

PRESS RELEASE

ANTI-CORRUPTION DAY, 9 DECEMBER 2020

“RECOVER WITH INTEGRITY”

Phnom Penh, 09 December 2020

At a time when the world is grappling with the Covid-19 pandemic, corruption is considered to be a major obstacle in the fight against this global crisis. An effective and inclusive recovery from the Covid-19 shock can only be achieved through integrity and accountability. Today, Transparency International Cambodia (TI Cambodia) is honoured to celebrate the National and International Anti-Corruption Day in solidarity with the global anti-corruption movement under the theme “**Recover with Integrity**”.

In celebrating this significant occasion, TI Cambodia organised a panel discussion, featuring two important topics: Business integrity during the Covid-19 pandemic, and citizen and youth engagement in the fight against corruption during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Due to the devastating effects of the pandemic on both the national and global economies, coupled with the challenges brought about by corruption, many businesses are struggling to survive. The small and medium enterprises (SMEs), already disadvantaged by limited resources to cope and adjust to the crisis, are particularly vulnerable to and at risk of encountering different forms of corruption such as unfair competition, favouritism in procurement processes, and violation of legal obligations. This situation underscores the urgent need to promote business integrity as well as a fair and transparent business environment that ensures a level playing field for businesses of all sizes.

For young people, especially vulnerable groups, the Covid-19 crisis poses considerable risks to their education, employment, physical and mental health, nutrition and disposal income, according to a recent study, entitled Youth and Covid-19, conducted by the OECD. Inequalities, such as those caused by missed opportunities and the lack of opportunities, are one of the major issues for young Cambodians. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, over three million children and youths have been affected by school closures in Cambodia, according to UNICEF Cambodia. This has seriously affected the capacity development and participation of young people, especially those living in rural areas. Addressing these issues requires that the government implements inclusive and effective governance mechanisms—ones that place central importance on integrity and transparency. Toward the same end, it is equally important that youth participation in monitoring and advocating for a corruption-free society is actively encouraged by the authorities.

Because accountability and transparency are key principles of the United Nations Convention against Corruption and are fundamental to **recovering with integrity**, Transparency International Cambodia calls upon the Royal Government of Cambodia to maintain its efforts in fighting Covid-19 in an effective and inclusive manner, and at the same time continue to eradicate all forms of corruption to ensure a more just and equal society.

Mr Pech Pisey, Executive Director of Transparency International Cambodia said that: “The Covid-19 pandemic crisis has put Cambodia and other countries around the world at an even greater risk to corruption and rule of law violations. Some public officials and businesspeople have taken

advantages of the crisis for the interests of themselves or their group through various forms of corrupt practices. This is because as most people’s attention has been dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic, the gap in the implementation of governance mechanisms by the state and companies has also widened, while participation from the public and relevant stakeholders in monitoring such processes has also declined”. **Mr Pech Pisey** continued: “A more open disclosure of information about government activities and, at the same time, giving and encouraging relevant stakeholders especially general citizens and youth to participate in the decision making process as well as to monitor the effectiveness of law enforcements by public officials will assist the government to recover with integrity.”

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Transparency International is the civil society organisation leading the fight against corruption.