

International Year of Volunteers 2001 in Cambodia
Country paper presents at the International Symposium on Volunteering
organised by Swiss IYV Committee and UNV
18 – 21 November 2001
Geneva, Switzerland



I- Volunteerism History in Cambodia and Its Meaning

- Volunteer work is not a new thing in Cambodia society, as we understand this spirit through Buddhist society and Local Communities activities. e.g. Pagoda is a main focal point to carry out volunteering job. The highly respected of the monk in its local area had a very strong voice in gathering people to work together and for the same level the elder people in the village could play a key role in leading neighbours to join a public work for the benefit of its area.
- During the dark period of Khmer Rouge everything had been in depth destroyed; infrastructures, cultures and religious, way of life, mutual understanding and trust, people and lives.
- To Cambodian people the word VOLUNTEER means to work with a sincerely heart without payment or any benefit. Say it – *NAK SMAK CHET*

II- Current Situation and IYV Activities

- Through great effort of UNV Office in Cambodia, the promotion and recognition of volunteer had been improved and this is really important for further motivation and recognition.
- The National Committee had not been established for the time being, as the rebuilding of trust and volunteer work would take more time and the National Committee will be very artificial at this stage, so we work with variety group called 'IYV Working Group' that consist of UNV, WHO, Cambodia Red Cross, International Federation of Red Cross, National Blood Transfusion Centre and the Ministry of Health.
- Activities carried out through IYV 2001:
 1. Opening of IYV 2001 organised by IVD working group for the restoration of Youth Mental Hospital in Takhmao district, Kandal province.
 2. Participation of Cambodian Red Cross organises in line with IYV 2001 focus on volunteering. CRC has a very large number of volunteers, approximately 10,000, overall the country include indigenous group.
 3. Participation of Publication Volunteering at grassroots level in Cambodia.
 4. Closing of the Year and launching of National Volunteering of Blood donation campaign with the Ministry of Health, Cambodian Red Cross, WHO and UNV. Another theme behind volunteer is to collect safety blood to fit the increasing demand as we agreed that the Volunteer Blood Donors will provide a more safer blood than the paid blood donor.
 5. Publicity of UNV activities and promotion of volunteering in Cambodia during Water Festival joint venture with all UN agencies on the occasion of UN DAY.

III- Achievement and Lesson Learned

- **Recognition and Promotion** – after putting up of Child Mental Health issues into the public domain. The awarding to a number of volunteers had been notified by the government institution and gain awareness.
- **Build up relationship** – within collaboration agencies of volunteer organisations, the primarily networking and research had been established.
- **Better understanding** – of what constitutes grassroots volunteering in post of Khmer Rouge society and gradually gain more mutual understanding at the local community level.
- Volunteerism is present in Cambodia not achieved yet but long term changing of attitudes on blood donation.
- Volunteerism is present in Cambodia but not called this enormous potential.
- There is not yet a common understanding in Cambodia on volunteerism which will need sometime to be built up.

IV- Future Promotion of Volunteer Heart

- Blood donation campaign on 5 Dec 2001
- Finalise the Publication of Volunteering at grassroots level in Cambodia.
- The intention to keep continues the IYV activities and inspires this theme to live esp. in the local community.
- We currently undertake a research on grassroots volunteer, so after we understand better then we hope to promote better.
- Promote the incorporation of Cambodian volunteer activities in development programmes

Cambodian Slogan of IVY - 2001

<< **Volunteerism and solidarity are essential to re-build trust and mutual cooperation in Khmer society.** >>