



# QSA Notes

## At year's end

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Chum Sam Oeun in her garden with grandchild. Photo: QSA

June 30th marks the end of the tax year. For QSA it is also the close off date for funding applications to be received by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Ai Leen and I have been working hard to complete these applications, getting information and comments from the project partners in Cambodia, India and Uganda. From DFAT, QSA will receive \$363,250 towards the \$633,048 total cost of the nine projects planned for this year. It is anticipated that a total of 8,878 men, women and children will be assisted as a result of these projects. Only 60 of these are urban participants, the rest from a range of rural communities. QSA recognises that women are disproportionately affected by poverty, so addressing cultural and social constraints to women so that they have an equal share in accessing resources are key components to these projects. Women and girls make up 62% of the project participants. We plan that each of these projects will receive a monitoring visit during the

coming year, to address project specific terms of reference and to assess the project's impact on the community. This visit will include meeting with the project participants to learn what changes they have been able to make in their lives as a result of their involvement in the project activities. This is always a special time to share ideas across cultures. Sometimes there is not a shared language, but project partner staff are on hand to help with this, and so much can be seen of the changes made, people being so pleased to be able to show their achievements. The other side to a monitoring visit is making sure the records kept by the project partner are verified; working with project partner staff to share project management ideas and develop a sound working relationship. Sometimes a monitoring visit cannot take place, and disappointingly for Ai Leen, she will not be able to visit one of the projects in Uganda as it is in an area to the west of the country which DFAT have now declared a 'do not travel' area, so other

plans will have to be made. She can, however, visit the other two project partners in Uganda (including Josephine Kizza who many of you will remember from her visit to Australia a number of years ago).

Some of the people I met during a visit to Cambodia in January this year included Chum Sam Oeun, a 64 year old widow living with her six children. They have a well still producing water at the end of the dry season. Where plants are not growing, the soil is sandy with small stones, whereas areas under cultivation have had compost added to replenish the soil and add to its water holding capabilities. Chum Sam Oeun was trained by another NGO a few years ago to implement an irrigation system, and she has successfully combined irrigation and soil improvement to have a very productive garden. During my visit, a number of eggplants, basil, and several varieties of beans were growing (and she told me she had sold 30 kg of long beans the day before to her neighbours), also cassava, pumpkin, cucumber, cashew nut



Jackie Perkins (centre) with project partner staff during a monitoring visit in Cambodia. Photo: QSA

trees, banana, avocados, mango, jack fruit, palm trees from which she makes palm sugar to sell, and kapok (for filling cushions and mattresses). She had trays of seeds ready for the next planting and a large number of plastic drink bottles which she hangs on poles and into which she plants her seedlings before they are ready to go into the ground. It was a very productive garden, and Chum Sam Oeun was so happy to show me all of her crops. A near neighbour, Phalia Von and her husband Phy Pheap had a smaller garden which was also very productive, with the soil benefitting from six pigs to add manure to the compost. They had a similar range of crops and an extensive and well stocked fish pond for added dietary protein. On the way to another

village we passed a police road check, looking to make sure produce is not being taken from the old forests. This is because the Cambodian government, in its climate change policy, is concerned about maintaining tree growth and stopping the logging of old timber. Hin Huoun is one of few men who are trainees, but his garden was not as productive because he had been in hospital recently. He was very apologetic about his garden, though it still had a range of different fruit and vegetable plants ready for harvesting for his family, and as he explained, his family will need to sell a lot of produce to cover the costs of his medical bills. His family is fortunate to have a rice field some distance from the house, and as at the

end of the season they still have several large sacks of rice left, it must be quite productive. I also met Sung Sor and her husband Sok Sar, who have a smaller garden from which to feed themselves and their three sons. Sok Sar can earn up to US\$4 per day as a labourer, but this is not every day and is very hard work usually digging potatoes or cassava. Sung Sor successfully grows mushrooms which bring in a good income in the local markets, but they cannot be grown when the weather is too hot or too wet. Sok Sar had a number of bamboo traps which he explained he uses to catch eels in the drainage ditches or ponds around the place; they are eaten by the family or sold in the markets.

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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