



QSA Notes

Developments in Cambodia

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Training in growing vegetables and fruit trees resulting in food gardens to feed the family. Photo credit QSA



QSA and DFAT funded wells. Photo credit QSA

Monitoring visits are always exciting and busy times. They also provide opportunities to see project achievements first hand, and develop further the relationship with project partners and participants on behalf of QSA. Details of many events are also given, many of which were not included in the quarterly report because they happened a few weeks ago, or the partner's staff thought we would not be interested! How wrong can they be? We love to know everything that is going on.

A recent visit to Cambodia to see the progress of the projects funded by QSA and Australian Aid via the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) gave me the opportunity to meet many more project participants, hear their stories and, in this case in a village in Kampong Thom Province, see the great project food gardens they have created to feed themselves and their families. One main change, as reported by the village chief involved in the project, is the

change in the attitude and demeanour of the participants – they have more confidence, are healthier due to the improved intake of fresh vegetables and are more cooperative and supportive of each other instead of being competitive all of the time. What was particularly evident was the impact of access to water resources on the crops being grown during this dry season. Some households have received a well as part of this project, consisting of concrete rings to secure the well shaft, and each recipient is responsible for providing a secure lid to prevent rubbish, small animals or children from falling down the shaft. One widow with two small children had an uncovered well, but the village chief gave his assurance that he would help her to provide a cover. As part of the DFAT funding guidelines, all resources provided have to promote the country providing the funding, hence the emblems painted on the side of the wells.

Garden beds had been created by

the participants in areas around their home that was previously simply bare soil unused for any purpose. Already noticeable were the range of crops grown and impact of income generation from selling a small quantity of surplus produce. This is the time of year when many families have used up their rice crop from last season and are having to purchase some. Previously they would also be purchasing vegetables so growing their own is a reduced outlay for them. Many of the families supplement their income either by working as labourers for other families in the area, harvesting palm juice to make palm sugar, selling fruit leathers from reduced fruit juices, selling honey from small bee hives, or fish farming. Some keep poultry to supply eggs as well as fresh chickens for festivals such as the many weddings happening at this time of year and for Khmer and Chinese New Year. One family I met were also keeping crocodiles, approximately twenty in all and currently six



Completing the woven mats at the Centre. Photo credit QSA

months old, which will be kept for their skins when more mature. Many of the families I met asked about the possibility of having a toilet near to their house, instead of simply using the local field. This was discussed with the project partner staff and QSA is pleased to see that this has been included in the new project proposal for the project from July 2016, again to be funded by QSA and DFAT.

During the visit I was joined by Jane Drexler, from NSW Regional Meeting, who was making another visit as a consultant to the vocational training centre in Pursat, the Bunrany Hun Sen Development Centre. The influence

of two garment factories in Pursat Province as large-scale employers of thousands of young people, especially women, continues to be a major obstacle for the expansion of the Centre as a training centre. Ponna, the Director of the Development Centre, has met with community leaders and parents in attempts to increase the number of youth coming for training, however this has not been effective and the numbers have halved in the last five years. Consequently, the quantity of products completed for sale, such as scarves, woven mats etc, is insufficient, particularly when an order is placed by traders who buy in bulk so that sometimes the Centre has to refuse

an order as it cannot get the quantity in time. Some of the products made in earlier years, such as stone carving, have now been curtailed due to a reduction in sales. Product quality continues to be an issue. As a result of Jane's investigations and discussions with Ponna and her staff, the idea has evolved of shifting the emphasis of the Centre away from being a vocational training centre, to becoming a production centre, still supporting local women and youth. This has been reflected in the new project proposals for the coming project year, and we look forward to receiving progress reports about this.

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QSA is a member of the Australian Council for International Development, and is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct. The Purpose of QSA is to express in a practical way the concern of Australian Quakers for the building of a more peaceful, equitable, just and compassionate world. To this end QSA works with communities in need to improve their quality of life with projects which are culturally sensitive, as well as being economically and environmentally appropriate and sustainable.

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