

Plan Cambodia

News, January/February 2006

Civil Registration Project – 8.5 million Cambodians registered, project moving into phase three

From January 2006 and the following 12 months, the project will focus more on the building of institutional capacity, including training for officials, volunteers and other organisations. Support to the mobile civil registration campaign will continue until end of August this year. Other activities planned by the civil registration office are to conduct a study of the possibility of computerisation of registering civil registration data and also start a national billboard campaign to continue reminding the Cambodian population about the necessity of obtaining a birth certificate. The civil registration office will merge with the Country Office when we're moving to our new location in June/July. The office has also slimmed down in size since the start of the New Year; Shabir, Irina, Dan, Vannary, Sok and Kagnchana are still here to keep the project moving. Plan was acknowledged in a UN Volunteer annual report 2004/2005 themed 'Gaining Ground' for its work on the Mobile National Civil Registration Campaign in Cambodia. The UN Volunteers played a very important role in providing technical input, training and support in the provinces. Before the campaign started in October 2004, only an estimated five per cent of the Cambodian population had a birth certificate. As of January 2006, more than 8.5 million people have been registered countrywide. Cambodia has 13.6 million inhabitants.

Water filters in the communities

Promotion of water filters have started in the communities with the immersion of our Community Development Facilitators. In Siem Reap, eight water filters were used during immersion the last quarter, this quarter the villagers wants to buy 31 filters. Plan Cambodia has started its collaboration with International Development Enterprise (IDE) and Resource Development International (RDI) in moving the marketing of the water filters forward.

Plan and KAPE

Plan has entered into a partnership with KAPE (a local Non-governmental organization) and the main areas for cooperation will be in improving access and quality of education of children in primary school level. This will include;

- teacher training
- scholarship for poor children
- remedial class for slow learners
- life skills
- school improvement plan – including curriculum, school management etc
- capacity building for school committee
- capacity building to government local educators
- child friendly classroom experiments

This project will mainly cover primary schools and for this first year, 20 schools will be involved in the projects in our Programme Units.

Expanding to Srei Snam

Siem Reap has taken several more steps towards opening up for activities in Srei Snam. At this point staff is being recruited and further preparation plans are being made. If everything goes according to plan, then immersion is expected to start from March.

Health emergency fund reaches more children

Last quarter 2,614 children benefited from Plan's Health Emergency Fund providing transportation support for sick children to two children's hospitals in Siem Reap. The hospitals are free of charge.

Youth Group on board

Through support from Plan, youth group members attended a local village planning meeting to presents their problems and their needs for things such as school fencing, library, and sport materials. Building fence for Angkor Thom junior high school is soon to start, in response to the request from one of the youth groups.

"Thanks to Plan, my village has its first junior high school and soon the fence will be built. As students will plant vegetables and do school gardening, the fence is a good for protecting cowing entering school compound," said Vong Lech, grade 9 students in Angkor Thom.

Avian flu

Alarming outbreaks in Turkey of avian flu killing several members of the same family and infecting many more clearly signal that the virus is spreading over the world. The infections have occurred as people have been in contact with dead birds, no known human to human transmissions have happened so far.

A survey has been conducted by the Academy of Educational Development (AED) and Indochina Research LTd in collaboration with the Ministry of

Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Department of Animal Health and Production. The Knowledge Attitude Practice (KAP) survey was conducted in Kandal and Pursat and included some 480 respondents. They had the following background: 2/3 earned less than \$100 month; six per cent completed primary school; TV is the most common medium of news and information; poultry faeces everywhere -92 per cent had free roaming scavenging birds; contact with other animals 66 per cent.

Some excerpts of the survey:

Personal Hygiene

- 30 per cent never wash hands with soap vs. 36 per cent always wash hands with soap.
- 53 per cent never change clothes vs. 16 per cent always change clothes. The hygiene levels were better in areas that had experienced Avian Flu.

Avian Flu awareness – Risk of getting infected?

- Awareness was reasonable good. 75 per cent of the respondents mentioned increased risk from contact with birds. 50 per cent mentioned contact with infected manure and 23 per cent did not know. Pursat was more knowledgeable.
- Only information from TV.

Levels of anxiety

- High level of worry, 6.5 on a scale of 7

Recognize symptoms and report

- Most people think they do recognize symptoms, but there is a Newcastle disease which presents similar symptoms.
- Most report to the village chief or some other local authority.

If you had Avian Flu in your poultry what would you do?

- 50 per cent would kill and burn.
- 63 per cent suggest quarantine (issues of compensation).
- If in an area with AI, 60 per cent would keep poultry in a closed space, 48 per cent would not accept new chickens.

In the News

International Monetary Fund (IMF) cancels Cambodian debt

The International Monetary Fund will write off 100 % of Cambodia's loan taken prior to January 2005. The cancellation of debt is part of multi-billion dollar debt relief program towards 19 impoverished countries. Cambodia is not considered as a heavily indebted country but qualified for the relief of debts because of the low per capita income, less than US\$380. Cambodia owed the IMF US\$82 million but IMF wanted to 'reward' Cambodia for its effort to improve the economy and reduce poverty. Critics

say that this may perpetuate Cambodia's dependency on foreign aid.

Dangerous traffic

Three people die and 20 people are injured every day, in road accidents. This dark statistics cost Cambodia US\$130 million every year. Violation of traffic rules and regulations such as carelessness, speeding and especially drunk driving, cause most of the casualties.

Mine clearance in Cambodia ranked second in the world

Cambodia is ranked second in the world's 84 countries in clearing land from mines and unexploded ordnance, according to the latest annual Landmine Monitor Report from International Campaign to Ban Land mines. Last year 32 square kilometres of land was cleared in Cambodia.

Civil society under pressure

The government has come down hard on several critics, jailing opponents on charges of defamation. A few days ago several human rights activists were released from jail; however the charges against them still remain. The arrest followed a human rights rally that had been approved by the authorities. Police confiscated a banner at the meeting where someone had written accusations against the government and the Prime Minister. The arrest has also brought an outcry from the international community, making both development partners as well as potential investors worried. Latest news is that they have now been released on bail and there is an ongoing discussion whether charges will be dropped or not.