



# QSA Notes

## QSA and the family

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**Above Left:** Cambodia couples discuss their jobs in the family. Photo: Khmer Community Development

**Above Right:** Gender workshop, Cambodia. Photo: Khmer Community Development

In all of QSA's projects, there is a strong connection with the family of the project participant, which begins early in the establishment of the project. The process begins with the project partner talking with the leaders of the community to find whether the topics for training which can be offered are of interest and likely to support the community in its plans for improving everyone's health and wellbeing. It may be that what is offered, such as permaculture or how to set up a cow bank or grow mushrooms, is not what the community wants to learn. If it is, a survey is conducted about the community itself. This can include everyone helping to draw a map of the area, where the houses are, where the school and the wells are. If, as is usually the case, there are more people wanting to learn than there is a budget to train, some sort of selection

criteria needs to be discussed. Here again everyone helps to do this; it's not something the project partner decides. In this way, the families with disabled members can be included, as can widows and widowers, and families with large numbers of children. With the list of those selected, the project partner staff can then conduct a baseline survey to learn more about each household. This survey notes the details of their home and land, the crops they grow and animals they have, but also how many people live in the home and what is their relationship. What is being noted now, especially in Cambodia where I have been making a monitoring visit, is that grandparents are caring for their grandchildren while the parents have moved somewhere else to seek employment. This is the case for Pha Lem in Kampong Thom province who is looking after her twin

grandsons, and Kim Sum who lives with her husband (though he is away a lot working in another province) their young daughter and Kim's grandparents who help her tend their extensive and productive food garden. Ngorn Chan lives with her husband, married daughter and her husband and their two granddaughters and therefore also has some help in her food garden. A number of the training courses provided by the project partners also help raise awareness of conflict resolution techniques, gender issues and health matters. In Uganda the women's groups learning about health needs especially during pregnancy, care of young children and birth spacing asked if they could invite their partners along to learn this information also, as a means of reducing tension in the household. Many project partners hold discussions and information



**Above Left:** Kim Sum's garden



**Above Right:** Kim Sum with her daughter and village chief Him Hun. **Photo:** Khmer Community Development

sharing sessions on gender issues, and how this information is shared and demonstrated to their children. In Cambodia a presenter likened parenting skills and ideas to that of a teapot – information is ‘poured’ into the children like tea is poured from a pot. If this is done in a negative way, the parents will send a negative message to their children, who will accept it, and their actions and behaviors will often also be negative. If however the parents say or transfer positive signs, the children will accept

this and act in a positive way. As part of the gender workshop, participants understood the basic concept of gender and families living in harmony with each other (such as good communication, motivation and showing appreciation) and about the gender differences in the family. An exercise to consider gender roles acknowledged the impact of cultural traditions of each country, and how it can cause inequalities and expectations of men and women. This was demonstrated by couples assessing

the work they each do in the home, and discussing how they feel about each other, which resulted in many of the participants being in tears as they heard these comments for the first time.

QSA is aware that these courses in gender, child protection and conflict resolution are not the primary workshops that communities sign up to. However with a broad concept of well-being as the focus, it is considered of importance to include these additional topics.

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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