

Fortifying Emergency Support Crucial for Phnom Penh Hospital

Interest Story

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PHNOM PENH, Cambodia – A man in 20s was injured from a road accident while driving on a busy street in Cambodia's Capitol City of Phnom Penh. He was immediately sent to Khmer Soviet Friendship Hospital located nearby. Upon arrival, Chieu Chin-Banoul, hospital's chief administrator rushed to evaluate seriousness and hurriedly took him to the emergency unit.

Cambodia's biggest hospital takes care of thousands of in-patients and out-patients including emergency cases on a daily basis. However, dealing with mass patients particularly during disasters is still a major challenge Mr. Banoul and many health professionals would like to strengthen their capacity.

“ Although we have not experienced many disasters like tsunami, volcanoes, etc., it doesn't mean we do not have to prepare for anything. Training is part of capacity building that we do not have sufficient resources. But it can help us work more effectively, ”

said Mr. Chieu Chin Banoul, Khmer Soviet Friendship Hospital Chief Administrator.

Thanks to HOPE —Hospital Preparedness for Emergency—program, hospital staff could learn how to systematically respond to emergencies involving large numbers of casualties. With focus on health care personnel, the five-day training program aims to build capacities essential for effective rapid response to emergencies involving large numbers of casualties, for example, earthquakes, floods, droughts, cyclones and disease outbreaks. Such emergencies could overwhelm emergency response at hospitals and communities without effective systems put in place.

HOPE is part of the objectives implemented under the Program for Enhancement of Emergency Response (PEER), a regional program initiated in 1998 with the support from the United States Agency for International Development Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA). PEER aims to boost local and regional disaster preparedness and build the response capacities of vulnerable countries within Asia region including Cambodia.



Chieu Chin-Banoul (Right), chief administrator of Khmer Soviet Friendship Hospital, is taking care of an injured patient. As Cambodia's largest hospital, the hospital takes care of hundreds of emergency cases on a daily basis.

Photo by: Apiradee Treerutkuarkul

Expect the unexpected

Dr. Prom Phanit, the hospital's vice chief of technical office, still reminisced the tragedy during the annual Water Festival in 2010. A total of 353 deaths and over 750 injuries were reported. Crammed with millions of revelers, the newly-built bridge across Bassac River in Phnom Penh fell down. Prime Minister Hun Sen even called the stampede as the biggest tragic incident since the Khmer rouge when more than 1.7 million Cambodians died.

Upon completion of the training last year, Dr. Phanit and his team including Mr. Banoul came up with an idea to set up an ad-hoc committee comprising up to 30 staff from hospital director as team leader, head of each department, to representative administration, finance and logistic units. The committee will be in charge of rapid response and management when emergency incident occurs.

The hospital's emergency team could well manage emergency victims based on the triage skills and more learned from the HOPE training program.

Since increasing number of emergency cases sent to hospitals involve road accidents, Dr. Phanit overseeing the hospital's emergency committee said he planned to extend the committee to include other health staff like nurses and medical students as volunteers. He is also on the process of seeking donors who can support the hospital to set guidelines for responding to health emergencies. The guideline could in time be a tool for other provincial hospitals as part of the emergency preparedness.



Dr. Prom Phanit, Vice Chief of Technical Office at Khmer Soviet Friendship Hospital, believes disaster preparedness will enable the hospital to well manage emergency patients.

Photo by: Apiradee Treerutkuarkul

“ Not only paramedic team, but all involving staff should be involved in a bid to effectively prepare for disasters, we have learned a lesson that health emergencies may happen. That's why we have to be more prepared for the unexpected. ”

Dr. Prom Phanit, Vice Chief of Technical Office at Khmer Soviet Friendship Hospital said.