

## Local Governance for Child Rights - Seth Koma 2011-2015 Programme

UNICEF shares the vision of the Royal
Government of Cambodia to bring social
services closer to its people by decentralising
administrative decision-making and encouraging
citizen engagement and social accountability.
Since 2003, UNICEF has worked closely
with the National Committee for Sub-National
Democratic Development (NCDD) to strengthen
commune capacity to identify the most vulnerable
women and children and deliver social services
and support with equity. This has been done
under the Local Governance for Child Rights
programme (LGCR) – also known as Seth Koma
which means "child rights" in Khmer.

Over the years, this collaboration has shifted from directly supporting communes to deliver social services to strengthening the capacity of commune administrators to provide such services autonomously. Commune representatives have demonstrated increased commitment

to consult citizens in planning, budgeting and targeting delivery of essential social services and support to vulnerable households. The impact of this collaboration is most visible in the 101 UNICEF-supported communes where thousands of women and children have benefitted from improved access to civic registration, safe water, latrines, health facilities and preschools.

This publication presents the work, outcomes and lessons learnt from 2011 to 2015, and offers a set of agreed actions and a Theory of Change (ToC) for moving the collaboration forward.

UNICEF and NCDD recognise with appreciation the generous contributions from UNICEF Australia, UNICEF Japan, UNICEF Korea, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and DFAT Australia which enabled he achievement of some truly important results for women and children between 2011 and 2015.

Did you know? We have designed this publication to be extra reader friendly by using the sans
serif font at size 12. We have also avoided the use of italics, aligned the text to the left and used
high contracts colors. For the visually impaired we have equipped each photo with a caption
explaining what it depicts. Enjoy.

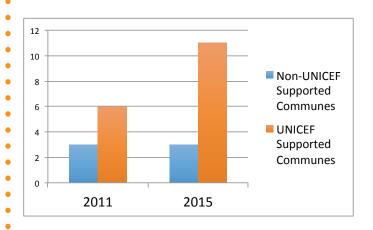
## UNICEF and NCDD Impact in Target Communes 2011-2015

### TOTAL NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES



179 400 women and children have benefited from one or more targeted commune organised social interventions

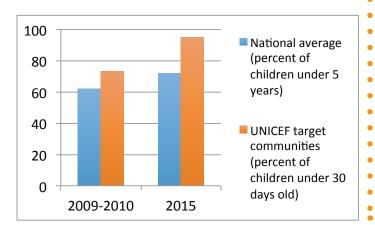
## INCREASE IN COMMUNE INVESTMENT AND SOCIAL SERVICE DELIVERY



### **INCREASE IN BIRTH REGISTRATION**

In 2015, 95% of children under 30 days old were registered at birth in target communes

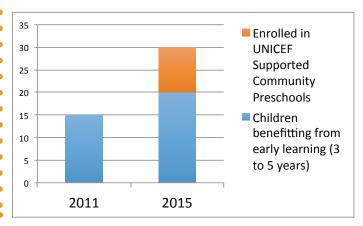




#### **INCREASE IN EARLY LEARNING**



109,122 children (51% girls) attended UNICEF supported Community Preschools



## Improving Equity in Social Service Delivery and Support

Prior to 2011, it was observed that village leaders, local commune council members and commune committee for women and children (CCWC) members were not equipped with tools to guide commune investment planning and social service delivery to respond to the needs of most vulnerable households.

In consultation with local community members, including youth and people living with disabilities, commune administrators mapped out the resources and services available in their villages, such as schools, health centres and sanitation facilities.

As a consequence, commune councils had limited insight into the social needs of their communities and commune investment plans tended to only focus on infrastructure.

UNICEF supported the National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development Secretariat (NCDDS) to introduce a social service mapping (SSM) initiative to visualise household needs and improve targeted social service delivery with equity, including for families living with disabilities.

### \_ . . .

- Beyond numbers
- Between 2011 and 2015, UNICEF
- and NCDD trained more than 10,000
- village leaders, commune council
- and commune committees for women
- and children members. They now
- demonstrate strengthened capacity
- to facilitate citizen engagement and
- promote more inclusive and equitable
- social service delivery and support to
- vulnerable women and children.

Subnational administrators also identified the villages' most vulnerable households on the map, using a list of 17 indicators including children living with disabilities, access to WASH facilities and school enrolment. They then developed their annual commune investment programs (CIPs) with reference to the SSM, enabling targeted and inclusive delivery of services and support to disadvantaged households. In each of the 101 target communes, UNICEF leveraged this improved commune capacity with an additional allocation of 3000 USD earmarked for social investments, enabling:

- Support of 39,000 women to attend antenatal and postnatal check-ups, and 10,000 pregnant women to safely deliver their child in a health facility. This support typically involved communes covering transportation costs to and from health facilities;
- An increase in commune investment in social services and support from 3 per cent in 2011 to 11 per cent in 2015. In non-target communes not receiving additional earmarked funds, the corresponding figures went from 3 per cent in 2011 to 6 per cent in 2015;

- The improvement of hygiene and sanitation facilities and access to safe drinking water in more than 41,000 vulnerable households.

  Communes also contributed to improve hygiene and sanitation facilities in 609 schools and 80 health centres;
- A significant increase in birth registration rates and children aged 3-5 years enrolled in preschool.



Prenatal checkup at health centre, Kampong Cham, © UNICEF Cambodia/2015/Pirozzi

Through evaluations and assessments of the capacity development support provided to sub-national administrators and councillors, UNICEF and NCDDS have learnt that there is continued need to simplify and streamline training initiatives and technical guidance to enable even greater autonomous sub-national investment in social services with equity. This must go hand in hand with activities to articulate and effectively communicate the mandate, roles and responsibilities of commune councils and CCWCs to the public.

Another important lesson to keep in mind is that commune investment funds are fairly limited and that commune investments in social needs on average represent less than a dollar per year per vulnerable beneficiary. With recent demand for commune investment funds to absorb a significant increase in administrative costs, including recruitment of additional commune clerks, it is necessary to adjust expectations to the role sub-national administrators can realistically play in the delivery of social services and support.

Rather than working with sub-national administrators exclusively as service providers, it may be more strategic to also work with them as influential facilitators of civic engagement and behaviour change. It may also be more efficient to strengthen their capacity to link up with local partners that are better positioned and better resourced to take specific action. UNICEF has, for example, successfully introduced partnerships in selected target communes through the provision of grants to 15 civil society organisations to provide disability-inclusive and specific support services.

## Moving forward UNICEF and NCDD will collaborate to:

- Articulate and communicate a realistic and practical vision to sub-national administrators on the national decentralisation reform, which encourages citizen engagement and increases sub-national investment and accountability in the equitable delivery of social services and support;
- Update commune budgeting guidelines to promote and enable increased expenditure on targeted social service delivery in line with government priorities;

- Simplify content and delivery
  mechanisms for capacity development support to
  be more accessible and useful for sub-national
  administrators to plan, implement and deliver
  social services and support in line with existing
  resources and locally available opportunities;
- Develop and implement communication and parenting education initiatives that effectively engage both male and female caregivers and

- community members to adopt and practice behaviours that support safe and healthy development of all children;
- Establish guidance and cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms for consultative committees for women and children at commune, district and provincial level, to systematically report on the implementation of the National Early Childhood Care and Development Action Plan.



A family is preparing food at their traditional home in the village of Ko Daek Kampong Cham province, © UNICEF Cambodia/2015/Pirozzi

### **Increasing Birth Registration**



In 2010, only 62 per cent of children under the age of five had been registered at birth. This meant that one in three children were without legal identity, placing them at increased risk of social exclusion, injustice and trafficking.

As children transition to adulthood, not having a birth certificate bars them from accessing social services, acquiring a valid Khmer identity, passport, and the entitlement to vote as citizens in electoral processes.

From a governance perspective, low birth registration and identification rates limits the information decision-makers need to respond to the needs of society through more effective, efficient and directed policies and budgets at national and local levels.

UNICEF and the General Department of Administration (GDA) of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) identified limited involvement of village leaders and absence of communication between village and civil registrars based in the commune administration, as key to these low registration rates.

This was translated into the design and successful implementation of the Village Record Book (VRB) initiative, which gives village leaders a formal tool to follow up on birth registration at household level and promote and support registration to be completed at commune level.

The VRB initiative triggered a considerable increase in birth registration in the 101 UNICEF target communes, from 62 per cent in 2010 to 95 per cent in 2015. This increase was significantly higher than the national average, which reached 73 per cent by 2015. Key to the successful implementation of the initiative was the engagement and training of village leaders in addition to the training of commune authorities.

The Cambodian paper-based civil registration system provided significant challenges to UNICEF and GDA as it does not enable national harmonised registration. When, in 2014, Cambodia established the General Department of Identification (GDI) with a mandate to establish a national system for civil registration and identification, UNICEF supported GDI to develop a 10-year National Strategic Plan for Identification (NSPI).

The plan was approved by the Government in 2015 and sets out to establish a law for civil registration identification, a national population registry and a digitalised system for registration.

Until an effective and efficient national system

for civil registration is established in Cambodia, it will remain necessary to train civil registration authorities to use the current system. Despite the introduction of the VRB, a majority of surveyed commune chiefs cannot properly perform the administrative calculations required to effectively manage the registration of all children.

Birth registration is free within the first 30 days of a child's life, yet there is currently no significant investment in strengthening sub-national authorities' communication skills for them to engage with communities and promote social

### Moving forward UNICEF and NCDD will continue collaboration to:

the birth registration process.

services and how they can be obtained. This

represents a missed opportunity and in many

instances results in caregivers disengaging with

 Support capacity strengthening of village leaders and commune chiefs to maintain a high quality of recording, reporting and monitoring of birth registration;



Father holds up child's birth certificate, Kampong Cham, © UNICEF Cambodia/2015/Pirozzi

- Identify systemic bottlenecks and barriers to birth registration and innovate to address these – in particular through the use of information and communications technology;
- Advocate and identify funding for implementation of NSPI, starting with the development of a national law and the establishment of a digitalised registration system and population registry.

## Increasing Access to Early Childhood Education



Evidence from around the world shows there is a positive correlation between young children participating in early learning activities and their cognitive and emotional development. In the long term, this improves their overall potential to contribute fully to their nation's socio-economic development. Consequentially, it has been shown that nations that invest in early childhood education benefit from as much as a sevenfold economic return on their investment.

In 2011, only one in seven children between the ages of three and five had access some form of

early learning in UNICEF target communes. With reference to Cambodia's commitment to increase access to early learning (dated 2003), and the mandate of communes to invest in social service delivery, UNICEF together with MOI trained commune administrators to establish and run community preschools. An emphasis was placed on administrative catchment areas without state preschools. Support was also provided to commune focal points for women and children to enable them to engage with caregivers and to encourage them to enrol their children in preschool.



Children singing at CPS, Ratanakiri, © UNICEF Cambodia/2015/Fox

Between 2011 and 2015, the 101 target communes used their resulting skills and additional funding earmarked for social services to establish and manage 1,073 community preschools using commune investment funds.

This enabled a significant increase in access to early learning: from 15 to 30 per cent of all children aged 3 to 5 between 2011 and 2015.

2011-2015: 109,122 children between aged 3-5 attend CPS in target communes Girls Boys 2011-2015: 11,556 children aged 6 supported to transfer to primary school Girls Boys

In 2015, community pre-schools accounted for 34 per cent of access to early childhood education

for children aged three to five in Cambodia. In target communes, 84 per cent of children were attending a UNICEF supported community preschool, and nationwide, UNICEF supported 46 per cent of community preschools.

The contribution of community preschools towards the increase of early learning has proven itself to be significant; it is essential to ensure the financial sustainability of this model.

Looking ahead, the model could be enhanced by using CPS as an entry point to other services that promote the safe and healthy development of young children, such as effective parenting.

Equally important, improving the quality assurance of the CPS model to learning outcomes for children must be prioritised and jointly addressed by both the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS).

A 2015 evaluation of the CPS found that whilst the model is very relevant to Cambodia's early learning goals, many CPS facilities are in poor condition, learning materials are often underutilised and most preschool teachers operate in isolation without regular supervision from subnational education authorities. In many instances, this results in a combination of poor quality education, exclusion of children with disabilities and poor staff retention.

#### Moving forward UNICEF and NCDD will collaborate with Mol and MoEYS to:

- Articulate and update technical guidance and capacity development support to communes to ensure that community preschools are established and managed with reference to a joint management and quality assurance plan agreed between the commune and sub-national education authorities;
- Establish partnerships with civil society organisations to pilot CPS models that are universally accessible, that facilitate early learning in multilingual settings, and that serve as entry points for parenting education and other Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) related services.



A boy in his wheelchair surrounded by friends at school, Kampong Cham © UNICEF Cambodia/2015/Pirozzi

# Harnessing Local Knowledge to Strengthen Community Resilience



40 per cent of Cambodia's 15 million people live just above the poverty line and the country is highly exposed to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters.

With limited financial and technical resources available at community level to respond to these, it is essential to adapt support; from the provision of external contributions to building capacities of communities to identify local, effective solutions to build and strengthen their resilience.

From this perspective, UNICEF and NCDD will collaborate to facilitate the co-creation of local solutions to address climate change and natural disasters, by working youth and women caregivers who have the knowledge and skills to disseminate such solutions. This marks a shift away from activities undertaken between 2011 and 2015 that aimed to help sub-national authorities develop emergency preparedness plans, that to a large extent were not implemented due to a lack of resources.



Community meeting held by village chief, Kratie, © UNICEF Cambodia/2016

### **Human Interest Story - August 2016**

## Capacitating Communes to Support the Most Vulnerable Children

## Kong Seak Aeng, Commune Chief of Sour Kang Commune, Kampong Cham Province

It is only 8 o'clock in the morning but Kong Seak Aeng's office is already buzzing. She sits behind her desk, talking vividly to a woman who has come to see her, her child sitting on her lap.

Kong Seak Aeng has been commune chief of Sour Kang commune since 2012, and oversees 11 villages in total. Prior to that, she worked as a commune counselor and commune focal point for women and children for 10 years. Aeng runs her commune with energy and passion- and always has an ear out to listen to her community's needs.

## Strengthening capacity to identify the most vulnerable households

UNICEF has been supporting Sour Kang
Commune since 2011, providing funds for the
implementation social services, as well
as technical training to deliver social services

and support for the most vulnerable women and children. The support has been provided in close collaboration with the National Democratic Committee for Sub-national Development (NCDD).

Prior to this strategic capacity development support, communes had no tools to identify the most vulnerable households and would therefore often spend their money and time on the most visible families rather than the ones who needed the most support.

## Improving Targeted Delivery of Social Services and Support

In the past 5 years, the funds and technical training UNICEF has provided to Sour Kang commune have gone towards civic registration, health, access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities, and to community preschools.

"Every year in July, the commune counselors and I sit down and draw up a commune investment plan (CIP), laying out the priorities we wish to work towards for the next year", says Aeng. "We just wrapped up this year's CIP."

In order to strengthen the commune investment plan's strategy, UNICEF introduced the social service mapping (SSM) tool to identify the most vulnerable households in the villages.

A map of the village is drawn, and the households and points of interests are indicated, using indicators such as unregistered children, households with no latrines and ID Poor beneficiaries as indicators.



Kong Seak Aeng, Sour Kang Commune Chief, © UNICEF Cambodia/2016/ Richard

"By bringing together village chiefs and other representatives to sit down and map out the villages, we noticed some families were particularly vulnerable and needed more support. The information we get from the SSM is very useful in the development of the commune investment plan. We must update it every six months, which can cause me headaches!", laughs Aeng.

For the commune chief, bringing the communities together to identify and discuss the villages' most important social issues has also enabled her to become closer to the families.

She has a reputation for being a strong mediator and steps in when she feels she can make a difference, particularly for women facing gender-based violence in their home. "Once, I took a woman out of her own house and had her sleep in mine for a few nights until her husband calmed down."

Determined to care for her community, it is no surprise she is always greeted with enthusiasm by the villagers.

## Improving targeted delivery of social services and support

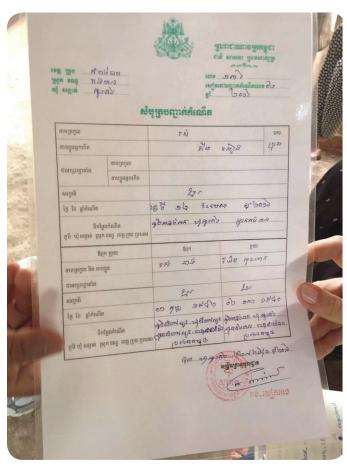
In the past five years, the funds and technical training UNICEF has provided to Sour Kang commune have gone towards civic registration, health, access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH) facilities, and to community preschools.

"If a child is not registered in the first 30 days of his/her life, families have to pay a 10,000 Riel fine, which represents a real burden for the poorest of them", explains Aeng. Thanks to this information, Chum Sokeoum, 24 years old, registered her fourth child immediately after his birth, at no cost. As a result of the commune's action, 18 out of 24 children born in 2014, and all 18 children born in 2015, were registered. This is an important increase from the commune's 62% registration rate in 2011.

The commune also supports the poorest families to pay the fine to make sure they register each family member. Chum Sokeoum's first three children are still not registered, but she hopes to do it this year with the commune's support.

Aeng continues: "the biggest challenge lies in trying to register adults who claim they have lost their birth certificates.

It is always a hassle to get hold of them as these documents are archived at district level."



Example of a birth certificate, Kampong Cham, © UNICEF Cambodia/2016/Richard

Aeng has also decided to support pregnant women to deliver their babies in health centres. "We provide women in need with approximately \$15-25 each to pay for transportation to and from the health centres, as well for food at the centre." For Chum Sokeoum, who had to be transferred to the provincial hospital after complications, this enabled her and her baby to stay safe.

The lack of WASH facilities is also a central issue. The commune has been allocating funds to install latrines in households that do not have any. In total, 19 latrines installed in 2014, and 32 were installed in 2015.

"We' also organise Hand Washing Day every year", says Aeng. "It doesn't only promote behavioral change, it also bring parents and children together around a fun activities that also gets parents involved in their children's school."

Early learning is also one of the cornerstones of the commune's social service investments. Thanks to the funds and technical expertise provided by UNICEF, the commune opened a 3rd community preschool in 2011, which runs three classes with 25 children each. "I had been advocating to open a new community preschool since 2005, but the commune lacked the technical skills required for the establishment and running of a school, and for the recruitment of teachers", explains Aeng.



Community pre-school in Kang Meas District, Kampong Cham Province © UNICEF Cambodia/2015/Pirozzi

Her aim in the coming year is to start a new class in the existing school and to open another community preschool. "I would also like to see attendance rates rise: about half of the children still work in the fields or stay at home with their parents during school hours."

Social service delivery in Sour Kang commune has visibly improved in the past five years: not only has it increased, but it now targets the poorest families, creating life-changing impact for the ones who need it most.

Thinking ahead, Sour Kang commune needs increase its resilience. This requires engaging more with local community members and building on lessons learnt, so as to be able to adequately respond to natural disasters like floods and drought.

## Moving forward - strengthening community resilience

Aeng's commune floods regularly; therefore, she makes sure villagers learn how to evacuate. Because of the lack of earmarked funding for community resilience, last year she asked the villagers to contribute to build a dam to avoid the disastrous effects of floods altogether. "It only required a small contribution from each family, and it will keep the entire village safe", explains Aeng.

There is no doubt that with Aeng running it, Sour Kang commune will continue to see its social service delivery and its resilience improve.

"I am so thankful for UNICEF and NCDD's support- I can now say that we are improving families' lives significantly on a daily basis."

Moving forward, the work of the Community Development programme is addressing the following Sustainable Development Goals:













## **UNICEF Theory of Change for Community Development 2016-2018**



Kiri is a four-year-old girl living with a disability. She lives together with her mother, father and three siblings at her grandparents' house in a remote community prone to frequent floods and droughts. Despite facing these challenges and her family being poor, Kiri is included, healthy and developing to her full potential in a safe community

Her caregivers love, support and protect her

Her birth has been registered and she has access to safe drinking water Her community supports her and family members to visit health facilities when needed She goes to preschool and learns with other children through play and sports

**RESULTS** 

OUTCOMES

**OUTPUTS** 

1

Infants and children zero to five years old and pregnant women access and use child survival, care and development services and practices (including in emergencies)

Child rights and equity are promoted in national and sub-national policies, budgets, civic engagement mechanisms and social protection systems



Administrative capacity to coordinate, implement and monitor actions that promote early childhood care and development

Caregiver capacity to practice early childhood care and development Administrative capacity to develop and monitor child- centered investment plans and budgets

Capacity of administrations, civil society organisations and caregivers to support children with disabilities to realise their rights

Capacity development support

Parenting education

Planning and budgeting guidelines Capacity development support

NSPI & National ECCD Action Plan

Communication with caregivers

Social accountability

Grants to CSOs

**ACTIVITIES** 

### For more information, contact:

### UNICEF Chief of Community Development: tjensen@unicef.org

### NCDD Deputy Director of Programme Management and Support Division: cbunnara@ncdd.gov.kh

#### Get connected:



facebook.com/unicefcambodia



twitter.com/unicefcambodia



youtube.com/unicefcambodia



@unicefcambodia



#### **UNICEF CAMBODIA**

Tel: +855 23 426 214 Fax: +855 23 426 284

Email: phnompenh@unicef.org Website: www.unicef.org.kh



#### **NCDDS**

Ministry of Interior's Compound (Building T), Norodom Boulevard Sangkat Tonle Basak Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Tel: +855 23 720 038 / 720 061 Email: info@ncdd.gov.kh

Website: www.ncdd.gov.kh