



## Empowering target-group

*"My major concern is that my parents will force me to stop my education, because they cannot pay my school-fees". This is a quote from one youth, who fears that instead of allowing her to study her parents will force her to work to support the family. ICC hears similar concerns expressed by many other youth, who worry about what the future will look like for them.*

For many Cambodian youth, their entire school-fees are paid by their parents, even up to university level. This is partially due to culture and tradition. But for those youth who have poor parents with not sufficient income to pay for their children's education, they are often forced to stop their education and give up their dreams.

ICC's FAST (Family And School Transformation) project is addressing this problem by working directly with youth and creating youth clubs in Svay Rieng province. Youth who are members of these youth clubs learn in democratic ways how to organise themselves and take responsibility for their lives. Through sport, dialogue and social gathering they are developing a healthy lifestyle based on core life-values and strong self-esteem.

Most of the established youth clubs have decided to start their own savings/credit program. FAST is assisting them in setting up the program, and are coaching the youth on useful purposes for taking a loan in the program. Those youth who have the ability to continue their studies at high-school and university start to save their money in the youth clubs, so that they have additional money for school-fees and study-materials. With good education, youth have much better opportunities in finding proper jobs. Those youth who do not wish or do not have the ability to study at high-school and university, instead use the saving/credit program to prepare for their future e.g. as farmers. Some youth are taking out a loan to start fishponds; others are taking out loans to start small businesses.

The FAST team assists and trains the youth to have a vision for their lives, and to work intentionally to reach their goals, so that it will be possible for them to have a better life than their parents, and to be able to support and care for their families. Also FAST team teaches the youth other topics, such as safe migration, human rights, self-management, planning, etc. - all useful topics for youth who are in a challenging phase of their life, entering adulthood.

The impact of the youth clubs is seen and acknowledged by the community. The positively changed mindset, behaviour and habits of the youth make them become role-models for other youth, juniors and children -and even also for adults. Furthermore, some of the youth clubs have engaged themselves in community development tasks, which are recognised highly by the villagers and local authorities. ICC believes that by including and empowering youth, a stronger foundation is made for reaching lasting changes and improvements for the Cambodian people - both now and in the future.