

Cambodia Criminal Justice Assistance Project Phase III Case Study

Project Focus		Crime Prevention and Community Safety
Date		April, 2011
Interviewer	Name	Ms. Nith Sophorn, Project Management Committee
Interviewee	Name	Laok Sophan
	Age	35
	Sex	Female
	Location	Ta Ong Keot Village, Roluos Commune, Svay Chek District, Banteay Meanchey Province

One of the six strategic objectives of the Cambodia Criminal Justice Assistance Project (CCJAP) is to work collaboratively with the Royal Government of Cambodia to jointly establish a sustainable Crime Prevention and Community Safety (CPCS) program. One of the four approaches of this program is to promote the welfare of citizens and encourage positive behavior through the provision of social services, economic services, and educational services. Particular focus is placed on high risk youths who display adverse behaviors associated with crime and victimisation. The following case study is an example of how CCJAP support has contributed to a prosperous, safe and secure community environment.

The Situation

Ms. Laok Sophan, 35, lives with her husband Mr. Plean Pov, 29, and two sons. When they began their relationships in 2003, they loved each other very much and helped each other with work.

Depending on three Rais of land, living status of her family is not always good. The couple regularly worked as labourers to transplant rice seedlings. In the off-season, Mr Plean Pov is employed as a construction worker.

Ms. Laok Sophan says that in 2005, her family began to experience domestic violence because her husband started drinking. His drinking became worse, and he was drunk almost every day. When Mr. Plean Pov arrived home, he would quarrel, throw and break housewares, accusing his wife of adultery. No one could stop him. A small discussion regarding his drinking would escalate the issue and cause immediate conflict. Ms. Laok Sophan could not defend herself because she did not have enough energy to do so.

As an example of the domestic violence—Ms. Laok Sophan was washing clothes when her husband kicked her from behind causing her fall face first onto the floor, and he left without a single word. Another example is that Ms. Laok Sophan was cooking a pot of rice when her husband returned home from the paddy field and without saying a word hit her. She kept these incidents secret and did not tell anyone. She hoped that one day she would be able to talk quietly with her husband to avoid further conflict.

Village chief and commune chief tried to discuss and educate Mr. Plean Pov, but he did not listen and did not stop his violent behaviour.

The family's income began to decline as Mr. Plean Pov's drinking increased, and he stopped working. Ms. Laok Sophan was caring for their baby and could not attend work.

Mr. Plean Pov used his drinking as an excuse for his behaviour. The violence continued for months. The family experienced a lot of sadness and was not happy. Ms. Laok Sophan thought her family would experience violence forever, and they would not be happy like other families. Her main concern was their two sons-- a six-year-old and a two-year-old-- who needed love and care from both their parents. For the sake of their two sons, she felt she had no choice but to endure the pain.

The Intervention

In 2010, Ms. Laok Sophan attended an information session on the prevention of domestic violence conducted by the District Office of Women Affairs and funded by CCJAPIII. Her husband was asked to join the session by the village chief and his wife, but did not attend. After attending, she told her husband about what she learned, e.g. those who commit domestic violence leading to injuries would face criminal liability. Ms. Laok Sophan hoped this would reduce or stop the violence in her family, but her husband did not listen and his actions continued.

The village and commune chiefs and the District Office of Women Affairs consulted directly with Mr. Plean Pov and discussed why he behaved violently and what issues he was trying to deal with and how to manage them. As a result, he reduced the domestic violence, but the arguments and destruction of homewares continued.

On March 2010, further information sessions were conducted on different types of vocational training such as mushroom growing, pig rearing, hairdressing, and sewing, aimed at increasing the living status of families facing domestic violence. Mr. Plean Pov, agreeing with his wife, could attend a vocational training course on sewing. With financial and emotional support from the project and commitment from her husband to help her in some housework, Ms. Laok Sophan attended the training.



The Behaviour Change

During six-month training, Ms. Loak Sophan noticed that her husband helped her more with housework, such as cooking rice, taking care of children, allowing her to successfully complete the sewing course. There was also a decrease in domestic violence, but his occasional drinking continued.

After Ms. Laok Sophan finished the training course, the project supported her with some equipment such as a sewing machine and some clothes, so she could start a business to support her family. She now operates a sewing business from her house which provides income for the family. In the first month, she had 10-15 customers. Ms. Laok Sophan says that the sewing business is successful because her service costs lower than that of the market to attract customers and gain experiences in sewing to improve her skills.

Ms. Laok Sophan is so happy that her family can generate income, and her husband helps her with some of the housework. She says that her husband has become a good person, and many villagers have become his friend as he no longer disrupts the community as before.

Mr. Ry Thorn, Village Chief, and Ms. Long Chourt, Village Secretary, says that Laok Sophan's family has had a positive change. They observed that Ms. Laok Sophan has been very busy studying and sewing, and Mr. Plean Pov now helps her with housework.

Auntie Chhorn Chenda, a neighbour, says that the couple has reduced their quarrels, fights, and arguments. Using bad words could no longer be heard. There is no more breaking of housewares, no more drinking or sleeping out in the village.

The project has assisted the couple in changed behaviour, improved living status, and prevention of domestic violence.

