

Security and Risks Management toward Civil Society Organizations and their Individual Staff

2 August 2016

As a result of several discussions/consultations with members of civil society, analysts, diplomats, activists, and others, it is evident that civil society is facing increasing security risks, both at an individual and organizational level.

Both political and legal measures have been tightened in recent years. A number of laws have been adopted, which have contributed to a crackdown on civil society. The current political climate, inappropriate use of courts, tribunals and national instructions coincides with increasing intimidation, imprisonment, and murder of human rights defenders, analysts, environmental activists and journalists. It has restricted the capacity of NGOs, CBOs, social movements, journalists, lawyers, bloggers and professional associations to do their work, freely express an opinion, and contribute to the development of Cambodia including actualization of international human rights instruments and UN's Sustainable Development Goals, without fear of reprisal.

After discussion at the 243th Bi-Monthly Meeting of members (August 2016), along with some tips from our partners organizations, some possible risks and mitigation strategies were identified. They included risks against people, property and programs (the three P's of risk). It was noted that there are risks to both organizations and individuals. It was also noted that security plans and risk mitigation strategies are not as well developed or communicated as they need to be. For example, organizations may choose to keep a low profile, but individual employees may be active on social media. In extreme situations, such as the death of Dr. Kem Ley, there can be a disconnect between the organizational response and the individual response. It was also noted that organizational risks vary, depending on the focus of their work. Community development, health and educational organizations are not as exposed (and tend to work more closely with government) as advocacy and campaign organizations.

CCC advises all individuals and organizations to prepare themselves well.

Who	Possible Risks	Mitigation Strategies
Individuals	<p>Personal censorship: individual activist might feel frightened, and are pressured from family members and friends not to get involved. Alternatively, individual staff want to be active but their organization wants a low profile.</p> <p>Intimidation: various ways of intimidation both public and anonymous made to individual activists such as threats, harassment, imprisonment, penalty, and/or non-cooperation.</p> <p>Defamation: some people have</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess security risks and threats before any event, trip or activity, and prepare yourself to deal with potential problems or security incidents. If you have reliable information that the security risk is very high, cancel the event, trip or activity. • Create a network of other human rights defenders, media and local and/or international NGOs who can support you and who have contacts with embassies and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Keep them informed of your activities. Find out what protection services different groups can provide. Provide health and accident insurance to front line staff.

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	<p>experiences of defamation on ethical and professional matters. Some cases are related money, sex scandals, speeches, and posting. Some people were afraid of stereotype/color painting.</p> <p>Personal imprisonment: many activists experiences in prison although they were innocent person.</p> <p>Flee/become asylum seeker: Dozens of activists and their family members become asylum seekers once they have experiences threat to death, or shot death.</p> <p>Assassination: Nearly ten activists were murdered by fatal killers and some cases could not justices to the deaths and their families. The assassination made bad impact to activists and citizens including fear, self-censorship, etc.</p> <p>Loss support for their family members: Activists, human rights defenders, and civil society organizations staff normally don't have good support for their family members once they encountered any problem and this limits their courageous to call and act for positive changes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform your family and friends of your activities (What? Where? When? With whom?) and give them instructions on what to do in the event that something happens to you. Consider using technology such as a 'Follow me' tracking App or a 'Panic / Security Alert' device. • Always have emergency contacts with you and try to memorize some useful phone numbers, such as those of colleagues, your lawyer, partner NGOs, embassies, journalists or local authorities. • Store sensitive data in a safe place, and avoid discussing or sharing sensitive information over the phone or via email. Also avoid mentioning names and locations, unless strictly necessary. • Secure your home by always ensuring to lock doors and windows. Consider additional security measures including external lights and security cameras, and getting a guard dog. • Always be on the lookout for strange activity near your home. • Avoid travelling at night or on your own, and make sure to check in daily with someone from your network, especially when travelling to remote or risky locations. • Keep record of the threats and risks you have faced: What? When? Who? Where? How? Why? Do not dismiss or ignore something that may be a threat to your security. • Report incidents to the members of your network, local NGOs, international NGOs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, embassies, etc. and seek support. • Know your rights! Take time to learn more about your right to liberty and security of the person, fair trial rights, and freedom of expression, association and assembly. Knowing your rights will enhance your security.
Individual Institution/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputational/cooperate risk: Some situations such as extreme human rights violation require an immediate intervention such as joint statement. This does put organizations at greater risk as they are then more easily identified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Network: Keep the updated information regarding to threat by security communication system to donors and partners • Organizational Risk Assessment: Regularly conduct organizational risk assessment with relevant stakeholders especially experience NGOs on mitigation risk.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of qualified staff: many NGOs have experiences of losing good staff both by their resignation, or imprisonment, or flee or shot to death. • Discrimination: • Sanction of operations: some NGOs have some experiences that local authorities did not provide good collaboration. A few NGOs used to receive a letter of sanction and others get investigation from local authority and Anti-corruption Unit. Moreover, local authority requested for weekly, monthly, and quarterly activities report of organizations in the provinces. • Risk to property and program: some NGOs have their office located on land /buildings owned by the government. Their situation is more precarious than those organizations in privately owned buildings. • Legislative threat and inappropriate function of the state institutions: Adopt legal and other regulations restrict CSOs, as well as controlling of information and communication in the reason of national security and anti terrorists. Risk of deregistration (legislative risks) for undertaking activities deemed to be undermining national security and stability. For INGOs this could result in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building development on security risk and mitigation • Develop/reviewed on security policy of each organization • SOS security alert registration • Advocate for budget allocation for front line staff in case of emergency such imprisonment, accident, or shot to death. • Train Staff on risk management • Coordinate the partners and network to discuss on risk prevention. <p>Develop a clear and consistent strategy on when the organization will speak out (including individual use of social media), and when it will keep a low profile based on an assessment of risk to property and program.</p> <p>Formalization of political engagement and active citizen journalist.</p> <p>Undertake a review of all laws impacting on CSOs and ensure activities are consistent with the laws.</p>

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	<p>having MOU cancelled and being expelled from the country.</p>	
<p>Civil Society Sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic space: Space of civil society to operate especially rights to association and rights to assembly are under threat, especially small and grassroots organizations experienced this. Some organizations received threaten messages or actions from government to stall and/or close operations and/or office. • Donor Driven: Not many CSOs have clear strategic plan, so they are often driven by donors. Furthermore, there is lack of funding support from donors regarding the advocacy campaign. Some donors work directly with the government body and without any funding support CSOs or grassroots movement. • Political Neutrality: There are many organizations operating their activities to serve best interests of political parties so the visibility of the CSOs might not be trusted by the government and public. In contrast, the political party tries to link CSOs to their political line, so there is a confusion that CSOs belong to the political party. Certain NGOs pro the government that undermined its neutrality and development role as CSOs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular sector meetings with CSO leaders to set up CSO council which represent common CSO voice. • Set up a strong communications system internally, so they can exchange the CSO information globally.