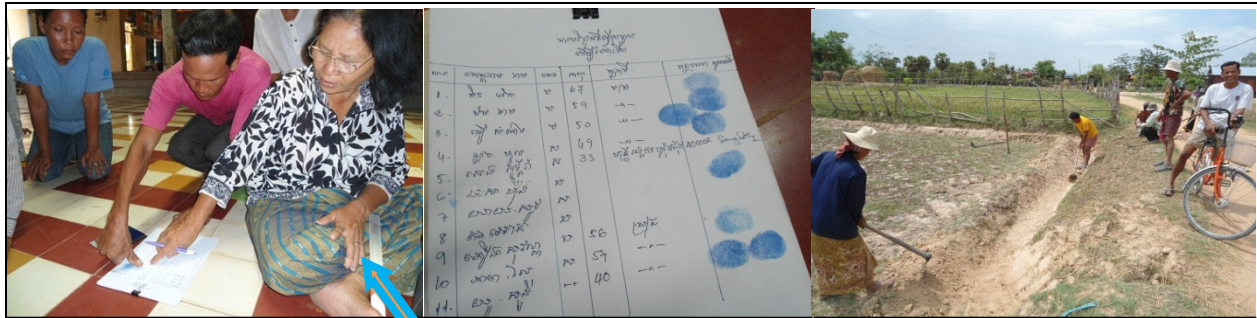


## Success Story#1: “Strengthen local governance to address the issues of community”



Agreement and Thumb Prints, led by deputy of commune chief, right

Small water canal

The organization People Center for Development and Peace (PDP-Center) was established on November 20, 2004 by founding members coming from Khmer Youth Association (KYA) with experience of working for increased youth participation in development since 1992.

*PDP-Center’s mission is to build a liberal democratic ideal with human rights respect, transparency, good governance, the promotion of well-being, climate change resilience and gender equality within the community (poor and marginalized men, women and youth) both in urban and rural areas through strengthening their engagement, participation, decision-making, networking and capacity.*

Since the establishment, PDP-Center has worked with a range of issues in their target areas, from community capacity building round human rights, democracy and gender equality to climate change, anti-corruption and local temperance. Lately PDP-Center has been advocating the national government to develop an alcohol policy and seriously address its related problems in Cambodia.

PDP-Center has four provincial centers across Cambodia: Siem Reap, Svay Rieng, Battambang and Banteay Meanchey, and the main office in Phnom Penh with a total of 16 staff (10 men and 6 women) and three projects: Better Democracy for Community; Alcohol Policy; and, Climate Change. The projects are cooperating with 18 community networks (including 9 youth networks) and another 15 NGOs Partners are at the targeted project.

One of PDP-center’s target villages is Samrong Year in Siem Reap where a particular focus has been put on climate change awareness raising and building of the community’s adaptive capacity. In Samrong Year village, PDP-center has facilitated both situational and functional analysis together with the community to identify local climate hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities. As a knowledge broker, PDP-center has supported the community’s knowledge building on climate change concepts, causes, effects and impacts as well as available solutions - commonly done through public forums where villagers and authorities can meet and discuss. PDP-center also took part and assisted in the establishment of a disaster management committee in Samrong Year with the purpose to develop a plan for future the droughts and floods.

In Samrong Year and Tachet villages the commune council decided to construct a new road in 2008. But without proper planning and consultation with communities it resulted in an uneven upstream/downstream distribution of water. Nine families upstream suddenly had their farms flooded during the rainy seasons whilst 21 families downstream experienced a shortage of accessible water. This caused serious arguments and conflict between some of the villagers. All this because the road didn’t have adequate drainage systems in place. Although the villagers complained in writing to the commune council no progress was made to solve the conflict that was now getting violent.

The project on Civic Engagement in Promoting Climate Change Adaptation and Better Democracy for Community

succeeded in building awareness through mentoring, coaching, training, meetings, and public forums to both the community people and local authorities on the concepts of climate change and human rights as well as gender equality. Moreover, PDP-Center has made significant contributions to strengthen local good governance by encouraging right holders and duty bearers to work together in addressing the problem in the community. The project has also built the good cooperation between stakeholders to organize activities and deal the problems in the target areas as well as increased meaningful participation of community people in decision making process. People and local authorities discussed together without being scared. They can raise their concerns and make commonly solutions.

So the problems were solved, because of both upstream and downstream agreed to contribute their land, money, and energy to construct a small canal after participating in public forum on May 17, 2013 and disaster management committee meeting on June 11, 2013. The community network, commune council and PDP-Center engaged with the local authority, affected families, upstream and downstream to sit together and find a solution. This facilitated discussion served as a space where everyone was allowed to speak and express their concerns and resulting in the participants starting to understand it was a problem for all affected, although in different ways. The agreement was thumb printed by all involved.

On May 18, 2013, a 208 meter long, 4cm deep and 5 cm wide water canal was completely dug by the people in Samrong Year and Tachet. On June 12-13 another 80 meters were dug serving three villages: Samroang Yea, Tachet and Ampil village.

Families in the three villages, but in particular the families directly upstream/downstream of the road have seen great improvements in their daily lives because of the canal. Now their rice fields are no longer destroyed from floods. Water available through the canal can now be used to grow crops around their house and the violence has stopped. Solving the conflict and working together brought unity to the communities and strength to keep their elected officials accountable and transparent in future local development projects.

The lesson learnt from the public forum is 1) Invite all relevant stakeholders to sit together and discuss, 2) map out the problem and identify the affected families, 3) important that the facilitator stays neutral and works for the common good and a peaceful solution, 4) commune council, police and village chiefs take role as a negotiator and gave opportunity to community people to make decision on solution by themselves. They didn't use their power to eliminate and restrict people during the discussion, but they have tried to facilitate for solution, 5) After agreed on solution and understanding each other, commune council facilitated upstream and downstream to sign on agreement together.