



ខ្ញុំទទួលយក

## What is the “ខ្ញុំទទួលយក - I Accept” Campaign?

The “ខ្ញុំទទួលយក - I Accept” Campaign aims to advance **legal marriage equality for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT+) couples in Cambodia**. The campaign strives to raise more public awareness and acceptance of LGBT+ persons, and contributing to advance the legal protection of marriage equality for LGBT+ couples, in line with the Royal Government of Cambodia's commitment during the third Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

This campaign will raise the voices and stories of the Cambodian LGBT+ community members, their families, their parents, allies from all sectors, and the general 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.

Just like everyone, LGBT+ couples want to marry the person they love and form their family following our Cambodian traditions, and want to receive a marriage certificate so that their families will be recognized and protected equally by the law under the same roof of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

### 1. Who are the founders and supporters of this campaign?

- The “ខ្ញុំទទួលយក - I Accept” campaign was founded by Rainbow Community Kampuchea (RoCK),<sup>1</sup> a Cambodian LGBT-led organization that has been advocating for equal protections of the rights of LGBT+ communities since 2009. The campaign direction is constantly driven by the members of the Cambodian LGBT+ communities, who have continuously identified the obtention of legal marriage equality as the priority to secure their equal rights and well-being.
- The campaign is also supported by civil society partners, including Love is Diversity, Micro-Rainbow International Foundation-Cambodia, Cambodian Center for Human Rights, Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia, Gender and Development for Cambodia, Just Associates South East Asia, Prumsodun Ok & NATYARASA, and Vuth Lyno, Artistic Director at Sa Sa Art Projects.
- Going forward, the campaign will seek to mobilize more allies and supporters from all sectors of Cambodian society, including civil society organizations working on LGBT+ rights, women's rights,

<sup>1</sup> Rainbow Community Kampuchea (RoCK) has a vision for Cambodia where Cambodian LGBTQ citizens live their life receiving full and equal respect, acceptance and human rights from all sectors of society - especially families, communities and authorities. We wish for Cambodian LGBTQ citizens to feel happy to be who they are and live happy lives. An active, committed voluntary group since 2009, RoCK has now been a registered NGO since February 2014 - the first LGBTQ advocacy organization in Cambodia. RoCK is beginning an exciting new stage of development as it transitions from a voluntary activist group to a professionally-run organisation. RoCK also has as a key goal to eventually transition into a membership-led organization. <https://rockcambodia.org/>



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gender equality, human rights, children's rights, artists, the private sector, and the Cambodian public.

## 2. How was this campaign founded?

- Cambodian LGBT+ persons have continuously identified the obtention of legal marriage equality as the priority to protect their equal marriage and family rights.
- In 2019 during the third Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Cambodia accepted three recommendations to amend Article 45 of the Constitution to enable legal marriage equality for same-sex couples. By accepting these recommendations, Cambodia committed to implement the recommendations. [\[See more details in the UPR recommendations infographic\]](#)
- The "ខ្ញុំទទួលយក - I Accept" campaign was initiated to support the progress towards the implementation of these accepted UPR recommendations, by raising more awareness and acceptance, and starting conversations across Cambodia about who same-sex couples are, why they want to marry, and why treating all families equally with respect is at the heart of who we are as Cambodians.

## 3. Context - What is the status of legal marriage for same-sex couples in Cambodia today?

- The current text of Article 45 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia determines that marriage is between "one husband and one wife", which effectively excludes same-sex couples.<sup>2</sup> While there is no longer any explicit legal prohibition of same-sex marriage, there are no explicit provisions facilitating legal same-sex marriage in Cambodian 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.
- As a result, same-sex couples in Cambodia are denied the essential protections and security that only legal marriage can provide.
- As long as same-sex couples in Cambodia continue to be excluded from the ability to marry under the law, thousands of couples who are already building their life together and working hard to care for their families will be treated as strangers under the legal framework and unable to protect and care for each other when it matters most.

## 4. How will the campaign support progress towards obtaining legal marriage equality for LGBT+ couples?

- By accepting the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations to amend Article 45 of the Constitution to enable legal marriage equality for same-sex couples received during the third UPR in 2019, the government of Cambodia committed to implement these recommendations. The "ខ្ញុំទទួលយក - I Accept" campaign supports the progress of this commitment in the framework of the UPR, by working together with relevant stakeholders and the Royal Government of Cambodia to advance legal marriage equality.

<sup>2</sup> Encouragingly, the adoption of the 2007 Civil Code & 2011 Law on the Implementation of the Civil Code repealed a previous explicit prohibition on marriage of same-sex couples.



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- Civil society [called](#) on the Royal Government of Cambodia through the Cambodian Human Rights Committee and Ministry of Women's Affairs working together with other stakeholders to take concrete steps to advance marriage equality based on the UPR commitment. In particular, civil society recommended forming of a multi-stakeholder working group in charge of studying and reviewing the proposed legal amendment of Article 45 of the Cambodian Constitution to enable legal marriage equality for LGBTIQ couples.
- The " **ខ្ញុំទទួលយក - I Accept**" **campaign** raises the voices and stories of the Cambodian LGBT+ communities, their families, their parents, allies from all sectors, and the general public through the media and social media for more understanding, acceptance, and support of realizing legal marriage equality for LGBT+ couples in Cambodia.

### 5. Why is it important for LGBT+ couples in Cambodia to have the right to legal marriage equality and obtain a marriage certificate?

- In Cambodia, getting married is the key foundation of forming a family based on love, commitment, and following of traditions.
- Many same-sex couples in Cambodia already live together as a family in a committed loving relationship, and many of these couples also have children in their care.
- Just like everyone, Cambodian LGBT+ people and couples aspire to follow Cambodian culture as well as the footsteps of their parents and grandparents to marry the person they love, to form a family filled with great happiness.
- LGBT+ couples want to register a marriage certificate to see their love, marriage, and family being protected equally by the Cambodian Constitution and laws under the same roof of the Kingdom of Cambodia, in relation to adoption rights, legal protection for their children, joint-ownership of property, and social protection schemes. Only a marriage certificate can provide these essential legal protection and recognition of full legal equality.
- Enabling legal marriage equality provides a crucial opportunity to significantly reduce stigma and discrimination against the LGBT+ community. Enabling legal marriage equality improves well-being, and contributes to a more inclusive and harmonious Cambodian society which reflects Cambodian values as well as the vision of the Royal Government of Cambodia, and contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals.

### 6. What are the benefits of legal marriage equality for the Cambodian society?

- Enabling legal marriage equality helps to ensure that all Cambodian families have the tools they need to care for and protect each other – especially in hard times when it matters most.
- Extending legal marriage to same-sex couples contributes to reducing discriminations and ending exclusion of LGBT+ people, helping LGBT+ people to live more secured lives and be able to equally grow and contribute their capacities, skills, and talents as human capitals and resources for the development of the country.
- Enabling legal marriage equality also leads to positive contributions to social protections because LGBT+ individuals can access better jobs and therefore better support their parents and families.
- Enabling legal marriage equality helps LGBT+ couples to have access to the right to full adoption, which contributes to social protection between parents and children. This also contributes to



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ensuring the best interest of the child by providing all Cambodian children with a loving, protective family environment, which is also in line with the government's commitment to reduce the number of children in residential care institutions. When the children grow up in loving families with equal legal protections, they can also better develop their skills to strengthen the development of Cambodia in the future. The children adopted by same-sex couples can take care of their parents when they grow up in adulthood, also reducing the burden on the government.

- The Cambodian government has already expressed its commitment towards equality and non-discrimination towards LGBT+ persons, enabling legal marriage equality would be a strong step to put this commitment into action. By enacting marriage equality, Cambodia could demonstrate that it is a champion of LGBT+ non-discrimination regionally and internationally.
- By enacting legal marriage equality for same-sex couples, Cambodia would send a signal to the world that we are an open and inclusive place to live, work, visit and invest – boosting our global reputation and helping us to compete in the global marketplace.

### 7. How many countries around the world have already secured marriage equality for same-sex couples - and what has the impact been?

- As of December 2021, marriage equality for same-sex couples is already recognized in 29 United Nations Member States, as well as in Taiwan.<sup>3</sup> Legal proposals to allow marriage equality are also currently under consideration in other countries throughout Asia and the world.
- Global evidence shows that recognizing marriage equality has had a positive impact in strengthening families, reducing discrimination against LGBT+ people, and contribute to more inclusive and harmonious societies.<sup>4</sup> Every country that has secured marriage for same-sex couples offers substantial of evidence revealing that families are helped and no one is harmed when marriage discrimination ends.
- Global evidence from countries who have already recognized legal marriage equality also shows that marriage equality is good for business, and is key to attracting business investments, contributing to high productivity, fostering innovation, and contributing to sustainable economic development, all while boosting the tourism sector and the wedding industry.

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<sup>3</sup> 'The Freedom to Marry Internationally', Webpage, <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/pages/the-freedom-to-marry-internationally>

<sup>4</sup> See: Evan Wolfson, "After 20 Years of the Freedom to Marry for Same-Sex Couples, A Mountain of Evidence, Expertise, and Experience", European Human Rights Law Review. 2021 Issue 1. Available at: <http://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/ftm-assets/ftm/EHRLR - Wolfson - Issue 1 March 2021.pdf>