

Stories from the field Cambodia

Increasing Access to Underserved Women and Youth in Cambodia

In 2015, Marie Stopes International worked with field-based teams to document stories about reproductive health care from young people, rural women, service providers and garment factory workers in Cambodia.

Removing barriers for vulnerable groups

Kroal is one of the many indigenous groups in rural Cambodia. Economic, geographic and cultural barriers can exist for indigenous women trying to access safe sexual and reproductive healthcare. Most indigenous communities live in remote areas and rely on public health centers and nongovernmental partners. Through a partnership with Australian Aid, Save the Children, CARE and the Cambodian Ministry of Health, Marie Stopes Cambodia works with service providers in public sector facilities to increase access to high-quality voluntary contraceptive services for rural women.

“The role of the health center is counseling patients, delivering babies and treating other illnesses. I think contraception is very important because family planning affects every aspect of villagers’ daily lives. Marie Stopes has been providing training on the benefits of contraception so more and more villagers have become aware of it and have come into [public] health centers to receive our services. It makes our health centers more trusted technically and in terms of the clinical skills of our staff too.”

**Im Phearith, Director of Operational District
Health Department**

“We are farmers, we grow rice. We have land for farming in the village. I have a lot of work. We are poor; we do not earn much to feed our children. My mother had nine children; there was no contraception in the past. When I am poor like this, I do not want to have many children, because I cannot afford it.”

Sroun, a Kroal farmer, who voluntarily chose an intrauterine contraceptive device after receiving contraceptive counseling





Increasing Access for Garment Factory Workers

650,000 Cambodians work in factories – of these, 90% are women.

Marie Stopes Cambodia operates on-site garment factory clinics that provide comprehensive counseling and short-term contraceptives. Marie Stopes Cambodia and the Population Council’s Evidence Project partner on the Cambodia Worker Health Coalition (Worker Health), a five-year USAID-supported initiative to ensure that workers, particularly women, have greater access to quality health services that meet their needs and improve their reproductive health. As a platform for collective action, Worker Health will create industry wide impact in partnership with leading brands as well as with workers, factories and other key industry stakeholders.

“Improved access to voluntary reproductive health services at the Zentai factory has addressed core needs of the workers and increased their productivity. Sometimes we used to have 80 absent workers a day but since we introduced the program, absenteeism has reduced to at least 20 cases a day.”

Sopheha, Human Resources Manager, the Zentai Factory, Phnom, Penh

“The nurse at Marie Stopes said I could choose any method I preferred. So I chose the pill. We can have children with a large age gap. And when I want to have a baby, I can just stop taking the pill.”

Savy, garment factory worker in Cambodia

Reaching the next generation

Marie Stopes Cambodia reaches young people through a hotline – a confidential and free number that anyone can call to get information and service referrals. The counselors are all midwives with appropriate training. In 2014, 35% of the callers were between 15 and 24 years old.



Young people under the age of 24 account for 52% of Cambodia’s population.

“Youth always ask about how the body changes when they hit puberty and they also ask about safe sex. Phone consultation is great for them because they can call from a place where they can be alone without anyone overhearing them.”

Em Sreymom and Ly Sokhey, Marie Stopes Cambodia Hotline team



“My name is Savy. I work at JIT factory in Phnom, Penh. I am married with one child. I didn’t get to study because I had many siblings. That is why I am working at the garment factory. If I have two children, I can make sure they get a good education.”

Savy, garment factory worker in Cambodia

“It is good for us to use a contraceptive method. It gives us time to work and it’s good for our finances.”

Rath, Savy’s husband

Voices of young people:

“People don’t discuss it because they are too shy but I have always believed that being shy is not as important as my safety.”

“Women face a lot of health issues. If they don’t know about contraception, or if they are stripped of their rights, to express opinions about health or sex, it makes their lives harder.”

“Especially young people, they should have the right. They must be educated about reproductive health and sex.”

For more information please visit intheirownwords.mariestopes.org

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