

## Innovative & sustainable development work



*Since the first NGOs entered Cambodia in 1990, when Cambodia opened its borders for humanitarian and development work after more than a decade of isolation from the outside world, the main approach was to tell people what they needed - and provided it for them. Now 25 years later, some Cambodians still like to maintain a passive role in the development of their own lives and communities. In ICC, we distance ourselves from this way of operating, instead seeking to involve, empower and mobilise people and communities in their own development and in finding solutions to their problems.*

ICC's project iBCDE (identity Based Community Development and Education) is currently working with indigenous minority communities in the North-Eastern region in Ratanakiri and Mondulkiri provinces, using an innovative approach called "Dialogue Team". The purpose of using Dialogue Teams is to carefully work in dialogue with the target communities in order to identify their needs and together generate feasible solutions. The iBCDE Dialogue Teams hold a number of various participatory tools, helpful for the communities to envision what they would like to be improved, and how to make it happen. The average Cambodian people, and in particular indigenous people, are not used to speaking up and expressing their opinion, hence the Dialogue Teams encourage and empower them to dare to share their joint community voice. iBCDE project is able to do this with the indigenous people because a number of the staff are indigenous people themselves, speaking their language and having a deep understanding of the target communities, their history and culture. The Dialogue Teams take time to listen, which builds trust and respectful relationships.

In one target community the Community Network took action to stand up to a company that was encroaching on their forest for its own gain. The Community Network raised this problem to the district Governor, who then used his influence to stop the company's activity. The Community Network demonstrated that they were able to mobilise the whole village to raise their concern with one voice. Besides stopping the company's activity, another result was that good relationships and cooperation were built within the village.

Another example of how Dialogue Teams empower the communities to take action dealing with their own problems, is from another indigenous village where women now dare to talk about sensitive health subjects. Now these women are interested in discussing their health issues very openly, in order to find a way to protect their health and to access proper health care.

Even if there still is a long way to go before the target indigenous communities have reached their visions, the communities see the usefulness of working together with iBCDE Dialogue Teams, as they believe sustainable community development work must happen with their involvement.