



## Working with the least-served people

*Education is of utmost importance for the development of a society and of human resources. Education is also an essential human right, and the level and impact of education is in many ways determining the future and possibilities for a child. During the last 25 years the educational system in Cambodia has been re-built, after total destruction during the Pol Pot regime in the 1970s. Besides the regular school structure, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport is also promoting pre-schools, in order for children to get a good start on their learning and education.*

Pre-school and primary education has been one of the focuses of ICC-FAST project (Family And School Transformation) in Svay Rieng province since 2012. FAST project is in collaboration with Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), see picture above, assisting children in rural communities to receive quality education at an early age. Together with PTAs and pre-school committees, children are now having access to better education from the age of three to five years old by attending classes in the eleven community pre-schools that are already established in rural parts of the province. Three more pre-schools are currently being built with funds raised by PTAs.

Two of the current pre-schools have been acknowledged by the Commune Council and the District Office of Education Youth and Sport for meeting the thirty-three indicators of “Community Pre-School Minimum Standards” set out by the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MoEYS). FAST project and PTAs are working on getting other community pre-schools to meet these required indicators for Minimum Standards, in order to receive the same recognition from the authorities, but most of all to give children quality education as well as other necessary knowledge for their future.

In addition, among five primary schools that PTAs and FAST project are working with, Chantrea primary school is a role-model school, as they received the appreciation letter from MoEYS for their leadership and good communication with the community for school improvement. In FAST project's five target primary schools, 95-98% of the children have passed their grade and are eligible for further education.

Even though significant impact can be seen from FAST project's collaboration with PTAs, challenges still occur. One challenge is the lack of school facilities, as most of the pre-schools are located at teachers' homes. Another challenge is the lack of teachers, due to low salaries. FAST project seeks to facilitate stronger cooperation between PTAs and local authorities, and as a result communes were able to increase the salary of community pre-school teachers from USD30 to USD50 per month. Hence, teachers in those communes decided to continue providing education to the community children.