

# GERMAN UNITY DAY

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*The Phnom Penh Post*

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# Keeping the ground safe for children

**C**LEARING landmines in former war zones and turning them into playgrounds and farming land are probably the noblest of humanitarian efforts.

In this endeavour, the government of Germany has lent its support to the HALO Trust in demining efforts in Cambodia to return the Kingdom to peace, prosperity and safety.

HALO is the world's oldest and largest humanitarian mine

clearance organisation and has been working in Cambodia for over 27 years.

In one example of how demining efforts have made it safe for schoolchildren, members of HALO, which is funded by Germany, went to a village school in Srah Kampaok after a child stumbled upon something resembling a landmine.

Head teacher Keng Sokun said she was warned of the presence of landmines in the

open space behind the school.

The teachers knew that there had been mine laying in the area in the late 1980s but no one knew how big the threat was. While all 90 students at the school had been prohibited from playing in the area, there was a worry that younger children would not be able to grasp the dangers presented by landmines.

Sokun told the press recently: "Even though we explained the risks to the children, sometimes it is difficult for the younger ones to understand this and they forget that they must not play there."

In 2011, when Sokun was appointed head teacher, a student strayed into the prohibited area and found something that looked like part of an explosive. The student then alerted the teachers and Sokun called HALO.

A specialist HALO team was dispatched to inspect the find and conduct a detailed survey of the area. A team was then deployed to clear the area of possible dangers.

Seven antipersonnel landmines were found behind Sokun's school. The head teachers said: "I was very surprised that HALO found seven mines right behind the school. That was dangerous for us, especially for our children."



Mrs Keng Sokun and her students. © HALO Trust

The HALO demining team later cleared all landmines from the area and declared the land safe for the school and the community to enjoy. Now, the children can play in the area and Sokun is also able to use the space to grow food to support the teachers working at the school.

Since 2015, German support has empowered HALO to make the land safe for almost 100,000 people in Cambodia. This partnership enables people like Sokun and the schoolchildren to live, learn and cultivate their land safely.

Germany will continue to work with HALO so that by

2025 no parent needs to worry about their children being harmed by mines.

According to the Cambodian Mine Action Authority, there is still 2,000 sq km yet to be cleared of mines and other unexploded ordnance, an area more than five times the size of Phnom Penh. ■



With German support, HALO Trust has made the land safe for almost 100,000 Cambodians. Photo: The Halo Trust

# Driving poverty out of Cambodia with the IDPoor card

**E**FFECTIVE poverty alleviation requires planned activities that are targeted specifically for this group.

To ensure that Cambodia's poorest are not left behind, the Ministry of Planning developed the "Identification of Poor Households" (IDPoor) mechanism, which is supported by Germany and Australia through the German Development Cooperation Agency or GIZ.

Based on a participatory identification process that takes place at the village level, poor households receive an IDPoor card that entitles all its members to obtain free healthcare nationwide.

It also allows them to avail themselves of other social services, such as cash transfers for pregnant women and children, school feeding programmes or disability allowances.

With IDPoor's reach to

more than 550,000 households, members can even get connected to running water and obtain lower government service fees.

The Ministry of Planning says this innovative system has helped to identify those in need and ease their burden in the fight against poverty.

To collect data and information for the system to work well, identification and registration of poor households are done when village communities gather for various events and celebrations.

The success of the system can be seen through the lives that have been changed for the better. Take Kung Him, who is 82-years-old and lives in a one-room corrugated metal house in a village in central Cambodia as an example.

She has no family. Her husband died in the early 1980s, and her only child died during the Khmer Rouge regime.

Him used to collect palm

leaves which she stitched together to make roof coverings that she could sell.

She received her IDPoor card in 2011 and uses it for her healthcare needs. Last month, when she had to visit the hospital, she produced the card and paid no fees. The medical treatment she received was free.

"I wouldn't dare go to the hospital without this card. I'm very happy to have it," Him said while beaming from ear to ear.

In another case, Nel Pholly lives alone in a rented room in one of Phnom Penh's open sewer slum areas.

The 50-year-old was interviewed by elected village representative group member Hao Sorychan as part of IDPoor's initial expansion into urban areas.

Being destitute, Pholly relies on the generosity of neighbours who often invite her to share a meal with them.

The IDPoor interview reviewed her housing situation, assets, health and disability status and other circumstances. It determined that Pholly was indeed poor and with no real support from kith or kin.

Today, a very happy Pholly gets access to social services and free health care, all thanks to her IDPoor card.

The elderly are not the only ones whose lives have been improved thanks to the IDPoor card.

Eight-year-old Choub Vy and his mother Vy Naran, 47, were interviewed by village



Mak Cheah and Mao Teur at the hospital. ©GIZ/Conor Wall

representative group member Mao Vatana inside the grounds of one of Phnom Penh's pagodas.

They have lived there for the last eight years after kind monks gave them a plot of land there for free. The interview process will determine if the mother and son will be classified as poor and receive an IDPoor card.

Sam Kunthea who is 38, lives alone in Cambodia's capital. She earns money by collecting recyclable waste such as aluminium cans and plastic bottles.

On a good day, she can

make \$2.50. The bicycle she uses was a gift from a kind neighbour. She lives rent-free in a shack that the landowner allowed her to construct out of pity.

Being vulnerable, each night she sleeps with a large knife beside her for protection.

In 2017, IDPoor expanded into urban areas for the first time and Sam Kunthea was among the initial recipients of an IDPoor card, which entitles her to free social services.

Mak Cheah who is 24 and her husband Mao Teur, 23, had their first child at the provincial hospital in Kampong

Chhnang.

They live with Cheah's family consisting of seven people in the home. Cheah has a job in a shoe factory while Teur earns money as a daily waged labourer at construction sites.

When their baby was born, she required an IV to fight a respiratory tract infection. She says: "Without IDPoor, we could not afford the treatment. The card is truly a lifesaver." ■

The story was part of the exhibition: *Leave no one behind – beneficiaries and implementers of IDPoor* which ran from June 21 to July 20, 2018.



Choub Vy household interview. © GIZ/Conor Wall

# Powering rural healthcare and communication

**I**NFRASTRUCTURE development, particularly good roads, is the nexus connecting people with markets, modern healthcare and education facilities.

The Rural Infrastructure Programme, a joint Cambodian-German initiative, has brought together farmers and buyers in Kampong Chhnang Province by building a network of roads.

While the numbers who have benefited from the project are numerous, several beneficiaries expressed their gratitude at the project implementation.

A village leader in Kampong Chhnang reported that there has been "a 50 per cent increase in the enrolment of 12-17-year-old girls in secondary schools".

Ensuring roads that can be used all-year-round will lead to higher school enrolment. Community leaders report that before the road construction, parents were reluctant to send their daughters to secondary school, as they were often unable to return home during the rainy season.

With transport costs declining substantially, markets become more accessible to farmers. Rice farmers from the beneficiary communes report that before road rehabilitation projects were carried out, only one trader was regularly purchasing rice from them and paying low prices.

Now 10 rice traders are visiting regularly to buy rice. This has resulted in a 50 to 70 per cent increase in prices.

Sok Sophal, a medium-sized rice trader, says rice production used to be constrained by limited investments. Since the completion of the roads, she



The rural road in Kbal Chhor Village, Sambok Commune, Chet Borei district, Kratie Province. The 11.2km-long road with one 20-meter bridge was co-financed by the German Government through KfW and the Royal Government of Cambodia. © KfW and the German Embassy

has been able to buy much more rice.

"Rice production has almost doubled in the last three years. Better access to the main road network enables youths to work in surrounding factories as

well.

"The additional family income is used to buy mechanical tillers, more fertilisers and better quality seeds," she says.

Meanwhile, Prom Sophia and her husband Savut started to grow sugar cane after the road was built.

"We now sell it at the big market in Romeas. My next project is to grow citrus, mangoes and coconuts on my land," she says.

Better market access also resulted in Chun Leang and her husband, Channa, to start a small mushroom farm. The whole family helps in the business and they harvested their first crop in November 2017.

A case where the lack of a good road network resulted in tragedy is that of Lay Bon. He lost his wife to snakebite while she was giving birth. The road connecting his home to the main network was in a bad state and often flooded during the rainy season.

"We could not use a vehicle to take my wife to the health centre. My

friends were helping me carry her through the floodwaters in a hammock when she died, he said.

"Since the completion of the road there have been no more deaths from snake bites," said Prom Sophia, a registered nurse who has a private practice serving communities along the road. Also, child vaccination rates have risen to 100 per cent from recent statistics.

The Rural Infrastructure Programme is improving year-round access to markets, schools, health centres and public services all over the country.

To date, the German Government has co-financed, through the KfW Development Bank, more than 2,000km of roads, over 70 bridges and 50 schools. It is also developing another eleven markets. In project areas, the average per-capita income has increased by over 50 per cent. ■



Peam Chilaeng Market. ©KfW and the German Embassy



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WHAT MAKES A GERMAN BREWMASTER?

Well I think there is no major difference between a German brewmaster and any other brewmaster around the world. Especially for us craft brewers it is not just a job, it's a passion. I consider one thing in Germany that is unique: all brewers follow an over 500 year-old law, the German purity law. We only use water, malt, hops and yeast. So you'll never find any chemicals or artificial ingredients in our beer. I follow this tradition at Hops.

HOW DID YOU BECOME A BREWMASTER?

I followed my passion and studied brewing and beverage technology at the most famous brewing university in the world, Weihenstephan in Bavaria, close to my home town Munich. And yes there is really a university for beer in Germany!

While studying I already worked for a small, very traditional brewery because I wanted more than just theory - I wanted to make real beer. This combination offered me the best start for my life as a brewmaster, a deep understanding about traditional brewing processes, technical knowledge, a feeling for hygienic processing and much more.

AND WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO CAMBODIA?

I'd say right place right time. Hops searched for a brewmaster, who can not just create his own beers, but set up a brewery. For every passionate brewer such an offer is hard to resist. But personally for me, it was more. I spent one year in South East Asia more than ten years ago, and the region stayed in my heart: "I want to be back there!" And it was the right decision to come to Cambodia again. Honestly sometimes it has been very hard, but I have always been supported by our great team. And so finally Hops 2.0 will be ready to brew soon. But good beer takes time, so please be patient and wait for the grand opening party which will be announced very soon!

Our house beer selection:



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