

VOLUNTEERISM

Harnessing the Potential
to Develop Cambodia
Eleanor Brown

Youth Star Cambodia
in cooperation with United Nations Volunteers
June, 2008

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Editing: Allen Myers

Layout and design: Christine Schmutzler

Printing: International Printing House

FOREWORD

This research stems from a partnership between Youth Star Cambodia and United Nations Volunteers (UNV), and a desire on the part of both organisations to better understand the volunteering environment in Cambodia in order to inform programme development and also to promote national volunteerism on a larger scale. This study, 'Volunteerism: Harnessing the Potential to Develop Cambodia', builds on two earlier studies, "Resurgence of Volunteerism in Cambodia", published by UNV in 2002, and "Youth, Volunteering and Social Capital in Cambodia", published by Youth Star Cambodia in 2005.

During the initial phases of the research and its preparation we found that there was a much broader interest in this study from many quarters, national and international. Many of us with volunteers were seeking further feedback on the impact and potential of volunteering.

We acknowledge from the start that the present study is modest in scope. Yet it does shed light on the state of volunteerism in Cambodia in cases where the volunteers are celebrated, in places where their work is making a difference but is not recognized for what it is, and in places where the word 'volunteer' is not used. This in itself highlights the need for a common language and understanding of volunteerism. The study also provides insights into a number of important issues, such as perceptions of volunteering in Cambodia, the different forms and approaches to volunteering, good practice, synergies with national development goals, challenges and constraints. Finally, the study provides recommendations for development planners and decision makers, and for the development community in general. It is also worth noting that volunteerism in Cambodia takes place in a specific socio-political context which may have implications for replicability in other contexts.

The study confirms what Youth Star Cambodia has learned from its own experience thus far, that there is a rich experience of volunteering, formal and informal, in Cambodia, though it is not yet widely recognized. The study also confirms that volunteering has the potential to grow and to make significant contributions towards improving livelihoods and reaching national development goals. It will take a concerted effort and commitment on the part of government and the development community to create an enabling environment for volunteering, to strategically integrate volunteering into development planning, and to mobilize the resources necessary to build volunteering infrastructure and support volunteer programmes.

While this study puts us in a new place in terms of better understanding the state of volunteerism and its impact in Cambodia, it also generates new questions and a desire to learn more about the transformative changes that are taking place in many communities where there are volunteers. More research is needed on "traditional" or informal volunteering, on the sustainability of volunteering efforts, on opportunity costs, as well as on volunteering through other entities such as government, the private sector, or universities, the latter which are not addressed in this study. Suggestions for further research are included in the report.

I hope that this study will be of interest to many in the Cambodian development community and that it will further the dialogue and integration of volunteerism as a third force and partner in development. Lastly, I would like to thank UNV, Christine Schmutzler and all the individuals and agencies that have contributed their valuable time, experiences, and expertise to this study.

Eva Mysliwiec
Executive Director, Youth Star Cambodia

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research team acknowledges with thanks the guidance and support of Youth Star Cambodia and United Nations Volunteers Cambodia in all phases of the research.

The author would like to thank first Mark Lawler, programme coordinator, UNV, and Eva Mysliwiec, Executive Director, Youth Star Cambodia, for their extensive support. Catherine Cecil (policy and communications adviser, Youth Star Cambodia) also provided valuable comments and insights into the first draft of this report. This research was conducted with an enthusiastic and dedicated research team, which included Ty Ranil, Seng Krisna and Laut Sovanna during the qualitative phases. Pich Charya worked as a data collector for the mapping survey.

Grateful acknowledgements also go to H.E. Kol Pheng, PhD, Senior Minister, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, H.E. Dr Ing Kantha Phavi, Minister of Women's Affairs, H.E. Leng Vy, Director General, Ministry of Interior and H.E. Prum Chantine, Director General, Cambodian Red Cross, who all provided valuable insights into how volunteers could provide inputs into achieving national development goals.

Our greatest thanks go to all the people and volunteers who participated in the research in their rural communities, and who gave up their time to provide their insights, despite often being busy. We hope that their insights in this report will further their involvement in their own development.

CONTENTS

Foreword	3
Acknowledgements	4
Key Terms Used	6
List of Acronyms	6
Executive Summary	7
1. Study Rationale	9
2. Study Aims	9
2.1 Research Methodology	10
2.2 Definitions of Volunteers	11
2.3 Limitations	12
3. Theories of Volunteerism and Civic Participation	12
4. Opportunities for Volunteer Action	13
5. The History of Volunteerism in Cambodia	17
6. Key Findings from the Mapping	23
7. Case Studies	33
7.1 Indigenous Definitions of Volunteerism	33
7.2 Khmer Youth Association	35
7.3 Buddhism for Development	39
7.4 Neak Aphiwat Sahakum	47
7.5 Cambodian Centre for Study and Development in Agriculture	55
7.6 Youth Star Cambodia	62
8. Conclusions	71
8.1 Emerging Models of Volunteer Action	72
8.2 Issues Affecting Volunteerism (and Its Ability to Create Social Capital)	72
8.3 Reaching National Development Goals	76
9. Recommendations	77
Annex I List of Key Informants	80
Annex II Bibliography	81
Annex III Research Conference	83
Annex IV Terms Of Reference	85

KEY TERMS USED

Achar—Buddhist layman, who liaises between the secular realms of the village and the religious realms of the wat, and usually has key roles in the village in religiously marked life cycle ceremonies (e.g. arranging funerals), in communal religious ceremonies (e.g. the post-harvest festival) and in mobilising labour for the maintenance of the wat and its religious community.

Civil society—“Civil society refers to the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organisations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organisations, community groups, women’s organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, trades unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy group”.¹

Issarak—The Khmer *Issarak* was an anti-French Khmer nationalist movement formed in 1945 with the backing of the government of Thailand.

Patron-client relations—Patron-client relations are characterised by the moral obligations of the two parties towards each other. The patron offers benefits, such as security and protection, to the client in return for his/her loyalty.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

BFD	Buddhism for Development
CEDAC	Cambodia Centre for the Study and Development of Agriculture
GRET	“Group de Recherches et Echanges Technologiques” or “Group for Research and Technology Exchanges”, an NGO working in international cooperation since the 1970s.
KYA	Khmer Youth Association.
NAK	Neak Aphiwat Sahakum
NGO	Non-government organisation.
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan, 2006–10, the government’s guiding development plan.
SRI	System of rice intensification, in which a single stalk of rice is grown instead of a bunch of stalks, thus increasing yields.

¹ Definition from the London School of Economics Centre for *Civil Society* (available from http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/what_is_civil_society.htm).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Youth Star Cambodia and United Nations Volunteers Cambodia commissioned a research project on volunteers and their contribution to national development. While volunteers are widely present in development, there is little current information that assesses their contributions. The research project began in December 2007, and the fieldwork concluded at the end of February 2008.

The aims of the research were to:

1. get a clear picture of the current volunteer infrastructure and environment in Cambodia, including the profiles of volunteers, their communities and their projects;
2. provide recommendations on how opportunities for Cambodians to volunteer can be increased and a clear understanding of the needs within volunteering organisations;
3. explore ways in which volunteerism can be better integrated and linked to national development objectives and initiatives;
4. provide recommendations on how donor support could be better targeted to increase volunteer participation in sustainable development.

The research methodology included administering fielding and mapping surveys to NGOs that might have been working with volunteers. The questionnaire covered areas such as work with volunteers, volunteer support and socio-demographic details. In addition, the project conducted in-depth qualitative research with five NGOs that work with and through volunteers. This included profiling the organisations and their volunteers, as well as exploring formal and informal rural volunteering.

The research found that “traditional” volunteerism has been essential to the formation of communities and to their access to resources such as education. In addition, several trends have led to increased opportunities for volunteers (including youth) to contribute to national development. First, there appears to have been a shift in the ways that NGOs work. International NGOs are working more in partnership with local NGOs, which are in turn initiating local grass-roots associations. These often rely entirely on village volunteers. Similarly, the government’s recent decentralisation and deconcentration have opened democratic spaces in villages. These have the potential to engage with and support local associations and volunteer efforts. Second, there is an emerging rural-urban gap in access to information and education. This is particularly the case with youth. However, due to the disruption of education during past conflicts, youth are often more highly educated than their parents’ generation and have an enormous potential to close this gap.

Theories of volunteerism say that people can be mobilised to participate in the development of their communities. When people volunteer, civic participation and social capital increase. Furthermore, these kinds of civic participation are essential to building democratic societies.

In Cambodia, several socio-economic factors influence the structure of volunteer programmes, especially the participation of youth. Traditional volunteers are often regarded as local leaders, initiating and managing development. However, their leadership is often not inclusive or easily transferable and lacking strong links to

other development actors. Age hierarchies also strongly influence both the patterns of leadership and young people's civic participation, often resulting in youth being marginalised and undervalued in development initiatives.

The mapping found that local NGOs form the majority of organisations working with and through volunteers, 74.4 percent. The fielding survey found that NGOs most frequently work with groups of volunteers whom they train and support (60.6 percent), followed by 58 percent that have volunteers working as office-based project assistants or in administration. Forty-six percent of NGOs supported volunteers who work with existing community-based organisations or groups. The high number of project-based volunteers may account for the concentration of volunteer work in Phnom Penh (45.5 percent). The most frequent sectors for volunteer work are education and training (50 percent) and community development (45.3 percent). NGOs in the sample work with a total of 23,997 volunteers across Cambodia, most of whom volunteer on a part-time basis (73.5 percent). Most volunteers (53.5 percent) are male. The age/sex group with the highest frequency is young women under 17 years of age (39.7 percent), followed by young men under 17 years of age (28.2 percent). This broadly supports the results from the qualitative research, which found that young people can often be mobilised in large numbers.

In the qualitative research, case studies highlighted several models of volunteer action. Rural volunteerism is very evident through traditional avenues, most often connected to sustaining the religious life of the village, with links to the pagoda and village development committees. NGO-initiated volunteerism follows several approaches: local associations (often skills building and poverty reduction), volunteer support (involving social change, education and integrated development), interest groups (often involving message-based technical skills). The ability of different approaches to build social capital was found to be related to the volunteers' freedom of action (whether they could initiate action), their ability to foster links with other development agencies (government and non-government) and their capacity to mobilise participation.

Certain key characteristics of volunteer programmes emerged from the qualitative research. Volunteer-based programmes often entail slow growth of activities but long-term impacts. Many volunteers are highly motivated to participate in local development, especially to support poverty reduction. Programmes that work with and through volunteers promote self-sufficiency and community empowerment. They are often based on an accurate model of community learning using long-term skills-building approaches. Programmes that support youth also demonstrate that they can mobilise large numbers of participants, promote volunteerism and support access to education. Volunteers who have more freedom of action can have a more integrated effect, tackling a wide range of educational and social issues. Furthermore, programmes that work with volunteers can have added unforeseen effects, such as personal development and improving the quality of local governance.

Volunteers have been found to have positive effects in the following priority areas of the government's National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 2006–10: promoting access to education (including survival rates and access to further education) and improving its quality; reducing poverty through increasing agricultural skills, decreasing interest rates and providing long-term flexible credit; reducing household vulnerability to shocks, especially related to health care; increasing lawfulness and peace in communities, including enhancing legal protection for women; promoting agricultural diversification; engaging young people so that they avoid harmful activities (such as violence and use of drugs); promoting civic engagement and good local governance.

The report makes several recommendations for supporting future volunteer action. These include: recognising and valuing the work of volunteers, and developing national policies that integrate their work into development planning; promoting a socially inclusive approach to volunteerism, such as fully recognising the importance of involving women and youth, and focussing on rural areas, where Cambodia's poverty is mostly concentrated; developing strategies to encourage a culture of volunteerism, including enabling legislative and fiscal frameworks and giving public recognition to volunteer activities; giving more space for youth and other volunteers to engage in transformative social action; and future research developing indicators for socially transformative action, and documenting strategies for supporting the development of local associations.

1. STUDY RATIONALE

Youth Star Cambodia and United Nations Volunteers Cambodia commissioned a study on volunteerism in Cambodia in order to inform the development of their programmes and strategies for further promoting, strengthening and expanding volunteer efforts in Cambodia.

While volunteers are widely used, there is little current information that assesses their contributions to national development. There was also a perceived need to understand the extent of Cambodian-led volunteering within communities.

2. STUDY AIMS

The terms of reference for the study can be found in Annex IV of this report.

The ultimate aim of the research was to recommend how opportunities for Cambodians to volunteer could be increased and to provide a clear understanding of the capacity needs within volunteering organisations and, thus, how donors could better target support towards increasing volunteer participation in sustainable development.

The research paper was envisaged to include the following:

- A background literature review of the history of volunteerism in Cambodia
- An analysis of the current contribution of volunteers (international and national, formal and informal) to national development in Cambodia
- An assessment of the potential of youth to contribute to national development through volunteering and promoting volunteerism
- The identification of specific areas for intervention by youth volunteers (including in national development programmes and UN programmes)

2.1 Research Methodology

The research project began in December 2007, and the fieldwork concluded at the end of February 2008.

The research comprised two components. The first was a mapping of organisations working with and through volunteers. The broad aim of the mapping was to gain a greater understanding of the focus areas that volunteers were working in (geography and sectors), the types of support that volunteers received and how they addressed youth and gender issues.

A sampling frame was developed using agency lists from NGO coordination and support institutions.² A fielding questionnaire in Khmer was developed which detailed the definition of “volunteers” and ascertained whether the NGO was working with volunteers. Organisations were selected or not selected for inclusion in the sample based on the fielding questionnaire. Those that did work with and through volunteers were invited to take part in the mapping survey. The refusal rate was very low (9 percent).

The mapping questionnaire was designed to be easy to fill in. It was sent out in Khmer and English. The questionnaire included a help line email and phone number for questions about it. The total sample of organisations that were active, working with and through volunteers and willing to take part in the survey was 305. Eighty-five responses were received through email, a 28 percent response rate. Data from the mapping were entered into Excel and cross-checked for inaccuracies. Where responses were clearly inaccurate or incomprehensible, research staff contacted the respondents to clarify the answers.

The second component involved in-depth qualitative research, analysing five case studies of volunteers active locally. These were selected based on their ability to demonstrate different kinds of volunteer approaches and action, as well as their involvement in local development. Efforts were also made to include youth-oriented programmes. It was also decided to concentrate on Cambodian volunteer programmes. All case studies were selected in order to understand how volunteerism contributed to civic engagement in Cambodia.

The selected case studies were two programmes that concentrate on rural development and poverty alleviation—Neak Aphiwat Sahakum (NAS) and the Cambodia Centre for the Study and Development of Agriculture (CEDAC)—two youth-focussed programmes (Khmer Youth Association and Youth Star Cambodia) and one peace and development initiative (Buddhism for Development (BDF)). Four of these programmes are concentrated in rural areas. The KYA volunteers were studied in an urban setting in Banteay Meanchey.

² This included Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC), Star Kampuchea, NGO Forum and VOLCAM (the volunteers network).

Focus group discussion guidelines and volunteer profiles were developed and pre-tested in a rural area where volunteers worked, and then were amended for clarity. The main research tools included: focus group discussions with youth, women and mixed groups; volunteer profiles; in-depth interviews with key informants and local villagers. Separate questions were developed for the KYA programme because it was based in an urban area without an easily accessible community. A questionnaire was also administered to the institution that had initiated the volunteer programme. Where possible, this was followed up by in-depth interviews with key staff members once the research had been completed. Interviews were translated as data collection took place.

In-depth interviews were also conducted with the Ministers of Education, Women's Affairs and the Interior to ascertain how volunteers could link to national development. A list of informants is included in Annex I.

2.2 Definitions of Volunteers

Definitions of volunteers were explored in a variety of different research tools. For the mapping survey, the research adapted the definition used by Australian Volunteers International, as being someone who:

- works for the benefit of the community and the volunteer;
- works of their own free will;
- is not mainly motivated by payment;
- may receive support (financial or otherwise) but not a salary;
- works in the not-for-profit sector;
- is not full-time staff of an organisation.

This definition was explained during the fielding questionnaire and was also included on the mapping questionnaire.

The qualitative research was interested in exploring indigenous explanations of volunteers. People in focus group discussions were asked "Who works for communal well-being in your village?" and the responses were divided into those who were volunteers and those who were not. These results are presented in Section 7.1.

2.3 Limitations

There were several limitations to the research.

The findings in this research report mostly concern volunteerism in the NGO sector, and while an effort was made to include traditional or informal volunteering, these types of volunteering are not reviewed in substantial detail. Also, the study does not address volunteering through other types of entities such as the private sector, government, or universities.

The questionnaire for the mapping was designed to be user friendly and easy to fill in. However, because it was sent out by email, responses were often unclear or lacking. In these cases, the researchers tried to follow up with individual respondents, but this was not always possible. For the same reason, the researchers could not check the accuracy of statements. Some of the data requested, such as the age and sex of volunteers, was not readily available to respondents, because volunteers are often project based and their details are not collected. While strong efforts were made to explain the wide application of the definition of “volunteer” before the questionnaire was administered, respondents may often have understood the word in a narrow sense (often an unpaid office intern or assistant) rather than an inclusive one. This all reflects the wide range of terms applied to volunteers in the community.

For the qualitative case studies, the main limitation was the perception that the research team, while officially independent, was somehow connected to the institution that had initiated the volunteer programme. Efforts were made to counter such perceptions, but data were discounted if the research team felt that the responses were biased. Data were also consistently triangulated with in-depth interviews from a variety of sources.

The specific locations for the research were selected in consultation with the volunteer supporting institution, and thus research often took place in communities where volunteer programmes “worked”. This was not a significant drawback, because the research wanted to explore the effects of volunteer programmes when they are fully active. However, efforts were also made to include volunteer programmes that had remained relatively inactive in order to explore obstacles that programmes may face. Lastly, because a maximum of only two communities per programme were reviewed, the data from the case studies cannot be used to make conclusions about the effectiveness of the programme as a whole.

3. THEORIES OF VOLUNTEERISM AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Several theories have linked volunteerism with the development of stable democratic societies and have posited that this leads to economic growth.

Theories of “social capital”, for instance, have been used to link civic engagement and participation with the development of democracy. Robert Putnam (1995), for instance, raised this theory’s profile in his analysis of how local associations in both Italy and the United States contributed to civic engagement and a thriving democracy. Social capital has also been researched as a source of economic growth (Dasgupta and Serageldin 2000) and adopted as a key source of development by agencies such as the World Bank.

Putnam defines social capital as “features of social life—networks, norms and trust—that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives” (p. 56). The establishment of trust is a key component of the social capital concept, because it enables people to cooperate to reach shared goals. Social capital is also broken down into bonding, bridging and institutional social capital. Bonding links occur within groups that share common interests but may exclude other people or groups, and thus have negative development impacts. Bridging capital establishes horizontal connections between heterogeneous groups, and thus often works in a more socially inclusive way. Institutional social capital makes links with the formal institutions that govern the social order.

Volunteerism has been suggested as a way in which to develop social capital. A research report by Innovations in Civic Participation (2004) said, “[W]hen youth are positively engaged through service, research indicates that social capital and citizenship increase ... Service fosters trust between citizens and helps develop norms of solidarity and reciprocity which are essential to stable communities” (p. 2). Key to this understanding of volunteerism is the idea of service for a nation or a community, leading to more and improved civic participation. Prevailing social norms and cultural ideas will clearly dictate patterns of social engagement. However, developing a “culture of volunteerism” has been posited as essential to both specific development goals (such as improving the quality of education, or improving youth employment) and a strategy for building democracy (ICP 2005).

This report will look at the case studies of volunteerism, analysing how these instances have worked to foster the different kinds of social capital and to what extent they promote a culture of volunteerism.

4. OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEER ACTION

Throughout this research, people interviewed suggested that there is currently more space for volunteer action than historically has been the case in Cambodia, as well as a greater need for it.

This was seen in the timelines,³ conducted with village elders in several villages included in the in-depth qualitative research. The living memory within these village societies is very long, and participants in the research could sometimes trace the life of their village back to the French colonial era.⁴ Elders understood the current era as one of peace and development, seeing the major differences as those between times of conflict and times when fighting stopped, and making relatively little distinction, for instance, between the ideologies of successive governments since the end of the Khmer Rouge period.⁵ It was clear, however, that in many villages several generations had grown up in circumstances that prevented many kinds of civic engagement beyond village boundaries. Several groups in different areas talked of being restricted and not allowed to leave their villages during French colonial times, or during the 1980s. Conditions of war seriously eroded or totally prevented trust or social engagement from existing, beyond ensuring basic survival.

3 The timelines mapped different eras and forms of reciprocal social exchange and norms of self-help over these periods. See Section 2.1 on research methodology.

4 The French colonial period extended from 1863, when Cambodia became a French protectorate, to 1953, when it declared its independence.

5 Officially, the rule of the Khmer Rouge ended on 7 January 1979. However, they continued as a resistance movement until 1998.

The period of conflict was also longer in many communities studied, encompassing eras such as the *Issarak* period (during French colonial times), up to the end of conflict with the Khmer Rouge. While the Khmer Rouge government was overthrown in 1979, many villages in this research still suffered from their attacks well into the mid-1980s.

Cultural norms of self-help and community spirit ensured their survival in the immediate post-conflict period; participants in all communities described a resurgence in these norms immediately after the end of Khmer Rouge rule. People had to help each other to survive, often with very little outside assistance.

The present era of stability and development has started to re-establish trust within communities. In turn, people have become more socially engaged in the development occurring within their communities. Some of the NGOs included in this study have started to look beyond filling service gaps in a post-conflict society, to establishing long-term means of working with communities. Run Saray, general manager, BFD, explained his perspective:

“In implementing the programme, the participants and participation are very important. If we do not have participation, it can not work. After the war was finished, everybody felt afraid to speak, to listen, to demand, but now we are starting to do this. The other reason that we work with volunteers is for the sustainability of the project, because after the project is finished those people are still there and they still work because the villagers know them well, so when they have a problem they can go to those people”.

This apparent shift by NGOs is largely undocumented. However, it is clear from the survey that international NGOs have largely left their direct service provision role, and local NGOs are working to build local capacities and community-based associations. Pellini (2007) characterised this as a general phenomenon within development, which has moved from encouraging participation to a paradigm of partnership with local actors, reflecting a need to move beyond the tokenistic inclusion of people in pre-designed projects towards a model that views local people as engaged and creating their own forms of development.

A recent review of local associations in Cambodia also highlighted that NGOs currently see their role as being the initiators and supporters of local associations, which are most commonly run by volunteers. While they can play a key role in encouraging this local growth, there are also disadvantages of the current reliance on NGOs:

“A more common view seems to be that, for now, local associations are not capable of standing alone. The main reasons for this are said to be a lack of capacity (both in technical and organisational matters) and the difficult political environment in which authorities seldom listen to local people unless they are backed by an NGO ... Furthermore, it seems as if several of the partners are not very aware of the full potential that local people really have to be agents of their own change”. (Wallgren 2005: 21)

Beyond the re-establishment of peace and stability, several research reports have also noted that decentralisation has opened democratic spaces and ways to link more effectively with local governance structures since the commune council elections in 2002.⁶ Specifically, it has provided local associations a greater potential to push for more accountability of local government. While some note that local associations are hampered in

⁶ Cambodia's first commune election was held in 2002, and is widely regarded as initiating country-wide decentralisation reform. The latter will not be complete until the adoption of an Organic Law on Decentralisation, which at the time of writing is widely expected to be completed in 2008.

exerting pressures on local government (Ojendal and Sedara 2007), there is no doubt that relationships are evolving between local authorities and grassroots initiatives, contributing to institutional social capital. As this report will explore, local associations and volunteer-led initiatives may face difficulties forcing local authorities to be more accountable, but they are finding ways to link with each other for common development goals. Specifically, this report will highlight the ways in which commune councils are beginning to facilitate volunteer-led initiatives becoming more solid institutions.

National government leaders are overwhelmingly supportive of including volunteers within development efforts. The government has worked extensively with networks and mass mobilisation of volunteers in its recent history. Volunteers are still perceived to be an essential part of reaching national development goals, particularly in the health sector (Mitchell 2006). Government officials at all levels in this research were very open to working with grass-roots volunteers.

Lastly, as this research highlights, there is a pressing need to respond to the situation of youth. Cambodia has an overwhelmingly young population, 38 percent being under 15 years old (NIS 2004). Youth are often marginalised in local development initiatives, despite being a valuable resource.⁷ This has commonly been attributed to age hierarchies that exclude young people, yet a recent report on volunteerism in Cambodia pointed out that during the 1980s young people were recruited as volunteers and seen as essential to rebuilding the country, but have since lost their prominence in reaching development goals (Mysliwiec 2005).

From this research, it was clear that age hierarchies have informed a “hierarchy of knowledge”. Older community-based volunteers interviewed openly argued that young people could not work for community well-being because they “lacked knowledge”, although, when probed, they could not specify what knowledge would be required. Where volunteerism was coupled with leadership within the community (which often included religious leadership), it was a common perception that only people of a certain age (broadly speaking from 40 years upwards) could be volunteers. Rural communities however, also feel a widening gap between rural and urban educational opportunities. It was common to find that people characterised local villagers as having “low knowledge”, which impeded their development.

There is now a greater imperative to include young people in volunteer-led initiatives and to address the perceptions that hamper their involvement. Young people can play a role in skills transfer to communities to reach development goals, such as increasing access to education or developing new agricultural skills.

Furthermore, there are increasing pressures on young people. In rural communities, land pressures have already become a reality for many families, who now cannot guarantee that their children will be a part of the rural economy. While land was allocated to individual families after the end of the conflict era, it is now estimated that 12 percent of those who received land have lost it (Biddulph and Vonn 2000). Young people are already becoming migrants, but often have low education and skills, ending up in low-paying sectors (Lim 2007). If migration is accepted as a key part of poverty reduction (ADB 2006), then increasing young migrants’ education and skills could significantly contribute to reducing poverty.

⁷ Personal communication, Chiv You Meng, Khmer Youth Association, 4 April 2008.

While the education of youth has significantly improved in recent decades, there are still some areas of concern highlighted in the NSDP. Primary school enrolments may seem high (at a total rate of 91.9 per cent—Ministry of Planning 2006), the NSDP highlights concerns with the primary school survival rate (the percentage of those enrolled who complete a school), which for grades one to six is only 53.1 percent (2005 data). It also aims to improve the quality of education in rural schools, and to encourage increased enrolments in secondary school. Interventions that address these concerns would support the development of youth's education and skills base.

Youth face a very high unemployment rate, in an economy that relies on a low-skilled labour force. Research on urban youth has found that young people feel despondent about being able to find a job (Mysliwiec 2005). Volunteering is to some extent already starting to address these needs, as one survey found that one-third of them had volunteer experience, and that their main motivation was gaining knowledge and work experience (Mysliwiec 2005).

There are currently low levels of participation, and consequently youth are marginalised. Yet Cambodia has a relatively free political environment that allows NGO initiative (ICP 2008). The same report concluded that there is a favourable environment for working with youth.

Many of the young people included in this research did not want to leave their villages, but very much did want to build their skills and education to be able to develop themselves and their communities. Young people could contribute significantly to rural development if given the opportunity to do so. Their parents have lived through years of conflict and war, and suffer from high rates of illiteracy. Consequently, young people are often more literate and able to embrace new learning than their parents' generation. Moreover, volunteer initiatives have been found to be able to address particular areas, such as the development of a destructive youth culture. A recent report on youth volunteering stated, “[Y]oung people who volunteer are 50% less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, become involved in delinquency, or drop out of school” (ICP 2004).

This report will explore the ways in which volunteering can engage and develop Cambodian youth in order to reach national development goals.

5. THE HISTORY OF VOLUNTEERISM IN CAMBODIA

The history of volunteerism in Cambodia was explored through timelines conducted with village elders in rural communities included in the qualitative research. The research also included a literature review.

The difficulty of analysing the history of volunteerism is partly semantic and partly a question of the analytical “lens” being used. From the timelines, it was clear that the modern term for “volunteer” has become widespread recently only due to its use in NGO-initiated grass-roots activities. Yet there are many people who have essential roles within rural Cambodian communities and whose work conforms to the definition of a volunteer. These would include local Buddhist laymen, *achars*, and village elders who are part of development committees, who work for no salaries for the well-being of the community. When asked, they clearly agree that they are volunteers. In the words of one religious and political leader in a Cham community, “In fact, I am a volunteer, because I do this work willingly and get no salary, and I will probably do it until I die”.

Research on Cambodia has explored the creation of social capital and volunteerism in Khmer communities in various ways. The different aspects of these concepts can be separated into: reciprocal social exchanges; traditional volunteerism; state-sponsored volunteerism; and what could be broadly termed “modern *civil society*” volunteerism. Each of these will be considered, because they appear to have reacted quite differently to historical circumstances.

Traditional Volunteerism and Norms of Reciprocal Social Exchange

Traditionally, people who are volunteers in a rural community are often in a leadership position. These roles often involve an interlinking of secular and religious tasks. The motivations for volunteering are also traditionally based on religious norms or merit making. In the religious communities (Buddhist, Muslim and Christian) reviewed in this research, concepts of “service” and “duty” are grounded in norms that are essential to the maintenance of a religious community.

However, in the literature these roles have been mostly conceived in terms of division of power and its impact on decision-making in rural communities, rather than as social systems that encourage volunteerism. This is not to deny the importance of looking at division of power in traditional volunteerism; this report will analyse how traditional norms include or exclude different people from volunteer efforts. Clearly, developing a “culture of volunteerism” relies on a socially inclusive approach.

One of the earliest anthropological analyses of Khmer communities was conducted by Ebihara (1968), in her in-depth study of a village in south-east Cambodia. She noted that there were no significant formal groups apart from the family and household, and that kinship relations constituted the basic socio-economic unit of village life. She also noted that there were relatively few communal social activities beyond those organised by the temple and central government, and that “only post-harvest festivals and ceremonies in times of crisis are stimulated from within the community itself” (p. 211). Nonetheless, Ebihara asserted that the villagers of West Svay “do have a sense of community, and ... are bound together by diverse social, economic, political and religious ties that form a loosely knit but nonetheless true community” (p. 215).

Several authors have noted that reciprocal relations have formed a key and vibrant part of Cambodian *civil society*. Collins (1998) asserted that within the village, “there are many informal mutual-help groups that serve to knit the households of Cambodian rural society together. The traditions, customs, rules and expectations associated with these groups suggest that they are ancient elements of Cambodian civil life” (p. 13). These reciprocal exchanges encourage social cohesion within a community, and various exchange groups have been documented. This mutual assistance covers a variety of ways in which villagers assist each other, including moving or building houses, exchange of assets (such as cows) or exchange of labour (such as rice transplanting groups). Sedara (2001) concludes that family and kinship relations are essential to these patterns of exchange, and these are characterised by a generalised reciprocity. He argues that these relations of exchange have two themes, namely that each kin member has the “obligation to assist his or her own relatives to improve economic conditions, and each has to ensure the well-being of one’s relatives” (p. 6). Beyond the household, he argues, these reciprocal relations also serve to create social cohesion among social networks in the village.

There has been controversy on the historical evolution of these norms of reciprocity, however, some arguing that they have been decimated by the conflict era (Ovesen et. al. (1996), and others that they were informal beyond the household even before the war (Ebihara 1968). Sedara (2001) asserts that social cohesiveness has returned to pre-war patterns. However, other studies have concluded that these relations have been altered, less by the decimation of the war era than by the erosion of norms created by a cash economy (Krishnamurty 1999). People have become less reliant on exchange of labour, for instance, and more likely to pay for these services.

The findings from the timelines in this research broadly support Krishnamurty’s finding. Elders in many of the focus group discussions asserted that before the conflict started (broadly speaking, during the end of the French colonial era), societies were characterised by a generalised reciprocity, in which goods were freely shared with others in the community. The key distinction that emerged during these discussions was that between exchanges prompted by general norms of sharing excess with the community and exchanges of goods or services that were “counted”, meaning that the cost was taken into account. Participants in the discussions also differentiated between eras when things were exchanged with people in general, and those when relations were more rigid and exchanges occurred only among close kin groups.

“Generalised reciprocity” existed in earlier eras because natural resources were plentiful and the population was smaller. These relations also varied over time. Villagers in some of the focus group discussions explained that social cohesiveness and mutual assistance had altered or disappeared during times of sudden increases in wealth or conflict. During the Lon Nol era, for instance, villagers could make a lot of money from trade between Lon Nol and Khmer Rouge forces, but risked their lives doing so. During that time, people did not share resources with each other freely and started to charge high rates of interest for anything borrowed. During the harsh Khmer Rouge time, norms of trust were severely affected, and villagers could be killed even for possessing any materials or food not sanctioned by local leaders. However, with the retreat of the Khmer Rouge in 1979, norms of mutual assistance had revived and had been critical to the survival of many communities.

Again, during this period, mutual exchange and assistance in some areas were community wide, and not just within a kinship group. In the words of one villager from Kompong Cham province:

“At that time, we had to help each other to survive ... When we came back to the village there were only a few houses left ... Some of us who had gold left went to sell it and bought fishing nets ... We could catch a lot of fish because there was a lot of it in those days. We would keep five barrels to share in the village amongst ourselves, and we would take another five barrels to sell”.

There was also broad agreement in the focus group discussions that these norms of mutual assistance were no longer as strong as they had been, mostly because of the introduction of a cash economy, in which people can pay for services or goods, and that in a consumerist era people are less likely to provide mutual assistance, except within close kinship groups.

Patterns of mutual assistance are also said to be formed by two key aspects—kinship and *patron-client relations*, which, Ledgerwood and Vijghen (2002) argue, “are still at the core of understanding how reciprocity works within a village and the social bonds created and sustained by those exchanges” (p. 143). This may seem to contradict findings that earlier societies were characterised by “generalised” reciprocity, beyond kin relations. However, it must also be remembered that the timelines often refer to the early foundations of a village, when members would have likely been from the same kinship group.

While norms of mutual assistance appear to have waned, traditional volunteerism is still a visible force in many communities. This is mostly seen in the presence of committees that are variously tied to the local wat. Volunteers have been identified in a variety of areas: funeral associations, rice associations, road construction committees, schools associations, among many others. In the timelines, it was clear that, similarly to the development of denser governance networks, religion-based social organisation had also evolved to become a key feature of village life. Villagers in Kompong Cham, for instance, referred to an era when there was only one *achar* for the whole commune, who had to be called on to perform various ceremonies.⁸ Villagers in those times also were not as cognisant of key Buddhist village ceremonies and appeared to observe only the major festivities. Participants explained that the wat committee in their village had started during the Sihanouk era, when governance had been divided into secular and religious realms.

Collins (1998) has commented on the critical role of wat committees in local development, saying, “[T]he endogenous voluntary cooperative associations connected to the Wat may also play a significant part in this resurgence of *civil society*” (p. 5).

⁸ The research team observed local *achars* and older women calling villagers to observe ceremonies. The key roles of the *achars* include making sure that villagers participate in these ceremonies and officiating at other life cycle ceremonies requested by individual villagers.

Researchers (including Pellini 2007; UNDP 2002) have commented on the ability of the wat-based committees to garner respect and trust as a key that has allowed them to raise funds for village development. The leaders of these associations are often perceived to be highly religious, and are motivated by religious notions of sacrifice and devotion, as Collins (1998) notes:

“The Wat provides an outlet for a volunteer spirit of retired and energetic villagers, who have the means to devote themselves to the Wat and to the public. The lay leaders of a Wat have a constituency that consists mainly of the pious men and women of the village who regularly come to the Wat to make their weekly devotions”.

Volunteers are thus often leaders within the community, which Ledgerwood and Vijhen (2002) argue is based on establishing a moral authority. Traditional volunteerism is not open to all, but is based on strict criteria. Roles are allocated according to sex and perception of high moral character. This is also demonstrated in Collins’ discussion of the role of the me khyal, or leader of different projects, who risks losing face by asking for villagers’ assent and support for projects:

“[T]he me khyal takes the risk to rise momentarily in society as a leader in order to accomplish a task that will benefit the community”.

Leadership and mobilisation of people into communal endeavours are thus based on respect and are argued to be essential to “maintaining a community spirit”.

Pellini (2007) has argued that the re-emergence of self-help groups and associations shows that trust and community solidarity are still present in Cambodia. He also argues that traditional associations represent the most common form of cooperation in rural communities, yet they have been excluded from the development-based definition of *civil society*. Thus, development assistance often bypasses these traditional associations and does not actively link with them. This research, however, explored some models that do try to establish these links.

Pellini also presents some key characteristics of traditional volunteers. They are often older and are respected in the villages where they work, and communities frequently rely on the same people to perform community roles. Thirty percent of the members of the schools association that he studied had five other community roles. While the volunteers are in effect community leaders, their leadership is often specific to a development objective and ceases once this has been achieved. Nonetheless, Pellini asserts that these traditional structures are probably “the largest and most solid component of Cambodian *civil society* groups” and that, “under committed leadership, Pagodas represent the space where community initiatives can start and develop” (p. 133).

State-Sponsored Volunteerism

There is relatively little information on state-sanctioned volunteerism. During the 1980s, mass mobilisations of “volunteers” proved vital for national reconstruction. At first, confronted with deep poverty and suffering and very few resources, national leaders encouraged people to rely on Cambodian traditions of mutual support. Later on, the state mobilised mass movements of volunteers as part of national reconstruction and nation building, under a socialist ideology (Slocomb 2003). For instance, there was a mass recruitment of students to conduct classes to eradicate illiteracy in rural areas, and the Women’s Organisation mobilised volunteers and encouraged mutual support at the local level (Mysliwiec 1988). There was still conflict during this era, which was also characterised by mass labour requisitioning for national defence, such as for the K-5 border projects to protect against damaging incursions by the remaining Khmer Rouge forces (Slocomb 2003). While securing Cambodia’s borders and winning the battle were undoubtedly the state’s primary aim, socialist ideological rationalisations were used to encourage efforts to rebuild the nation. It is consequently difficult to separate volunteerism from forced national service, as Slocomb explains: “Some people did volunteer to take part in K-5, but the great majority of them were conscripted”.

In the timelines, elders identified the current era as one of peace and development, which has allowed volunteerism to be fostered. The present volunteer infrastructure has a variety of actors, who all play a vital role in developing Cambodia. Traditional and government-sanctioned volunteerism are still crucial to development, as is NGO-initiated volunteerism. All of these efforts represent a concern for working with rural communities and grass-roots initiatives.

Current government-supported volunteerism is widespread, and includes, for instance, village health volunteers, volunteers to feed back and participate in commune councils and those who promote changing gender norms. Government leaders interviewed for this research were highly supportive of involving volunteers, not only to reach development objectives, but also to encourage links between government and local communities. Village health volunteers are included in government health policies, for instance the “Policy on Community Participation”, and have played a clear role in encouraging people to use public health services (Mitchell 2006). The Ministry of the Interior, in planning decentralisation to commune councils, foresees volunteers who participate in local government planning as an essential part of empowerment of communities⁹ to demand transparent and accountable local leadership. The Ministry of Women’s Affairs is currently piloting its own project, working with local volunteers to promote the re-establishment of norms, such as respect for women, that could reduce violence against women.¹⁰

⁹ Personal communication, H.E. Leng Vy, Director General, Ministry of the Interior, 22 February 2008.

¹⁰ Personal communication, H.E. Dr Ing Kantha Phavi, Minister of Women’s Affairs, 20 February 2008.

Modern Civil Society Volunteerism

NGOs have also supported the development of government-sanctioned volunteers, in order to meet government objectives. For instance, many have supported village health volunteers, or have worked with traditional birth attendants (whose vital role is also supported by government policy) or with village feedback committees to commune councils (see Section 6). NGOs have also developed innovative programmes that work with volunteers, often using indigenous norms or volunteerism to promote social engagement with development issues. Both HIV/AIDS and natural resource management programmes, for instance, have promoted religious leaders to be involved in service provision, to reduce discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS or to promote respect for natural resources (Henke et al. 2002; Bradley and Oberndorf 2005). In the context of resource degradation, natural resource networks or local associations (e.g. forest and fishery committees) have advocated for local communities' role in managing resources (Bradley 2006).

The increased presence of international NGOs¹¹ has included international volunteer sending agencies, such as Voluntary Service Overseas, Australian Volunteers International, Voluntary Service Agency, United Nations Volunteers (UNV) and, more recently, the US Peace Corps. Collectively, these agencies supported a total of 179 volunteers at the time of the research, 60 percent of whom were women. Only UNV also supports a national volunteering programme. International volunteering agencies mostly support the recruitment of highly skilled volunteers to assist strategically in reaching Cambodia's development goals.

There is also an emerging role for youth as volunteers. A recent survey of university students found that 30 percent had volunteered, demonstrating that volunteerism is one avenue that young people use for gaining valuable work experience that may help them secure employment in a competitive job market (Mysliwiec 2005).

Although very little is documented about the scale of NGO-initiated projects, there are several valuable insights from the literature. There is a lack of policy governing volunteerism. A recent review of youth participation in Asia concluded that there was a lack of policy on youth, despite a relatively free environment and pressing need for engaging with youth issues (ICP 2008).

11 International NGOs were absent during the Khmer Rouge era and had a minimal presence from 1979 to 1991, but returned with the signing of the Paris peace accords in 1991 and the first elections in 1993.

6. KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MAPPING

A total of 405 NGOs and other organisations (faith-based organisations and local associations) were contacted by telephone to be included in the fielding questionnaire, which asked basic questions on what kinds of volunteers they were working with; 83.7 percent were found to be working with volunteers. Those not working with volunteers, or who did not wish to take part in the fielding questionnaire, were excluded, which left a total sample of 317 NGOs.

Table 1: Types of Volunteers	Number of NGOs	Percentage of Total
My organisation/group has projects that work with groups of volunteers who are trained and supported by us	192	60.6 %
My organisation/group has volunteers who assist in administration or with projects	184	58 %
My organisation/group supports volunteers who train or mobilise groups of existing traditional associations, community-based organisations or community workers/health workers	146	46.1 %
My organisation/group promotes either human rights or rights-based issues, or supports giving human rights to our target group. We work with volunteers, either on a full-time basis or when we mobilise people to be a part of campaigns	119	37.5 %
My organisation/group supports volunteers who facilitate or mobilise communities to give feedback to commune councils	97	30.6 %
I participate in a community-based organisation or traditional association	94	29.7 %
I am a community worker who does not receive a fixed salary, and money is not the main reason that I work for my community	49	15.5 %
I participate in a self-help group that is focussed on a particular issue or cause	47	14.8 %
My organisation/group is a volunteer support organisation and works with people whom we refer to as “volunteers”	40	12.6 %

Note: answers do not add up to 100% because respondents were allowed more than one answer.

Table 1 demonstrates from this sample their main focus areas (although the questionnaire did not collect data on total numbers in each sector).

The most frequent response demonstrates that NGOs are initiating and transferring skills to grass-roots volunteer programmes. The second most frequent response shows a focus on volunteers who are acquiring office skills, most probably to build professional work experience.

Respondents who took part in the fielding questionnaire and who were found to be working with and through volunteers were invited by email to be a part of the mapping survey. A total of 86 NGOs responded to the mapping survey, a 27 percent response rate.

Of those who responded, the vast majority (74.4 percent) were Cambodian NGOs, while 19.8 percent were international. Also, 8.1 percent identified themselves as faith-based organisations.¹²

There is substantial evidence from the mapping that Cambodian organisations are currently leading work with volunteers, and that, while international organisations played an important role in establishing NGOs, they have now largely moved away from direct support to the grass roots.

Table 2 shows who had supported the forming of respondents’ organisation (financially, organisationally, with training or in other ways).

Table 2: Support for Formation of Organisation

	Percentage
Respondent is an international NGO that set up its programme office in Cambodia	24.4 %
Local NGO	15.1 %
International NGO/International organisation	61.6 %
Governmental agencies	15.1 %
Local authorities	9.3 %
Faith-based organisation (international)	11.6 %
Faith-based organisation (local)	4.7 %
Self-initiated	16.3 %
Other	8.1 %

Note: answers do not add up to more than 100% because respondents were allowed more than one answer.

While international agencies have played a substantial support role (cited by 61.6 percent of respondents), several other agencies also emerged as pivotal. Governmental agencies (national and local) were cited by 24.4 percent of respondents, demonstrating that they are supportive of work at the grass roots. Faith-based organisations are also a significant source of support, at 16.3 percent.

The majority of organisations sampled are still currently donor-funded, at 70.9 percent, while only 3.5 percent raise money from their local communities. However, there are some signs of diversification of income generation: 22.1 percent said that they raised funds from members of their organisation; 27.9 percent cited private donors; 27.9 percent conducted “other” activities, such as fund-raising events.

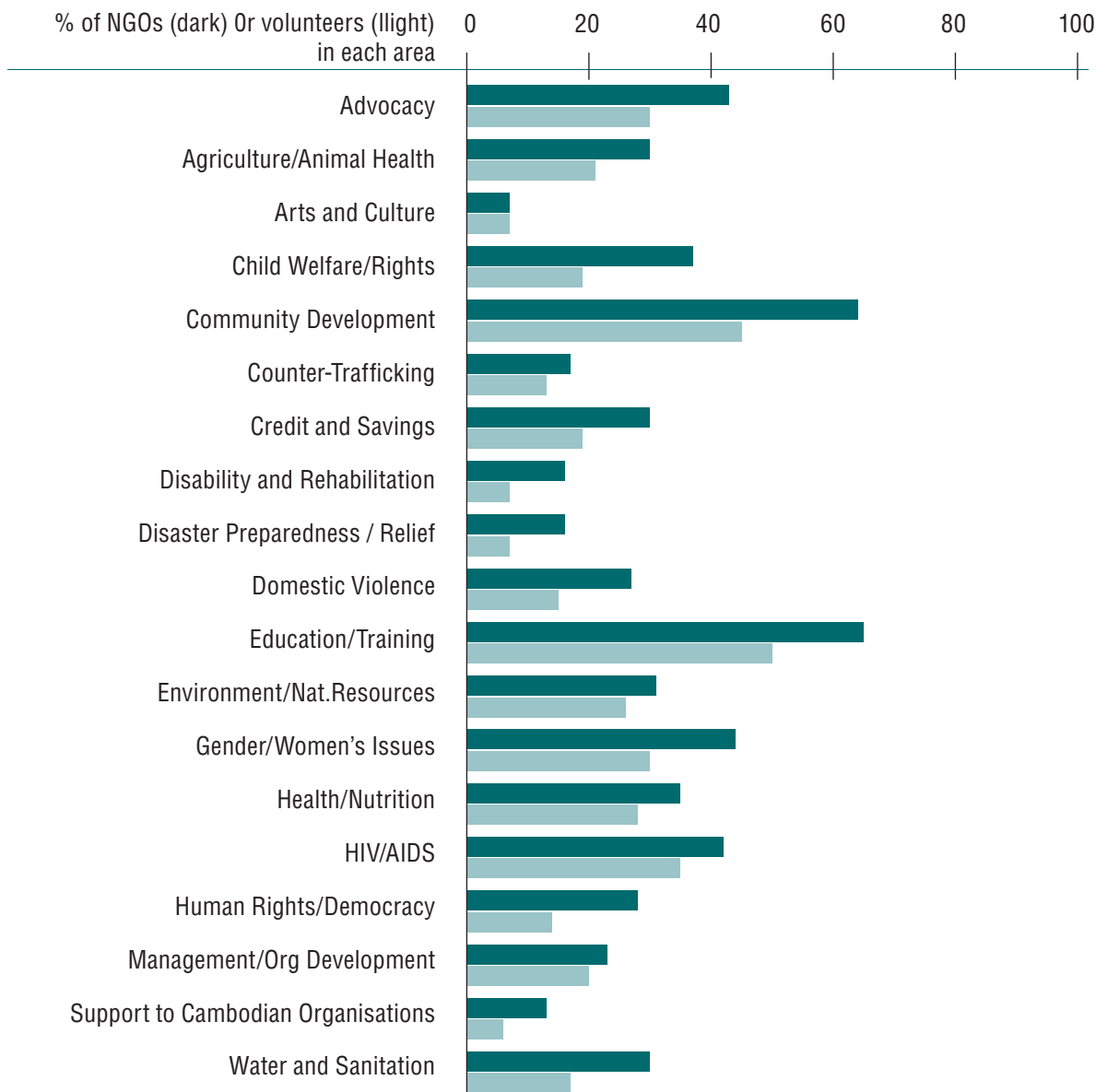
¹² Some respondents identified themselves as both NGOs and faith-based organizations, so answers add up to more than 100 percent.

Volunteer Focus Areas and Geographical Reach

Graph 1 shows the sectors focussed on by NGOs (Sector 1) and by the volunteers they work with (Sector 2). It should be noted that this information does not give us overall numbers for where volunteers are working, but rather what each respondent’s target areas are.

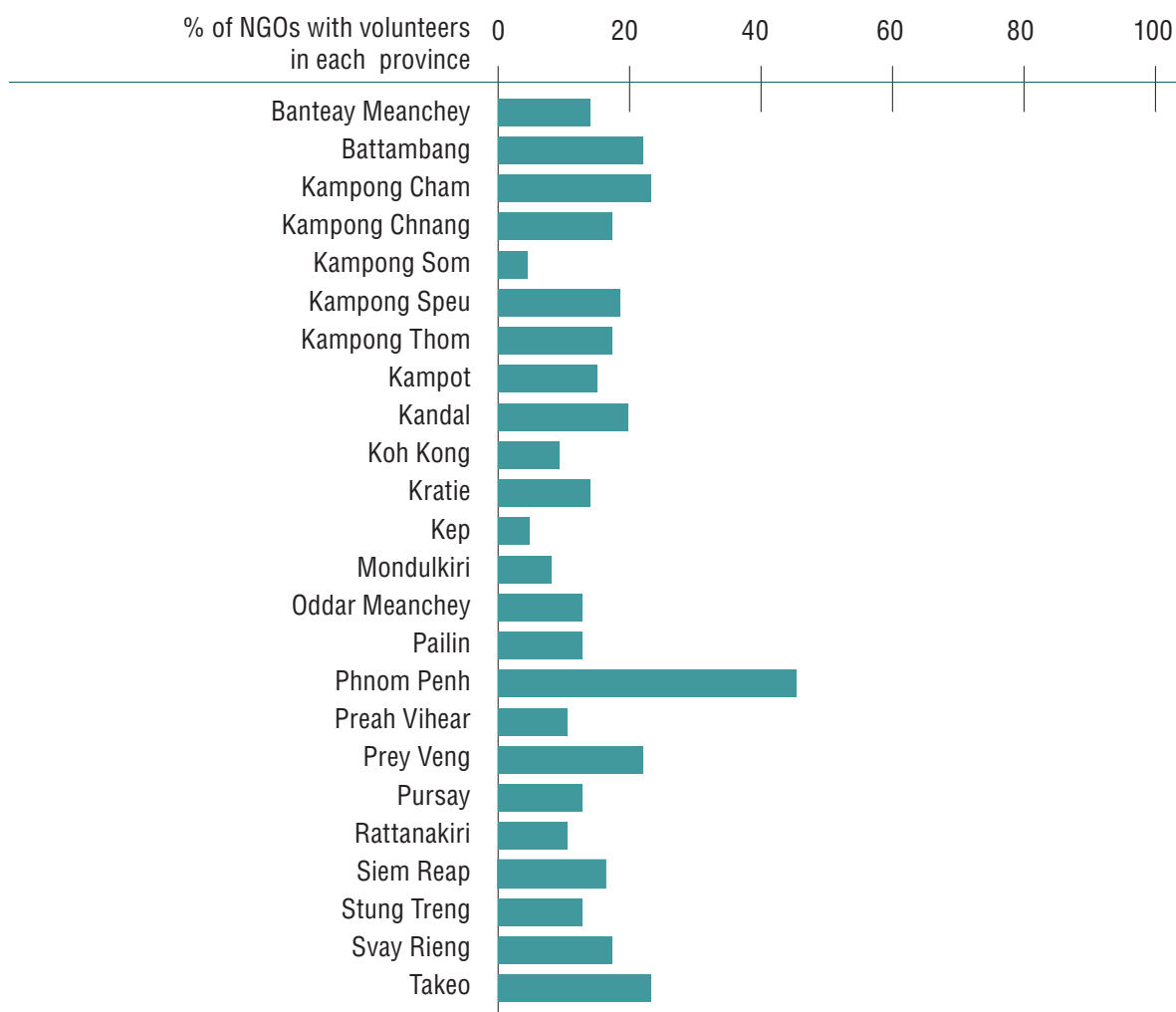
Volunteers are overwhelmingly active in education and training (50 percent), demonstrating that there has been a substantial shift towards empowering people in communities to be their own sources of learning. They are also clearly focussed on development in rural areas—for instance, 45 percent are involved in community development, and 25.6 percent are working on natural resources issues. Volunteers are also clearly involved in the development of civic participation, 30.2 percent citing “advocacy” as a focus area. This also broadly tallies with the results of the fielding questionnaire, which showed substantial involvement of volunteers in developing civic participation in commune councils. Volunteers are also expanding their role to enable communities to tackle a variety of “modern” issues, such as HIV/AIDS (34.9 percent).

Graph 1: NGO and Volunteer Areas of Involvement



Graph 2 shows the provinces where respondents said their volunteers worked. It does not give us the overall numbers of volunteers in each province. The focus on Phnom Penh is largely reflective of the high numbers of respondents who have volunteers as office interns or project assistants, often in order to give them job skills and experience. Beyond this, it can be seen that volunteers are working across all provinces, and are often focussed on the most densely populated areas, such as Kompong Cham and Battambang.

Graph 2: **Provinces Where Volunteers Work**



Volunteer Demographics

In total, respondents to the mapping survey work with and through 23,997 volunteers. This number is a considerable underestimation of the volunteers in Cambodia. It counts only those defined as volunteers by our NGO respondents, and does not take into account countless others who are also working for their community's benefit but who are not referred to as volunteers.

Volunteers overwhelmingly volunteer on a part-time basis (73.5 percent) or occasionally (24.4 percent),¹³ demonstrating that they often combine volunteer work with livelihood and education. Only 2 percent of volunteers were full time.

Table 3¹⁴ shows the demographics of our respondents' volunteers, which also shows a high level of participation of young people. This broadly corresponds with the findings of the qualitative research that young people are very easily mobilised in large numbers, due to their lack of livelihood commitments and their eagerness to be included in development efforts.

	% of Total
Males, all ages	53.5 %
Females, all ages	46.5 %
Under 17 years male	28.2 %
Under 17 years female	39.7 %
17–24 years male	3.9 %
17–24 years female	4 %
25–49 years male	9.1 %
25–49 years female	11.4 %
50 years plus male	1.7 %
50 years plus female	1.9 %

It can be seen that volunteering varies greatly with sex and age. Girls play a big role in their younger years and are the largest group. However, overall, males are more active, showing that women's participation becomes harder later in life. This data are strongly indicative of NGO-initiated volunteer programmes. The qualitative research found that traditional volunteers often participate at later stages of life, such as in their 50s, which is the least frequent category in our survey.

¹³ The definitions used in the survey were: full-time, more than 20 hours per week; part-time, 2–20 hours per week; occasionally, less than 2 hours per week.

¹⁴ The numbers given for overall male and female volunteers and for volunteers disaggregated by sex and age category are not consistent, as some respondents provided overall numbers for male and female volunteers only, and not those disaggregated by age. The denominator used for rows 1-2 in the table is thus different from those used for rows 3 to 10. This also highlights that data on the age of volunteers is often not in a readily available form, making monitoring of participation across age groups difficult

Recruitment

Selection processes are often tailored to the different kinds of volunteers who are being engaged. Open recruitment (where positions are advertised) was said to be the main mechanism for 50 percent of the survey respondents, whereas closed recruitment (where positions are open only to people from targeted groups or areas) was cited by another 45.3 percent. Broadly speaking, this corresponds to two forms of volunteer engagement—open recruitment broadly recruits people from all age groups into new and emerging volunteer roles that focus on skills building or skills transferral. Closed recruitment is more likely to be associated with traditional forms of leadership and volunteerism in rural communities.

Selection processes also vary with the kinds of skills or characteristics respondents are looking for in their volunteers. Thirty-nine and a half percent of respondents said that volunteers have to be from the communities where they work, and 41.9 percent said that they have to be respected by those communities, but only 23.3 percent said that volunteers are selected by the communities themselves. This was corroborated by the qualitative research, which found that volunteers in rural communities are often recruited based on their leadership abilities (such as ability to command respect and call people to participate in activities) but, consequently, their selection is rarely democratic. Twenty-seven point nine percent of respondents said that volunteers have to be “educated” people (such as having a university degree), suggesting that they will be involved in skills transfer or building. These points will be expanded on in Section 7.

However, all respondents selected volunteers based on two fundamental aspects of volunteerism: their commitment to the issues being worked on (55.8 percent) and their ability to transfer skills and education (59.3 percent).

Lastly, the survey looked at methods to ensure equal representation of men and women. The responses for this showed a generally low commitment to equal gender representation, as only 50 percent of respondents said that they had a policy to ensure this. Moreover, analysis of the responses showed a mixed picture of implementation. In some cases, such as the selection of village health support group volunteers, there is a clear policy that both men and women should be selected, but the majority of organisations did not have a way of ensuring equal participation beyond merely encouraging women to apply.

“We can have both male and female volunteers. We can put a lot girls working in administration, but they also have the right to go to the field. They apply to work in different areas [administration or field], but we do not think about a percentage of how many females and males should be working for us”. Mapping respondent

Some also stated that they could not set targets for female participation because communities select volunteers themselves. Women may also be marginalised in other ways, such as through literacy requirements or, more evidently, through gender norms that tie them to reproductive work.

“We consistently fail to get the women that we need. They are too busy with other activities, they often cannot read and write, and if they can, often they are not interested because of our low incentives. We keep trying”. —Mapping respondent

Support to Volunteers

The survey looked at different kinds of support offered to volunteers, both preparing them for their roles and encouraging them throughout their work.

Respondents were first asked what kinds of training were given to volunteers before they started work. Educational and networking skills, at 41.9 percent and 34.9 percent respectively, were the key areas that most respondents focussed on, followed by management (26.7 percent) and advocacy skills (17.4 percent). Nine point three percent said that they concentrated on all of these areas. A further 33.7 percent said that they offered “other” training, and 16.3 percent offered no training whatsoever.

Table 4: Type of Support for Volunteers

	% of Organisations
Training (pre-departure)	29 %
Training (ongoing and refresher)	34.8 %
Per-diem to workshops	24.4 %
Transportation	52.3 %
Transportation (means of)	2.3 %
None	9.3 %
Other	31.4 %

Table 4 summarises the main areas in which volunteers may be offered non-financial incentives or benefits.

In terms of financial benefits, there are several issues. First, only 38.4 percent of the respondents in the mapping said that they provide a financial benefit to their volunteers, meaning that a large majority do not. However, the number receiving benefits is large enough to cause confusion and may account for the difficulties that many informants in the qualitative research reported when using the term “volunteer”, namely that a financial benefit was then expected, and the project then became unsustainable without it.

Secondly, there are substantial differences between expatriate and local volunteer rates, and a high range of variation within these groups. The expatriate volunteer agencies that participated in the survey paid their volunteers an average of US\$931.40 per month, with a very wide range of US\$340–2200. Cambodian volunteers receive an average of US\$60.71 per month, with a range of US\$5–440. It becomes difficult to differentiate between those whose costs are being covered, and those who are in effect not volunteers, but staff. The upper benefit, US\$440 is for full-time United Nations volunteers, who were not perceived as volunteers but as project staff by the local communities where they work.¹⁵ This is not surprising when these rates are compared to average incomes in rural communities.¹⁶ It also allowed UNV staff visible disposable income that sharply

¹⁵ The research included a site visit to a UNV-supported project in Siem Reap, where the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with UNV volunteers and a focus group discussion in their target area. During this discussion, researchers specifically probed whether participants considered the UNV workers to be volunteers or staff.

¹⁶ The current annual per capita income is US\$290. Ninety percent of poor households live in rural areas (UNFPA 2008).

differentiated them from the villagers. Even when volunteers are selected from rural communities, the benefits have often resulted in these positions being co-opted by local patronage networks and elites (Ledgerwood and Vijghen 2002).

However, it should also be noted that there are likely to be substantial variations according to how long the volunteer works, and the core philosophy of volunteerism embraced by the supporting organisation. Some of the higher financial benefits are more likely to be given to NGO interns, who are often office based and recruited on the basis of skills and education. In general, the cases reviewed in the qualitative research showed that volunteers in rural communities receive few if any benefits.

Including Youth and Women

The mapping survey included questions on integrating women and youth into work with volunteers. Traditional development models often marginalise these groups (see sections 7 and 9), and thus it was felt important to explore if and how volunteer programmes were integrating them. While it is difficult to make firm conclusions on the impact of interventions given the brief nature of the survey, some general remarks can be made.

For many respondents, it appeared that there was more awareness of the importance of being gender sensitive than of the importance of including youth. This was particularly the case with development programmes in rural communities. Where NGO initiatives support governmental policy, for instance in reaching health objectives, there appears to be a concerted effort to target women and girls and ensure equal participation, as both volunteers and beneficiaries. However, as will be explored in the case studies, this is a complicated issue.

Women are also conceived of as generally benefiting from community development activities in important ways, such as through livelihood activities. The qualitative results from this research broadly support this conclusion, as women often engage in livelihood enhancement activities.

However, many of the respondents were specifically youth-focussed organisations that rely on youth volunteer participation. The Red Cross, for instance, is one of the few that has developed a youth volunteer policy and integrated youth volunteers as a core part of its intervention strategy (Cambodian Red Cross 2004). Furthermore, youth organisations are often based in urban settings, and appear to focus on more “modern” issues, such as migration, trafficking, domestic violence and HIV/AIDS. There could be several reasons for this. Youth are likely to be attracted to more modern issues. Youth are often at high risk of HIV or of being trafficked; thus they are focussing on issues which affect them as a group. Secondly, they are often marginalised in community development and so possibly tend to congregate in youth-focussed organisations. Many of these organisations aim to develop young people’s confidence and ability to participate in society, and in theory are contributing to the development of young people’s civic participation.

“Youth have also gained positive effects from volunteer work, such as gathering them to educate them to be the social capital of the community. As a result, the majority of youth in the community have changed their attitude and are not involved in drugs, gangs and bad behaviour”.—Mapping respondent

Furthermore, for some issues, such as sexual relationships, a focus on youth as a separate interest group is appropriate. As was also found in the case studies, youth volunteers can effectively target their peers to tackle the problems they face,

“Relationships, especially love relationships, are a key issue for youth. So young people are really looking for information regarding a topic that concerns their relationships ... Ninety percent of our beneficiaries are youth, and volunteers help the organisation to contact youth and to be attentive to their problems”.—Mapping respondent

Volunteers—Perceived Social Benefits of Their Work

The mapping survey attempted to outline briefly the effects of volunteer action and what their social impact could be. As sketched in Section 7, volunteer involvement can have multiple social benefits, such as building social capital, civic participation and engagement. However, these effects will depend greatly on the extent to which the volunteers have freedom of action, and how they are conceived of as social actors, able to engage in and change their societies. Concomitantly, the different ways that people volunteer may have implications for the development of a culture of volunteerism.

While the information provided in the mapping survey was brief, it became clear that there were several different ways in which volunteers were engaged. Both Cambodian and expatriate volunteers are placed within organisations or projects. It was clear that the Cambodian volunteers were working with an important but quite limited goal—to gain job experience and skills. It appears that many respondents are using an increasingly available pool of labour—young, unemployed educated people who may be willing to give their time for free in order to gain some experience. While some respondents talked of very specific skills and support that they would give their volunteers, it was also clear that, for a few, the financial benefits of using this labour were a main motivation.

“We decided to use volunteers to help us in our administrative work. Through these volunteers, our organisation can minimise the administrative costs, because our organisation has limited funds which are only enough to support the project”. —Mapping respondent

Some organisations appeared to engage their volunteers in field visits and work with communities, even if they were predominantly office based, so that they could obtain some understanding of the social impacts of NGO work. As the qualitative research will explore, working with and through volunteers can open arenas of engagement for people who may have been marginalised.

“We recruited only female graduate students, because we wanted to give them more opportunity and chances. On the other hand, we want to promote more females in public work or civil society work”.—Mapping respondent

In discussion of volunteers in rural communities, or with specific target groups, the concept of volunteering seems to broaden. However, this also varies widely and covers a number of issues. For example, many respondents are supporting government health objectives through village health volunteers.¹⁷ This is an

¹⁷ Village health volunteers encourage people to access care at health centres, and may give health messages that encourage treatment-seeking for specific ailments (Mitchell 2006).

area where the government has recognised that volunteers can make a valuable contribution. Many of these programmes recognise the advantages of working with people living in the target communities, and especially their ability to distribute information. Their primary role is to educate and often to encourage specific health behaviour, such as accessing ante-natal care.

However, while the lack of data makes it difficult to delineate, it does seem that there is a shift towards expanding on the work of volunteers and establishing more autonomous volunteer-led rural groups. Some respondents considered gender norms that may affect women's access to health care to be addressed more effectively through working with groups of mothers.

“The aim of the organisation is to improve maternal and child health. To have a long-lasting impact, we establish mother support groups and train traditional birth attendants. Volunteers are part of the community and an essential part of our programme to ensure the sustainability of our work”.—Mapping respondent

As explored in Section 5, the current era of peace and development has opened democratic spaces for civic engagement, and this is leading NGOs to work in partnership with much more solid and sustainable grass-roots structures, as one respondent explained:

“Our organisation does not work directly with communities; rather, we work closely with community-based organisations, coordinating them to work with communities. We believe that our way of working is effective and can change the community, because they are all in their communities, so they can work for their communities. Furthermore, community-based organisations have their organisational structure and responsibilities, which makes them much easier to work with”.

Those respondents that view working with volunteers as integral to establishing grass-roots sustainable action could more clearly include them within their organisational values. In response to this question, 22 percent did not have a statement of values, and only 16.3 percent said that volunteers were not included in their organisation's values. Fifty-seven percent said that working with volunteers was a part of their statement of values. It is likely that this is an over-representation, however, because many of the qualitative responses did not clearly articulate how volunteers were included. Nonetheless, it was clear that some respondents viewed working with volunteers as part of encouraging values such as empowerment, self-help and sustainability.

“We have it in the mission of our organisation: encourage and empower them to take an active role in resolving community issues”.—Mapping respondent

“[We] acknowledge that helping each other is very important, so working through volunteers is a contribution to awareness-raising, especially for the next generation, so that they can help each other”.—Mapping respondent

Very few respondents talked about encouraging a culture of volunteerism and its potential to contribute to sustainable development. Yet, for a few, volunteerism encompassed encouraging values such as self-sufficiency.

As will be explored in Section 7, this was also a critical aspect of many volunteer-led programmes.

“Volunteerism needs to be encouraged because it is not very strong in this country for cultural and historical reasons. Volunteerism decreases dependency on outside money and encourages people to solve their own problems. There is no hope if they wait for an outside agency to come in. Lots of villages don’t get any help, or the help that they do get is sporadic. They need to help themselves”.—Mapping respondent

7. CASE STUDIES

Five case studies were selected for a qualitative analysis of different approaches to volunteerism. Specifically, the case studies aimed to explore the effects and impacts of volunteer approaches on national and local development goals, in order to provide recommendations on how to scale up these initiatives. The studies also focussed on Cambodian NGO-initiated volunteerism that was not directed at single issues but had wider development aims.¹⁸ Efforts were also made to select NGOs that had a long history of initiating volunteer action.

Two youth-focussed volunteer models were chosen—the Khmer Youth Association and Youth Star Cambodia. Three other case studies focussed on development in rural communities, where 90 percent of Cambodia’s poor live. NAS provided a clear example of a local NGO working with volunteers for rural development. CEDAC is one of Cambodia’s oldest volunteer-using organisations, although it has recently moved away from this model, and the research wanted to explore the reasons for this. Lastly, BFD is a faith-based local NGO that has long promoted volunteerism and which provided additional insights into values-based volunteerism.

The research team spent over one week at each project site in three provinces, Banteay Meanchey, Kampong Cham, and Prey Veng, where the case study NGOs are active. The communes or villages studied were selected in consultation with the NGOs. The research methods included conducting focus group discussions with mixed, youth and women’s groups, and timelines with elders. The team also did profiles with three to five volunteers in each program, an institutional analysis and in-depth interviews with key informants both in the communities studied and with the NGO at local and national level.

7.1 Indigenous Definitions of Volunteerism

Indigenous definitions of volunteerism were explored in the context of the qualitative research. In focus group discussions, researchers asked people to rank those who worked for the well-being of the community, and then asked them to divide them into those they did and did not consider volunteers.

In the rankings, those who worked for well-being always included the village chief and the village development committees. In some cases, it also included other local associations, such as funeral associations. Women’s focus group discussions always ranked “volunteers” such as traditional birth attendants and women’s health groups highly, whereas this was less the case in mixed discussions.

¹⁸ Many volunteers appear to work on single issues, such as providing HIV/AIDS education. These volunteers often work alone providing a message, and were not felt to provide enough of a range of volunteer action.

If the volunteer model being studied was not included, researchers were asked to include it in the rankings—this happened in several different focus groups in one commune, where local volunteers were less well known. Across the communities studied, there was broad agreement over the key components of the definition of volunteer as someone who;

- works willingly and without coercion;
- works without a salary;
- sacrifices or gives up something for the role (mostly time and energy);
- works for community well-being.

There was broad agreement that people such as village chiefs or teachers were not volunteers, because they have a government role and a salary. However, this was not always the case. In one community where the village chief had been elected and was particularly well loved,¹⁹ one focus group discussion said that the village chief was not a volunteer, but another said that he was. When asked if he was a volunteer even if he received a government salary, they replied, “That’s not a salary, that’s just money that they give him”. In other words, the ranking exercise did not resolve the difficulties inherent in many definitions of a volunteer, namely of differentiating between a “salary” and a “stipend”.

The crucial aspect of this definition is clearly the perception of the volunteer’s motivation being to work for communal good. This was also highlighted in discussions about whether volunteers should come from inside or outside the community. While people tended to value people from within the community because they were known to them and easy to approach, many respondents wanted volunteers to come from outside, because they perceived their own communities as having low knowledge and skills. However, it seems that to be accepted as volunteers, they had to be perceived as not being motivated by a salary but by communal benefit.

“We can have people from outside as well. They just have to have confidence in us, and our community, and they have to have experience and knowledge. The most important thing is that they can stay in the village with us”.—Woman in focus group discussion, Kompong Cham

Lastly, it must be noted that in discussions about who in the community could be a volunteer, it became clear that this definition is not as socially inclusive as it may appear. In communities with strong religious beliefs, the question about who could volunteer was difficult for people to respond to, because volunteers were often local leaders selected on strict criteria, such as being respected by the community, that precluded widespread application and definitely did not include youth or women. Furthermore, many women and girls interviewed felt that they did not have the leadership skills needed to become a volunteer.

Thus, while this research found that developing a culture of volunteerism relies on staying true to indigenous definitions, there is also a strong need to broaden cultural understandings of volunteerism towards being more socially inclusive.

¹⁹ Village chiefs are currently not elected but appointed by the commune council and thus often are part of local patronage networks. In this community, however, there were strong norms of trust and social cohesion, and thus the village elected its chief, whose appointment was then approved by the chief of the commune council. In other communities village chiefs are more likely to be viewed as political partisans.

7.2 Khmer Youth Association

History of NGO Involvement in Volunteerism

KYA has been operating since 1992, working with youth in a variety of areas that include building democracy, peace building and reproductive health. It focusses on youth to include them in development.

The research looked at youth clubs initiated and supported by KYA in Svay Sisophon (Serei Saophoan, Banteay Meanchey province). At the time of the interview, KYA in this province was working with 277 volunteers, most of whom were women aged 17–24 years (113 males and 164 females). This corroborates the results of the mapping that young women participate the most as volunteers, especially before they marry.

As with many other NGOs that work with volunteers, KYA has incorporated them into a variety of its programmes, from building democracy to cultural exchanges between Cambodian and Swedish students.²⁰ Programmes included peer education on issues such as reproductive health and drug prevention.

KYA envisages that its programmes are helping to cultivate youth as a resource for national development, promoting volunteerism among youth and developing skills that will make them more employable, as the director of the Banteay Meanchey office explained:

“We challenge youth that they need to volunteer and learn endurance, and it equips them so that they can find good jobs. We want to educate youth, because they are the ones who build community resources. They have the capacity and ability, so that they can help to reduce bad activities, and will help to develop society, to build human resources and build social stability”.—Sovann, Director of KYA Banteay Meanchey

Observations of the Programme

KYA operates through youth clubs in an urban area, and thus the patterns of volunteerism are qualitatively different from those in a rural community.

Rural communities often have visible forms of traditional volunteering, as well as modern NGO or self-initiated forms. Volunteers in rural communities can also often appeal to traditional values of self-help and service for the community that those in an urban setting find harder to harness. Several informants explained this rural-urban difference as due to the influence of consumerism, saying that people in urban areas work “for themselves”, without relying on community cooperation that encourages traditional volunteerism, for instance.

KYA has organised about eight youth clubs based in a Youth Learning Centre, each comprising 10 to 15 young people who are active in drug prevention activities in a variety of settings, including schools and villages. KYA chose drug prevention based on studies that showed a high prevalence of amphetamine use and production in Banteay Meanchey.²¹ Drug prevention is an activity that can mobilise youth in a non-political way (Wallgren 2005).

²⁰ Personal communication from Chiv You Meng, Executive Director of KYA, 19 December 2007.

²¹ Personal communication from Sovann Sopheap, Director of Banteay Meanchey office, KYA, 22 January 2008, and UNODC (2002).

Although the cost of running the clubs is relatively low, the programme is reliant on donor funding, and both youth club organisers and participants felt that they could not engage in activities beyond those outlined in the project proposal. The clubs are initiated by KYA staff, who then allow the young people to select club leaders and to organise their own drug education sessions. The clubs are usually mobilised by young volunteers, or peer educators, who receive a stipend from KYA (US\$35 per month). However, at the time of the study, the clubs had dissolved for various reasons and were in the process of restarting with the support of KYA drug coordinators (who were themselves former volunteers in the club).

The young people in the club were the youngest of all those in the case studies. They were on average 18.2 years old, whereas overall the volunteers included in the qualitative research were 29 years old. Young people are mostly recruited by peer educators or by participants in the youth clubs through friendship networks.

In focus group discussions, young people discussed their involvement in volunteering prior to joining the clubs. As was found with youth in other areas, they generally had been marginalised from development activities, mostly due to their age and the perception that they were thus not relevant to development. When asked why they were not called to participate in development activities, one young man explained, “Maybe they think that older people have more understanding than younger people. Older people have finished studying and have more understanding than younger people, and on the other hand, young people are busy studying”.

There were several other barriers to young people’s participation. Most of the club members were in their final years at secondary school. They often had a full schedule of education that left them very little free time. In some cases, they also described facing obstacles from their families when they joined the clubs. While some had supportive parents, they could join only outside of study hours. Very few of the young people in the clubs had left school.

Young people had mixed motivations for joining the clubs and drug prevention activities. It was clear that, for many, gaining work experience and job skills was a main motivation. Young people are trained in skills such as note-taking and facilitation. They also identified being able to work in a group and administrative skills (such as filling in official requests and activity reports) as transferable to the workplace.

Nonetheless, many of the youth were also highly motivated to participate in community development. They identified the clubs’ activities as to some extent addressing the concerns of youth in their areas.

“For youth, there are problems with drugs. There are gangsters who fight and hit each other, gamble, skip school and don’t study”.—Youth in in-depth interview

Once young people feel included in small-scale development activities, they have a strong desire to become more involved in other development arenas.

“I want to join so that we know about society. I want to know about the projects—for instance, what they have done. I want to have experience so that we can implement it ourselves”. —Youth in focus group discussion

This highlights one of the first prerequisites of developing volunteerism, which is the participants’ perception that their contributions are valuable to community or social well-being. Working for community well-being is one of the pivotal aspects of Cambodian definitions of volunteering explored in this research, and the young people in KYA’s clubs identified numerous ways in which they were working for communal well-being.

“We can help the community because the community needs a lot of people to join and help each other”.—Youth in in-depth interview

“It helps young people to escape from using drugs and reduces insecurity in the community. For example, when they use drugs they fight and have conflicts and steal from each other. It helps the community have the capacity to help itself”.—Youth in in-depth interview

Young people also provided descriptions of how the communities in which they conducted education sessions would support them in their work.

“It was difficult to gather people because they are busy, but there are still some people who can join with us. There is a lot of support from people in the community because they see that we work well, and they think that we can help to explain drug problems to the young people”.—Youth in in-depth interview

The youth clubs also teach young people to cooperate with local authorities, such as commune and village chiefs, directors of schools and other government staff. Interviews were conducted with a local school director who had collaborated with the youth clubs to provide drug education sessions to all of the grades in her secondary school. She also had promoted volunteerism in the school by setting up a club run by student volunteers that sold school bow-ties made with materials bought with fines levied on students for breaking school rules. This highlights the generally supportive attitude of local authorities towards youth volunteer initiatives, which they appear to value particularly if these are in areas that they identify as being a problem for youth, such as drug taking.

The benefits of the clubs can equally be seen for the young people themselves. One respondent identified the benefits for him:

“I can facilitate in a group, feel braver in sharing ideas and be patient in difficult work, because I have had difficulties before in the club’s work”.

Building young people’s confidence is an important social development goal, particularly in Cambodia, where rigid age hierarchies give low value to young people’s opinions. The youth clubs attempt to overcome these ideas by allowing young people to collaborate and make links with outside agencies.

“Since I joined the club, I feel more confident. I have met a lot of people and have a lot of older friends. I dare to talk to people higher up, have understanding about drug problems, have taken the lessons about drugs and shown them to other people”.—Youth in focus group discussion

The clubs also appear on a small scale to promote leadership skills such as networking and perseverance. This is crucial, as will be explored in other case studies. Volunteer-led associations are usually quite dynamic but need resilience to deal with the vagaries of people’s participation.

“Before, all the villagers did not really support us. It was difficult to get them to join and find other people to join because they are busy. But later it was easy because we made a good relationship with the villagers, and the next time we came, they welcomed us”.—Youth in in-depth interview

Impacts and Links to National Development

Links to national development are explored in two respects: how do KYA's youth clubs respond to national development goals outlined in the NSDP, and how do they promote volunteerism?

Prevention of drug problems among youth is a part of the NSDP (Ministry of Planning 2006). Drug use is also an area of strong concern among local authorities and rural communities, and often associated with the development of gang culture. It was not within the remit of the research to evaluate the youth clubs' effectiveness in reducing drug use. However, it can be noted that the clubs mostly recruit young people who are educated and committed to self-development, and thus not at highest risk of developing drug habits. Nonetheless, the youth clubs cooperated with school authorities to counter the creation of a drug culture in schools, and targeted out-of-school youth in local communities where they conducted drug education sessions.

The KYA developed volunteerism among the youth clubs in several ways. Most importantly, it initiated a forum through which young people could make a valuable contribution to social well-being. While most of the respondents envisaged themselves moving into the workplace after their volunteering, they also felt that they would want to work as volunteers again in the future. Nine out of ten respondents in in-depth interviews said that they would volunteer in the future. Participants in focus group discussions identified several other areas which they wanted to work in, such as anti-corruption and reproductive health campaigns. This clearly shows a sense of civic participation.

However, there are limits to the KYA's model. The project was generally donor-dependent, and youth interviewed did not seem to have much autonomy beyond the remit of the project goals. While the youth clubs did make social development gains, such as promoting and valuing young people's ideas, the effects of these were smaller than in other models studied that gave greater freedom of action to youth volunteers.

This clearly affects the sustainability of volunteer action in other ways. Broadly speaking, where volunteers are given more autonomy and freedom of action, they are more successful in mobilising long-term and sustainable participation. This may be an unobtainable aim with young people in an urban setting, who have many demands on their time and are often highly mobile.

For the young people in the clubs, this is often their first experience of volunteering. The developing of a culture of volunteerism should be viewed as a valuable first step.

"I can help society; I can develop society. But I believe that I can't work alone; I must have many other people who participate".—Youth in in-depth interview

7.3 Buddhism for Development

History of NGO Involvement in Volunteerism

BFD has worked on a model of development that implements Buddhist values. The programme studied aimed to bring peace and stability to the areas where they worked. The concept of “traditional justice”, which relies on traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, informed the development of the programme. Volunteers were envisaged as bringing swifter and less costly conflict resolution to villagers, thus reducing a culture of impunity that has arisen due to prevailing dysfunctions in the justice system since Cambodia’s era of conflict.²² Currently, it is acknowledged that there is a lack of trust in the justice system, especially from poor rural villagers, due to the courts’ remoteness and perceived corruption.

Furthermore, BFD had felt a frustration with the lack of conflict resolution through religious education alone. The volunteers thus aim to work in cooperation with local religious leaders, but they rely on Cambodia’s legal framework to enforce sanctions against transgressors. Volunteers were also conceived of as community activists, empowered with knowledge of the law in their communities and working for a just and equitable resolution.²³

BFD’s programme, at the time of the research, included 1205 peace and development volunteers across two provinces (Banteay Meanchey and Battambang). Women were only 22 percent of the volunteers, however. All volunteers worked in the same areas (broadly, legal activism, peace and development), but BFD recognised that the structure of the communities led to very different outcomes (although it did not affect the structure of the programme). BFD identified three different areas: economic zones, mainly in urban areas where people may have less cooperation with each other, be busier working, working more for their personal interests and thus be less likely to work effectively without some kind of compensation; indigenous zones, where ethnic minorities have a different social structure; and Khmer Rouge zones, where communities are based on the remnants of the Khmer Rouge, and have a more hierarchical structure.

History of the Community Studied

Two communities in Banteay Meanchey where BFD had set up a volunteer project on peace and development were reviewed—the focus commune in depth, and a second, adjacent, commune to a lesser extent, although it provided a valuable insight. Both communities were former Khmer Rouge areas, but with very different factors influencing their development.

Social dynamics in former Khmer Rouge areas are highly complex. Information and conclusions from this area are relevant only to the researched location.

A timeline was conducted in the focus commune, which demonstrated several aspects of social organisation that impacted on the effects of volunteer action.

²² Personal communication, Run Saray, general manager, BFD Battambang, 30 January 2008.

²³ *ibid.*

The community had been created in 1979, when the Khmer Rouge leadership had retreated before the advancing Vietnamese forces.²⁴ While this community was strongly influenced by its Khmer Rouge past, the conclusions from this research cannot be generalised to others with a similar history. The people in the village studied were very different from others studied in that they had very few family networks to rely on. At the time of its creation, the population was living in military units, which lived and ate together, and family members lived communally within each unit. Fighting had continued, and from 1984 onwards many people had fled to the border camps in Thailand, where they could rest before resuming fighting against government forces. Respondents said that materials (such as food and arms) were provided by “outside forces”²⁵ and, consequently, there was little need to establish firm livelihoods or community at this time.

An in-depth interview with the local *achar* revealed that he resumed his role in about 1985, principally because of the need for funeral rites for the large numbers who were dying in the fighting. Previous to this, observance of Buddhist religious rites had been forbidden by the Khmer Rouge.

The position of these Khmer Rouge forces just over the border in Thailand placed them in an ideal position to trade with those inside Cambodia. The local commune chief explained that during the early 1980s people had engaged extensively in trade. In 1996, the Khmer Rouge in this area reconciled with the government. In the words of the commune chief,

“Now we don’t think that we are separate; we just think that we are all Khmer now”.

Nonetheless, there were several aspects that were very different from other communities the research team visited. The present local authorities are clearly descended from the former military leadership. During the conflict, military leaders had dealt with all requests for provisions. When the community finally started to settle in the village, they had also been responsible for allocating land to families, which by then had stopped living communally. These days, many former military leaders have become local leaders and deal with all agencies (governmental, non-governmental and private). The thriving economy appears to have solidified this leadership structure.

The current commune chief was formerly the leader of a military unit, and the population are in large part his former soldiers and their families. This social structure conditioned an absence of self-help and social support, which were present in other communities. An authoritarian leadership style was evident in many aspects of social organisation. For instance, communal works such as roads and wells were built by order from local leaders. Families were told what their contribution would be, and all had to participate.

The strength and dominance of the local leaders could also be seen in their treatment of outsiders. There appeared to have been several waves of migration into the village—the first in 1979 (by the Khmer Rouge forces), and then from 1985 onwards, with a strong influx once reconciliation had begun. The people in the second wave appeared to be either poor and landless labourers or relatives of earlier settlers. Both migrated because they heard that the economy in this area was thriving. They appeared more likely to be landless and frequently migrated illegally to Thailand, unlike the “1979 people”, who had almost entirely stopped going.

24 This was a sensitive subject to discuss openly in this area, but many of the people there had formerly been prominent leaders of the Khmer Rouge forces.

25 Respondents did not clarify this sensitive information, but it is acknowledged that the Khmer Rouge forces were largely provisioned by international aid agencies at this time (Mysliwiec 1988), although armaments came from other sources.

In-depth interviews with poor families revealed that new migrants were required to sign a contract with local village chiefs, which outlined socially acceptable and unacceptable behaviour (such as violence, drunkenness, loudness and rudeness). In this way, the “1979 people” exerted strong control over newcomers and maintained their sense of a separate identity.

Given the heavily top-down style of leadership, it was impossible to judge levels of participation. People clearly joined in communal works because they were ordered to do so. Despite this, the commune was thriving. The local office was one of the most active in the research. At the time of the research, it had just completed a five-year plan, which included 138 development projects, more than 60 of which were funded by outside agencies. The local leadership was very active in making links with both the private sector (such as agri-business) and NGOs. The position on the border enabled them to take advantage of economic opportunities not available to others, particularly from business.

The second commune visited was also partly made up of former Khmer Rouge. However, people in this area had had fewer economic opportunities than those near the border, and this appeared to entail a less rigid leadership and a more open attitude towards newcomers.

Observations of the Programme

BFD set up groups of volunteers with the aim of bringing peace and development to each area. The “peace and development volunteers” (PDVs) are elected in each village, and subsequently are eligible to stand for election to become “commune peace monitors” (CPMs). If conflicts cannot be resolved by village volunteers and the local authorities, they are referred to CPMs and commune officials. Volunteers are also officially recognised in several ways. The religious authorities have recognised their right to work, and the commune council has issued a *dekas*, giving volunteers official rights.²⁶

The volunteers are trained in a variety of laws, mainly focussing on the marriage law, the domestic violence law and the land law. Volunteers are also trained in conflict mediation outside the courts, human rights and other laws (such as criminal law and property law).

Part of their role is to promote traditional justice, promoting existing mechanisms for quick and easy access to conflict resolution. This has been used in other cultural contexts where access to the judicial system is expensive, perceived to be biased and in practice inaccessible to marginalised and oppressed groups (Nyamu-Musembi 2007). BFD also conceived of its volunteers as community activists who could seek equitable solutions to conflicts. Furthermore, the volunteers were provided with equipment (microphones and audio equipment) to conduct legal literacy education within their communities and promote an understanding of key aspects of the law.

Volunteers had been provided with a budget for conducting education, although they themselves receive no financial support beyond support to attend training and transportation stipends. At the time of the research, project funding had ended several months earlier, and the planned educational activities had stopped. Several volunteers stated that they could still use the equipment to conduct education during communal events such

²⁶ A *dekas* is a form of official recognition or declaration, which gives the volunteers the right to resolve conflicts (personal communication, Run Saray, BFD Battambang, 30 January 2008).

as religious festivals. However, many volunteers felt that they could not hold educational sessions if they did not have the means to offer refreshments for participants. As one volunteer complained, “If we call them to a meeting and there is nothing for them, they will blame us”. This was echoed in other communities, where it was also found that educational activities are often among the least sustainable.

Interviews with BFD stated that the selection of PDVs and CPMs was supposed to be an introduction to democratic process. However, in the context of a controlled political structure, this process was subdued. The selection criteria for being a volunteer—being able to write, having free time and being respected by the community—preclude more widespread community involvement. As in other areas, before elections occurred, commune or village authorities directly approached volunteers and asked them to stand. This resulted in a preselected list of candidates in the focus village, most of whom were in some way connected to local authorities. This meant that most of those who stood for election were the older members of the community, the “1979 people”, whereas more recent immigrants appeared to be excluded. One respondent explained:

“They appointed people for the election. The village chief appointed me because he saw that I can do it [be a volunteer], can serve the people in the village and have time to work. I have known the village chief for a long time, since 1979, and we are friendly with one another. He told me about this role before I was elected”.—Peace and development volunteer

The role of the local authorities may not be as significant in other areas. Volunteers in the second focus commune described a more open election process, in which all people from the community were given the opportunity to stand. However, only two of those elected had not been directly selected by the village or commune authorities. This conforms with traditional ideas of leadership, which can limit volunteer action.

Looking at the profile of BFD volunteers, it is clear that the process resulted in more male than female participation and heavily favoured those who had a current or previous leadership role. Two of the four volunteers interviewed in the focus commune had some connection to the local authorities. It was also clear that volunteers did not see themselves as “community activists”, but as assistants to the current political leadership.

However, it is doubtful whether this selection process undermined confidence in the volunteers within the community. In other areas it was also found that, where volunteers were required to have a leadership role, it was accepted that only certain people could be selected. Selection criteria often revolved around personal characteristics and morality, as well as commitment to the work.

“They have to have the ability to do the work. This means that we can see that they can lead in their family; they are better off, do not argue with each other and have a respectable profession. All of this means that they are the kind of person that people will listen to and will be able to lead other people in the village, because in this work they need to be able to resolve conflicts”.—Commune peace monitor volunteer

Similarly to local leaders, in some cases volunteers explained that a key requirement was being “better off”. However, they also asserted that anyone could do the work, but that those who were wealthier had more time to participate, whereas poorer families were often so busy earning their living that they could not spare the time.

The research explored the similarities between a leader and a volunteer who offers moral leadership.

“[Political] leadership and moral leadership are a bit different. People who give moral leadership are volunteers because they work to resolve and mediate in the village, but a political leader has to order people to do things ... They have to have high morality and can mediate so that there are no more conflicts. He is not partial, but political leaders have to talk about the law”.—Commune peace monitor volunteer

The requirements of high morality and community respect could be argued to contribute to the sustainability of BFD’s programme, which was still active in conflict resolution despite lack of funds. Firstly, local leaders on the whole cooperated well with the local volunteers and supported their work. Secondly, the volunteers themselves felt that they had gained social value and recognition within the community, because they were visibly serving their community.

“I feel very excited because I can serve the people, and the people support us and trust us. If they have any problems they come to ask us to help. When we have meetings they support us”.—Peace and development volunteer

One volunteer interviewed had not had any role before being appointed a volunteer, but at the time of the interview he had been selected as the village second deputy chief. The programme has also found that some volunteers later come to have positions as local authorities.²⁷ Volunteer programmes can provide opportunities to develop and demonstrate leadership qualities, and thus open up opportunities for new leaders to emerge. This is one of several ways in which volunteer programmes can invigorate local leadership.

Volunteers are also highly motivated to work for their community, not just for social recognition but to address problems that they see. Two of the volunteers in the second commune studied had become volunteers because of specific injustices that they had seen, as one female peace and development volunteer explained:

“In my village, no one dared to talk about problems like domestic violence and rape, and no one wanted to stand up and be seen to help, but then I took a child who had been raped to a shelter, and then the stepfather was afraid and ran away, and we have not seen him since. He was afraid because there is a law and because we raised awareness about the law”.

In both areas studied, volunteers worked in a variety of areas, including resolving domestic violence and land conflicts. Volunteers in the second commune appeared to work on a greater variety of issues, possibly because they had greater freedom of action. Volunteers in the focus commune were not widely known in the community, and would be called upon by the local village chief when conflicts arose. This was partly due to the perception that only the chief could be involved in conflict resolution. In the second commune, villagers could equally approach volunteers or the authorities.

²⁷ Personal communication, Run Saray, BFD Battambang, 30 January 2008.

Volunteers were most frequently called upon in cases of domestic violence. In these cases, they most frequently worked with village chiefs to mediate. Volunteers in both areas said that they would point out that conflict had few benefits, and once they had resolved the issues between the parties, would get them to sign an agreement not to use violence again. The PDVs also had a clear referral process: if the conflict could not be resolved, it was referred to the commune, or if the conflict had involved serious physical assault (described as resulting in “wounds”), then police also had to be involved.

Looking at domestic violence, the volunteers appeared to have a mixed effect, and this highlights some of the issues with traditional justice. Several women volunteers in the second commune were highly motivated to resolve conflicts for the women in their community. They also felt very strongly that they were able to do this because they were women—and that local women would never approach a male volunteer. Their dynamic involvement also arguably led to a direct tackling of gender norms that support violence against women. When asked if there were any cases in which violence against women is justified, one male commune peace monitor replied:

“Most of the cases of domestic violence that we have seen have been caused by the husband, because they are the head of the household and they have to make the house’s money, so they think that they can go out and spend the money drinking and gambling. When the wife gets a little bit cross about this, then they use violence and hit her”.

Women interviewed in the focus commune also generally felt that domestic violence was an issue on which they could trust local authorities to intervene. The work of the volunteers contributed to a sense of a lawful community, in which conflicts could be resolved.

“The community values the committee [of volunteers], which has given women rights to talk and share ideas about problems they face of abuse and difficulties. Women feel confident to give the committee a lot of ideas and suggestions when there are meetings, because they have seen that when there are difficulties, the law stands behind them and helps them”.—Chief monk, focus commune

While volunteers could mobilise and assist local authorities to resolve issues quickly, in some cases the volunteers’ messages could reinforce gender norms that support violence against women. For instance, a deputy village chief explained that in some cases violence against a woman was justified if she had not made the evening meal on time for her husband, and at the end of mediation she would sign an agreement to do so in the future. This kind of enforcement of women’s reproductive role clearly negatively affects women.²⁸ Furthermore, volunteers also explained that they would try to encourage the couple not to divorce, principally because this would have bad outcomes for the children. This reluctance to accept divorce as valid is disturbing, especially when the understanding of abuse was limited to physical violence. Emotional or sexual abuse was not raised as an issue.

Nonetheless, key informants stated that conflicts had often been resolved, and if not were referred to higher authorities. They also generally said that conflicts had declined since the volunteers had started their work. One

²⁸ National surveys have consistently found a strong relationship between violence and attitudes that reinforce women’s reproductive roles. The Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (2005), for instance, found a rate of 13.7 percent of women who had experienced domestic violence within the past year, and also found 41.7 percent of female respondents who said that married women should not work.

volunteer also noticed that community self-help and respect had started to return, not just due to establishing lawfulness but also because mediation had encouraged mutual understanding.

“Now people in the community know how to respect each other and can help each other... Now people know how to be patient and forgive each other. Before, if there was something that they were not happy with, they just knew how to fight, and that was it”.—Commune peace monitor

Volunteers were able to instil a sense of lawfulness partly through their cooperation with local authorities. The chief of the focus commune was highly supportive of the volunteers’ work and referred to them as his “helpers”, because it meant that conflicts could be quickly resolved and he could concentrate on other aspects of local governance. However, volunteers in the second commune asserted that their existence outside the local justice system was key to their work:

“When we did not have our group [of volunteers], all of the work went to the commune to resolve. But the commune has hundreds of kinds of work, so they were just too busy and put the conflict to one side and were slow to resolve it. The people who have a conflict want a quick solution, and sometimes the commune never resolved it, so now the CPM can help to resolve the conflict, and we resolve it in a few days, at most a week”.—Commune peace monitor

The chief monk of the focus commune also asserted that the voluntary nature of this work, with no financial compensation, had been essential in building trust in and respect for the volunteers:

“In resolving problems, there is no relationship with money; but with the local village and commune authorities, they have to pay informal fees”.

Conversely, in other areas where local authorities were less interested in fulfilling their duties, the work of volunteers was less effective. One female volunteer complained that her village chief and local police would not come to assist in conflict resolution. This issue was raised in the focus group discussion, and led to an in-depth analysis and criticism of the village chief, as well as a discussion about good leadership:

“In fact the problem is that he does not understand his role. It is like he is the parent and the villagers are the children and he forgets to look after them. He has no commitment to the villagers and does not know how to help people”.—Peace and development volunteer

Volunteers who act as local leaders may thus invigorate discussions and grass-roots ideas about leadership. Yet it was their ability to make links with other governance structures, in particular the commune council, that ensured their sustainability. In the second commune, the volunteers had been allocated a small sum from the commune to enable them to continue their work and cover such things as travel costs.

The links with local religious leaders were also innovative and a source of encouragement for the volunteers. Religious leaders had not been directly involved in legal education, but had been involved in the volunteer planning committee. They had also incorporated messages into their religious teachings that supported the volunteers' work. More importantly, they gave the volunteers official recognition and encouragement and a moral basis for their social activism.

"We work on the laws; we educate and raise awareness about the problems of violence in the family and the marriage law, because we have signed a contract with the province, with the chief monk in the province, that allows us to work. The monk said that he asked us and encouraged us to lead the people. Whether we can or cannot do that, we must still continue to work. Whether or not they listen, we will still talk".—Peace and development volunteer

Impacts and Links to National Development

Links to national development are explored in two respects: how do BFD's volunteers respond to national development goals outlined in the NSDP, and how do they promote volunteerism?

BFD volunteers clearly worked sustainably to resolve conflicts within their communities. The effects were several. As the chief of the focus commune identified, volunteers reduced the cost of accessing justice for many people in the community, principally women at risk of domestic violence.

As with many volunteer programmes in which volunteers are empowered with knowledge and committed to working for their community, there were "ripple effects". BFD's model creates an alternative source of leadership and moral authority within the community, which seemed to re-invigorate local leadership. It also allowed local advocates, especially females, a space in which to advocate on gender issues in their communities.

"Now people in the community know how to respect each other and can help each other. Before, they did not allow their girl children to go and learn, but now they let their girls go and learn".—Commune peace monitor

The volunteer model appears to work in Cambodia for several reasons. Firstly, it selects people on the basis of community respect, and provides a traditional space for them to work in, namely, conflict resolution, for which there appears to be widespread perceived need. Secondly, it relies on groups of volunteers working together. Culturally, the group is valued over the individual (Ovesen *et al.* 1996). Volunteer models that work in groups appeared to give the volunteers a firmer moral basis to work from, as well as a forum for discussion and support that can further motivate volunteers. Lastly, the volunteers were mandated to address a wide range of conflicts, and this meant that the pressing issue of domestic violence was not sidelined as a "women's problem", but was perceived as something that impacted the community as a whole.

7.4 Neak Aphiwat Sahakum

History of NGO Involvement in Volunteerism

NAS was originally started by the French NGO GRET. During the political turmoil of 1997, NAS lost this support but then set up as a local NGO.²⁹

NAS currently works in rural development in seven communes of Kompong Cham. It has set up community-based associations to conduct grass-roots rural development and has gained official recognition for some of them. One of their local associations has now been given official registration by the provincial Department of Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries.³⁰ It has promoted key skills, such as use of the System of Rice Intensification (SRI), which has been adopted in the NSDP because it gives higher rice yields.

Interestingly, NAS has stopped referring to its community counterparts as “volunteers”, because of the expectation that volunteers will receive a stipend or other benefits and the experience that people will often stop working once those financial supports are no longer offered. Instead, NAS refers to them as “skilled teachers”, although it admits that in some cases the volunteers do not yet have any skills to impart.

NAS stated that it selects villages using a poverty map, but also looks for communities that have high levels of cooperation that can facilitate its work.³¹

History of the Community Studied

The programme in Kampong Cham province, where NAS had set up a volunteer-led community-based association working on rural development, had worked for two years, but at the time of the research, project funding had been stopped for over a year. NAS said that it still came to provide encouragement to local association members, but volunteers said that these visits were infrequent. Volunteers were nonetheless still working and in fact expanding their activities.

In the timeline, elders said that the village had originated from three families that they traced back as far as the French colonial era. Elders asserted that in those times and later, villagers had strong norms of self-help and reciprocal exchange, and freely shared food with everyone, regardless of whether they were relatives or how much they had previously given them. This was because in those days food, such as fish and animals, was plentiful. The village, like many other areas, also suffered from the conflict, starting from the *Issarak* era.³² These norms had started to erode, especially during the Lon Nol era, when villagers could make substantial money by supplying both the nearby Khmer Rouge (with medicines) and Lon Nol’s army (with foodstuffs). This was when people started to charge interest for loans or restrict their lending to close friends and relatives.

29 Personal Communication, Kaut Thaeng, programme officer, NAS, 15 February 2008.

30 *ibid.*

31 *ibid.*

32 The Khmer *Issarak* was an anti-French, Khmer nationalist political movement formed in 1945 with the backing of the government of Thailand. It sought to expel the French colonial authorities from Cambodia and establish an independent Khmer state. The *Issarak*’s often violent tactics had affected communities in several different provinces that were part of this study, including Prey Veng and Kompong Cham.

Elders explained that they started to try to profit from lending at this time because the cost of trade was so high (they risked their lives to engage in this trade) and as people became motivated by commercial values. Similarly to other areas, elders said that this was when people started to factionalise into groups that supported different political leaders.

During the Khmer Rouge period, many of the villagers had been moved to work groups in other areas. However, the conflict did not end for them in 1979. In fact, the head monk said that three buildings in the local wat had been burned down in 1987 by Khmer Rouge forces, who would hide in nearby forests but return to engage in battles with government forces. This protracted conflict meant that many villagers had received little if any education, and most of this had been informal literacy classes given in the wat.

Religious life had sporadically returned to the village after the Khmer Rouge era, when the former head monk had restarted the wat.³³ The head monk during this time had been trying to rebuild the destroyed wat, through extensive fund-raising visits to other parts of the country. The villagers had also quickly rebuilt the village prayer hall with bamboo and palm leaf thatch in order to receive visiting monks and conduct village religious ceremonies. In 2000, the former head monk died. The new head monk made links with a powerful local politician and obtained his patronage. The local wat, which directly adjoins the village in the study, now boasts several big prayer halls, funded by this patron, who also funded the rebuilding of the nearby primary school.

The local communities are also active in the thriving religious life of the village and wat. Within the wat walls are several lodging houses for villagers who come to assist during religious festivals. Elderly men and women were visibly active in maintaining these buildings and participating in religious festivities. The wat committee, with representatives from all of the villages around, regularly meets and plans the participation of villagers to ensure that religious festivities occur.

The village itself had seen little development from outside agencies, with the exception of NAS and CEDAC, which both set up development groups. Compared to other areas visited, there was a lack of water infrastructure. The village also appeared to be dividing into two separate entities—an east and west side. There were two prayer halls, for instance, because a new one had been built on the west side in 2005. Villagers said that this was because the village was “too big”, and they could now meet in their own prayer halls. Local *achars* had been raising funds to buy equipment (mostly plates and cooking equipment). The *achars* also had been divided according to their functions on the east or west side of the village. The *achar* from the east had already been appointed, but the one in the west was still temporary. During religious festivities that involved the whole village, each *achar* would call people from his side, but for smaller religious ceremonies only people from the side where the festival was occurring would join in. It was observed that the activities of the local associations were divided between the two sides of the village. NAS mostly operated in the east and CEDAC in the west.

Many of the poorer families interviewed were experiencing significant land pressure, and this partly contributed to a high level of migration of young people out of the village, especially into the garment and construction industries. As in other villages studied, there appeared to be few ways for young people to participate in development.

33 During the post-Khmer Rouge period, only old men were allowed to become monks, because younger men were needed for reconstructing the country and meeting important food production goals (Slocomb 2003).

It was in this village that the research found an example of self-initiated volunteerism. There was also a young man volunteering with no support from anyone, as an English teacher for young children who could not afford to attend English lessons. He did this in order to get work experience as well as to help poor children. There was also reported to be a couple teaching Korean in the wat, so that “Cambodians can get jobs in Korea in the future”. This demonstrates that volunteerism is one way in which young people are gaining skills to participate in the non-agricultural economy, as land pressures force them to seek employment elsewhere.

Land pressures and lack of off-farm employment had resulted in persistent poverty for some of the families. They seem to have little access to formal credit. Loans are frequently obtained from three local moneylenders, often in response to household crises that poor families lack the resources to surmount.

Elders in the timelines decried the low levels of participation and community cooperation, which they had seen decline over many decades. One commented,

“Previously people in different villages used to love each other, but now they hate each other. They just break up into groups and have fights when there are parties like weddings, or they put on loud music. They take their belts to hit each other”.

Another woman in a focus group discussion commented on how the local political culture had eroded trust and cooperation:

“People in the village do not do volunteer work a lot, and they don’t join things that much, because when they give out gifts they just call their own group and so other people don’t really want to join”.

Observations of the Programme

NAS sets up local associations through a gradually evolving programme. Similarly to other NGOs using this approach, the sustainability and activity of the organisation rely almost entirely on people’s participation.

NAS initially started its activities through agricultural training, concentrating on SRI, natural fertiliser, planting vegetables and raising chickens. They initially recruited participants through the village chief, who called a general meeting for people interested in learning these new skills. At first, there were very few participants, and the initial group started with seven members. Later, the group were asked to form a savings group and elected their leaders.

The group elected a female leader, because most of the participants up to this point had been female (men were too busy working in the fields to join), but she was illiterate, so NAS advised them to appoint her literate husband as her “adviser”. Subsequently, her husband assumed the leadership, especially since NAS started to train local association leaders using text-based learning.

As with BFD’s programme, respect and trust were important elements that informed the selection of group leaders, along with certain skills (such as literacy). It was found in several studies that strong leadership is especially important when setting up savings groups. In both villages studied that worked with savings groups, villagers were reluctant to join until they felt confident that a group was solid, because they had previous

experiences of groups collapsing. This seemed especially likely to happen if the group leader was unable to mobilise enough people to join or to mediate conflicts within the group. The volunteer leaders asserted that they had to build trust through transparent leadership.

“They support us because they see that we keep the savings safe. We don’t spend it ourselves, and they see that we are not corrupt”.—Village deputy chief and NAS volunteer

Leadership is also based on notions of honour, which have traditionally informed the selection of village leaders. *Achars* are selected based on their religious knowledge, their high moral standing and the extent to which people “love them” and follow them. These characteristics are very similar to those that informants said were used to select association leaders. However, it also seemed that the support of the village chief had been instrumental in building trust in the association.

NAS started the group with a variety of activities, including agricultural training, for instance in growing vegetables and SRI. At a later stage, this educational role had been handed over to the head of the association, who had set up a demonstration garden to promote vegetable growing. In contrast to other villages researched (see the case study on CEDAC’s association), the effects of this training appeared to be limited, principally because of a lack of communal water infrastructure that would allow planting in the dry season. This echoes BFD’s case study, which demonstrated that educational activities often cease with project funding.

The group was mainly active in promoting and managing the savings group and rice bank. The CEDAC and NAS associations used contrasting approaches in promoting themselves in this village. There appeared to be a widespread perception that CEDAC’s savings group was “for making money”, because people in the group were allowed to pay in different amounts and therefore earn different amounts of interest, which was distributed every month. This had led to the perception that the group was “for rich people” (who could invest larger amounts), and it had failed to garner wide participation.³⁴

NAS’s local association required equal amounts from its members. The interest was not distributed but kept in the group so that it could build up its reserves. People could receive the interest only if they left the group. This difference was mainly based on the high level of commitment of the association leader, who had used the resources available to him (mainly the savings group and rice bank) to target poor people. He explained, “I saw that they were developing the community. Especially I saw them teaching SRI, so I decided to join NAS, because I wanted to have development in the future, wanted to have poor people participate and to reduce their poverty, because poor people have a lot of difficulties to live and get food every day so I wanted to reduce their poverty”.

This association had garnered wider support from villagers, because of the perception of being pro-poor. It is worth exploring in depth the ways in which this association engaged with poor people and was able to lift them out of poverty. Clearly, this is a complex but vital issue in development. Box 1 highlights a case study of a family that had been specifically targeted by the head of the association, and reviews the factors that enabled its inclusion in the group.

³⁴ Interviews with villagers also revealed that this group had experienced a lot of conflict over the amount of money that the group could lend, jealousy between members and accusations of nepotism and favouritism in leadership.

At the time of the research, the group had grown and had 32 families as members. People had started to feel confident and trusting in the leadership. The head of the association was also targeting new members, especially those who were in deep debt to local moneylenders. The association's leaders were motivated by social activism to alleviate these people's poverty.

Their work to include poor people facing difficulties had substantial impacts on the latter's lives. Local moneylenders often seek to keep poor people in protracted debt, as the case in Box 1 highlights. Those who have rice fields, for instance, can choose to put up their property deeds as a guarantee of the loan, and then

Box 1: **Case Study of Sophear, a Poor Woman Accessing a Volunteer-Led Credit Association**

At the beginning of her married life, Sophear received two small rice fields and the land for her house from her grandfather. She gradually lost most of that land because of her husband's health problems. They still own the land her house stands on but no longer have any rice fields. Her husband earns his living catching fish in the river at the foot of the mountain several kilometres away. He can earn 6000–10,000 riels per day if he catches fish, but some days he does not catch any. Sophear and her husband have 11 children, and at the time of the research she was pregnant with her 12th child. She stays at home and does not have any way of earning income.

Three years ago, her husband fell ill again. Sophear borrowed 700,000 riels from local moneylenders to pay for his treatment and feed her children. Since she had no land to guarantee her loan, she has to pay interest every month. She currently pays 35,000 riels per month in interest (5 per cent per month; the year before, they had charged her 10 percent per month). Since then, her husband has recovered, but they have not paid back any of the principal. They faced an uncertain future with no clear way of getting out of debt.

Sophear first joined the local association's savings group a few years ago, but at that time members had to pay 1000 riels per month into the rice bank and savings group. This was too expensive for her, and she asked to leave the group.

The head of the local association recently approached her and asked her to rejoin, which she agreed to do. She had to pay a substantial amount of money (64,000 riels) to "catch up" with other members of the savings group. She joined because she saw the leader of the group assisting other people who were indebted to moneylenders, and hopes that they will assist her too. She also now has two children who have migrated and are working, one in Phnom Penh as a cleaner, and the other as a casual labourer. Her children send money home every month.

If the group agrees to give her a loan to repay the local moneylender, she will have to pay 2 percent interest (on the entire principal) per month, and pay the loan off over a period of 10 months. This would mean paying back 84,000 riels per month, but with her children's financial assistance, Sophear feels that this is achievable. She also hopes that the group will be able to distribute some of their cattle for her to raise, giving her an alternative source of income.

do not have to pay interest, but the creditor has the use of the land until the debt is paid. Thus the debtors lose their main source of income and often cannot find other means of repaying their loan. Those who do not have property have to pay high rates of monthly interest, leaving them with little means to pay off the principal. The moneylenders in several contexts reviewed have also worked a system of indenture to their further advantage. People indebted to them often work on the rice fields of other people who gave their land as loan guarantees. The harvest is then split between the moneylender and the debtor who has worked the field, but often inputs such as fertiliser have to be bought by the debtor. It can be seen that it is not in the moneylenders' interest for the loan to be repaid. It is also doubtful whether micro-finance institutions would be in a better position than the local association to address persistent debt problems³⁵.

It was also clear that the association was able to offer loans accessible by poor people, because they were flexible, at low interest rates and with long repayment periods. At the time of the research, the association had used its limited funds to target poor people who were in entrenched debt, had bought their debt from local moneylenders, and had offered them better deals that they could pay off. One man who had got out of debt with the association's help explained:

"I thinking joining the association was good because they don't force me to pay back quickly like the others. Whenever we can pay back 1000 riels, it will go down; it is up to us how much we pay back, and the debt goes down. Borrowing from the association is easier than borrowing from [moneylenders] because they take a high interest rate, and they also think about the time within which we have to pay them back, but the group does not think like that; we can pay back whenever we want ... I would like to have a lot of these saving groups in the village, because it makes it easy to get a cheap interest rate, and we can find them when we need them".

As this informant also said, once the loan had been repaid, the small interest made stayed in the group, making it able to target more people. It also seemed that the group's activity had increased competition and generally reduced the rates of interest being offered. Whereas the previous year moneylenders had charged up to 10 percent, this year they were charging only 5 percent.

While the local association had worked hard to help poor people in the village, it was also clear that it did not always act in a socially inclusive way. The cost of joining the savings group increased as time went on, because new members had to invest the same amount of money as the older members. Poor people did not always have the money to join, and as the case in Box 1 demonstrates, would be able to do so only through relying on options outside of the village, such as family members migrating. Even if the group wanted to target the poorest, it was not always able to do so.

There also appeared to be a widespread perception in the village that the local association worked just for "its own group". Agricultural training sessions, for instance, had been given only to members of the group, and other villagers were not invited to join. This perception excluded people who might have joined the group and reinforced perceptions that it was working within factions in the village, rather than trying to bridge them.

35 Micro-finance institutions studied in another context in this research often required some kind of guarantee for a loan, such as a property deed.

It also became clear that since funding from NAS had stopped, the association had become a client of a powerful political patron who had also been funding the local wat. The patron had provided the group with vital inputs, such as US\$200 for the savings group and a pair of cows which they had started to revolve through the group.

Three main issues arose from the association's cooption by this patron, which directly affected their ability to build social capital and promote volunteerism. First, some of the people in the group explained that, since the association had received gifts from the patron, only people from within his political party would be allowed to join, because now, "We are like children of the party". Whatever gains had been made for inclusion were lost by excluding new members based on political affiliation.

Second, this highlights the evolution of patron-client systems, which are not only penetrating to the grass roots but also becoming based on a pro-poor policy, rather than on ensuring security, as had been the case in recent history (Pak *et al.* 2007). As the village chief explained, it was the association's ability to work for the poor that helped it to receive this patronage, because it could garner political affiliation for the patron through the promise of potential benefits given out to its poor members: "We have to help really poor people, and then they will help people through the association".

This indicates important dilemmas in the evolution of community-based associations that can alleviate local poverty. The association had clearly put the financial support it received to extremely effective use in tackling poverty, but if its current sources of patronage and funding are pushing it to be political and exclude others, what alternative pressures are there to keep it non-partisan and inclusive? As a non-registered and small organisation, it had few other sources available.

Third, the effects of this patronage were said by some informants to be antithetical to the aims of community associations, and of volunteerism, which are to promote the participation of local people and the self-sufficiency of communities. Volunteers are in the front line of dilemmas about participation.

One informant asserted that norms of participation had been in decline since the first elections (in 1993), more so since 1998, when there were more political parties. This assertion was echoed in the timelines, where elders pointed out the growth of factions within the village and their impact on community spirit. One of the effects of this local patronage network, and its culture of gift-giving, was an expectation of outside inputs. For instance, when asked whether they prefer to have volunteers from within or outside the community, one participant in a mixed focus group said, "People from outside are better because they have knowledge and they have money and help us".

When this issue was raised with NAS managers, it seemed that they were aware that the effects of the patronage were counter to their aims, which had been to set up community associations that could manage themselves. They equally complained about the lack of participation of villagers, who had come to expect quick gifts from outside agencies, which decreased their willingness to work for their communities. However, as they pointed out, if associations are truly sustainable, then it is also their right to act independently and choose their patrons. Furthermore, supporting NGOs such as NAS cannot prevent them from receiving donations. It was also clear, however, that in general NAS might have accepted a level of patronage if it meant that the association could secure funding, whatever the political and social cost.

Impacts and Links to National Development

Links to national development are explored in two respects: how do NAS's volunteers respond to national development goals outlined in the NSDP, and how do they promote volunteerism?

It can be seen that the local association worked in line with several aims of the NSDP. It sought to alleviate the poverty of the poorest groups in the village. Reducing interest rates on loans was one area where the local association was particularly successful. It also reduced the impact of shocks on households by making flexible loans quickly available during health crises.

However, it appeared that its agricultural skills training had limited impact. This may be due to the short time that NAS had to train the local association members, and contrasts with the CEDAC case study, which followed a similar model but had worked for a longer period.

On promoting volunteerism, the findings of this study were also mixed. The local association did visibly motivate people around notions of community development and helping poor people within the village, which encouraged a far more widespread participation than other associations had been able to do. Mobilisation of people around ideas of communal benefit is surely a first step towards volunteerism.

However, it was noticeable that the activities of the group, while highly motivated, were mostly reliant on its trusted leader, and this model did not create a readily available source of alternative leadership or encourage widespread participation beyond membership. In fact, since this style of leadership relied on personal connections to secure the support of local political leaders and outside patrons, it was unclear how easily this leadership could be transferred.

7.5 Cambodian Centre for Study and Development in Agriculture

History of NGO Involvement in Volunteerism³⁶

CEDAC started in 1997 with support from the French NGO GRET. It initially concentrated on agricultural skills, working with local volunteer groups in Kandal province. CEDAC's operations have increased, and it says that it currently reaches about 65,000 farmers in 1827 villages in 15 provinces. Its strategic plan for 2006–10 intends to reach 6000 villages through participatory research programmes and extension.

Strengthening community-based organisations, such as self-help groups, is a fundamental part of CEDAC's strategy. Its strategic plan promotes a vision of farmers' associations directing their own development:

"[CEDAC will] organise the rural population so that it can become a force in mobilizing resources for mutual cooperation, assisting other members of the community, and for overall local development. Strong farmer organisations will influence and interact with the government, especially local governments, to take more responsibility for sustainable local economic, social and environmental development".³⁷

CEDAC's approach to developing grass-roots initiative has recently evolved, influenced by numerous factors. It has moved towards empowering local community-based associations and facilitating their engagement with government structures at all levels. This is similar to the shift seen in many other volunteer models towards empowering local actors in a democratic space that has opened up in an era of peace and development. For instance, CEDAC facilitates and supports the Farmer and Nature Net, a network for community-based associations, which joins in forums on rural development issues with national government agencies.

CEDAC has also evolved from an exclusively donor-funded approach which relied on volunteerism, towards a "social business" model based on strategic benefits and incentives. This has affected its operations at all levels. This change in strategy was partly influenced by models of development in other Asian countries (e.g. Malaysia) that aimed to alleviate poverty through developing business skills at the grass roots. It also evolved from CEDAC's desire to move away from donor dependency.

Currently, the social business and donor-funded approaches work alongside each other. As will be detailed in the case study, members of local associations initially volunteer and receive very few incentives. Later, once their enterprises have grown, these generate enough benefits for their members that they become staff. However, this raises the whole question of people's involvement in local associations, which may be motivated by perceived benefits, even if these will be gained only in the long term.

³⁶ This section is based on a review of CEDAC materials (available from <http://www.cedac.org.kh>), the research findings and an institutional analysis and in-depth interview with CEDAC's provincial and national staff (Choeurn Chea, CEDAC office, Skon, and Ouch Ngak, Human Resource Director, 21 February 2008).

³⁷ Extract from CEDAC's strategic plan, 2006–10, available from <http://www.cedac.org.kh/2006-2010.asp>.

CEDAC says that local associations are initially staffed by volunteers, although it has largely moved away from promoting volunteerism. At the national level, CEDAC has started several “social enterprises”, such as shops selling organic produce. This means that farmers growing organic produce (who have learned these skills through training) can sell their produce to CEDAC.

Several key differences in CEDAC’s approach affect the grass-roots model and appear to give greater freedom of action. First, CEDAC works in a long-term partnership with local associations and self-help groups. While associations are fully empowered to make their own decisions, the relationship continues longer than with other NGOs that have a capacity-building approach, in which associations are set up and then left to their own devices. Second, adopting a business model means that CEDAC can move relatively quickly to identify opportunities in the market and mobilise farmer cooperatives to capitalise on them. Furthermore, CEDAC can make decisions based on economies of scale, buying products such as salt in bulk at below market rates and distributing these products through local associations for them to make a profit. Third, people are envisaged as working for an incentive or benefit, unlike other models that mobilise people around community spirit or self-help. While it is acknowledged that initially people involved in CEDAC grass-roots projects will work for few or no benefits, and thus can be classified as volunteers, later on it is expected that they will benefit financially from their association’s trade activities and will receive a salary.

Unlike an NGO approach that selects target areas based on set criteria and then aims to reach a given number of the population, CEDAC’s model is designed to open opportunities for “those who are interested to join”. CEDAC says this means that it can work with even a very small number of people in each village. Crucially, this conceives of participants in its programmes as fully cognizant social actors, rather than beneficiaries of targeted aid.

Lastly, the reorientation from a volunteer-based to a social business model based on profits and incentives is most clearly demonstrated by the shift in its volunteer programme.³⁸ CEDAC used to make space for interns, and has recruited a majority of its staff through this system. It is still committed to developing youth and human resources. However, these courses are now charged for at differential rates. Youth from rural areas (with no university degree) can study rural development with CEDAC over a period of a year, at a cost of US\$1000,³⁹ and it is envisaged that they will then become “entrepreneurs”, able to set up rural enterprises. Unemployed former university students can study in an apprenticeship programme for six months (at US\$650), and more than 60 percent of CEDAC’s staff have been recruited from this programme.

CEDAC’s rationale for charging for these courses includes encouraging youth to value the training. However, it must also be noted that CEDAC is moving towards a “for profit” model, and has started a variety of small enterprises.

38 This section is based on a personal communication from Mr Ouch Ngak, Human Resources Director, CEDAC, 21 February 2008.

39 CEDAC states that this does not cover the entire cost of training one person. Furthermore, the amount is payable only once the intern has found a job.

History of the Community Studied

The village selected for the CEDAC case study was an old village in Kampong Cham province, descended from three original families. Elders traced the village within their memory back to the French colonial era, but it was not clear when the village was founded, although it was probably earlier.

The village survived several tumultuous eras thanks partly to strong norms of self-help and reciprocal exchange. In those times, it also had a village leader whose main role was resolving conflicts between families. Similarly to the village in the NAS case study, elders said that these norms of sharing and self-help had started to alter radically during the Lon Nol era, when villagers had engaged in trade between the Khmer Rouge and Lon Nol forces. The villagers were moved out of their village in 1973 by the Khmer Rouge to work in other areas. They returned after the Pol Pot era, and initially worked in labour cooperatives in which the harvest was distributed according to the labour contributed by each household.⁴⁰

In contrast to other areas, elders here said that at present there was a lot of community cooperation. “These days people help each other, because there are a lot of people who are educated, and we have good leaders, and there are many NGOs that teach and train the people”. This village was notable for its social cohesiveness, perhaps due to the fact that villagers were mostly related to each other and could trace their family lines back to common ancestors.⁴¹ There had been very little immigration, apart from those who had joined the households through marriage. While there was some emigration, especially of young people, this appeared to be mostly seasonal and not the entrenched pattern observed in other areas. There were also very few social divisions within the village, unlike other areas, where people noticeably stayed within their social network and allegiances. When questioned on this, informants said that people did not attach importance to factions, and still held to norms that people had to “love each other” and share things equally “like relatives”.

These villagers clearly learned well from each other, and this had visibly increased their wealth. Several livelihood strategies had spread throughout the village, mainly through villagers learning from each other and sharing information. Many households made traditional baskets, which they sold to local tradespeople, and many more raised ducks, mainly to sell their fertilised eggs. This trade had not been taught by any outside agency, but had been learned through sharing experience. Several factors had facilitated this, however. First, CEDAC had been instrumental in building water infrastructure, with participation from the villagers. Previously, the only water source had been more than two kilometres away, and villagers had to travel every day to collect both drinking and bathing water. This had seriously limited livelihood development, especially during the dry season. Second, there were four micro-finance institutions operating in the village: ACLEDA, AMRET, AMK and Prasac. The village and commune chiefs estimated that in the previous year villagers had borrowed up to US\$20,000. This year borrowing was less but still significant, at an estimated US\$13,000–14,000. The commune chief also

40 These production cooperatives, or “solidarity groups”, were set up by the government and have been substantially credited with providing an equitable distribution of land and food that protected the most vulnerable population in the crucial years after the emergence from Khmer Rouge rule. These groups worked collectively, pooling scarce resources such as draught animals, and the produce was divided according to the labour contributed. See Slocomb (2003), Ovesen *et al.* (1996) and Mysliwiec (1999) for a discussion of the groups’ role in Cambodia’s rehabilitation.

41 This became clear when the researchers attempted to analyse the kin relationships between people in the group. It soon became obvious that the exercise had limited meaning because all of the villagers were related in some degree.

said that this borrowing was attributable to only 18 families (out of a total of 275). Almost all of this debt was capital for starting a business, mostly raising ducks, which requires a large capital outlay before starting to generate revenue.

Observations of the Programme

CEDAC had had a comparatively long involvement with the village studied, compared to other volunteer programmes in this study, and the relationship was clearly evolving dynamically to identifying effective ways of working. CEDAC's social business model approach had allowed it to work for a longer period than many NGOs reliant on donor funding.

The relationship started in 2004 and was still active at the time of the research. However, it had always aimed at establishing reliable and active community institutions. Like NAS, CEDAC had originally started with agricultural training, but had also used the development of water infrastructure as an entry point. It promoted the use of water jars through a scheme in which villagers could buy one and get one free. It had also contributed towards communal ponds that allowed villagers to take full advantage of training in vegetable growing.

The local association and CEDAC's role had evolved dynamically, and encompassed a plurality of groups. It initially started with a youth group and a poor women's group. These groups were later amalgamated into the association. At the time of the research, there were many different way for people to be involved, and their participation was not tied to all activities. This was different from NAS's group, whose participants were required to join both the savings group and the rice bank at the same time, the capital needed to enter the group acting as a barrier to involvement, especially of the poor.

The local association was composed of groups that revolved around different activities—making fuel-efficient ovens, promoting SRI and reducing the use of chemicals and running a market stall, among others. This seemed to mean that learning was more widespread. For instance, reducing the use of chemical fertilisers and switching to natural ones was a key message in CEDAC's training, and was widely accepted by villagers interviewed.

It also meant that key concepts, such as the self-sufficiency of villages, could be mainstreamed into a variety of different activities. This included raising prices for products, through cutting out middlemen by setting up a village market stall, or through starting a pig production group that could negotiate for better prices. Activities were also used to mobilise people to join the savings group, so that the interest on loans could be kept within the village. One female member of the savings group explained, "They help us to be better off than before, so that we don't have to go and find people from outside".

The emphasis on different groups appeared to have had a strong effect on the leadership of the association, helping to include young people and women. Both the young people's and women's groups started at the beginning of CEDAC's work had mobilised many participants, although the youth group had since disbanded (due to marriage and migration of its members). These had acted as a training school and enabled a few people to gain demonstrable leadership skills. The head of the village association was only 25 years old, but through his early engagement in the youth group had proven his leadership qualities. Villagers interviewed also seemed

to recognise the advantage of having a young leader, such as his being more educated than older people and a faster learner. This early involvement of youth should be considered a best practice by CEDAC.

However, it could also be that the high levels of trust and cooperation in this village also enabled this young man to attain his position. In other villages where there were greater social divisions, it is likely that people would rely more on traditional leadership norms, such as age and social status.

Similarly, women were in key positions within the organisation. The numerous different activities conducted meant that there were many different leadership positions to be filled. In this village, different women headed the fiscal group and the market stall.

From CEDAC's point of view, its role had evolved from service provision to providing advice, training and facilitation to the association's leaders. CEDAC staff had initially started by providing agricultural training in areas such as planting vegetables and developing water infrastructure. Even at this stage, they worked in partnership with local leaders. They had worked to develop the association, and once its leaders had been elected, had trained them to be able to pass on agricultural knowledge. There had been a gradual withdrawal of CEDAC training activities until there was a total handover to the community association, and there had also been a significant drop in participation once this occurred (from more than 40 families to 16). Volunteers or community association leaders often have to work hard to build trust with people in the village, who frequently seem to value more highly knowledge that has come from outside. However, CEDAC was still active in the background, providing advice on how to expand the association, providing training inputs to the association leaders and buying agricultural produce.

The trade link that CEDAC has now established keeps the relationship between it and the local association strong. For example, the local association leader was being trained in pig raising, and intended to set up a production cooperative, but CEDAC also planned to build a slaughterhouse in nearby Skon, which could be used by all of the farmers' associations in the area, thereby using collective bargaining power to raise the price for small farmers. There had been a significant increase in the price of pork, and CEDAC had responded quickly.

This ongoing relationship could be argued to be crucial to the achievement of certain goals, such as the adoption of SRI. This innovative way of increasing rice yields has been demonstrated in other areas and could play a significant role in reducing poverty, but it is a substantial change for risk-averse households. In CEDAC's model, however, local volunteers were still encouraging people to adopt the new technique, partly because they themselves still had a relationship with and encouragement from CEDAC. This is crucial because the technique has to be clearly demonstrated, and it usually requires several growing seasons for it to become widespread. The members of the local association could keep encouraging people to adopt it for a longer period. Furthermore, CEDAC would buy excess organically grown rice from local farmers at 10 percent above the market rate, giving them a clear incentive to adopt the new technique.

CEDAC's model also establishes links to other development agencies in the village, and plans the association's involvement with local government. This was done in several ways. In 2006, it consulted with villagers and local authorities (the village chief, but this was later endorsed by the commune chief) to issue laws about issues that could have caused conflict within the village. These ranged from dealing with domestic violence to fines for letting cows wander onto a neighbour's property and eat their harvested rice. These laws are declared once

a year by the village chief, but they are drafted and decided by the villagers themselves through a consultative process. Key informants asserted that conflicts had declined because of this.

The association's trade-based projects distribute their profits to contribute to community well-being. The association's market stall buys common foodstuffs and products that villagers would usually buy several kilometres away. It sells them at the same price, but villagers do not have to spend money on travel and so prefer to buy from the association. The profits from the market stall are divided between the seller (30 percent), the management committee (10 percent), development (10 percent) and the members of the group (50 percent). These contributions are found in all of the different trades that CEDAC has set up. They contribute to the village through the "emergency fund", which is part of the "development fund". The emergency fund has contributed to supporting a poor woman in the village.⁴² The development fund had donated to projects initiated by the village development committee, such as building small roads.

This fund's contribution was still very small, however, and did not appear to be highly valued by the local *achar*. However, the fund had been started very recently (in 2007). Furthermore, such funds rely on expanding activities to be able to make substantial contributions. Moreover, the fund is significant in that it links to traditional village development processes, such as the village development committees.⁴³ An emphasis on local associations appeared to mean that their initiatives were well coordinated with traditional village development groups. This could be seen in the process that had led to CEDAC funding water infrastructure in the village. CEDAC first informed the former head of the local association that there were opportunities for funding water infrastructure. He next contacted a landowner to assess the price of land to make a pond for use by the village. He then contacted the village chief, followed by the village development committee. Once these had agreed, a general meeting was held with all villagers to get their agreement and raise funds for making the pond. This had been done with substantial contributions from the community, no doubt because of real need for the project, but also because of support from the village decision makers.

While the CEDAC model has the potential to make significant contributions to local development and farmer-led initiatives, there were several limitations to the approach. This had been illustrated in another research site, where the CEDAC-initiated local association had not been able to garner much participation and had in effect remained a small savings group. This seemed to be due to three main reasons. First, the level of activity required to set up the programme had excluded some participants because the time commitment affected their livelihoods. This particularly applied to female volunteers, who often could not find people to replace their labour within the household. In general, successful volunteer-led programmes accept that volunteers can contribute only on a part-time basis, and that programmes consequently grow slowly. Secondly, the association, although stable and sustainable, was still reliant on CEDAC to make trade links for it. Thirdly, the association in its growing pains appeared to be giving conflicting messages of working for profits and benefits, and for the community.

42 The research team concluded that this woman was not materially poor (she had land and draught animals that she could rent out), but "symbolically poor", meaning that she had no family (she had not married or had children) and therefore was viewed as being without essential support.

43 Village development committees here are the traditional groups of *achars* and village elders who have been responsible for small-scale village development and who mobilise people to participate in development activities.

All of its activities contained an element of both. However, some activities were clearly judged on their benefits, rather than on their contribution to village development. The savings group had problems keeping members because those interviewed were motivated by the profit they could make rather than building up a resource that could be used to develop the community, or help poor people within it, as NAS had done.

Impacts and Links to National Development

Links to national development are explored in two respects: how do CEDAC's volunteers respond to national development goals outlined in the NSDP, and how do they promote volunteerism?

CEDAC has linked its programmes and approach to the NSDP's overall aim of poverty alleviation. This case study shows that they can contribute in many areas related to farmer-led initiatives, including agricultural skills training, cheap credit and increasing rice production, all of which are proven strategies for improving poor people's incomes at Cambodia's stage of development (ADB 2006).

In terms of promoting volunteerism, the CEDAC case study highlights several key points. As explained above, CEDAC works with people who are interested and volunteer to participate in its programmes. It makes substantial contributions to volunteer-led initiatives and promotes ideas that are key to volunteerism, such as self-sufficiency and engagement of communities to solve their own problems. However, while participants in CEDAC's model may initially be seen as volunteers, contributing their time for the well-being of the community, they will also at some point receive financial benefits from their work and become in effect full-time staff of their local associations. In the focus community, where there were strong bonds and norms of reciprocal exchange, the association relied on extensive volunteer labour. In another setting where there were strong social divisions, this model appeared to have less success. One major drawback of this model is that it relies on extensive economies of scale. In the area studied, the activities of the association did not generate enough profits to garner wider participation.

How this will affect the strength of engagement with local governance structures remains to be seen.

7.6 Youth Star Cambodia

History of NGO Involvement in Volunteerism⁴⁴

Youth Star started in 2005, as Cambodia's first service programme for youth. Youth Star is based on the idea that volunteering can be a means of developing citizenship and social engagement. The mission is “to build a just and peaceful nation through citizen service, civic leadership, and social entrepreneurship”.

Youth Star cited several reasons for setting up the programme. Foremost was an understanding of how civic service can contribute to the development of Cambodia and of democratic, stable societies (see Section 3). Youth Star's feasibility study noted that in Cambodia at present volunteerism was “misunderstood and undervalued”, because volunteering was traditionally linked to religious service. The report also highlighted concerns about youth, such as their very high rates of unemployment, the low level of education and, consequently, their lack of preparation for the job market. They were also unengaged or marginalised in development efforts, with few notions of civic duty or service that could be harnessed for development. Nonetheless, the feasibility study also noted several areas where youth volunteers could play a valuable role, especially by transferring some of their skills to rural communities.

The volunteer programme set up by Youth Star places university graduates, often in rural communities, for a period of one year. To date, 71 volunteers have been or are currently working.

Several aspects were found to be pivotal to the impact of this volunteer model. For the social development of volunteers, it was deemed crucial that they be placed far from familiar contexts, away from family pressures, so that the types of activities they would do could be directed by the community partner and the volunteer. Youth Star also places a lot of emphasis on training, both previous to and after volunteer service, for example through careers advice. Volunteers receive a small stipend (US\$50 per month) to cover their costs, but which is designed not to affect the perception of the young person as a volunteer in service to the community, rather than a paid NGO staff member. Volunteers have very few resources with which to work, beyond their labour, their ideas and the resources they can mobilise. Once they arrive in the community, they conduct a “community resources mapping”, which looks at the community from the perspective of an outsider but tries to understand what skills and resources are already available. The community partner and other members often participate in this mapping, so they too are involved in looking at their communities in this way. Furthermore, the volunteers have to meet all of the villagers as part of this mapping, and view them, not as people to be changed, but as valuable resources to be included and mobilised.

The community is an important aspect of the Youth Star model. Youth Star initially started by selecting different kinds of communities that could demonstrate the different kinds of support that volunteers would need in different contexts.⁴⁵ The provinces selected for the first year included some that had access to substantial natural resources (areas of Kompong Cham), some with poor communities and few resources but some NGO action (Prey Veng) and more remote communities with ethnic minority populations (Kratie). Community

44 The sources for this section include a feasibility study conducted by Youth Star before its programme started (see Mysliwiec 2005), in-depth interviews with staff and the researchers' observations.

45 Personal communication, Eva Mysliwiec, Executive Director of Youth Star, 3 March 2008.

involvement in requesting the volunteer is an important aspect of the programme, however, as the community has to identify the areas in which it foresees volunteers making a contribution. The volunteers are also placed with a community partner, who can help them to integrate into the community and offer professional and emotional support. Youth Star staff find the communities and have these important dialogues before placing the volunteer.

History of the Community Studied

Youth Star's programme was observed in two research sites, one a Cham Muslim village and one in Prey Veng province. This allowed researchers to understand the different impacts of the volunteer programmes. Most of the findings came from the site in Prey Veng, because the first site was included as a pre-test of research tools. However, the first site also gave some useful insights into the impact of the programme, which are presented in this report.

The community studied was located in Prey Veng province, a poor area with degraded natural resources.⁴⁶ There are several NGOs active in the area, including PADEK and SIPAR, which have collaborated to set up sustainable community institutions, such as a community resource centre. PADEK has also set up several credit groups in the village studied, and now provides a low level of support to these groups, which are largely run by their members.

The village, like other areas in this study, faces growing land pressure and a rising population. There has been significant community cooperation to address these issues. For example, a local *achar* had been advocating the re-establishment of a wat on the site where it existed before the war. The reason he gave was that the elders in the village could more easily attend the wat, and that a new primary school could be established nearby. The wat started to be rebuilt in 2000, although it is still not completed. Elders in the village have been trying to raise funds for it through traditional methods such as festivals, and other religious communities in nearby areas have been helping. The more skilled monks from nearby areas attend the festivals to attract more donations and participants. As observed also in other areas, older women are important in maintaining the religious life of the village, through making food for festivals, receiving and welcoming guests and promoting religious values, among other things.

Nonetheless, a high level of social divisions and factionalism within the community was observed. Elders in the timeline explained that there had been good community cooperation before the war period, despite the difficulties that they faced during the era of French colonialism. Elders said that social divisions had started to occur during the Lon Nol era, when villagers divided into those who supported Lon Nol and those who supported the deposed Norodom Sihanouk. As in many other areas, this was a shock to the rural community's sense of harmony, as "Even families broke up". Elders also identified this era as when people started to "live for themselves". For this group, the difference in community cooperation was stark, and they mostly attributed it to the rise in consumerist values: "In society previously we used our labour; in society today they use money".

46 The "2004 Poverty Profile of Cambodia" (Royal Government of Cambodia 2006), gave a poverty headcount index of 37.2 percent for Prey Veng, which is above the national average of 27.97 percent, but below the poorest province (Kompong Speu, 57.2 percent).

In the modern era, several other factors appeared to undermine community cohesiveness. Religious leaders said that consumerist values meant that people were often more interested in earning money than in community cooperation, and that villagers were often jealous of each other's achievements. This undermined trust and cooperation. The village had also experienced significant immigration, from areas such as Kampuchea Krom⁴⁷ and other areas of Prey Veng province. Key informants said that this immigration had started after the war, and that people in the village often stayed within their social networks, based on familial and personal relationships. Elders also explained that this difference in affiliation extended even into religious life, as different *achars* had different followers and therefore could call different groups to attend religious ceremonies. Lastly, emigration, especially to Thailand, had become an entrenched part of villagers' livelihood strategies, which particularly affected young men. Informants estimated that more than 200 people had left the village to work illegally in Thailand, and that since this pattern had started several years ago, 10 of them had died or gone missing. In general, it seemed that this migration pattern had also affected the drop-out rates of young men, who were pressured to leave school once they had reached a certain age.⁴⁸ Traffickers were visible in the community at the time of the research, recruiting labourers for the next trip to Thailand.

Additional research was conducted in a predominantly Cham village, in Kompong Cham province. This village had suffered during the conflict era: half of the village had been killed during the Khmer Rouge period, and the other half had survived by fleeing. Strong cooperation had been essential to the community's survival after those years. These days, the community has very high levels of cooperation and has raised funds for its own development, including building a mosque, wells, roads and other infrastructure. Volunteers are often motivated by their religious values and actively maintain the community's religious basis. Seven volunteer teachers run religious classes for children in the village. Other volunteers teach foreign languages that students may use in the future, such as Malaysian.

Migration has become an entrenched livelihood strategy, and the community still receives funds from villagers who are working in other countries. The poverty in the village did not appear to be as great as in other areas studied.

The villagers also suffered from discrimination, which especially impacted on girls' attendance at the local secondary school, located outside the village. Religious norms also separated the sexes in certain spheres. Women and girls were not allowed to attend daily prayer sessions in the mosque, apart from on Friday afternoons.

47 The area now referred to as "Kampuchea Krom", in southern Vietnam, was originally part of Cambodia, but gradually settled by Vietnamese. It was officially included in Vietnam by the French colonial power. The area still includes a substantial ethnic Khmer minority.

48 Informants estimated that many boys started to leave the village from 13–14 years of age, but some could be younger.

Observations of the Programme⁴⁹

At the time of the research, the Prey Veng community had already had one placement of a Youth Star volunteer, and a second one was working with the community members who had been involved at the start of the programme. The first volunteer had been placed at the request of the community, facilitated by PADEK, which had worked for a long time in this area. The community request for the volunteer built strong community ownership of the programme.

The history of the Youth Star volunteers' work in this area is instructive, revealing how they were able to mobilise people into their programme, despite having very few resources. It also shows how the volunteers are encouraged to work with the community, even if there is little cooperation. The first volunteer had initially been placed in the local primary school, to work with teachers and students. The community partner explained:

“At the beginning of the programme, the volunteer wanted to set up a club for the young people. But if the youth from this village came, then youth from the other village did not want to come, and if the youth from the other village came, then the youth from this village did not want to come. He came to me and asked me what to do; he said that he could not go forward ... He called all of the youth to a meeting and encouraged them to work together. He explained to them that if we cannot cooperate, there is no benefit”.

This is a qualitative difference in approach. Many communities in this study, and by implication their volunteer-led programmes, suffer from social divisions and groupings. They usually try to overcome this by having an evolving programme, or benefits for the group that they hope will motivate outsiders to join.

In this case, the identity of the volunteer as an outsider who is encouraged to work in an inclusive way with the community means that developing social capital is addressed at the outset. This was seen in other cases too. For example, in Kompong Cham, the first Youth Star volunteer also worked with a children's club; although strong religious norms made it difficult to include both girls and boys in the same group, yet the volunteer was able to advocate for both to join.

The volunteers are able to overcome these social barriers, principally because they are perceived as working for the benefit of the community and for youth in particular. The community partner was also found to be essential in both communities, because they can encourage the volunteer to address these issues, and give them legitimacy. The current Youth Star volunteer in Kompong Cham has been working with the community partner to tackle ethnic discrimination and the consequent eruptions of violence between Cham and Khmer young people. A Khmer, he has come to understand issues of discrimination, and has seen its impact, for instance in preventing young women from attending secondary school because fears that they will be taunted for their Islamic dress. He has advocated for more understanding in neighbouring communities, with the support of the community partner.

⁴⁹ In this section, “volunteer” refers to the Youth Star-supported volunteer, “village volunteers” refers to the local youth who have become active members of the youth club; they are also sometimes referred to as “club members”.

In Prey Veng, the volunteers' youth work had quickly expanded, once youth from different villages had accepted the importance of working together. The first Youth Star volunteer had set up English and remedial classes in Khmer to support his work in the primary school and to tackle school drop-outs. However, participation swelled, and at the time of the research, the role of the volunteer had expanded to supporting youth volunteers within the village. There are currently two clubs (for youth and for children), which conduct a variety of activities. The village youth volunteers have set up classes to teach other village youth and children in topics including English, Khmer and ethics. The Youth Star volunteer now teaches the volunteers in the youth club, who in turn have started to teach classes for other youth across the four villages in the commune. They have responded strongly to the example of volunteerism, and have been able very quickly to encourage other youth to volunteer. In doing this, they have come to rely to a lesser extent on the Youth Star volunteer, and appear to have set up a sustainable volunteer-led structure.

The impact of the young village volunteers can be seen when looking at education. The quality of education is low, because teachers feel demoralised and have to earn additional income outside school. Students feel demoralised, as corruption allows richer children to pass exams, while those who cannot afford bribes struggle to pass. The quality of the teaching does not engage them in learning. Once they reach a certain age, livelihood and family pressures mean that they often drop out of school to find work. The community partner (who is also the school deputy director) said that most of the students have dropped out by grades seven or eight.

The youth club and its volunteers have been tackling these issues and advocating for their peers to continue their education. The Youth Star volunteer works in the primary school in the mornings, and can substitute for a class teacher should one be absent. In the afternoons, the village youth volunteers and the Youth Star volunteer give free classes in Khmer literacy, ethics and English, so that children and adolescents who are at risk of dropping out can keep up with their peers. They have encouraged their peers to join in the free extracurricular lessons. In one focus group discussion with children who are a part of the club, they said that they have collected money and asked their mothers for rice to share with their friends who are too poor to attend school. They have also contacted parents of children who have dropped out and encouraged them to allow their children to continue their education.

Parents interviewed in the village have noticed a change in their children's attitude to education.

"I want my child to learn a lot so that he can have knowledge and find a good job in the future ... Now my child can read and knows a lot. He can read the writing on the TV [in English], he reads books at home ... I want my child to go and learn". —Parent of a child in the club

Many of the parents highly appreciated the changes they had seen in their children's valuing of education and new knowledge. Many of them were concerned for their children's future, especially finding good jobs, and felt that they were acquiring new skills that they could use in non-rural employment. Some parents interviewed did not let their children attend the classes because of labour shortages in the house. These families expected their children to remain in the rural economy instead of pursuing further education.

Educational activities were just one aspect of the Youth Star and village volunteers' work. The Youth Star volunteer facilitated village volunteers' access to educational resources. This was aided by the activities of

other NGOs. SIPAR had set up an educational resource centre. The village volunteers quickly put this to use and conducted sessions on a wide variety of topics, including hygiene, trafficking and migration and domestic violence. They had also experimented with new agricultural techniques, such as natural composting and fertilisers and SRI. The club had requested some land from the village chief, and had planted a demonstration plot using SRI. They had also developed a plan for dissemination of this technique throughout the village. They planned to use a small part of each of their families' rice plots to demonstrate the technique to their parents. This plan recognised the problems that they faced trying to “educate” their elders in a society with strict age-based hierarchies. However, similarly to other communities in which volunteers tried to teach SRI, success required a clear understanding of how communities learn and acquire new skills, principally through practical demonstrations and, in this case, dissemination.

This model also demonstrates the potential for harnessing young people's ability to learn quickly and openness to acquiring new skills. It could also be argued that this method provides a much more integrated model of accessing key development messages, because the village youth volunteers could focus on issues that they felt were relevant to their target group. Messages about trafficking were targeted to youth who were at high risk of being trafficked, by their peers in a development setting. This was done against a background of also encouraging youth to continue their education, and giving them skills (such as English) that could enable them to access other employment in the future. This also highlights an important finding, that when young people are given the freedom to set their own agendas, they become powerful advocates for their peers.

The Youth Star volunteers had become role models in the two communities studied. In Kompong Cham, the first volunteer in that village had provided a role model of a young, educated woman to younger girls. This was particularly important to widen young women's aspirations when they were not being encouraged in their own environment. In this case, the volunteer was able to encourage two young women to apply to teacher training college. She facilitated their discussions and encouraged them to think about their professional futures. Her description shows that she was both a role model and an advocate for them to develop their skills:

“I explained the value of education ... After about four to five months, they became interested in me and wanted to learn a lot and work like me ... I told them that education means that people cannot cheat us, that it is easy for us to go and live anywhere, and that we don't have to rely on our husbands, because we cannot rely on them forever; we have to be able to help ourselves ... I asked them what they wanted to learn and they did not know, so I asked them what they thought about becoming teachers ... When they went to do the exams for getting into teacher training college, it was the first time they had left the village. I encouraged them before the exam. Their parents did not encourage them to go, but they did not forbid it either”.

It could also be posited that certain issues become narrowed in focus when they are tied to projects with specific educational goals, but conversely, they can be tackled in a more holistic way if volunteers have greater freedom of action. This can be illustrated in the case of domestic violence, which was addressed in a variety of ways in the communities studied, but most frequently through “sentinels” who could try to address violence with support from local authorities. It was also noticeable that when villagers were asked about issues affecting women, they almost invariably talked about domestic violence, and rarely about other issues, such as access

to education or employment. However, in Prey Veng, the village youth volunteers have performed dramas about domestic violence for their village. They have also chosen to have classes about ethics, which promote positive values such as conflict resolution. One parent said, “Now my daughter has higher ideas than me. When I have arguments with my husband, the children come and advise us not to fight”. There are going to be violent situations in which young people cannot intervene, but given that the current high levels of domestic violence are frequently attributed to Cambodia’s recent history of conflict, re-instilling social understanding is arguably a crucial part of social development. Violence is also strongly related to women’s lack of bargaining power, their weak access to education and lack of employment opportunities. Interventions that address these issues could have a substantial impact in the long term.

Villages visited during the research also had concerns about these kinds of social development goals. They were almost universally concerned about a breakdown in community spirit and social harmony, as the timelines revealed. They were also very concerned about their youth, and how to deal with an emerging youth culture of violence and gangs that they seemed ill equipped to deal with. In two communities visited, the village development committees had instituted a system of fines for “misbehaviour” such as violence at communal celebrations. It was noticeable that this seemed to happen in more socially cohesive communities, where these could be applied equally. The elders in Kompong Cham said, “These fines apply to everyone. Even if the village chief’s son does something wrong, he has to be fined”. Beyond these communal sanctions, there were very few interventions that addressed youth, who generally remained marginalised and undervalued in community development activities.

This situation was noticeably different in Prey Veng, where the members of the youth club had become engaged in numerous activities. In focus group discussions, they talked of this transformation and of their own social development, from feeling “useless”, to participating in village development.

“Before [joining the club], I felt useless, I wasted time walking around, I watched TV and did not do anything useful. In the club there are a lot of activities that I can get involved in ... I changed my character, from being mean to being gentle ... My friends talked to me. They saw that I would go walking and would hit other people, and they told me to change, so I became gentle”.—Male youth club member, Prey Veng

Youth often feel isolated from each other. Strong age hierarchies often discourage their participation, because they feel that their opinions will not be valued. This was found in numerous focus group discussions with youth, who are infrequently included in public or development forums. Yet when the youth in focus group discussions were asked to rank the benefits for them of being in the youth club, “helping society” was their first response, followed by “gaining experience” and “knowing each other”. However, for the girls in the group, “feeling confident/brave” was an important outcome of their participation.

The motivation that young people feel in being part of development activities was in sharp contrast to many older community volunteers. Because the selection for the latter often relies on notions of seniority and respect, older volunteers often state that they want to stop their work but higher local authorities do not allow it. The domestic violence sentinel in Prey Veng had formally requested to stop work, but the commune had asked her to carry on. In focus group discussions, it seemed that it was widely perceived by women in the community that she was the only one who could do this volunteer job, which in effect meant that she was tied to it by a notion of communal duty.

The Youth Star volunteers' and village volunteers' youth both aided and hampered their ability to link with other development agencies. For the Youth Star volunteers, three aspects of their identity in the rural community seemed to facilitate the links that they could make with other development agencies. Firstly, because they were almost always significantly younger than other community volunteers, and therefore to some extent bound by cultural norms of respect for older generations, they were frequently called upon to support older volunteers, for example by filling in paperwork. In this way (as well as through community mapping exercises) they were able to form relationships and gain an understanding of other volunteer-led activities in the village.

Secondly, Youth Star volunteers came to be seen as a community resource. This emerged very strongly from conversations with local villagers, who accepted them because they were living with them and serving the community. The idea of serving the community is key to indigenous definitions of volunteerism. As one villager said, "We don't see them as someone from outside; we see them as one of us". This translated into giving the volunteers rights to represent and make links on behalf of the community, for instance with the commune council.

Lastly, the volunteers come to the community with very few resources of their own. They are frequently supported in small ways by the community, who give them places to stay or things to eat and encourage them in their work. However, they clearly see their ability to increase people's access to knowledge, information and skills as a key part of what they can contribute, and therefore make links with other development agencies if they feel that they can give villagers access to training or education. In Prey Veng, the Youth Star volunteer has made links with visiting NGOs such as the Youth Council of Cambodia to provide training to members of the youth and children's clubs.

Their links to other development agencies, such as the village development committees, have been less successful because of the age of the village volunteers. As remarked in Section 5, these are among the oldest institutions in rural communities, and they rely on notions of respect for age and leadership, making it hard for young people to be recognised as a group that should be included in development planning. The village volunteers have had more success being recognised by the local authorities, who saw the positive impact that they have had.

"If there is any kind of activity in the village, they come to meet me; they participate by sharing their ideas and solving the problems. Youth have a lot more understanding about development than before ... They have educated young people about violence among themselves, and they don't have groups fighting like before. They can grow rice and vegetables, and they have good morality in the village and respect the elders".—Commune chief, Prey Veng

At the time of the research, the youth volunteers had submitted a request to the commune to be able to build a youth centre where they could carry on their mentoring and teaching activities and meet with their peers. The commune had approved this plan and the village youth volunteers were raising funds (through growing and selling vegetables, making compost for sale and other activities) to be able to build this resource.

Impacts and Links to National Development

Links to national development are explored in two respects: how do Youth Star's volunteers respond to national development goals outlined in the NSDP, and how do they promote volunteerism?

The case study indicates that it would be limiting to view this model's contribution to national development as a set list of reachable targets. Youth Star volunteers can mobilise participation because they are requested by the communities in which they work. They also work closely with their community partners, on development objectives set for them. They can later expand their agenda based on needs they have identified. The case study also highlights how village youth volunteers mobilised by the Youth Star volunteer were given the freedom to set their own agenda, and therefore could tackle a variety of issues that they feel to be important for themselves, their peers and their communities.

Where they have had the freedom to do so, they have tackled areas that are specifically mentioned in the NSDP, such as improving school survival rates, improving the quality of education and motivating their peers to build skills for other job markets. More broadly, this model tackles the rising inequalities in access to education and information between rural and urban communities. It can also promote changes in gender roles by providing a model, and thus encourage young women's access to education and skills. It can contribute to community learning and provide a more integrated education than reliance on single volunteers working alone to tackle a single issue.

This model has also made a substantial contribution to promoting volunteerism. The Youth Star study shows that youth can be mobilised to become volunteers, despite existing social divisions. The Youth Star volunteers' cooperation with community partners and with village volunteers inspired and mobilised them to become active and engaged citizens. This is important because volunteer-led initiatives can be sustainable only if they inspire others to participate.

Several factors could account for the strength of this initiative. One is the situation of youth in many rural communities, who are currently marginalised but an available and motivated force for development. Initiatives that involve youth have clearly shown that they can be mobilised in large numbers, even where they do not have freedom to set the development agenda, but more so if they do. A second is the identity of the volunteers. While many villagers in this research said that they would prefer to have volunteers from within their communities, the Youth Star study demonstrates that outsiders can have a qualitatively different impact, mostly because they do not work within existing social divisions but seek to overcome them, and are perceived as a community resource. A third factor is community ownership. Volunteers are placed only in communities that request them. They work in cooperation with local partners and the villagers. They also live and work, with very little recompense, in the community, and are recognised as part of it.

This strongly supports that idea that we should pay close attention to indigenous definitions of volunteerism. If volunteer models "ring true" in rural communities, they will inspire others to join.

Lastly, there is a clear cumulative effect, for both the communities and the volunteers. In Kompong Cham, villagers exposed to volunteers and community service have identified other ways to use volunteers to develop their community. Youth Star's community partner would like to have youth volunteers to teach mechanics so that they can fix their own farm machinery and not lose time travelling to the nearest town. Village youth volunteers in Prey Veng want to develop their educational skills and learn more about agricultural techniques, because they see a lot of land being wasted in the village and want to put it to use.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The case studies highlight the different approaches that NGOs working with and through volunteers have used. Reviewing the key elements of each approach points to several “best practices” that promote both volunteerism and civic engagement.

KYA's youth clubs mobilised youth to address issues of high concern, and involved them significantly in those education activities in a variety of settings. It also encouraged them to liaise with local authorities and develop skills that youth felt they needed. BFD's volunteers promoted peace and justice within their communities and were active on issues such as domestic violence. In some areas, they also appeared to have an impact on local governance, by creating an alternative moral authority and advocating for people to enable them to access justice. The NAS-initiated local association addressed the causes of poverty within the village and made a substantial impact in reducing the vulnerability to shocks of some poor households. While CEDAC's model envisages moving away from volunteerism, the case study highlights that it initially relied on volunteer participation and has promoted strategies to alleviate poverty, including by developing agricultural skills and diversifying livelihoods. Volunteers working with Youth Star Cambodia have demonstrated the importance of working in full cooperation with community resources and have shown how youth can be mobilised as volunteers to address the needs and concerns of their peers.

All of the case studies highlight one of the first prerequisites of developing volunteerism, which is the participants' perception that their contributions are valuable to community or social well-being. Traditional volunteerism shows that people who are perceived to work for communal well-being are highly valued. Promotion of volunteerism expands the social definition of “communal needs” to include vulnerable groups such as youth or women who suffer from domestic violence.

Where volunteers have had more freedom to set the agenda, they have done more to develop social capital and highlight these evolving communal needs. Volunteer models that move beyond volunteers working didactically to promote behaviour change and recognise the potential of volunteers to enact transformative change have had the deepest impact. This could be seen in each of the case studies.

8.1 Emerging Models of Volunteer Action

From the case studies, it is clear that there are several emerging models of volunteer action, which differ qualitatively from those of previous eras. All contribute in some way to the establishment of volunteerism in Cambodian culture.

Traditional volunteerism is still an important influence within Cambodian rural communities (in both Khmer and other ethnic groups). As Pellini (2007) asserted, “[I]t forms one of the most stable parts of Cambodian society”. However, it is often tied to religious duty, and is formed by age and gender hierarchies that strictly delineate participation. Nonetheless, it is still intimately linked to development and the decision-making process in rural communities. Some of the volunteer-led programmes, especially those that envisage creating sustainable grass-roots associations, made concerted efforts to link with traditional volunteer groups.

From the qualitative research, it can be seen that some of the volunteer programmes are working in broadly similar ways and represent emerging forms of volunteerism that have not existed in Cambodia before (see Section 5).

The interest group approach was one of the first approaches to emerge in the post-conflict era. It has often involved message-based technical skills, but has had limited impact because it does not allow much freedom for volunteers to initiate social action.

An important emerging approach involves local associations. This has had a significant impact in skills building and poverty reduction, and conceives of participants engaged with local development structures (governmental and non-governmental) to address local issues. Lastly, the volunteer support approach promotes volunteers demonstrating and initiating civic leadership and service. These programmes are broadly characterised by enabling social change, education and facilitating integrated development.

8.2 Issues Affecting Volunteerism (and Its Ability to Create Social Capital)

The cases reviewed in this research all demonstrate that volunteers are highly motivated to work for their communities, often in the hope of initiating deep social change. Several of these case studies also show that when volunteers are given freedom of action, they will target their peers and respond to local needs and issues.

The strength of this volunteer action shows that it relies on traditional norms that value people serving their community. As Sedara (2001) points out, traditional norms support a generalised reciprocity in which people feel loyalty to those in their communities. Notions of assisting and “loving each other” were described as the foundation stone of community in our research, supporting the patterns of reciprocal exchange and self-help without which people in rural societies could not survive. However, while the word “volunteer” is a modern invention, Cambodian rural societies have relied on people working for free for the general well-being. Modern volunteerism relies on the honour and social value given to those who do such work, while dynamically redefining the concept.

If volunteerism is alive and well in Cambodia, it is interesting to look at how it is understood and formed. From the qualitative research, two approaches emerged—the “power and leaders” approach, and the “inclusive” approach. Both are greatly informed by traditional norms.

The “power and leaders” approach is often seen in volunteer-led community-based associations and relies on traditional ideas of leadership. The volunteers are chosen based on their ability to lead people in the village and to mobilise them into the programme. Volunteers have to have personal qualities that are viewed as essential to leadership in Cambodian culture. Previous research has pointed to aspects such as being a powerful speaker (Ledgerwood and Vijghen 2002), but other qualities that people talked of in this research included those important for establishing social harmony or resolving conflict—moral standing, honour, being gentle or non-confrontational. The social respect that volunteers gain from their role, and their own motivations, stem from a recognition that volunteer work involves social leadership. Some of the volunteer roles included in this study also required leadership skills; for instance, mediation and negotiation were central for BFD’s volunteers. More importantly, volunteer work can broaden concepts of leadership by including more people in leadership roles. In the areas studied, volunteers within the “leaders and power” approach could re-invigorate norms of leadership, partly by becoming motivated leaders themselves, but also by being examples. In some cases, they were recruited by the local authorities and perceived to be an essential part of local governance.

Nonetheless, the case studies demonstrated several limits to this approach. Traditional norms of leadership can exclude certain groups, most commonly youth and women. Age hierarchies are essential to ideas of leadership and concepts of knowledge. Young people are often seen as lacking knowledge and therefore are not taken into consideration for leadership. In other cases, the volunteer-led initiative very much relied on a “strong” leader, who was respected and admired for his dedication to the community, but the model did not include leadership roles for other people, and thus it was unclear who could sustain the organisation if he were to leave. If volunteer models do not encourage widespread leadership, they can exclude an important aspect of volunteerism. CEDAC’s model involved many different groups under one association and, consequently, different leaders in different capacities. The association was more sustainable because it encouraged more people to become volunteer leaders and develop the skills to keep the organisation working.

The “inclusive” approach works with either special interest groups or, more commonly, groups marginalised from development. In the case studies, this included youth, who are highly motivated and easy to mobilise, partly because they have a strong desire to be included. Even when their work is strongly messaged-based, such as in the KYA case study, youth volunteers can work with a lot of dedication and few incentives. They also effectively target their peers to prevent their social exclusion. Youth Star’s work has highlighted this, through both youth-led social work with school drop-outs and work with marginalised groups such as children of families with domestic violence.

It can be seen that these two approaches use different mechanisms for mobilising people into the programmes. Volunteers are at the forefront of issues to do with participation or mobilisation. Many volunteers in the case studies were able to mobilise participants because they were recognised as people working for communal benefit. This could be seen in the strong ownership that communities felt towards the Youth Star volunteer or

the respect given to BFD's peace and development volunteers. In some areas and for some people (based on their experience with previous development projects), volunteering may be strongly associated with receiving a financial benefit, and consequently there is very little motivation to work without this.⁵⁰ However, it was found in this research that the most successful volunteer programmes encourage volunteerism because they pay attention to the most important aspects of indigenous definitions, namely working voluntarily without a salary for communal benefit.

The selection criteria for volunteers in communities include these motivations. Perhaps because of a tacit acceptance that volunteers will be selected based on criteria such as leadership skills and popularity, some programmes have noticeably failed to confront the exclusion of groups such as women, who are marginalised from volunteer roles by numerous factors. Most obviously, older women often lack literacy, which may be a basic NGO requirement for volunteers, especially if they have to conduct educational activities.

However, there are deeper, cultural, reasons for their exclusion. *Achars*, who are only men, often play a central role in the development of the village and are almost always included in village development committees. Women are also tied to their reproductive roles within the household, which may clash with their participation in volunteer groups.

"I used to join with CEDAC, but now I have stopped, because my husband was so grumpy about it that I got tired [of listening to him], so I stopped ... When I was in the CEDAC group, I thought that it was good and had a lot of development, but it was difficult for me in my family, because my husband easily becomes grumpy. Whenever I went for a long meeting and made food late, he would blame me and we would fight, so I decided to stop".—Female villager in Kompong Cham, former member of CEDAC savings group

"I think joining the group is good, because we can save money, learn how to plant vegetables, learn how to raise ducks, but my husband does not understand and just wants to have fights and blame them. When I first joined, we discussed it; he allowed me to join. Then after a while he fought with me, saying that I have left the house and am not at home any more and do not look after the children well enough".—Female villager in Kompong Cham, former member of CEDAC savings group

In other cases, women and girls are socialised not to have qualities that are seen as part of leadership skills. Young women said that they could not volunteer because they were not strong speakers, yet this is not a characteristic which is socially valued in women. However, female volunteers working with BFD were very clear that as women they were more able to tackle areas such as rape and domestic violence, and that women and girls would not be able to approach a man with their concerns. This is an important point, and despite the large numbers of respondents who said that they had policies to ensure equal participation of women in their volunteer programmes (50 percent), few in practice take any measures beyond broadly "encouraging" female participation.⁵¹

50 As explained in Section 5, the word "volunteer" was mostly associated with NGO-initiated activities, and some agencies, such as NAS, have found that people therefore expect a benefit from their volunteer role and will stop working if this benefit stops. NAS now uses the term "core teacher".

51 It was even less clear what "encouragement" meant, beyond accepting applications from women and girls.

CEDAC's example demonstrates that measures can be taken to ensure the participation of youth and women, particularly through directly involving them in volunteer programmes from their inception. Both a women's group and a youth group were set up at the beginning of CEDAC's work in the village studied, and later this resulted in the association involving youth and women leaders.

The level of social mobilisation also depends on the level of agency accorded to volunteer groups. Groups that had the freedom to set their own agenda could respond faster to local development needs and, with few resources, could mobilise large numbers of participants. This was clearly shown in Youth Star's case. Although the volunteers had been in place only for just over a year, they had mobilised a youth volunteer structure across four villages and had made plans for setting up a youth learning centre next to the commune office. Youth-focused initiatives can mobilise large numbers, but where volunteers have more freedom to set the agenda, they can encourage sustainable involvement.

These interventions were more effective at building social capital, both bonding and bridging. Many of the volunteer models studied were making bridging links with other development agencies, most often other volunteer and local development groups. Consequently, many of these groups' actions have ripple effects: once mobilised, the groups start to work for communal benefit in unforeseen ways. A BFD female peace and development volunteer started to advocate for girls to attend school. A women's health group in Kompong Cham started to put in requests to the commune council to fund an employment generation project. These groups have started to prioritise their own development needs and initiate ways to address them.

There were also several factors identified that undermined volunteers' ability to mobilise participation and build social capital.

It is commonly assumed that communities are socially homogeneous, and many of the models did not look at how to promote a socially inclusive approach. Many of the communities were quite divided. The timelines revealed that this was often due to the introduction of consumerist values and market economies, as well as other factors such as migration. In one case study, overcoming these social divisions and building social capital was an aim at the outset of the volunteer's work. In only one village reviewed was social cohesion sufficient to overcome tendencies to factionalise.

The effects of political culture must also be taken into account. The timelines demonstrated that political factionalism has undermined social cohesion since the Lon Nol era. Communities factionalise due to a number of factors, but political partisanship undoubtedly undermines volunteer efforts. As the NAS case study highlighted, political affiliation can make local associations socially exclusive and undermine perceptions of working for communal well-being, rather than for political power. This case study also highlighted that small community-based associations are easy to co-opt politically, with relatively few alternative sources of support available to them. Communal political rivalries can fuel these social divisions. Volunteers who visibly have no political agenda and come from outside those social groupings can often be more effective in mobilising participation and community support.

There is a lack of consensus among volunteer-supporting NGOs about the effects of political partisanship on volunteer initiatives. Grass-roots volunteers often identify a political culture of "gift giving" as counter-productive to their own work, which tries to develop a culture of participation and, by implication, volunteerism. However, when this issue was raised with two NGOs, they expressed few reservations and, in some cases,

pointed out the benefits of political patronage.⁵² NGOs may be clear about their own policies regarding political affiliation and state that they have no such affiliation, but point out that they are not in a position to forbid volunteer groups or local associations from accepting political patronage. There needs to be more debate on this issue and clear guidance for groups whose aim is to encourage grass-roots volunteerism.

There is also a lack of focus on communities' ability to contribute their own technical resources and skills to development, and on the different social contexts in which volunteers will find themselves working. Perhaps because volunteer programmes are often set up across wide areas, they tend to have a "one size fits all" approach. This was seen in BFD's case, where the political structures of the two communities in the study were very different. Initiating agencies may have to offer different levels of support to volunteers in these different contexts.

The emergence of volunteer programmes may indicate a paradigm shift in development practice in Cambodia. As explored in Section 5, the new period of peace and development has opened democratic space for sustainable grass-roots initiatives. Local volunteer activities are included and seen as an essential part of implementing government policies, from health care to decentralisation.⁵³ More broadly, volunteer programmes are focussed on genuine involvement at the grass roots. As CEDAC's case demonstrated, they conceive of development as involving people who are motivated to participate, rather than targeting specific groups.

Both the mapping and the case studies have highlighted that volunteerism is alive and well in Cambodian communities. Nonetheless, the issue of incentives and benefits for volunteers is unresolved. The case studies showed that volunteerism does exist and that sustainable structures can be created that have a long-term impact on communities, without either NGO support or incentives. For volunteerism to be promoted, the difference between working for a financial benefit and working out of a commitment to social action must be clear. Several informants in this study had decided to move away from using the word "volunteer" due to its association with financial benefits.

8.3 Reaching National Development Goals

As part of the research, in-depth interviews were conducted with key informants within the government, including H.E. Dr Ing Kantha Phavi, Minister of Women's Affairs, H.E. Khol Peng PhD, Minister of Education, and H.E. Leng Vy, Director General, Ministry of the Interior, who identified ways in which they foresaw volunteers making a contribution to national development goals.

All these key informants said that volunteerism is strongly supported by Cambodian values, although some said that these values had been seriously eroded since the Khmer Rouge period, especially by consumerist values. However, the government has recognised volunteers as an important part of reaching national development goals.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs is currently piloting a programme that works with community-based volunteers to promote social values, specifically the value of women in the family. The ministry has been trying to address

⁵² These included giving associations a feeling of confidence and supporting them in their work.

⁵³ Personal communication, H.E. Leng Vy, Director General, Ministry of the Interior, 22 February 2008.

issues such as domestic violence at the grass roots. The Ministry of the Interior foresees volunteers helping to empower communities to link with decentralised governance structures, and to build demands for transparent and accountable governance.

Government authorities interviewed for this research envisage volunteers playing a key role in development in several areas. Volunteers' social work can help to rebuild communities. For the Ministry of Women's Affairs, this includes promoting female employment and increasing girls' access to education. It is very receptive to this change in gender norms occurring through role models. Furthermore, there is a deep need for all kinds of legal literacy in the communities. Promoting an understanding of the law has reduced domestic violence and encouraged local authorities to act on this issue.

Volunteers could also promote literacy and help improve the quality of education, both of which are vital to building the resources of Cambodia's young population. The Ministry of Education is receptive to using volunteer labour in innovative ways to improve educational outcomes. It also favours the use of spiritual leaders, such as monks, to give ethics-based education in schools.

Volunteer programmes are low cost, often slow growing (because volunteers often have other livelihood commitments) but with long-term impacts. While many agencies are concerned about the sustainability of volunteer programmes, two of the programmes in this study were still active after the end of funding, and one had set up an apparently sustainable volunteer structure. Volunteer programmes are also based on realistic models of community learning, which encourage long-term learning from real examples. For instance, SRI may be difficult to promote through education alone. Volunteers have set up demonstration plots to show the benefits of SRI, and are present in the community to encourage a shift to this technique.

Finally, volunteer programmes demonstrate innovative ways to achieve development goals. Youth Star volunteers help to improve the education in local schools and work with school drop-outs to re-integrate them into classes. In villages where BFD's volunteers work, local leaders report that there has been a substantial decline in conflicts and domestic violence. Most importantly, volunteer programmes are trying to reduce poverty in the communities where they work.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

As the study suggests, there already exists a rich experience of volunteerism in Cambodia impacting individuals, communities, and development in countless ways, though volunteerism in Cambodia may not always be valued or recognized. Volunteers can and do play important roles as catalysts empowering individuals and communities to take charge of and participate in development, build community cohesion and trust, foster inclusiveness, promote civic engagement, raise awareness of social and health issues that affect people most, transfer skills and technology, offer access to information on rights, laws and resources, nurture and care for more vulnerable members of society, among other roles and contributions. It is not the purview of this study to suggest what type, where and how volunteerism should be deployed, but the case studies do indicate that volunteerism has

a significant impact when it is rooted in communities and responds to locally identified needs, when there is strong local ownership, when it builds on and links with existing structures and initiatives, when it is inclusive and recognizes local resources, and when the volunteers themselves are motivated to work for the common good and have skills and knowledge to share.

Volunteers can make a valuable contribution in virtually any sector of development. The Royal Government's Rectangular Strategy and the Cambodian Development Millennium Goals for example offer a broad range of goals and challenges towards which volunteers could make a difference, such as reducing poverty, making basic education and literacy accessible to all, improving health and well being, enhancing food security, gender equality, environmental protection, good governance, etc. In interviews conducted in the course of this study, the Minister of Education expressed support for a volunteer initiative that would engage students in literacy programmes in rural areas in order to reduce school drop out rates and illiteracy. Similarly, the Minister of Women's Affairs expressed interest in and support for initiatives that would strengthen their social work interventions at local level, particularly those that address domestic violence, by working with and through female volunteers, both young and older. The Ministry of Interior's Department of Local Administration sees a role for volunteers in strengthening local governance by facilitating youth councils working in cooperation with commune councils. These are but a few examples and one can safely assume that development actors in Cambodia, both governmental and non-governmental, could easily identify numerous ways that volunteers could contribute in any of their areas of intervention. But, volunteers or volunteer programs do not exist in a vacuum. They require a conscious effort to create space and opportunity for volunteering, and these in turn require planning and integration in development plans, as well as recognition of their value. At the same time particular attention needs to be paid to developing inclusive policies that enable women and the disabled to access and participate in volunteering opportunities. Also, volunteer programmes are not cost-free. Although volunteerism implies that there is no salary or monetary benefit to the volunteers, volunteer programmes require infrastructure, resources, and an enabling environment in which to prosper. Volunteer efforts will yield more impact if they are well managed, supported, and coordinated. Recommendations regarding ways to enhance and expand volunteerism efforts in Cambodia are further highlighted in Annex III of this report, and were put forward by stakeholders from a broad range of sectors who participated in the conference focusing on the preliminary findings of this study in February 2008.

The recommendations made in this report reflect some of the best practices observed in the case studies. There is a need to make the impacts of volunteerism as widely felt as possible, and this entails including and valuing the contributions of different age groups. It is equally important to create an enabling environment so that a culture that encourages people to volunteer, and to become involved in their communities can thrive. This has already started to happen in some areas, but needs to be capitalised on.

The following actions and policies directed to the development community including, government, non-government, and private sectors, can contribute towards creating this enabling environment:

- Recognise the contribution of volunteers to the social and economic development of communities, through increased public awareness (public events and information). The work of volunteers is currently not widely recognised.
- Create and integrate volunteering opportunities into national development planning and in donor development plans. Working with volunteers is often seen as a means of achieving project outputs, rather than an opportunity for integrated development to help reach national development goals.
- Develop, implement, and monitor inclusive policies that enable women, youth, and the disabled to participate in volunteering programmes. Volunteer profiles do not seem to be adequately monitored, and gender and youth mainstreaming policies are inadequate.
- Make public spaces available for the promotion of volunteerism or volunteer activities, especially in poor geographical areas. Volunteerism should be encouraged in these areas.
- Adopt measures and make the necessary resources available for the encouragement and facilitation, preparation, training and recognition of volunteers, including the establishment of volunteer centres.
- Provide an enabling legislative and fiscal framework that can encourage volunteering, and donating to volunteer programmes, including tax incentives and subsidies. Community-based associations need support to formalise their status if they wish to do so. Give tax incentives for donations made by the private sector to volunteer organisations or programmes.
- Encourage and promote youth volunteerism within educational establishments and youth services, and by developing specific programmes to encourage youth volunteering. Systems could be put in place that recognise youth volunteering, for instance by giving credits towards an educational qualification. The media can be encouraged to present an attractive image of volunteering. The profile of youth volunteers could be raised through an annual award for outstanding volunteers, recognising their achievements for national development.
- Create more opportunities at local and national levels for civic engagement by young people. Formalize the role of youth councils in local and national development. Create volunteer youth advisory panels in institutions and organisations to ensure that policies and programmes address their needs and aspirations.
- Encourage and make resources available for further research on volunteerism. Potential areas of study include, assessing and developing appropriate methodologies and tools for measuring impacts and transformational change; documenting the extent and impact of ‘informal’ or traditional volunteer efforts in Cambodia, as well as other non-NGO initiated volunteer programmes; costing and assessing the social outcomes of volunteering, and of youth who volunteer (for instance, their rates of employment).
- Volunteer agencies and volunteer involving organizations are encouraged to review the incentives and benefits that are offered to volunteers to ensure that they do not undermine local and national volunteering efforts.

ANNEX I

LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS

Name and Title

1. H.E. Dr Ing Kantha Phavi, Minister of Women's Affairs
2. H.E. Kol Pheng, PhD, Senior Minister, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
3. H.E. Leng Vy, Deputy Director General, Ministry of the Interior
4. Chiv You Meng, Executive Director, Khmer Youth Association
5. Sovan Sopheap, Head of Banteay Meanchey Office, KYA Banteay Meanchey
6. Run Saray, General Manager, Buddhism for Development
7. Kaut Thaeng, Programme Officer, Neak Aphiwat Sahakum
8. Eva Mysliwicz, Executive Director, Youth Star Cambodia
9. Mark Lawler, Country Programme Manager, United Nations Volunteers Cambodia
10. Ouch Ngak, Head of Human Resources, CEDAC
11. H.E. Prum Chantine, Director General, Cambodian Red Cross

ANNEX II

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ANNEX III

RESEARCH CONFERENCE

Volunteerism: Harnessing the Potential to Develop Cambodia

Thursday, 20 March 2008

Recommendations from Conference Participants

The following recommendations were put forward by conference participants during group discussions. They were addressed to the conference sponsors, all present at the meeting and their organisations, institutions or businesses. Participants came from a broad spectrum of the development community in Cambodia, including the government, international organisations, civil society, academic institutions and the private sector.

Group 1: On strategies to further promote volunteerism

- Value and recognise the contributions of volunteers.
- Recognise the achievements of volunteers and create opportunities for volunteering in organisations, institutions and programmes.
- Create a committee to assess the contributions of volunteers, strengths and weaknesses, and share findings with the government so that it may identify policies and strategies to support volunteerism.
- Strengthen the capacities and professionalism of volunteering organisations and of volunteers.
- Volunteers should demonstrate and showcase their achievements and capacities.
- Create a central volunteer information and resource centre that will serve all volunteering organisations and anyone seeking information on volunteerism in Cambodia.
- Engage retired officials to be role models.
- Government and others could create scholarship incentives for volunteers.
- Target the family and especially parents in messages about volunteering so that they will be supportive and encourage their children to volunteer.
- Widely disseminate information to parents about the positive contributions of volunteers to society.
- Invite more students to participate in conferences on volunteerism.

Group 2: On linking volunteerism to national development goals

- The government is encouraged to integrate volunteers in its planning and as partners in all sectors of development.
- Expand the opportunities for students to volunteer.
- Volunteers can help the government to achieve its goals for literacy.
- Volunteer can promote awareness of laws.
- Volunteers can work with commune councils to encourage the participation of community members in local development meetings.

Group 3: Strategies to enhance the impact of volunteerism

- Build a strong network of volunteering organisations that can share resources and experiences.
- Recruit more and more volunteers.
- Promote and engage local volunteers in their own communities.
- Facilitate networking between communities with local volunteers in order to allow an exchange of experiences.
- Widely support and encourage volunteering at a younger age in order to raise awareness and understanding about volunteerism.
- Encourage volunteerism not only in communities but also in government service, organisations and business.
- Evaluate and showcase the achievements and impacts of volunteerism to all volunteers.
- Establish a programme of exchange visits whereby volunteers can share experiences and learn from their peers in other countries, bringing new ideas to Cambodia.
- Strengthen communication and networking between communities.
- Identify good practice in volunteering, and strategies that have succeeded in getting strong community support and engagement with volunteers.
- Expand the recruitment base for volunteers to include people of all ages, backgrounds and sectors of society.

ANNEX IV



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Research: “Volunteerism and Youth Engagement in Cambodia”

Purpose of the Research

Youth Star Cambodia, in cooperation with UNV, is planning to conduct a short term (3 months) research study with the aim of getting a clearer picture of the current volunteer infrastructure and environment in Cambodia, the profiles of volunteers, and the communities and projects with which they work. The ultimate aim of the research is to provide recommendations on how opportunities for Cambodians to volunteer can be increased and to provide a clear understanding of the capacity needs within volunteering organisations and thus, how donor support could be better targeted towards increasing volunteer participation in sustainable development.

Scope of Work

To produce a background research paper including the following:

- A background literature review of the history of volunteerism in Cambodia
- An analysis of the current contribution of volunteers (international and national, formal and informal) to national development in Cambodia (and understanding of volunteerism in the Cambodian context)
- An assessment of the potential of the youth population to contribute to national development through volunteering and promoting volunteerism
- The identification of specific areas for intervention through youth volunteers (including the context of the National Development Programmes, and UN Programmes) .

a) A background study on volunteerism in Cambodia

- A history of the evolution of volunteerism before, during and after the conflict in Cambodia

b) Analysis of current contribution of volunteers (international and national) to national development in Cambodia

- Gathering of existing information and materials (including areas of activity, geographical reach, relevant communities and specific projects, volunteers involved (age, gender, background, experience etc.) as well as overall mapping) regarding formal and (to the extent possible) informal volunteer-involving groups in Cambodia—this could be done by collaborating with organisations such as the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC, <http://www.ccc-cambodia.org>), which may already have extensive information in this regard. This scanning exercise should also include the UNV volunteer modalities, international and national;
 - Assessment of the perceived value of the work of volunteers in the communities where they work and among development partners, and the perception of the volunteer in the community;
 - Assessment of pre-departure training of volunteers and efforts made to link volunteer deployments with needs in the community as well as development priorities of the Government of Cambodia;
 - Assessment of the feasibility and scope of UNV (and other donor) support to joint initiatives among formal volunteer-involving groups in Cambodia, as well as complementarities with the existing National UNV Scheme;
 - Examination of the role of gender in volunteer deployments/volunteer-involving community based projects;
 - Assessment of the resources at the disposal of volunteer-involving groups, and the support of local/international funding partners
- c) Assessment of the potential of the youth population to contribute to national development through volunteering and promoting volunteerism**
- Exploration of strategies for scaling up the contribution of volunteers to sustainable development programmers in Cambodia through linkages with established development institutions and initiatives;
 - Gathering and analysing all existing materials on youth and their role in the society and for national development;
 - Examination of ways in which opportunities for (young) people to volunteer could be increased
- d) Identification of specific areas for intervention through (youth) volunteers (including the context of Government and UN programmes among others).**

It should be noted that the scope of volunteering is not limited to full-time volunteers but also part time volunteers that already exist in Cambodia.

youth  star



UN
Volunteers