

# Empowering Communities, Empowered Nation (ICC Slogan)



*“Everything they (ICC-FAST project) do is good for people, the village and commune”, said one of the commune chiefs in Svay Rieng province. Before ICC-FAST project (Family and School Transformation) came to this province, community people rarely performed any livelihood activities at home, such as home gardening, raising livestock, and growing rice by using modern agriculture techniques. Furthermore, people had poor sanitation practices. There was also less cooperation among the community people in generating in-village capital. Most of the families in the community were facing food shortages from one to three months, and mainly depended on migration jobs. Moreover, children were facing mal-nutrition, and high rates of both non-enrolment and school dropout.*

The above description is from an external evaluation report, conducted in December 2018 of the ICC-FAST project. The FAST project has been operating in Svay Rieng province since 2012 targeting communities related to improving family wellbeing through poverty alleviation, community empowerment and citizen education.

Self Help Groups have been established, and members and model-farmers now have enough food for family consumption and for sale. Most of those target community people are growing vegetables, raising livestock, and growing rice with better agriculture techniques. School teachers and principals are noticing parents’ ability to support their children to go to school, as students have access to transportation, and they have enough school uniforms and study materials. Target community people are also becoming more aware of social issues, e.g. through training and exchange visits to other role-model villages. At the same time, the FAST project has strengthened the role

of local authorities and provincial departments through networking and coaching, in order for them to pro-actively address the needs of communities. The FAST project is also empowering target communities to take ownership of their community development initiatives. This will enable those communities to stand on their own, and for civil groups to become long-term sustainable.

FAST project is closely aligned with the Cambodian National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP), which highlights the importance of and strategies for poverty alleviation at family level. Furthermore, the FAST project is promoting the Cambodian National Youth Development Policy by mobilising and empowering youth, via grouping them together in Youth Clubs. In those clubs youth are learning valuable life skills and are getting actively involved in community tasks. FAST project has also established good collaboration with the relevant authorities in order to reduce school dropout rates and to promote quality education, as well as combating child sexual and labour exploitation. By working directly with communities and authorities, FAST project is contributing to an empowered Cambodian nation, as the ICC slogan says.

Until now, FAST project has contributed significantly to its expected results and impact. There is still one more year left of the current project phase, which will be used to ensure long-term sustainability of the achieved results. The external evaluation report confirms that ICC-FAST project is relevant and is responding to the needs of communities in Svay Rieng province. The project will continue to work with local communities and authorities for the next project phase in order to intervene related to other needs, as well as to social and development issues in Svay Rieng province.