

## PRESS RELEASE

### Children and youth advocate for child rights and climate actions on World Children's Day in Cambodia

**KRATIE, 17 November 2023** – Children, young people, authorities, celebrities, civil society organizations, and development partners from all sectors in Cambodia come together today to begin a three-day celebration of World Children's Day 2023, which is officially marked on 20 November. This year, UNICEF Cambodia will amplify the voices of children and young people as advocates for children's rights in the country.

"We are here in Kratie to celebrate the potential and promise of children and youth in Cambodia," said Dr. Will Parks, UNICEF Representative in Cambodia, at the launch of the World Children's Day event. "But today also reminds us of the profound challenges facing children who are affected by escalating conflicts and environmental disasters worldwide."

"While we can only mark this day with humility, I want to share a message of hope. This event has provided us with an opportunity to form new partnerships with youth networks, artists, and local authorities, who have all joined forces to raise awareness about child rights. Through the participation and inclusion of young people, we collectively benefit from their incredible potential as change-makers for social transformation."

A partnership with Bonn Phum on the Move, a popular cultural festival, has been established to engage children and young people in Kratie, a rural province in the northeastern part of the country. More than 200 volunteers were given the opportunity to co-organize and oversee the event, which will take place from 17 to 19 November around the Rokarkandal Pagoda, including leading activities on child rights.

"Bonn Phum on the Move has collaborated with UNICEF to celebrate World Children's Day," said Ms. Lomorpich Rithy, founder of Plerng Kob, the organization that manages the festival. "As part of the event, we have trained the young volunteers in order to equip them with knowledge and skills in business, teamwork, and self-awareness, which will support scholarship applications. In partnership with UNICEF, we are also conducting workshops on mental health, nutrition, and climate change for the volunteers who are organizing the event."

Young people will also lead tree planting initiatives, clean up plastic and waste, and participate in music competitions and art performances. On Sunday, 19 November, prominent Khmer artists including VannDa, Vanthan, Sophea Chamroeun, Kesorr and Sai will perform on stage facing the Mekong River.

"As a young volunteer, I am learning a lot, from organizing events to leading sessions on child rights or even how to take action to preserve our environment and reduce plastic use," said Phana, a 21-year-old student volunteering at the Phum UNICEF, where workshops and games will be provided for youth and children on 18 and 19 November.

"It is great to have the opportunity to decide and implement the activities we find useful and entertaining. Through games and arts, we can engage more of our friends to take action for child rights and the climate."

The Secretary of State for the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth Rehabilitation; the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Environment; the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries; the Deputy Governor of Kratie province; His Excellency the Ambassador of Kuwait; and officials from the French Embassy, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), as well as representatives from NGOs participated in the launch at the Kratie Hall Theatre.

“Over the past decade, Cambodia has demonstrated its commitment to advancing children's rights,” added Dr. Parks. “Challenges still exist in the country, and UNICEF is fully committed to addressing these issues, promoting child rights, and enhancing the well-being of the most vulnerable children.”

World Children’s Day is a global day of action for children, by children. World Children’s Day commemorates the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which took place on 20 November 1989, and which Cambodia ratified in 1992. UNICEF and partners are calling for a united world where no child is left behind, where their rights are protected, and where their voices shape a path for their future.

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