Chamkar Samrong health center. Registration of patients.
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Thirteen years from the commencement of the first Cambodian National Health Plan project, the achievements have been remarkable. The project highlights as of January 2006 include:

- Training of a total of 26 psychiatrists to international standards
- Training of 40 psychiatric nurses
- Training of 254 general practitioners and 269 non-specialized nurses (three months' basic training in psychiatry)
- Inclusion of mental health as a discipline in the medical student curriculum.
- Development of an extensive network of provincial clinical service in 23 of 24 provinces in Cambodia
- Provision of over 350,000 consultations to over 40,000 Cambodians during the life of the programme
- Mainstreaming of Mental Health within the Ministry of Health

The Cambodian National Program for Mental Health aims to ensure the development of viable mental health training and treatment services after external funding and manpower support have ended. Cambodian psychiatrists and psychiatric nurses will continue their work on educational programmes and clinical services, consulting periodically with representatives of the University of Oslo and lecturers for teaching blocks or specific workshops.



Dr. Oum Nhel during an interview at the out patient department of the Battambang referral hospital with a patient suffering from anxiety. ©John Vink/ Magnum Photos/IOM 2006

Activities will expand, as will the cooperation with organizations working in the field of mental health. Being a joint proposal between IOM and the Ministry of Health, the project emphasizes the responsibility of the Royal Government of Cambodia, represented by the Ministry of Health, for the continuous development of mental health and related human resources. The Office for Mental Health in the Ministry will be in charge of the programme.

The project is implemented in close collaboration with the World Health Organization, international non-governmental organizations working in mental health in Cambodia, as well as national health authorities.

Principal Activities

- Training of new Cambodian psychiatrists
- Training of new Cambodian psychiatric nurses
- Mental health training of general practitioners and nurses
- Improvement of mental health services
- Training of medical undergraduates
- Improvement of mental health education
- Improvement in documentation of clinical files

To learn more about this project and other IOM activities, please visit www.iom.int/activities.



Files of patients at the out patient department of the Battambang referral hospital. ©John Vink/ Magnum Photos/IOM 2006



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