

18th of January, 2024

Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson
Stockholm, Sweden

Dear Prime Minister,

We, the undersigned civil society groups, communities, unions, activists, youth networks and media organisations, operating in Cambodia are seriously concerned with the Swedish government's decision to phase out funding to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) for human rights, democracy and rule of law programs in Cambodia by the end of 2024.

Your government's decision, released in late December 2023, will have an immediate and devastating impact on civil society organisations and other non-governmental entities that have stringent labour and other legal obligations to their staff members and the Cambodians they serve. More worryingly, this will result in the stopping of critical human rights programs, and medical and social services, all of which have been developed through decades of Swedish assistance.

The decision to phase out funding to SIDA Cambodia will affect over 30 organisations and multilateral institutions that rely directly or indirectly on this support and will be detrimental to tens of thousands of Cambodians who look to Sweden as a reliable partner in the promotion of human rights, democracy, gender equality, youth empowerment and rule of law.

This partnership has resulted in long-term support and abilities for rural communities fighting against land grabs, reducing endemic corruption, keeping a free press alive, adherence to decent labour conditions and strengthening gender equality issues at all levels.

Following the Swedish government's announcement in 2020 to close the embassy in Phnom Penh, the recent decision to end SIDA's presence will only further hamper Sweden's ability to monitor the human rights situation in Cambodia, affecting its newly stated aid objectives of freedom, empowerment and sustainable growth.

This new decision will cause tremendous harm to vulnerable Cambodians, including grassroots communities and youths, who work closely with civil society groups. The impacts will be immediate:

1. Human rights and anti-corruption organisations, multilateral institutions and youth networks and labour unions will have to scale back or terminate monitoring of human rights violations in the country, a critical task in the absence of credible and trustworthy law enforcement agencies and judiciary in Cambodia. This will further narrow the human rights landscape, hamper the rule of law, and increase corruption and impunity, directly affecting Sweden's objective of increasing synergy between development cooperation and trade.
2. As inequality and indebtedness soar in Cambodia, human rights organisations have increasingly had to provide legal and humanitarian assistance for Cambodians who are

on the brink of financial crisis and often resort to risky and harmful migration to earn an income. The new cuts in funding to SIDA will deal a blow to poverty alleviation efforts and worsen the human rights abuses faced by people in Cambodia.

3. Sweden's decision to phase out SIDA funding for Cambodia will also leave a vacuum in the country that will be filled by geopolitical players like China and Russia whose interests may not align with those of Sweden, impacting Sweden's efforts to strengthen Cambodia's economic growth. Sweden is keenly aware of the need for an increasingly interconnected world to support those standing up for democracy before it is too late.

We are very aware of the disastrous impacts of the war on Ukraine and express solidarity with humanitarian efforts to support the Ukrainian people. We are also aware of other conflicts and humanitarian crises across the world and the urgent action needed to help all affected people.

We encourage you to stand with Cambodian civil society, communities, unions and youth networks in these trying times and ensure that the consequences of assisting the Ukrainian people and others affected by brutal conflicts do not come at the cost of the Cambodian people.

Sweden's support for human rights and democracy has been a consistent feature of development in Cambodia for decades, especially following the recent global trend opposed to democratic values.

Dear Prime Minister, as the head of the Swedish government and supporter of international cooperation among democrats, we call on you to reconsider the decision to suspend SIDA's funding for Cambodian civil society organisations at the end of 2024 or give us a realistic and longer timeframe to replace Swedish funding to reduce serious consequences and harm to the Cambodians we serve.

Thank you for your consideration.

A total of 100 civil society organisations, grassroots communities, activist groups, and youth networks working in Cambodia have endorsed this letter to Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson.

1. 197 Land Community (Koh Kong province)
2. Akpiwat Thmey community (Phnom Penh)
3. AmLeang Community (Kampong Speu province)
4. Andong Ta Eang Community (Phnom Penh)
5. Andong Trabek Land Community (Svay Rieng province)
6. Banteay Srei (BS)
7. Boeung Chhouk Meanchey Thmey II Community (Phnom Penh)
8. Boeung Pram Community (Battambang province)
9. Building Community Voice (BCV)
10. Cambodia Indigenous Peoples Organisation (CIPO)
11. Cambodia's Independent Civil Servants Association (CICA)
12. Cambodian Alliance of Trade Unions (CATU)
13. Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM)
14. Cambodian Food and Service Workers' Federation (CFSWF)
15. Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)

16. Cambodian Independent Teachers' Association (CITA)
17. Cambodian Journalists Alliance Association (CamboJA)
18. Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)
19. Cambodian Tourism Workers Union Federation (CTWUF)
20. Cambodian Youth Network (CYN)
21. Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL)
22. Chamrouen community (Phnom Penh)
23. Charay Indigenous Community in Peng village (Ratanakiri province)
24. Chi Kha Kraom Land Community (Koh Kong province)
25. Chmar Aeot Community (Phnom Penh)
26. Community to Protect Nature (Pursat province)
27. Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC)
28. Dak Por Community (Kampong Speu province)
29. Diakonia (Cambodia)
30. Equitable Cambodia (EC)
31. Future Forum Cambodia
32. Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC)
33. Independent Trade Union Federation (INTUFE)
34. Kachok Indigenous Community (Ratanakiri province)
35. Kam Village Indigenous Land community (Ratanakiri province)
36. Kao Pi Community (Phnom Penh)
37. Kbal Kla Forestry Community (Kampong Thom province)
38. Kbal Ou Thnornng Forestry Community (Kampong Thom province)
39. Klahan
40. Kouy Indigenous Community (Kampong Thom province)
41. Kouy Indigenous Community (Preah Vihear province)
42. Kres Village Indigenous Land community (Ratanakiri province)
43. Labour Right Supported Union Khmer Employee of Nagaworld (L.R.S.U)
44. Lor Peang community (Kampong Chhnang province)
45. Mean Chey Land Community (Svay Rieng province)
46. Mother Nature Cambodia Movement (MNC)
47. Nay Village Indigenous Land community (Ratanakiri province)
48. Ou Bat Moan Land Community (Oddar Meanchey province)
49. Pailin Land Community (Pailin province)
50. Phnom Krom Community (Siem Reap province)
51. Phnom Tnaut community (Kampot province)
52. Phum 23 Community (Phnom Penh)
53. Phum Sela Khmer Land Community (Banteay Meanchey province)
54. Phlov Roth Phleung community (Phnom Penh)
55. Ponlok Khmer (PKH)
56. Pongro Senchey community (Phnom Penh)
57. Pongrok Cheyleak community (Kampot province)
58. Por Indigenous Community in Phnum Rai Village (Battambang province)
59. Prek Takong 3 community (Phnom Penh)
60. Prey Chher Pech Changvar Laor Chhert Community (Kampong Chhnang province)
61. Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN)
62. Prey Peay community (Kampot province)
63. Ratanak Rokha Forestry Community (Oddar Meanchey province)
64. Raksmeay Samaki Community (Phnom Penh)

65. Reaksmei Sameakki Community (Kampong Speu province)
66. Roluos Cheung Ek community (Phnom Penh)
67. Roveang Mine Community (Preah Vihear province)
68. Ruom Chet Te Muoy (Phnom Penh)
69. Russey Srah community (Phnom Penh)
70. Samaki Chek Meas Community (Svay Rieng province)
71. Samaki Romeas Haek Community (Svay Rieng province)
72. Samaki Rung Roeung Community (Phnom Penh)
73. Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT)
74. Samrong Thbong Community (Phnom Penh)
75. Sangke Pi Meanrith Land Community (Preah Vihear province)
76. Satrei Klaing Sang community (Phnom Penh)
77. Smor San community (Phnom Penh)
78. Sen Reak Reay community (Phnom Penh)
79. Srae Prang Land Community (Tboung Khmum province)
80. Sre Ampel Water Fall Tourism Forestry Community (Kampong Chhnang province)
81. Strey Khlahan community (Phnom Penh)
82. Stueng Khsach Sa Forestry Resource community (Kampong Chhnang province)
83. Stueng Meanchey Land Community
84. Stung Kambot Community (Phnom Penh)
85. Sugarcane Land Community (Preah Vihear province)
86. Ta Ni Land Community (Siem Reap province)
87. Talao Village Indigenous Land community (Ratanakiri province)
88. The Cambodian NGO Committee on CEDAW (NGO-CEDAW)
89. The Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL)
90. The NGO Forum on Cambodia (NGOF)
91. Thnaot Chhum Land Community (Pursat province)
92. Tlan 100 community (Kampot province)
93. Tonlung Community (Tboung Khmum province)
94. Transparency International Cambodia (TIC)
95. Trapeang Chan Forestry Community (Kampong Chhnang province)
96. Trapeang Chour Community (Kampong Speu province)
97. Tubnup Ta Thlang Community (Phnom Penh)
98. Veal Sbov Community (Phnom Penh)
99. Veal Entry community (Kampot province)
100. Youth Resources Development Program (YRDP)