



# GENDER AFFIRMATIVE HORMONE USE AMONG TRANSGENERS IN CAMBODIA

## PURPOSE:

This factsheet is developed based on evidence from RHAC's study: Understanding Hormone Therapy Usage Among Transgender Individuals in Cambodia: A Multi-Site Study. The purpose of the factsheet is for the policy makers, program leaders, and health care providers to use the evidence for further improvement of policy and clinical practices to meet the need of transgender individuals in Cambodia.

## GENDER AFFIRMATIVE HORMONE THERAPY (GAHT):

Individuals who want to use gender affirmative hormone need to consult with health care professional who have been trained on GAHT. The persons need to undergo psychological assessment and appropriate medical tests before using GAHT. GAHT helps to improve confidence and mental wellbeing of transgender persons, but could also cause a range of health issues if not follow an appropriate standard practice.

## POPULATION SIZE

Various groups have tried to estimate the population size of transgender people, and the figure varied. UNAIDS Key Population Atlas[i] estimated 15700 transgender people in Cambodia. NCHADS, the Cambodian National Center for HIV/AIDS Dermatology and STD, reported in 2023 the number of Transgender Female is 15660.

## HORMONE USAGE AMONG TRANSGENERS:

26.3% of transgender females used hormone for gender affirmation via oral or topical hormones, while 0.4% had used injection hormone[ii].

61% of transgender females (TGF) used hormone therapy[iii], while transgender males (TGM) did not. TGM seem to face more social pressure which affect their decision to use GAHT. Furthermore, TGM reported significant discomfort from binding practices.

## SUMMARY QUANTITATIVE STUDY FINDINGS [iv]:

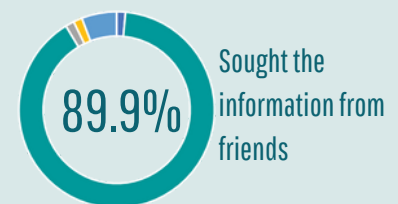
### Unsafe Practices Reported:

- 34% of quantitative respondents started using hormone before age 18.
- 89.9% of those who used hormone sought advices from transgender friends or those who have experience using hormone before start using.
- None of those who used hormone consulted with a health care professional
- No obtained prescription for hormone use.
- Irregular use of hormone, depending on own judgment or advice from friends or affordability.
- More than 60% of those who have used hormone have used for more than five years.
- 86% of those who used hormone have never received blood tests or other health assessments to monitor their health.
- 97% of the users purchased hormone from pharmacies, transgender friends who sell hormone online or in-person, and shops selling Chinese traditional medicines.

### Hormone Used Experience Among Transgender Female (n938)



### Person who consulted before using hormone



### Age of starting hormone usage



### Injection to Enhance Body

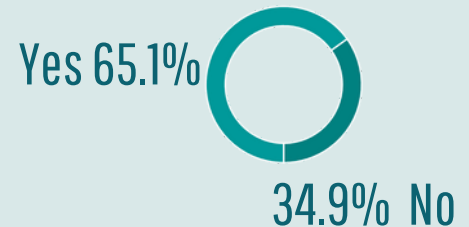


### Ever Heard about side effects and danger of using hormone

Only 58.1%

\*but 34% of them realized by own experiences

### Mental health Issues



## EVIDENCE FROM QUALITATIVE STUDY[v]:

### Reasons for Not Seeking Medical Care:

- Many respondents doubt the doctors' knowledge about Gender Affirmative Hormone Therapy.
- Financial constraint refrains the respondents from seeking services from a health care professional.
- Concerns about discrimination or negative repercussions from health care providers when asked questions about GAHT.
- Are not sure about the availability of GAHT in public and private healthcare facilities.
- Most respondents think that GAHT or other gender-affirmative services are provided at aesthetic clinics.

- The respondents tend to believe those who have experience using hormones when seeking advice or services.

### Unsafe Practice Reported:

- Some respondents reported unsafe injecting of Agarwood oil into their faces, though this practice has reportedly decreased.
- 56.8 % of the quantitative respondents used injection. The injected products include vitamins, filler, female hormones, collagen, silicon, K-Cort, etc.
- Only 36% of those who use injections get the injection by a doctor, 9% relied on self-injection, 23% by friends, and 34% by others (mainly Pet Phoum, followed by aesthetic centers, and pharmacies).

### Support sources/barriers

- Limit awareness on the availability of GAHT services, and psychological counseling/therapy
- Financial constraints of TG individuals in access to GAHT services
- Limit accurate information sharing among TG networks

### Unsafe Practices

- Taking medicines reversely (No prescription)
- Taking overdose hormones
- Belief: side effects will go away gradually if the intake is irregular or reduced, or they kept taking hormone(s)
- Practicing agarwood oil injection on different parts of the body
- Use of nonprescription injections to obtain body image

“

I am Islamic. Same-sex love is against our religion. Some people they translated that: the kind of person should not be communicated with. But some people said that rule in religion is created by human, so now the world changes. Life should be realized in the present time. So, some people they understand it. I am happy that I can cross barriers of my own self, family and especially my religion.

”

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Comprehensive Policies:** Formulate inclusive healthcare policies and guidelines for GAHT with participation from transgender community.
- **Health Care Provider Training:** Implement training and educational programs for health care providers and transgender individuals to encourage safe practices and informed choices.
- **Address Barriers:** Identify and tackle financial and cultural barriers to care, addressing the unique healthcare needs of the transgender community.
- **Promote Gender Assessment and Research Activities Feedback loops:** on the specific needs of TG individuals and find the possibility of adapting the programs.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDY:

RHAC conducted a study: Understanding Hormone Therapy Usage Among Transgender Individuals in Cambodia in mid 2024. The study was conducted in Phnom Penh, Battambang, and Siem Reap, using qualitative (47 respondents) and quantitative (75 respondents) methods. The respondents are transgenders who have used hormone or are interested in using hormone. Among the 75 quantitative respondents: 67 have used hormone and 8 are interested in using hormone. In qualitative study: all use hormone, except 6 respondents. The study is approved by the National Ethics Committee for Health Research, the Ministry of Health on 6 August 2024.

[i] UNAID Atlas on Key Population, Access Online on 2 December 2024.

[ii] National Center for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STD Report: Integrated Biological and Behavioral Survey and Population Size Estimation among Men Who Have Sex with Men and Transgender Women in Cambodia, 2023

[iii] Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia (RHAC): Rapid Assessment and Baseline Survey on Transgender Health, 2014.

[iv] Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia (RHAC): Understanding Hormone Therapy Usage Among Transgender Individuals in Cambodia: A Multi-Site Study

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