

ICC Slogan: Empowering Communities, Empowered Nation



"Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenges of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance." - Kofi Annan (former United Nations Secretary General). ICC FAST (Family and School Transformation) project in Svay Rieng province is currently working to empower local communities to tackle prejudice and gender discrimination inside the family and in the community. This work is rooted in ICC's belief, that male and female by creation are equal and have the same value and rights. ICC believes that, when both male and female are involved and contributing, a greater impact can be achieved, because of their different input.

Since 2015, FAST project has been mainstreaming gender equality throughout the project implementation. As a result, gender equality in FAST target communities has improved for the better. Local authorities are becoming more aware of gender issues, legislation and legal rights, including rights for protection of women and children. Currently, more women are being appointed as leaders at local level, e.g. to work on issues related to women and children. It is positive to see that villagers are understanding the importance of gender equality, especially within the family, which as a result has contributed to a decrease in domestic violence.

One of the successful stories of gender mainstream from FAST project is about a woman, who has challenged social and cultural norms by taking an active leadership role in the development of her community. After being involved with FAST project since 2015, she has become a key person and a role model, due to her strong commitment toward community development and empowerment. She was elected by her Self-Help Group (SHG) members to become their SHG-leader, because she has capability and

knowledge, gained from various FAST training sessions, such as training on bookkeeping, development concepts, family and peace, prevention of domestic violence, and gender equality.

Her passion for community development work drives her to challenge herself, e.g. to stand in front of a crowd of people to teach and to share lessons that she has learnt. As a result, she has also been elected as a Parent-Teacher Association member, and as an Agriculture Cooperative Committee member. Besides that, she is the Deputy Village Chief and a member of the Village Development Committee. She helps poor farmers in the SHG to effectively grow vegetables and raise fish, while at the same time providing consultations to family with domestic violence problem. She advises parents to support their children to go to school, and once a year she helps facilitate a village gathering and encourages villagers to raise their voice. She also seeks to get women and children engaged in commune planning processes.

As the above picture of her shows, she engages and takes on responsibility for the betterment of her community. At the same time she demonstrates that women can take on tasks and leadership equally to men. She has become a role-model to her co-villagers, but also to people higher up in the state-sector at district and provincial levels. By being the evidence of gender equality in practice, she inspires local authorities and other Cambodians to also become active in mainstreaming gender equality, and to empower women to be heard, become engaged and take responsibility. This is what ICC slogan means; that when communities become empowered, it will affect the nation as well. Hence, ICC believes in *Empowering Communities, Empowered Nation*.