

'Breaking the Silence' Takes Courage: Actress Men Kimseng May 3, 2010

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Actress Chhon Sina, whose real life story is a part of a theater drama aimed at getting people to talk about their trauma under the Khmer Rouge, says even she at first was hesitant to share her experiences.

But such sharing can help relieve suffering, she told "VOA Khmer" on Thursday, and she hopes other survivors will stop keeping their experiences hidden.

Chhon Sina is part of a drama called "Breaking the Silence," a series of skits that have been performed live in villages around the country and most recently broadcast on VOA Khmer.

"Breaking the Silence" encourages survivors and perpetrators to discuss their respective trauma, especially in villages where atrocities may have occurred and both live side by side as neighbors.

Chhon Sina's father was killed after seeking treatment at a Khmer Rouge hospital. A nurse gave him an injection of medicine to stop him from groaning, which killed him.

"At first, I didn't want to talk about my story at all because the death of my father really hurt me," Chhon Sina said Thursday. "Only later did I feel that I should be brave to describe my story, so that I could be relieved and able to encourage other people to be brave and speak out as well."

She may be brave enough to speak about her father's murder, she said, but she's not so sure she would be able to confront his killer.

"If I saw the nurse who killed my father, I wouldn't know what to do," she said. "I would have to run away from her."

And she still has a hard time explaining her trauma to her nieces and nephews and making them believe such things happened, she said.

“As an actress, I hope that through my play I am able to encourage the victims to be brave to speak out, such as I did,” she said. “I believe that through this performance, people will have the courage to speak out.”