



Support from government trainers leads to dramatic changes in school management in Mondul Kiri province

School support committee members who participated in CARE trainings are now stepping up to spearhead construction and fundraising efforts at their schools.

Chaim Sopheak is a very busy woman. Apart from working as a full-time primary school director, she is the director of the school cluster in Mondul Kiri's Ou Reang district and a core trainer in the District Training and Monitoring Team. But that's just how she operates – she likes to keep busy, she explains.

As a core trainer, equipped in knowledge through CARE Cambodia workshops, she is responsible for teaching school support committees about their roles and responsibilities.

"In the past, I used to be a member of the school support committee myself but I never knew what I was supposed to do. It's only at the CARE training that I learnt of the Ministry of Education Guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of the school support committees," the woman says.

Sopheak admits that, when she found out she will be delivering trainings to people belonging to indigenous groups – some 90% of her trainees belong to ethnic minorities – she was worried she wouldn't be able to convey her knowledge to them.

"I was concerned about cultural and educational differences – what if I couldn't communicate with the school support committee members effectively and convey my knowledge to them?" she used to wonder.

Luckily, Sopheak explains, CARE taught her and the other trainers about "intercultural techniques", which helped her conduct the workshops effectively.

To date, she has conducted three trainings at ten schools in Mondul Kiri's Ou Reang district, which she says led to "communities becoming involved in school management and development".

One of the most impressive achievements she witnessed took place at the Dam Svay primary school, which is located in a very remote and hard to reach area of the province.

"In the past, there was no road to reach the school so the community members had to cut down bits of the forest so that I could deliver the training," Sopheak recounts with a smile on her face. "And then," she adds "there was no real school either."

According to the woman, the original building of the Dam Svay primary school was in a dilapidated condition and wasn't really fit for use. Additionally, although the community asked the Ministry of Education for financial support, it would take some time before the money reached the school.



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"Instead of waiting," Sopheak says with visible pride on her face "the school support committee raised the funds from the community and then worked together to construct the school."

That is not to say that other schools haven't received support from their committees. "All the committees I trained have been successfully supporting their primary schools, leading to better community engagement, participating in school management, as well as improved student and teacher attendance," she points out.

Sopheak says this is why she became a trainer. "I wanted our schools to improve and make sure that the community becomes involved in school management."

These activities are part of the *School Governance* project, which is supported by the Capacity Development Partnership Fund.



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