



## Innovative and sustainable development work

*“It is not like in other villages, because there is a Child Protection Committee in our village. You can report any concerns to me, because I am one of the committee-members.” This statement was made by a Buddhist leader, as he assisted and gave blessings during a Buddhist ceremony. Religious leaders are very important and respected people in Cambodian society, and role-models to many people.*

ICC-Voice Of The Children (ICC-VOTC) project is facilitating the process of forming Child Protection Committees (CPC). A CPC is setup by a local church in collaboration with other local civil society actors. A CPC is a community based organisation (CBO), created with ownership of the local citizens, with the core purpose to safeguard children. This means promoting child rights and child protection, and in addition, addressing local social and development issues. Also, a CPC raises the voice of children to the wider community, and demonstrates commitment and passion for creating a safe environment and circumstances for children in Cambodia.

A CPC has permanent members, who represent the citizens in the village. Members are parents, children, youth, church leaders, Buddhist leaders and representatives from local CBOs. The CPC becomes the link between the local civil society and local authorities and government staff, in order to create networks and collaboration for children's welfare.

So far ICC-VOTC has supported 17 villages to form their own CPCs in Pursat and Takeo provinces. Some children have expressed their appreciation and thankfulness to their village chief, church leaders, and the other CPC members for allowing them to be members of their own CPC. These children see it as an opportunity for them to learn and grow by being involved in child protection work in their own village. Church leaders, Buddhist leaders, parents and their village chiefs are really inspired and proud of the usefulness and the engagement of children and youth as members of CPCs.

However, the process of setting up CPCs also faces challenges. It does not always go as well as planned and anticipated. Any CPC member needs to be motivated and engaged for the cause, and see the vision of improved livelihood and social circumstances for children. ICC-VOTC expects to use these first 17 CPCs to become inspirational and role-model committees for other target villages, where ICC-VOTC also plans to setup CPCs.

Children protection is needed in the whole world and CPCs in Cambodia are a vehicle for local people to look after children in local communities.