



**APLE**

# Annual Report

# 2016

*Your report matters...Don't ignore a child in danger!*

## ***Vision***

*A community with robust social and legal justice in which all children are safe from child sexual abuse and exploitation*

*To strengthen national social and legal mechanisms for the protection of children at risk of, or affected by, child sexual abuse or exploitation*

## ***Mission***

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# Message from the Chairman of the Board



On behalf of the Board of Directors of APLE Cambodia, I am delighted to introduce the Annual Report for 2016. This was an important and challenging year, as we introduced our new 5-year strategy to our partners and donors.

The 2016-2020 strategy focuses on ensuring that APLE activities result in sustainable improvements in child protection through partnership and capacity-building with Cambodian law-enforcement and judicial agencies. We also aim to base our activities on a strong evidence base; to this end we have strengthened our monitoring and evaluation team and hope to publish some new and transferable knowledge from our research analysis of the data.

One of the major challenges for all NGOs is achieving sustainable and recurrent funding to enable better forward planning;

this is difficult in a climate where donors often only pledge funding on an annual basis and may withdraw without warning at any time. All our APLE Cambodia staff have worked tirelessly in a year of considerable financial uncertainty and must be commended for their commitment to protecting Cambodian children, despite their own personal insecurity.

We are very grateful to all the generous donors who have supported us throughout 2016 and whose commitment and confidence will help us to attract new supporters in the years to come. We hope you will be impressed, reassured and inspired by this report of APLE Cambodia activities in 2016, and will continue to support us in the future.

Evelyn Dykes  
Acting Chair, Board of Directors, APLE Cambodia  
*January 2017*

## Dear colleagues, friends and donors:



As always, I'm the one who is very excited to make a proud announcement of our success every year, but in fact it's all our team members who worked so hard every single day to make it all happen. 2016 gave us another momentum to celebrate our accomplishments and the adoption of our 5 -year strategic plan 2016-2020 in a difficult time.

Last year we took a deliberate shift to restructure our programs by focusing on strategic partnership and capacity building activities to harness sustainable impact on the beneficiaries, communities, law enforcement and judicial agencies, aiming to strengthen national social and legal mechanisms for the protection of children affected by sexual abuse. The change brought some financial and operational challenges, but it brought positive results as well.

Firstly, the Criminal Justice Development (CJD) program that encompasses the best-known investigative work of APLE has now addressed the priority to train, mentor and engage in high-level technical discussions with the Cambodian police to build their capacities and passion. As a result of the mentorship activities, we noticed changes in the police officer's behaviour by responding to all cases of child sexual exploitation. Besides, victims and witnesses who came through the process felt more bearable and empowered to participate, thanks to the child-friendly approach. Although the case agent approach introduced by APLE was partially challenging to apply, police have now acted more proactively and responsibly. They began to use a wider range of techniques to investigate suspicion of abuse and conduct surveillance with minimal support from APLE case agents whose main role is to plan operational tasks with police, coordinate, and assist with building up a strong case to secure a successful conviction. We can be confident that the Cambodian police will soon adhere to most, if not all, of the international standards when investigating child abuse crimes.

Secondly, working alongside CJD, the Court Support (CS) program achieved and exceeded the traditional standards of crisis intervention by joining with the department of social affairs and NGO partners to develop and disseminate best-practices for supporting victims and their families from the moment of the rescue to the end of the legal proceeding. The CS team of lawyers, legal assistants and social workers counselled the victims, represented them in court, coordinated actions, and mobilised resources to improve the services for their clients. I am proud that, in 2016, we were able to continue our support for most of the previous victims while offering simultaneous assistance to new ones. The CS team has changed many desperate lives, making sure that the victims will have stable lives in their families after they exit the program.

Thirdly, while we helped police to prosecute crimes and took care of so many victims, our Community Engagement team fulfilled knowledge gaps by educating and empowering the community and duty bearers to prevent child sexual abuse. Hundreds of dedicated home-grown informants have been equipped through trainings and aspired to help us detect abuse and run the public hotlines successfully. Furthermore, the team engaged NGOs, communities and private companies in their “training of trainers” sessions to ensure that the knowledge passed through and stayed alive. The Internet hotline was launched and promoted through roundtable discussions, seeing the increase of interests and perspectives to address the legal loopholes and collaboration with private sector such as ISPs and mobile operators. Funding shortfall hampered us from doing more, but 2016 was the evolving motive for us to explore partners to fight online child sexual exploitation.

Unfortunately, we could not implement the Research and Advocacy Program, due to the financial constraint. We wanted to make use of our data to generate and publish evidence-based research that would help us and others to design solutions more effectively, but the activity was cancelled in 2016 because of the limited budget. However, we were able to find external resources that enabled us to lead some lobbying activities. For instance, we partnered with Child Redress Project and INHOPE to host roundtable meetings and workshops to discuss the phenomenon of online child sexual exploitation and civil compensation for victims, with the aim to attract legislative change.

This year signified a dire need to secure enough funding for 2017 and the coming years to escalate the mechanism against online child exploitation and the research work to run an evidence-based advocacy strategy, whilst the partnership with law enforcement and the services for victims will be emphasised.

I’d like to end with thanking our donors for generously funding all the programs and making the fight possible. Without your support, we could not have translated our dreams into such powerful actions and successes. It’s still sad to see many children in vulnerable and abusive situations, but more work is to be done and I hope we can continue to bring our efforts together again in 2017 and in the future.

Sincerely yours,



Seila Samleang  
Executive Director, APLE Cambodia  
*January 2017*



# Fast Facts

*Some highlights from APLE Cambodia's 2016*

**21**

victims rescued

**17**

suspects convicted

**261**

clients received social support

**82**

victims represented in court

**178**

clients received legal counseling

**809**

children & youth received training and awareness

**332**

law enforcement & government officials trained

**95**

cases reported to our new Internet Hotline



# The problem

Cambodia is a country with an established problem of child sexual exploitation and abuse with 5.6 per cent of boys and 4.4 percent of girls experiencing at least one incident of sexual abuse before the age of 18 (Cambodia VAC Survey, MoWA, 2013). Furthermore, studies of vulnerable populations such as street-connected children, reveal prevalence rates of sexual abuse of up to 38 per cent (I Want To Be Brave, Davis & Miles, 2014). Research of sexual exploitation of children in establishments revealed an 8.16 per cent prevalence of minors, with minors under 15 years representing 0.76 per cent (IJM, 2013).

A range of cultural and social factors combine to increase the vulnerability of children and youth to sexual exploitation, including poverty, neglect, low awareness of exploitation and low protective capacity within communities and government institutions. In addition, attitudes to sexual relationships, influenced by low

awareness of sexual development and healthy sexuality also contribute to increased vulnerability: due to grooming, many people may benefit from or trust the offender; as a result, they may not believe a child if he/she discloses abuse or may rely too heavily on support from the offender to file a complaint.

Additionally, although little is understood about specific online threats for children in Cambodia, global sources indicate that the increase on the availability of internet and mobile technology contribute heavily to sexual exploitation of children (ECPAT, 2016) and the availability of online child abuse materials (UNODC, 2006). Reports from local partners indicate an increase of perpetrators using the internet to contact victims and children accessing pornography being linked to abusive sexual behaviors (Sexually Harmful Behaviors: Understanding the Needs of Children and Families, FSC, Cambodia, 2016).

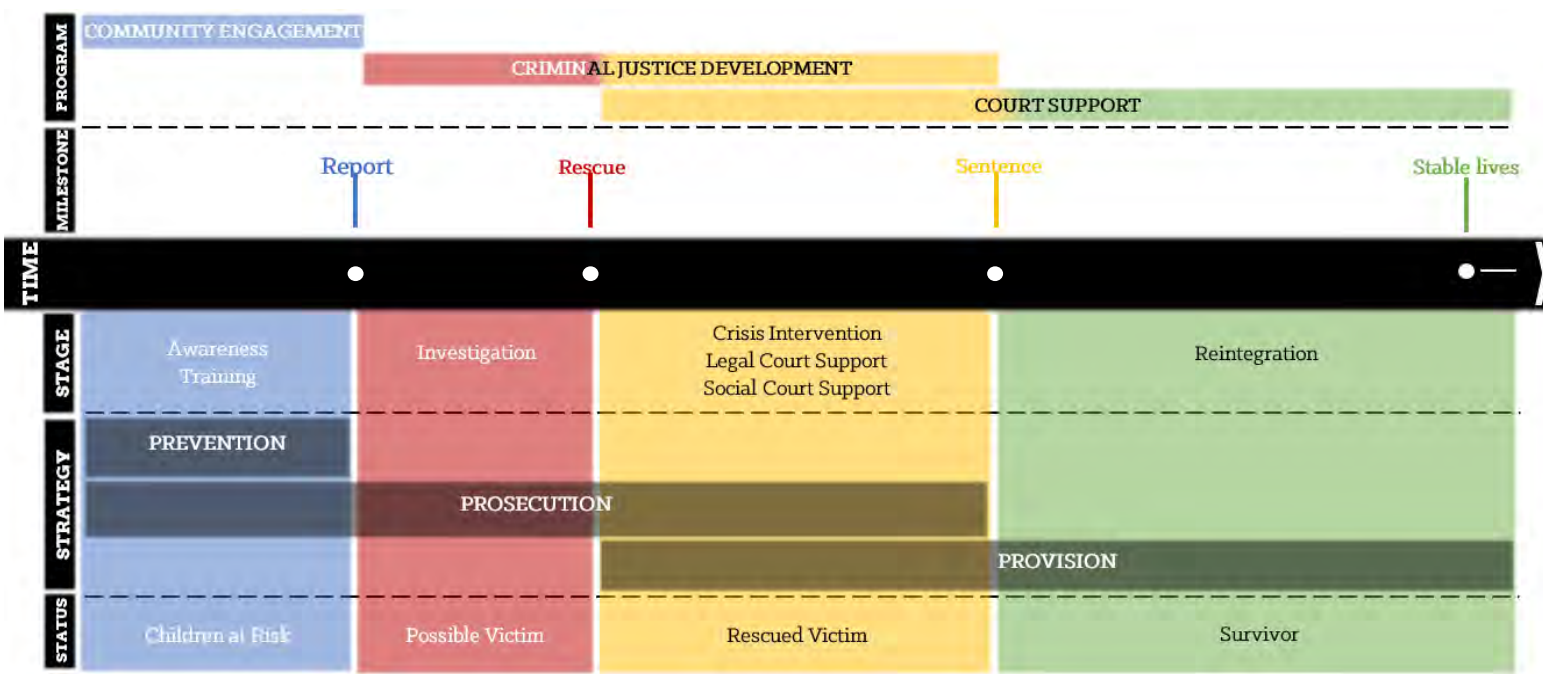
*Foreigner suspect grooming two girls*



# APPLE Contributes to the solution

## Our 'Continuity of Service' Holistic Model

APPLE Cambodia's programs are uniquely designed to improve the social and legal justice and child protection mechanisms, which are crucial to the successful long-term prevention of child sexual abuse and exploitation and in ensuring efficient and effective responses when such crimes do occur. APPLE Cambodia has developed particular experience and expertise in these areas over the last decade. Our programs interlink with each other and with those of partner NGOs and government stakeholders benefiting the children who have been victims of abuse or exploitation directly or indirectly and their families, as well as contributing to the long-term sustainable capacity-development in all areas of child protection.



### APPLE holistic approach: case study

Sambath <sup>1</sup> participated in various APPLE **trainings** to prevent online and offline child sexual exploitation and abuse. Due to his personal commitment towards the safety of Cambodian children, he was invited to be part of the organization's **informant network**. Every day, apart from his profession as an English teacher, Sambath would safeguard the children of his community by voluntarily keeping the

eyes open to suspicious interactions between adults and children. Towards the end of 2008, Sambath came across a U.S. citizen who was traveling in Cambodia who, after engaging in a number of friendly conversations, expressed interest in finding young girls to have sex with. Sambath immediately alerted the APPLE team by calling the 24/7 **phone hotline** to **report** the case.

<sup>1</sup> All mentioned names were changed for privacy reasons



Our team found out that the suspect was frequenting Svay Pak, also known as Kilometre 11, an infamous centre of child prostitution in the north side of Phnom Penh. During the **surveillance**, the case officers observed some interactions between the suspect and people known to be child prostitution solicitors and facilitators in the area. Sambath was right, so APLE's staff took an increased attention in the man and opened a case.

A **formal investigation** was carried out in cooperation with the Cambodian National Police leading to the **arrest** of the suspect and the **rescue** of one identified victim followed by five more; the youngest one being only nine-years old. The suspect denied any implication but the victims strongly confirmed being abused by him on multiple occasions through the facilitation of the above-mentioned solicitors.

After assessing the needs of the victims, they were referred to proper **services** and **alternative care** programs while the suspect was **charged** for purchasing child prostitution, an offence that can be punished with seven to fifteen years of imprisonment. Two traffickers were subsequently arrested for recruiting and facilitating the girls to perform sexual activities. The U.S.A.'s PROTECT Act 2003 allowed the U.S. authority to extradite the offender back to his home country where he was charged with the offences of "travel with intent to engage in illicit sexual conduct" and "engaging in illicit sexual conduct in foreign places" of the U.S. Federal Law on extraterritorial sexual exploitation of children. During the eight-year prosecution process, the six victims, five APLE staff, police officers and other individuals involved in the case testified before the U.S. court as witnesses. Finally, in 2016, the suspect was found guilty and was **sentenced** to a 70-year imprisonment in the U.S. Additionally, he was ordered to pay USD 40,000 **civil compensation** to his victims (who became "survivors").

Two of the **survivors** are currently building a



*The offender being surveilled by APLE*

new life in the U.S., one more is working as a counsellor in an NGO while the other three live happily with their families. The punishment given to the offender and the compensation received do not restore completely the harm suffered by the abuse but at least the survivors received justice.

**Big and sincere thanks to Sambath and all stakeholders committed in creating a safer environment for children in Cambodia, words could never describe how important your involvement is. Your report matters...Don't ignore a child in danger!**

# Community Engagement

Educating key community members on the topics of child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSAE) and engaging them in child protection are the main objective of APLE community engagement program.

Additionally, by building a committed informant network and running phone and Internet hotlines where the public can report abuse anonymously and confidentially, this program boosts informal social protection mechanisms to prevent and eradicate sexual abuse and exploitation of children.

## *Achievements*

This year, the Community Engagement program reached **1588[729F]** individuals through **43** awareness and training sessions and courses to **216[111F]** children, **593[297F]** youth, **181 [101]** NGO personnel, **332[144]** law enforcement and government officials, **92[13F]** volunteering informants and **174[63F]** other stakeholders. Besides, **31** new key individuals were engaged into the informant network now composed of **198** members.

*Training at a school*





In partnership with

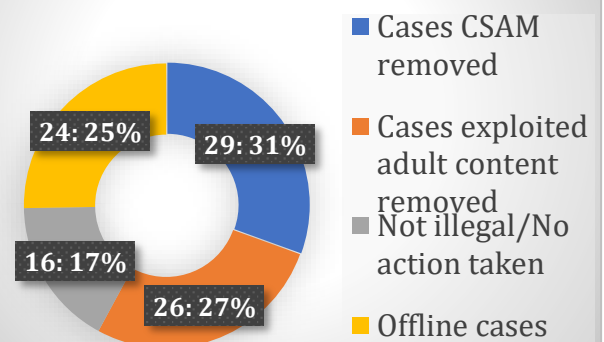


## Preventing and Tackling Online Abuse

APLE is pursuing new activities related to online child sexual exploitation, bringing a strong network, passion, and drive to learn more about it and how to combat it. In 2016, APLE strengthened the partnership with INHOPE Foundation, an active and collaborative network of 51 in 45 countries worldwide, dealing with illegal content online.

INHOPE supported APLE with the set up and launching of the **Internet Hotline Cambodia** service to receive notifications of, or suspicion of, online child sexual exploitation or related-illegal content on the Internet. Striving for the highest standards, INHOPE supported the capacity building of the hotline analyst as well. Currently the platform allows APLE's hotline analyst to receive online notifications from anyone accessing the Internet that has information of illegal content in relation to child pornography and other child sexual abuse material.

### Total cases reported in 2016 to the Internet Hotline: 95



The awareness and training sessions enrich the participants with knowledge on CSAE online and offline, how to stay safe, methodology to train others and reporting mechanisms (phone and internet hotlines)

# But, how does it happen?

## Grooming of children through social networks

Kunthea, is a 17-year old girl living in a small village close to one of Cambodia's big cities. Being the oldest of five siblings and hoping for a better future, she decided to engage temporarily as a worker in a small brick factory during the summer break of 2015 where she could earn US 1.5 a day. Her boss, a 35-year old man, treated her very well. He often offered gifts to her and gave her more

to kiss her while saying that he wanted to marry her. Kunthea pushed the man off and ran away.

Kunthea did not feel safe with that man anymore but after apologizing and promising that he would not do it again, two weeks later he took Kunthea to a guesthouse with the excuse of having new phone waiting for her inside but instead he raped her and took naked

photos of her. They kept seeing each other afterwards but the man was always jealous at Kunthea, blaming her and saying that she had a lot of boyfriends.

Finally, on July 22, 2016, Kunthea called the man to break up with him because she realized that he was cheating on her. A couple of hours later Kunthea's neighbor told her that there was an anonymous Facebook profile with indecent pictures of her. Almost immediately, a member of APLE's informant network was made aware of the issue and he referred the case to APLE's Internet Hotline.

With the help of the victim, APLE's hotline analyst found the

offending Facebook account which privacy settings were highly protective, accessed it and reported the illegal content to Facebook.

The removal of the profile and all offending materials took only three to four hours after being reported. The man was arrested by the Cambodian National Police and was being charged for distributing child pornography online and abusing a minor.



APLE's Hotline Analyst

cash than what she was supposed to earn. Kunthea wondered why he was so nice to her and she remembered one day in which her boss told her that he loved her as a daughter. When Kunthea went back to school in October 2015, her boss kept contacting her through Facebook and other social networks, always offering gifts and money. After five months, on a day-trip to the big city in which he bought clothes and shoes for Kunthea, the man tried



# Criminal Justice Development

Through training and discussion sessions, high-level technical meetings, long-term mentorship, assistance in investigations and other approaches to build capacities, the program targets national law enforcement agencies and other judicial protection mechanisms to increase adherence to national and international standards in cases of sexual abuse and exploitation of children and the use of child-friendly procedures throughout the whole criminal justice process.

## Achievements

In 2016, we conducted preliminary investigations into **98** cases and opened **43** new cases. Increasing collaborative efforts, we worked with Cambodian police on **54** cases and with foreign police on **22** cases. Due to the tireless work of APLE Cambodia and the police, **8** foreigners and **9** Cambodians were arrested and **21 [17F]** victims were rescued. Our existing internet and phone hotlines received **299** reports from which **156** required further action.

*APLE with the Cambodian police*



# YES! International Cooperation

## Abused in Cambodia, convicted at home

Mister G.'s behavior first attracted **APLE's** **investigators** attention when, back in 2013, the Swedish national was noticed having close interactions with five underage girls who used to beg tourists for money in the Riverside area of Phnom Penh. According to our records, Mister G. started to spend a great deal of time with them, inviting them for food and giving them money and [relatively] valuable items. They became closer and, due to the financial support Mister G. was providing to the girls, he gained influence on them. Then he sexually abused the girls before leaving the country.

However, thanks to the evidence gathered by APLE's team and our excellent collaboration with the Swedish authorities, Mister G. was **arrested in his home country** in 2015. In

February 2016, with the assistance of APLE, a Swedish delegation consisting of a state prosecutor, lawyers and judicial police officers, traveled to Cambodia to interview the five victimized girls to gather further evidence related to the case. Currently, the statements and evidence collected in Cambodia are being utilized to prosecute Mister G. in Sweden with the hope that the victims will receive justice.

This is a good practice of multi-agency cooperation in which civil society organizations, governments, and national and international law enforcement agencies work together to bring an offender, no matter where he hides, into legal accountability and provide legal justice for the victimized children.

*Mister G. buying toys for three girls*



*“APLE’s excellent cooperation with national and international law enforcement allowed for hundreds of perpetrators to be brought to justice until this day”*



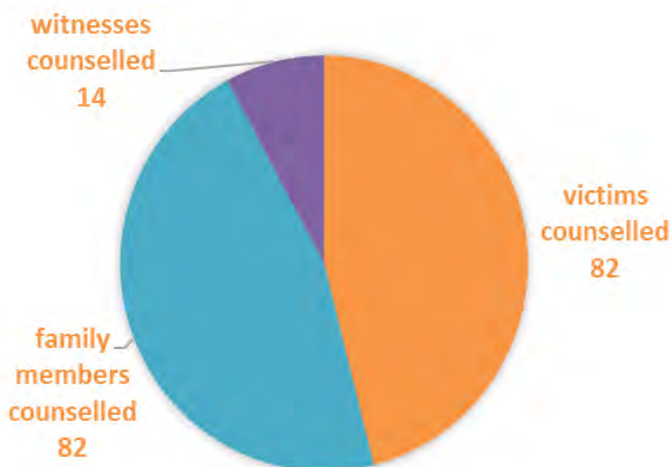
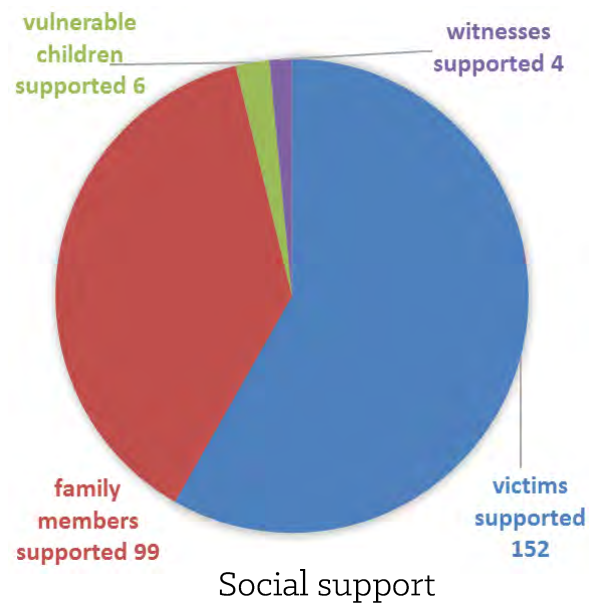
# Court Support

This program focuses on providing high-quality and timely legal and social support for victims of sexual abuse through developing and disseminating best practice guidelines for supporting victims and their families, doing case-by-case advocacy and building strategic partnerships with other organizations, thus enabling victims to pursue justice without further trauma. The program's activities include crisis intervention, provision of emotional support, legal advice and representation for victims and their families along with advocacy at all levels to establish child-friendly procedures during the entire judicial process.

## Achievements

### Social Team

**261[172F]** clients received social support, including **152[85F]** victims. **103** clients received welfare and/or rescue materials, and our social workers arranged medical care for **17** clients and medical examinations to **18**. We also referred **28** victims of CSAE to partner NGOs to ensure an integral service.



Legal counseling

### Legal Team

We provided legal counselling to **178** clients. The lawyers represented **82[48F]** victims in court, resulting in **9** Cambodians and **8** foreigners convicted. Moreover, 25 compensation orders were given and 5 of the convicted foreigners received a deportation order.



## Hoping to be a professional cook

Vutha and his sister grew up in a poor single-parent family in Phnom Penh. One day, Vutha's father decided to send his son to a charitable organization hoping for him to get a better education, food and safe accommodation. However, things did not go as they expected. Taking advantage of his authority and the vulnerable situation of the child, the director of the organization sexually abused eight-year-old Vutha multiple times. Psychologically disturbed and not being able to escape or denounce what had happened, Vutha turned into an aggressive, silent, inactive and over-worried child.

It wasn't until the end of 2014, ten years after Vutha's abuse took place, that a case was reported involving the director of the organization abusing other children. Immediately, APLE in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veteran and Youth Rehabilitation and the Cambodian National Police's Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Police Department, conducted a joint intervention to rescue all victimized children and those at risk of abuse from the organization and bring the director to justice.

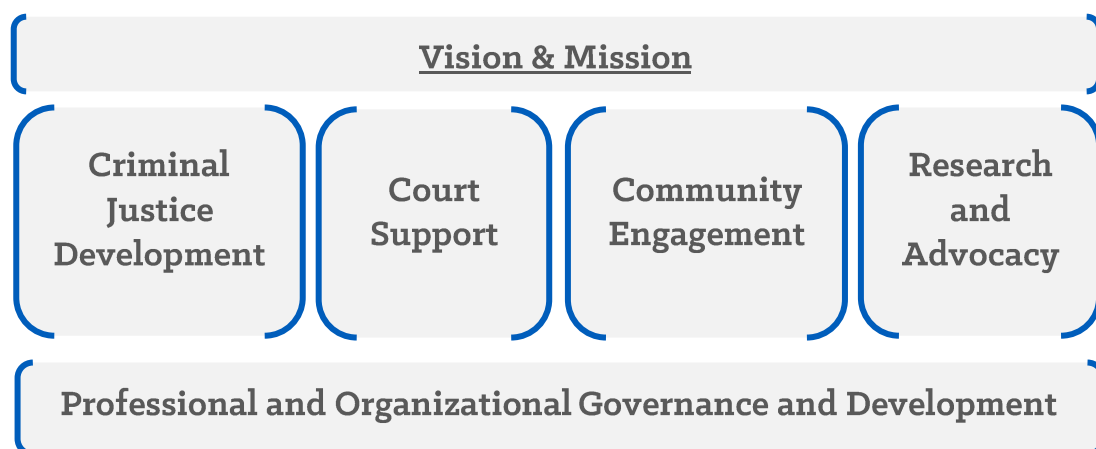
However, after the rescue Vutha remained very affected. He often wanted to drop out of school

and even attempted to commit suicide due to the depression and the trauma he had to deal with. At this stage, APLE together with two other trusted partners (Pour un Sourire d'Enfant and First-Step Cambodia) led Vutha through a holistic healing process by providing him with emotional support and a vocational training course to be a cook. In addition, Vutha received on-going support and assistance during his participation in the legal proceeding against the director of the charity who abused him. In February 2016, Vutha's offender was found guilty and sentenced to three-year imprisonment and a fine of eight million Riels plus an order to pay five million Riels compensation to six of the eleven victims he abused.

Today Vutha is more active and sociable and he is ready to graduate as a professional cook. Moreover, he has participated in a few formal events speaking on behalf of other victimized and at-risk children of sexual abuse. In a local consultation held by APLE and ECPAT International Vutha said that "without the support from APLE, I might not have gone through all the difficulties and hardships". And then he added, **"never ignore the problem, bring it to light."**



# Strategic Plan 2016–2020



APLE's new strategic plan that highlights sustainability and best practices, thus prioritizing methods that aim at long-lasting impacts. Through this process, some previous activities were stopped due to the lack of contribution to sustainable solutions. Emphasis is placed on social and legal justice as well as protection mechanisms, all of which APLE views as crucial to preventing child sexual abuse and exploitation while ensuring efficient and effective responses.

## Case Agent Approach

APLE's case agent approach was designed to increase the capacity of child protection services in Cambodia, as long-term “policing” of CSAE by donor-funded NGOs is not sustainable. Previously, two APLE investigators for each case were assigned to conduct investigations into suspected cases of CSAE; now with the case agent approach one APLE agent is designated to liaise with the police, assist and advise on investigation.

The focus has therefore changed from APLE initiating the evidence gathering process towards having police take lead in their cases, following a joint case management plan; thus, minimizing human and financial resources needed from APLE and enhancing knowledge and ownership of the police.





## Mekong Tourism Forum

On 6 July 2016, APLE's Executive Director [speaking], was invited to the Mekong Tourism Forum 2016 to speak about the key role that the tourism industry plays in protecting vulnerable children from abuse and exploitation. Acknowledging the valuable opportunity of participating in this forum, Mr. Samleang also gave a snapshot of the child sex tourism situation in Cambodia, new trends for abuse and exploitation of children and what is necessary to manage the risks of the increasing tourist flows.

# Highlights

## Tackling Online CSAE

In September 2016, APLE organized an expert roundtable meeting on **“Tackling Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse towards a safer Internet Environment”** in collaboration with the INHOPE Foundation. The aim of the roundtable discussion was to establish a better understanding of online CSEA and to identify key operational strategies and suitable reporting processes. Participants came from government ministries, national and international law enforcement agencies, judiciary, embassies, private sector and non-governmental organizations. The meeting ended with the launching of the Internet Hotline Cambodia, an online platform that allows the public to report any suspicion of online CSEA and/or indecent content posted online.





# Online child safety

## and the importance of ISPs' participation to child protection

APLE staff with ISP representatives



## ***Engaging ISPs***

To provide an overview of the roles and responsibility of the private sector, such as internet service providers (ISPs), in making the digital world safer for children, APLE co-hosted an expert roundtable discussion on **“Online Child Safety and The Importance of ISPs’ Participation to Child Protection”** together with the International Child Redress Project in December 2016. Best practices from other countries were shared to identify potential solutions and all participants from the private sector, expressed their willingness to collaborate to help disseminate awareness on online safety to their customers.



*In  
collaboration  
with the  
International  
Child Redress  
Project*



## ***Remedies for Victims***

Also in December, an interactive workshop on **“Meaningful Remedies for Child Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse”** was facilitated by APLE in collaboration with the ICRP and Terre des Hommes Netherlands. The objective was to first create an understanding of the role of child victims in the Cambodian Justice System and then to work on possible solutions to bring justice. The 55 participants included a representative from Microsoft and from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, lawyers from the Netherlands and the U.S., law enforcement agencies, relevant ministries and survivors who contributed to the discussion.



# The good moments...

## ***APLE General Assembly and Annual Retreat 2016***

APLE held its General Assembly and Annual Retreat last November in Siem Reap, attended by all APLE staff and two members of our Board of Directors. The focus was on sharing and discussing APLE's achievements and challenges. In addition, two staff trainings with experts took place and our outstanding staff were recognized with the "Staff Recognition Award" to honor their hard work and great performance.



## Staff

APLE is a locally managed NGO and equal opportunity employer. At present, **APLE has 36[13F] staff** who work tirelessly to protect children across Cambodia. The team is a mix of long-term staff and new hires who work together to bring APLE's strong support to beneficiaries and generate new ideas for innovative approaches.

Currently APLE is hoping to host 2 interns in 2017 to conduct research and collaborate on the fundraising strategy.





## Income

APLE Cambodia's work is made possible by donations from international NGOs, government institutions, and individuals.

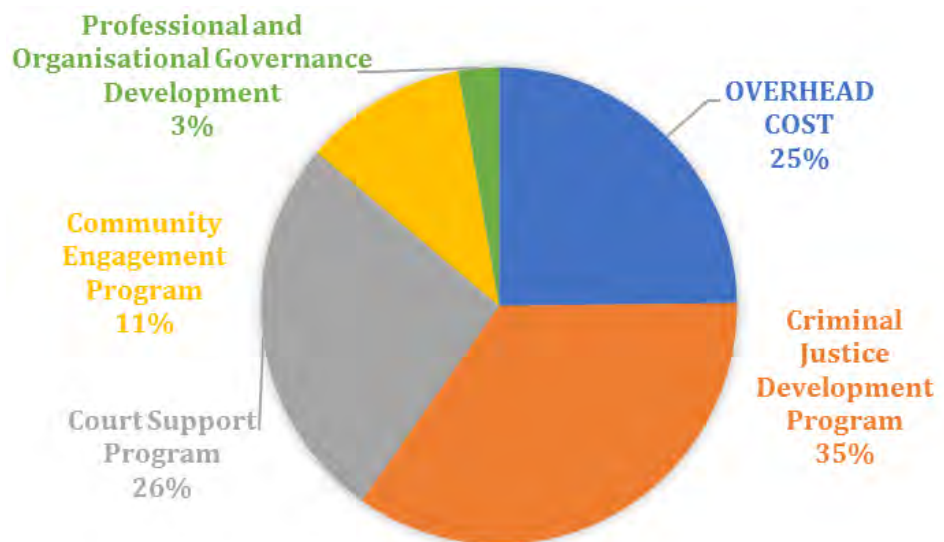
Our total income for 2016 was:

**\$ 461 327**

## Expenditure

Our total expenditure was:

**\$ 449 511**



**Your support matters... together  
build up a community with zero  
tolerance for CSAE!**



We are grateful to all our wonderful donors, including the organizations below, who continue to enable us to keep protecting children



**For more information, please visit:** [www.aplecambodia.org](http://www.aplecambodia.org)

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