



History of the Women's Media Center

Established by a group of six women in 1993, the Women's Media Centre of Cambodia is a non-government and non-profit media organization. With the support of the UN and international donors, WMC was the first and remains the only media organization specialized in empowering women and disadvantaged groups in Cambodia.

WMC was started as a project of the Khmer Women's Voice Centre. During the UN-backed 1993 elections in Cambodia, a coalition of six women - Ms. Sarayeth Tiv, Ms. Khemra Som, Ms. Chan Davy Yim, Ms. Sundaneth Chea, H.E. Sochuo Mu, and Ms. Rasy Nuth - formed the Cambodian Women's Committee for Non-Violence and the Election during a meeting at Asia Foundation.

Their mission was to increase the participation of women in the democratic processes of voting and drafting the Cambodian constitution. In collaboration with the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) the group launched an advocacy and media campaign and produced radio programs about voting. They collaborated with the NGO "Media Ties" to train a group of women in video production skills to document the election from a non-partisan perspective.¹

The momentum continued during the drafting of the Constitution of Cambodia. Through workshops, they gathered ideas from rural women and presented them to the Constituent Assembly. One outcome of those workshops was the production of a seven-minute video. It was called 'The Rights of Women to Be Guaranteed' and was broadcast nationally while the Constitution was being drafted.

Some of the coalition members recognized the need to continue to promote the rights of women after the conclusion of the elections. They recognized the power of the media in promoting and protecting these rights as well as raising pressing development issues in the country. This core group of women went on to become the founders of the Women's Media Centre of Cambodia, and officially established it as a non-profit NGO in 1994. It was registered with the Council of Ministers in January 1995, and again with the Ministry of Interior in 2021 when the Law on NGOs and Association was adopted by the National Assembly of Cambodia.

The concept of women's rights as human rights is at the core of the WMC's work, and is reflected in its founding by-law, which recognizes that "the lack of women's representation in the media restrained the enjoyment by women of equal rights and fundamental freedoms".

¹ Narration from Ms. Khemara Som, 2021

WMC's mandate is grounded in commitments arising from the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women adopted in 1979, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a visionary agenda for the empowerment of women and girls.

In 29 years of its operations, hundreds of staff members and civil society experts have participated in supporting its vision and missions in promoting equality.

WMC has provided national awareness and information programs on a diverse range of issues affecting present day Cambodia, with a particular focus on the roles and rights of Cambodian women in society.

The Women's Media Centre is well known through its radio channel Women's Radio, FM103.5. It has produced thousands of products and has invested in innovative, demand-driven, evidence-based solutions and life-changing initiatives at the nationwide and local levels.

WMC has given voice and tried to unfold hidden and untold stories. Issues discussed include poverty, HIV and AIDS, human trafficking, violence against women, elections, rule of law, and good governance. WMC encourages an inclusive and optimistic media environment to all of its members and to the Cambodian community.

WMC Today

Today, WMC is one of the only remaining independent media organizations in Cambodia, due to our strong risk management processes, focus on women's issues and ability to strategically navigate political issues. Informed by 29 years of experience and robust local expertise, we continue to build on our strong track record of successfully executing programs that empower women.

WMC's programs are funded by local and international donors and some small income generation programs. Some of our recent and current funders include UNESCO, European Union, USAID, Article19, Australian Volunteer Program, EWMI, BMZ, GIZ, and Transparency International.

WMC can reach millions of people daily through radio and social media. Our radio coverage can reach up to 75% of the population from both urban and rural areas.

Rural communities, especially women and girls, may have limited access to electricity, smartphones, and internet, and do not always have access to digital media. In this context, radio continues to be an important source of daily news and information for a substantial part of Cambodia's population.

WMC is governed by a Board of Directors with the management team directing daily operations. The Board meets every fourth months. It sets policy, hires the Executive Director and reviews organizational performance. The management team meets bi-weekly.