



Working with the least-served people

Not many people in Cambodia know about the Indigenous minority people who are part of Cambodian society, and that all groups are referred to by only one group, Bunong. Therefore they are not being given enough attention and for that reason, ICC wants to empower indigenous groups in order for them to be treated equally with respect to opportunities for education, healthcare, work, and other basic needs. They also want to be recognized for who they are, to enjoy and pass on to their children their histories, languages, traditions, modes of internal governance, and anything else that makes them who they are.

With the current project; iBCDE, ICC has worked with 5 different groups; Brao, Kreung, Tampuan, Bunong, and Jarai and is aiming for them to advocate for their rights and to participate as valued and active members of Cambodian society.

Central to iBCDE are dialogue teams who build close connections with indigenous communities. These dialogue teams see the process of cultural changes as central to the issues that indigenous communities face in northeastern Cambodia. Dialogue teams are supported by three technical teams focusing on Community Wellbeing, Cultural Relevant Education, and Improved Indigenous Livelihoods. The technical teams also network and conduct relevant action research to ensure that they can provide the best possible service to community action groups and education providers.

It's worth noticing that the replication of an existing good practice in establishing the Village Support Committee has now been spreading. The Village Support Committee is established in order to care for village issues e.g. sanitation, ending open defecation, their own contribution for building of the literacy classes, building wooden bridges for crossing the stream etc. It's also encouraging to see the communities themselves taking ownership of planned activities and depending much less on NGO leadership and involvement; for instance the Bunong Community Network Committee spent much time and effort in getting the acknowledgement from loggers, miners, environmentalists and policy implementers, that they own, or have rights to, their lands and resources, and that they have the right to make free and informed decisions about what happens to their lands.

Through active participation, young people are empowered to play a vital role in their own development as well as in that of their communities. Dialogue teams are helping them to believe achieving is possible when coming together with the same mindset. For instance, one youth group expressed their goal of seeing the sustainability of their group; even though they don't have money, they can contribute their commitment, their core values in helping the needy and widowed, and to initiate ideas for income generation.