

Press Release

Cambodian LGBT+ communities continue dialogue with the Cambodian Government and launch the “ខ្ញុំទទួលយក - I Accept” campaign to advance legal marriage equality for LGBT+ couples

Phnom Penh, 09 December 2021

On 09 December 2021, Cambodian Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT+) communities and civil society organizations held a **roundtable dialogue with Cambodian government representatives** and announced the launch of the “**ខ្ញុំទទួលយក - I Accept**” campaign to **advance legal marriage equality for LGBT+ couples in Cambodia**. The “**ខ្ញុំទទួលយក - I Accept**” campaign aims to raise more public awareness and acceptance of LGBT+ persons, and to contribute to advancing the legal protection of marriage equality for LGBT+ couples, in line with the Royal Government of Cambodia's commitment in the third Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

The roundtable dialogue and launching of the “**ខ្ញុំទទួលយក - I Accept**” campaign on the International Human Rights Day 2021 at Himawari Hotel were co-organized by Rainbow Community Kampuchea (RoCK), together with civil society networks of individuals, groups, and organizations, including Vuth Lyno, Artistic Director of Sa Sa Art Projects, Prumsodun Ok & NATYARASA, Love is Diversity, Micro-Rainbow International Foundation-Cambodia, Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia, Cambodian Center for Human Rights, Gender and Development for Cambodia, and Just Associates South East Asia.

Obtaining legal marriage equality has been continuously identified by the Cambodian LGBT+ community as a priority to protect their equal marriage and family rights.¹ **The Roundtable Dialogue** continued discussions between Cambodian LGBT+ community members and their Cambodian government representatives on the ways forward for advancing the legal recognition and protection of marriage equality for LGBT+ couples in Cambodia, in line with the third cycle UPR recommendations to “Amend Article 45 of the Constitution to enable legal marriage equality for same-sex couples” accepted by Cambodia in 2019.

The total of approximately 85 participants in the **Roundtable Dialogue** included representatives from the Cambodian Human Rights Committee and key Ministries of the Royal Government of Cambodia, Cambodian local authorities, LGBT+ community members, the family members of LGBT+ persons and civil society organizations. This dialogue was a continuation of discussions held in 2018 and 2019, and recently in September 2021 on the UPR mid-term reporting period.

“It is so important to inform our government representatives and to the public that just like everyone, LGBT+ couples want to marry the person we love, to form our families, following our Cambodian traditions, and be able to receive a marriage certificate so that our families can be equally recognized and protected by the law under the same roof of the Kingdom of Cambodia,” said Ms. Pisey Ly, Coordinator of RoCK.

After the Roundtable Dialogue, LGBT+ communities also announced the launch of the “**ខ្ញុំទទួលយក - I Accept**” campaign. The “**ខ្ញុំទទួលយក - I Accept**” campaign will raise the voices, experiences, and stories of the Cambodian LGBT+ community members, their families, their parents, allies from all sectors, and the public across the country through the media and social media, for more understanding, acceptance, and support for the importance of obtaining legal marriage equality for LGBT+ couples in Cambodia. More details on the campaign are available at: www.rockcambodia.org/iaccept.

“My partner and I have been together for ten years. We built our small family based on true love, commitment to take good care, forgive each other and look after our beloved son. Our parents, neighbors and local authorities knew about our family. However, the local authority could not issue the marriage certificate for us because we

¹ Context: Currently, **Article 45 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia** determines that “marriage shall be conducted according to conditions determined by law based on the principle of mutual consent between one husband and one wife”, which effectively excludes same-sex couples. While there is no longer any explicit legal prohibition of same-sex marriage, there are no explicit provisions facilitating legal same-sex marriage in Cambodia law. Currently, Cambodian LGBT+ couples can hold unofficial traditional wedding ceremonies and parties. However, they cannot register for a marriage certificate and cannot obtain legal recognition of their marriage relationship.

are a same-sex couple. I am so worried, especially for my son because our family does not receive the same legal recognition and protection as other families.” – Poeu Dalin, LGBT+ community member of RoCK.

“I love and accept my child, all I wish for my child is that he can marry the one person that he truly loves. The happiness of my child is also mine as a parent. I hope the Cambodian government will allow my child to legally marry the same as other different-sex couples, living their simple lives with happiness and warmth.” – Mrs. Sous Narin, mother of an LGBT+ person.

“My partner and I, just like thousands of LGBT+ couples in Cambodia, have overcome all obstacles to finally be able to live together, forming our family together, and taking care of each other in both hard and happy times. Because of our commitment and endurance, our parents and our community accepted us. How long do we have to continue waiting until the law stops considering our relationship and family as strangers under the legal framework?” – Mr. Kuy Thida, co-founder of Love is Diversity.

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