



## Bridging authorities and civil society

*Due to the geographical isolation of many indigenous communities inside Mondulakiri province, this posed many challenges to their communities to connect outside of their own villages. One example of this is a case of one of the Bunong indigenous communities called Leng Neh. This village experienced the lack of communication, difficult access to public services such as health care and schooling, and there was no market place to sell their vegetables, chickens, and any other agricultural products. That was a result of their community being cut off by a stream that separates their village from the outside. Because of this, the villagers decided to work collectively with the local authorities, village elders, and ICC-iBCDE Mondulakiri (identity Based Community Development and Education) to build a wooden bridge in order to connect their village with the outside world.*

Before the bridge was built, when people were sick or needed to use public services, they needed to ford the stream in order to get to the other side, or to use other methods to cross the stream during the rainy season when the stream became large. ICC-iBCDE project staff also had to cross the stream in order to meet and work with the community people in that village. Moreover, this village has been overlooked by many NGOs since the village is not really accessible from the outside. As a result of this complication and to overcome these challenges, everyone inside the community decided to work together in order to construct a bridge. The construction started in 2015 and was completed in 2017 using the available resources inside their own community, and also using funds that were collected from the community people, local authority, and from ICC-iBCDE as well.

With the bridge fully completed, the community people can now go to hospital, and they can sell their agricultural products in other villages more easily. Moreover, community children can travel to school much faster and safer, because unlike before they do not have to ford the stream to school anymore. Other public services have also become more accessible to the community people, and this also makes it possible for some NGOs to work on development projects at their village. Most importantly, this bridge construction has brought together all of the people who are involved in this project to achieve collective benefit for the community. This is aligned with the Win-Win policy (a policy that brings peace to Cambodia after the end of civil war) and the National Strategic Development Plan of the government of Cambodia for social integration, unity, and socio-economic development in which each Cambodian person deserves equal opportunity and access to public services and a reasonable livelihood.

ICC-iBCDE project has been helping this community with informal education such as creating their own writing system, while also teaching them agricultural and other skills that are essential for them. Furthermore, ICC-iBCDE team also facilitates them in addressing their needs and concerns, as well as providing them with information from outside that cannot be accessed within their community.