



# Working with the least-served people

*In the world there are many children who for various reasons are not receiving sufficient food, basic education, safe shelter, and protection from violence and abuse. This is not only sad - but wrong. According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child all children have the right to food, education, shelter, protection, and other basic rights. This includes children in Cambodia, because the Cambodian government has signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Cambodian government is working towards fulfilment of the Convention, and one step is the setup of Commune Committees for Women and Children (CCWC) throughout the country. During May to July ICC conducted a study about the functioning of the CCWC structure and the possibility for collaboration.*

The ICC Design Intervention Committee carried out the study in three different provinces on commune, district and provincial level, with a particular focus on children. Different informants were interviewed, including children and parents/caregivers.

Children and young teenagers know that their livelihood is not optimal, and expressed a need for the CCWCs to intervene for them. Some of their requests were: to avoid children dropping or being taken out of school, provide good schools with good education and facilities, help to stop domestic violence, and combat child abuse such as sexual and labour abuse.

Parents and caregivers expressed appreciation for the CCWC work and engagement in their community. In some communes the CCWC is doing awareness raising on child rights and nutrition for children. Parents and caregivers confirmed the need of having a CCWC, especially in reporting to higher authorities when sexual abuse happens to children or women. Also it was expressed that the CCWCs have an important role in supporting pre-schools in the community, for the benefit of the younger children.

Furthermore, from this study ICC learned that the CCWC staff have passion and empathy for creating better livelihoods and circumstances for children and women in their community. However, sometimes the staff feel challenged to carry out their tasks, because of limited knowledge and resources. The extent of social problems affecting children and women is large, but the Government is seeking to provide them with new knowledge in different technical areas.

One area in which the CCWCs are involved, is to ensure children are provided with a birth certificate when they are born. Some parents neglect to provide their children with this legal status, but the CCWCs give priority to this issue in order to fulfil the civil rights of the child.

ICC took initiative to conduct this CCWC study, because ICC has an interest in scaling up its work on promoting and ensuring children are being provided their legal rights. However, to gain a successful impact, ICC believes this work has to be done in close collaboration with the local authorities. ICC will further explore how collaboration with the CCWCs can be utilised for the benefit of Cambodian children.