

## **Recommendations from urban and rural poor groups to the Royal Government of Cambodia in response to Covid-19**

28 April 2020

We, the undersigned communities of Phnom Penh and surrounding areas, submit the following letter to the Royal Government of Cambodia and other relevant Government ministries, institutions and working groups.

Our communities are varied in size and description, are located across the city of Phnom Penh and throughout Cambodia, and are all poor and in need of support from the Royal Government of Cambodia. Currently, our communities face many issues which are being worsened by the threat of Covid-19. Although only a couple of communities have reported cases of Covid-19, many of our communities have been affected by the virus already through loss of income, loss of jobs, and exacerbation of currently existing issues.

Most of our communities have already been educated by the Government and NGOs on the threat of the Covid-19 virus to our communities. We are now well educated about this, and many of us have taken it upon ourselves to buy preventative medical supplies and teach other community members about social distancing and good hygiene practices.

However, we may remain particularly vulnerable to the threat of the virus. Our communities are often cramped with many people living in small houses. We are poor, with few savings, and many of our young children and elderly people have pre-existing health concerns as a result of our living conditions. In addition, our relationship with the health care service in Cambodia is not well established. Although the ID Poor program is borne out of an intent to do good and connect many of our communities with health care services, the program has yet to be fully effective and many of our families are not included in the program. This must be taken into account by the Royal Government of Cambodia and other groups when responding to community issues.

We have greater concerns regarding the spread of the virus. We fear that in the event of a lock-down, which many of us encourage in order to stop the spread of the virus, that we may be forgotten and not receive the support that we need medically and financially. We are concerned that our lack of savings, our debts to MFIs and money lenders, and our decreased income generation as a result of job losses may cause serious harm to our communities.

In line with the above, we submit the following requests to the Royal Government of Cambodia to assist our communities in safely and sustainably managing our way through the Covid-19 situation:

*Distribute preventative medical supplies to the most vulnerable*

Many communities have taken it upon themselves to purchase alcoholic disinfectants, anti-bacterial hand gels, and masks. In addition, in many of our communities these resources have been given out for free to community members by authorities. However, in many cases our

poorest families cannot afford to buy these products. We submit that the provision of preventative medical supplies like those above be targeted towards the most in need of them, namely motodup drivers, tuk-tuk drivers, trash collectors and poor families. Without these materials the threat of Covid-19 spreading throughout our communities and into the wider population becomes much greater. In order to target the most in need families, the use of ID Poor will not be enough. We recommend the Royal Government of Cambodia to work with development partners and NGOs in this regard to ensure efficient targeting of vulnerable groups.

*Ease or suspend debt to MFIs, banks and private money-lenders*

All communities fear that they will not be able to repay their loans on time, or at all. The fear is compacted by the prospect of further job loss, in the event of a lock-down, and by reduced income through greater spending on preventative medical supplies as listed above. Therefore, we submit to the Royal Government of Cambodia to take action to order MFI institutions and banks to suspend loan repayments during the time in which Covid-19 has affected job security in the country. Further, we ask that a public statement be made for informal money-lenders to cease debt collection during this time and that local authorities and NGOs work with both money lenders and indebted communities to resolve issues peacefully.

*Rental suspension and suspension of all taxes on sales*

Many community members are renters and either do not own the land on which they live, or do not own the land on which they conduct business. We understand the Prime Minister's position that he and the Government have no right to suspend rental payments but we believe that this is not an issue of private rights but an issue of social rights and that all of society is being affected by the Covid-19 so all of society should have to work together to defeat the virus. As livelihoods are under threat because of Covid-19 we submit to the Royal Government of Cambodia to take action to order the suspension of rental payments below \$200.00 USD per month during the time in which Covid-19 has affected job security in the country. In addition, any taxes related to the business transactions which poor and informal sector workers currently engage in, should also be suspended by order of the State.

*Stay-at-home payments*

The communities are facing severe effects already as a result of job loss and income reduction caused by Covid-19. In addition, it is understood that the Royal Government of Cambodia is considering the possibility of lockdown measures in line with other countries and which would ultimately lead to our communities losing their incomes entirely. As community members are poor, and typically have no savings or saving groups, it is requested that community members are paid by the Royal Government of Cambodia a stay-at-home stipend in order to ensure community members are kept safe, that their lives continue with respect and dignity, and that they do not put themselves into precarious situations by taking out further loans with money lenders or by leaving their houses to work and putting the greater population at risk of the virus spreading.

*Relocation and eviction issues*

Communities have expressed fear that evictions and relocations may continue during this time. While some communities are awaiting their relocation sites and do not wish to have this process

delayed or abandoned, others are requesting that the eviction and relocation process be suspended during the time in which Covid-19 is affecting the country. It is requested that the Royal Government of Cambodia direct its Ministries and authorities to meet with communities and clearly and cooperatively come to a conclusion as to how each community situation will proceed where a relocation and eviction is ongoing. We also ask that the Government place a complete ban on evictions of people from their houses until after the Covid-19 situation has stopped affecting the country. Without this protection our communities will be more likely to be infected by the virus, and that any evictions that take place during this time would contravene other Governmental directives, such as social distancing and avoiding unnecessary travel.

*Price issues on foodstuffs*

Some traders are taking advantage of the current pandemic by raising prices for vegetables, fish, meat, and rice, which is a daily need of all people. With that regard, we ask the government to carefully monitor the situation and make official announcements to keep pricing on essential items of food reasonable.

*Improving livelihoods for a more sustainable future*

In order for farmers to utilise the agricultural land and to promote our economy, we ask the Royal Government of Cambodia to provide subsidies to low-income small and medium-sized farmers through increased funding to the agricultural sector to enable farmers to raise livestock and grow agricultural crops. We would like to request the Royal Government of Cambodia to work on land issues in partnership with civil society, and private sector development partners to assist farmers in building their technical capacity to secure livelihoods.

This letter is endorsed by the following communities:

1. Somrong Meanchey Community, Phnom Penh
2. Smor San Community, Phnom Penh
3. Russey Srah Community, Phnom Penh
4. Samaki Rong Roeung Community, Phnom Penh
5. Toul Sangke A Community, Phnom Penh
6. Phlov Rothpleung Community, Phnom Penh
7. Prek Takong 3 Community, Phnom Penh
8. Borey Santipheap Community, Phnom Penh
9. Satrei Khlangsang Community, Phnom Penh
10. Sen Reak Reay Community, Phnom Penh
11. Prek Takong 60m Community, Phnom Penh
12. Samroung Tbound Community, Phnom Penh
13. Phum 23 Community, Phnom Penh
14. 92 Community, Phnom Penh
15. Boeung Chhouk Community, Phnom Penh
16. Tropeang Rang Community, Phnom Penh
17. Boeung Chhouk A Community, Phnom Penh
18. Thmor Kol Community, Phnom Penh

19. Steung Meanchey Community, Phnom Penh
20. Roluos Cheung Ek Community, Phnom Penh
21. Reak Chamroeun Community, Phnom Penh
22. Boeung Trabek Phum 4 Community, Phnom Penh
23. Boeung Chhouk Meanchey Thmey 2 Community, Phnom Penh
24. Chraing Chamreah group 7 community, Phnom Penh
25. Brobok Khang Tbound Community, Phnom Penh
26. Phum 5 Steung Meanchey Community, Phnom Penh
27. Phum 5 Olumpich Community, Phnom Penh
28. Ondoung 3 Community, Phnom Penh
29. Phum Boeung Salang Community, Phnom Penh
30. Chres Thmey Community, Phnom Penh
31. Prek Toul Community, Phnom Penh
32. Phum 17 Community, Phnom Penh
33. Phum 21 Community, Phnom Penh
34. Phum 3 Community, Phnom Penh
35. Block Kanvathmey Community, Phnom Penh
36. Boeung Chhouk Meanchey Thmey 1 Community, Phnom Penh
37. Nirout Boeung Chhouk Community, Phnom Penh
38. Toul Sambo Aphiwat Community, Phnom Penh
39. Punleu Khemara Community, Phnom Penh
40. Krey Kro Steung Meanchey Community, Phnom Penh
41. Phum Prek Punlea Community, Phnom Penh
42. Koh Norea Community, Phnom Penh
43. Kva Community, Phnom Penh
44. Phum Teuk Thla Community, Phnom Penh
45. Phum Baku Community, Phnom Penh
46. Prek Tanou Community, Phnom Penh
47. Prek Tangov Community, Phnom Penh
48. Derm Makkleur Community, Phnom Penh
49. Boeung Kak I Community, Phnom Penh
50. Phum 2 Community, Phnom Penh
51. Phum Derm Sleng Community, Phnom Penh
52. Phum Mitapheap Community, Phnom Penh
53. Phum Kor Community, Phnom Penh
54. Phum Krol Kor group III Community, Phnom Penh
55. Cheung Ek Group III Community, Phnom Penh
56. Cherg Ek Krom 4 community Phnom Penh
57. Roum Meat community Phnom Penh
58. Derm Srol community Phnom Penh
59. Sameki 3 community Phnom Penh
60. Phum Klang Sang Phnom Penh
61. Chery Mokol community Phnom Penh
62. Phom Kombor Krom 5 Phnom Penh

63. Phom Phsa Toch Krom 15 Phnom Penh
64. Samaki Chak Meas community , Svay Chrom district, Svay Reang province
65. Lor Peang community, Kampong Chhnang province
66. Om Lang community, Thpong district, Kampong Speu province
67. Tropeang Cho community, Oral district, Kampong Speu province
68. Rasmey Samki community, Oral district, Kampong Spoe province
69. Krom 197 Land community, Srea Ombil district, Koh Kong province
70. Krom 175 Land community, Srae Ombil district, Koh Kong province
71. Krom 66 Land community, Srea Ombil district, Koh Kong province
72. 843 Land community, Bothom Saker district, Koh Kong province
73. Chong Kom Ti 1 community, Memuth district, Tbong Khmum province
74. Chong Kom Kandal community, Memuth district, Tbong Khmum province
75. Kaksakam Molathan community, Memuth district, Tbong Khmum province
76. Kambros community, Domber district, Tbong Khmum province
77. Srea Brang community, Domber district, Tbong Khmum province
78. Bossa Snoe community, Domber district, Tbong Khmum province
79. Meanchey community, Romdol district, Svay Reang province
80. Samaki Remeas Hek community, Remeas Hek district, Svay Reang province
81. Deythli Orndong Tropang community, Remeas Hek district, Svay Reang province
82. Lerk Stouy Sethmanous community, Kandal Stung district, Kandal province
83. Dorpor community, Samrong district, Takeo province
84. Kok Tarea community, Samrong district, Takeo province
85. Otrachak Chit community, Prey Nop district, Preah Sihanouk province
86. Bat khta community, Prey Nop district, Preah Sihanouk province
87. Odomrey community, Stang Hav district, Preah Sihanouk province
88. Okampochea community, Prey Nop district, Preah Sihanouk province
89. Spean Chhas community, Preah Sihanouk province
90. Thmor Thom community, Prey Nop district, Preah Sihanouk province
91. Kbal Hong Teo community, Prey Nop district, Preah Sihanouk province
92. Okhach community, Stung Hav district, Preah Sihanouk province
93. Orndong Thmor community, Prey Nop district, Preah Sihanouk province
94. Sa Ei 5 community, Prey Nop district, Preah Sihanouk province
95. Preak Treang community, Stung Hav district, Preah Sihanouk province
96. Borey Kila Community, Phnom Penh
97. Chheko Community, Phnom Penh
98. Phum 22 Community, Phnom Penh
99. Hou Samnom Community, Kompong Speu
100. Um Leang Community, Kompong Speu
101. Phum Deychhnang Community, Kompong Speu
102. Raksmeay Samaki Community, Kompong Speu
103. 297 Community, Koh Kong
104. Chhi kor Krom Community, Koh Kong
105. Fishing Community, Koh Kong
106. Kein Teuk Community, Koh Kong

107. Koh Sdach Community, Koh Kong
108. Koh Srolaov Fishing Community, Koh Kong
109. Samrash Koh Sdach Finishing Community, Koh Kong
110. Cheam Krovean Community, Kompong Cham
111. Tonluong Community, Kompong Cham
112. Cheung Prey Community, Kompong Cham
113. Pech Chongva Lorchhert Community, Kompong Chhnang
114. Nesat Apirak Aphiwat Thun Thean Chhuolphal Konlengphe Community, Kompong Chhnang
115. 185 k Tita Community, Chambak Thom, Kompong Chhnang
116. O Ampel Community, Banteay Meanchey
117. Phum Phsar Kondal Community, Banteay Meanchey
118. Phum O Svay Community, Banteay Meanchey
119. Phum Prasat Community, Banteay Meanchey
120. Phum Sela Khmer Community, Banteay Meanchey
121. Anlong Run Community, Battambang
122. Bos Sa Om Community Battambang
123. Sdey Krom Fishing Community, Battambang
124. Thmar Da Community, Pursat
125. Prey Chheur Kbal Tearhean Community, Pursat
126. Prey Chheur Neung Thun Thean Thamachheat Community, Pursat
127. Prey Lang Community, Kompong Thom
128. Phnom Tateung Community, Kompot
129. Prey Peay Fishing Community, Kompot
130. Trapeang Sangke Community, Kompot
131. Indogenoures Charay Community, Ratanakiri
132. Phum SamutKrom Community, Ratanakiri
133. Indogenours Youth Samrab, Ratanakiri
134. Phnom Krom Community, Siem Reap
135. Khlang Teuk 78 Community, Siem Reap
136. Romchek Community, Siem Reap
137. Skun Community, Siem Reap
138. Trapeang Krosang Community, Siem Reap
139. Tapen Community, Siem Reap
140. Lumtuok Community, Siem Reap
141. Meurn Chhey Community, Svay Rieng